Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION
   Kendall Clark, Zach Field, Samantha Story, and Meredith Underwood

II. SEXUAL ORIENTATION & GENDER

   UNH Undergraduate Students’ Attitudes toward Bisexuality
   Alli Puchlopek

   A Comparative Examination of Suicide Rates among Hetero- & Homosexual Adolescents 
   and Young Adults
   Arianna Schaff

   Experiencing Bullying between Genders: A Quantitative Study done at UNH
   Kiley Schlieper

   The Effects of Advertising on Gender Roles within American Marriages
   Victoria Browall

III. FAMILY & COMMUNITY

   How Parents Influence Deviant Behavior among Adolescents: An Analysis of their Family 
   Life, Community, and Peers
   Amber Carlson

   Race Differences in the Perception of African American Inclusion on the UNH Campus
   Kelby Mackell

   The Effects of Income, Gender, Parental-Involvement on the Education of Children with 
   Single-Parent and Step-Parent Families
   Halie Olszowy

   Teen Magazines and Parents: Their Impacts on Adolescent Female Sexual Scripts and 
   Contraception
   Audrey Hickey

   Labeling Theory and the Effects of Sanctioning on Delinquent Peer Association: A New 
   Approach to Sentencing Juveniles
   Nathaniel Ascani
The Female Perspective of Hooking-Up on College Campuses
Maura Gallagher

IV. ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH

Individualism, Environmentalism and Social Change
Alex Chelstowski

Sustainable Agriculture in Rural Central American Countries: Grassroots Effectiveness in Initiating Cultural Change
Zach Field

A Literature Review on Vital Elements to a Successful Health Education Program in Central America
Whitney Mills

Examining the Effect of SES on Access to Nutritional Food
Rebecca White

The Effects of Social Integration on Stress and Risk of Depression in College Students
Cristina Calderan

V. EDUCATION

Funding for the Future
Mackenzie Colburn

The Effects of Working for Pay during the School Year on Academic Achievement
Mackenzie Keene

The Impact of Multilingualism on GPA among College Undergraduates
Alexandra Kovalik

Influential Factors Contributing to College Student Spending Habits and Credit Card Debt
Kristi Leclerc

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

V. AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES
VI. EDITOR BIOGRAPHIES
Introduction

Kendall Clark, Zach Field, Samantha Story, and Meredith Underwood

Welcome to the 2012 edition of Perspectives. As the school year comes to a close we often find ourselves reflecting on the past nine months. We’ve seen change, both in ourselves and in the world, and as I’m sure anyone will agree, it can be challenging. With the economic hardships and unprecedented social unrest, the future may seem uncertain. It can help to step back and put everything into perspective. Whether we are preparing for life after college or for the next year here at UNH, sociology has the intrinsic ability to allow us to make sense of the world around us. This year’s edition focuses on four overarching themes, consisting of Sexual Orientation and Gender, Family and Community, Environment and Health, and Education. Boasting an impressive array of original research and a titillating spectrum of sociological theories, this edition continues the tradition of student excellence and sociological understanding. So please, sit back, enjoy, and gain some perspective.

While looking at themes of Sexual Orientation and Gender, students touch upon attitudes and experiences of sexual diversity as well as gender roles. In her paper, Alli Puchlopek reports on her research study of opinions that undergraduate students have toward bisexual individuals. She feels that this is an under researched topic, and she focuses on the bisexual population to draw attention to a relevant sexual identity. Arianna Schaaff gathers literature to discuss suicide rates among heterosexual and homosexual adolescents and young adults. She recognizes that beyond an individual’s sexual orientation, there are other factors to consider when looking at suicide rates. Kiley Schlieper completed a research study to explore undergraduate students’ experiences being bullied in a college setting. Results of this study show a relationship between gender and either physical or emotional bullying. Victoria J. Browall analyzes literature on the relationship between advertisements and gender roles in American marriages. She argues that advertisements in the media present unrealistic gender expectations for contemporary marriages. These four authors recognize the complexities of gender and identities amongst members of varying communities.

