### Boise State University McNair Scholars

#### Class of 2004

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<td>Vermont Law/Northeastern U.</td>
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<td>Spanish</td>
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<td>University of Memphis</td>
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The McNair Scholars Research Journal is the official annual publication of the McNair Scholars Program at Boise State University. The McNair Scholars Program is housed in the Center for Multicultural and Educational Opportunities within the College of Education. The program is funded by a $225,000 Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program grant from the US Department of Education.
MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BOB KUSTRA

It is with real pleasure that I write to introduce this seventh volume of the *McNair Scholars Research Journal*. The papers contained in this volume represent a remarkable breadth of scholarship that encompasses some of the best of what Boise State University has to offer. The Scholars, their faculty mentors, the staff of the McNair Program, and all of us at Boise State are justifiably proud of this work.

Congratulations to all of the 2011 McNair Scholars for your achievements over the past year. In particular, I want to acknowledge the hard work and accomplishments of the senior Scholars whose research is represented in the papers in this publication. McNair scholars work with faculty mentors who are committed to the rigors of scholarship—a working relationship that both students and faculty describe as unique and beneficial. I also want to recognize and thank all of the faculty mentors who have worked with our McNair Scholars. It is your patience, guidance, and encouragement that facilitates the transformation of these students into scholars.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program honors the memory and achievement of the late Dr. Ronald E. McNair, a physicist and NASA astronaut. Its goal is to encourage undergraduates from underrepresented backgrounds to emulate the academic and professional accomplishments of Dr. McNair by facilitating their pursuit of doctoral degrees and academic careers in teaching and research. The McNair Scholars Research Journal is evidence that the McNair Program provides a valuable opportunity for these students to explore research on significant issues as they prepare for graduate school. Students also have access to venues such as conferences and journals where they can present their original projects.

The research presented here signals the arrival of a new group of rising scholars who will carry their talents, enthusiasm, and hard work ahead into graduate programs here and across the country. I hope that you will continue to aspire, achieve, and pursue your dreams.

Again, congratulations and best wishes.

Sincerely,

Bob Kustra
President

This is the seventh issue of the Boise State *McNair Scholars Research Journal*. Contained within is the work of 14 Boise State McNair Scholars, making it the most scholarly work and largest journal we have ever published. Since 2003, the Boise State McNair Scholars Program has provided guidance and support to many dedicated McNair Scholars striving to find a committed academic life beyond the completion of their Baccalaureate degree. This publication celebrates these Scholars’ achievements and we offer it to our readers with pride and pleasure.

The research contained here demonstrates a significant accomplishment for each of these scholars and is the culmination of work that began approximately 20 months ago, with the bulk of research having been accomplished during the summer of 2010. These Scholars spent considerable time with faculty mentors who provided important guidance during their research experience. We are especially proud to see how these students have grown as researchers and scholars. The hard work, dedication, and persistence required in producing new knowledge through research is most evident in these articles. We commend you for this dedicated scholarship.

We would like to thank our fine group of Boise State faculty mentors whose expertise is essential to our success. Your guidance and support have allowed our Scholars to grow in meaningful ways, helped them develop a solid research experience and given them the foundation to enter graduate school with confidence.

A final thanks goes to Meredith Grubbs who committed herself to editing and formatting this journal for the last four years. Best to you in your future endeavors.

Gregory Martinez
Director

Helen Barnes
Program Coordinator
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*The Boise State McNair Scholars Program is supported by a $225,000 annual grant from the US Department of Education TRiO Programs.*
Expression and Regulation of Survivin in Prostate Cancer

Maygen K. Cardona: McNair Scholar

Dr. Beatrice Knudsen: Mentor

Biology

Abstract

Survivin is an Inhibitor of Apoptosis Protein (IAP), which makes it responsible for cell proliferation and survival by inhibiting regulated cell death and promoting mitosis. The exact role that it plays in prostate cancer is not yet fully understood; expression and regulation of Survivin is the primary focus of my project. The way Survivin was studied was through fractionating various cancer cell lines (LaPC-4, PC-3 E+, VCAP, C4-2 and DU145-Spindle, Round and Tight) and isolating the nuclear and cytosolic components. These fractionated samples were then treated and analyzed using Western Blot analysis being probed for nuclear and cytoplasmic Survivin, respectively. The two main goals of my project were to see if there is a difference in expression between nuclear and cytosolic Survivin as shown in previous immunohistochemical staining and also to test if movement of the Androgen Receptor from the nucleus to the cytoplasm occurs when the cell components are treated with charcoal-stripped media. The found results were that there is in fact a difference between nuclear and cytoplasmic Survivin as indicated by band definition in Western Blot analysis for all lines used. There was also movement seen in the Androgen Receptor of two cell lines (LaPC-4 and C4-2) with charcoal-stripped media. Since little is known about Survivin other than the fact that it is most readily seen in cancerous cells in humans, the hope is that through my results we will be able to inhibit expression of the protein by understanding what functions the two forms have.

Introduction

Survivin is a protein that functions as a promoter of cell proliferation and survival in tumors and/or regularly proliferating cells. The protein counteracts apoptosis by endogenously inhibiting caspases and has been found in “almost virtually every human tumor that has been studied”. Survivin is not usually found in normal adult tissues but it is seen in large concentrations in more aggressive cancers. Survivin is classified as an Inhibitor of Apoptosis Protein, also known as an IAP. Survivin is the smallest known IAP and is approximately 16.5 kiloDaltons big. Structurally, it has a single Baculovirus IAP Repeat (BIR) and an extended carboxy-terminal alpha-helical coiled-coil, but no RING-finger or other identifiable domain. The main function of Survivin is to control mitotic progression and has maximal expression during the G2/M Phase; it is essential for cell division. However, Survivin has rarely, if ever, been studied in prostate cancer.

An IAP is an Inhibitor of Apoptosis Protein and functions to inhibit regulated cell death. Structurally, IAPs consist of 1-3 copies of a 70-amino-acid zinc-finger fold, which is a designated BIR. Certain IAPs can also include a caspase-recruitment domain (CARD), and a carboxy-terminal RING finger. There have been a total of eight members of the IAP gene family identified in humans; Survivin is one of them. The most well studied human IAPs include: XIAP, c-IAP1 and c-IAP2. IAPs work by preventing the processing of initiator caspase-9 from the apoptosome, which is responsible for activating effector caspases and death substrates.

There are three different identifiable forms of Survivin. Survivin Wild-type: 3-intron-4-exon structure, Survivin-2B: Insertion of an alternative exon 2, and Survivin-ΔEx3: Removal of exon 3 (results in frameshift). As well as two different regulation mechanisms; cell cycle dependent and cell cycle independent, respectively. These forms are illustrated in Figure 2.

Cell cycle dependent regulation of Survivin functions at the transcriptional and post-transcriptional level to control Survivin expression and involves CDE/CHR G1 repressor elements in the Survivin promoter with increased protein stability by phosphorylation on Thr34, respectively. Cell cycle independent regulation of Survivin functions in response to haematopoietic and vascular remodeling cytokines, STAT3-dependent signal transduction and phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase activity. The known pathways for cell-cycle dependence and cell-cycle independence are shown in Figure 3.
From previous immunohistochemical (IHC) staining performed by Dr. Knudsen at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, the two distinct functions of Survivin were readily seen in human prostates. However, no analyses of Survivin have been previously conducted using human prostate tissue and therefore the distinction between cytosolic Survivin (cell-cycle independent) and nuclear Survivin (cell-cycle dependent) must be made in order to confirm that two regulatory paths do exist. Analyzing expression of the primary antibodies used in the previous IHC experiment must do this.

Methods

The guiding questions behind this study were: Do the antibodies for nuclear and cytosolic Survivin used in immunohistochemistry bind to distinct forms of Survivin? As well as: Does treatment of cell lines with charcoal-stripped media cause the Androgen Receptor to move from the nucleus into the cytoplasm? These two questions are important to understanding the function of Survivin in prostate cancer because confirming that there are indeed two distinct functions of Survivin and where they are localized in aggressive cancers can help form treatment plans according to each individual. Also, confirming that Survivin shows movement during Androgen Ablation shows that Survivin, much like the Androgen Receptor will move from a method of proliferation in the nucleus to one of survival in the cytoplasm during commonly used prostate cancer treatments.

In order to test the first hypothesis, LaPC-4, PC-3 E+, VCAP, C4-2 and DU145-Spindle, Round, and Tight human cancer cell lines were used. All of the cells were plated from reserves kept in liquid nitrogen and ranging from 1980-present. After plating, the cells were kept in the 37°C incubator and fed every other day with passage done until there were six plates of each cell line and all plates were the same passage number and dilution. Four plates of each cell line were then taken when eighty percent confluent and a fractionation protocol was followed for harvesting, while the other two plates were kept as reserves in the incubator and continually fed and passed accordingly.

For fractionation, pre-labeled eppendorf tubes, pre-labeled ultracentrifuge tubes and buffers, reagents, rotor of the ultracentrifuge machine, etc. used during the experiment were taken into the cold room (4°C). Twenty-five milliliters of Cell Lysis Buffer (Mannitol Lysis Buffer) was made on the day of the experiment from the stock solution and placed on ice for thirty minutes before beginning. Three hundred micro liters per plate Cell Lysis Buffer (Mannitol Lysis Buffer) w/inhibitors was also prepared the day of the experiment in the cold room and placed on ice along with Nuclei Resuspension Buffer and 2X RIPA Buffer with protease and phosphatase inhibitors.

The four 10-cm plates of cells were taken from the incubator and media was immediately removed by suction in the tissue-culture hood. The plates were immediately put on ice and taken to the cold room. In the cold room, the plates were washed once with five milliliters of ice-cold PBS/EDTA and subsequently poured off. The plates were then washed once with two milliliters of ice cold Cell Lysis Buffer and immediately poured off. The plates were placed on ice at a 30° angle to allow the residual liquid to drain before aspirating all the remaining liquid. Three hundred micro liters of Cell Lysis Buffer (w/inhibitors) was then added to each plate and laid flat on ice for thirty minutes.

After thirty minutes, the dishes were set at an angle once again on ice. Tilting the dish, the cells were scraped with a cell scraper vigorously for 3-4 times, collecting the lysate along the bottom edge of the plate with a P1000 pipettman. Lysates were transferred to pre-chilled eppendorf tubes, pre-labeled as P0 (nuclear fraction) and spun at 3000 rpm for ten minutes in the centrifuge. On ice, the supernatant was then transferred to an empty eppendorf tube, labeled as P1 and the pellet was kept in P0 tubes. The P0 tubes then had 300 micro liters of Nuclei Resuspension Buffer and three micro liters of Dnase I added, combining all tubes. The pellets were Resuspended by vortexing until the pellet went into solution. Finally, 200 micro liters of 2X RIPA Buffer (w/inhibitors) was added and a nuclear wet mount was prepared to check for appearance of nuclei and little to no debris.

The P1 eppendorf tubes were then spun at 14000 rpm for twenty minutes. On ice, the supernatant was transferred with a 1000 micro liter pipette tip from the P1 tube to a pre-chilled ultracentrifuge tube, labeled as P100. All supernatants were combined in one ultracentrifuge tube (Beckman Polycarbonate 13x51mm 3mL tubes). After completing isolation of the nuclear and cytosolic matter of each cell line, the tubes were stored in the -80°C freezer until needed.

After storing and isolating all cell lines, concentration of the protein in the nuclear and cytosolic components had to be determined. Doing a Bradford Assay using known dilutions of photosensitive liquid and dilutions of either cytosolic or nuclear components from the cell lines did this. Each cell line concentration was determined for both components and using a predetermined excel sheet, the necessary amounts of Western Blot reagents were added to the protein in either 10, 25, or 50 micro liter dilutions.
From this step, Western Blot analysis was then performed using a typical “Western Blot with Wet Transfer” protocol and developing using chemiluminescent reagent and radiographic film.

The Western Blots used to test for differences in cytoplasmic and nuclear Survivin used a mouse monoclonal and a rabbit polyclonal primary antibody, respectively. The gels used for both components were 12% Bis-Tris with 10 micro liters of ladder loaded and 15 micro liters of protein into each well. The Western Blot was run at 200mV for twenty minutes or until a one inch space remained at the bottom of the gel. Transfer was done by blocking the gel with a nitrocellulose membrane for 90 minutes at 300mA in the cold room. The membrane was then cut and marked to designate the ladder and each component was probed separately. The nuclear fraction was probed with milk overnight followed by a second milk-blocking step with secondary antibody in order to reduce background noise. The cytoplasmic fraction was probed with a milk overnight primary step followed by a 5% BSA blocking step with secondary antibody and was repeated until radiographic films appeared as clear to read as possible. These final Western analyses are shown in Figures 4 and 5.

The second hypothesis was tested by using a similar method as the above mentioned, however, only cell lines for LaPC-4 and PC-3 E+ were used. Each cell line was grown using a medium made from charcoal strip in order to remove any hormones. The plates were grown for six days and four plates each were obtained from the same passage and dilution number. Cells were then harvested using the same method as above for cell fractionation. Western Blot analysis for these cells was conducted using the AR 441 primary antibody and an anti-horse secondary antibody with milk blocking overnight and 5% BSA blocking on the secondary antibody. The Western Blot for this experiment is shown in Figure 6.

Results

From Western Blot Analysis, I was able to confirm that the antibodies used for nuclear and cytosolic Survivin are indeed distinct from each other. When probed for nuclear Survivin, only bands on nuclear fractions are visible and are located at approximately 16.5 kDa on the ladder. However, when probed with cytoplasmic Survivin, bands are located for nuclear and cytosolic fractions, but at different locations on the molecular weight ladder. It is believed that the lower band seen is one of the non-wild type forms of Survivin and the cytosolic fractions at approximately 16.5 kDa are the wild type. Further testing must be done in order to confirm these results and identify the second visible band in the cytosolic probe. However, a distinction between the two antibodies used is obvious.

For the Androgen Receptor, movement of Survivin from the nucleus to the cytoplasm is clearly seen for LaPC-4 cells that were treated with androgen ablation and bands appear at the known molecular weight. This is an important finding because it shows that Survivin, like the Androgen Receptor can be seen in adult human cancer cells as well as the fact that it has two distinct regulations. When androgen is readily available in the nucleus, Survivin is able to control mitotic progression in a cell and therefore proliferate. However, when androgen is taken away from the host and it moves to the cytoplasm, Survivin goes into a somewhat “dormant” state and moves into the cytoplasm as well with the main goal of just “surviving.” The Western Blot for the AR 441 is shown in Figure 6.

Discussion

The findings of this research are extremely important. Since Survivin is known to have a detrimental effect in patients with any aggressive cancer, it is important to understand the different regulations and forms that it has. Being able to confirm previous results that there are two distinct forms and that the antibodies used to probe for them can be used independently are a huge step in furthering our understanding of the protein. Since analysis of prostate cancer tissues is currently only able to happen after the patient has died from the disease, this allows us to be able to selectively study one form or the other as well as use immunohistochemistry to study which form led to a more serious or lethal case of prostate cancer. In doing this, there is the possibility that prostate cancer can be controlled better and studied before the demise of the patient.

Additionally, by studying the movement of the Androgen Receptor from the nucleus to the cytoplasm upon androgen ablation, helps to understand the processes and forms that Survivin might take as a result of common prostate cancer treatment therapies. If Survivin is moved from a proliferating stage in the nucleus when androgen is readily available and then into a “survival” mode when androgen ablation is done, it may appear that the patients’ cancer has gone into remission or been cured. This however, is not the case as every human prostate with cancer has been seen to have Survivin expression and more so in the nucleus of more aggressive cancer. If Survivin can be better regulated or its pathway in the nucleus blocked this can easily be prevented.
Overall, there is more work needing to be done on this research, as it is only the beginning of finding a possible treatment plan for prostate cancer patients. The above findings need to be confirmed further as well as more in-depth biochemical processes of Survivin need to be studied in order to understand all regulations and possible inhibitors of the protein.

Figure 1. Schematic illustrating apoptotic activation of caspases from both extrinsic and intrinsic stimulus. Survivin is responsible for inhibiting the intrinsic stimulus and therefore silencing apoptosis.

Figure 2. Representation of the three forms of Survivin with an alternate exon 2 and removal of exon 3 in the non-wild type forms. The removal of exon 3 results in a frameshift mutation of the protein.
Figure 3. Schematic showing the two ways Survivin functions: either in a cell-cycle dependent manner, or in a cell-cycle independent manner, which leads to activating of cytokines.

Figure 4. Western Blot probing for nuclear Survivin. Distinct bands are seen only in fractions of nuclear cells for all cell lines at the expected 16.5 kDa molecular weight. Order of loading: P0-S, C+M-S, P0-R, C+M-R, P0-T, C+M-T, P0 LaPC4, C+M LaPC4, P0 PC3, C+M PC3, P0 C4-2, C+M C42, P0-VCAP, C+M-VCAP.

Figure 5. Western Blot probing for cytoplasmic Survivin. Distinct bands are seen for all fractions at the expected molecular weight with lower bands being seen below 16.5 kDa, believed to be a mutation in the Survivin protein. Order of loading: P0-S, C+M-S, P0-R, C+M-R, P0-T, C+M-T, P0 LaPC4, C+M LaPC4, P0 PC3, C+M PC3, P0 C4-2, C+M C42, P0-VCAP, C+M-VCAP.
Figure 6. From left to right: Ladder indicating molecular weight in kDa, Nuclear fraction without androgen ablation, Cytosolic fraction without androgen ablation, Nuclear fraction with androgen ablation, Cytosolic fraction with androgen ablation, Positive LnCAP control. When androgen is available to cells, bands are seen in the nuclear and cytosolic fractions of LaPC-4 cells, however when androgen has been stripped from the cells, only a band is seen in the cytoplasm. The large band seen to the far right is a control for the AR 441 primary antibody.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks Dr. Beatrice Knudsen for being an amazing mentor, Dr. Alexander Bailey for assisting in experiments and explaining protocols, Lisa Peterson for being supportive, The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, University of Washington GenOM Project, University of Washington SACNAS Chapter, Boise State McNair Scholars Program, Helen Barnes, Greg Martinez, 2009 Boise State McNair Scholars Cohort, and my family and friends for everything they have given me.

References

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A Study of Its Effects on the Development of Young Adults at the University Level  

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Psychology  

Abstract  

The present study examined the significance of methods of discipline used by parents and how these methods of discipline consequently affect multiple aspects of their child's development well into adulthood. Participants were young adults ranging from ages 18-55 recruited from various university psychology courses. The participants were given an online questionnaire measuring quantitative data. This questionnaire asked about methods of discipline the participant’s parents used on them, if they were ever spanked as children, if they believe spanking to be harmful to children, which methods of discipline made them feel worse, and how they would rate their current level of self-esteem, and about the quality of the parent-child relationship.  

Keywords:  parental discipline, authoritarian, authoritative, harsh discipline, negotiation.  

Introduction  

Research regarding conflict-tactics used by parents is often contradictory, most significantly regarding whether there are negative effects following the use of harsh discipline and, if so, what these may be. Research suggests that the use of harsh discipline is significantly related to the use of abusive child rearing whenever the child is a parent (Steinmetz, 1977), and to the existence of conflict within families (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Chyi-In, 1991). Subsequently, high amounts of conflict have been shown to negatively impact self-esteem (Pawlak & Klein, 1997).  

Understanding the effects of harsh discipline on children, and more importantly if it has any long-term effects is important because parents, educators and caregivers are often unsure as to which method of discipline is best to use with children. The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between various factors important to child development, which may be influenced by of the use of harsh discipline. These factors include self-esteem, parenting styles, conflict management techniques, and ultimately whether or not harsh discipline was used on the participants of this study.  

Studying relationships between parenting styles and conflict management techniques is beneficial in further understanding the effects of the quality of parent-child relationships. Studying relationships between the use of harsh discipline and the child having suffered physical assault is important in determining if the severity of harsh discipline is a predictor of harsh physical and/or verbal abuse. And ultimately, studying the relationships between the use of harsh discipline and self-esteem is important because there is strong evidence that children exposed to harsh or abusive parenting are at risk for outcomes including delinquency, academic failure, difficulties with peers, and substance abuse (Simons, et al. 1991); behaviors which ultimately affect our communities.  

Conflict-management techniques  

Conflict-management techniques are also studied in order to determine if there is any physical or psychological maltreatment of children by their parents. The two types of conflict-management techniques examined in the present study include harsh discipline and negotiation. For the purpose of the present study, harsh discipline can be defined as corporal punishment and harsh verbal punishment which includes name-calling, profanity, and/or causing shame to child (Simons, et al. 1991; Straus, et al. 1998).  

If conflict-tactics show physical and/or psychological maltreatment is present in the form of harsh discipline, it can be a significant factor negatively influencing the development of the child (Straus, Hamby,
A study conducted by Turner and Finkelhor (1996) found that there were associations between the use of corporal punishment and an increased probability of physical aggression and other anti-social behavior. Although the frequency and severity of the punishment is important to take into account, research suggests that the use of corporal punishment may increase the chances of an individual resolving conflicts later in life with physical aggression and possibly causing injury (Turner & Finkelhor, 1996).

Negotiation is a conflict-management technique which, in contrast to harsh discipline, has shown to have positive effects on the development of a child and on child-parent relationships. Studies show that when negotiation is used as a conflict-management technique, a child is more likely to adopt positive behaviors and have a stronger relationship with their parents (Vereecken, Legiest, Bourdeaudhuij, & Maes, 2009). One such study, found that negotiation techniques implemented by both parent and child are crucial to a healthy and supportive relationship within the family (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O’Connor, 1994; Baumrind, 1991; Sternberg, 1987).

Parenting styles and conflict-management techniques

Parenting styles are defined as parenting behaviors and attitudes that set the emotional climate of parent-child interactions (Seigler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2006). According to a study done by Diana Baumrind (1973) there are three parenting styles, which include, authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting, and permissive parenting. These styles of parenting are determined by two specific measures which are first, the degree of parental warmth, support, and acceptance a parent gives their child; and secondly, the degree of parenting control and demandingness toward the child (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). While authoritative parents tend to have a high quality relationship with their child with equal amounts of warmth and demandingness, authoritarian parents do not. Authoritarian parents tend to be high on the amount of parenting control and demandingness they exert onto their child and tend to use harsh punishment more frequently (Seigler, et al., 2006).

Parenting styles and conflicts within the family have been shown to have negative effects on the development of an individual’s self-esteem as they are growing up. A study done by Diana Baumrind (1991) found that children who were raised by authoritarian parents tended to be unhappy, unfriendly, have low self-confidence, and were relatively lower in social and academic competence. The same was true as children grew to be adolescents (Baumrind, 1991).

Self-esteem and harsh discipline

The use of corporal punishment has also been linked to a wide variety of negative mental health outcomes, including internalizing characteristics such as lower self-esteem (Gershoff, 2002). A study done by Bender, Allen, McElhaney, Antonishak, Moore, Kelly, & Davis, 2007, correlated the use of harsh discipline with the ability of young adults to establish autonomy while maintaining a healthy parent-adolescent relationship. They found that the use of harsh discipline by both parents resulted in greater adolescent depression. They also found that the use of harsh discipline by mother resulted in adolescents who were less engaged and warm toward their mothers. This negative effect on the parent-adolescent relationship is found to result in adolescents reported significantly lower levels of self-esteem.

The present study

The purpose of the present study was to examine if there were any relationships between perceived parenting styles, conflict-management techniques (such as harsh discipline and negotiation), the use of physical assault, and self-esteem. The present study focused on four goals in order to analyze any relationships which may exist between these variables.

The first goal of this study was to examine if there is a relationship between perceived parenting styles from the participants and the use of harsh discipline as they were growing up. This was proposed by the hypothesis: 1.) There will be a significant positive relationship between the use of harsh discipline on an individual and having an authoritarian parent (Seigler, et al., 2006). The second goal was to examine if there is any relationship between perceived parenting styles and the use of negotiation when resolving conflicts in the family. This was proposed by the hypothesis: 2.) There will be a positive significant relationship between the use of negotiation when solving conflicts and having an authoritative parent (Seigler, et al., 2006). The third goal was to examine whether there is any relation between harsh discipline and the child having suffered physical assault from the parents, as proposed by the hypotheses: 3) There will be a significant relationship between the use of harsh discipline on an individual and
having a parent who has used physical assault on the individual (Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). The fourth goal was to examine if there is any relation between the use of harsh discipline as the participant was growing up and the participant’s reported low self-esteem. This was proposed by the hypothesis: 4.) There will be a significant relationship between an individual’s low self-esteem and the use of harsh discipline from their parents toward them (Gershoff, 2002).

Method

Participants

The sample of participants who completed this study consisted of 53 (39 female, 14 male) undergraduate college students. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 55 (M = 18.72, SD = 7.77). Five were freshman, 14 were sophomores, 16 were juniors, and 13 were seniors. Participants’ racial backgrounds included White/Caucasian (75%, n = 40), Hispanic (19%, n = 10), Black/African American (2%, n = 1), and other or non-specified ethnic identities (4%, n = 2).

Procedure

All participants were college students enrolled at a public university in Boise, Idaho. The results of this study were obtained from a questionnaire created for this study. Participants were given information about the questionnaire and chose to participate by accessing the questionnaire via a website link provided to them. After giving consent, participants completed demographic information followed by various scales used to measure (a) self-esteem, (b) parenting styles, (c) conflict management techniques, and (d) harsh discipline use. The questionnaire took an average of 35 minutes to complete.

Measures

Parental authority. The students’ perceived parenting style was assessed using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991). The PAQ was developed to measure Baumrind’s (1971) three parenting prototypes with 10 questions each, and it consists of 30 items per parent for a total of 60 items. Items are rated on a five-point likert scale (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree), where higher scores reflect greater amounts of parenting style. The PAQ produces authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative scores for each parent. Alpha levels for the three subscales include: authoritarian parenting for mother, α = .622, authoritarian parenting for father, α = .596, authoritative parenting for mother, α = .665, authoritative parenting for father, α = .634, permissive parenting for mother, α = .606 and permissive parenting for father, α = .657. A sample question regarding authoritarian parenting includes, “My mother felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.” A sample question for authoritative parenting includes, “As I was growing up my mother gave me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but she was also understanding when I disagreed with her.” A sample question for permissive parenting includes, “As I was growing up, my mother seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior.”

Adult-Recall Conflict Tactics Scale. The CTS2 is a revised version of the original Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979). Participants are instructed to respond to items assessing both their own behaviors and their parents’ behaviors over the past year. For the purpose of this study, participants were instructed to respond assessing their own and their parents’ behaviors during the year in which they were in eighth grade (approximately 13-14 years old). This change was made due to the participant pool which consisted of university students and many had most likely not lived with their parents for one or more years.

In this study, two of the five main subscales were used: Negotiation and Physical Assault. All subscales were further broken down into minor subscales which consisted of assessment of the mother’s behavior, of the self’s behavior toward their mother, of the father’s behavior, and of the self’s behavior toward their father. The CTS2 was scored on a scale of 0-7 (0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = twice…7 = did not occur this year but has occurred in the past) based on the frequency the behaviors occurred during that specific year. The alpha levels for the subscales include: negotiation mother, α = .659, negotiation father, α = .645, negotiation of self toward mother α = .604, negotiation of self toward father, α = .615, physical assault mother, α = .785, physical assault father, α = .762, physical assault of
self toward mother, $\alpha = .769$, physical assault of self toward father, $\alpha = .759$. A sample item from the CTS2 includes, “My mother showed me she cared about me even when we disagreed.”

**Harsh discipline.** Each individual completed a four-item Harsh Discipline Scale for each of their parents. The items were adapted from Straus et al. (1980) and asked the respondents to indicate how their mother (or father) interacted with them when they were the age of 13-14 years old. They answered statements such as “When you did something wrong, how often did your mother lose her temper and yell at you?” and indicated their level of agreement based off of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

**Self-esteem.** Students completed a measure of global self-esteem by answering the ten-item ‘Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.’ The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale requires respondents to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with 10 statements (e.g., “I take a positive attitude toward myself”) using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), (Rosenburg, 1965).

**Results**

To examine whether the use of harsh discipline significantly correlated with perceived parenting styles, the use of physical assault, and self-esteem, Pearson’s $r$ correlation was computed between the use of harsh discipline and parenting styles, the use of physical assault by mother, the use of harsh discipline and the use of physical assault by father, and between the use of harsh discipline and self-esteem. Table 1 represents the correlations found between harsh discipline and parenting styles. Table 2 represents the correlations found between harsh discipline and self-esteem, and the correlations found between harsh discipline and the use of physical aggression.

**Question-by-question analysis**

The first hypothesis was that the use of harsh discipline on an individual by their parent(s) has a positive relationship with the individual’s parent being authoritarian. When examining the relationship between harsh discipline using a correlation with the Parental Authority Questionnaire, the result was a positive correlation between the use of harsh discipline and having an authoritarian mother ($r = 0.45, p = 0.005$) and a positive correlation between the use of harsh discipline and having an authoritarian father ($r = 0.406, p = 0.011$).

The second hypothesis was that the use of negotiation between the parent(s) and the individual has a positive relationship with the individual’s parent being authoritative. When examining the relationship between negotiation using a correlation with the Parental Authority questionnaire, the result is a positive correlation between the use of negotiation and having an authoritative mother ($r = 0.73, p = <0.001$) and a positive correlation between the use of harsh discipline and having an authoritative father ($r = 0.66, p = <0.001$).

The third hypothesis was that the use of harsh discipline on an individual by their parent(s) has a negative relationship with an individual’s self-esteem score. When examining the relationship between harsh discipline using a correlation with Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale, the result was no correlation between the use of harsh discipline and an individual’s self-esteem score ($r = 0.23, p = 0.17$).

**Discussion**

Prior research on the use of harsh discipline has not specifically addressed the relationship between the parenting style of a child’s parent and the manner in which they solve conflicts in the home. It also has not addressed as to whether this relationship between child and parent is reciprocal. In the present study, reported parenting styles and the conflict-tactics they reported as being used in their home were analyzed to see whether there was a relationship between these variables and if perhaps the parenting-style influenced the conflict management technique being implemented.

In the present study, we found parents who implemented harsh discipline as a conflict-tactic were more likely to be reported as having an authoritarian parenting style. This was found to be true for both mother and father. It was also found that a parent who implemented negotiation as a conflict-tactic was very likely to be reported as having an authoritative parenting style. In regard to self-esteem, it was found that the use of harsh discipline did not have a significant effect on the current level of self-esteem reported by the individual.

Surprisingly, it was not only found that harsh discipline was associated with authoritarian parenting, but we also found a very strong positive relationship between having an authoritarian father and having an authoritative
mother. This held true for authoritative parenting as well. This is intriguing for future studies, which may want to further analyze why parents of the same child reported having similar parenting styles.

The aforementioned findings regarding parenting styles and the relationship parents have with their children may suggest that authoritarian parenting, which is noted for having reduced warmth in the relationship a parent has with their child, may lead to less empathetic methods of discipline. Parents may want to show they have control and using harsh discipline may be their way of demanding respect from the child. They may also demand compliance with the rules and using harsh discipline may be the only way they believe they will attain it. On the other hand, an authoritative parent, who notably has more warmth in their relationship with their child, may use more subtle techniques, such as negotiation, because of the type of relationship they have with their children.

The lack of a relationship between the use of harsh discipline and self-esteem was a surprising one, given that previous studies showed that the use of corporal punishment was linked to a wide variety of negative mental health outcomes, including internalizing characteristics such as lower self-esteem (Gershoff, 2002). An explanation for this could be that while corporal punishment is a form of harsh discipline, it does not encompass every type of harsh discipline used. Therefore, when a student reported their parent used harsh discipline, we cannot know if they used corporal punishment specifically or if perhaps mostly verbal punishment was used. We could also take note that maybe harsh discipline was not severe enough to cause damage to self-esteem and perhaps the student had built resilience due to other factors aside from their relationship with their parent.

A few limitations to our study include the variability of our participants. Our participant pool was not as varied culturally. Previous studies show that culture plays a large role into how children are disciplined and what those effects are to the child. Certain countries such as Jamaica do not discourage corporal punishment or harsh discipline at all; since harsh discipline is the accepted norm, the study shows that the effects of such discipline style are not very significant (Smith & Mosby, 2003). If there was more of a cultural variation, we would be able to have results which could apply to a more general population, rather than a select population which was represented by the present study.

Other limitations would include not having input from the parents. While participants were able to answer questions regarding memories they had from childhood, the accuracy of these memories may not be as reliable without the input from the parents. A child may not remember the events as they actually occurred or may have not judged the severity of the punishment accurately. A future study which could include participation from the parents would perhaps include more complete results.

Overall, the present study found that there are significant relationships between the type of conflict-tactics used by parents and their parenting style. This is important to know for future studies which could delve more specifically into why these relationships occur. Knowledge in areas of discipline and relationships between adults and children are of value to parents, educators, and caregivers so that they may be more educated as to what are the most effective methods of discipline to use on children in order to foster a healthy development.
### Table 1. Correlation Matrix for Study Variables: Discipline & Parenting Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Harsh Discipline Subscale</th>
<th>Negotiation Subscale for Mother</th>
<th>Negotiation Subscale for Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother Authoritarian</td>
<td>0.45**</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Authoritarian</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Permissive</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Permissive</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Authoritative</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.73**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Authoritative</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.66**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *p* < 0.05, **p* < 0.01, ***p* < 0.001

### Table 2. Correlation Matrix for Study Variables: Harsh Discipline, Physical Assault, Self-Esteem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Harsh Discipline Subscale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Assault by Mother</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Assault by Father</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem Subscale</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References


Factors in Academic Achievement: 
Correlations Between Clearly Expressed Expectations 
From a Figure of Authority, Academic Achievement, 
and Self-Concept

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Abstract

This study builds on knowledge of the interactions of teacher expectations, self-concept and academic achievement. Participants were Psychology students (N = 21) fourteen female, and seven male. Their age ranged from eighteen years old to forty-six years old. This was a matched paired, repeated measures design. Participants were given academic tests then matched into two equal groups. The treatment group was told they did exceptionally well, and that they were expected to do well again. The control group was not told anything about their previous performance or what was expected of them. Both groups were given similar tests as before. We hypothesized that the treatment group would show a greater improvement in part two of this study than the control group. The hypothesis was not supported, t (16.31) = 1.122, p = 1.36, n.s.. We also hypothesized that participants who scored higher on self-concept would have higher scores on the tests. This hypothesis was supported in some areas with various correlations.

Introduction

Over the last several decades there has been much research done on the topic of expectations, and how they relate to achievement. Much of this research has been focused specifically on teacher expectations, and how they may influence or interact with student academic achievement. Through this research many components of how teacher expectations relate to student academic achievement have been established. This topic really started to flourish among researchers after Rosenthal and Jacobson’s *Pygmalion in the Classroom (1968)* a now famous study, in which certain students were identified as “academic bloomers” to the teachers of first and second graders. The results of this experiment found that the students who had been identified as an “academic bloomer” to the teachers showed a significant “expectancy advantage” (Firestone & Brody, 1975).

A review of the field of expectation studies was compiled by Good and Nichols (2001). In this review, Good and Nichols (2001) referenced Elahoff & Snow, (1971) who warn that the original Rosenthal and Jacobson’s *Pygmalion in the Classroom* results were controversial because of various methodological problems. Still *Pygmalion in the classroom* has sparked further research, some of which have found similar findings to support the Pygmaliion theory (Firestone, G., & Brody, N. 1975). Negative Pygmalion effects have been seen too, the term for this is referred to as the Golem effect, named by Babad, Inbar, and Rosenthal (1982). Golem effects have not been widely studied, in large part because of ethical issues surrounding negative expectations (Reynolds, D., 2007).

Good and Nichols (2001) remind us that Weinstein and Middlestadt (1979) reported students were aware of teachers displaying different behavior towards different students and that “some teachers did not help low achievers with their seat work and often collect such work before students had a chance to complete it” (Good and Nichols, 2001, p.116). “It is interesting to note that in classrooms where status differential perceptions vary widely (on social and academic dimension), students are more likely to monitor their participation, whereas in contrast, when student differential is less notable (and expectations for classmates more even), participation by low achieving students increases.” (Good and Nichols, 2001, page 116).

Research on self-fulfilling prophecies and how they may fit into the equation of academic achievement and expectations has been researched as well. Jussim and Eccles recall that other researchers (Brophy & Good, 1974; Crano & Melon, 1977) have seen that students often live up to the expectations that have been made of them. There are still many more factors that play into the actual influence that can be made on academic achievement from
teacher expectations. For instance, some children are more vulnerable to being influenced by teacher expectations. Good and Nichols (2001) tell us that according to Johnson, (1970), people with personality traits such as being dependant, adult-orientated, and generally other-directed would be more vulnerable to expectation effects. Along with these traits, Good and Nichols (2001 tell us that Persell (1977), and West and Anderson (1976) found that being younger has been identified as another factor that has a role in expectations.

Some of the other factors that play a role in the interaction of teacher expectations and academic achievement have to deal with the natural expectations that teachers form, or more specifically how these expectations are formed and what they are based on. Gender has been studied by Jussim and Eccles (1992), and their findings suggest that gender has a significant influence on the perceptions that teachers form. In their study they found that girls were rated by their teachers as trying harder, and boys as having more ability in math. Consequently girls often receive higher grades in math because teachers want to reward them for their efforts. Teachers will also form expectations based on a student’s previous performance (Dusek & O’Connell, 1973).

Other researchers such as (Feldman, Saletsky, Sullivan, & Theiss, 1983) have looked at this issue of expectations from another angle, and that is that not only do teachers form expectations, but students do too. Their study looked at students’ locus of control, and found that internal students were more responsive to self-expectancies. Internally oriented students held more positive attitudes for teachers when given positive expectancies about teachers’ ability, than the negative group of internally oriented students. Students tended to view that teacher more positively when they had a more positive view of their own abilities. Students are often aware of teacher expectations and differential treatment and because of this students also mediate teacher expectations (Good & Nichols, 2001). It is interesting that because children have different orientations, how they interpret teacher expectations and then mediate those expectations can vary as well.

Many researchers that have joined in contributing to the understanding of teacher expectations have also found an interaction between teacher expectations and academic performance, regardless of whether these expectations were natural or induced. Certain behaviors both from teachers and students may play an intricate role in this relationship. This relates to what has been mentioned above in regards to students mediating teacher expectancies. Even the most subtle differences in teacher’s behavior towards different students can be noticed by the students (Rubie-Davies, 2006.) These could be as subtle as a different tone used, or different word emphasis, facial expressions, body language, etc. The interactions that are found within a classroom context, according to Hallinan (2008), feed off of each other, and play an important role in students’ attachment to their school, which in turn has an effect on the students’ perspective of the schooling experience, and ultimately on their academic achievement.

There have been researchers studying expectations that teachers have on a whole for their classes, rather than towards individual students (Rubie-Davies, 2006). The study that Rubie-Davies conducted found that the teacher expectancy effect was stronger from the teacher to the students, rather than from the students to the teacher. The study aimed to measure student self-perceptions, and to show that these student self-perception changed to be in line with teacher class centered expectations over one year. In this study 256 students were placed into one of three groups. One was a group that had teachers whose expectations had been in years past higher than their students actual achievement, the second group were teachers who were pretty much average with their students academic performance, and the third group were teachers who displayed having lower expectations for their students. Students were given self-perception scales at the beginning of the school year, and also at the end. While all three groups did not show a significant difference at the beginning of the year on their self-perception scales, by the end of the year there were significant differences. The high expectancy group and the average expectancy group increased in score, while the group of low-expectancy decreased over the course of the year. It was shown in this study too that the students had some level aware of the expectations that their teacher held.