Six of our Perspectives articles focus on Family and Community. Amber Carlson explores the effects of family life, community, and peers on deviant behavior among adolescents. She looks at the correlation between environment and juvenile deviance. Kelby Mackell presents findings from a survey to gain knowledge about the UNH campus and students’ perceptions of African-American involvement in the college community. Halie Olszowy explores the effect of income and gender on parental-involvement in single-family and step-parent families. She strives to discover the effects on the education of children in these families. Audrey Hickey’s article focuses on teen magazines, parents, and adolescent females. She is particularly curious about the impact on teen magazines on females’ sexual scripts and contraception. Nathaniel Ascani delves into labeling theory and its relationship with delinquency, specifically its effects.
on sanctioning delinquent peer association. Lastly, Maura Gallagher uses a survey to discover female opinions regarding modern relationships. She explores women’s perspectives of hooking up on college campuses. All of these articles provide a variety of insight on family and community.

In this year’s edition, several authors examine Environment and Health issues through a sociological lens. Senior and fellow Perspectives editor, Zach Field examines grassroots organizations in Central America and their effectiveness in instituting cultural changes in traditional agricultural practices. Whitney Mills explores how inadequate sanitation, lack of clean water and malnutrition are part of the social and cultural issues that contribute to the cycle of poor health in Central America. In “Individualism, Environmentalism, and Social Change,” Alex Chelstowski examines how the notion of individualism affects consumer habits, which ultimately conceals larger institutional problems that lead to issues of environmental degradation and disparaging civic participation. Rebecca White’s essay addresses how serious health risks disproportionately plague those of low socioeconomic status, and how low status areas do not have geographic access to food stores selling healthy foods. In the article titled “The Effects of Social Integration on Stress and Risk of Depression in College Students,” Cristina Calderan studies how college students’ levels of social integration affects their feeling of stress and depression.

The last sociological topic focused on within this edition of Perspectives is Education. To begin the discussion, Mackenzie Colburn presents an analysis of inequalities found in the American educational system. She discusses relevant literature as well as information from schools in the state of New Hampshire. In the article following, Mackenzie Keene discusses her survey research study that explores the correlation between socioeconomic status and the academic achievement of undergraduate students. Keene finds that students who work for pay during the academic year tend to have lower GPAs than students who do not have to work for pay during the academic year. Alexandra Kovalik explores a different aspect of education among college undergraduates. She presents findings on the association between multilingualism and GPA. She argues that we need more research to better understand multilingual students. The last article, by Kristi Leclerc, also focuses on undergraduate students. The author investigates factors that contribute to college students’ credit card debt, including academic achievement and level of financial education.

The 2012 edition of Perspectives includes a compilation of sociological articles that touch on relevant issues in our contemporary society. With the combination of literature reviews and research papers, the undergraduate authors included in this edition have showcased their interest and extensive knowledge on each of their respective topics. By presenting this diverse collection of papers, we hope to educate and interest readers in the sociological issues of the twenty-first century.
UNH Undergraduate Students’ Attitudes toward Bisexuality

Alli Puchlopek

ABSTRACT

Although many studies primarily discuss gay men and lesbian women, very few have focused on the bisexual population. The few previous studies conducted about bisexuality show that many people have negative attitudes toward bisexuality. This study examines the effects of gender and sexual orientation on attitudes toward bisexuality. 378 students at the University of New Hampshire took surveys asking whether they believed bisexuality was a legitimate sexual orientation. The data showed no statistically significant differences in attitudes between men, women, or other sexual orientations. However, the majority of students in general believed that bisexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation. Another large portion had “neutral” attitudes, suggesting a lack of knowledge about the bisexual population, demonstrating a reluctance to formulate opinions about them. Further research on larger and more diverse samples is still necessary to more accurately measure attitudes toward bisexuality.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, policymakers and society as a whole have gradually moved toward more liberal views of sexuality. Although it seems that people generally accept others with different sexual orientations, the bisexual population remains misunderstood by mainstream society (De Bruin and Arnt 2010). Most empirical research approaches bisexuality with labels such as “LGBT.” This over-categorization of sexuality ignores the fact that bisexual individuals still face very different obstacles than homosexual individuals. Previous studies cover a wide variety of reasons why some groups have negative perceptions of bisexuals. Many studies suggest that the bisexual experience is especially difficult because bisexuals must face stigma from both heterosexuals who are uncomfortable with same-sex attractions and homosexuals who may doubt their true sexual identity. For example, some studies propose that bisexuality is doubted as a legitimate sexual orientation, leaving many bisexual individuals labeled as merely confused, or even afraid of their true homosexual identity (Balsam and Mohr 2007; Israel and Mohr 2004; Parker, Adams, and Phillips 2007; Welzer-Lang 2008). Other studies note that many label bisexuals as promiscuous, oversexed beings who cannot conform to one identity, therefore, must be incapable of a monogamous relationship (Fairington 2008; Herek 2002; Israel and Mohr 2004; Welzer-Lang 2008).