Another interesting find from the work of Rubie-Davies that should be noted is that there was a correlation found between teachers’ expectations for their classes and the amount of teaching experience that teachers have. Teachers with the lowest expectancies also had the least amount of experience. What is it about more experience in teaching that may influence the expectations for classes? Is this something that can be transferred to new teachers from more experienced teachers? Perhaps more research as to why this may be should be conducted.

Research has shown repeatedly that students pick up on differential treatment that teachers give to high or low achievers and that even when teachers try to control for this differential treatment it still exists. It is interesting to think about teachers having high or low expectations for an entire class, rather than just towards the high or low achievers within a class (referring to the work that Rubie and Davies has done.) I believe an avenue that could lead to more of this disposition among teachers is a more extensive training to help ensure that all teachers will have equally high expectations for all of their students. In order for teachers to be able to teach as though they expect more from their students teachers need to actually believe that all of their students are capable of excelling in their academics, regardless of their gender, ability groups, economic status, race, or any other factor.
Some researchers contend that students are not challenged enough at school. In Masons’ study (1973); average achieving eighth grade students that would normally be in a general mathematics course were placed into a pre-algebra class that would normally have high achievers. It was predicted that these students that were integrated into an advanced class under a program of higher expectations, monitoring of progress, and active teaching, would both achieve more than peers that had not been placed in the more advanced class and that in the future these students would enroll in more advanced classes. The results indicate a successful integration of these students. This study does have some cautions to consider. This study was part of a single school’s effort to improve academic performance, the principal was involved, and was fully aware of the hypothesis, and knew the students well, so there may have been some biases involved.

The proposed study aims to look at a few of the different factors such as age, gender, perceived economic status, birth order, ethnicity, parents educational level, and self-reported self-concept into a measurable form to further examine the relationship of academic achievement, and expectations that an authoritative figure, such as a teacher, verbally expresses to students. More specifically this project seeks to determine by how much a student’s academic achievement can be influenced by an authoritative figure’s expressed expectations, and what the role of a student’s self-concept and other factors such as their parent’s educational level are during this interaction. We hypothesize that participants who were told they performed exceptionally well would show a greater improvement in part two of this study than the participants in the control group.

**Method**

**Participants**

While 131 students participated in the first session of this study, a total of 21 students completed both sessions and only their data were included in the analyses. All participants were Psychology 101 students at Boise State University and received course credit for their participation in this study. There were 14 (66.7%) female and 7 (33.3%) male participants, age ranged from 18-46, M= 27.9, (SD= 10.17). There were 11 freshmen, 6 sophomores, 2 juniors, and 2 seniors. Of the participants that responded on their ethnicity, most (17; 94.4%) participants identifying themselves as European American and the remaining (1; 5.6%) identified themselves as being Asian American.

When asked about their families’ economic class was for most of their growing up 8; 38.1% reported middle class, 7; 33.3% reported lower-middle class, 5; 23.8% reported upper-middle class, and 1 ;4.8% reported upper class. When asked their placement in their families 10; 47.6% of participants responded that they were a middle child, There were equal responses from participants 5; 23.8%’ for each choice of oldest child and youngest child, and the remaining 1; 4.8% participant reported being an only child. 11; 52.4% of the participants reported their fathers highest level of education as being a bachelors, 4; 19% reporting their fathers’ highest level of education was high school and the same amount (4; 19% ) reported some college. 1; 4.8 % of participants reported their fathers’ highest level of education as being a masters and the same amount (1; 4.8 %) of participants reported doctorates.

When asked about their mothers’ highest level of education there was an equal amount of participants (6; 28.6%) that responded with high school and bachelors. There was also an equal amount of participants (3; 14.3%) that responded with their mothers’ highest level of education as being a masters and some college, 2; 9.5% reported their mothers as having an associates, and 1 participant (4.8%) reported their mothers’ level of education as below high school.

**Materials**

Two short academic tests that were developed for this study using eighth-grade level text books and seventh and eighth grade level sample test questions released from California standards tests found online were used in this study The questions on the tests covered areas such as sentence structure, spelling, and identifying grammatical errors, and included science reasoning, percentages, ratios, algebraic problems, and measurement conversions for the math and science questions. These questions were presented to participants in the form of a paper packet. Demographic information was obtained through a self-created questionnaire. This study also asked questions related to the students’ self-concept using a short self created questionnaire. A projecting device was used for the word-task words to be displayed to the students.
Design and procedures

This was a matched paired, repeated measures design. Participants were matched primarily on test scores obtained during study and were matched secondarily based on demographic information obtained during this study. Data was analyzed using the SPSS software program.

During session one of this study, participants were shown thirty words on a screen for thirty seconds, they then had thirty more seconds to recall as many as they could. Next participants had twelve minutes to complete an academic test. Lastly, participants were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire to complete the first session.

After the first session took place, participants were divided into two groups matched based on information gained from the first session. Approximately one week after the first study took place; participants were invited back for the second session. The second session was held separately for each group.

During the second session participants completed another word memorization task, and completed another academic test. The format and difficulty level, and amount of time allotted for both of these tasks were consistent with the first session. Instead of a demographic questionnaire there is a short questionnaire asking questions related to self-concept.

Treatment was administered to one of the groups prior to beginning session two, and consisted of what was said to the participants. The treatment group was told that they performed extremely well, much better than the other group of participants and that they are expected to perform well again. The control group is told that they are here to perform similar tasks, and see what the results are. The instructions and verbalized expectations given to the control group are left rather ambiguous and vague. All participants are debriefed after each session; it is however, only at the end of the second session when all is told regarding the nature of this study.

Results

Independent sample t-tests were ran to show the difference of scores of the first session from the second session between the two groups. The hypothesis that participants who were told they performed exceptionally well would show a greater improvement in part two of this study than the participants in the control group was not supported. Numerous correlations were found with the information obtained in this study.

There was a correlation between how participants responded to the statement “I prefer activities or school work that are somewhat difficult or challenging” and how participants responded to the statement “I tend to attribute my success to ability and my failures to lack of effort or bad luck,” $r(19) = .48, p < .05$. The correlation between how participants responded to the statement of “I prefer activities or school work that are somewhat difficult or challenging” and how well the participants performed on the science section in session two was significant, $r(19) = .66, p < .01$.

The correlation between how participants responded to the statement “I tend to set realistic, reachable goals thereby making success more possible” and how participants performed on the memorization task in the second session was significant, $r(19) = .53, p < .005$. The correlation between how participants responded to the statement “I tend to set realistic, reachable goals thereby making success more possible” and how participants performed on the memorization task in the first session was significant, $r(19) = .49, p < .005$. The correlation between how participants responded to the statement “I tend to attribute my success to ability and my failures to lack of effort or bad luck” and how participants performed on the memorization task in the first session was significant, $r(19) = .46, p < .005$.

The correlation between the mothers’ level of education and how participants performed on the math section in session one was significant, $r(19) = .56, p < .001$. There was a significant correlation between the mothers’ level of education and how participants performed on the reading section of session one, $r(19) = .54, p < .005$. The correlation between how participants performed on the science portion in session two and the mothers’ level of education was significant, $r(19) = .52, p < .005$.

There was a negative correlation of significance between “I am persistent, I usually finish what I start” and how participants performed on the sentences in the first session, $r(19) = -.51, p < .05$. There was a negative correlation between how participants performed on the sentences in the first session and how participants responded to the statement “I take school work seriously and strive to do well,” $r(19) = -.49, p < .05$. 
Discussion

While numerous studies have examined the role of self-concept, and expectations, this particular study is unique in that this is done over only two meetings. While results were not statistically significant for what we were seeking, there are still findings worth consideration. The correlations found between the participants mothers’ highest level of education and how the participants performed on the math and reading for the first session and with science on the second session is worth noting. This is interesting because the mothers’ and fathers’ education level were correlated, while the fathers’ education level does not appear to be correlated with any of the academic tasks. Is this because mothers typically spend more time with their children than do fathers?

Limitations

Because interactions between the authoritative figure and the students were very limited, it is not advisable that any findings from this study be applied to a broader context, such as one that includes a teacher who has far more interactions with students. Also, participants used in this study were drawn from a convenience sample consisting of undergraduate psychology students at one school in Boise Idaho; therefore findings may not be generalized to a wider population.

It should be noted that the materials used in this study were designed solely for use in this study. They have not been used previously, and therefore the validity of these measures has not been determined. With the attrition rate so high between sessions, it is advised that this study be conducted in one session.

Despite the limitations, this study contributes to the existing knowledge on expectations and how they and the demographic information obtained in this study relate to academic achievement. The design of this study is unique in that the experimenter is not an actual teacher, nor do the student’s and the experimenter share a relationship outside of this hour long study. This design could be used as a basis for future studies that want to explore the extent to which expectations influence academic performance. This study is important because it provides not only a good example for future study set-ups, but it also has met its aim to lessen the gap between the unknown and known factors and sensitivity of how teacher expectations can influence student academic performance.

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References

Native American Mascots:
A Quantitative and Qualitative Study
of Students’ Acceptability Perceptions of Native Mascots
Versus Theoretical Use of Other Ethnic Groups’
Iconology by Sports Teams

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Abstract

United States’ sports teams have made use of the faces, cultures and traditions of the indigenous people of our
country for many years. Despite the perception that many Native Americans feel this practice is racist and/or
insulting, it continues. This study helps further analyze perceptions that lead to the acceptability by the public of
continued use of Native American iconology by sports teams for their logos, names, nicknames and mascots.
Students report that the use of such iconology is a compliment to Native Americans, whereas it is an insult to other
ethnic groups when represented in the same manner.

The use of Native American culture, tradition, and beliefs in the form of sports team names, mascots, logos
and nicknames (hereinafter referred to as “Native iconology”) can be construed as evidence of continuing racism
against this ethnic group. Seemingly a matter of little import to the majority of society, there are those who view the
racism involved and the unwillingness to correct it as indicative of the fact that Western Euro-American culture does
not understand the impact Native iconology use can have on Native peoples in the United States (E. Duran & B.
Duran, 1976). In the United States, there are approximately five professional sports teams and approximately 35
college sports teams using Native iconology in football, baseball, and hockey (American Indian Sports Team
Mascots; AISTM.org, 2009). Yet sports teams do not utilize mascots or team names representing other minority
races (e.g., African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian). Why does American society seem to feel it is
acceptable, even complimentary to use Native American iconology but not iconology of other minority races? This
raises the question: is the use of terms and images relating to Native American culture and traditions for sports team
names, nicknames, mascots and logos an accolade or an insult?

There is considerable research on the use of Native iconology by sports teams. Generally speaking, the
overall message is perceived acceptance of Native iconology use. Native American participants in these studies,
however, consider the use of their cultural and traditional iconology by sports teams to be insulting and racist
(Williams, 2007).

It has been argued that Native American mascots actually teach about race, culture, and history. These
arguments assert that Native American mascots like Chief Illiniwek of the University of Illinois are quite literally
teaching machines that educate, or as some would say ‘miseducate’ (Pewewardy, 1991), the public about cultural
differences, history, race relations and what it means to be a citizen-subject (King, 2008). Native iconology is
considered by many as “…stereotypical and racist images that relegate [Native American] people to a colonial
representation history…” (Pewewardy, 2004). This definition would suggest the use of Native iconology by sports
teams is not a positive teaching medium. The use of Native iconology teaches the fallacy that the culture and
traditions of the indigenous people of this continent is a dead culture (Pewewardy, 2004).

A potential factor affecting the study of Native iconology use by sports teams may be the comparatively
low population of Native American students in United States universities, where a great many of such studies are
conducted. Consider, for example, Boise State University, the site of this study. The university has over 20,000
students. There were approximately 11 new Native American students on campus starting fall 2008; only 1.2% of
new students (Boise State University Enrollment Services, 2008). In reviewing the same statistical data between
2006 and 2008, Native student population ranged between one percent and 2.5 percent. This being the case, the
proportion of Native American students at Boise State University is quite small. Such statistics minimize the power
of any study whose aim is to bring to light the issues of Native iconology use acceptance. Native students, the affected population, simply do not have the numbers necessary to lend power as survey participants. This, paired with the idea that Caucasians, the dominant ethnic segment of many university populations, are prone to be less concerned with issues that do not directly affect them (Williams, 2007), traditional forms of study do little to further the cause of elimination of the use of Native American mascots.

Universities tend to emphasize their cultural diversity while research indicates otherwise (Pewewardy, 2004). The term “ethnic fraud” has been used with regard to higher education (Castagno & Lee, 2007). Assertions are made that universities only do the bare minimum to appear to embrace cultural diversity for the sole purpose of attracting students and therefore funds (Castagno & Lee, 2007).

Interestingly, in Williams’ study, not only did the Native American student population strongly oppose the “Fighting Sioux” nickname at their university (Midwestern University), women of all ethnicities were more inclined to feel it was insulting and racist, whereas men of all ethnicities other than Native American tended to feel the use of the “Fighting Sioux” name was not an insult. They did not indicate that it was an accolade, but did not feel strongly enough to indicate it should be changed (Williams, 2007).

There must be some validity to the argument for eliminating the use of Native iconology for sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos, as roughly 600 schools have made the change in recent years (Castagno, 2007). Still, five professional sports teams and countless schools in the United States continue to use Native American terms for their sports teams, flatly refusing to make any changes, citing loss of revenue, loss of alumni and loss of part of the institution’s identity and that it would be incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to get the public to accept such change as reasons (Wolburg, 2006). Despite these arguments, proponents of these changes argue that it can be done quite successfully (Wolburg, 2006).

Perhaps the real issue at hand is lack of knowledge by the majority of the population of the United States. Although many non-natives view the issue as one of “political correctness,” many Native Americans and their supporters view it as blatant racism, promoting harmful stereotypes. Add the fact that the arena in which purported racism is performed is part of professional and collegiate sports is a highly visible venue (Wolburg, 2006), and for those who view the issue as racism and the promotion of harmful stereotypes, the issue becomes an urgent one.

Boise State University is in an interesting position geographically, being within reasonable distance of many reservations such as Fort Hall and Duck Valley, and therefore the potential exists for a reasonably high Native American student population. However, as previously mentioned, the Native American student population remains relatively low. Boise State University is a predominately Caucasian school with no Native American mascot or logo. This study seeks to see how students at Boise State University respond to this issue, as it is hard to avoid the existence of Native Americans in Idaho, a sparsely populated state with several reservations either within its boundaries or very near them. How do students at Boise State University feel about the use of Native iconology by sports teams? Will the proximity of so many reservations, and the evolution of knowledge about racism show that students, even those unaffected by the issue, believe it should be changed?

Hypotheses and Rationale

Rationale

It is believed that Boise State University has not been the subject of a study of this issue. The rationale behind using this population is to see if the proximity of so many reservations has an impact on study results. It also provides an opportunity to conduct qualitative analysis of a population similar to those of other studies that used a strictly quantitative approach. This study includes a qualitative dimension using the phenomenological model. It is hoped that giving respondents the opportunity to answer “why or why not?” in connection to “yes or no” answers to questions will provide, through structural and textural analysis and development of thematic content deeper insight. It is hoped this approach will serve two purposes: one, to see if this population’s responses align with responses to other, similar studies, and second, to gain a glimpse into participants’ rationale for their choices.

Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that participants in this study will not feel that the use of Native iconology for sports teams is racist, insulting or demeaning to Native American peoples.
It is also hypothesized that participants will consider the use of iconology of other ethnic groups (African American, Asian, Caucasian and Hispanic) to be equally racist, insulting and demeaning to those peoples as it is to Native American peoples.

Lastly, it is hypothesized that non-Caucasian participants will feel more strongly than Caucasian participants that the use of racial and ethnic names, nicknames, terms and iconology by sports teams in the United States is racist, insulting and demeaning.

Method

Participants

The study consisted of 322 students enrolled in an Introduction to Psychology course at a large state university in the Rocky Mountain region. For the study, participants’ average age was 20.89 ($SD = 5.447$). The youngest participant was 18 years of age and the oldest was 55 years of age. With regard to gender, 40.1% were male and 59.6% were female.

The participants could elect to complete a survey as part of their Psychology 101 class and were given class credit.

Materials

The study consisted of a survey consisting of a set of questions asking primarily whether they would consider various sport team names to be racist, insulting and demeaning. Five primary ethnic groups found in the United States were represented in each question as follows: Washington Niggers (to represent African Americans), Washington Chinks (to represent Asians), Washington Honkeys (to represent Caucasians) Washington Wetbacks (to represent Hispanics) and Washington Redskins (to represent Native Americans). Directly following each “yes or no” question was an open block where participants were asked to indicate “why or why not?” with regard to their answer to the question. Participants were also asked if there were any Native American reservations within a five-hour drive of Boise, Idaho, and if so, they were asked to list the ones they knew of. Finally, a short portion of the Attitudes Toward American Indians (“ATAI”) survey (Tehee, M., 2007), comprised the final part of the survey. It is unknown whether the survey questions have been used in prior surveys, with the exception of the questions obtained from the ATAI. Please see Appendix 1 for questions asked in the survey. The survey questions, except those from the ATAI, were developed by the author, and were based upon literature review and personal knowledge. The materials were pilot tested by the author and two others on a small sample $n = 77$ of participants who were students at Boise State University and enrolled in an Introduction to Psychology course. Participants signed up to take the survey using the web-based program Experimetrix and took the survey online through Qualtrics. These participants were given class credit for their participation.

Procedure

Participants completed the survey independently by signing up on Experimetrix then completed the survey independently via Qualtrics. Participants were allowed 60 minutes to complete the survey and were debriefed.

Results

Though both quantitative and qualitative questions were asked concerning all ethnic groups were asked, quantitative analysis was applied to all questions and qualitative analysis was limited to Native specific questions.

The expected outcome was that participants in this study would not feel that the use of Native iconology for sports teams is racist, insulting or demeaning to Native American peoples.

It was also expected that participants would consider sports team use of iconology of other ethnic groups (African American, Asian, Caucasian and Hispanic) to be equally racist, insulting and demeaning when compared to Native iconology use.

Lastly, it was expected that a higher percentage of non-Caucasian participants would feel that the use of racial and ethnic names, nicknames, terms and iconology by sports teams in the United States is racist, insulting and demeaning. In response to the question “Are there any Native American reservations within a five-hour drive of Boise State University, 55.9% answered “yes,” 42.2% answered “no,” and 1.9% did not respond. These numbers
remained relatively consistent throughout all the questions relating to Native Americans. Qualitative analysis of these questions showed a lack of accuracy from those who responded “yes.” The large number of negative responses could indicate either that respondents did not know of the existence of Native reservations in the area or were caught up on the “five-hour drive” aspect of the question. Some respondents named tribes rather than reservation names and there were some respondents who obviously were knowledgeable about reservations in the area as they were very specific in their responses.

In response to the question “Please indicate whether you feel the following team names are racist or insulting (select all that apply),” 87% indicated “yes” in response to “Washington Chinks,” 71% indicated “yes” in response to “Washington Honkeys,” 93.8% indicated “yes” to “Washington Niggers,” 54.3% indicated “yes” in response to “Washington Redskins” and 85.1% indicated “yes” to “Washington Wetbacks.” Qualitative analysis of responses to “Washington Redskins” indicated a seeming acceptance of the term Redskins. Reasons cited included: “…because it has been in use for so long.” Qualitative responses gave an overall impression that desensitization and loss of meaning of the term has allowed social acceptability. Though following that line of reasoning, many indicated they would not be happy being called a Washington “paleface,” for example, “…just because [they] have a different shade to [their] skin.”

Structural analysis indicated that, because it’s a pre-existing term, Redskin seems better accepted than other options for other groups. Participants for the most part did not seem to know what “Redskin” actually means—they think it is a reference to skin color. Once paired with other potential team names, some participants took a second look at Redskin and felt it was derogatory. Only one participant explained the accurate meaning of the term ‘Redskin’ out of 300 surveys. One response often repeated in support of Washington Redskins was that it is already in existence, and for many participants this led to the feeling that the term was not derogatory. Indicative were responses similar to “if there was something wrong with it [Washington Redskins], something would have been done about it by now.” A small number of participants mentioned they were either part Native or knew a Native who did not have a problem with the term. They felt this information established that the team name was complimentary. Still others felt that Native people should be proud and feel “honored” by Native iconology use. Interestingly, when faced with “Washington Redkins” in context with other ethnically derived names provided some interesting results, including: “Looking at all the names above seem so racist; after viewing all of them this name seems very racist as well and I can see how this would upset Native Americans” and “It upsets me to just hear the word “chink” so to have a person’s heritage being negatively portrayed as a team name can be very upsetting.”

In response to the question “Do you believe naming sports teams after Native American terms that relate to Native American culture and traditions to be offensive? (Yes or No)” Qualitatively, the responses were interesting. Examples of those who responded “yes” included: “You are singling out a group based on the color of their skin.” “The Redskins yes—it is a racial slur. The Chiefs-no. That’s a noun like Viking, samurai, etc.” Perhaps even more interesting was the response that: “The terms that are used for naming sports teams are traditionally seen as offensive. If a team is named the “Washington Blackfeet” and they show an accurate depiction of an authentic Blackfoot Indian, it is not offensive. If they name a team the “Washington Savages” and their logo depicts any Indian, it is offensive.” “They usually use terms like “brave” or “squaw” “It would offend me.” More generally, responses were similar to general responses such as: “rude,” “derogatory,” and “it just is [offensive]”

Those who responded “no” to these questions gave explanations as follows: “It would only be offensive if it was derogatory” and “No matter what race, we all took their land and culture.” “It is an honor”

In asking respondents if they felt Native Americans should be offended by the use of terms relating to their culture and traditions being used as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos? The answers were as follows: “No: Naming in this way honors Native people” and “Redskins is racist but “Chiefs” or “Medicine Men” not as offensive.” And “I think they should be privileged that they want their culture to represent them.”

In response to the question “Do you feel ethnic groups (e.g., Latino, Asian, Caucasian, Native American and African American) should be represented in sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos? For example, the Washington Niggers, Chinks, Honkys, Redskins or Wetbacks.” The overall theme was affirmative if the proposed name sounded “tough” or cool” and many “no” responses mentions that the exact survey terms (except Redskins) were inappropriate, but that there were ethnically based alternatives that would be acceptable.

There was insufficient variation in ethnicity among the participants to report any data on the significance or lack thereof of ethnicity in relation to the survey questions.
Discussion

Desensitization and familiarity seem to be prevailing themes with regard to survey responses. For example, in one response:

If someone named a team like that they would have some sort of racist intention and that is not ok. No one has ever named any team anything like that except the Washington Redskins, who I grew up with and because they’ve been a team for so long I am completely desensitized to anything sinister behind the name. This is obviously examining how we feel about the Redskins being a pro-football team, and if you are out to persuade them to change, I support you. My opinion is widespread, do you think any team name chink, niggers, honkys, or wetbacks would still be around in today’s society, absolutely not, it would have been changed a long time ago. So why are the Redskins still around? I think it’s because they have virtually no representation and are the smallest culture out there. To me saying Redskin is just referring to a Native American, just like chief (i.e. Kansas City Chiefs), warrior (Meridian warriors), or Indian (Cleveland Indians).

In general, there seemed to be two prevailing themes that came out of survey responses: one, that the use of Native iconology for sports team names is acceptable because it has been going on for a long time and secondly that study participants’ opinions were tempered by de-sensitization and lack of information. While reacting strongly to all other ethnic group iconology use, Native iconology use seemed to be acceptable and non-discriminatory; though there were a few participants that commented that once seen in the light of the survey they could understand how it would be inappropriate.

Another pervasive theme was that if Native people objected to the use of their iconology for sports teams, something would have “been done about it by now.” This leads to a question of whether or not formative education is lending equal credence to all ethnic groups. As the results breakdown suggests, the least offensive was the use of Native iconology, the second least offensive was Caucasian iconography and the remaining ethnic groups trailed far behind in perceived acceptability.

Conclusion

Though this study provided similar data to other studies (Castagno & Lee, 2007; Williams, 2007; Wolburg, 2006), one point of interest is that the results showed participants felt representing Native Americans and their culture, traditions and beliefs in the form of sports team names, mascots, logos and nicknames was overall neither racist nor an insult. However, participants did not feel that other ethnicities should be represented in the form of sports team names, mascots, logos and nicknames.

Expected outcomes from this study included that Boise State University students would not feel the use of Native American iconology by sports teams was equally racist, insulting and demeaning as the use of other ethnic groups’ iconology. This held to be true. However, what was surprising that only 54% of participants felt the use of Native iconology use by sports teams to be racist, insulting or demeaning, while 85% of participants felt the use of other ethnic groups’ iconology (aside from Caucasian) was unacceptable. Equally surprisingly, the participant pool, 85% of which were Caucasian, rated the acceptability of Caucasian iconology use by sports teams at 26%, roughly in between Native Americans and other ethnic groups. This contradicts other studies that have been done (Williams, 2007). Participants at Boise State University actually disagreed that the use of such Native iconology was racist and insulting to Native Americans. Other studies (e.g., Williams, 2007) indicated that while participants thought it was racist and/or insulting, participants did not feel there was any urgent need to change anything. This study went one step further, with participants indicating that they did not feel the use of Native American iconology was racist and insulting; rather, a number of participants actually stated that such use “is a compliment to Native Americans.” In other studies, though participants did not generally indicate that this practice should change, they did not indicate that they felt it was a compliment (Wolburg, 2006). “Native Americans are justified in feeling insulted by the use of Native American terms (for example, Indians, Redskins, Braves, Tomahawk Chop).”

Since only 15% of participants in the study identify as non-Caucasian and was allowed to cross-identify, there was no way to measure whether other minority ethnicities would feel more strongly that change with regard to the use of Native American terms in relation to sports teams was necessary.

This study, as opposed to others, would point toward favorable acceptance of the use of Native American mascots, team names, logos and nicknames, as opposed to other studies which, while not necessarily indicating
elimination of the use of Native iconology is needed, do tend toward thinking the use of Native mascots, team names, logos and nicknames to be generally unacceptable. One speculation is that the location of Boise State University, in a relatively sparsely populated state that is politically conservative and predominately Caucasian, had an impact on the results. Another possibility is a lack in formative education; perhaps pre-college curricula does not teach enough about Native Americans for individuals to have an understanding of the importance of the Native American terms and symbols that are being used as sports team names, nicknames, logos and mascots. Could it be that the relatively close proximity in and around Idaho of several Native American reservations has a negative impact on the way Native Americans are viewed? If that were the case, there is a possibility that may impact opinions about the use of Native American terms and images for sports team logos, names, nicknames and mascots.

Further study into the question of why it is not deemed racist or an insult to use Native American terms with regard to sports teams could be conducted. It could be informative to delve further into the reasons why participants in this study felt that it was acceptable to use Native American terms in relation to sports teams but not acceptable to use terms related to other ethnicities in the same manner. The fact that participants were split on whether Native Americans were justified in feeling insulted by the use of Native American terms for sports team names, nicknames, logos and mascots does not seem to fit in with participants feeling that the use of Native terms for sports teams is a compliment.

The most interesting of the findings in this study were the high percentage of participants that felt that the use of Native American terms and images for sports team names, nicknames, logos and mascots was a compliment to Native Americans. This point is interesting because although a higher percentage of participants responded in this way, participants also felt that other ethnicities should not be represented in sports team names, nicknames, logos and mascots. This study upheld the general idea that the issue is not important enough to change. Overall, this study serves to show that in some ways attitudes at Boise State University line up with attitudes of students at other universities. It also raises an interesting question about why participants at Boise State University, while overall considering the use of Native American terms for sports team names, logos, nicknames and mascots to be a compliment, do not feel other ethnicities should be represented in a similar manner by sports teams for names, nicknames, logos and mascots. Almost equally interesting is the doubled rate of acceptability for the use of Caucasian iconology for sports teams. Further study into this area, possibly looking at formative education might shed light on this.

References


Appendix I

Native American Mascots: Insult or Accolade?

Please complete the following questionnaire as accurately as possible. We approximate that this survey will take 20-30 minutes to complete. Response to this survey is entirely voluntary and responses are anonymous and confidential. If, at anytime, you wish to stop taking this survey, feel free to do so. If you do not wish to complete a question, you may leave it blank.

For this research project, we are requesting demographic information. Due to the make-up of Idaho’s population, the combined answers to these questions may make an individual person identifiable. We will make every effort to protect participants’ confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may leave them blank.

Some of the questions within this survey might have touched on sensitive issues for you. Please, if you have any concerns about any of the questions asked, please speak to someone. Boise State University provides counseling services to all enrolled students (the first session is free). The Counseling Center is located in Taylor Hall, B103 and their telephone number is (208) 426-1601. If we have raised any issues or concerns, please be sure to speak to someone.

Definitions:

Mascot: a figure, representative of a team, that performs at games usually along the sidelines and during half time at games. They are often people dressed in costume.

Logo: a picture, design or other graphic item that is put on signs, uniforms and merchandise and are part of the “branding” of a team

Nickname: a team name, what a team is known by. For example, “The Sox” or “The Bears”

Sports Team Name: a “proper” name for a sports team. For example, the Chicago Red Sox or the Chicago Bears are “proper” team names.

First Nations Peoples: are indigenous people of North America whose tribal lands and homes are in Canada rather than the United States. They are essentially the Canadian equivalent of Native Americans in the United States.

1. What is your age in years?
2. What is your gender? (Select one: Male Female)
3. What is your year in school? (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior)
4. What is your ethnicity? (Select all that apply)
   a. African American
   b. Asian
   c. Alaskan/Native American/First Nations Peoples
   d. Caucasian
   e. Hispanic/Latino
   f. Pacific Islander
5. Do you consider yourself a native of Idaho? (Have you lived most or all of your life in Idaho?) (Yes or No)
6. What City and State did you grow up in?
7. Are there any Native American reservations within a five-hour drive of Boise State University? (Yes or No)

8. If you answered Yes to number 7 above, please name as many Native American reservations within a five hour drive of Boise as you are able.

9. Would you consider yourself a fan of college sports? (Yes or No)

10. Would you consider yourself a fan of professional sports? (Yes or No)

11. Do you believe naming sports teams (e.g., Washington Chinks) after Asian American terms relating to their culture and traditions is a compliment to Asian Americans? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or Why not?

12. Do you believe naming sports teams (e.g., Washington Honkys) after Anglo American terms relating to their culture and traditions is a compliment to Anglo Americans? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or Why not?

13. Do you believe naming sports teams (e.g., Washington Wetbacks) after Latino terms relating to their culture and traditions is a compliment to Latinos? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or Why not?

14. Do you believe naming sports teams (e.g., Washington Niggers) after African American terms relating to their culture and traditions is a compliment to African Americans? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or Why not?

15. Do you believe naming sports teams (e.g., Washington Redskins) after Native American terms relating to their culture and traditions is a compliment to Native Americans? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or Why not?

16. Do you believe naming sports teams after African American terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

17. Do you believe naming sports teams after Anglo American terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

18. Do you believe naming sports teams after Asian American terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

19. Do you believe naming sports teams after Latino terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

20. Do you believe naming sports teams after Native American terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

21. Do you believe naming sports teams after African American terms that relate to African American culture and traditions to be offensive? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?
22. Do you believe naming sports teams after Anglo American terms that relate to Anglo American culture and traditions to be offensive? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

23. Do you believe naming sports teams after Asian American terms that relate to Asian American culture and traditions to be offensive? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

24. Do you believe naming sports teams after Latino terms that relate to Latino culture and traditions to be offensive? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

25. Do you believe naming sports teams after Native American terms that relate to Native American culture and traditions to be offensive? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

26. Do you believe African Americans should be offended by the use of terms relating to their culture and traditions being used as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

27. Do you believe Anglo Americans should be offended by the use of terms relating to their culture and traditions being used as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

28. Do you believe Asian Americans should be offended by the use of terms relating to their culture and traditions being used as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

29. Do you believe Latinos should be offended by the use of terms relating to their culture and traditions being used as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

30. Do you believe Native Americans should be offended by the use of terms relating to their culture and traditions being used as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

31. Do you feel ethnic groups (e.g., Latino, Asian, Caucasian, Native American and African American) should be represented in sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos? For example, the Washington Niggers, Chinks, Honkys, Redskins or Wetbacks. (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

32. Please indicate whether you feel the following team names are racist or insulting.
   a. Washington Chinks
   b. Washington Honkys
   c. Washington Niggers
   d. Washington Redskins
   e. Washington Wetbacks

33. Do you believe that African Americans feel that the use of African American terms relating to their culture and traditions as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos is insulting or racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

34. Do you believe that Anglo Americans feel that the use of Anglo American terms relating to their culture and traditions as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos is insulting or racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?
35. Do you believe that Asian Americans feel that the use of Asian American terms relating to their culture and traditions as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos is insulting or racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

36. Do you believe that Asian Americans feel that the use of Asian American terms relating to their culture and traditions as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos is insulting or racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

37. Do you believe that Native Americans feel that the use of Native American terms relating to their culture and traditions as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos is insulting or racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

38. Do you believe naming sports teams after African American terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

39. Do you believe naming sports teams after Asian American terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

40. Do you believe naming sports teams after Anglo American terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

41. Do you believe naming sports teams after Latino terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

42. Why or why not? Do you believe naming sports teams after Native American terms relating to their culture and traditions to be racist? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

43. Do you believe that Native Americans are justified in feeling that the use of Native American terms relating to their culture and traditions as sports teams’ names, nicknames, mascots and logos is racist and insulting? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

44. Do you believe that Native Americans should stop being insulted and feeling prejudiced against because First Nations people (the Canadian equivalent of Native Americans) sometimes use Native names, nicknames, logos and mascots for their sports teams? (Yes or No)
   a. Why or why not?

45. Native Americans won’t work even when jobs are available.

46. Native Americans have too many children.

47. As a whole, Native Americans are drunk more than they are sober.

48. There seems to be little hope for progress for the Native American.

49. I think Native Americans are often alcoholics.

50. Native Americans seem to have looser morals than European Americans.

51. As a whole, Native Americans are more likely to steal or cheat than any other group.
52. It seems that Native Americans would rather be on welfare than work.
53. Native Americans spend what money they have very foolishly.
54. It is fair that Native Americans do not have to follow all the same laws as everyone else.
55. I support programs that help Native Americans get jobs.*
56. Native Americans have lost their land and had it stolen from them.*
57. Natural resources found on Native American land should belong only to the Native Americans.
58. Native Americans should be able to have reservations or free areas of land to live on.*
59. I believe Native Americans should have free tutors or assistance in school.*
60. The federal government has a responsibility to provide for Native Americans.
61. People should try harder to understand the Native American way of life.
62. I think Native Americans are discriminated against.*

* Indicates Items from Willis Esqueda (2005)
Sexting and Sexual Relationships Among Teens and Young Adults

Lori Henderson: McNair Scholar
Dr. Elizabeth Morgan: Mentor

Psychology

Abstract

The present study examined young adult participation in sexting: a transmission of nude or semi-nude images or sexually suggestive text of themselves to others through cell phones. An online survey was conducted Spring 2010 at a large northwest university. Results revealed that nearly two thirds of participants had sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves. Cell phones were reported as the primary medium in transmission of sext messages. Nearly half of those who have participated in sexting had sent them to a boyfriend or girlfriend, while 15% sent them to someone they only knew online. To be sexy or to initiate sexual intercourse was the main reason given for sending sext messages. There were significant differences found between those who have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves and those who have not. The total number of sexual intercourse partners and number of oral sex (performed) partners appear to be higher among those who have sent sext messages. Given the lack of scientific research on this topic, current and future research will allow educators, parents and communities to make choices that are more informed in regards to sexting and to understand the ever-changing advances that technology and evolution has on society.

Introduction

Teen and young adult sexuality represents an area that is often a topic of interest to parents, educators and researchers (Hamil & Chepko, 2005). Interest is largely due to the potential negative consequences (e.g., unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases) associated with sexual activity in the teen and young adult years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000). In addition, research indicates that the prevalence of teens having sexual intercourse increases as they increase in age (Cubbin, Santelli, Braveman, et al., 2005). Similarly, a new topic of interest involves sexting, a new technological communication trend that distributes nude, semi nude or sexually suggestive text messages through electronic messaging (i.e., cell phones) (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Sexuality is a core topic among teens therefore, in an era of technological advancements teens who desire sexual exploration may do so through the convenience of electronic handheld devices (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, et al., 2010; Lenhart, et. al., 2008; Weinstein & Rosen, 1991). In addition, any number of problems can result from posting electronic images including increased risk of cyberbullying, damage to reputation, or criminal charges that require teens and young adults to register as sex offenders (Ybarra, Mitchell, Finkelhor, et al., 2007; Manzo, 2009).

The topic of sexting has become a national issue as American teens and young adults are increasingly engaging in this behavior (Contemporary Sexuality, 2009). In an era of social networking and technological change, the youth of America are faced with severe negative consequences for this new phase of technologically enhanced self-expression, including jail sentencing and suicide (Kotch, 2009; Inbar, 2009). National debates have ensued due to the overwhelming numbers of teens and young adults who are being arrested and charged with possession and distribution of child pornography. Some of the states with documented cases include Idaho, Connecticut, Vermont, Virginia, Ohio, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Utah (Orr, 2009; Contemporary Sexuality, 2009).

Given the interest in relation to the negative consequences of sexting and sexual behaviors, research on this topic is essential. There have been few mass media research studies conducted on sexting. In addition, there is no known scientific research regarding the relationship between the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with sexting and sexual behaviors. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate why teens and young adults participate in this new phase of communication involving the exchange of nude or partially nude photographs and sexually suggestive text messages of themselves, with others (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Understanding the
motivation behind these types of messages may enable parents, the community, and school officials to better understand and provide proper sexuality education to this new generation of technologically driven youth.

Sexting behaviors

Current mass media research investigates the extent of sexting and the key issues surrounding this rapidly growing technological trend. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) conducted an online survey of 1280 teens and young adults ranging in age from 13-26. Results reported that approximately one-half of all young people surveyed have electronically transmitted nude or semi nude photos. In addition, of those surveyed, 38% of teens and 58% of young adults (a total of 48% combined) have sent sexually suggestive messages through their cell phones via text messaging or other electronic communication means such as MySpace, Facebook, e-mail, or online instant messaging. In contrast, Pew Research Center, 2009 reported 4% of teens between the age of 12 and 17 had sent or posted nude or semi nude images of themselves. The number of teens and young adults who engage in sexting vary among studies, however it appears that sexting is a growing trend which identifies teen and young adult behavior within this realm.

Medium. Several mediums have been identified as a means of transmitting nude or semi nude pictures and sexually suggestive text messages. Research indicates that cell phone use within the United States has increased remarkably among young people since 2004 (Lenhart, 2009). With the increase in cell phone use there appears to be a rise in the number of sext messages being sent. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) report that 26% of those surveyed had posted/sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves and 48% had sent sexually suggestive text messages on a cell phone. Additionally, other mediums reported in sending nude or semi nude pictures included 27% on the “Net” and 5% on social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, Myspace, or a blog). Other mediums reported in sending sexually suggestive text messages include 49% on the “Net” and 14% on social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, Myspace, or a blog). Overall, cell phones appear to be the main method of sending sexually suggestive text messages, which coincides with the idea that many cell phones are equipped with immediate access to cameras, video, and internet access; making the transmission of nude or semi-nude photos or sexually suggestive text messages easier and faster than ever (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010).

Recipients. Regarding self-exposure related to sexting, teens and young adults typically intend for their messages to be viewed only by those who they were sent to. However, according to a study done by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008), one third (33%) of teen males and one-quarter (25%) of teen females say they have had nude/semi-nude images originally meant to be private, shared with them. Additionally, 50.3% of men and 57.8% of women have sent nude or semi-nude photos to a boyfriend or girlfriend, 23.3% of men and 13.5% of women to someone they wanted to date, 18.7% of men and 16.2% of women to someone they just met. In addition, 71.5% of men and 71.9% of women have sent sexually suggestive text messages to a boyfriend or girlfriend, 40.4% of men and 27.6% of women to someone they wanted to date, 22.3% of men and 14.1% of women to someone they just met (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Moreover, Pew Research (2009) also report the primary exchange of sexually suggestive images has been between romantic partners, partner outside the relationship, and potential relationship in which at least one person hopes to be in.

Attitudes towards sexting. Mass media research suggests that attitudes toward sending nude or semi-nude pictures or video broadly differ in opinion (Lenhart, 2009). In addition, gender differences have been noted regarding the attitudes involved with sexting (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Reports show that 47% of teens and 38% of young adults say pressure from males is a reason females send and post sexually suggestive messages and images. In addition, 24% of teens and 20% of young adults say pressure from friends is a reason males send and post sexually suggestive messages and images. This data also shows that 75% of teens and 71% of young adults felt that sexting could have serious negative consequences; however, 19% of females and 26% of males felt that sexting is no big deal (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Therefore, it appears that teens and young adults felt that pressure from males is the primary reason females send sext messages and pressure from friends is a primary reason males send sext messages. The majority of teens and young adults also feel that sexting could have serious negative consequences even though a small amount felt it is no big deal.
Reasons for sexting

Recent research indicates three main reasons that nude or semi-nude images are sent; to initiate sexual activity between partners (i.e., boyfriend or girlfriend), as an experimental phase of their sexuality prior to ever having sexual intercourse, and as a way to enhance current sexual relationships (Lenhart, 2009). Studies have shown that more than two thirds of teens and young adults have sent nude or partially nude messages to initiate keep or gain a male’s/female’s attention. Two thirds of female teen and young adults have sent these types of messages as a “sexy” present for a boyfriend, while over half of males sent them to be “fun and flirtatious.” In addition, nearly half of females felt pressure from males and nearly one fifth of males felt pressure from females (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). Overall, results from prior studies indicate an increase in teen and young adult participation with sexual exploration, using current technology.

Sexting and sexual behavior

Sexting may be a new technique used to express sexuality; however, it is not a new subject matter. Sexting is just another method in which nude or semi-nude pictures are viewed. Pew Research Center, (2009) reports that sexually suggestive images shared as part of a prelude to sexual activity and may be just one part of a sexual relationship. Adolescents who viewed internet pornography appeared to have a greater acceptance of sexual promiscuity (Lo & Wei, 2005). In addition, much of the content viewed on the internet by adolescents is unmonitored (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout). In 2008, Braun-Courville & Rojas found that exposure to internet pornography is associated with high-risk sexual behaviors and that adolescent exposure to sexually explicit web sites is also associated with these types of sexual behaviors (i.e., anal sex and multiple sexual partners). The internet is an unlimited outlet for pornographic material (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2008). Therefore, nude or semi-nude pictures viewed or sent on cell phones could potentially be endless, which may also increase the acceptance of sexual exploration and behaviors.

Present study

The purpose of this study was to examine a recent technological trend known as sexting (beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors) in relation to sexual behaviors using empirical research data. As such, the first research goal was to explore the behaviors involved with sexting such as how often sexually suggestive messages are sent, properly understanding the mediums in which they are sent, and to whom they are sent. Next, the attitudes associated with sexting were explored to include questions that would explain the pressures that may be associated with sexting. Finally, the reasons why sexually suggestive messages are sent was explored to investigate if this trend was simply an act of self-expression or a way to initiate sexual activity. Three hypotheses were formulated to explore sexting behaviors. First, it was hypothesized that there are a greater number of teen and young adult females than there are teen and young adult males that initially engage in sexting. Second, it was hypothesized that there are significant differences among females to feel pressure to send sext messages than would their male counterparts. Finally, it was hypothesized that the main reason both males and females send sext messages is to initiate sexual activity.

The second research goal was to examine the relationship among those who send sexually suggestive messages and sexual behaviors, including number of sexual intercourse, oral and anal sex partners. It was hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between sexting and sexual behaviors. In order for a solid view of the relationships between sexting and sexual behaviors to be supported, the act of sexting would need to indicate a transition into increased sexual behaviors. Lastly, prior mass media research has examined sexting attitudes and behaviors however; it has not addressed the relationships between sexting and sexting behaviors.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of Boise State University students who were enrolled in General Psychology classes. The total number of student participants was 468 (235 females, 234 males). Participants ranged in age from 18 – 30 (M = 20.59, SD = 2.86). The majority of the participants identified as White/Caucasian (n = 382, 81.7%), Black/African American (n = 13, 2.8%), Hispanic (n = 38, 8.1%), Asian/Pacific Islander (n = 19, 4.1%), Arabic/Middle Easterner

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(0.6% \( n = 3 \)), Native American Indian \( (n = 4, 0.9\%) \), Other \( (n = 9, 1.9\%) \). Nearly all participants \( (n = 452, 96.8\%) \) identified as straight/heterosexual.

**Materials**

Self-report questionnaires were used to gather information about demographics, sexting behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs; as well as sexual behaviors. Since sexting behavior is a rather new research field no validated measures exist. The sexting questionnaire was designed to measure behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes involved with the act of sexting; to include frequencies, methods sent (how the messages were sent), recipients (to whom the messages are sent), reasons for and attitudes toward sexting behaviors (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). A sexual behaviors questionnaire was used to establish the frequencies of sexual experiences and number of sexual partners.

**Sexting behaviors.** Regarding the medium in which nude or semi nude pictures or sexually suggestive text messages were sent, participants were asked, “how many times have you posted/sent nude or semi-nude pictures of yourself using each of these methods?” and “how many times have you posted/sent sexually suggestive messages about yourself using each of these methods?” Item options included cell phone, e-mail, social networking sites and blogs. These items were placed on a 6-point likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (10 or more times).

To assess whom nude or semi-nude pictures or sexually suggestive text were sent, participants were asked, “to whom have you ever sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures (of yourself)?” or “to whom have you ever sent/posted sexually suggestive messages (of yourself)” were asked to identify to whom these messages were being sent. Items included boyfriend/girlfriend, someone I just met, and someone I only knew online. Participants were allowed to mark all items that applied.

**Attitudes towards sexting.** Regarding attitudes toward sexting, participants were asked, “how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?” Survey items included, “Is there pressure among people my age to send/post nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves?”, “Females have to worry about privacy of nude or semi-nude pictures being viewed by someone other than the person they had originally intended the message for, more than males do?”, “Males have to worry about privacy of nude or semi-nude pictures being viewed by someone other than the person they had originally intended the message for, more than females do?”, “Sending sexually suggestive messages is no big deal.”, and “Sending sexually suggestive messages can have serious negative consequences.” Response options were on a 5-point likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree).

**Reasons for sexting.** Reasons for sending nude or semi-nude or sexually suggestive text messages were assessed using two questions, participants were asked “What do you think are the reasons that males/females send/share nude or semi nude pictures of themselves?” and “What do you think are the reasons that males/females send/share sexually suggestive text messages of themselves?” Item options included, “as a form of self expression?””, “To be sexy or initiate sexual activity?” and “To be fun/flirtatious?” Participants were allowed to mark all items that applied.

**Sexting and sexual behavior.** A six-item sexual experiences questionnaire was used to assess whether or not participants had engaged in the following types of sexual behaviors: sexual intercourse, oral sex, casual sex, and anal sex. Answers to these questions were based on yes or no responses. Sexual experience questions included how many sexual partners have you had, how many oral sex partners have you had, how many casual sex partners have you had, how many anal sex partners have you had.

**Procedure**

Introductory psychology students who chose to complete the questionnaire were directed to the survey within the secure “Psychsurveys.org” website. Prior to starting the survey, participants were provided with consent information and asked to verify that they are 18 years of age or older and consent to participate in the study. Once they gave consent, participants completed a series of closed-response questions via the secure website. Participants were allowed to skip any questions they did not want to answer. The questionnaire took approximately 60 minutes to
Students were then thanked for their participation and given information of the credit allocation process. Full IRB approval was obtained prior to implementation.

**Results**

**Sexting behaviors**

The first analyses explored the rates of sexting and gender differences between the two types of sexting; those who send/post nude or semi-nude photos and those who send sexually suggestive messages. Sixty percent \((n = 282)\) of participants had sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves. Sixty-nine percent \((n = 324)\) have sent/posted sexually suggestive text messages. To assess whether there were gender differences in sexting rates, we conducted independent measures \(t\) test analyses for males and females. There was no significant difference between males \((M = 3.37, SD = 5.54)\) and females \((M = 3.63, SD = 5.70)\) on sending or posting nude or semi-nude photos, \(t(466) = -0.49, p = .622\). There was also no significant differences between males \((M = 3.58, SD = 3.84)\) and females \((M = 2.99, SD = 3.17)\), sending or posting sexually suggestive text messages, \(t(466) = 1.78, p = .073\).

Several types of sexting mediums were measured to show the differences in the way sext messages were distributed. Over half \((56.9\%)\) of the participants reported that they posted/sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves on a cell phone, while one fourth \((27.5\%)\) have posted/sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves in an e-mail. Similarly, more than half of the participants \((58.2\%)\) posted/sent sexually suggestive text messages on a cell phone, one-fourth \((25.2\%)\) have posted/sent sexually suggestive text messages through e-mail.

Results from the sexting behaviors questionnaire showed that 60% of participants who had sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves, 43.5% \((n = 204)\) of sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend while 22% \((n = 103)\) sent them to someone they dated or hooked up with and 11% \((n = 49)\) sent them to someone they only knew online. Fifty-eight percent \((n = 271)\) of participants sent/posted sexually suggestive messages of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend, 31% \((n = 143)\) to someone they dated or hooked up with and 15% \((n = 69)\) to someone they only knew online.

**Attitudes towards sexting**

Table 1 provides a summary of the means, standard deviations, and \(t\) values of sexting attitudes by gender. Results show that females were not significantly more likely to feel pressure among people their own age to send/post nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves than were their male counterparts \(t(466) = -1.50, p = .133\). However, females were significantly more likely to feel pressure among people their own age to send/post sexually suggestive text messages of themselves than were their male counterparts \(t(464) = -2.20, p < .028\).

**Reasons for sexting**

Table 2 reports the percentages and comparisons by gender for male and female participants’ beliefs about why both young men and women sext. Chi-square analyses revealed that males and females had comparable views concerning reasons why nude or semi-nude pictures are sent. To be sexy or initiate sexual activity was the highest percentage given among both genders, whereas self-expression was among the lowest. In addition, gaining attention from a dating partner was the second highest rated reason for sexting among both genders.

**Sexting and sexual behavior**

Among the sexual behaviors that were examined, two were found to have a significant relationship between sending nude or semi-nude pictures and number of sexual partners. To assess the relationships between sexting and sexual behavior, we conducted independent measures \(t\) test analyses for males and females. As predicted, there were significant differences found between those who have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves \((M = 7.28, SD = 7.54)\) and those who have not \((M = 4.39, SD = 5.91)\) on number of sexual intercourse partners, \(t(379) = -3.64, p < .001\). There were significant differences found between those who have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves \((M = 5.54, SD = 6.63)\) and those who have not \((M = 3.53, SD = 5.07)\) on number of oral sex (performed) partners, \(t(368) = -2.86, p = .004\). There were no significant differences found between those who have sent have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves \((M = 5.36, SD = 6.96)\) and those who have not \((M = 3.72, SD = 6.78)\) on number of casual sex partners, \(t(166) = -1.26, p = .209\). There were no significant differences found between
those who have sent have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves ($M = 2.50, SD = 3.83$) and those who have not ($M = 4.05, SD = 8.66$) on number of anal sex partners, $t(126) = 1.31, p = .191$. The number of sexual intercourse and oral sex partners appear to be greater when sexting is involved, whereas no differences were found among sexting and casual sex partners.

**Discussion**

Results revealed that transmission of nude or semi-nude pictures or sexually suggestive text messages appear to be a frequent behavior among teens and young adults, extending similar findings on mass media research (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). In addition, questionnaire results revealed no considerable differences among the frequency in which females and males are sending or posting nude or semi-nude picture of themselves or sexually suggestive text messages. The majority of these messages were sent in the form of sexually suggestive text. Furthermore, participants revealed that nearly two thirds of these messages were sent through the use of cell phones. Sext messages were primarily posted or sent to enhance current sexual relationships with a boyfriend or girlfriend, by both males and females. However, it is worth noting that approximately one fourth of participants reported sending sext messages to someone they wanted to hook up with or someone they wanted to date and 15% sent sext messages to someone they had just met. Males reported slightly higher percentages in these three categories.

The questionnaire results also provided further findings in regard to attitudes toward sexting. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008) reported that females feel more pressure from males to send nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves, as well as sexually suggestive text messages. Conversely, the current study suggested that females did not differ significantly in feeling pressure from the opposite sex to send or post nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves. However, the percentage of females who felt pressured was slightly higher than their male counterparts. In contrast, females felt more pressure than males to send sexually suggestive text messages. Additionally, participants in the current and past studies felt that there were severe negative consequences; however, they also felt that sexting is no big deal.

Furthermore, our study provided information pertaining to the reasons nude or semi-nude pictures or sexually suggestive text messages are sent or posted. Regarding the reasons for sexting, questionnaire results revealed the main reason for sexting was to be sexy or initiate sexual activity. The reasons “to gain attention” or “to be fun or flirtatious” were also among the top three reasons for sending or posting sext messages. Females reported slightly higher ratings on all three reasons regarding both nude or semi-nude pictures and sexually suggestive text messages.

Results revealed interesting information in regard to sexting and sexual behavior, including a higher number of sexual intercourse and oral sex (performed) partners, among those who have sent or posted nude or semi-nude pictures and sexually suggestive text messages. In addition, it is important to note there was also a slightly higher number of oral sex (received) and casual sex partners among those who sext. Previous studies also indicate that sexting was central in sexual exploration among teens and young adults (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008).

While the results of this study provide important information regarding the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors towards sending or posting nude or semi-nude pictures or sexually suggestive text messages, there are some limitations to the study. First, the lack of access to a broader teen population restricts the ability to compare findings from previous mass media research among the ages of those 13 to 17. Due to the lack of scientific research, little is known about the associations between sexting and sexual behaviors. At best, we can only speculate on relationships between sexting behaviors (i.e., frequency) and sexual experience (i.e., number of sexual partners) based on what we know about teens and young adults who participate in sexting and sexual behaviors.

In an attempt to educate teens and young adults about sexuality, focus has veered away from explicit sexual education with the argument that this type of instruction promotes immorality. Without precise sexual awareness, the dangers and consequences of sexual exploration (i.e., sexting), especially among young females, remain a threat to a proper understanding of sex and sexuality issues (Fine, 1988; National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008). The numbers of teen exploring their sexuality urges has increased dramatically over time (Brown, J., Keller, S., & Stern, S. 2009). With these numbers on the rise, it is important to keep in mind that sexual interaction among teens and young adults may be significantly impacted by the way they perceive the events leading up to intercourse including the act of sexting (Tolman, 2002).

It is vital to gain an understanding of the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with sexting and to then provide proper sexuality education to teens and young adults in an attempt to curtail this problem. Where past intervention have not been successful in relaying healthy sexuality messages, future attempts should incorporate
current technology, especially cell phones, as a successful avenue of sexuality education; given that, adolescents have a broader access to cell phones than computers (Keller, & Stern, 2009; Pascoe, 2009).

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to express thanks to her son Jason for sacrificing “everything” and making her smile when things were tough, her mentor Dr. Elizabeth Morgan for her continued support and invaluable guidance, and Helen Barnes for her devotion and unconditional support throughout this process. She would also like to thank her mother for her continued encouragement and support from afar, her cohort for their continued friendship, and the Boise State University McNair Scholar Program for offering this life changing experience.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Sexting Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>t</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nude or semi-nude pictures (sent/posted)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is pressure among people my age to send.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>-1.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually end up being seen by more than just those whom they were sent</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females have to worry about privacy of messages being viewed by someone other than the person they had originally intended the message for, more than males do.</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>-.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males have to worry about privacy of messages being viewed by someone other than the person they had originally intended the message for, more than females do.</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>-.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No big deal</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.104*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can cause serious negative consequences</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>-2.524**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexually Suggestive Text</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is pressure among people my age to send.</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>-2.200*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually end up being seen by more than just those whom they were sent</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>-1.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females have to worry about messages being seen by someone other than the one they intended it for, more than males do.</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy’s have to worry about messages being seen by someone other than the one they intended it for, more than girl’s do.</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>-1.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No big deal</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can cause serious negative consequences</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>-2.524**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items were measured on a scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.
* = p < .05, ** = p < .01
Table 2. Tests of Differences Between Reasons for Sexting by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Sexting</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>X²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nude - Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be sexy or initiate sexual activity</td>
<td>195 (83.3%)</td>
<td>201 (85.9%)</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get attention from a dating partner</td>
<td>185 (78.9%)</td>
<td>185 (79.1%)</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be fun and flirtatious</td>
<td>156 (66.7%)</td>
<td>153 (65.4%)</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt pressured to by friends or a dating partner</td>
<td>76 (32.5%)</td>
<td>71 (30.3%)</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A form of self expression</td>
<td>70 (29.9%)</td>
<td>66 (28.2%)</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexually Suggestive Text - Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be sexy or initiate sexual activity</td>
<td>196 (83.8%)</td>
<td>210 (89.7%)</td>
<td>3.64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get attention from a dating partner</td>
<td>190 (81.2%)</td>
<td>189 (80.8%)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be fun and flirtatious</td>
<td>167 (71.4%)</td>
<td>151 (64.5%)</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt pressured to by friends or a dating partner</td>
<td>72 (30.8%)</td>
<td>76 (32.5%)</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A form of self expression</td>
<td>71 (30.3%)</td>
<td>72 (30.8%)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nude - Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be sexy or initiate sexual activity</td>
<td>220 (83.3%)</td>
<td>217 (85.9%)</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get attention from a dating partner</td>
<td>199 (78.9%)</td>
<td>220 (79.1%)</td>
<td>10.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be fun and flirtatious</td>
<td>209 (66.7%)</td>
<td>198 (65.4%)</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt pressured to by friends or a dating partner</td>
<td>151 (32.5%)</td>
<td>163 (30.3%)</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A form of self expression</td>
<td>98 (29.9%)</td>
<td>79 (28.2%)</td>
<td>3.28*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexually Suggestive Text - Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be sexy or initiate sexual activity</td>
<td>210 (83.8%)</td>
<td>211 (89.7%)</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get attention from a dating partner</td>
<td>208 (81.2%)</td>
<td>218 (80.8%)</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be fun and flirtatious</td>
<td>203 (71.4%)</td>
<td>201 (64.5%)</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt pressured to by friends or a dating partner</td>
<td>119 (30.8%)</td>
<td>144 (32.5%)</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A form of self expression</td>
<td>91 (30.3%)</td>
<td>70 (30.8%)</td>
<td>4.18*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Reasons for Sexting by gender: Men (N=234); Women; (N=234)

*= p < .05, **= p < .01, ***= p < .001
References


Sexual Offender Registries:
Public Safety or Scarlet Letter?

Marilyn Hiller: McNair Scholar
Dr. Arthur Scarritt: Mentor
Sociology and Social Work

Abstract

Sexual offender legislation has been based on “moral panics” stemming from sensationalized cases (i.e. Wetterling, Kanka, and Klaas). The variety of sex offenders that are treated with blanket punishment is causing collateral consequences which actually create more risk to the public. By comparing the Idaho Sexual Offender Registry with the Idaho Department of Justice Database, this study determined what offenses were being committed after placement on the registry. My research identifies a collateral consequence of unsafe driving conditions. It found that there was a 113% increase of moving traffic related charges and 94% increase of non-moving violations such as driving without privileges, unregistered vehicles, and no insurance and moving violations. These finding were unexpected, but supported by other data nationwide. Possible factors contributing to this are caused by residency restrictions causing offenders to avoid detection by not keeping current on licensure for vehicles. Future research should delve into this dynamic to understand why this trend is occurring.

Introduction

History abounds with examples of legislation designed to protect the public from sex offenders. Much of this legislation is based on sensational cases that paint all sex offenders with one broad brush as habitual and untreatable. When this happens it pushes sex offenders to the fringes of society where they do not participate in institutions put in place to protect the public. They are also forced to live in clusters in areas that have the least resources to manage them. This is not an isolated phenomenon. It is common in virtually all areas of the country.

There is a large variety of offenses that are representative of sexual offenders on the registry the range is public urination to kidnapping for the purpose of committing a sexual crime, and attempted murder during the commission of a sexual crime. One complication of the registry is that all offenders are placed in one registry with little distinction between offenses. Many people that utilize the registry to see where sexual offenders are living in their communities rarely look at offenses and whether that person could be a potential danger or is someone with a nuisance type of offense. This is due to the reporting of extreme sexual cases in the media. Society hears the words sexual offender and immediately thinks of the Joseph Duncans that make up less than 1% of the sex offender population. These are the cases we hear the most about because these are the ones that start moral panics that create new legislation that heaps more and more reparations on offenders trying to reintegrate into society. The large variety of offenses is overlooked and we forget about the ones that have what are nuisance charges than predatory sexual offending. There are also many sexual offenses that are considered to be victimless offenses. When they are all put into one public registry for anyone to access not only are they affected by the collateral consequences that this brings about so are family members that are often victims of the offender. It is also how the institutions incorporate the registry, and the way the registry as an institution is presented as a tool of protection that creates these problems. Society does not like to look at the collateral consequences this causes. They are not allowed to live in homeless shelters and in many of the areas in the community that are too close to protected businesses for them to reside.

This study looks at the crimes that are disproportionately committed after placement on the registry. I found that in Idaho there is a 113% increase in traffic violations and a 94% increase in non-moving violations. Often sex offenders that are not registering for the registry are also not renewing licenses and automobile registration and licensing. There are obvious reasons that this is a matter of public safety. Driving without the protection of these institutions are obvious reasons to cite. The less obvious problem arises with the reasons that sexual offenders are choosing to not participate in them that is the more dangerous problem. This pushes many offenders into an underground existence and begins a criminal underground population that is harder not easier to monitor them. They
are in turn driven to more crimes endangering the public. They are not given access to treatment or resources to move forward in their lives.

This study looks at the history of society trying to reconcile the need for justice to be served and, the need for public safety. Throughout history societies have had laws in place to protect children from sexual abuse. Society has also attempted many methods of trying to control sexual behaviors. The sex offender registry is just another one of those methods, with some positive and some negative results. It does give many people the illusion of public safety and a way to monitor many sex offenders. The results of this study opens up new issues by showing us that most sex offenders only are charged one time for a sexual offense, but are much more likely to be charged for a traffic offense if stopped by a police officer.

The Idaho data shows that besides traffic offenses other offenses did not raise at high levels and some actually went down after placement on the registry. In this case it could be argued that maybe the registry is indeed working. The traffic offenses that registered sex offenders are being charged with actually endanger the public, as well as creating an underground movement that many more sex offenders are participating in. It is also forcing sex offenders to live in clusters around the United States, in areas with the least amount of resources to monitor them. The results of this study indeed support the phenomenon happening around the country.

Background

Society has struggled with how to mesh public safety with punishment of sex offenders. One issue that comes up is the way sex offenders are all treated as a homogeneous type of criminal. In actuality, sex offenders are a heterogeneous group of criminals that commit a variety of offenses. Pedophiles are one such type of offender (meaning “lover of children”). Most pedophiles are male, usually called child molesters and many do not have previous criminal histories. There have been many studies that address pedophilia in the United States and other countries. “A study in 1973 showed that 24% of adolescents will be abused before their eighteenth birthday. Another study done in 1985 found that 50% of young women between eighteen and thirty-six had been sexually abused before their eighteenth birthday” (Holmes, 2009). Most pedophiles show a lack of empathy for their victims, and fear intimacy. Other types of offenses all come with different issues, and some are more likely to rehabilitate than others.

Moral panics create public outcry for more legislation and penalties aimed at punishing all sexual offenders instead of rehabilitation. The chance of rehabilitation relies on a few factors: (1) the closeness of relationship between victim and offender. (2) Length of time the offender has been offending. (3) The degree of violence perpetrated on victim. If a person is close to the victim relationally they are more likely to rehabilitate. An offender who has been offending for a long duration of time will be more resistant to change. An offender who inflicts a lot of violence in the act of sexually abusing a child they are far less likely to change.

There are several other types of sexual crimes that get people put on sexual offender registries; some are more serious than others, and some are considered little more than nuisance behaviors. Nuisance sexual crimes in Holmes and Holmes (2009) include: prostitution, frottage, exhibitionism, peeping, bestiality, and scatophilia. These are the behaviors that there are considered more victimless than direct contact offenses and are the least dangerous but can be considered crimes that can require that you register as a sexual offender. Another offense where the victim is more difficult to identify is child pornography which is sexually explicit pictures, videos or other media of minors under the age of eighteen. Many people who engage in sexual activities with children under eighteen claim to have possessed or viewed child pornography before they engaged in sexual acts with children. There are people that feel that all pornography should be outlawed and others who feel that it is a safe alternative to offending. These are acts that cause problems for the family of the offender, the offender and at times the victim. The registry also causes collateral damage that society often fails to take into account. Sexual offenders and the registry have been the topic of much research.

There have been many studies that show that the main problems that arise from placement on the registry are securing employment and housing. These two factors have been studied in regards to the effect they have on offenders and families. Society does not look at the consequences caused by the registry and placing more penalties and restrictions on offenders. There are several articles written about specific collateral consequences that have occurred as a result of placement on the registry. Difficulty finding housing and jobs are just two consequences that face most sexual offenders. The more insidious and damaging consequence is the effect that this placement has on family members of registered sex offenders. Spouses, parents, siblings and children are often blamed and bullied for the offenses they had little or nothing to do with.

Another consequence is a phenomenon that was discovered in Colorado is “shared living arrangements, where one sex offender lives with others while receiving treatment and other services. When this was discovered
legislation was passed that not more than one sex offender could be housed in a residence,” (Rodriguez and Dethlefsen, 2009). Tewksbury studied both female and male offenders in Kentucky, Florida and Indiana and “report that social stigmatization, loss of relationships, incidents of harassment, as well as difficulties securing housing and maintaining and finding employment were experienced either by a majority, or a significant minority, of sex offenders,” (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006).

Other collateral consequences that few people in society take into account are the effect on the family when someone is placed on the registry. A study published in 2009 delves into the effects on families. The study looked at common problems for sex offenders such as housing and employment. Family members were affected by residency restrictions at a lower level and not required to move. Employment issues created financial hardships for other family members as well. “Almost half, however, reported being threatened or harassed by neighbors, 27% had their property damaged, and 7% said they were physically assaulted by someone as a result of notification,” (Levonson & Tewsbury, 2009). The adverse effects were greater on family members who lived with the Registered Sexual Offender than those who did not. Children of RSO suffered on many more levels, they were taunted at school by other children. They were singled out for special attention from teachers and other staff members. Many sex offender children were not allowed at friends’ homes and vice versa. Parents who were sex offenders were unable to attend events of their children because of restrictions of the registry. “The psychosocial impact on the children as it was reported by their non offending parent. The children of RSOs are reported to most often exhibit anger (80%), depression (77%), anxiety (73%), feeling left out by their peers (65%), and fear (63%). More than one in eight (13%) of the children of RSOs were reported to exhibit suicidal tendencies,” (Levonson & Tewsbury, 2009).

The main motivation for the sex offender registry is public safety. As Mustaine et al. find: “treating the large variety of sexual offenders as habitual violent criminals actually has a negative overall impact on public safety. This directly contradicts the stated intentions of the sex offender legislation,” (Mustaine, A Tewksbury, & A Stengel, 2006). The popular media portray all sex offenders as violent sexual predators. The largest body of research shows that sex offenders recidivate at a substantially lower rate than the average criminal offender. In a study done “in 2003 by the Justice Department of 10,000 male sex offenders they found that sex offenders had a 25% lower rate than other criminal offenders”(Radford, 2008). Serial sex offenders are the ones found most likely to reoffend are rarely released from prison. Several studies that were looked at showed similar findings. A study done in 2006 states that “there is a widespread misperception that people who commit sexual crimes do it again and again, however research directly contradicts showing that they are relatively low running in the 3-13% range and among the lowest of all crimes” (Lotke & Hoelter, 2008). In a thirteen year study that was completed in Idaho showed relatively low rates of recidivism.

In Rhode Island a task force headed a sweep looking for registered sex offenders they found several sex offenders that were not compliant with the registry as well as driving without privileges (Malinowski, 2010). In Tulsa, Oklahoma registered sex offenders are not allowed to live in ninety percent of the city. Even though there has been a drop in the number of RSOs that live in the city it is not necessarily mean that fewer offenders are living there just that they are not registering. “While well-intended, the changes to Oklahoma's Sex Offender Registration Act have made it very difficult for offenders to find places to live legally.” They come down here and give us their address where they want to live, and we say, “That is restricted; you can't live there,” Stansill said. “They may come back two or three times, and sometimes they never show back up” (Marshall, 2007). Many states are finding that stops done randomly to cars in certain areas have identified many non-compliant sex offenders, many driving without privileges and insurance. One reason that these are important to public safety is because it shows a lack of regard for other motorists on the road as well as other laws in place for public safety.

My study looks at the ways the registry in Idaho contributes collateral consequences for registered sex offenders. It shows the way in which traffic offenses are increased and threatens public safety. It also looks at recidivism of sex offenders in Idaho and the rate at which they reoffend. The surprising find of this study is the increase in traffic offenses both moving and non-moving. I also look at possible explanations as to why registered sex offenders are declining to participate in these established institutions.

Data and Methods

The data that were used for this study were collected from the Idaho sexual offenders’ registry and the Idaho courts repository web sites. This was done by first collecting data from the sexual offender registry. I then went into the Idaho court systems database and compiled a list of offenses before and after a registered sex offender was put on the registry. I analyzed the data that had been collected by comparing offenses before and after placement on the registry. I then looked at possible causal effects for the types of offenses that were showing and considering how this impacts public safety. Other research indicates that for this population, “The rate for any
reconviction was 13.6%, while of the 447 cases studied a reconviction of sexual abuse was no more than 9.2%" (Patrick & Marsh, 2008). This study is most closely related to this study because the data for both came from Idaho data. The offenders studied in our study had a 7.17% rate for further sexual offenses. This is a low recidivism rate for someone who has been charged with a crime in our society. Recidivism for the majority of crimes is between thirteen and fifteen percent. People charged with violent crimes tend to recidivate at a rate of between twenty and twenty-five percent. Sex offenders that have an element of physical violence attached to their offense tend to have a similar recidivistic rate as other violent criminals. This is an example of why not all sex offenders should be treated as a homogeneous group but tested to see which ones with the best chance for rehabilitation.

The design of the registry in Idaho where all the offenders are placed in one registry regardless of degree or classification of the offense makes identify nuisance offenses from more severe crimes. The highest rate of offense is in the category of lewd conduct with a minor child. However this can be a broad range of acts from sexual contact with a child under the age of sixteen, or any act that is “appealing to or gratifying the lust or passions or sexual desires of such person, such minor child, or third party,” (Idaho State Police Bureau of Criminal Identification, 2008). This is similar to the next most common offense committed in Idaho sexual abuse of a child under sixteen years of age. This also covers a broad range of offenses which include: “Solicit a minor child under the age of sixteen (16) years to participate in a sexual act; cause or have sexual contact with minor child; make any photographic or electronic recording of minor child; or induce, cause or permit a minor child to witness an act of sexual conduct,” (Idaho State Police Bureau of Criminal Identification, 2008).

Rape charges include any penetration of the penis no matter how slight to a female under age of sixteen or forcible penetration of any female. These are the three top charges in Idaho which as can be seen cover a broad range of charges with differing degrees which can be from nuisance crimes up to violent sexual crimes. These crimes make up 80% of the charges in Idaho, many of these charges are first time offenses to offenders. Once placed on the registry the charges offenders are charged with are traffic violations with a huge 113% increase. This is when offenders begin to stop participating in societal institutions that provide public safety. The argument could be made that a sex offender is much more likely to get charged with a traffic violation if pulled over than someone not on the registry.

The limitations in this study are that we are only looking at charges that occurred in Idaho. The exception would be is that if someone was to commit a further sexual offense in a state other than Idaho it would still show up on the sex offender registry data. There is also limitation connecting the type of offender to the later crime as all offenders in Idaho are placed on the registry as a non-distinct sex offender. The data speak to that somewhat as their sexual charges are listed, but those often cover a broad degree of offending.

Results

Treating the large variety of sexual offenders as habitual violent criminals actually has a negative overall impact on public safety. This directly contradicts the stated intentions of the sex offender legislation. Reinforcing other work in this field, my data identified a major “collateral consequence” of the SOR. The largest percentage of offenses were in the area of traffic offenses. The results of this study has shown us several things one is that many sexual offenders in Idaho have charges against them for Driving Without Privileges (DWP), driving an unregistered vehicle or driving without insurance. Sixty percent of post-SOR violations were for one of these non-violent traffic-related offenses. These are acts that have little bearing on protecting the public from sexual predators. These institutional practices are put in place for public safety; however the obvious danger is less significant than the more insidious reasons for not participating in them. According to Idaho State Police data, the general population that does not participate in registering their vehicles, not renewing their licenses, or obtaining insurance is between twenty-five and thirty percent. Among registered sexual offenders the rate that does not participate in these practices is around 53%.

Reinforcing other work in this field, my data identified a major “collateral consequence” of the SOR. Registration has created a massive increase, over 113%, of non-moving and moving traffic violations. This means many things. The inability of registrants to engage in these institutionalized norms greatly increases the general public’s risk of being victimized by an unlicensed driver without insurance. This is the obvious danger. The more subtle and more dangerous consequence is that society is forcing sex offenders into the fringes and underground where they are harder to monitor. Furthermore, the purpose of the registry is it to protect the public. Instead it is designed more to shame and blame the offender for the rest of his life and such shaming and blaming prevents them from participating in the institutions that perpetuate public safety.

Many states are reporting similar trends. In 2003 Georgia changed its sexual offender’s legislation because of unintended consequences in residency restrictions. They were finding that due to residency restrictions sex
offenders were living in clusters and being forced to the outskirts of cities that have the least amount of resources to monitor them. They also found that many were forced to live a life underground where they not only did not apply for new driver’s licenses they did not register or insure their vehicles. States around the country have reported that sex offenders are failing to register, not renewing drivers’ licenses. Some states have implemented drivers’ licenses that have registered sex offender stamped in red prominently on the front of the license. Nevada requires require sex offenders to renew license every year and if they are not in compliance with the registry they will not renew the license. Often part of that compliance is having an appropriate place to live and a job. To complicate this many states are considering having a red registered sex offender stamp on sex offender’s drivers’ licenses.

Marginalized populations often find themselves in the legal system where getting their lives back begins to look like an insurmountable task to accomplish. This happens in disorganized neighborhoods with the fewest resources to monitor sex offenders. These areas are also less likely to report criminal behaviors. Tewksbury states “prior to this study it was debated whether sex offenders are relegated to socially disorganized areas, or if they reside in these communities by choice in hopes of anonymity (and perhaps greater opportunities for re-offending). Our results strongly show that registered sex offenders are likely to live in socially disorganized and undesirable locations. (Mustaine, Tewksbury, & Stengel, 2006).

“Research has shown that residency restrictions have no relationship to recidivism and that some negative consequences may result. Research has also found that sex offenses are usually not the sensational type that has caused legislators to pass residency restriction laws,” (Walker, 2007). This fact however does not deter legislators from passing more restrictive laws. Nor does it prevent the public outcry for stricter and harsher penalties. “Responding to all sexual offenders as though they are predatory molesters and killers of unknown victims misdirects scarce criminal justice resources, ignores the realities of known offenders in favor of stranger-danger, and may in fact increase the victimization risk to the public rather than reduce the potential harms,” (Meloy, Miller, & Curtis, 2008). A common reason for the need of a sexual offender registry is to protect children in our communities by making parents aware of where they reside. Craun looks at this issue in a recent study and “One should note that having children in the home was not a significant predictor of awareness of a sex offender” (Craun, 2010) which shows that the registry often is ineffective as a public safety tool. “Residence restrictions exemplify a moral panic over ‘stranger-danger’ and a widespread fear of ‘sexual predators’ that are based on a plethora of faulty assumptions. The public needs better access to accurate information about the realities of sexual violence,” (Meloy, Miller, & Curtis, 2008).

Other collateral consequences that occur are a “large representation of transient sex offender parolees who recidivate suggests a strong correlation between transiency and recidivism. As such, an unintended consequence of residency restrictions could be a decrease in community safety due to the rise of transient sex offenders,” (Loving, 2009). The problem with this is that some of these “transient” offenders tend to be more dangerous than the offender who is maintaining a residence and has an address and can be more easily monitored. “What we have now is a system of law that condemns the extremely harmful and completely harmless sex offenders alike but fails to capture many of the most harmful offenders, confusing the public and failing to protect children and other potential victims. This system ensnares harmful and harmless sex offenders because it is designed to ensnare all alternate sexualities,” (Morris, 2007).

Shaming and blaming sexual offenders instead of creating the public safety that is the stated purpose of the sex offender registry does not work. This has been supported not only by the research done here, but also by the numerous other studies mentioned in this article. We can see that the continual heaping of consequences only increase the danger of driving more sex offenders into an underground lifestyle that prevents them from participating in social institutions put into place for the safety of the public.

Discussion

States have the right within certain guidelines to legislate the laws regarding the sexual offender registry. The main guideline is that the registry has to be made public for anyone to access; but they can decide what level offender will be placed on the registry if they are not considered dangerous. There are states that have three tier systems where the least dangerous offenders are not accessible to the general public, and has less stringent residency restrictions. This creates a criminal subculture that pushes some sex offenders into criminal behavior they may not otherwise engage in. There has been much research done on the sex offender population and registries, but there needs to be more research on collateral consequences as well as how this affects society in general. More research needs to investigate the multiple causal processes behind the huge increase in traffic violations. This could be due to discrimination by the officer once the person is shown to be a sex offender. A qualitative study looking at what law officials say about that, as well as sex offenders themselves would say and then do a comparison. In Georgia they
have one of the strictest sex offender registry laws. The goal is to drive all sex offenders out of the state and regardless of the fact that sex offenders are already very limited in choices of where they are living. This law drove many offenders underground and into not participating in normative institutionalized practices. Georgia like Idaho puts all offenders in a single tier registry. Further evidence that more restrictions do not make the public safer but drive more offenders into a criminal underground through more restrictions.

There is a need for more research in this field as we have found the reasons for this happening is not clarified conclusively. The data shows that the restrictions placed on offenders is not making the public safer, but instead placing them in more danger. The dangers of not participating in the societal institutions is the more obvious danger, but the more dangerous is that underground communities that are created. There are thousands of sex offenders that are not accounted for in our country that can be anywhere. In Idaho alone there are 157 non-compliant sex offenders that are unaccounted for. That is five percent of the Idaho registry is unaccounted for. There is a need for qualitative research to be done to address why this is happening and what measures would improve the situation. A qualitative study that looked at both reactions of sexual offenders and police officers to assess treatment at traffic stops.