The existence of prejudiced attitudes toward bisexuals suggests that society still favors a dichotomous model of sexuality (De Bruin and Arnt 2010). This model may be preferred, but it
is not realistic. Another problem with the current body of research on bisexuality is the lack of expansive knowledge of bisexual individuals in general. Studies rarely focus specifically on the bisexual population. Most studies, as mentioned previously, choose to group bisexuals with gay men and lesbian women, which ignores the complex problems specific to bisexuals. The present study will shed light on the largely ignored and over-categorized population of bisexuals. Studying bisexuals’ experiences can enlighten researchers and students of the true fluidity of sexuality. The goal of the present study is to describe how gender and sexual orientation influence attitudes toward bisexuality. Researching the origins of negative attitudes may provide clearer explanations of the bisexual experience itself. Exploring these attitudes can help fill the gap in empirical research on bisexuality and influence readers to move toward a more modern, expansive view of sexuality. More research on bisexuals can eventually lead to the promotion of positive attitudes toward bisexuality by removing the stigma currently attached to bisexuality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The body of knowledge on attitudes toward bisexuality is scarce. However, many exploratory articles attempt to explain existing attitudes toward bisexuality from various angles. Since there is a wide gap in research on bisexuals, many articles described difficulty in actually defining bisexuality in general. Fairyington discussed a problem defining bisexuality because Western society is used to viewing sexuality as neatly categorized (2008). Anything straying from typical heteronormative labels is difficult to study because researchers are simply not used to approaching sexual orientation in a non-dichotomized fashion. Similarly, Israel and Mohr (2007) suggest that negative judgments of bisexuals may come from society’s general discomfort with exploring sexualities that differ from the heterosexual norm. This heteronormative attitude is problematic, and most likely a source of heterosexuals’ negativity toward bisexuals. Simply ignoring a whole population of people will only perpetuate a heteronormative view of sexuality. By studying bisexuality, researchers gain a completely new perspective of a population that has been overlooked far too long.

Previous research on the bisexual population describes some clear patterns in attitudes. One example of a negative attitude voiced by heterosexuals and homosexuals alike is the doubt of bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation (Herek 2002; Israel and Mohr 2007; Lewis et al. 2009; Parker, Adams, and Phillips 2007; Welzer-Lang 2008). In Welzer-Lang’s rich qualitative study, many homosexual participants voiced concerns that people merely label themselves as “bisexual” because they are confused about their sexuality (2008). Interview participants also claimed that many bisexuals are simply homosexuals who are afraid of society’s reaction to coming out. Many homosexuals claimed that bisexuals lived socially as heterosexuals by marrying the opposite sex while maintaining sexual relationships with people of the same sex outside their marriage. One respondent said specifically, “Without generalizing to all bisexuals, they have a habit of living their heterosexual side out on a social level while hiding their homosexual boyfriend” (Welzer-Lang 84-85). Similar themes appeared in Israel and Mohr’s study, which expanded on other possible reasons why bisexuality is often not considered a
legitimate status (2007). This study suggested that bisexuals might be simply in denial of their homosexuality, wishing to have homosexual relationships privately while being able to “maintain heterosexual privilege” in public social lives (Israel and Mohr 2007:121). It is logical to consider that bisexuals may fear society’s reaction to coming out as a homosexual, but these studies suggest they are ridiculed for not doing so already.