Table 1. Offenders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliant</th>
<th>Non-Compliant</th>
<th>VSP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,129 (95.5%)</td>
<td>138 (4.5%)</td>
<td>52 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age 33</td>
<td>Mode Age 21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Charges Before and After Placement on SOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFENSES</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>CHANGE</th>
<th>CHARGES AFTER SOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUI</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>24.38%</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEALED CASES</td>
<td>594</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.95%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAILURE TO REGISTER</td>
<td>325</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FURTHER SEXUAL OFFENSES</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>50.82%</td>
<td>2.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL/LP/INS VIOLATIONS</td>
<td>1738</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>93.54%</td>
<td>23.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSAULT/BATTERY</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>19.19%</td>
<td>3.16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS</td>
<td>2742</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td>113.39%</td>
<td>36.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROBATION VIOLATIONS</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRUG/ALCOHOL VIOLATIONS</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>-19.59%</td>
<td>6.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESIST/OBSTRUCT OFFICERS FLEE/EVADE</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>-4.16%</td>
<td>1.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURGLARY/THEFT/FRAUD</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>-37.01%</td>
<td>2.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRESPASS/PROPERTY VIOLATIONS</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>-15.59%</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAILURE TO APPEAR CONTEMPT OF COURT</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>243</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FISH/GAME/ANIMAL VIOLATIONS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>MISCELLANEOUS</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>-38.17%</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7474</td>
<td>4336</td>
<td>72.37%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL + TRAFFIC = ~60% of after violations!</td>
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Conflated categories 4480 2183 105.22% 59.94%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFENSE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>OFFENSE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-1508 -- lewd conduct with a minor child</td>
<td>1716</td>
<td>18-6608 -- forcible sexual penetration by use of a foreign object</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(41.67%)</td>
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<td>(0.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-1506 -- sexual abuse of a child under sixteen years of age</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>18-1509A -- enticing a child over the internet</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-6101 -- rape</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>18-1507 -- sexual exploitation of a child</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.67%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-1508A -- sexual battery of a minor child sixteen or seventeen years of age</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>18-4503 -- second degree kidnapping where the victim is an unrelated minor child</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.95%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-1507A -- possession of sexually exploitative material for other than a commercial purpose</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>18-6602 -- incest</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.64%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-911 -- battery with attempt to commit rape, infamous crime against nature, or lewd and lascivious conduct with a minor</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18-4502 -- first degree kidnapping committed for the purpose of rape</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.42%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-6605 -- crime against nature</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>18-6110 -- sexual contact with a prisoner</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.06%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-909 -- assault with attempt to commit rape, infamous crime against nature, or lewd and lascivious conduct with a minor</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18-1505B -- sex abuse 2nd degree</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.48%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-4116 -- indecent exposure, but excluding a misdemeanor conviction</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18-4001 -- attempted murder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.87%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-6108 -- male rape</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18-4501 -- kidnapping</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.75%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Drive for Muscularity and Drive for Thinness:  
The Impact of Pro-Anorexia Websites

Lilia Juarez: McNair Scholar

Dr. Mary E. Pritchard: Mentor

Psychology

Abstract

In recent years, websites that stress the message of thinness as the ideal and only choice have surfaced on the internet. As a source of media, pro-anorexia websites have detrimental effects similar to other forms of media (e.g., magazines, TV). In addition, friends may be influencing one another to view these websites, thus increasing the risk of developing a drive for thinness in women and a drive for muscularity in men. Approximately 300 male and female undergraduate psychology students responded to questionnaires assessing: viewership and use of pro-anorexia websites, influence of friends to view pro-anorexia websites, drive for muscularity, and drive for thinness. Results showed viewership of pro-anorexia websites was positively correlated with drive for thinness in women, and negatively correlated with drive for muscularity in men. Pro-anorexia websites were found to be the only predictor of both drive for thinness in women and drive for muscularity in men.

Introduction

Disordered eating behaviors are occurring more frequently among adolescents and young adults (Tamim et al., 2006) and are now considered commonplace in Western society (Cook-Cottone & Phelps, 2006). According to Weltzin et al. (2005), about 10% of individuals with anorexia and bulimia are men, indicating that disordered eating behaviors can occur regardless of gender. Although anorexia and bulimia are more commonly recognized in our society, most individuals would fall under the category of Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS). The EDNOS category is for behaviors or disorders that do not necessarily meet the criteria for a diagnosis of anorexia or bulimia (APA, 2000); it includes anorexic-like and bulimic-like behaviors such as drive for thinness, excessive dieting, excessive exercising, purging and binging. Research shows that about 50% of adults that seek treatment for an eating disorder are diagnosed with EDNOS and 60% of most eating disorder cases are EDNOS (Fairburn et al., 2007; Fairburn & Bohn, 2005). Drive for muscularity is a newly coined term, which is not yet classified under any specific disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V). However, Murray et al. (2010) argue that the drive for muscularity component in muscle dysmorphia is parallel to drive for thinness in anorexia because of the similarities of the symptoms and the high attention to diet, as well as the compensatory behavior of excessive exercise.

Regardless of classification, the onset of disordered eating behaviors and/or exercise behaviors can be attributed to a variety of factors; the influence of mass media is one contributor to increased drive for thinness in females (Rodgers, Paxton, & Chabrol, 2010). Media ideals also increase the likelihood of drive for thinness in males (Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002). Alperin (2004 suggests high levels of disordered eating behaviors are due to media influence. Carney and Louw (2006) suggest that media consumption is frequently related to an increase in the occurrence of disordered eating behaviors and attitudes. According to Grabe, Ward, and Hyde (2008), media has an important role in defining female and male ideals. Due to the increased promotion of thin body ideals (Homan, 2010), eating disorders have been harder to prevent as adolescents have increased their media consumption.

Research has repeatedly found negative relationships between levels of media exposure and level of body satisfaction (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2007), even in men. Depiction of the ideal male body (as portrayed by the media) affects mood and body satisfaction in men (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Baird & Grieve, 2006; Derenne, 2006). A study of undergraduate men also found that 9% to 12% of men were unhappy with their body and wanted to lose weight (O’Dea & Abraham, 2002). Kjelsås, Björnström, and Götestam (2004) suggest that media perpetuates and strengthens body perceptions and drive for thinness in young adults. Although thinness may not be the overall end goal for all men, pressure to conform to an ideal muscular body is similar to that of women’s pressure to conform to the ideal thin body (Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005). Leit et al. (2002) have suggested that one of the strongest
predictors of drive for muscul arity is the internalization of the media body ideals. Thus, while women tend to want to lose weight, men want to gain muscle weight.

Amongst various kinds of mass media, the internet has managed to embed itself as an increasing source of influence. In the past decade, pro-anorexia websites have surfaced. These websites contain images and writings that support the pursuit of an ideal thin body image (Williams & Reid, 2007). Research has shown that pro-anorexia websites stress thinness as the ideal and only choice for women (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2006), and in some websites ideal images of muscul arity and thinness for men. This latest form of mass media has been suggested as negative and detrimental to a female’s eating behaviors and body image (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2007). According to Tiggemann and Miller (2010), internet media exposure has a direct effect on drive for thinness. Researchers found that women who had viewed these websites at least once had a decrease in self-esteem (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2007). Reports also show an increased likelihood of future engagement in many negative behaviors related to food, exercise, and weight (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2006). While research on pro-anorexia websites is still in its infancy, most research suggests that pro-anorexia websites affect college students negatively.

Although media sources are a strong influence, research suggests that adolescents rely greatly on their friends when it comes to the development of body image and weight-related behaviors (Wang, Houshyar, & Prinstein, 2006). Shomaker and Furman (2009, 2010) found that interpersonal pressure from parents, romantic partners and friends are important sources of influence on attitudes or behaviors towards muscle gaining and on anorexic-like and bulimic-like behaviors such as drive for thinness, excessive dieting, excessive exercising, purging and binging. According to Grieve (2007), the views of muscularity as the ideal body type for men are reinforced by family, significant others and friends. Social influence is a strong predictor of dietary behaviors (Huon, Lim, & Gunewardene, 2000). Research has shown that members of particular social groups may exhibit the same behaviors as their peers in order to avoid being rejected (Shea & Pritchard, 2007). If and when uniformity exists in social groups it can be implied that friends will tend to consume the same type of media. According to Tiggemann and Miller (2010), about 82.5% of adolescent females report knowing about websites focusing on appearance through their friends. Media influence in combination with the influence friends exert over disordered eating and exercise behaviors, may suggest that friends affect the consumption of media in the form of viewing pro-anorexia websites in pursuit of thinness and drive for muscularity.

Research has shown that media usage has increased the occurrence of disordered eating behaviors and attitudes (Carney & Louw, 2006). Disordered eating and exercise behaviors have been thought to be a female trend, and in past research, males have been ignored. However, studies show that males are at risk of developing disordered eating behaviors as well (Weltzin et al., 2005). Increased exposure to male ideals creates an increased level of drive for thinness and is an important predictor of drive for muscularity in men (Leit et al., 2002). This influence has become even stronger as mass media expands to the realm of the World Wide Web and with the birth of pro-anorexia websites, media influences on body image, exercise behaviors and disordered eating has increased. Pro-anorexia websites are full of pictures of thin female models, muscular and thin male models, as well as letters or quotes encouraging the continuation of anorexia, which has been found to have harmful effects (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2007). The media is an important source of body ideals for both men and women (Grabe et al., 2008). However, friend influence over the viewership and use of pro-anorexia websites may add to the already harmful effects of viewing pro-anorexia websites alone. Due to the impact friends have on both men’s and women’s dieting, drive for thinness, excessive exercise and the desire to gain muscle mass (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Shomaker & Furman, 2009), it may be possible that friends influence the purposes of media use. Thus, friends could influence each other to view pro-anorexia websites to continue or institute drive for thinness and drive for muscularity.

The primary purpose of the present study is to explore the relationships between pro-anorexia website viewing, drive for thinness in females, and drive for muscularity in males in the college student population. Literature suggests that pro-anorexia websites and friend influence over the viewership of the websites may affect men’s drive for muscularity and women’s drive for thinness (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2006). Therefore, we have decided to focus on drive for thinness in females and drive for muscularity in males. We will also compare the correlations between pro-anorexia website viewing and drive for thinness and drive for muscularity against the relationships between general website viewing and drive for thinness and drive for muscularity. Second, the present study will examine the influence of friends on the use of pro-anorexia websites as a means to aid in the pursuit of thinness in females and the drive for muscularity in males. Finally, it will examine whether pro-anorexia website viewership and friend influence over viewership of pro-anorexia websites predict drive for thinness and drive for muscularity. Overall, this study hopes to expand on the research of pro-anorexia websites and their effects on drive for thinness and muscularity among the collegiate population.

We propose four hypotheses. Hypothesis 1: Drive for thinness will correlate with more frequent viewing of pro-anorexia websites as well as with general website viewing in women. Hypothesis 2: Drive for muscularity will
correlate with more frequent viewing of pro-anorexia websites as well as with more general website viewing in men. Hypothesis 3: The influence of friends over the viewership of pro-anorexia websites will correlate with the viewership of pro-anorexia websites in both men and women. Hypothesis 4: Pro-anorexia website viewership will be predictive of drive for thinness in women and drive for muscularity in men. In addition, friend influence to view those websites will also be predictive of drive for thinness in women and drive for muscularity in men.

Method

Participants

Approximately 300 introductory psychology students 18 years or older participated in this study. Participants ranged in age, gender and race. About 55.9% were female students and 39.5% were male students. The average age was 22.37 (SD=6.25), with the oldest student being 55 years old and the youngest 18 years old. About 76.8 % of students were Caucasian, 6.5% Latino, 5.5% Asian, 1.9% African-American, 1.0% Pacific Islander, 1.3% Native Americans and 2.9% considered themselves as ‘Other.’ The Institutional Review Board approved the study protocol before data collection began.

Materials and procedure

Drive for thinness. Disordered eating symptoms were measured by the Drive for Thinness Subscale (DT) from the Eating Disorder Inventory (Garner & Olmsted, 1984). The subscale is known to reliably distinguish individuals with symptoms of anorexia and those without symptoms of anorexia (Garner, Olmsted, & Garfinkel, 1983). Participants respond to statements regarding extreme dieting, preoccupation with weight, and the fear of gaining weight (i.e., I thinking about dieting and I am preoccupied with the desire to be thinner) using a 6- point Likert Scale (1=always, 2=usually, 3=often, 4=sometimes, 5=rarely and 6=never). Items were summed to create a scale score (α =.92).

Drive for muscularity. Drive for muscularity was measured by the Drive for Muscularity Scale (DFM) (McCreary & Sasse, 2000). The DFM questions were adapted to include questions about how they felt about body tone (i.e., I think I would feel more confident if I had more muscle mass/body tone). Responses were based on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = always, 2 = very often, 3 = often, 4 = sometimes, 5 = rarely, and 6 = never). The DFM is scored by obtaining the average rating of the items, with higher scores indicating a greater drive for muscularity (α =.91).

Pro-anorexia websites influence. Pro-anorexia websites influence questionnaire was adapted by the author from the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS) (Cusumano & Thompson, 2001). The MMIS questions were adapted to ask about pro-anorexia website viewership (i.e., I like to browse websites that support anorexia) and the motivations behind viewership of the websites (i.e., I like to browse websites that support anorexia in order to get motivated to lose weight). Responses were based on a 5-point Likert Scale (1=strongly agree, 2= agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4= disagree and 5=strongly disagree). Items were summed to create a scale score (α =.79).

General media influence. General media influence questionnaire was adapted by the author from the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS) (Cusumano & Thompson, 2001). The MMIS questions were adapted to ask about general website viewership (i.e., I like to browse websites that contain pictures of thin celebrities.) and the motivations behind viewership of the websites (i.e., I would like my body to look like the pictures of models). Responses were based on a 5-point Likert Scale (1=strongly agree, 2= agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4= disagree and 5=strongly disagree). Items were averaged to create a scale (α =.85).

Friend influence. Friend influence questionnaire was adapted from the Perceived Friend Preoccupation with Weight and Dieting Scale by Shroff (2005). The 9-item scale was adapted to ask questions more relevant to the encouragement of disordered eating behaviors and the viewership of pro-anorexia websites (i.e., How often do your friends: Encourage you to view websites that support anorexia). Responses were based on a 5-point Likert Scale (1= always, 2=usually, 3=often, 4=sometimes, 5=rarely and 6=never).
never, 2= rarely, 3=sometimes, 4= quite often and 5= very often). Higher scores indicated a higher friend influence over viewership and drive for thinness ($\alpha = .88$).

**General friend influence.** General friend influence questionnaire was adapted from the Perceived Friend Preoccupation with Weight and Dieting Scale by Shroff (2005). The 9-item scale was adapted to ask questions more relevant to the encouragement of disordered eating behaviors (i.e., How often do your friends: Encourage you to lose weight, Comment on each other’s weight, and Talk about weight and dieting). Responses were based on a 5-point Likert Scale (1= never, 2= rarely, 3=sometimes, 4= quite often and 5= very often). Items scores were averaged to create a scale ($\alpha = .84$).

Undergraduate students were given the surveys individually through Qualtrics, an online survey software. Time limits to complete the survey were not set, thus an average time of completion was not recorded. Upon participation completion, each student was awarded credit points towards their General psychology class grade.

**Results**

The relation between media, friend influence, and drive for muscularity in men

As predicted, drive for muscularity was positively correlated with more frequent viewing of pro-anorexia websites (see Table 1). Drive for muscularity and general website viewing were also positively correlated (see Table 1). Drive for muscularity did not correlate with friend influence to view pro-anorexia websites, or with general friend influence (see Table 1).

The relation between media, friend influence, and drive for thinness in women

Our hypothesis that the drive for thinness would correlate with more frequent viewing of pro-anorexia websites was supported (see Table 2). Drive for thinness was positively correlated with general website viewing (see Table 2). Finally, drive for thinness was positively correlated with friend influence to view pro-anorexia websites as well as with general friend influence (see Table 2).

Predicting drive for muscularity in men and drive for thinness in women

In order to determine predictors for drive for muscularity in men and drive for thinness in women, we regressed the viewing of pro-anorexia websites, general websites, friend influence to view pro-anorexia websites and general friend influence on DFT and DFM using the stepwise method separately for men and women (see Table 3). Interestingly, the only predictor of drive for muscularity in men was viewership of pro-anorexia websites, $R^2 = .10$, $F(1,116) = 12.31$, $p = .001$ (see Table 3).

Similarly, pro-anorexia website viewership was the primary predictor of drive for thinness in women $R^2 = .30$, $F(1,161) = 70.79$, $p < .001$, with general friend influence serving as the secondary predictor, $R^2 = .39$, $F(2,160) = 50.87$, $p < .001$, and general website viewing as the tertiary predictor, $R^2 = .41$, $F(3, 159) = 37.48$, $p < .001$ (see Table 3).

**Discussion**

We hypothesized that drive for thinness would correlate with more frequent viewing of pro-anorexia websites, as well as with general website viewing in women. We further hypothesized that drive for muscularity would correlate with more frequent viewing of pro-anorexia websites, as well as with more general website viewing in men. Both of these hypotheses were supported. In addition, we hypothesized that the influence of friends over the viewership of pro-anorexia websites would be related to the viewership of pro-anorexia websites in both men and women, which was also supported. We expected that pro-anorexia website viewership would be predictive of drive for thinness in women and muscularity in men. Lastly, we proposed that friend influence to view those websites would also be predictive of drive for thinness in women and drive for muscularity in men. Results were not quite as we predicted, as will be discussed below separately for men and women.
Men

The results from the present study show a positive relationship between drive for muscularity and pro-anorexia website viewing in men. This is not surprising given the research suggesting that increased exposure to male ideals creates an increased level of drive for thinness and is an important predictor of drive for muscularity in men (Leit et al., 2002). Contrary to our hypothesis, we found that friend influence to view pro-anorexia websites did not correlate with the increase of drive for muscularity in men, nor did general friend influence. This is interesting given that Agliata and Tantleff-Dunn (2004) and Shomaker and Furman (2009) suggested friends have influence over the dieting, drive for thinness, excessive exercise and the desire to gain muscle mass in both men in women. Future research will need to explore this issue in more depth.

Additionally, the present showed that pro-anorexia website viewership was the only predictor of drive for muscularity in men. This is not surprising given previous research (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Baird & Grieve, 2006; Derenne, 2006; Leit et al., 2002) that has consistently shown media, and in this case viewership of pro-anorexia websites, are a strong predictor for muscularity because of the portrayal of the male body ideal.

Women

The present study found that viewing and using pro-anorexia websites and general websites is predictive of drive for thinness in women. This is not surprising given Rodgers et al. (2010) finding that the influence of mass media is one contributor to increased drive for thinness. When it came to friend influence, we found a significant relationship between the influence to view pro-anorexia websites and drive for thinness, as well as general friend influence. Literature suggests that although media is indeed proving to be a strong influence on disordered eating and exercise behaviors, friend influence seems to still make its mark as a contributing factor. Corroborating research by Tiggemann and Miller (2010) found that a high percentage of girls reported friend influence on website viewing choices. The results from the present study are also in accordance with research suggesting that social influence is a factor in predicting dieting behaviors (Huon et al., 2000) and that close relationships (i.e., friends and family) influence the development of drive for thinness, excessive exercise and the desire to gain muscle mass (Shomaker & Furman, 2009).

Additionally, the present study showed that pro-anorexia website viewership was a strong predictor of drive for thinness in women, followed by general friend influence and general website viewing. Research by Bardone-Cone and Cass (2006, 2007) and Carney and Louw (2006) has suggested that media has harmful effects on individuals and that it may increase the likelihood of developing disordered eating. The present study’s results reveal that media may enhance drive for thinness in women. Homan (2010) suggested that the increased promotions of thin body ideals makes disordered eating behaviors harder to prevent. Results show that although in some instances the effect may be small, the relationship between media and existence of drive for thinness is still present. Therefore, it can be inferred that such body ideals in media, such as pro-anorexia websites, may impact the development of drive for thinness in women.

Overall, these findings suggest that women may be more susceptible to the influence of pro-anorexia websites than men. The results also showed that as friend influence to view pro-anorexia websites increases so does the viewership of pro-anorexia websites. Though the relationships were moderately correlated, especially in women, it gives us an insight into the influence friends have in the choices individuals make while in the college environment. Friends may still be significantly influencing the consumption and use of media in college students. However, it is important to note, friend influence to view pro-anorexia websites affects drive for thinness in women, but not drive for muscularity in men.

Limitations

The present study has several limitations that must be addressed. First, this study was correlational in nature; we cannot say whether viewership of pro-anorexia websites causes drive for thinness or drive for muscularity. Another limitation is that the results were based on self-report survey data, which does not ensure complete honesty from the participants.
Conclusion

Our study shows that while drive for muscularity in men is correlated with the viewership of pro-anorexia websites, drive for thinness in women has a stronger relationship with the viewership of pro-anorexia websites. Friend influence to view pro-anorexia websites is correlated with the viewership of pro-anorexia websites; however friend influences to view pro-anorexia websites only related to drive for thinness and not drive for muscularity. Lastly, pro-anorexia websites viewership is a strong predictor of drive for thinness in women and the only predictor of drive for muscularity in men.

All in all we believe the findings in this study will aid in the expansion of knowledge of pro-anorexia websites. Understanding what factors may lead to the development of disordered eating and exercise behaviors, specifically drive for muscularity and thinness, will allow for greater treatment methods and effectiveness. Knowledge in this area will also help address the increasing threat of the online realm on body image issues. Overall awareness of the effects of viewing pro-anorexia websites will help the greater population educate individuals on the harmful effects of these websites. Future research should examine how pro-anorexia websites affect the development of disordered eating, as well as the eating disorders anorexia and bulimia.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express her appreciation to Dr. Mary Pritchard for all the support and guidance, to Dr. Kimberly Henderson and Dr. Teresa Taylor, to my fellow McNair Scholars, especially to Lori Henderson, to the McNair program (Helen, Diana and Greg), to my research partner, Ernesto Soto. To my lovely family and my parents to whom I owe all that I am. To Edward Kim, my husband, who has supported me in everything that I do.

Table 1. Correlations Between Friend and Media influence and Drive for Muscularity in Men

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Drive for muscularity</td>
<td>3.70(.93)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pro-anorexia website use</td>
<td>1.75(.64)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>.73**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. General website viewing</td>
<td>2.24(.84)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>.29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Friend influence over pro-anorexia websites</td>
<td>1.31(.65)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. General friend influence</td>
<td>2.20(.62)</td>
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</table>

Note. *p < .001, **p < .05
Note. CI = confidence interval
### Table 2. Correlations Between Friend and Media Influence and Drive for Thinness in Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>1. Drive for thinness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.10(8.4)</td>
<td>.57*</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.51*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Pro-anorexia website use</td>
<td></td>
<td>.77*</td>
<td>.40*</td>
<td>.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. General website viewing</td>
<td></td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Friend Influence over pro-anorexia websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.52*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. General friend influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .001, **p < .05

*Note. CI = confidence interval

### Table 3. Predictors of Drive for Thinness in Women and Drive for Muscularity in Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 Pro-anorexia websites</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 Pro-anorexia websites</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General friend influence</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 Pro-anorexia websites</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General friend influence</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General media influence</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. **p < .001, *p < 0.05
References


Gay Marriage and the Citizens’ Initiative: A Comparative Analysis

Benjamin Larsen: McNair Scholar

Dr. Ross Burkhart: Mentor

Political Science

Abstract

The legalization of gay marriage has become a contentious issue in the United States, especially for individual state governments. The variation between gay marriage policies in US states ranges from complete ban of all partnership benefits to complete marriage equality for homosexual couples. This study seeks to explain this variation by looking at the possible mechanical factors that could affect state gay marriage policies. Specifically, this study looks at the influence the presence or lack of the citizens’ initiative process has on the gay marriage movement. The sample is seven states that have previously or currently legalized gay marriage through at least one branch of the state government. The results show that a correlation does exist between the citizens’ initiative process and the repeal or retention of state gay marriage laws. A state in which citizens do not have access to the citizens’ initiative will be more likely to retain gay marriage laws than a state where the initiative process is allowed.

Introduction

The debate over marriage equality has spread throughout the world at an alarming pace over the last decade. Currently, ten nations have legalized gay marriage: Netherlands (2001), Belgium (2003), Canada (2005), Spain (2005), South Africa (2006), Sweden (2009), Norway, (2009), Iceland (2010), Portugal (2010), and Argentina (2010). The United States is among the nations still wrangling over same-sex unions. Only five of the 50 states have legalized gay marriage, while about 30 states have passed constitutional bans against legal recognition. The issue of gay marriage has developed into a heated public debate since the Hawaii Supreme Court became the first political entity to deem the practice legal under the state constitution in 1993 (Killian, 2003, p. 54). However, marriage licenses were never granted to same-sex couples because the decision was soon overturned by the Hawaii State Legislature. Nevertheless, the monumental case caused a surge of anti-gay marriage sentiments across the United States that eventually resulted in the passage of the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 by Congress (Rimmerman and Wilcox, 2007, p. 304). This officially reserved marriage for heterosexual couples at the federal level. Currently, the majority of US states narrowly define marriage as one man and one woman, while others are moving toward marriage equality for all sexual orientations. The purpose of this study is to compare the status of gay marriage laws in states. The key component of this study is determining the factors that contribute to the passage or impediment that may occur. Factors like religiosity, education levels, and public opinion of the electorate are common explanations for the status of gay marriage in a state. However, this study takes a slightly different approach by examining the citizens’ initiative process as a key factor of the repeal of gay marriage laws. This study looks at the citizens’ initiative’s effects on the seven states that have already legalized gay marriage.

While public opinion plays a major role in determining a state’s gay marriage policies, this argument is limited. For example, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) reported that Proposition 8, which amended the constitution of California to limited marriage to one man and one woman, was approved by California voters 52 percent to 48 percent in 2008. Moreover, in 2010, more Californians supported gay marriage than opposed it in their state (Baldassare, Bonner, Petek, & Willcoxon, 2010). Meanwhile, public support for gay marriage in Iowa remains well under 50 percent, with the University of Iowa reporting a 28 percent approval rating just before the Iowa Supreme Court legalized the practice in 2008 (UI Political Scientists Examine Support for Gay Marriage in Iowa, 2008, par. 1). Since public opinion provides a limited explanation of whether a state will legalize gay marriage or not, other factors, like the citizens’ initiative, should be examined.

One obvious pattern among states that have legalized gay marriage is the citizens’ initiative law. According to the Initiative and Referendum Institute Website, of the five states that condone same-sex marriages, four do not have any form of citizens’ initiative, with Massachusetts being the exception (Matsusaka, 2009). The citizens’
initiative is a key democratic mechanism that affects the status of gay marriage in states. This could explain why California, which has much greater support for gay marriage, continues to reject same-sex couples the right to marry, while more conservative Iowa allows the same relationships that title of marriage. In fact, while the Iowa State Legislature again blocked a constitutional amendment from a popular vote, Danny Carroll of the Iowa Family Policy Center stated that “our resources and efforts are focused on letting the people of Iowa vote” (Same-Sex Marriage in Iowa, 2010). The popular vote appears to be a valuable tool for anti-gay marriage groups to achieve their goals.

With factors like public opinion failing to fully explain the variation in US states’ gay marriage policies, the mechanisms at play in individual states’ policy processes must be considered. How does direct democracy affect gay marriage policies in US states? To answer this question, I developed the following hypothesis:

Initiative states are more likely the non-initiative states to repeal gay marriage laws after one or more of the governmental branches have legalized gay marriage.

This study will examine the effects that the presence or lack of the citizens’ initiative has on the gay rights campaign in the states that have at one point legalized gay marriage. By comparing these states’ gay marriage policies and direct democracy laws, the study sheds light on the popular initiative’s effects the gay marriage movement’s push for equal protection of homosexual marriages.

**Literature Review**

This project deals with the citizens’ initiative process and gay marriage policy; therefore, it requires review of the bodies of literature concerning both research areas. Matsusaka defines the citizens’ initiative as the process by which “citizens…propose and pass legislation without the consent of their elected representatives” (2004, p. 1). The literature surrounding the citizens’ initiative process (also called the popular initiative process) is extensive, because many scholars have debated the process’ merits since members of the Progressive Movement began pushing the idea in the early 1900s (Smith and Tolbert, 2004, p. 2). Since South Dakota first implemented its citizens’ initiative in 1898, a total of 24 states have adopted some form of popular initiative (Dye and MacManus, 2009). Over the last century the citizens’ initiative has become an integral part of the policy process in these 24 states and is used by citizens each year.

Even though the process is popular and widely used in the United States, scholars remain deeply divided over the legitimacy of the citizens’ initiative process. Matsusaka provides a clear overview of the current debate in his book, *For the Many or the Few: The Initiative, Public Policy, and American Democracy*. He explains that supporters of the citizens’ initiative, including Matsusaka, argue that the initiative process is the most effective method of assuring that policies with the most public support are implemented by the government. They further argue that because citizens can overrule or prevent the legislature from passing unpopular legislation, the initiative process is necessary for legitimate state governments. However, those that are opposed to the use of citizens’ initiative claim that the initiative process is simply another tool for special interest groups to use. Opponents argue that the organization that can mobilize the most money can launch the more effective campaign and therefore win a ballot initiative. For example, many opponents of citizens’ initiatives believe that the passage of California’s Proposition 8 was a result of well funded campaign rather than public opinion. Overall, Matsusaka showed in his study that the results citizens’ initiatives often correlate with public opinion. However, he only studied initiatives that dealt with fiscal policy; therefore, this finding is limited when studying morality policy, such as gay marriage (2004, p. 2-4).

Other scholars have taken different approaches to studying the citizens’ initiative process. Gerber, Lupia, McCubbins, and Kiewiet studied the citizens’ initiative process during the implementation phase. They argue that the effectiveness of the initiative process is limited because politicians that do not agree with a policy are unlikely to enforce the new law. In other words, the initiative process is designed to sidestep elected government officials to make policy decisions, but those same officials are also responsible for enforcement of laws. Untimely, if elected representatives do not agree with the initiative, the law will not be implemented (2001, p. 1-5). However, Gerber et al. also argue that highly salient issue, such as gay marriage, demand a lot of transparency, so politicians are more likely to implement those policies (2001, p. 6). As a result, citizens’ initiatives concerning gay rights policies are very likely to be implemented.

Smith and Tolbert also have a unique take on the citizens’ initiative process. Their argument in favor of the popular initiative rests on the educational benefits that they claim can be gained from using this process. These benefits include boosting voter turnout, increasing political discussion and knowledge among citizens, and raising confidence in the government. Overall, Smith and Tolbert believe these educational benefits were mostly...
overlooked by progressives throughout the twentieth century and attempt to insert these benefits into the discussion of the popular initiative’s merits (Smith and Tolbert, 2004).

Are minority groups affected, or even targeted, by the popular initiative process? This is the most significant question that is left unanswered by the literature surrounding the citizens’ initiative process. Both Matussaka and Smith and Tolbert address this issue (2004, p. 117; 2004, p. 144). They agree that majority tyranny may be an issue that harms minority groups, including homosexuals. However, the analysis is mostly speculative and very little evidence is presented to support or reject this claim. My research will help fill this gap in the literature by providing insight into the possibility that minority groups are discriminated against through the initiative process, specifically the gay population.

The second body of literature that is necessary for this project deals with gay marriage policy in the United States. Vanhorn suggests, “The literature that exists on homosexuality can be divided into two different groups. The first group focuses on the formation of attitudes and public opinion towards homosexuality. The second group of research focuses on the general policy process from formation to outcome as it relates to all aspects of homosexuality” (2008, p. 7). This study focuses on the second group of research that Vanhorn defines, specifically dealing with gay marriage. Furthermore, Werum and Winders argue that much of the research done on gay marriage policy follows that assumption that “the structure of the state determines the extent to which different social classes or groups shape policy formation” (2001, p. 389). This assumption allows this study to look at the policy processes of individual states to determine why states’ gay marriage laws do not necessarily reflect the public opinion.

My review of the current literature about gay marriage policy shows support for the notion that citizens’ initiative laws have a great influence on the gay marriage movement in individual states. Muccioroni states that “the opponents of same-sex marriage have used the ballot initiative extensively and successfully to get voters to approve bans on gay marriage” (2008, p. 219). Similarly, Killian recognized the citizens’ initiative as the paramount policy tool that can disrupt other variables that may determine the gay marriage status of a state. She asserts that many states, including California and Maine, “[have] the confounding variable of allowing popular referendum and ballot initiative, an important consideration but one that could render other variables moot” (2003, p. 14). Scholars recognize citizens’ initiative as a major factor in the gay rights movement, but specific evidence to support this claim is difficult to pinpoint in the current body of literature on the subject. My hope is that this study will provide further evidence that shows the citizens’ initiative process as a serious detriment to gay marriage activists. My research will accomplish this by specifically examining the citizens’ initiative as a leading variable in the passage and/or repeal of gay marriage laws, unlike most other studies.

Additionally, Werum and Winders explain the use of citizens’ initiatives by anti-gay marriage groups, “If central state arenas like state courts and local legislatures appear predisposed to siding with gay rights advocates, opponents may have had to rely on more peripheral arenas” (2001, p. 404). They further explain that during the 1990s, gay marriage advocates were no longer political “outsiders” and possessed much more influence in governmental institutions. Therefore, anti-gay rights groups turned elsewhere to push their agendas. In the past three years there has been a resurgence of the use of citizens’ initiatives by anti-gay marriage groups and these laws are again a main influence in the gay rights movement in the United States.

Methodology

The framework for this study will mostly deal with the citizens’ initiative as a tool of social policy. Direct democracy laws exist to give the public greater control over their government, including state legislatures, courts, and executives. However, the use of citizens’ initiatives in the anti-gay rights movement, as well as other social movements, is specifically to deny minority rights. Therefore, these laws create a direct avenue for a majority to target minorities. This phenomenon presents a problem for our democratic ideals because majority rule turns into majority tyranny when minority group’s rights cannot be protected by the government. I approached the campaigns in my cases with this majority tyranny in mind and look for specific methods and events that explain how anti-gay marriage groups use citizens’ initiatives to discriminate against homosexuals as a marginalized group.

This study focuses on the gay marriage laws in the seven states that have already legalized gay marriage: California, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. (It is important to note that I considered adding both Hawaii (repealed gay marriage law) and the District of Colombia (gay marriage legal) to my sample, but the methods used by each to determine gay marriage laws were significantly different than the seven-state sample.) I chose to limit my sample to these states because I am able control for the types of laws that have been passed throughout the country. The extreme variation in marriage policies among the 50 states includes complete marriage restrictions to civil unions to full marriage equality. Isolating the states dealing with repealing equal marriage laws already in place allows me to observe the effects of the initiative process without having to
distinguish between a variety of different policy questions. For example, the question of legalizing gay marriage is vastly different than the question of allowing limited partnership benefits.

Data collection for this portion was mostly based on archival research. I focused on government documents. I paid particularly close attention to state constitutions when studying each state's direct democracy laws. Also, the amendment formula for each state constitution was a consideration while studying the sample. Next, I used the information from government records to research newspapers and campaign advertisements that were/are in use. This allowed me to get specific knowledge of the dates and methods used to repeal (or attempt to repeal) the state’s gay marriage laws.

Results

After a review of each state’s gay marriage policy, I compiled my findings in Table 1. All seven states legalized gay marriage either by ruling of the state supreme court or through approval by the state legislature. Of these seven states, five still allow same-sex couples to wed. Two of the seven (California and Maine), both repealed their gay marriage laws through the citizens’ initiative process. Four of the five states in which gay marriage is currently legal are non-initiative states.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Method of Initial Legalization</th>
<th>Currently Recognizes Gay Marriage?</th>
<th>Initiative Process?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Legislature</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>Legislature</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>Legislature</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This initial findings is supportive of my hypothesis because a strong correlation between the initiative process and the retention of gay marriage laws. In every instance that either the state legislature or courts legalized gay marriage, the law was removed by a popular initiative. California voters overturned the California Supreme Court’s ruling that prohibiting gay marriage in unconstitutional in 2008, with the famous Proposition 8. The public in Maine repealed the marriage law enacted by the Maine State Legislature in 2009 (Winstein, 2009). As previously stated, four of the five states that currently allow gay marriage are non-initiative states. This correlation shows that the initiative process has an impact of the repeal of gay marriage laws in US states.

The only initiative state that allows gay marriages is Massachusetts. However, Massachusetts is an anomaly, because even though it is an initiative state, the state constitution forbids citizens to vote on initiative that would overturn a Massachusetts Supreme Court decision (Matsusaka, 2009). Since gay marriage was legalized through the Supreme Court in that state, the popular initiative could not be legally employed by anti-gay marriage groups. This unusual limitation to the initiative process in Massachusetts further supports my hypothesis, because, even though it is an initiative state, the citizens of Massachusetts do not have access to the repeal of the Massachusetts Supreme Court’s decision. Taking this constitutional limitation into account, every instance where the citizens’ initiative was not available to overturn the state’s gay marriage law, the practice remains recognized by the state. The correlation is even stronger if Massachusetts is not considered an initiative state in this instance.
Discussion

The results above show that the variation among state regarding gay marriage laws are partly due to mechanical factors, namely the citizens’ initiative process. Thus, I accept my hypothesis that initiative states are more likely the non-initiative states to repeal gay marriage laws after one or more of the governmental branches have legalized gay marriage. This study shows that presence of the citizens’ initiative process does have an effect on the gay marriage policies in US states. In states where citizens have access to direct democracy, the gay marriage laws that were passed by one branch of government were overturned by popular vote.

With a strong correlation established between the citizens’ initiative process and gay marriage laws (at least for the repeal of such laws), two important implications must be considered. Initially, the pro-gay marriage movement’s goal is to reach full marriage equality for homosexual and heterosexual couples. This goal is pursued mostly through state legislatures or courts. However, the presence of the citizens’ initiative presents an avenue for the repeal of gay marriage laws, even after they have been successfully passed by the state government. In states where the initiative process is legal, the battle over gay marriage moves from the legislative and judicial arenas to the electorate. The result is extensive campaigns for both sides of the gay marriage debate and increases the amount of media attention on the gay marriage movement.

Second, even though public opinion is an important factor in determining gay marriage policy in US states, mechanical factors also must be considered. The previously mentioned example contrasting the public opinion of Iowa and California shows that public opinion does not fully explain the variation among states on gay rights issues. This study helps explain how gay marriage laws can be contrary to popular opinion about gay marriage. Because mechanical factors influence the policy process, the views of the electorate are not necessarily reflected in a state’s policy toward gay marriage. This is true for both states in which the public supports gay marriage and in states where the public opposes the practice.

Three additional observations can be drawn from these results. First, since the debate over gay marriage centers around the constitutionality of the practice, a state’s constitutional structure plays a major role in determining the fate of state gay marriage policies. Again this is illustrated by comparing the amending formulas of California and Iowa. California’s constitution can be amended by the public very quickly and easily compared to most state constitutions. The California state constitution can be amended by a majority vote on an initiative like Proposition 8 in 2008. On the other hand, Iowa’s constitution is very difficult to amend in comparison with other states. In Iowa, an amendment must pass two consecutive legislatures and then a popular vote. A constitutional amendment in Iowa takes a minimum of two and a half years to become fully realized. New Hampshire, Vermont, and Connecticut constitutions have similar amending procedures as the Iowa constitution (Matsusaka, 2009). The ease of amending the state constitution is an important factor in whether a state’s gay marriage law is repealed or not.

The second observation deals with the initial mechanism of gay marriage legalization, either the state legislature or state supreme court. In this study, I found that the fate of a state’s gay marriage law was not significantly affected by the means by which gay marriage was first legalized in the state. Lastly, the presence of the citizens’ initiative did not determine the activity of anti-gay marriage movements within a state. Anti-gay marriage movements where present in all the states in my sample. The strength of the organizations varied by state, but not according to the state’s direct democracy laws.

Conclusion

The outlook of the gay marriage movement has progressed significantly since the Hawaii Supreme Court first ruled that denying homosexuals the right to marry was unconstitutional in 1993. Even though public opinion and other factors help explain the status of gay marriage in US states, this study shows that the citizens’ initiative is an important variable that influences the repeal of gay marriage laws even after they have been passed by one or more branches of the state government. Since this study was limited to seven states, future research should explore the relationship of gay marriage laws and popular initiatives on a national scale. A 50 state study would also shed light on the influence of state constitutions, legislative versus judicial initial passage, and the strength of anti-gay marriage movements. Additionally, future research should also be conducted on the level of influence the citizens’ initiative has on the gay marriage movement in relation to other factors, such as public opinion. This study shows that the citizens’ initiative process must be considered when determining the ability of gay marriage laws to be repealed or withheld by US states.
Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all those who helped make this project possible: Dr. Ross Burkhart (Faculty Mentor), Helen Barnes (McNair Advisor), the McNair program staff, and the entire McNair cohort.

References

Lifestyles of the Not So Rich and Famous: Ideological Shifts in Popular Culture, Reagan-Era Sitcoms and Portrayals of the Working Class

April Janise Raine: McNair Scholar
Dr. Virginia Husting: Mentor

History

Abstract

My research identifies, through examination of popular culture, a major shift in meanings and values surrounding the working class at a vital time in US history: the Reagan years. During the Reagan Era, the working class was weakened economically, politically and ideologically. I explore three salient themes evidenced throughout the family-centered sitcoms analyzed in my research: Minimization of Working-Class jobs, Working Class Self-deprecation and Defeat, and the Stigmatization of aid/assistance. These themes emerged from an inductive analysis of family based sitcoms (airing 1980-1988) which encompassed main characters who were both representatives of the corporate elite and had direct interactions with working class characters. During the Reagan Era, nearly the entirety of working class characters in US sitcoms were servants, laborers or adoptees of upper middle class families; whose only meaningful role was as a foil for the values, work ethic and behavior of the corporate class. Through my research I found that during the Reagan era, class representations on television contributed to an enervation of working class issues and thus bolstered Reagan administration policies.

Ask a group of first generation college students in the U.S. to raise the hands if they identify as working class, and there will be a pause, an uncomfortable shift in seats, and a few hesitant hands in the air. This experiment is enlightening since it is indicative of how American society perceives class. Most Americans are unsure about class and we are hesitant to discuss it. This is not surprising, since class is not “a central category of cultural discourse”¹ throughout American society. Since the discussion of class is missing and misrepresented in cultural discourse this in turn makes “class as class” difficult to understand.² Class is an integral part of identity so these misunderstandings have a cumulative and negative effect not only on individuals but also in communities. Therefore, it is critical for historians and media scholars to analyze how class is reflected and defined over time and throughout culture.

Rick Fantasia poignantly asked, what are the “cultural practices, collective actions, processes of organizational construction (and destruction)—that have been central to the sustenance (and weakening) of class cohesion and definition, yet that have been largely ignored in the study of class consciousness?”³ One of the many answers to this thought provoking question is the way in which class is presented throughout popular culture, and most especially, how it is presented on television. During the Reagan era, class representations on television contributed to an enervation of working class issues and thus bolstered Reagan administration policies. Although many media and cultural scholars have examined class representation on television, only a few studies have concentrated on the class related messages of particular programs.⁴

This paper analyzes the representation of class difference and interaction in US primetime sitcoms from 1980-1988; focusing specifically on personifications of corporate capitalism and the working class. The shows

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² Ibid. 142.
analyzed were the only family based sitcoms\(^5\) (airing 1980-1988) which encompassed main characters who were both representatives of the corporate elite and had direct interactions with working class characters. To define the social class of fictional characters the work of O’Guinn, Shrum, Ehrenrich, and Kendall was followed. According to O’Guinn and Shrum, “Television commonly uses consumption symbols as a means of visual shorthand; what television characters have and the activities in which they participate mark their social status with an economy of explanatory dialogue.”\(^6\) In this research, the characters’ occupations were also used as markers of social status, with upper-class characters being defined as “owners of substantial enterprises, investors with diversified wealth, heirs to family fortunes and top executives of major corporations.”\(^7\) The working class characters were not only defined as “industrial workers in hard hats” but all the characters who were not professionals, managers, or entrepreneurs; who worked for wages rather than salaries; and who spent their working hours variously lifting, bending, driving, monitoring, typing, keyboarding, cleaning, providing physical care for others, loading, unloading, cooking, [and] serving.”\(^8\) This type of classification is further supported by the Museum of Broadcast, “since data on occupations can be used as a measure of the class distribution of television characters.”\(^9\)

Before analyzing these particular shows, it is important to understand how class has presented itself throughout television’s history. Since the invention of television, with minimal ebbs and flows, there has been an underrepresentation of working class characters on television. For example, a study of 262 domestic sitcoms, from 1946-1990, found that only 11 percent of those shows had blue collar, clerical and service workers as heads of household.\(^10\) Unfortunately, when working class people are portrayed they are generally portrayed in a negative way. Pepi Leistyna, analyzing representations of class on TV, found that working class individuals are overwhelmingly portrayed as failures who lack intelligence, a strong work ethic, healthy family values and who possess an ideology defined by reactionary politics.\(^11\) Even more, according to Barbara Ehrenreich, “working-class people are likely to cross the screen only as witnesses to crimes or sports events, never as commentators or—even when their own lives are under discussion—as experts.”\(^12\) TV’s history however does present distinct cultural shifts regarding the exposure working class characters receive. These social shifts implicitly reflect shifts in cultural values.

According to George Lipsitz, in the 1950s, there were several popular shows about working class families.\(^13\) However, Lipsitz found that as consumer culture began to readily define American family life and cultural norms, family sitcoms about the working class were altered to fit consumerist values. One reason was, that “sponsors hardly relished the prospect of shows situated in lower class environments” because sponsors were “trying to ‘upgrade the consumer,’” and they “preferred beautiful people in mouth-watering décor to convey what it meant to climb the socioeconomic ladder.”\(^14\) Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, although few in number, primetime shows still included working class main characters, whose lives existed in a world of working class perceptions and experiences, seen for example in shows such as Good Times, Sanford & Son and Alice. Although fraught with stereotypes, the working class characters inhabited a space of their own; the world of bosses and corporate America was a distant and nebulous one. These more complex working class characters coincided with a time of changing attitudes and policies toward people living in poverty and the working poor.

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\(^5\) “A series was designated as family-focused if it met two criteria. First, the majority of its continuing (regular) cast had to portray genetically or legally related individuals. Second, its primary ‘set’ and/or dramatic focus had to revolve around the family domicile.” (Thomas and Callahan 1982).


\(^9\) Museum of Broadcast Television

\(^10\) Bettie, “Class Dismissed?” 127.


\(^12\) Ehrenreich, “The Silenced Majority,” 40.


\(^14\) Ibid, 372.
In 1964, Lyndon Johnson’s war on poverty introduced several new responses to the struggles facing many Americans. These responses included the Housing and Urban Development Act in 1965, the Model Cities Act in 1966 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act in 1965. The Housing and Urban Development act sought to help people living in poverty, but also benefited construction workers. Further, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, “designated more than $1 billion dollars for educationally deprived children,” while the Higher Education Act “established scholarships and low interest loan programs.” In 1967, food stamp distribution began and the free school lunch program was implemented. However, for many, especially women of color, the “changes of the 1960s meant nothing.” Instead, they found themselves affected more than ever by the “triple whammy of race, class and gender oppression.”

In contrast, during this time, the industrial working class experienced relative stability. For example, although industrial unions were shrinking due to numerous factors, union activity was still prevalent and by 1970 membership in public employees’ unions exceeded 4 million making it ten times larger than it had been fifteen years earlier. Concomitantly, in the early 1970s, working class characters showed up in primetime; displaying complexity within storylines seeking to reflect a realistic working class lifestyle. Shows such as Good Times, Sanford and Son, All in the Family, and Alice showed working class characters as flawed, truthful and relevant; and in an era not yet introduced to the sarcasm of Roseanne Arnold, “the Fonz and Laverne and Shirley retained their dignity in their everyday struggles against class biases."

In direct contrast with Leistyna’s work, during this narrow window of time, working class characters were also shown positively. For example, a study of family centered shows done by Callahan and Thomas in 1982 concluded that:

The television family generally enjoys stronger interpersonal harmony, more agreeable personalities, greater felicity and good will, and better problem outcomes when it is located in lower socioeconomic strata. This tendency appears strikingly in the distinction between working-class families and their unharmonious, unhappy and problem riddled upper-class counterparts.

However, this paper does not seek to propose that these were the halcyon days of television with regard to class issues and especially racial issues. For example, the show Good Times, “In order to negotiate its ‘authentic’ representation of black inner city poverty and the attending white racism…. had to soften the representation, making it more palatable to white, middle-class viewers...” Further, the Mexican-American, Asian-American, Native-American, Arab-American and Latino working class were also significantly underrepresented on television during this time. The white working class character, Archie Bunker developed by Norman Lear, had the potential to be a catalyst for social discussion on things like race, but instead became a stereotypical and negative representation of the white working class male. Additionally, from 1955 to 1971 “not one new working-class domestic sitcom appeared.”

These working class sitcoms of the 1970s also appeared in a time with significant class conflict. In the US, class tension had started to build in the 1960s during Vietnam when privileged men received draft deferments. Working class Americans also began to feel the effects of an 18% inflation rate, while “prices for food, housing, energy and medical care rose appreciably faster than for other items.” Additionally, working class jobs continued to be exported in large numbers and “even when jobs were not exported industrial production in many segments

16 Marty, Daily Life in The United States, 46.
17 Ibid, 130.
19 Marty, Daily Life in the United States, 100.
20 Museum of Broadcast Television.
22 Bodroghkozy, “Good times in Race Relations?” 413.
23 Museum of Broadcast Television.
26 Ibid, 196.
of the economy suffered,” most notably the auto industry. By the end of 1980, 200,000 auto industry workers had been laid off.\(^2\) Struggles for the working class continued into the 1980s and became more pronounced as Reagan took office. In 1981, auto layoffs increased to 215,000. By 1985, the economy measured by sales looked deceivingly better “but workers were not hired back in the same numbers in which they were laid off.”

As US workers experienced these economic upheavals, a drastic shift developed in the way working class characters were portrayed on TV. Such a shift reflects the fact that television is a key part of social change and shifting ideological values. Television is not the cause of social change but rather the effectiveness of television will “either hasten or delay” change.\(^2\)

As seen in Figure 1, the peak of this major shift in TV comes at the height of the Reagan administration. During the Reagan years, there was both an increase in family sitcoms and an almost complete erasure of standalone working class characters. “The movement of working-class people to the periphery of television’s dramatic worlds produces what Gebner called ‘symbolic annihilation’ i.e. they are invisible background in the dominant cultural discourse.”\(^2\) Thus this shift is salient since it comes at a time when the working class was weakened economically, politically and ideologically.

In the 1980’s, the working class was growing and the middle class shrinking. Between 1983 and 1988, unemployment decreased and while “the number of Americans employed rose, wages and incomes failed to rise sufficiently for most workers to improve their real standards of living.”\(^3\) This was due in part to the increase of service occupations. In 1985, only 26 percent of workers “produced goods while service occupations increased to 74 percent.”\(^3\) Between 1981 and 1986 “roughly five million Americans who had held their jobs for three years or more lost them after plant closings or layoffs.”\(^3\) Unions also suffered under the new administration. In 1981, Reagan introduced the nation to his feelings regarding unions when he broke up a workers strike by firing 12,000 members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization.\(^3\) Reagan era anti-labor rhetoric would continue throughout the 80s, when during the campaign of 1984, “the Republicans succeeded in indentifying organized labor as a selfish special interest whose programs came at the expense of the majority of citizens.”\(^3\) Throughout Reagan’s terms, it became clear that “Unions could not expect cordial or deferential treatment from the new administration…”\(^3\)

Although a child of the Great Depression, Reagan did not favor government help for the poor. Reagan bragged “that he and his family endured poverty in the twenties, when there were no government programs that might have provided relief.”\(^3\) As president, Reagan “preached that welfare had created ‘a kind of bondage’ in which the people are made subservient to the government that is handing out the largesse.”\(^3\) During Reagan’s presidency, the family based sitcoms—Silver Spoons, Who’s the Boss? and Diff’rent Strokes helped produce ideologies congruent with Reagan’s policies regarding unemployment, unions and welfare. In these shows, the major tropes of minimization of working class occupations, working class self defeat and shame, and the demonization of dependency reflect and justify the social and political climate of the Reagan era.

The show Silver Spoons, (1982-1987) is premised around a billionaire toy maker, Edward Stratton III, who acquired his money through a family fortune. With money from his family’s auto plant factories he opened up a toy factory. On the show, Edward lived with his son Ricky and was visited by reoccurring characters based in the corporate world including his secretary/love interest (Kate), his lawyer (Leonard), and his father and auto industry magnate (Edward Stratton II). Episodes of the show included such topics as private military schools, outsourcing a lug nut factory for cheaper labor costs, and acquiring a larger fortune through marriage. In many episodes, Edward Jr. is often framed through what Diana Kendall describes as a “poor little rich boy” lens. Edward is filthy rich and

29 Museum of Broadcast Television.
31 Bettie, “Class Dismissed?” 132.
34 Dulles and Dubosky, Labor in America, 392.
37 Troy, Morning in America, 91.
incompetent to boot, he is seemingly undeserving of his wealth because he is so clueless, yet the creators of the show paint him as a victim of a lonely childhood and Edward retains an endearing childlike innocence in raising his own son and thus in a way becomes endearing to the viewer.

Who’s the Boss? (1984-1992) revolved around WASP Angela Bower, president of one of the largest advertising firms in the nation. The pilot episode shows Angela’s decision to hire a male housekeeper; Bronx-based Tony Macelli, an out of work baseball player who is now struggling to make a living. Angela’s class status is coded into her occupation, the location and decoration of her Connecticut home and her physical appearance. Angela is Anglo-Saxon, blond and thin; matching “the thin and normatively beautiful characters of middle-class sitcoms.” Tony is also coded physically; Tony is Italian, with olive skin, and dark hair. Tony is muscular and several lines of dialogue reduce him to a sexual object. Tony brings his daughter Samantha (Sam) to live with him in the Bower household, which also includes Angela’s son Jonathan and her mother Mona (who lives next door). Most of the episodes deal with the novelty of a male housekeeper and gender role commentary is reoccurring. Angela is portrayed as a strong and powerful woman who “has it all” as Samantha tells her father in the pilot episode, but Angela represents a “bourgeois and careerist feminism” not the “gritty feminism” portrayed in the later sitcom Roseanne. The sexual tension existent between Tony and Angela dominate many of the episodes, but issues of class are equally pronounced.

The show Diff’rent Strokes (1978-1985) is premised around the adoption of two working class boys—Arnold and Willis. Adopted by Philip Drummond, (the CEO of a transnational corporation) as a favor to Arnold and Willis’ late mother who was also Drummond’s old housekeeper, the show is not only classist, but racist. Arnold and Willis are African-American while Drummond is white and the show is coded with symbols of paternalism and color-blind racism. Many episodes bring out the tiniest sliver of social commentary regarding discrimination in hiring, destruction of low cost housing and environmental devastation. However, while these things are momentarily brought to the surface, the connection between the role of corporate capitalism and these social problems are quickly reconciled or obfuscated. Above all, Drummond, like the other upper-class characters in these shows are portrayed as kind, interesting and important.

There are social and political reasons that “the media portray people who produce goods and services as much less interesting” than those who consume them. Throughout these shows not only are working class jobs portrayed as uninteresting they are depicted as irrelevant and there is a constant devaluing of working class labor. In the pilot episode of Who’s the Boss? Angela is hesitant to hire Tony as a housekeeper; Mona reassures her, “Don’t be sexist; men can do meaningless, unproductive work” [emphasis added]. As presented in these popular sitcoms, the minimization of working class jobs contributed to the ideological erasure of the working class by devaluing the labor they perform and their subsequently related struggles. In these shows, working class jobs are portrayed as expendable. Workers are fired and hired on the whims of the corporate class and workers are traded like supplies. This is reflective of a cultural attitude displayed between employers and employees. During the 1980s, “Employers had increasingly come to regard their employees as a ‘contingent’ workforce to be retained or dismissed depending on immediate circumstances.”

The Silver Spoons episode “The Best Christmas Ever” (12/18/82) implicitly portrays the conflict between US labor and the corporate elite. In this episode, the Stratton family comes into contact with a homeless family living in a cave in the wealthy area where the Stratton’s live. The homeless family, Jack, Ellen, and Joey have become displaced after Jack is fired from his job at a steel mill. Jack and Ellen’s son Joey enters the episode early, knocking on the Stratton’s door and asking for a job. Because of what he is wearing, his desire to earn a dollar and his quaint colloquiums it is easy for the viewer to identify Joey as a representation of the working class. In the initial dialogue between the two boys (Joey and Ricky), there is an immediate deference to Ricky by Joey. Joey addresses Ricky as “mister” not due to any formalities or difference in age but because Joey is the coded worker, while Ricky represents capital and the means that control it. Ricky goes on to “hire” Joey to hang a Christmas ornament and later on in the episode (after the Strattons donate their Christmas tree and gifts to Joey’s family), Ricky’s father Edward (disguised as Santa Claus) “hires” Joey’s father Jack.

Jack: Listen, who are you?
Edward: Edward Stratton III
Jack: You know, my first instinct was to throw you out of here.

38 Bettie, “Class Dismissed?” 137.
39 Ibid, 142.
40 Kendall, Framing Class, 233.
Edward: (looking worried) What’s your second instinct?
Jack: To say thank you. You really made my son happy. I’m gonna pay you back for all of this.
Edward: No, it’s not necessary. It’s Christmas. In the spirit of...
Jack: I don’t take handouts. I’ll find you some way to pay you back.
Edward: Well, I respect that. I’ll tell you what we’ll take it out of your first week’s paycheck.
Jack: My what?
Edward: Your first week’s paycheck. See I own a factory and I can really use a man like you.
Jack: Yeah?
Edward: Yeah, definitely. What do you do?

Because the two fathers represent worker and capital, (first established when Ricky “hires” Joey and then when Edward hires Jack), there is an unresolved conflict implicit in this scene. The implicit connection between the outsourcing of the Stratton factory in a previous episode and Jack’s lay-off in this episode is reconciled by Edward hiring Jack. Shows that acknowledge class are often presented with these kinds of conundrums, since:

[U]nresolved, active contradictions working in the reader’s consciousness would destroy the unified position of dominant specularity, and the complacent acceptance of omniscience that goes with it, and produce instead discomfort uncertainty, and an active desire to think through these contradictions not just in textual terms but in terms of the reader’s social experience. 42

In the above scene, the way in which the class tension is addressed both minimizes Jack’s role in the economy while simultaneously presenting the wealthy as generous. Although Jack is adamant about not accepting assistance, the writer conveys to the reader that this charity is acceptable as it presents the wealthy as generous at a time when their generosity is allowed, such as Christmastime. Seasonal generosity in the media offers temporary resolutions and is common across all forms of media.

According to Diane Kendall:

…television entertainment story lines using charitable framing focus on the need for a helping hand on ‘special occasions’ but do not suggest that a more focused effort should be made on a daily basis to help alleviate the larger societal problems that contribute to individual problems of poverty, hunger, and homelessness. 43

In Silver Spoons, the exchange between the two fathers provides important information about both classes by stating the importance of work and unimportance of working class jobs. For Edward, all workers are the same. Edward is not simply placating Jack by telling him he is right for the job, in the Stratton factory, menial labor is performed and could be performed by any able-bodied worker. However, for Jack, work is the most important thing as it eliminates any benefits, such as welfare or what Jack refers to as a “handout” in this scene. This episode aired at a time of substantial layoffs in the industrial sector and Jack’s plight echoes the uncertainty workers may have felt regarding their own future. As stable jobs in manufacturing decreased jobs in service industries increased and for many these low paying service jobs “were simply a dead-end way to maintain a marginal existence.” 44 Service jobs symbolized this new kind of working class uncertainty, since service jobs were often part-time and offered few benefits. As once well-respected and skilled jobs in manufacturing were being lost and replaced by unskilled labor, the minimization of any working class occupation in this show reflect Reagan’s attitude towards these shifts.

Reagan’s heroes of the 1980s were entrepreneurs45 not the working class. Regarding the plight of workers, Reagan attacked reporters asking “Is it news that some fellow out in South Succotash someplace has just been laid off that he should be interviewed nationwide?”46 Reagan instead toasted the “trailblazers mastering computers and other modern miracles.” In his 1984 inaugural address he stated: “Hope is reborn for couples dreaming of owning homes and for risk takers with vision to create tomorrow’s opportunities.” 47

42 Fiske, Television Culture, 35.
43 Kendall, Framing Class, 17.
45 Troy, Morning in America, 131.
46 Troy, Morning in America, 112.
47 Ibid, 120.
Minimizing the jobs performed by working class characters carries over into the characters’ internalized feelings of unworthiness. Both Tony in *Who’s the Boss?* and Jack in *Silver Spoons* are presented as defeated and shamed, thus they feel shame in being poor, and feel responsible for their poverty. Both men complain of being failed providers and Tony frequently compares himself to the upper-class and self deprecates when he doesn’t measure up.

In the *Who’s the Boss?* episode “Keeping up with the Marci’s” (4/9/85), Tony is put in a position where he is unable to participate in upper-middle class modes of consumption, which lead to his feelings of failure. In the episode, Tony’s daughter Sam hopes to go on a ski field trip. Before school, in front of Sam’s friend Marci and Marci’s father Dr. Ferguson, Sam asks Tony to sign her permission slip. When Tony is hesitant to sign it Dr. Ferguson understands, but a look of consternation crosses Marci’s face. “Oh” she says, “Maybe we can pay for it.” Tony tries everything he can to earn the $250 it takes to send Sam on the trip; including disastrously cleaning a chimney, and finally, by selling his autographed ’62 Mets baseball collection. At one point in the episode he tells Sam that “he blew it,” explaining to his daughter that she will have to be honest with her friends about the fact that her father doesn’t make the same kind of money as people in Connecticut. When Sam throws a typical childlike fit, Tony goes into a rant of self-deprecation in front of his boss, Angela. He compares himself to Dr. Ferguson with a laundry list of why he is a bad father. He tells Angela, “He’s a big time surgeon and I’m just a lousy housekeeper.”

He continues:

Tony:  Maybe we shouldn’t have come to Connecticut; I just wanted to show my daughter a better life.
Angela:  You have.
Tony:  I’ve shown her, I just can’t give it to her.

It is after this conversation with Angela that Tony decides to sell his most prized possession—the autographed baseball collection that belonged to his father.

Not only does Tony self-deprecate he is humiliated by Marci, Mona, Angela and Jonathan’s cavalier attitudes towards money. The final blow to Tony’s self esteem comes with selling his baseball collection for less than what it is worth in his desperation to please his daughter. Tony displays the now well known hidden injuries of class: “the social psychological burden of class status anxiety, ‘the feeling of vulnerability in contrasting oneself to others at a higher social level, the buried sense of inadequacy.”

Jack (*Silver Spoons*) on the other hand, conveys his self defeat through body language and dialogue. As his wife consoles him about losing his job, Jack stares at her incredulously. With his arms lifeless and shoulders slumped he is, in essence, an animated Dorothea Lange photograph. Jack’s feelings of defeat present themselves orally when he must tell his son Joey that Santa will not be visiting their family.

Joey: You mean he’s gonna leave my gifts at our old house. We better go back!
Jack: We can’t, it belongs to the bank now. Look, Joey, next year, I promise you Santa will know exactly where we are and we’ll have the best Christmas ever.

Jack’s and Tony’s feelings about themselves as failed providers act as a source of shame for the characters; while for the viewer, Jack and Tony’s defeat is representative of the defeat that many unemployed workers may have felt during this period of instability. The promise Jack gives Joey that Santa will come next year puts an unsubstantiated faith in Reagan’s trickledown economic policy.

Socially and ideologically, the misrepresentation of the working class on TV helps to “create a reality that seemingly justifies superior positions of the upper middle and upper classes and establishes them as entitled to their privileged position in the stratification system.” Thus, “the manner in which class is framed by the media has a major impact on how people feel about class and inequality.” Televison often skews our perceptions of inequality in the US by frequently glorifying the affluent. According to a study conducted by O’Guinn and Shrum “heavy” TV viewers “are more likely to believe the social world to be an affluent place.” This belief in the affluence of society affects the consumption patterns of viewers. O’Guinn and Shrum also revealed data which indicated “where consumption markers of affluence are concerned, those with less income and education are the most affected by

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49 Kendall, *Framing Class*, 2-3.
50 Ibid, 2.
televised representations of the consumption practices of others." In short, ‘‘knowing’ how others live informs consumer expectations, satisfaction, motivation and desire.’’\(^{51}\)

Further connected with issues of class, feeling sad coupled with self focus, a study found, leads to increased consumption.\(^{52}\) The working class of the Reagan era, focused on its perceived shortcomings and feeling depressed because of them was in a vulnerable state of induced consumption. Even as wages fell during the 1980s, the working class still felt pressure to overcome “consumer inadequacy” in order to be a full-fledged participant in a consumer society.\(^{53}\) and credit offered a quick fix.

While characters like Tony and Jack struggle to get by, the upper-class characters practice conspicuous consumption. In the pilot episode of *Who’s the Boss?* Angela and her date joke about spending $300 on a fistful of food, while in another episode Angela takes Samantha on a shopping spree at high end department stores and gets “carried away.” In the show *Silver Spoons* Edward hires Mr. T to be Ricky’s bodyguard when Ricky becomes the object of ridicule at a public school.

It is easy to overlook the importance of these shows within the 1980s primetime lineup or to brush aside the importance of the class portrayals within them, however, like any other cultural group, representation in the media has individual psychological and social responses. According to Sociology Professor Barry Gordon, “in a multicultural society, the most well adjusted people are those who have some realistic perspective about what other groups are like. It’s also crystal clear that in our society that it’s important for people to see others like themselves on TV. It validates you.”\(^{54}\) Additionally, the media plays a key role in defining cultural tastes, locating ourselves in history, establishing our national identity, as well as ascertaining a range of national and social possibilities.\(^{55}\) Thus it is clear how the overarching themes of class in these popular shows need further examination regarding their place in the social and political climate of the Reagan Era.

Viewers coming of age in the context of these popular sitcoms were especially vulnerable to their effects. “Ward and Wackman (1971) report that heavy television viewing among adolescents is associated with the belief that ‘material goods and money are important for personal happiness and social progress.’”\(^{56}\) This correlates even further with a study by Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) which found identification with fictional characters often led to incorporation of the character into the self; culminating in Bandura’s modeling process where people go far beyond simple imitation of fictional characters “to include the changing of attitudes, values, aspirations and other characteristics to match those of a model.”\(^{57}\) In terms of class, viewers only tended to identify with characters similar to themselves in the demographics of gender, race and age, never economic status. Part of this non-identification with working class characters may be due in part to the media’s portrayal of the working class within such narrow and overwhelmingly negative frames; thus viewers who are working class have a hard time seeing themselves reflected in popular culture since they transcend many of these stereotypes.

Working class viewers who do not recognize their own class contribute to what is one of the most damaging aspects to class consciousness, an inability on the part of workers to “see their interests as individuals in their interests as members of the working-class.”\(^{58}\) What is more disturbing is that in several psychological studies, children imitated or wanted to be like successful characters even if the character’s behavior conflicted with their own personal values.\(^{59}\) This is striking considering that the children and adolescents of the 1980s are the adults of


\(^{57}\) Cynthia Hoffner and Martha Buchanan, “Young Adults’ Wishful Identification with Television Characters: The Role of Perceived Similarity and Character Attributes,” *Media Psychology* 7 (2005) 327.


\(^{59}\) Hoffner and Buchanan, “Young Adults’ Wishful Identification with Television Characters,” 331.
today, and little has improved in terms of class discourse while consumer culture has remained steady and possibly increased.

At the intersection between non-working class identification and portrayals of consumption throughout popular culture, there is a sea of easy credit, rampant consumerism and a mall lifestyle which not only offers escapism but a road to identification with the middle-class. In the 1980s, this identification with middle class ideas and values helped bolster Reagan’s policies and his support of capitalist interests. “While he was not quite Gordon Gekko in Oliver Stone’s 1987 movie Wall Street proclaiming ‘greed is good,’ Reagan felt that “the chief business of the American people is business.” Under Reagan, Vice-President George Bush, “worked on reducing the growth of federal regulations by more than 25 percent,” while “the costly and corrosive savings and loan scandals ballooned as a result of Reagan’s determination to get government off the back of business so that the ‘magic of the market’ could show its stuff.” Reagan also enjoyed spending in a capitalist economy. Reagan’s inauguration garnered a price tag of $16 million with Nancy Reagan’s dress alone costing $10,000. With his costly inauguration Reagan set a precedent for 1980s popular culture which became preoccupied with Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous. The creators of the show Dallas said they had in fact “picked up on the glitz and glamour of the Reagan era.”

“Althusser (1979) stresses that any psychologistic identification, whether multiple or not, must be preceded by an ideological identification.” During the 1980s, viewers were placed into a subject position which made identifying with upper class characters relatively easy. Television is able to construct subject positions effectively with the help of social agencies that “have been working all our lives to construct our subjectiveness in equivalent ways.” The study by Hoffner and Buchanan on Young Adults and Wishful Identification with Television Characters found that people “identifed more strongly with successful and admired characters.” As already established by Leistyna, the most successful and admired characters on television are not working class. Thus, in TV we are invited into a subject position and then rewarded ideologically when we identify with that subject.

Part of the reason upper-class characters are appealing is the way in which the low self esteem expressed by working class characters is contrasted with the extreme generosity of upper-class characters. Angela is a stern but, above all, kind employer; not only is she overly generous she often romanticizes poverty. However, it is in Diff’rent Strokes that the generosity is most pronounced in the paternalism of Phillip Drummond. He, like Angela, is only stern when the working-class Willis and Arnold “disobey.” However, in some of the shows the wealthy characters’ generosity is framed negatively. In one episode of Diff’rent Strokes, Mr. Drummond buys uniforms for Arnold’s football team as a bribe for Arnold’s admission. In Silver Spoons, Edward Stratton Sr. confesses to his son Edward Jr. that he was only admitted to a prestigious university because he funded the building of the school’s gymnasium. However, it is still easier and more rewarding for the viewer to identify with Angela, Phillip and Edward even though each of these characters represents corporate capitalism, as evidenced by their fictional occupations within the corporate world. This association acts as a powerful ideological tool.

Since:

The workers, with relatively few exceptions—depending on the country and the period—don’t really and deeply hate capitalists, because they cannot distinguish them sharply enough from themselves, because they have never been able to set off a sufficiently unencumbered target to hate.

Viewers of these shows in the 1980s know they don’t live like the upper-class characters of these shows, but they identify with them. To criticize capitalism would be to criticize the generous Angela, Phillip and Edward. There is a direct link between television viewing and views on capitalism, according to Carlson, “It is reasonable to hypothesize that heavy television viewing is associated with unrealistic perceptions of American affluence and support for capitalist values.” Moreover, “Heavy viewing of situation comedies is... correlated with positive

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60 Troy, Morning in America, 52.
61 Ibid, 133.
63 Troy, Morning in America, 50.
64 Fiske, Television Culture, 178.
65 Fiske, Television Culture, 51.
66 Hoffner and Buchanan, “Young Adults’ Wishful Identification with Television Characters,” 325.
67 Ollman, Toward Class Consciousness Next Time: Marx and the Working Class.
68 Carlson, Television Viewing, 246.
attitudes toward capitalism."69 Even though the wealthy characters are extremely generous, these shows also make it clear that their generosity should not be accepted unconditionally by the working class.

In these popular sitcoms, working class characters reiterate throughout individual episodes the negativity of any “charity” or “handout” illustrating the final theme—Stigmatization/Demonization of Dependency. The working class characters in these shows are proud and they will do anything to avoid assistance. They will not borrow money and they will not accept gifts without offering to pay for them. This theme is richly layered and is rooted deeply in middle-class notions of the deserving and undeserving poor. We can trace back these negative feelings towards assistance to the cultural genealogy of the word dependency and all of its negative connotations. “The senator Daniel P. Moynihan prefigured today’s discourse when he began his 1973 book by claiming that ‘the issue of welfare is the issue of dependency’ ”70 Thus, in order to make the working class characters in these shows devoid of a middle-class audience’s contempt, it becomes important for producers to distance these characters from the stigmatized world of welfare and so-called “dependency.”

In “Keeping up with the Marci’s” (Who’s the Boss?), when Mona, Angela and even 7 year old Jonathan offer the Macelli’s (both Sam and Tony) money, their pride prevents them from accepting the money even as a loan. In the episode, “Paint Your Wagon” (1/15/85) Tony must work off every dime of the wrong paint job he allowed on Angela’s Jaguar, even after Angela’s neighbor Mrs. Wilmington (who wants to hire Tony) brings out her checkbook to settle the matter. Tony thanks her but says “nobody pays my way.” Ricky, coded as generous throughout Silver Spoons, paid Joey $20 to hang a single Christmas ornament. This is contrasted later in the episode when Joey sneaks back into the Stratton house, leaves the “earned” $20 bill on the table, and then with his head down in shame takes a gift basket. In the following scene Joey’s dad interrogates him on the status of food:

Jack: Where’d you get all this stuff? We don’t take handouts, son.
Joey: This is not a handout. I met this really rich guy in this big house. I asked him for a job and he gave it to me.

This exchange tells us that pride is not sustained by taking welfare or anything that might be perceived as welfare. The only way this gift basket is acceptable, to Jack, and the audience is the fact that Joey supposedly worked for it.

This attitude toward welfare presented in this small piece of dialogue is congruent with arguments made by the Reagan administration. The Reagan approach to welfare was a “‘new federalism’, a plan to make the down-and-out in society a local and state responsibility.”71 Reagan purported that “government aid was not needed,” and “that private enterprise would take care of poverty.”72 This private response to poverty is reflected in the way Angela and Edward attempt to help the less fortunate characters. Reagan had a history of anti-assistance for the non-elites; as governor in 1966, Reagan “questioned the concept of free tuition for students at state colleges and universities.”73 According to historian Dulles, Reagan’s second term had a clear mandate of economic policies which “took from the poor and gave to the rich.” This type of trickledown economics created a degree of income and wealth inequality not seen since the Great Depression.74 However, the administration’s emphasis on work implied that the true responsibility of eradicating poverty lay on the poor. Instead of looking at root causes of poverty, “Congress attempted to reform the welfare system, with specific measures aimed at giving the poor job training or education needed to get off welfare.”75 The obvious problem with these programs, and the way poverty is presented in shows such as Silver Spoons, is that poverty is systemic not individual, as Reagan’s policies and the dialogue in the shows would have us believe. Poverty “is a direct result of economic and political policies that deprive people of jobs, adequate wages and legitimate support.”76

These shows are not unique in supporting the notion of individualized poverty. Through the media “we are told that the poor live in a personal and cultural cycle of poverty that hopelessly imprisons them.” We also see this

69 Ibid, 253.
74 Dulles and Dubosky, Labor in America, 392-393
76 Manstios, “Media Magic,” 466.
conveyed in other popular shows from the 1980s such as *Taxi* and *Cheers*, where the failure of the working class characters is based on a lacking in their own culture.\(^77\)

For the Reagan administration, instituting new welfare policies in this cultural context is welcomed since eliminating something that is portrayed as negative would be considered a positive response by the administration. With welfare being cut and reformed and working class jobs being eradicated or outsourced, equating solving these problems with a “handout” or “charity,” (portrayed as negative throughout popular culture), helped exonerate Reagan and his administration.

This kind of “discursive power, that is, the power to make common sense of a class based sense of the real,”\(^78\) clearly worked to bolster Reagan Administration policies. The connection between the messages coming out of Washington and Hollywood were inextricable. “The classes who dominate social relations also attempt to dominate the production of meanings that underpin them: social power and semiotic power are two sides of the same coin.”\(^79\)

It is fairly common knowledge that corporate interests drive media content:

More than 40 years ago Lazarsfeld and Merton (1949) asserted that the mass media are financed by the business establishment, which rests on assumptions of capitalism, and contributes to the maintenance of that system. The same argument has been articulated more recently by Ginsberg (1988) and Parenti (1986) among others.\(^80\)

A direct correlation between media content and Ronald Reagan began when Reagan appointed Mark Fowler to head the FCC. Fowler “regarded television as just another appliance…that should be treated like a business, nothing more or less. Under Fowler’s leadership, the FCC discontinued rules limiting the number of minutes per hour that could be devoted to advertising and stopped requiring television stations to play a public service role.”\(^81\) “The superstructure of media ownership” purposefully benefits the upper classes.\(^82\) “A mass media that did not have its own class interests in preserving that status quo would acknowledge that inordinate wealth and power undermines democracy and that a ‘free market’ economy can ravage a people and their communities.”\(^83\) Further, working class interests and strength are a direct threat to capitalist-class interests.\(^84\) Thus it is clear that network leaders and executive producers, as members of the corporate class, would either consciously or unconsciously shed a negative light on the working class or fail to portray working class empowerment, and this is a sub theme in many of the shows’ episodes.

In “Paint Your Wagon” (*Who’s the Boss?*) Tony teaches an aerobics class to the other housekeepers in the neighborhood since they cannot afford gym memberships. When the housekeepers start to form solidarity because of Tony’s attitude toward work and his friendly relationship with Angela, a neighbor of Angela’s (Mrs. Wilmington) becomes concerned. The power Tony has in the household has disrupted the power balance in the neighborhood between capital and labor. Since Tony’s classes, Mrs. Wilmington tells Angela her housekeeper has become “unsatisfied.” She tells Angela: “You’ve given to many special privileges to your live in….and you’re making it tough for the rest of us.” The pressure from her neighbor causes Angela to start devaluing Tony and their friendship wanes. In one scene, Angela raises her voice to explain to Tony: “I pay you to do the damn floors! You are just the maid around here and don’t you forget it!” Later, when Angela seeks a comfortable relationship with Tony, Tony uses her humiliating tirade to prove a point by altering their usual eating arrangements:

> Angela: What are you doing?
> Tony: Just my job ma’am.
> Angela: (Angela looking down at the table.) Why are there only two place settings?
> Tony: One for you and one for Master Jonathan. The hired help will eat in the kitchen.”

\(^77\) Leistyna, *Class Dismissed*.
\(^78\) Fiske, *Television Culture*, 42.
\(^79\) Ibid, 326.
\(^82\) Kendall, *Framing Class*, 239.
\(^83\) Manstios, “Media Magic,” 471.
Tony is one of the few working class characters, (others include Benson and Roseanne) who are able to exude confidence and smugness regarding class issues, and the often awkward Angela is an easy target for his remarks. This becomes especially clear in the episode where Angela is forced to maneuver through Tony’s neighborhood in the Bronx (“Angela’s First Fight”).

However, in other shows the notion of working class confidence and solidarity is quickly destroyed through humor and powerful symbology. In the Christmas episode of *Silver Spoons* one telling exchange of dialogue between Edward (dressed as Santa) and Joey, signifies resistance to working class solidarity:

Edward/Santa: Does a Joey Thompson live here?
Joey: (jumping up and down) Yeah, that’s me! That’s me!
Santa: If I hadn’t gotten that telegram I wouldn’t have known you were here. How are you Joey?
Joey: Great, Santa. I mean, how are you?
Santa: Well, I’m—I’m a little tired. This is my busy season you know. Plus, I got a power struggle going on. The Teamsters are trying to unionize my elves. Well, you don’t wanna hear my troubles. Ho! Ho! Ho!

This scene in particular is reflective of Reagan’s sentiments on union activity while the delivery of this anti-labor diatribe by the iconic image of Santa Claus reaches deeply into the audience’s subconscious. The story of Santa Claus is one in which “consumer, capitalist, and laborer were idealized: Commodities (toys) were manufactured by happy elves working in Santa’s workshop….” This symbolism must have had a powerful effect in 1982 in light of recent workers’ strikes and Reagan’s subsequent response. This presidential attitude coupled with loss of manufacturing jobs, which held strong unions, created reluctance towards union membership. Just like television helped erode political activity among American workers in the 1940s these shows had a similar effect. In the larger picture, the symbolic and cultural shifts of working class characters also affected class identity in the nation, since “Classes are social configurations structured from without…from within…but classes are also always partial social configurations to the extent that they are constantly in a process of organization, disorganization, and reorganization in relation to their conflicts with other classes.”

“People lack confidence in the future, essentially, because they lack confidence in themselves; but nothing in the lives of workers has enabled them to acquire such confidence; especially their representation in the media. For television viewers of the Reagan era, *Silver Spoons, Who’s the Boss?* and *Diff’rent Strokes* provided a powerful discourse that reflected Reagan administration policies, thus contributing to a weakening of the working class. In the mid 80s almost the only working class characters in US family based sitcoms were servants, laborers or adoptees of upper middle class families; the working class in these shows only became meaningful as a foil for the better values, work ethic and behavior of the corporate class while representations of class during the Reagan era reflected, justified and helped create new class positions in an era of class conflict.

Using Clark and Berry’s theory regarding the four stages of media representation for minority groups, popular sitcoms of the 1980s moved the working class from ridicule to regulation but even today characters who represent the working class have still not reached the final stage of respect. Although Post Reagan some new Primetime sitcoms about the working class emerged to challenge television’s classist past, most notably *Roseanne*, the previous class paradigm set by the Reagan era continues to reverberate today.

The powerful and often overlooked role of television can not only affect a viewer’s life goals and occupational aspirations, but can also affect “social beliefs about the material well-being of others” informing “social and political discourse about everything from welfare reform to class envy.” Television is powerful. “In terms of exposure, television rivals many traditional socialization agents such as school, church and even parents.” It is imperative then as critics of television, that we are never “content with asking and revealing what view of the

86 Ibid, 271.
88 Fantasia, “From Class Consciousness to Culture,” 275.
89 Ollman, *Toward Class Consciousness Next Time*.
91 Hoffner and Buchanan, “Young Adults’ Wishful Identification with Television Characters” 327-328.
93 Ibid, 279.
world is being presented, but must recognize that someone’s view of the world is implicitly or explicitly, obviously or subtly, inscribed within it.”94

When we understand the roots of the class paradigm set by television we can look at our own roles within it and seek change where it is needed. Like Fredric Jameson stated history can be what hurts, but Lipsitz said it best when said “history can also be what helps, what takes us back into the past in order to break its hold on the present.”95

Figure 1. Graph illustrating shift in family-based sitcoms based on class, from 1974-1994.

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94 Fiske, Television Culture, 42.
95 Lipsitz, “The Meaning of Memory.”
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Transracial Adoption: 
Promoting Racial Literacy 
or Perpetuating Colorblind Racism?

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Sociology

Abstract

How do white adoptive parents of black children teach their children to navigate race? In 1994 Congress passed the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) removing race as a consideration in adoptive placements, effectively opening up the pool of adoptable black infants to middle class white couples. Inspired by France Twine’s study on how white members of black/white couples developed “racial literacy,” this qualitative study is based on semi-structured interviews with 20 adoptive parents. My findings show that although parents are open to anti-racist practices, they lack the required insight to follow through. Parents are conflicted between perceptions of how racism operates in society and their actual lived experiences, illuminating their struggle to reconcile the two in order to develop a critical lens through which to analyze race. I argue that MEPA is a colorblind racist policy that reproduces colorblind racism through its failure to provide parents with adequate resources concerning race and racism.

Introduction

How do white adoptive parents of black children teach their children to navigate a highly racialized world? Does transracial adoption transform parents understanding of how racism operates and facilitate the development of a critical lens through which race is analyzed? Or do white parents reproduce the existing racial hierarchy? Seeking answers to these questions, I interviewed 20 white adoptive parents of black children in this qualitative study.

In “A White Side of Black Britain,” France Winddance Twine showed how “interracial intimacy is a micro level political site where white people can acquire a critical analytical lens” that transforms their understanding of how racism operates. Expanding on Winddance Twine’s work, this study sought to discover whether transracial adoption, a different form of interracial intimacy, promotes the development of “racial literacy” similarly to what Twine found in her study of black/white couples. What I found was that parents failed to acquire the critical analytical lens Winddance Twine described and instead viewed race through a colorblind lens.

Enabled by the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act which removed race as a consideration in adoptive placements, white adoptive parents of black children assume their role armed with an abundance of love but very little life experience that would teach them to identify and respond to racist incidents. This study, then, seeks to document the extent to which white parents of black children are perpetuating colorblind racism. It specifically looks at the parent’s beliefs regarding race and racism, the extent to which they are perpetuating colorblind racism, and the forces that push them to reproduce it. I argue that the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act is a colorblind racist policy that perpetuates colorblind racism through its failure to provide parents with adequate resources concerning race and racism. My findings show that parents are conflicted between their perception of how racism operates in society and their actual lived experiences, illuminating their struggle to reconcile the two in order to develop a critical lens through which to analyze race.

In the following pages, I reveal relevant unanswered questions in the existing literature regarding white adoptive parent’s attitudes and beliefs concerning the role race will play in their children’s lives. I sought to answer these questions by conducting semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions with 20 adoptive parents. Placing my findings within the framework of Guinier and Torres rules of colorblind racism, I then demonstrate how parent’s responses fit into each of the three rules. My findings explore the tension that exists between parent’s colorblind ideology and their actual lived experiences with racism, supporting the need for pre-adoptive education and post-adoption support for transracial adoptive families.
Existing research: Identity formation, resources, and whiteness studies

A review of the literature indicates that much research has been done on the outcome of transracial adoptions, primarily focusing on identity issues of the adoptee (Samuels, 2009). Transracial adoption is a fairly recent phenomenon in the United States and much of the research has been centered on the debate over the ethics of placing black children with white families (Tuan, 2008 and Fogg-Davis, 2002).

Outside of the literature pertaining to adoption, a great deal of research has been conducted in the form of “whiteness” studies (Frankenberg, 1993). In “White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness” (1993), Frankenberg argues that white women in relationships with black men undergo a transformation in their awareness and understanding of race and racism along with acquiring an understanding of the many benefits of being white. Similarly, it would seem that transracial adoption offers an opportunity for whites to have a transformative experience in their understanding of race and racism through their relationship with their children of color. France Winddance Twine expanded on this with her concept of “racial literacy,” developed as the result of a seven year ethnography focused on the biological white parents of African-descent children (Winddance Twine, 2004). In the study, as well as a study on black/white interracial relationships, Winddance Twine suggests that “interracial intimacy is a micro level political site where White people can acquire a critical analytical lens” that transforms their understanding of how racism operates. Building upon the work of Frankenberg, Winddance Twine focused on parents whom she classified “racism cognizant,” meaning that “they identified racism as a serious problem for their children and had concluded that it is either undesirable or impossible for their children to manage everyday racism if they are not taught how to identify and respond to racial hierarchies and resist racisms.”

I found few studies centered on the adoptive parents themselves. One important exception interviewed transracial adoptive parents in order to identify issues that required resources that are unavailable to them (deHaymes and Simon, 2003). In another, Patricia Jennings investigated how race relations influence infertile women’s choices of race in their decision to adopt (Jennings, 2006). DeHaymes and Simon found that the majority of adoptive parents were disappointed with the training and resources they were provided with pertaining to race. Additionally, many of the adoptees they interviewed felt their parents were not equipped to handle issues of discrimination or racism, leaving them to cope on their own. This is congruent with the opinions expressed by adoptees in Samuels’s study, “Being Raised by White People” (2009) who reported feeling alienated from others who could provide insight into their lived experience with race. In both studies, adoptees felt that their parents often dismissed racist incidents as being similar to other childhood name-calling. This study builds upon the work of deHaymes and Simon, as well as Samuels by further investigating the adoptive parent’s attitudes and ideas concerning the role of race in their children’s lives. Focusing on the parent’s perceptions can be useful to determine what is driving the behavior that results in their adopted children feeling abandoned when it comes to dealing with race. Understanding the cause of these discordant parent-child relationships can help professionals and policy makers look for solutions that will address the underlying issues and better serve the adoption community.

What racism? The great disconnect

Expanding upon Winddance Twine’s work which studied the white biological mothers of black children in Great Britain, this study looks at MEPA enabled white adoptive parents of African American children and their perception of the level of importance race plays or will play in their children’s lives. Initially I expected to find that parents had developed a great deal of racial literacy, as the white biological parents and white partners in interracial relationships had in Winddance Twine’s study, however that was not the case. Instead, I found that parents failed to acquire the critical analytical lens Winddance Twine described and instead viewed race through a colorblind lens. This study, then, seeks to document the extent to which white parents of black children are perpetuating colorblind racism. It specifically looks at their beliefs regarding race and racism, the extent to which they are perpetuating colorblind racism, and the forces that push them to reproduce it. I argue that the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act is a colorblind racist policy that perpetuates colorblind racism through its failure to provide parents with adequate resources concerning race and racism. My findings show that parents seem to be conflicted between their perception of how racism operates in society and their actual lived experiences. Their colorblind lens encourages them to dismiss incidents of racism or discrimination as being due to factors other than race, often leading them to a contradiction between these experiences and their ideas about race and society.

This study provides empirical evidence of the colorblind ideology that overwhelmingly exists in a group of adoptive parents, supporting the existing scholarship that suggests policy changes requiring training for those considering transracial adoption.
Methods

I recruited white adoptive parents of black children who completed their adoption over eight years ago for this study in two ways. First, as a white adoptive parent of two black children and the former Secretary of Families of MAC (Multi-Cultural and Adopted Children), a support group for adoptive families which disbanded 8 years ago, I had access to a membership roster which I used to contact former members to recruit for the study. I then used the snowballing method to gain referrals by asking the parents to identify other adoptive parents who might be willing to participate in the study. Once participants were selected, in-depth, semi-structured, phenomenological based interviews lasting from 1 to 2 hours were conducted with parents from 20 families, 17 of them with the mothers only and the remaining 3 with both the mother and father. The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, which allowed participants to recount their experiences with racism and elaborate on their beliefs pertaining to parenting and race. All parents self-identified as being middle to upper-middle class and their ages ranged from 32 to 56, with adopted children who ranged in age from 3 to 19 and biological children who ranged in age from 4 to 26 years old. All of the families completed domestic adoptions through private adoption agencies located in Boise, Idaho that worked with private agencies in other states such as Texas, Ohio, California, and Florida where the babies were born. Of the 23 parents interviewed, 14 had bachelor’s degrees; one had a master’s degree, and one a doctorate. Twelve women were stay at home moms, with the rest employed in occupations such as a real estate agent, a teacher, a dentist, a financial planner, and a florist. Nine of the families also had biological children, and of the remaining 11 families, ten adopted due to infertility and one adopted because they didn’t wish to contribute to the expanding population of the world.

This study was conducted in Boise, Idaho, a semi-progressive area of a non-progressive state with minimal diversity. Idaho is among the top five states with the highest overall rates of transracial adoption (Hansen/Simon 2004). The availability of families who have completed transracial adoptions, along with the dominance of white culture/lack of diversity in this overwhelmingly white state make the study particularly revealing of the forces of hegemonic whiteness that contribute to the dominance of colorblind ideology.

I conducted the interviews at mutually agreed upon locations, including coffee shops and participants homes where the interviews were digitally recorded. I then transcribed the interviews so that they could be analyzed using the Grounded Theory Method (Glaser & Strauss) to look for recurring themes from which to develop a system of codes. A cross-case analysis was done, looking for the identified themes among multiple cases and coding them accordingly. After the data were coded, it was possible to identify and analyze patterns and related concepts in order to form a grounded theory.

The case-oriented analysis method is unique in the fact that cases are chosen for theoretical, rather than statistical purposes and random selection is neither desirable nor necessary (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Colorblind racism

In the post-civil rights era, the United States has adopted a colorblind approach to racism, essentially denying the subtle forms of discrimination that have replaced the blatant racism of the past. Race has disappeared as a “hot topic” of discussion and many Americans deny the existence of racism completely, claiming that racism is a thing of the past and either ignoring the persisting disparities in income, education, and wealth between blacks and whites or acknowledging the disparity as being a result of blacks being lazy. Denying the significance of race allows whites to discount the privileges they receive from their white skin along with normalizing their whiteness. According to Ruth Frankenberg, this colorblind approach ignores the fact that skin color plays a powerful role in shaping an individual’s life experiences. Whites do not make the connection between their skin color and the structural benefits they receive in society (Lipsitz). Color-blind racism allows whites to maintain their position of privilege without appearing racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2001).

The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act

In 1994, Congress passed the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) which removed race as a consideration in adoptive placements. This made it easier for middle class white couples to adopt, as it opened the pool of adoptable children up to include other races. Additionally, congress enacted legislation providing a tax credit for adoptive families, making the cost of adoption feasible for more middle class couples. The stated intention of MEPA was to transition more children from foster care into permanent homes; however statistics do not show a significant
increase in those numbers. According to Mary Eschelbach Hansen and Rita J. Simon (2004), there has not been an increase in state assisted transracial adoptions at the national level since the passage of MEPA. While it failed to meet its goal of decreasing the number of black children in foster care, MEPA did remove race as a consideration in any adoption which facilitated the adoption of black infants by white parents through private adoption agencies. This change favored the consumptive choices of infertile, white, middle and upper-class heterosexual couples as the availability of children of color exceeds the availability of white infants (Patton, 2002 and Quiroz, 2008).

While it paved the way for whites to adopt children of color, MEPA failed to mandate any form of education or training for parents wishing to adopt transracially. With no federal guidelines in place, adoption agencies determine whether racial/cultural education is offered to adoptive parents or not and requirements vary from agency to agency and state to state. Some agencies require as little as a questionnaire concerning parents’ attitudes toward race to be completed prior to adoption, minimizing the complexity of race relations and ignoring the reality of what it means to have black skin in America.

Transracial adoption: Colorblind practices

The Multi-ethnic Placement Act is just one aspect of adoption that ignores racial differences in favor of a colorblind ideology. Further evidence of colorblind practices can be seen in the way children are categorized by adoption agencies. Although the adoption of a child from any race by parents from a different race would be considered a transracial adoption, the term is reserved for black children adopted by white families in current adoption discourse (Tuan, 2008). Common practice in adoption discourse, as evidenced on adoption agencies websites, is to divide children into three racial categories of black, multi-racial (black/white combination), with the remaining children grouped together in a non-labeled category. The absence of a label on the third group of children establishes whiteness as the normative race without any cultural markers, making it easier for whites to ignore the privileges attached to their whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993). This tripartite system of categorization is one of the components of colorblind racism described by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and is indicative of the colorblind racism that exists within the arena of adoption (Quiroz, 2007).

Finally, as Hawley Fogg-Davis points out, the fact that adoptive parents are allowed to choose the race of the child they are adopting can be viewed as racial discrimination against the children who are waiting to be adopted. However, rather than labeling this discrimination, adopting children of color (or not adopting them) is seen as a matter of individual taste as well as a partial solution to poverty and racism, another indication of Bonilla-Silva’s concept of colorblind racism (Quiroz, 2007).

Given the pervasiveness of colorblind ideology throughout the adoption process, it stands to reason that adoptive parents will continue along this colorblind trajectory when raising their children. Although existing research mostly supports “successful outcomes” in transracial adoptions, studies also suggest that adoptees are left to fend for themselves in matters concerning race and racism, often leaving them feeling isolated and invalidated (Samuels, 2009).

Following the colorblind rules

Enabled by MEPA, a policy that essentially denies the salience of race by removing race as a consideration in adoptive placements without calling for states to either a) make an assessment of parents racial literacy prior to adoption in order to determine their ability to help children navigate race and racism, or b) requiring states to provide parents with some sort of education about race and the impact it will have on their children’s lives, I found that parents are unwittingly reproducing this colorblind form of racism that will guarantee the continuation of the covert practices that will oppress their own children. Lacking a clear understanding of the ways in which centuries of oppression and discrimination shaped the institutions in society that guarantee the structural disadvantage of people with black skin, parents miss out on the opportunity to use transracial adoption as an anti-racism project and instead struggle to overcome this colorblind ideology without guidance or support from the institution that places these children into their loving arms in the first place.

In “The Ideology of Colorblindness” (2002), Guinier and Torres reference three rules of colorblind racism: 1) Race is all about skin color, 2) Talking about race is equivalent to being racist, and 3) racism is an individual problem. They go on to show how these deeply held beliefs mask the glaring racial inequalities that are present in society, such as the conditions that lead to such a disproportionate number of children of color being placed for adoption. Analyzing parents’ responses, most conformed to at least one or more of Guinier and Torres three rules. Additionally, parents often contradicted themselves throughout the interview indicating that they were conflicted in
their perception of racism and their actual lived experiences and struggling to make sense of their existing ideology concerning race.

**Rule number one: Racism is all about skin color**

The first rule of Guinier and Torres three rules of colorblind racism is that race is all about skin color and is not a marker for social status, history, or power; rather it is a false construction of phenotype that relies improperly on ascriptive physical identifiers of “blood” or ancestry (Guinier and Torres, 2002). When race is seen as being only about pigmentation in the skin, the benefits or negative effects that are associated with a person’s skin color are ignored.

The following quote from Amy, a 49 year-old mother of three black sons all in their teens, illustrates how a parent’s belief conforms to this first rule of colorblind racism. This quote was in response to the question of how she taught her children about race. “I told them that melanin is just a chemical underneath the skin; the skin is the same. So it’s sorta like giving them the tools to say, there is nothing different except you’ve got more chemical in you than I do.”

Throughout the interview, Amy made additional comments about skin color being the only difference between her and her children and often compared it to her own experience of growing up overweight. When asked how she thought her kids felt about race she said, “I think they might feel it just like say, a fat kid, or a kid who wears glasses might get teased. We try not to make a big deal out of it.” She goes on to say, “I tell them it doesn’t matter what you look like, there is always going to be hatred between different groups.”

Reducing race to just being about skin color denies the history of oppression and discrimination experienced by blacks in America and fails to address current inequalities. Comparing race to weight problems or wearing glasses reduces race to a cosmetic issue and obviously fails to recognize the fact that wearing glasses or having weight problems doesn’t significantly impact an individual’s life chances the way that race does.

While on one hand, Amy downplays the significance of skin color, on the other hand she confirms the salience of race by saying, “When my son had reading problems in school, maybe it was just me, but I felt like they had diminished expectations of him. Like they didn’t expect as much, maybe, because he is black.” This illuminates the contradiction I found in conversing with most of the parents, as they would initially deny having encountered racism or discrimination yet as the interview progressed they would recount several confrontations with racism. Colorblind ideology forces them to ignore these incidents or attribute discrimination to other causes. This speaks to the struggle they face in reconciling their ideas about race and racism with their actual lived experiences.

**Rule number two: Talking about racism is equivalent to being racist**

Guinier and Torres second rule of colorblind racism is that recognizing race is the equivalent of holding onto unscientific notions of racial biology, claiming that recognizing race is essentially a throwback to racism of the past. In other words, recognizing race is equal to being racist. This is problematic because the failure to recognize race means judging people on individual merit without taking into consideration the historical effects of racism and societal influences such as lack of access to resources.

Holly, the mother of three adopted children ages 4, 7, and 10, when asked if we should recognize race, said:

I think we just need to pick up on our kids’ clues, you know, do they want to talk about it? I don’t know really. We still don’t need affirmative action. I think in a lot of ways, everyone needs to work for what they want. They shouldn’t just be given it because they are a minority.

Further into the interview, when asked how her children’s lives might be different if they weren’t adopted, Holly said:

I think it would be a lot more about survival. You go right to work out of high school because you have to. There are no other options. In a lot of families there is no one that’s ever gone to college, you drop out of school and go to work.

Furthermore, when asked how we explain the high rates of poverty among blacks, Holly answered, “I think it’s because they are not educated and I hate to generalize, but it’s the key to financial freedom. Maybe they don’t get the support they need so they are trapped.”
Holly’s suggestion that we no longer need affirmative action ignores the persisting disparity in income and wealth between blacks and whites, assuming a level playing field with equal chances—all a person has to do is work for what they want. This illustrates Guinier and Torres second rule of racism by suggesting we no longer need these programs to make up for the hundreds of years that blacks were discriminated against and excluded from employment that would allow them to accumulate wealth at the same rates as whites. Holly’s idea that everyone needs to work for what they want supports the notion that individuals should be judged on their own merit, ignoring the structural advantages or disadvantages conferred upon an individual based upon their skin color.

On one hand, Holly claims that we don’t need affirmative action, yet on the other hand she points out that many blacks have no other options than to quit school in order to work. She also asserts that education is the key to financial freedom, yet according to her blacks aren’t able to get an education because they have to work.

Guinier and Torres show that parents’ financial contribution to their child’s education is one of the strongest, if not the strongest influence on the outcome in children’s educational achievements. But because of centuries of discrimination, blacks are unable to accumulate assets at the same rate as whites and therefore lack the ability to make those contributions. Holly fails to make the connection that parental wealth greatly influences children’s educational outcome, focusing instead on how education influences income. Through her colorblind lens, Holly views a world where everyone has access to higher education. Yet her statement that blacks often have no choice other than quitting school in order to work/survive shows that she is aware that is not reality. Colorblind ideology does not permit race to be recognized as a predictor of opportunity or life chances, forcing Holly to denounce affirmative action even though she recognizes that opportunity is not equal. Additionally, while Holly opposes affirmative action, in a sense she is providing her own privatized form of affirmative action by providing wealth to insure her own children’s education.

Similarly, Jessica, the mother of two biological white children ages 17 and 15, and two adopted black children ages 11 and 9, also demonstrates Guinier and Torres second rule of colorblind racism when asked if race limits what a person can accomplish:

I think that you accomplish whatever your perception thinks you can accomplish. If you let race be the reason then you won’t accomplish because of your race. I think blacks probably have more opportunity in getting education when it comes to funding, scholarships, etc. They may have limited opportunities in some geographic locations but mostly they have more.

She goes on to say, “It doesn’t matter what color you are, if you grow up in poverty that’s what you know. It just so happens that there’s a disproportionate number of minorities in the ghettos.”

In Jessica’s view, like Holly’s, a person can accomplish whatever they set their mind to and race simply is not an issue unless you make it one. And when it comes to getting an education, Jessica feels that not only is the playing field level, but blacks now have more opportunities than whites. In Jessica’s opinion, we shouldn’t recognize race because things are now equal if not balanced in favor of blacks. It is just some accident that happens to land so many blacks in the ghettos. Yet later in the interview, when asked why there are so many black children in foster care and up for adoption, Jessica said:

Because there’s a lot of babies being born to blacks. I think that you have more blacks in poverty, which leads to higher birth rates. Because of history, race has (pause) you can’t say that there aren’t differences. I think it’s a generational paradigm that is passed on. It’s an engrained thing.

Jessica, like the other adoptive parents, is influenced by colorblind ideology so strongly that she contradicts herself because on one hand she claims that accomplishment is about your perception, not your race. But on the other hand she acknowledges that history has created differences between blacks and whites leading to higher rates of poverty among blacks.

Rule number three: Racism is an individual problem

The third rule of colorblind racism suggests is that racism is located within individuals, rather than a systemic problem within the structures of our society. As Guinier and Torres state, under this third rule of colorblind racism, it is “a psychological disease of individuals, not a social plague” and a problem of “changing people’s thinking.”
All but two of the parents interviewed offered stories of friends, family, or co-workers who, because of exposure to their adopted children were able to overcome some of their individual attitudes about race. Here are some of their stories:

We had my racist grandparents who, when I’d send them pictures, would plaster them all over the place and even, she kind of neglected her white grandchildren to show everybody her black grandchildren, especially when she got in the retirement home and a lot of her caregivers were African American. I think it was a real turning point for her.

My grandparents were not happy about the adoption, they live in the South. I remember calling my grandma and she acted excited, but then my grandfather told other family members “well they didn’t ask us first.” But you know we don’t see them often but when we do they try to treat them the same as the other grandchildren. And my dad was raised in the south so I think he can’t help but be a little racist, but he treats my kids good. I think maybe it’s been a real turning point for him. You know, I think with every generation it gets less and less and eventually it will just go away.

Everybody in the neighborhood knows that our next door neighbor doesn’t like blacks. He has always made comments about colored people. But over the years he has come to really like the girls and I think his attitude has changed just from knowing them.

We’ve seen a lot of people change their thinking about race and black people just from knowing our kids. I think the more people continue to inter-marry and the more normal it becomes then you’ll have more and more people changing their attitudes and thinking and eventually there will be no more racism. It just takes time. But it’s nice to think that we are doing our own little part in eliminating racism one person at a time.

While changing individual beliefs is desirable, these parents still see racism as only being an individual problem, which doesn’t allow them to look more closely at the problem as it relates to the institutional practices that reproduce racial disadvantages. Locating the problem of racism within individuals leads to individual based solutions, or changing the hearts and minds of society one person at a time while ignoring the mechanisms of society that prevent minorities from gaining social mobility. This line of thinking suggests that if these individuals would just come around in their thinking, racial inequality would cease to exist.

Looking through a colorblind lens

In addition to parents overwhelmingly fitting into Guinier and Torres three rules of colorblind racism, I also found that a majority of them conformed to the parental behavior reported by adult adoptees in Samuels study, as they failed to recognize incidents as being racist or discriminatory and often seemed to be looking for reasons to not see things as being race based. Having never experienced racism and the disadvantages of having black skin in our society, parents fail to notice things such as avoidance when a white couple crosses the street to walk on the other side when a black male approaches, or rejection such as poor service in a restaurant (Feagin, 1991). As Feagin points out, black Americans are more likely to evaluate a situation carefully before judging it based on their lifetime of experiences, something white parents are unable to do. Instead, parents seemed to try to justify discrimination or search for reasons that something was not about race, as the following quotes demonstrate:

I do worry about when they begin to date, but I think people are pretty open minded. I really do. Sometimes I think people just don’t like each other, or maybe it was that the parents didn’t want her to have a boyfriend—not because he’s black, you just don’t know if its skin color or a million other things and I think sometimes people just look for that.

My son, I think he just doesn’t like to think that someone just doesn’t like him. He’d rather say it’s because he’s black.

The only thing that we’ve had happen, and I don’t really think this was racist, was a kid not wanting to play with him on the playground because ‘he’s different’. He might have said the same thing about a red headed kid, you know?
In addition to denying that incidents were racist, several parents indicated that in questionable situations they were reluctant to bring the event to anyone’s attention as possibly being racist. These incidents may have registered differently if parents had a more developed racial consciousness since they lack a lifetime of experience with racism that black parents would have. Instead, these events are swept under the rug when they could be used as opportunities to implement anti-racism practices and teach their children how to recognize and handle those situations.

Parents also expressed a fear that talking about race would lead to their children “having a chip on their shoulder” and a few felt that their child had already developed one. The parents of children who felt they already had a “chip on their shoulder” couldn’t explain why the child might have developed this heightened sense of racial injustice and reasoned that it must be a cry for attention, rather than giving any weight to what their children were saying.

Failure to address the racial aspects of these incidents embodies all three rules of Guinier and Torres explanation of colorblind ideology. First, parents view race as only about skin color, rather than recognizing its significance; second their reluctance to bring up race conforms to rule number two; and lastly, failure to recognize the connection between incidents of racism and privilege in our society falls under rule number three. The grip of colorblind ideology is so strong that parents not only fail to see things as being about race, but also search for reasons to define them as being about anything but race.

Toward a transformation

Although parents overwhelmingly demonstrated a colorblind ideology, they also expressed a desire for a better understanding of race. The experience, although not a transformative one, created openings for some racialized experiences within the contradictions of the dominant ideology. Many wished they had been better prepared or had an idea of what to expect and all of them would have liked access to resources to help them better parent their black children. I found that the more experienced parents were far less colorblind, suggesting that as their children grew and had different experiences, their understanding of race shifted as well. Perhaps there comes a point where incidents of racism can no longer be ignored, forcing parents to confront racism.

Twine (2004), in her whiteness studies, shows how white people can develop racial literacy by taking note of their whiteness and the benefits society confers upon them simply because of their skin color. Although the parents I interviewed are reproducing colorblind racism, there are indications that they are shifting toward racial consciousness by acknowledging the benefits their children receive from having white parents, as Amy did in the following quote:

I’ve seen people who look at my kids and I could see that they are sort of not treating them badly but just differently and then I’ll come in and they’ll realize I’m their mother and they’ll say Oh, they are LIKE white people. They aren’t really black; they are more like white people. They’ll exhale and let their guard down.

In this instance, Amy was describing an interaction with a store clerk at the mall. She acknowledges the protective quality of her Whiteness and how it is used to “vouch” for her children as being white by association. Her children are afforded the privilege of not being scrutinized so closely by the clerk once her Whiteness is brought into play. This incident was not mentioned when I asked about specific events that were racist, which again highlights the contradiction between parents perception and their lived experiences. At the same time it is a positive step away from colorblind racism. Recognizing the advantages of her whiteness may be the first step toward racial literacy for Amy.

Conclusion

Studies on transracial adoption have shown that the adoptive children do not fare any worse than same race adopted children (Simon, 1998 and Silverman 1993), however the adoptees do struggle with identity development. In a study by Gina Samuels, multiracial adults who had been adopted by white families reported feeling racially alienated and struggling to come to terms with their own racialized existence. Being raised in a “race neutral” environment where racial incidents were downplayed caused many adoptees to feel estranged from their parents, disconnected from their race and left them ill equipped to navigate their experiences in a racialized society. Parents in the present study, enabled by the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act, appear to be employing similar colorblind
parenting strategies that will likely have the same outcome of children who struggle to reconcile their lived experience with the worldview of their parents.

The history of race relations in the United States leaves a legacy of very real consequences for these children of color that cannot be overcome simply by being raised in a white family. Enabled and empowered by MEPA, couples who are eager to love a child are thrust into parenthood with little preparation for dealing with such a complex issue as race. As Twine suggests, the family can be viewed as a site where competing racial projects are negotiated. Transracial adoptive families should be an ideal site for anti-racist practices; however because of the state’s failure to follow MEPA with laws mandating both racial training and the need for resources for these adoptive families, instead they become sites that perpetuate colorblind racism which insures the continuance of racism and oppression.

This study provides evidence of the colorblind ideology that overwhelmingly exists in a group of adoptive parents, supporting previous scholar’s suggestions that call for transracial adoption policy mandating racial education for those who wish to adopt children of a different race or ethnicity from their own. Additionally, post-adoption support in the form of organized support groups would benefit adoptive families.

Future research in the form of longitudinal studies incorporating both the parents and adult transracial adoptees perspectives might explore how parent’s ideologies transform over time or follow the process of developing a critical lens through which to analyze race. As Twine points out, “analysis of how they informally train their children to negotiate and/or challenge racial boundaries provides critical race theorists and sociologists with insights into how white people conceptualize blackness, whiteness and anti-racism as the intimates of blacks.”
References

Fracture Energy Method for Determining Stiffness in Polymer Modified Asphalt Binders Using the Single Edge Notched Beam

Alejandro Rosales: McNair Scholar

Dr. Hussain U. Bahia and Dr. Mandar Khanal: Mentors

Civil Engineering

Abstract

Transverse cracking is a prevalent problem that occurs in asphalt pavement binders in cold climates and diminishes the integrity of the road as well as shortens the life span of the road leading to premature failure. Current specification for testing asphalt pavement binders for transverse cracking fails to accurately model the behavior of modified asphalt binders because it does not take into account the effects of physical hardening. Furthermore, current specification, which employs the use of the bending beam rheometer (BBR) and direct tension tests, was developed through the use of unmodified asphalt pavement binders and so it does not accurately model the behavior of modified asphalt pavement binders at colder temperatures. This study sought to come up with a new specification criterion for testing for transverse cracking as well as modeling the behavior of modified asphalt pavement binders at colder temperatures. This was achieved by the fracture energy method through the use of a single edge notched beam (SENB). The results showed that the fracture energy method proved to be an effective tool for modeling the behavior of modified asphalt pavement binders. However, when comparing the stiffness calculated from the SENB with that of the BBR we found that the stiffness in the SENB was much higher than that of the BBR. The increase in stiffness could very well be attributed to the differences in the way the samples are tested. Further research is necessary to come up with a way to compare the stiffness calculated from the SENB with that of the BBR before the fracture energy method can replace the BBR method.

Introduction

Transverse cracking is a serious problem that affects the longevity and performance of asphalt pavements. Transverse cracks occur due to distresses in the pavement caused by three modes of failure. The first mode of failure is called single event thermal cracking and it is characterized by a dramatic drop in temperature below a critical value that causes thermal stresses to build up in the pavement and exceed its designed capacity (2, 14). The second mode of failure is known as repetitive thermal stress which is the stress induced on a pavement caused by repetitive fluctuations in temperature below a critical value that weakens the integrity of the mix and causes it to fail without reaching a critical stress (2, 14). The third mode of failure is characterized by the repetitive loading of an asphalt pavement by regular and heavy vehicles that over time weaken the asphalt pavement's structural integrity thereby allowing for transverse cracks to form and further deteriorate the life of the road (2, 14).

One way engineers can design and prevent transverse cracking is by measuring the stiffness of the asphalt binder. Stiffness is a quantity that measures the load over the displacement of a material. It is a material property that is independent of test apparatus, sample size, or geometry (11). As such, it helps engineers to characterize the behavior of a material at low temperatures so that they can modify the material to withstand the various modes of failure that can cause transverse cracking. Current specification employs the use of the bending beam rheometer as well as the direct tension test to determine the stiffness of the material (1). The bending beam rheometer reports a value of stiffness that is taken after sixty seconds of constant loading and an m-value which is the slope of the double logarithmic graph of strain versus time (10). The m-value essentially measures the material's ability to relax stresses (10). This information is used to construct a master curve which is then used to predict how the material will behave at various temperatures (10).

Current specification however does not account for the effects of physical hardening that can occur with asphalt binders at low temperatures (2). Furthermore, when the bending beam rheometer was developed, it was developed using unmodified asphalt binders and so it does not accurately model the behavior of polymer modified asphalt binders (10). Physical hardening can have a significant effect on the validity of stiffness readings that could
lead to erroneous results regarding the specification of asphalt binders. The process is characterized by free volume collapse of the material below the glass transition phase of the material (2). This hardening causes a time dependent isothermal change in the rheological behavior and specific volume of the material.

As a result, it is necessary to develop a method that takes into account the effects of physical hardening as well as the aforementioned modes of failure and create a better model for how polymer modified asphalt binders behave and resist thermal cracking.

**Methodology**

To conduct this study we employed the use of a Bending Beam Rheometer (BBR) and the Single Edge Notched Beam (SENB) in order to compare the stiffness for the materials selected in the study. The materials used for this study are summarized in Table 1.

**Bending beam rheometer**

The Bending Beam Rheometer (BBR) tests for stiffness in pavement binders by loading a beam that is placed in the apparatus between the supports at a constant load in a methanol bath where the sample is allowed to condition to the specified temperature. By measuring how much the beam has deflected over a period of five minutes, the stiffness can be calculated. Thus, the stiffness tells us how the material will behave at cold temperatures and whether or not it will fail at a certain temperature (13). Typically tests are conducted on pavement temperatures within a temperature range of -12C to -24C and a master curve is then constructed for the material. This curve then allows us to calculate the stiffness value for the material for any temperature within that temperature range. The beams are prepared by pouring hot asphalt into a mold that is allowed to cool down to room temperature which is then removed and the sample is then allowed to condition to the testing temperature for an hour.

The following equation shown below (Equation 1) is used to model the behavior of the asphalt binder and is used to calculate the stiffness of the material.

\[
S(t) = A + B \log(t) + C \log(t)^2
\]  

(1)

The BBR typically reports a value for the stiffness and a value known as the m-value which is the slope of the log of stress vs log of strain (4). These two values give us an idea of how the material behaves over a range of temperatures and allows us to design pavements that meet or exceed the design criteria for a specified temperature.

**Single edge notched beam**

The Single Edge Notched Beam (SENB) is essentially modeled after the beams used for conducting the Bending Beam Rheometer (BBR), with the exception that the SENB requires the use of a notch that is molded using a piece of plastic that is fixed at the center of the beam. The mold is prefabricated with the notch in place and a plastic sheet is placed in the notch as shown in Figure 1. The asphalt is then poured into the mold while it is still hot and allowed to cool down to room temperature after which the mold is then removed and the corresponding beam is placed in the methanol bath to condition the sample to the specified temperature. For this study we chose to test our samples at -12C and -18C and compared the stiffness attained at these two temperatures with the stiffness attained from the BBR at those two temperatures.

The Single Edge Notched Beam is similar to the BBR in the approach used to test the beam except whereas the BBR bends the beam as it is placed horizontally, the SENB places the beam vertically with the notch facing down as shown in Figure 2. This essentially allows us to control the manner in which the beam fails through thermal cracking at low temperatures.
The mechanism for testing the notched beams is similar to that of the BBR as well except that the SENB loads the beam until the point of fracture while holding the rate of strain constant and the BBR uses a constant force on the beam and allows the strain to change over time. Essentially the SENB is measuring the energy required to propagate a crack through the material which then allows us to calculate the stiffness of the material for the specified temperature (9, 12). The fracture energy is calculated using a model developed in an excel spreadsheet and the stiffness can be calculated by equation 2:

\[ S(t) = \frac{PL^3}{4bh^3 \delta(t)} \]  

Where P is the load applied in mN, L is the length of the specimen in mm, b is the width in mm, h is the height in mm and \( \delta \) is the displacement at the point of fracture in mm. The equation presented above allows us to calculate the stiffness of the material up to the point of fracture. This geometric approach is independent of the type of apparatus used, geometry, or size of the sample and more discriminate in the way that it tests the material’s inherent structure and ability to resist deformation.

**Materials**

The table shown below, Table 1, is a summary of the materials used to conduct this study. Table 2 summarizes the codes used to identify each respective material. The number scheme is used to identify whether or not the material has been modified through the addition of a polymer modifier. For example, in the sample A0, the A corresponds to the source Flint Hills and the number 0 corresponds to an unmodified binder. The samples coded with a 0 are base binders that have not been modified with a polymer additive and are used in this study to compare how the stiffness changes with the type of modifier.
Table 1. Base and Polymer Modified Asphalt Binders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Class of Modifier</th>
<th>Expected Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A0</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>PG 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Functionalize PE</td>
<td>Plastomer-Non reactive</td>
<td>PG 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Functionalize PE</td>
<td>Plastomer-Non reactive</td>
<td>PG 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>SBS with x-linking</td>
<td>Elastomer-Reactive</td>
<td>PG 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>SBS with x-linking</td>
<td>Elastomer-Reactive</td>
<td>PG 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B0</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>PG 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Ter-polymer</td>
<td>Elastomer-Reactive</td>
<td>PG 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Ter-polymer</td>
<td>Elastomer-Reactive</td>
<td>PG 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C0</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>PG 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>PPA</td>
<td>Chemical Reactive</td>
<td>PG 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>PPA+SBS+x-linking</td>
<td>Elastomer-Reactive</td>
<td>PG 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>PG 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>SBS with x-linking</td>
<td>Elastomer-Reactive</td>
<td>PG 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>SBS with x-linking</td>
<td>Elastomer-Reactive</td>
<td>PG 76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The expected grade corresponds to the performance grade expected for the material and was confirmed using a Dynamic Shear Rheometer to confirm the true grade of the material both under the original and aged conditions (3, 8). It is important to note that the material used to conduct this study was aged material that had been aged using the Pressurized Aging Vessel (PAV) for a period of 20 hours as outlined in the performance grade criteria for grading asphalt binders (5, 6, 7).

Table 2. Source Codes for the Corresponding Materials List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flint Hills</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathy Construction</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Asphalt</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nustar</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the material used in the BBR is PAV material we chose to test PAV material for the SENB as well as material that has been aged and simulates the worst conditions to which a pavement binder can be subjected (6, 7).

Results and Discussion

The figure (Figure 3) shown below is the result of the Single Edge Notched Beam on a sample B1 that has been modified with a Ter-polymer which is an elastomeric-reactive type of modifier. The fracture energy associated with the sample is displayed by the equation shown to model the recorded data. Using the value recorded for the displacement of the material up to the point of fracture it is possible to calculate the energy needed to fracture a beam with this type of polymer modifier.
In order to ensure consistent results and repeatability, the three samples were tested on the SENB test and a test on the variability was conducted and was found to be less than 10% between samples.

Figure 4 is the stress vs. strain curve for sample B1 that was also derived from the data recorded by the SENB. One of the advantages that the SENB has over the BBR is the ability to calculate both the fracture energy and the stiffness as well as the stress vs. strain. The BBR is only able to yield the stiffness and the stress vs. strain. In Figure 4 the relationship shown is a linear one, which is what we had expected to observe. Noting this relationship is important when calculating the fracture energy because if a material is ductile it will not exhibit a linear relationship and thus the model used to calculate the fracture energy is not applicable.

A comparison of the fracture energy at -12C and -18C is shown in Figure 5. One of the trends that were observed was that the fracture energy tended to decrease with a drop in temperature. This observation was noted in most of the samples tested regardless of the type of modifier used when compared to their base binder.
This tells us that regardless of the type of modifier, the polymer modified and base binders became more brittle as the temperature dropped and thus required less energy to fracture the material. One of the important observations that can be made from this analysis is that the SBS cross linking polymer tended to fare better than the other types of polymer modifiers as displayed by samples A3 and A4.

A regression analysis conducted on the stiffness calculated from both the SENB data and the BBR data is shown in Figure 6. The figure is a graph of the stiffness vs. temperature and shows that for the most part the stiffness calculated using the SENB tends to be higher than that of the BBR.

For the most part this difference can be attributed to the difference in which the two stiffness values are calculated. The stiffness calculated using the BBR is calculated using Equation 1 which models the curve of the log of stress vs. log of strain graph. This value uses the deflection after a period of 60 seconds of loading as mentioned in the ASTM standard for flexural creep using the BBR. The stiffness calculated through the SENB is attained until the point of fracture in which case it does not have a clearly defined time period as the BBR. As a result, the stiffness values calculated with the SENB will tend to be higher than those attained with the BBR.

**Conclusion**

The Single Edge Notched Beam proved to be a more discriminate tool in determining how a type of pavement binder will behave with temperature, especially when modified with a polymer. The data showed that the fracture energy method is a property that is unique to the type of material as it tests the structural integrity of the material by propagating a crack through the material. Those pavement binders that tended to do better with a drop in temperature, such as the SBS cross linking polymer modifiers, could be attributed to the type of bonds generated within the microscopic structure of the material and could be a point of further research. The stiffness calculated using the data obtained through the SENB tended to be higher than that of the BBR. This difference can be attributed to the different criteria used to conduct each respective test. More research is necessary in order to come up with a way to better compare the two stiffness values so that it can be determined whether or not the SENB is a better tool attaining the stiffness of a material.
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References


Climate Change and Idaho Agriculture: 
Is Farm Size a Determinant of Adaptive Capacity?

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Dr. Kelly Cobourn: Mentor
Economics

Abstract

Determining how agriculture will be affected by climate change is not only a question biophysical change in crop production; it also depends on the adaptation of the farmer to changing conditions. A flaw in models using nationally aggregated cross sectional data is that the adaptive capacity of unique farms is not captured in the analysis. In order to understand the local effect of climate change on welfare models must capture attributes specific to the study area. Factors that must be taken into consideration include farm characteristics, local policy and institutional frameworks (Antle et al. 2004; Mendelsohn, Nordhaus, and Shaw 1994). This study looks at weather and crop characteristic specific to Idaho agriculture by utilizing county data over a fifty year period. This approach captures local conditions, although adaptation under climate change is hard to determine because of the prevalence of advanced adaptation techniques, such as irrigation and cultivation technology, across all farm sizes.

Introduction

Determining how agriculture will be affected by climate change is not only a question biophysical change in crop production; it also depends on the adaptation of the farmer to changing climate conditions. The capacity to adapt to changing climate conditions can depend on many variables. These can be factors such as access to financial instruments, suitability of land for alternative uses, available inputs, such as water and fertilizer, and farm management skill. Because these various adaptation strategies are very difficult to estimate with empirical methods a rich source of literature has emerged concerned with measuring adaptive capacity through other means.

The two dominant methods in the literature are process based (Antle et al. 2004) and Ricardian (Reidsma, Ewert, and Oude Lansink 2007; Reidsma et al. 2009; Mendelsohn, Nordhaus, and Shaw 1994). A theme that has emerged from research using both methodologies is that analysis on specific regions is important in understanding how each type of farm will be affected. This involves taking into account local changes in climate, farm characteristics, local policy and institutional frameworks (Reidsma et al. 2009; Antle et al. 2004; Mendelsohn, Nordhaus, and Shaw 1994). The current study will use site specific data to look at a critical farm characteristic for understanding adaptive capacity: economic size.

Understanding the adaptive capacity among farm sizes is a relevant research goal because structural changes in the distribution of farm sizes has implications for rural economies, consumers in both export and local markets, and for new producers entering the industry. Heady and Sonka (1974) cite farms as a tax base and source of employment for local economies and makes the argument that a greater number of small farms will necessarily raise tax revenues and employment opportunities. Counter to this positive view of small farms, Hall and LeVeen (1978) note that competitive agricultural markets transfer the increased production costs associated with labor intensive small scale farming into decreased rents, rather than transferring the higher costs to consumers, which would lower the potential welfare of this type of farm. The implication for current agricultural trends can be seen in the high growth of small scale farmers focusing on local and organic production. These farmers are made up of relatively young individuals breaking into the industry for the first time and growing mainly vegetables and fruit for either direct sale or farmers markets (ARMS cite needed). While this study does not presume to determine the economic benefits of farm size or the viability of recent industry trends, discovering what group of farmers is most adaptable to climate change can help inform policy decisions for desired economic outcomes.
Literature Review

Pytrik Reidsma et al. (2008) identify two main approaches to understanding the economic impact of climate change for agriculture. The first is process based and combines crop and economic models (Antle et al. 2004), and the second is through Ricardian analysis (Reidsma et al. 2009; Mendelsohn, Nordhaus, and Shaw 1994; Schlenker, Hanemann, and Fisher 2005). The limitation of process based models is that decisions within the model refer to projected yields that are stipulated by the parameters of the model. Because the model does not use actual crop production figures, the results show how well a farm was predicted to perform given assumed management efficiency (usually either optimal adaptation or no adaptation), but does not say how well the farm performed in reality, thus is difficult to quantify adaptive capacity (Reidsma et al. 2009). The Ricardian approach is limited because it cannot easily discern spatial adjustments from temporal changes and because it has been employed using cross sectional data across a large sample size, it fails to take into account regional differences in production methods (Mendelsohn, Nordhaus, and Shaw 1994; Schlenker, Hanemann, and Fisher 2005).

To address these deficiencies Reidsma et al. (2007) uses a multi-level Ricardian approach using both farm level and regional data. This captures spatial changes among regions, and by using actual crop yields, it is possible to measure the real adaptations by farmers to changing climate conditions. Because adaptive capacity is difficult to quantify, a key assumption of the study is that performance is implicitly linked to adaptive capacity. Thus farms that perform well are well adapted to their current technology and environment (Reidsma, Ewert, and Oude Lansink 2007). In this analysis factors influencing farm performance were identified in two different groups. The first was farm characteristics, and the second was regional factors including the biophysical environment, socio-economic conditions and policy. The results show that farm characteristic such as input intensity, economic size and land use were more significant than climate in explaining variability in farmer income. This indicates that farmers within the study region are well adapted to local climates (Reidsma, Ewert, and Oude Lansink 2007).

The same multi-level approach is used again in Reidsma et al. 2008, but it is used to determine if farm characteristics affect the response to temporal changes or variability in climate. An important observation made here is that aggregation can have a large impact on how the results are interpreted. Agriculture at the regional level may seem less susceptible to damage from climate effects because of the diversity of farms helps to mitigate aggregate damages while individual farms could be more vulnerable than others (Reidsma et al. 2009). The benefit of using a multi-level approach that considers both farm and regional level influences will capture more contributing factors than either a regional or farm level analysis could capture alone. In order to achieve a generalized picture of how climate variability affects farm economics, data sets focus on comparing annualized trends among regions rather than inter-annual data. This allows the use of larger data sets in more coherent fashion than could be achieved by looking at fluctuations within the regions themselves (Reidsma et al. 2009).

Mendelsohn, Nordhaus and Shaw (1994) pioneered the use of the “Ricardian” approach in order to address the how farmer welfare would ultimately be effected by climate change (Mendelsohn, Nordhaus, and Shaw 1994). Rather than use a production function for a single crop and then estimating production along this curve, the Ricardian approach takes into account the ability of the farmer to adapt their land use to maximize welfare. This adaptation can include adjustments in cultivating techniques, fertilizer application and land use changes towards more profitable uses. In the case of wheat farming, if production falls to the point where corn or soybeans would yield a higher return of investment, then it is likely that the farmer will chose to plant these crops. This welfare maximizing behavior will continue and lead to a production function that is a composite of many land uses, and ultimately flattens the long term curve. By measuring the economic value of the farmer’s land along this production frontier it is possible to discover the farmer’s capacity to adjust land use.

The Mendelsohn, Nordhaus, Shaw study is a valuation of climate in the agricultural industry, as such, data is collected that expresses changes in long term climate trends rather than short term variations in weather. Also, because this is a cross sectional analysis using data across the contiguous U.S., it is difficult to understand the influence of climate on distinct growing regions. The authors admit that most weight in the regression analysis is given to the grain belt region because the model weights counties based on the total area of cropland and the value of these crops. By giving more weight to the citrus regions on the coast there is a more comprehensive picture of total agriculture, but this leaves out farms west of the 100th meridian where irrigation predominates. The authors also acknowledge that their regression models fit data on east side of the 100th meridian better than data on the west side. This could be attributed to the much more extensive use of irrigation in the western region and may indicate
that these farms are less sensitive to changes in climate trends.\footnote{Long term climate trends may be less important for irrigators, but this study does not address short term variability that is expected to accompany the climate change phenomena.} This is similar to what Reidsma et al. (2010) observed in the Mediterranean region, which shares a similar climate with the western United States. These farms often choose more heat resistant crops and have more extensively adopted irrigation as an adaptation technique than farms in northern latitudes (Reidsma et al. 2010).

The problem of combining irrigated with dry-land farming in a hedonic analysis is examined Schlenker, Hanemann and Fisher (2005). Because irrigated farming is dependent on water storage both surface and ground data on precipitation and temperature will not reflect an irrigated crop’s production. Rather, it is will be dependent on the farmer’s ability to apply sufficient stored water to the crop during the growing season. However, data on quantities of stored water is problematic because current county level data is merely an estimated figure and thus unreliable in modeling. Accurate measures of water use reside within irrigation districts, of which many can exist within one county. Because this level of aggregation is not sufficient to carry out a nationwide cross sectional analysis, Schlenker et al. (2005) found the model employed by Mendelsohn, Nordhaus and Shaw (1994) to be insufficient in capturing the effects of climate change on irrigated and dry-land farming using pooled data. Some evidence is given as to why climate change would damage irrigated farming, including higher evapotranspiration rates leading to a higher demand for irrigation water, and greatly increased costs for modern water storage capabilities, but because water supplies are determined uniquely for each region, it is difficult to measure this damage precisely.

\section*{Methods}

\subsection*{Study area}

The study area for this research is the state of Idaho. The majority of agricultural production in this area is focused along the Snake River in the south. This area is characterized as semi-arid land and is reliant on irrigation for high levels of production, although dry cropping is also common. The other notable region of crop production is located in the west central portion of the state along the Washington-Idaho border. This area produces mostly wheat, although at a lower average yield than the southern regions. Along the Upper Snake River basin, Central Plains, and Southwest annual precipitation is typically less than 10 inches and summer temperatures.\footnote{Western Region Climate Center historical summary.} In the more northern latitudes rainfall is varied due to the geophysical variations of the state, although the areas of the Clearwater, Payette and Boise River Basin receive 40 to 50 inches of rainfall annually.\footnote{Western Region Climate Center historical summary.}

Agricultural production within the state is predominately livestock and their products. This segment of the industry accounted for 57\% of total agricultural products sold in 2007, and of the crops that make up the rest of the agricultural receipts, 36\% is devoted to forage material and corn silage as an input to livestock production. The remaining crops are wheat (summer, spring and durum varieties), barley, potatoes, corn (predominately for seed) and specialty crops such as mint and hops that are grown in smaller quantities.
The total number of farms in 2007 was 25,349 with an average size of 454 acres. As figure two and three show, small farms less than 50 acres greatly outnumber the number larger farms, but the acreage operated by large farms greatly outweighs that of smaller farms. Within this distribution the largest 15% of farms in Idaho are responsible for 85% of production. Despite this biased production distribution, the segment of small farms has risen significantly over the years, with a 50% increase in farms of 1 to 49 acres from 1978 to 2007.

### Empirical Model

This framework describes the effect of farm size and climate variables (Palmer Drought Intensity Index) on either the dollar amount of production or crop failure.

\[ Y_{c,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 FS_{c,t} + \beta_2 PD_{c,t} + \beta_3 FS_{c,t} \times PD_{c,t} + \beta_4 X_{c,t} + n + \delta + \varepsilon_{c,t} \]

- \( FS \) = Average farm size per county
- \( PD \) = Palmer Drought Intensity Index
- \( FS \times PD \) = Interaction variable for average farm size and climate
- \( X \) = Control variables such as soil quality and topography
- \( n \) = Fixed effects for county over time
- \( \delta \) = Fixed effects across time by counties
- \( \varepsilon \) = Error term

### Results

The results show insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that farm size has an effect on adaptability. The two models of interest used crop land failure and market value of agricultural goods as dependent variables. Regression on crop failure, as measured by total crop land less crops harvested, showed a positive coefficient on the

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4 USDA NASS 2007 Agricultural Census data  
5 Anecdotal figure provided by NASS (NEEDS VERIFICATION)  
6 USDA NASS 2007 Agricultural Census data
independent variable Palmer Drought Index (1876.503), as would be expected, but a low t value for this variable (.53) and a low R-squared value (0.5107) for the model makes the finding insignificant. The model using market value of agricultural products shows better results. The coefficient on the Palmer Drought Index is negative (-16246.01) with a significant t-value (-3.77), whereas average farm size has a positive effect on market value (66.46) and has a significant t-value (4.99). Both of these results are intuitive, larger farms should experience a positive return to scale and periods of drought should reduce the productivity of farms, although together their interaction term is insignificant with a t-value of 0.728. Also, the R-squared value for the overall model does not point to a strong relationship (0.7534).

Conclusion

The relationship between farm size and adaptation on a regionally scaled basis is difficult to establish for many reasons. First, the sampling technique used was limited to census years for agriculture data while climate and weather data was available over single year intervals. This disparity could allow the effects of single drought years to go unnoticed if it is not in close proximity to the next census. Also, the effects of non-crop farming, such as livestock production, are difficult to separate from data containing only cropland farming. These different types of farming will respond to climate and weather changes in much different ways which confounds the data.

A large factor in determining adaptive capacity to climate change is the access to technology to cope with changing environmental circumstances. As stated earlier, the study region is heavily reliant on irrigated farming. This means an effective adaptive technology is already established in the area and is extensively employed by farmers. Some of the insignificant relationships between farm size and climate may be explained by the even distribution of irrigation technology to farms of all sizes.

Because of these limitations, future research on this topic should consider the level of aggregation and the timing interval of census or sample data. If obtainable, this data could be used to focus more closely on the relationship between climate and water availability, both temporally and spatially. In an area that depends so heavily on irrigated farming the question of how changing climate conditions will affect water scarcity will only grow in importance as the natural environment changes.

References


Ethnographic Introduction of Coping in a Timber-Dependent Community

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Sociology

Abstract

The effects of socioeconomic change on individuals is a central theme of sociology. In order to understand how society functions the impacts of social change on individuals must be examined. In extreme cases, where a community’s economy is dependent on a single resource, change can hit hard and fast. Most research on these communities is quantitative and has been successful in identifying social problems associated with resource dependence, but people react in the context of local history and value systems. Most studies have been limited in their examination of this context. This has been recognized by researchers who have argued that “coping strategies” need to be studied in order to determine how social change can impact individuals, communities, regions and nations (Force and Machalis 2000; Christensen and Donoghue 2001). This study uses ethnomethodology to describe how some citizens of Kamiah (KAM-ee-eye), Idaho are coping after the community’s largest sawmill, Three Rivers Timber, Inc., ceased operations in the fall of 2008. Those with whom I spoke told me of events taking place after 90 well-paid mill workers lost their jobs and benefits.

Literature Review

“[An] isolated rural community, dependent upon mill, mine, or farm for livelihood, its stability as a social system a function of its resource production and localized economy” (Machlis, Force and Balice 1990:225) as the “classic view” of a resource-dependent community has been refuted. Recent research describes rural communities as struggling to compete and survive in a capitalist society in where the vulnerable local market is at the mercy of an ever-growing, resourceful, and exploitative global economy (Bonanno and Constance 2003; England and Brown 2003; Flora and Flora 2003; Luloff and Bridger 2003; Lyson and Tolbert 2003). In essence, “the quality of life of many rural peoples and their respective communities depends less and less on nation-based policies [and more] on socioeconomic events taking place at the global level” (Bonanno and Constance 2003:241).

The phrase “resource dependence” refers to the extent which a community’s economy relies on the healthy supply of a resource to fuel the industries built around it. An “industry-resource town” is one whose “economic base is dominated by the extraction and primary processing of (nonagricultural) natural resources” (Hayter 2002:2). Timber-dependence, specifically, describes the economic circumstances of a community where extracted and processed timber resources provide the most jobs. These jobs pay well and provide benefits such as health insurance and paid vacation.

In The Engines of Change in Resource-Dependent Communities (Force, Machlis, and Zhang 2000) most resource-dependent communities are rural places and have been described as “communities at risk” ([1984] 2000:410), “corporate satellites” ([1990] 2000:410), and “addictive communities” ([1992] 2000:410). Kamiah is a timber-dependent community and, unlike agriculture communities, timber-dependent communities share a characteristic that is not present in other communities: “[These communities rely] on biological processes that are technologically modifiable...but not totally controllable” ([1982] Force et al. 2003:727). In other words, resource dependence describes a community’s dilemma when its labor force is heavily employed and highly paid by resource industries.

While providing high incomes when that sector is economically healthy, such dependence may result in a host of negative outcomes based on the vulnerability to fluctuations in that dominant sector. Sudden changes in demand can lead to job losses in the leading sector and in sectors that depend on expenditures from that sector. (Stedman et al. 2007:629)
Communities whose economy is resource dependent have been shown to be hot spots for the development and reproduction of social problems including high poverty rates (McGranahan 2003; Jensen, McLaughlin and Slack 2003), low educational attainment (Beaulieu, Israel and Wimberley 2003), and exploitation of workers, land and community (Foster 1993; Cohen 2001; England and Brown 2003). These are just a few of the reasons studies concerning social change and sustainability of resource-dependent communities have become an increasingly serious line of inquiry in the social sciences.

Caudill’s classic ethnographic study, Night Comes to the Cumberlands (1962), describes isolated rural areas as extremely connected to the history of their localities. It is shown that many of the actions individuals and communities take in everyday life have been deeply affected by family history and personal experiences that come with the incorporation of and exposure to a particular community’s values, norms, beliefs, customs, and economy. Today, however, rural places are much less isolated because of the modern capitalist economy and twenty-first century technology.

But what exactly is community? “Community” is an ambiguous term that can be described by geography, social and cultural groups, structural organizations, “economic regions,” and so forth (Machlis and Force 1988). Be that as it may, there is one theme that is present in any accepted definition of community, which is that “human interaction is the foundation of all communities” (Flora and Flora 2003:214). Identifying particular communities must incorporate the population’s history, culture, social and economic practices, institutions, social structures, values, norms and personal interpretations (Flora and Flora 2003; Luloff and Bridger 2003; Lyson and Tolbert 2003; Machlis and Force 1988; Stedman et al. 2007).

Luloff and Bridger (2003) summarize Wilkinson’s (1991:16) theory of community as “the fact that one naturally is connected to other people.” Community is said to be “natural” because:

People . . . engage in social relationships with others on a continuing basis and . . . derive their social being and identities from social interaction. . . . [A]ll people engage in it all most all of the time, whether or not they recognize that fact. . . . Community, therefore, is a natural disposition among people who interact with one another on matters that comprise a common life. (1991:210)

Researchers have studied correlations between resource production and social change in communities and concluded that these two are interrelated (Machlis and Force 1988; Machlis et al. 1990; Force and Machlis 1993; Force and Machlis 2000). But results of such studies have their limits when it comes to describing social change. For example, if a timber company invests in new technology where it is possible to harvest just as much timber with twenty fewer people, then measuring resource production cannot account for the social change that may occur as a result. Of course, Force and Machlis did understand this limit and have suggested that research is needed to “[identify] the range of coping strategies employed by the community, groups, and individual members to mitigate the influence of production systems upon the social order” (Machlis et al. 1990:421).

Coping is “a response aimed at diminishing the physical, emotional, and psychological burden that is linked to stressful life events” (Cheavens and Dreer 2009:1). The ways in which people react are seen as appendages of their values, beliefs, psychological conditions, and personal relationships; coping strategies can depict the actual social environment in which an individual is engulfed.

The research that exists on coping strategies developed by communities has been explored by various disciplines (Rennie, 2006). Within the range of studies, a few underlying themes are present. For example, one’s ability to cope with a given situation is in part a function of access to social capital – education or technical skills are other variables when it comes to coping. In essence, “coping consists of constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised to be taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Cheavens and Dreer 2009:1).

In ethnomethodology, “the intelligible features of a society are locally produced by members themselves for one another, with methods that are reflexively embedded in concrete social situations” ([2003] Rennie 2006:33). By exploring what “a normal” social life is comprised of at a given point in time according to the people who experience that life, we can begin to indicate a “population’s capacity to react and adapt to change” (Rennie 2006:33). Anxiety, grief, total change in occupation, and the like can help explain the society in which individuals live.
Methodology

I spent one month living in Kamiah conducting field work: reading local history, talking with residents on and off the record, jotting down observation notes of daily life, and taking photographs. Twelve qualitative interviews with fifteen members of the community, and four separate e-mail interviews were conducted (17 research participants in all), representing municipal and business leaders, members of the Nez Perce tribe, former timber industry workers, teachers, and health care providers. Each interview was at a location of the participant’s choosing, and each received, read, and signed the full informed consent forms before the interview began. Participants who were photographed followed the same procedures. The Kamiah Library and the Clearwater Progress provided all the historical materials needed for this study.

Ethnomethodology and quantitative interviews

Ethnography is a type of cultural description that relies on the behaviors and conversations of people within a culture. In order to remain coherent during my interviews, I conducted an historical overview of the Kamiah community. Pioneer Profile (Brown 1974), Treaties, Nez Perce Perspective (Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho 2003), The History of Kamiah, Idaho in Pictures (Spicer 2007), and With the Nez Perces: Alice Fletcher in the field, 1889-92 (Gay, Hoxie, and Mark 1981) were the main sources used. In addition, the local newspaper, The Clearwater Progress, was used to confirm details and get a feel for what life was like for citizens.

For the interviews, [A] digital recording device was used to record the conversations, which were soon thereafter transcribed personally (190 pages total). A wide spectrum of questions was asked to embrace interests and expertise of people within the community. My interviews were conducted according to standards of ethnographic methodology—they were not directed, questionnaire-driven interviews, but were open-ended. My subjects told me what is important to them, which is critical to better understand how individual people themselves deal with socioeconomic change. Human beings shape their lives through personal experience and those experiences are encased in their stories.

Examples of questions asked: Can you tell me what happened after Three Rivers Mill closed down? How have things changed for you (your family/your job/your friends/etc.) since the timber mill closed? Can you tell me more about (what happened after you lost your job/how you were able to make extra money)? Do you think the (mill closure/alcohol abuse/etc.) affected (your life/the community/your children/etc.) in any way?

Ethnographic analysis

First, interviews were transcribed as soon as it was possible after each was completed. Transcribing is the process of writing a detailed log by dividing and identifying each question and response by the time, recording all verbatim. Second, an analysis of domains (e.g., interviewees versus published records) was briefly conducted to understand the town as the citizens might see it. This was accomplished by constructing a paradigmatic chart (in essence, an upside down pyramid) constructed that conceptualized the taxonomy, where taxonomy refers to isolated categories of information from the most general category to the most specific (McCurdy, Spradley, and Shandy 2005). Third, a slide show presentation was developed and used as a further outline. Forth, a quasi-narrative was constructed to describe how events played out in the community and how people reacted to changes. Fifth, themes were identified from within the interview data and categorized accordingly. These steps provided the foundation for my analysis and conclusion.

Participant observations and photography

General observations and specific details of the community or the people I was interviewing were noted in a field manual. The other aspect of field observations was photography. Photographs, original and archived, are used to help paint a more elaborate picture than what words can provide. There were approximately 100 photographs taken during the one month of the field work. Participants who were photographed gave me their full consent.

The City of Kamiah

Kamiah is a Nez Perce word for “many rope litters.” The Nez Perce gathered in the Kamiah valley to manufacture “kamia” ropes for the ceremonial practice of fishing in the Clearwater River. Nez Perce is the name of
the Nimiipuu tribe officially recognized by the U.S. government. Over 5,000 years ago the Nimiipuu were part the Cupnitpelu (the “Emerging” or the “Walking Out People”), a people that inhabited over 13 million acres of mountains, plains, water and desert (Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho 2003). Kamiah’s lush landscape and mild weather was as appealing to the Nimiipuu as it was to the Euro-American immigrants who were to make Kamiah home beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Lewis and Clark came through Kamiah in 1806, and 99 years later Kamiah was incorporated as a town in 1905 (Brown 1974). Kamiah is located in the Clearwater Valley in Lewis County, Idaho, and has a population of 1,160 according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Just outside of Kamiah, east bound on US Highway 12, is The Heart of The Monster site where the Nimiipuu believe their people originated. The Heart of The Monster is both a physical monument and their creation story. The following is a paraphrased version of that story:

A monster was eating all of the animals. Coyote fooled the monster into swallowing him. Using a set of stone knives that he had brought with him, Coyote cut apart the monster from the inside to release all of the animals that were trapped in the monster. Upon emerging from the remains of the monster, Coyote cut it up and threw the pieces all over the land, creating the Indian people who inhabit the land. Fox asked Coyote about the land around the monster, it had no people, what was he to do? As Coyote washed the blood of the monster off his hands, the drops became the Nez Perce (Nez Perce National Historic Park 2010).

Historically, Kamiah is a spiritual gathering place for the Nimiipuu. In 1872 Rev. H.T. Cowley organized the First Indian Presbyterian Church within walking distance of the Heart of the Monster (Brown 1974; Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho 2003). Today, there are 14 church groups in the Kamiah area (Kamiah Chamber of Commerce 2010).

Demographics

Men are 49 percent of the population, whereas 51 percent are women; Euro-Americans make up over 85 percent of Kamiah’s population, American Indians represent just under 10 percent, and Hispanic Americans occupy 2 percent; 82 percent of Kamiah’s citizens have a high school degree, yet only about 10 percent have obtained a bachelors degree or higher (almost 14 percentage points lower than the national average); the median household income for Kamiah is $28,909 ($13,085 less than the national average); Kamiah’s median family income is $33,547 ($16,499 less than the national average); 11.4 percent of Kamiah’s families are below the poverty line (2.2 percentage points higher than the national average); and, 15 percent of the individual residents are under the poverty line (almost 2.5 percentage points higher than the national average) (American Fact Finder 2000 U.S. Census).

There are three subdivisions of Kamiah: Pine Ridge, which is outside city limits by the Lewis and Idaho County lines drawn by Lawyers Creek; the Bethman Addition, which is directly parallel to Idaho State Highway 162 and within walking distance of the public school system; and Valley View, located across the Clearwater River, in Idaho County, approximately 1.5 miles east on Highway 12. There are two areas across the Clearwater River, in Idaho County’s northern mountain ranges: Woodland, where the anti-government, anti-UN survivalist group known as “Almost Heaven” is located, and Glenwood, an area characterized by small ranches, alfalfa farms, outdoor enthusiasts, and people seeking isolation and refuge in the Clearwater Mountains. Two Indian “projects” are located about 1.5 and 3 miles east on the Clearwater River. These “projects” are low-income Housing and Urban Development (HUD) establishments for Nez Perce tribal members. All of these places are located in the boundaries of Kamiah School District #304 and Kamiah’s zip code 83536. The community is better represented by all the citizens residing in zip code 83536, which encompasses 3,650 people (American Fact Finder 2000 U.S. Census).

The isolated location and spectacular geography of the Clearwater Valley is analogous to the types of people that reside in Kamiah. The town is a secluded place, nestled away in the Clearwater Valley, and seems the ideal place for one to get away, to be left alone perhaps, or to simply live free. In many ways Kamiah is an ideal place. Wild fruit, roots, and fungus are plentiful, along with the fish and wild game. The terrain is just rugged enough for some people to enjoy its bounty and beauty while keeping the majority locked up in urban centers or the suburbs. However, after the closure of Three Rivers Timber sawmill in 2008, this scene of isolation and seclusion can be seen as more of an illusion because Kamiah is now facing a serious economic crisis that goes far beyond the local economy.
Kamiah’s Timber Industry

When Kamiah was becoming industrialized in the beginning of the twentieth century, the timber industry was growing, vibrant, and bringing in all sorts of businesses, services and people from all over the U.S., establishing necessary social networks for a strong community (Brown 1974). In short it was in its “boom” phase. “The country to the east and north is Kamiah’s greatest resource, and its greatest wealth just at present lies in its timber and sawmills” ([1907] Brown 1974:16). For example, the first medical doctor, the first pharmacy, and the first educational system (excluding the church establishments and boarding schools for the Nez Perce) all came to be because of a growing economy fueled by wood.

Western States Lumber Co. was the first major corporation to begin operating in Kamiah in 1917, but by 1923 the company had to end all activity. Other smaller, local corporations, Selway Lumber Company and the Valley Tie and Lumber Company, operated mills in the Kamiah area. Most important, though, was the fact that the majority of the timber industry during that time was run by local contractors. The first major mill closure came in 1923 when Western States Lumber Company put the city of Kamiah’s sawmill industry on hold until 1936. However, outside the official city limits there were a number of operations taking place in Glenwood, Caribel, and O’Hara Creek. Such operations included a shingle mill established by Z.M. Powell in 1922. In 1923 the Crowe, McKeen, and Adams mills were producing lumber, and poles were hauled from Warren Knights mill down the Glenwood road and Adams grades by horses and a team of 40 men. In 1925, contractor Ira Root and his two GMC trucks with trailers were hauling 4 loads of poles down Glenwood 24 hours a day.

In 1941 Leonard Floan constructed the Valley Tie and Lumber Company near the railroad depot at Kooskia. . . . The mill was destroyed by fire and in the fall construction began on a new mill near the mouth of Clear Creek, approximately three miles from Kooskia. It became apparent that a location near a railroad spur was necessary and in the spring of 1947 the Conrad mill site at Kamiah was purchased. . . . Floan chose the name of Twin Feathers for his mills at Kamiah and Kooskia. From 1949 the Kamiah plant expanded rapidly and since purchase by Potlatch Forest, Inc., in 1953 emphasis has been on increased production and standardization with other Potlatch operations. (Brown 1974:18)

Potlatch’s Twin Feathers provided hundreds of people work in North Central Idaho and were crucial in forming the vibrant and easy living community of Kamiah. Twin Feathers would also be the driving force in an extreme local economic depression and population decline after its closure in 1984. In those days Kamiah was a product of a much larger 1980s phenomena: the Reagan Administration policies of dismantling industrial America (Shell 2009; Wolff 2009). The closure of the Twin Feathers sawmills in 1984 absolutely devastated the community of Kamiah, Idaho to a degree from which the town has never quite recovered.

In the next few paragraphs I will examine a firsthand recollection of the 1984 Twin Feathers mill closure with two lifetime locals. Joe and Tammy Harding, a wedded couple, provided valuable insights into the 1984 closure and will provide a prologue to examining how the community coped after the 2008 closure. For my limited analysis, I assume that 1984 dates the beginning of Kamiah’s industrial bust. Kamiah, as a community, has been fighting for its economic survival since long before I was alive and has been coping with economic transition for the better part of three decades.

“Tammy Harding, 50 years old, Forest Service ID Team Leader and sale administrator.”

Q: Is there anything that stands out in your mind things that you noticed around town after the mill closed down?

Tammy: I don’t notice as dramatically this time [2008 Three Rivers] as I did back when Potlatch [1984 Twin Feathers] shut down. To me I thought it was worse then [in ’84]. . . . I remember suicides, don’t you [Joe]? I mean, I do, I remember there was a few people, younger people. . . . Now [today] folks were so much poorer to start with, our standard of living, everything, so much has declined to a point. You don’t have the working age people out there, you don’t have all the softball teams [for] the adults, you don’t have all the large groups . . . you just don’t have that type. We’ve turned into a retirement community where people bring in outside money, purchase homes, they build, live her for 10-15 years, they get too old and because of our lack of medical facilities they move on to Lewiston. And so we don’t have near the spark. . . . What you do have here are . . .
more services that are sought over by older folks. And so it’s just a different community now from what it was. I mean we used to have two clothing stores, two hardware stores, grocery stores, multiple ones, you know, auto part sales, auto sales, mobile home sales, all of those things were here. So in the past 30 years, those have all dried up and went away. So from a rural perspective, towns are much poorer because the dollars are flying out and nobody’s here making them from timber. (Emphasis mine)

Q: Well do you think that maybe the people that had experienced the mill closure of ‘84. . . . Do you think that kinda helped prepare this town in any sort of way for when Three Rivers shut down?

Tammy: No, I just think that it really totally changed the fabric of the town. Like I mentioned before, you lost your youth. . . . You lost a certain type of people. . . . We have the red neck contingency you might call it, a very back woods, self-sufficient type of individual that are drawn to living without much. But then it crosses over a line and you end up with border line groups. . . . But I think we weren’t necessary prepared for this, I think we just end up with a group of people that are either quite well off, financially set, they’re retired, and it doesn’t affect them. Or you end up with folks that are very poor, and they expect to be poor, and they don’t expect much better than they’re going to get by on the fringes. (Emphasis mine)

“Joe Harding, 59 years old, part store owner.”

Q: (To Joe) The same question: Well do you think that maybe the people that had experienced the mill closure of ‘84. . . . Do you think that kind of helped prepare this town in any sort of way for when Three Rivers shut down?

Joe: [The closure of the ‘80s] was a local deal for us. This time we’re, for lack of a better word, we’re a part of the whole problem. [When] Potlatch [Twin Feathers] went down it was just Kamiah. . . . Well when it went down this time it was actually part of the national decline in everything. People quit buying cars, people quit selling cars, people were out of work, you know, everybody was out of work. So I don’t think you saw the people leave as fast because number one, getting unemployment in Kamiah’s probably better than getting unemployment in Lewiston. It’s a hell of a lot cheaper to live in Kamiah. . . . They’re leaving because there isn’t a perceived opportunity. . . . I mean you could go to work, you could start making $12 per hour, which in those days was pretty good money. And if you decided to hang it out and you wanted to go logging, you could go make $350 a day. . . . Actually you could make more money those days than the loggers could make today. . . . And it doesn’t all have that much to do with the mill closing, it’s just an evolution that our society is going through. (Emphasis mine)

Coping with Resource Dependence

Those who were hit the hardest were those directly involved in the timber industry. For workers, entire livelihoods were at stake due to actions and events outside of their control. 90 people lost their jobs at Three Rivers sawmill in 2008, as did many others working in the mountains for or as Three River contractors. These people obviously had to find something else to do if they were not satisfied with just collecting unemployment.

When asking residents why Three Rivers mill shut down, I received a number of conflicting and vague answers. Some feel as if it was the fact that a credit based industry, which timber most undoubtedly is, was bound to fail in the midst of a housing bubble burst like in 2008. Some blamed the previous managers for bad business policies. Some pointed fingers at the banks and greedy corporations, while others still said it was the unions or environmental movements. With this variation the residents appear not to really know why things ended up the way they did. Either way, it is a situation they will have to deal with.

There are two main objectives for the rest of the paper. First, to have the citizens of Kamiah tell us what it was like for them when they were faced with socioeconomic change. These experiences will be analyzed as the story is being told. The second, will be to categorize the coping strategies discovered during my field work, and discuss how, according to my original data, individuals, businesses and the community at large coped with the loss of the major employer. So, how is Kamiah coping with the loss of their economic backbone?

Things have become increasingly difficult for both contractors and laborers alike in Kamiah’s timber
industry, especially after the mill closure in 2008. Both are at the whims of a global market and policy changes at all levels of government, both are exploited by non-local entities, and are members of one of the most ridiculed and attacked industries for environmental and social catastrophes. The nature of the timber industry, in all its historical context, has caused so much confusion, anxiety, anger, and a range of other emotions in all parties involved, that to have a civil and empathetic dialogue aimed to solve real problems can quickly turn sour, even turn violent (Foster 1993). The next conversation we are to observe is with a man who has been involved in these struggles for years, and now is faced with a sink or swim sort of scenario.

“Steve Uhlhorn, age 54, contract logger.”

Q: Was that [Three Rivers] a pretty big part of your operation?

Steve: [Three Rivers was] 90 percent of what we’d done. I employed six to eight guys directly, and had probably three to seven subcontractors. Usually work an average 45-50 hours per week. Pretty much a nine to ten month season, a little bit of shut down time and maintenance repair during the spring or wet weather. After Three Rivers we went to a four man crew the first year and a three man crew last year. And as far as season, it was about a seven month season the first year and about an eight month season last year . . . so a little short of the runway both years. And as far as contract truckers . . . I went from three to six to about two and sometimes three.

Q: Why are things so bad for the timber industry?

Steve: One thing you got to realize is we cannot generate enough timber resource now the way the federal timber program is it’s in the toilet. I mean we have more timber to waste than we cut, there’s more dying every year than we cut on our national forest and wilderness.

Q: Really?

Steve: Oh probably 2:1

Q: Why?

Steve: Gridlock (pause) the environmental movement has a concept in their vision that this is the way everything should look, it should never change. And, in reality it’s a different concept than in the timber industry and the mining industry. . . . And the sad part of it is, you have to admire the zeal of some of the people in the environmental movement, but they’re misguided. They have no on the ground knowledge. . . . Nature’s dynamic, it’s a constant change. It doesn’t matter if it’s man made, man-managed, it’s always in constant change . . . it’s not going to stay the same. (Emphasis mine)

Q: Where did you see exploitation?

Steve: If anything I would say the exploitation was from the work force. And that’s because . . . now don’t get me wrong, unions had their great day. They were a needed situation at one time, but they’ve become so lethargic they’ve gone away from their roots. They’ve gotten to where they’ve got a stranglehold on a lot of our industry, not just timber. That’s why we’re starting to see Detroit, Michigan suffer so severe financial losses. They’re not competitive; the unions have run up their wage base so high that we can’t compete with anybody. We’ve used to that standard of living, and for us to back up is gonna be a real issue. I mean, people aren’t used to it and they won’t—they’ll expect public assistance. Well that can go on for a couple of years but it can’t for a lifetime or generation after generation. And that’s probably the crux of it.

Q: Those people who got laid off or moved, do you know what they did to make money after?

Steve: Well for the first year a few guys did odd jobs here and there. Couple guys were in the timber industry or the mill industry took jobs driving truck or moved out of state part-time for
filling in for other places you know. Alaska picked up a couple of guys up on the North Slope. Those guys got laid off this year because the oil industry got tough this year too. And as far as the loggers that moved out of town they all ended up coming back because it was just as tough all the way out the west coast. So there was really no logging industry per se last year. Anywhere, it wasn’t any better anywhere. Montana is probably even worse than what we are. The largest chip maker there in the State of Montana did probably 40 percent of their revenue, closed the doors last fall. And so that’s—it had a filter effect. The guys that had moved to there have come back (tape skips) from here are starting to filter back. But, there’s nothing for them here. As far as log contractors go, there’s too many contractors and not enough mills. So it's kind of a game of attrition now, see who can withstand it. Work is a lot cheaper . . . I was able to do pretty good maintenance and upgrade systems on equipment until two years ago. Then the cash flow pretty much withered and died. So it’s just a subsistence deal, trying to pay the taxes, pay the payments, keep a couple your key guys employed, that’s all I’m trying to do. (Emphasis mine)

Tammy Harding, who we meet earlier, can elaborate on these problems:

Tammy: Before I was a timber sales administrator I was a scaler, which meant that I visited all the mills from here to Lewiston . . . from Elk City to Lewiston actually . . . and scaled, measured those mills that were receiving Forest Service wood. And I think I calculated at the time, there was, both large mills and small mills, there was 30 of ‘em. . . . That’s a lot of mills. And there was like five major ones that were large. And now were to the point where between Elk City and Lewiston, and that’s considering Grangeville too . . . We have three large mills, well actually two, and all of the other small backyard mills, or product mills, or pulp mills, or all these, we don’t have those anymore.

Q: Tell me about the timber industry today.

Tammy: If you look at the records for the Forest Service, timber harvests peaked in the 80s and has been on the decline ever since. So at one time we were cutting over 80 to 100 million board feet per year, just off the Clearwater National Forests. We’re now down to a point where we don’t cut 20 million.

After Three Rivers sawmill closed a “game of attrition” began and has a “filter effect,” or trickled down to the smaller businesses that relied (at least partially) on the business of well-paid mill workers and timber-harvesting contractors. The contractors, who once were key in preserving some quality of life from 1923 until 1936 when Western States Lumber Company closed down are now facing a crisis that appears strikingly similar.

It was observed that people who worked in the timber industry either began to rely on unemployment, generate alternative income (odd jobs), or would leave in search of other work (exodus). Steve had to cope by doing anything he could do to keep his business alive. Prior to Three Rivers, Steve had recognized that the industries and the markets of forest products were undergoing change. With these changes arose situations where reactions to such were critical to the survival of a company. Competition is everything, and Steve invested heavily in the tools of competition: technology.

Steve: We used to it do by hand, cutting the bigger trees with two to three fallers, two to three buckers, two to three skidding rigs. We’d do 12-16 loads of logs a day. Now mechanized, using three to four guys, I’m doing 12-16 load a day. So, ya cut the man power in half. Basically I went from labor costs to mechanical costs—just to be competitive.

Investing and working in an industry that is unstable and largely controlled by wealthy non-local forces is no small challenge. According to The North Central Idaho Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2009:63) three things have compounded the negative effects of the recent market crash on timber industries in the North Central Idaho Regional Area (NCIR): 1) In the 1990s changes were made to U.S. Forest Service policy, which reduced the total amount of timber harvested in the subsequent years; 2) Advancing technology constantly reduces the need for human labor to extract and process the same amount of wood products as before; and, 3) government subsidies for Canadian timber industries have helped in the dramatic drop in global timber prices. These local timber contractors, who are more reliant on credit than ever, have been placed in an extremely precarious position and there
is literally no margin for error. Sacrifices and adjustments have to be made as things change, and one must adapt to these circumstances otherwise they will be quick to deal their last hand.

Most of the coping strategies that were developed by many of the laid-off laborers affiliated with Three Rivers could not be documented because I was only able to conduct an off the record interview with one. However, I was able to get many third-party accounts of what happened since Kamiah is such a small town, and most of the people I spoke with happened to be friends, or acquaintances, or relatives of one, or many, people who were employed through Three Rivers. Delia Nasura was able to tell me a little about what had happened to some of the timber industry workers after they lost their jobs, including a relative of hers.

“My name is Delia Nasura, I’m 41 years old, and I’m a pharmacy technician at Kamiah Drug.”

Delia: Some people just moved, they just up and moved. . . . You know a lot of them went to the oil fields. [A relative of mine] worked at the mill for several years. When he lost his job. . . . He had to actually move there and work in the oil fields and that’s what he’s doing now . . . [in Colorado].

Finding work at out of state oil fields appeared to be one of the more popular choices for those who decided to find a new job. Work on oil rigs was also a sought after by youth because of factors like restricted career opportunities in Kamiah, the high pay, and, as high school teacher Amy Woods put it, “they want some excitement.” But for many others, for whatever reason, becoming a roughneck was not something they were willing to pursue.

For some, public assistance was enough to get them by, allowing them to wait it out or figure out what their next course of action was.

Joe: They’ve extended the unemployment, the federal government has, in a lot of ways to keep the businesses from really dying. . . . Not that unemployment is a good way of life, but if you can keep your house, and you can keep your car, and you can feed your kids, then you can have any kind of a standard of living. You know, it’s different than what it used to be. Used to be, like when Potlatch closed down [in 1984], initially there’s a lot of people that just up and left because they had a finite amount of unemployment and they had to go find a job.

There were those who were able to find similar work at nearby mills, like Bennit’s in Grangeville, or Potlatch in Lewiston, and either relocated or began to commute. One person with whom I spoke rents a room at a bed and breakfast in Lewiston to work as a millwright at the Potlatch paper mill, staying there four nights a week. But not everyone was able to find work at a mill or could afford to commute, and had to completely change what they did to make a living. I was told of one ex-Three Rivers employee who now commutes to the nearby town of Cottonwood to work as a prison guard, and another who chose to become a tribal police officer.

One person discovered opportunity in disaster by taking advantage of federal government grants that became available for the unemployed because the United States as a whole, not just Kamiah, was suffering from economic decline. Amy Woods, 50, provided the account: “I do know of one [person], he’s about my age and he is being trained to be a nurse in Lewiston. So he took advantage of an opportunity to get an education that he didn’t have.”

One common theme that was expressed, without exception, in each interview was a “trickle-down effect.” The exact phrase was not always used, but each person noticed that once the major employer in Kamiah had failed almost every business was soon after impacted. Several businesses in the area went under, a few people working for small businesses like local diners were laid-off, pay raises became out of the question, and the streets became notably less busy.

The companies and employees of timber industries that were not directly connected to Three Rivers were forced into a situation that was far beyond their control, and it became their turn to decide whether to sink or swim.

“Duane Nasura, I’m 50, I’m a timber faller.”

Duane: Well we didn’t log for them [Three Rivers] but . . . how it affected us is their contractors were looking for work and, everybody gets hungry, and they came to the mill that we log for and they offered to work for less money . . . So the lowest bidders got the jobs. I know of three jobs that would have been ours, that were more-or-less taken from us because they offered to do it for less money. And my boss was offering jobs still but, he had to do it for the price they offered. . . .
He refused to do them. . . . We had to take a little cut in pay because my boss had to start bidding lower for jobs. So, you know it trickled down to everybody that worked for him. . . . For instance, a few years ago he was getting, say, $32 a ton on one job and then the next that basically was the same timber and everything, after Three Rivers closed, he was having to bid like $26-$28 a ton. . . . And a fuel prices have gone on up, and that’s hurt everybody. (Emphasis mine)

Duane was eventually laid off and began to collect an unemployment check, but he was not satisfied. His wife, Delia, expressed to me how difficult it was to dramatically adjust lifestyles, and almost seemed as if she felt guilty for having to cut back the amount of money spent on their children. In response, extra care and attention was given to their vegetable garden, the couple basically quit going out to movies or dinner, and Duane did whatever he could to make a few extra dollars while he was out of work.

Duane: Well last year I worked for Knife River, which is a construction, road construction company. I did that for almost three months. . . . Then I went back to logging ‘cause, the mill pretty much assured us that it was gonna get better (laughs, but not happy). It picked up some but not like they told us was going to.

Duane: When Knife River came in, they probably did like any other corporation, but . . . they took advantage of the fact that everybody was laid off at that saw mill, and so . . . the wages weren’t what they would have been say two to three years ago, you know?

Duane: I worked part time for an old feller out of town here, helped him . . . build fence, I cleared some land for him.

Duane: Oh, we done it [building cabinets] for three months. . . . I mean we built a few and we did odd jobs, you know but . . . there was people you know, wanting stuff done but they just didn’t have the money (laughing but not happy). . . . The biggest problem we ran into was they was wanting it done for nothing. . . . I mean, we had to make a profit. If we couldn’t make a profit we just couldn’t do the job . . . we ran into a lot of that.

Duane did everything he could to pay the bills and maintain a certain quality of life and he was successful. Granted, he only had to do the odd jobs for a short period of time and it cannot be known what would have happened had he not been called back for work. His experience as a laborer and his work ethic paid off and allowed him to weather the storm—this time at least.

His wife, Delia, on the other hand, holds a job with seniority that is not associated with the timber-industry. She has, however, not received a pay raise in three years and has noticed a drastic change in the community and in her place of work.

Delia: When Three Rivers closed down we lost a lot of our business as a pharmacy. . . . [Those who] worked at the mill, they had real good insurance, and when they lost their insurance they had to end up paying out of pocket full price for [their prescriptions]. . . . Men lost their jobs, they had to move . . . people who decided to stay here and find just little part-time jobs ended up getting their prescriptions filled at Walmart, Costco, places where they could get their prescriptions cheaper. . . . mail order. . . . I’d say we lost . . . about 30 percent, at least. . . . It was a big drop.

If the timber industry is dissolved any more than it already has been, more people will move away and it will most likely spell the death of many small local businesses. Some have already suffered that fate. Exodus was described in two different ways.

The first form of exodus we have already observed was when people physically left the community to find a new job. Their second form has two different connotations as it can be a mental or emotional escape from harsh realities through either substance abuse or divorce.

Substance abuse as a means to cope was noted by several people, some by observation, some through relationships, while other people didn’t report to notice much difference at all. The extents of alcohol and drug abuse after the mill closure cannot be known, but it is a strategy that some have undoubtedly turned to. Allicia Oatman, mother of three, experienced one of the worst outcomes to be reported that came as a result of the mill closure.
“Allicia Oatman, 32, and senior citizens cook.”

Allicia: A lot of men went for the bars and in turn it kind of . . . Well in my situation I was divorced from it . . . Losing his job did kind of throw [him] through a whirlwind ‘cause he was stable there for, oh gosh, 8 years. . . . Before he was happy, close to home, made good money, and it’s steady, and it was something he loves to do too. But once it closed down he had more time to go to the bars. And for a month he was just kinda always drinking. (Emphasis mine)

Allicia, and several others, also stated that the mill did nothing to help out those who had lost their jobs. They were basically left to fend for themselves in the midst of a life-changing episode. This might be associated with the “mass anxiety” that was observed in the community by citizens. It also displays a breaking point. Lori Johnson, a 49 year-old liquor store owner, said that her business actually experienced a lag for the first several weeks after the mill closure. When I interviewed her at her place of business, a year and a half later, however, this did not seem to be the case anymore as our interview was interrupted several times by customers. In short, a “mass anxiety” caused many to quickly begin saving money (not buying alcohol for example) but after a while gave into temptation for whatever reason.

Another account of noticing an increase of substance abuse in the area was from a local health care professional:

“Brenda Hewlett, 49, and I’m a nurse practitioner.”

Brenda: Mostly perception drugs and alcohol. Yep, that’s increasing. I don’t think that that’s any different though in this community than it is, I don’t know (pause) alcoholism, is that increasing in other places? It certainly is here. Perception drug abuse is a problem nation-wide.

From what I observed during my field work, the majority of citizens in Kamiah that were directly affected in one way or another took one of the three obvious options: collect unemployment and see what happens, find a conventional job nearby, or leave the community completely in search for work. Others, however, decided that they wanted more control over their situation by adding a few extra dollars to their budget any way they knew how. Performing odd jobs like clearing brush or making home improvements were widely cited, but, unfortunately, were not seen as being extremely successful.

It can be assumed, as it was by my research participants’, that the amount of success could be determined, partly, by the fact that the entire community was tightening their belts—the market for such tasks had been basically dissolved by people deciding to put off projects or doing them themselves. However, there are some small, informal markets that have not subsided because they are more specialized and require technical skills. Additionally, there are existing markets that may not appear on the surface to be able to produce profit, yet some have been able to spot them out and exploit them.

Nelson Davis is one such individual, as he was able to capitalize on two of those markets. The first is auto mechanics, a passion Nelson has had since he learned how to use a wrench. His technical knowledge and skill in the trade was a twofold educational process. He was first taught auto mechanics by his step father, and not long after he was rebuilding engines and transmissions. Second, after sticking out a delayed graduation from high school in 2006, he joined the two-year auto mechanics program at Lewis and Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho, and received his degree and technical certificate in 2008.

Unfortunately, his new piece of paper was not offering any real opportunity. Furthermore, Nelson had found himself in a completely new situation—he recently had a son. With more than one life to care for, and very few options, Nelson moved back home with his family and began to think about how to deal with his situation. His conclusion was to become his own boss.

He began to work on friends’ and relatives’ vehicles for discount prices, which were soon referring other people to him. However, the problem of not having a stock pile of spare parts was hindering and soon became obvious. This dilemma became the second opportunity once he realized that scrapping unwanted vehicles from private individuals could be used to salvage parts for his odd jobs. This solution was brilliant because not only did he now have access to free or extremely cheap parts (hopefully they were the kind needed), the rest of the vehicle that was not salvaged could be taken to a scrap yard and exchanged for cash.
“Nelson Davis, 23, I’m unemployed right now.”

Nelson Davis: I’m unemployed right now, [so I’ve] kind-a been scrapping rigs to get money. . . . How it works is there’s a steel yard in town here . . . they’ll pay ya 95 bucks a ton. . . . I’ll go talk to people that got old junkers laying around in their yard or whatever, and I’ll ask ‘em if they want it out of their yard or not. . . . Sometimes I got to pay ‘em for it, just a little bit though . . . but I’ll just take it to the scrap yard and they’ll pay me for it by weight. . . . They’ll give ya 70 bucks a ton if you don’t drain [the fluids out of] it, and 95 bucks a ton if you drain it.

This has proved to be a success, allowing him to provide for his new family and wait until he could get steady employment, which he received at the Itse-Ye-Ye Casino several weeks after our interview. He plans to continue “scraping rigs” and provide small repairs for friends and family because it’s something he loves doing and he can make extra cash doing it. Nelson claimed he has made over $700 in a day on more than one occasion.

In addition, Nelson Davis, a Nez Perce tribal member, was also able to use exercise the salmon fishing rights guaranteed by the Treaty of 1855. Nelson, along with any registered Nez Perce Tribal member, is able to fish in the Clearwater, Colombia, Salmon, and Snake Rivers and all their tributaries. These rights are helping tribal residents by providing families with food for the winter in some of the toughest economic times seen in Kamiah since the 1980s. Salmon fishing was not a coping strategy that was developed as a result of the Three Rivers mill closing, but it is something that has proved to be extremely helpful in times of economic distress. And, unlike the rest of the residents, the Nez Perce have been coping with economic depression their entire lives.

In the summer months one can observe the original inhabitants of the Clearwater Valley selling their catch on the side of many roads in Idaho. Salmon fishing was described to me as a “family business,” a way to survive, and as a ceremonial practice within the Nez Perce culture. It is the right of the individual and family to decide how they practice their own rights.

Nelson: We usually focus on getting’ all the family fish first, grandparents and stuff. We fill up everybody’s freezer first, then after everybody’s got the fish they need for a long period of time . . . then we’ll start making money off it. Ya the salmon dollars are big dollars.

In addition to individuals and families finding ways to cope, Kamiah was described to me as a tight-knit and supportive community and, as I observed, seemed to be coming together in ways that definitely helped out those in need. Debbie Evans, a grant writer for the city of Kamiah, responded to an e-mail interview and provided her viewpoints on the impact of the timber industry and future and the community:

Debbie: Forest-based industry has been the basis of the economic well-being of Kamiah and the surrounding area. As the traditional means of support from this industry has declined so has the economic gains and stability. Conscious thought is beginning to evolve that natural resource value added, tourism-based, service, and small business/entrepreneurial opportunities need to be researched, taught and developed to create a healthy community. Big business and large manufacturing are not an option as there is not enough “footprint” space available, lack of trained workforce, and could/would jeopardize the “small town” atmosphere that is wished to be preserved. The logging industry will probably never be what it once was but it will still play a significant role in the economics of the area.

The residents of Kamiah, overall, had the same outlook, seeing that most likely the timber industry will never be as strong as in the past. As Dallon Wheeler Sr. described it, “everyone saw the writing on the wall.” Furthermore, residents and groups noticed that, after the mill closure in 2008, their neighbors in Kamiah needed help and they sprung into action. There were not many accounts given about community solidarity but the ones I received are clearly worth mention.

- Many groups, such as the Pine Ridge Baptist Church, and two unidentified church organizations were cited by interviewees as giving much needed assistance for struggling families in the form of food.
- Avista Utility Co. was cited for giving up to $500 to keep the lights on for different needy families across the valley.
- Amy Woods, fitting it into her required curriculum, created a “careers” class for high school students at the high school level. They provide the students with one college credit from Lewis and Clark State College in Lewiston,
Idaho, while assisting them in finding a suitable career choice in pursuit after high school graduation. They even make financial aid and housing arrangements for the students. This is much needed help for youngsters emerging into a world of little local opportunity. Mrs. Woods noted that, “... most of our graduating seniors are first generation college students. Or even first generation post-secondary training students.” However, despite the good will and hard work of Mrs. Woods and companions, little success in the terms of completing secondary education/training has come from the program.

- An unnamed retired gentlemen who recently moved into the area volunteers his time to direct the high school drama performances. This saves the school money and ensures (for now at least) that the school can keep an invaluable program in the arts department.
- Dallon Wheeler Sr. coaches Kamiah middle school football and gave $400 of his $900 check for students whose parents could not afford the “pay to play” tax the school district imposes.

Findings

The range of coping strategies revealed on the individual level can be organized into the following categories:

1) Entrepreneurship: Scrapping rigs, auto-mechanics, odd jobs, and salmon fishing.
2) Alternative income: government assistance, i.e., unemployment, finding a new job, or commuting to a different job.
3) Education and technical training: nurse, tribal police officer, and prison guard.
4) Sustenance: fishing and hunting, vegetable gardens, and collecting firewood.
5) Exodus: leaving community for other work (oil fields, other mills, etc.), substance abuse, and divorce.

The coping strategies for businesses are as follows:

1) The “game of attrition”: underbidding, layoffs and utilizing technology
2) The “trickle-down effect”: once money started to disappear with the jobs many people in various sectors felt the strain. Those who were not financially affected as a direct result observed the results in the community as time went on.

The coping strategies on the community level can be categorized as:

1) Group organized donations: church groups and corporations set up food drives and help people struggling to pay bills.
2) Individual contributions to community: creating high school classes, financial donations for pay-to-play for student athletes, and volunteer work.

Kamiah appears to be a timber dependent, industry-resource town and is not isolated by any means from the global capitalist market. This fact was observed through the lens of the “trickle-down effect,” which was translated into a “game of attrition,” and illustrates the interconnections between the major local industry and the rest of the community. Once Three Rivers closed, the financial stress eventually trickled down the rungs of the economic ladder and generated a range and variety of coping strategies on the individual, business, and community levels. When the health of a community’s main economic force fails, the effects can lead to serious hardship.

The theme of “trickle down” came up in every interview. From the viewpoint of citizens residing in Kamiah, “trickle down” referred to the overall economic instability that caused people to become more reserved and “anxious.” The “game of attrition” was directly related to this “trickle-down effect” and influenced how the business community was coping. Strategies of this “game” included: layoffs, stagnant wages, underbidding, and business closure.

Individuals have made huge monetary donations and school teachers have made it a priority to help make sure Kamiah’s youth have some knowledge base that will help them in an uncertain economic atmosphere. Church groups and corporations have also lent a helping hand in the form of money and canned foods.

These coping strategies may not necessarily be unique to Kamiah and they cannot be taken as generalizations of rural America or timber-dependent communities. As it has been rightfully stated, “when you’ve seen one rural community, you have seen one rural community” ([1991] Swanson and Brown 2003:397). However, one community is part of the economic and social whole, and as such, one community’s experience can be analyzed to understand specific aspects of the whole, especially when a database of case studies exists.
Conclusion

Ethnography gives researchers a chance to capture the human experience by articulating socioeconomic change with the terms used by those humans who have experienced that change. Ultimately, the historical experiences of human society are translated into human action (collectively or individually), which can then be used to understand particular facets of society. This study was a successful first step in that process. After speaking with citizens about their experiences it was easy to conclude that Kamiah may be isolated when it comes to geography, but its economy is extremely connected to non-local interests and markets. Despite the tough economic times many locals were able to be “resilient” and “resourceful” and were successful in keeping their houses and maintaining a certain quality of life with odd and temporary jobs, utilizing vegetable gardens, innovation, salmon fishing, collecting firewood, training for a new profession, and commuting. Others were able to ride out the storm on unemployment alone thanks to federal extensions during the worst economic catastrophe since the Great Depression. On the other hand, there were many who, for whatever reason, were not able to remain emotionally stable or stay in Kamiah and had to resort to exodus.

This research was successful in identifying a few coping strategies that were developed by individuals, businesses, and the community. More studies of this kind must be undertaken so that comparisons and correlations can be made to further understand the pressing social problems of rural America. But, as past research has suggested, and as we have observed here, the “how” question of coping must be immediately followed with the “why?”

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Adam Wolfe: McNair Scholar
Dr. Samia Islam: Mentor

Economics

Abstract

This preliminary study draws upon previous research to analyze the black-white income gap in America by examining trends in mean and median household incomes, educational attainment, and unemployment rates from 1966-2001. I examine some historic themes to racism and how they persist through income inequality today. Through this research I hope to highlight that there is much work to do to minimize the economic marginalization of different races. Unequal incomes are evidence of such marginalization, which at times is unrecognized even by those who are being marginalized. In order to fully embrace being a land of opportunity, we must first create an environment within which economic opportunity can be equally generated by each citizen. The data collected will be used in conjunction with further research to form a model for better identifying the key factors that contribute to the growing income gap between blacks and whites in America.

Introduction

Varying forms of racism have been much discussed, examined, and debated over the years. According to Henry & Sears (Jun. 2002), “These [evolving] theories all share the underlying assumption that, among whites, new forms of prejudice embody negative feelings toward blacks as a group combined with a sense that blacks violate cherished American values. One of the most recent theories is ‘symbolic racism.’” According to their research:

[Symbolic racism] has been formalized in terms of four specific themes: (1) “work ethic and responsibility for outcomes,” the sense that blacks’ failure to progress results from their unwillingness to work hard enough; (2) “excessive demands,” the sense that blacks are demanding too much; (3) “denial of continuing racial discrimination,” the belief that blacks no longer face much prejudice in society today; and (4) “underserved advantage,” the sense that blacks have gotten more than they deserve (Henry & Sears, Jun. 2002).

In trying to define racism we are often negligent in identifying the policies, governmental systems, and social doctrines that are the foundation of such discriminatory acts; rather, we focus on the external acts of discrimination and hatred. These foundations are where we find the roots undermining such egocentric social behaviors. If we examine these roots and the beliefs with which they were created perhaps we will be able to find a solution as to how to resolve the ever growing problem of racism in America. I am taking the stand that racism is indeed an ever growing problem because, while society may appear to be more and more accepting of color and ethnic differences, I believe that there remains an unearthed problem deeply rooted in the founding of our great nation that is inhibiting our society’s disjunction from our racist and illiberal past.

The United States has made notable progress in terms of race relations between blacks and whites. Most notably are the gains made in civil rights and the perceptual attempt at recognizing equality through various special interests groups. The eradication of Jim Crow segregation laws and the recognition of the black vote are a testament to our nation’s progress (Reich, 1981). Even with the recent election of the first president of African-American decent in President Barack Obama, there is still a very unsettling issue regarding the economic well being of blacks with respect to whites. Public opinion has been such blacks are doing well and thriving in the modern society. Harris-Lacewell and Albertson (May 2005) point out that:

In the year 2000, nearly 30% of African-American respondents to a national survey expressed the belief that blacks are [actually] doing better economically than whites. There is no evidence to
suggest that African Americans are in a better economic position than whites. Striking gaps in income, employment, and wealth continue to distinguish black economic reality.

They go on to question where this misperception of racial economic fortunes might stem from (Harris-Lacewell & Albertson, May 2005). These misguided beliefs can be directly related to the disproportionate number of black and other minority professional athletes with high dollar contracts, especially in basketball, baseball, and football. This social trend is compounded by the success of other social figures primarily in the entertainment industry. Communal, we see leading actors and actresses like Denzel Washington, Will Smith, Morgan Freeman, Whoopi Goldberg and Halle Berry thriving and succeeding, and we in turn feel that their success is shared by the black population as a whole. If we take this idea of social misguidance even further, we can look at the music industry in which blacks have been able to turn rhythmic and poetic expression into a multi-billion dollar hip hop industry. The success of the industry is perpetuated by the image of a lavish lifestyle full of entourages, scantily clad women, exotic cars, high end jewelry and fashion, sex, drugs, and excessive amounts of money. It seems almost common place for rappers to be throwing around stacks of hundred dollar bills in their videos and interviews.

Despite all of the progress, or ‘overly-perceived progress,’ of racial equality, blacks are still being economically marginalized. This economic exploitation of blacks is evident all around us, and yet it remains taboo to recognize it. Why is it that the black-white relation is so unique? Racial hostility can be seen across the globe throughout the annals of history. None, however, have had the same sort of absolute marginalization as the American black-white experience.

Given what would appear to be a proactive movement for equality in the United States, it should seem reasonable to assume that the racial divide has been continually shrinking; however, if we look at the mean household income gap between blacks and whites we can see that this is just not the case here in America (see Figure 1). Even worse is the racial wealth gap which “depending on the data sources used [shows that] white households in the United States hold somewhere between five and ten times the net worth of black households” (Barsky, Bound, Charles, & Lupton, Sept. 2002). For the simplicity of this preliminary research I will focus on the lesser, but still very substantial income gap.

In looking at the relative income gap between blacks and whites we can visualize how our nation is truly responding to the increase of minority presence and influence domestically. One might naturally make the assumption that since we now have a black president; things are certainly more balance and that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream of equality has finally been realized. The truth is quite the contrary. The income gap between whites and blacks holds strong evidence of the continued marginalization of blacks. The mean household income gap has actually been expanding rather than contracting (See Figure 1). This could imply that there are deeply-rooted beliefs and doctrines of racism that are still present and active in our society.
Accounting for the population differences between blacks and whites, we can look at the median household incomes by race as another measure. Median household income data, however, depicts a more synchronized movement of the two income groups (Figure 2). Analyzing this in conjunction with Figure 3, showing the actual movements of the gap between black and white median incomes, suggests that during recessionary periods, white incomes drop at a faster rate than do black incomes. This is illustrated through the varying declines in the gap during these recessionary periods. This was somewhat surprising to me as I would’ve expected to see the opposite, given the types of positions held by a majority of blacks in the workforce.

To what or whom can we attribute this equality setback to? I’ll first look back at slavery and its abolishment to determine how such a system continues to affect the relationship between blacks and white in our modern society.

![Gap in Median Household Incomes, 1967-2001](Figure 2)

![Median Household Incomes by Race, 1967-2001](Figure 3)
Racism

Slavery was not unique to the United States, in fact it was rather popular in the early conquering of civilizations. The difference and uniqueness is apparent in the treatment and view of former slaves upon the granting of their freedom. In the earliest forms of slavery, slaves were able to earn their freedom over time through their labor. Upon receipt of one’s freedom, a former slave was then granted citizen and permitted to live and interact with the rest of the community as a member. They could marry, work, and even attain high social status as leaders. In the case of blacks in America, however, upon emancipation, blacks were still alienated by whites. A harsh racial stigma still lingered around the melanin found in the skin of blacks. There was a sort of social code that was prevalent.

Our social structure encompasses all facets of our society from mass media, to our educational system, to our law-makers and enforcers all the way to our highest elected government officials, and all the way down to those who are without jobs and even homes. The transformations we have seen in society in reference to racism, have all come without “requiring [any] radical restructuring of the entire society” (Reich, 1981). The changes made have been done so in accordance to conformity of those in power. Nothing was fundamentally changed or restructured, but merely morphed to create the illusion of concern and change. Much negative attention has been paid to the few governmental attempts at constructing equality.

Take affirmative action for instance. The government instituted affirmative action as an “amalgam of components of other legislation and of court rulings [rather] than a single coherent policy” (Holzer & Neumark, Sept. 2000). Its purpose, as ordered by President Kennedy in his Executive Order 10925 of 1961, “required government contractors not to discriminate against employees or job applicants, and mandated that contractors ‘take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and employees are treated during employment without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin’ ” (Holzer & Neumark, Sept. 2000). These orders would later be expanded to higher education. Kennedy’s attempts at amending a history of racial discrimination was to be met with much scrutiny from working and middle-class whites who felt that it was taking away opportunities from whites and presenting them to blacks. Affirmative action is viewed by many as a form of reverse racism in which blacks benefit at the cost of whites. In 1996, California passed Proposition 209 which prohibited all government institutions from “discriminating against or giving preferential treatment to any individual or group in public employment, public education, or public contracting on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin” (Holzer & Neumark, Sept. 2000). Other states have since followed. Ironically the proposition addresses the very thing that affirmative action was intended to reverse.

Understanding the uniqueness of America’s radical interracial relationships is key and necessary to exploring the economic inequalities that remain between blacks and whites especially. Many variables must be accounted for to gain a full understanding of what is actually going on. These include education, GDP per capita, the national unemployment rate, etc. These variables must then be separated between blacks and whites so they can be analyzed both individually and collectively. For this purposes of this study I will focus on the possible correlations between educational attainment and the unemployment rates in order to gain an understanding for the black-white income gap.

Education

Education in America has been a hot topic for many scholars throughout America’s brief history. “Education policy is thought to be one of the most effective tools of the government for equalizing economic opportunities in a society. In many countries [including America] however, education itself is unequally provided, reducing the ability of the system to equalize opportunities” (O’Gorman, 2010). Education is the primary source for accumulating the human capital that is then translated into economic opportunity. Proactive and direct actions such as the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling in 1954 to integrate schools have been followed by positive economic results. These results, however, taper with time and it takes more proactive and direct actions to motivate and then cultivate change. Melanie O’Gorman (2010) points out that “since roughly 1980, progress in closing the black-white wage gap has slowed, and black Americans still lag behind whites.”

By looking at educational attainment rates in America we can get a better picture of the movements of social interest and how they translate to actual statistics. Figure 4 shows the percent of Americans 25 and older that have completed at least 4 years high school or more. By 2009 the difference between blacks and whites had shrunk to 3% as 84.1% of the black population was successfully completing at least 4 years of high school. This would appear to be a near equalization of educational attainment.
A somewhat different image is depicted by secondary education statistics. In fact, seemingly the exact opposite movement is reflected in the percentages of people 25 and older who are successfully completing at least 4 years of college. It’s almost as if the graph from Figure 4 has been spun around. Rather than making gains, Figure 5 shows us that blacks have actually been falling farther and farther behind in what would be considered a typical college completion timeframe. In a span of 43 years, between 1966-2009, the difference between black and white completion rates jumped from 6.6% in 1966 up to 10.6% in 2009. This gives rise to questions as to the direction of equality in our education system, especially since education is the primary tool for economic equalization. In fact, some “52% of the black-white wage gap in the early 1990s can be accounted for by differential human capital accumulation by race” (O’Gorman, 2010). “The relevance of this phenomenon becomes obvious as soon as one accepts the role of human capital and hence of education in economic development” (Rillaers, Aug. 2001).

O’Gorman (2010) focused more on the funding of education and the disincentives that blacks face when looking to build upon their human capital. These disincentives are a summation of funding issues that lead to lower quality schooling for blacks. In looking at different policies, she was able to determine that “local financing of education has stemmed from property tax revenue in the U.S., and given inter-district differences in property values and hence tax bases, this system has entailed inter-district disparity of school funding and therefore school quality.”
Alexandra Rillaers, on the other hand, explores “possible role the welfare state may play through a system of unemployment benefits, in stimulating risky activities and reducing income inequality” (Rillaers, Aug. 2001). She expands on the “extensive debate [as to] what extent that large systems of social protection do or do not affect economic development” (Rillaers, Aug. 2001) by focusing on unemployment benefits which we, as we will cover, effect blacks more so than whites.

Rillaers (Aug. 2001) found that unemployment benefits actually stimulate lower levels of effort “guaranteeing a minimum income independently of individual investment and productivity” (Rillaers, Aug. 2001). On the contrary, she also discovered that unemployment “benefits reduce uncertainty concerning future income, encouraging the risk averse individuals to increase their educational investment” (Rillaers, Aug. 2001). She goes on to say that:

although the presence of unemployment benefits may stimulate risky investment in education, the disincentive effects generated by this system should not be underestimated. They can over compensate the encouraging effect of resulting in an ultimate negative effect on education (Rillaers, Aug. 2001).

In either case, evidence would point to the disincentive effects given the growing disparity in secondary education attainment we saw in Figure 5 above. With this in mind we can conclude that unemployment benefits may be providing a false sense of short term security without encouraging the increase in educational benefits. This could be proving to be a dangerous combination of adverse effects leading to a deterioration in the human capital growth of blacks.

**Unemployment**

In tying in with unemployment benefits, if we examine the national unemployment rates of blacks and whites respectively, we can see that blacks are affected by recessionary periods in a much more traumatic fashion than are whites. Figure 4 shows the annual mean unemployment rates for each group from 1966 to 2001. These annual averages have not been seasonally adjusted so the rates shown are calculated from monthly totals and then annualized. In analyzing the graph we can see that black unemployment rates react to the national economy in much the same pattern as white unemployment rates, but at a greatly amplified rate. The black unemployment rate is consistently at least double that of whites and by incorporating Rillaers’ thoughts on a strong welfare state leading to educational inequality, we can see a direct correlation.


Figure 6.
While the number of whites receiving unemployment benefits far outweighs the number of blacks simply given the population differences, the percentage of blacks receiving assistance is far greater. This incident is replicated in nearly all governmental assistance programs. Higher percentages of blacks rely on the welfare state than whites which further harvests inequitable opportunities early on in an individual’s life. The unemployment rate was used since it is often considered a major economic indicator. It is also an interesting variable since there is a significant proportion of the black population that is incarcerated, and thus not in the labor force. The unemployment rate also does not take into account discouraged workers who have discontinued their search for employment. Without further data, I hypothesize that this discouraged worker ratio is again much higher in the black population based on the dependence on the welfare state for assistance.

Conclusion

Analysis of mean household incomes by race yields a promising depiction of the growing income gap, however, statistically the amount of white households far outweighs the amount of black households so we would naturally expect to see much larger household incomes. On the other hand median household incomes reveal a lesser scale growth of the income gap. Also more variables need to be addressed and analyzed in order to gain a more complete picture of the black-white income gap. In looking ahead to extending this research I will examine prison populations in order to take into account those missing from the workforce, especially since there is a significant difference in the ratio of blacks to whites in our prison systems. All together tho, from the basic analysis done thus far, we can see that national, economic recessions tend to affect blacks more dramatically than whites. This phenomenon can be attributed to the educational differences that are prevalent. These educational differences are the primary factor in income and wage disparities; however, other factors, such as the prison ratios and populations, also affect the gap.

Through this research I have come to realize that the problem of income inequality doesn’t necessarily lie in the calculations of individuals’ incomes. Rather than analyzing *ex post* and looking at incomes, we should examine *ex ante* by looking at the unequal distribution of opportunity. Unequal incomes is more of a Sociological issue since you can have economic efficiencies with disproportionate income distributions. In fact if incomes were equal, I believe there would be a disincentive to work. In order to have proportionate income distribution, we would also have to have a greater amount of income redistribution which would alleviate the incentive for people to work since they could theoretically make the same or very near the same amount by simply sitting at home. An *ex ante* approach would allow us to look at the structural and policy obstructions preventing unequal opportunity for personal income generation, specifically between races. Sadly, however, this approach comes full circle to incomes and wealth as financial capital is the primary means of improving human capital and financial significance.

I have somewhat conflicting views on the Gini coefficient. On one hand, I do not feel that it is a truly accurate indicator of the overall scope of the economy because it doesn’t take into consideration the relative costs of living or quality of life. Often times poor, underdeveloped countries will have low Gini scores, especially when compared to more industrialized countries like the United States; but there is no accounting for the social welfare of the people in each country. While incomes in a poor country may be more equally distributed, the lower class citizens in the wealthier nation may well be better off than those of the poor nation comparatively. On the other hand, however, the Gini coefficient is a powerful tool that allows us visual confirmation of distribution variability. With that being said, further examination of this research and of the data should take into consideration the Gini coefficient.
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