Another source of negative attitudes is the doubt of bisexuals’ loyalty in monogamous relationships (Herek 2002; Israel and Mohr 2007; Welzer-Lang 2008). Homosexuals in particular have voiced this concern, such as in Fairyington’s study where she mentioned homosexuals’ fears of a bisexual partner “going straight” (2008:268). Because these concerns exist within the sexual minority community, bisexuals face opposition among both the heteronormative mainstream society and among people who identify strictly as homosexuals. Balsam and Mohr addressed the adversity bisexuals’ face against both groups by discussing how bisexuals form identities within their communities (2007). The study found that compared to lesbian and gay individuals, bisexuals were generally less open about their sexuality and felt more confusion about their sexual identity. Additionally, the study found that bisexuals felt less connection to the sexual minority community. This study could not determine the exact source of bisexuals’ confusion and lack of openness, but the research suggests that forming communities specifically for bisexuals (separate from the gay and lesbian community) could help the general well-being of such individuals. This would create a public forum for bisexuals to share experiences unique to them while also leading to healthier ways of coping with the struggles of stigmatization.

Some studies also note that many consider bisexuality a mere “transitional” phase between heterosexuality and homosexuality (Israel and Mohr 2007; Welzer-Lang 2008). Diamond’s ten-year longitudinal study on non-heterosexual (lesbian, bisexual, or unlabeled) women sought to explore the possibility that bisexuality may be merely a temporary phase in one’s life rather than a permanent status (2008). The study showed that women who identified as bisexual or unlabeled in the beginning of the study were unlikely to change their identity label to heterosexual or lesbian later. Often, bisexual and unlabeled women fluctuated only between those two statuses, and continued to report attractions to men and women at even ratios throughout the study (12). These findings conflict with the common belief that bisexuality is only a transitional stage. The women in this study maintained attractions to both sexes throughout the ten-year period. They also consistently chose identity labels that reflected attractions to both sexes.

Previous literature also discussed the implications of negative attitudes toward bisexuals. Lewis et al. claimed that some of these implications include stigmatization of bisexuals in mainstream society, and lack of a community specifically for bisexuals (2009). This study also hypothesized that bisexuals experience more mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, than homosexuals (Lewis et al. 2009). To measure mental health of bisexuals in this study, researchers surveyed both bisexuals and homosexuals to see who was more likely to experience sexual minority stress factors. Some of the factors researchers
hypothesized would lead to depression and anxiety were discrimination, inner conflict about sexuality, and openness about sexuality. The study’s results did suggest that bisexuals are more likely to be depressed than homosexuals are. Although the study could not prove causation, it is likely that negative attitudes toward bisexuality and the lack (or scarcity) of a bisexual-specific community could influence depression in bisexuals.

Many studies have discussed in great length the reasons negative attitudes toward bisexuality exist, but very few have quantitatively measured these attitudes. Herek conducted a study measuring specifically heterosexuals’ attitudes toward bisexuality (2002). In this study, respondents indicated their own attitudes toward several types of people, including bisexuals, on a feeling thermometer. Some of the other groups included in the questionnaire were homosexuals, people of different religious groups, drug users, and many more. Participants expressed very negative feelings toward bisexuals; often scoring them on the extremely “cold” side of the thermometer. The study also found that men’s attitudes toward bisexual men were particularly negative. De Bruin and Arndt also measured attitudes toward bisexuality, but measured for variables in addition to gender (2010). This study included variables such as race, sexual orientation, and religiosity. Similar to Herek’s study, this one also found that men had more negative attitudes toward bisexuality than women (2002). Both heterosexuals and homosexuals reported negative attitudes toward bisexuality; however, heterosexuals’ attitudes were most negative. Both Herek’s (2002) and De Bruin and Arndt’s (2010) studies suggest that gender and sexual orientation may influence attitudes toward bisexuality, but these two articles represent the only quantitative research of note measuring these two specific variables. Identifying possible variables can help future studies (such as the present one) determine where negative attitudes come from, and how various groups formulate them.

Even though there may be expansive, rich qualitative studies on bisexuality, future researchers cannot determine influence of attitudes without supporting quantitative data as well. The individuals in qualitative studies discuss interesting ideas, but quantitative research is necessary to draw conclusions about the entire population. Many previous studies also avoided studying multiple variables at once, such as sexual orientation and gender. The present study will yield quantitative data measuring multiple variables in hopes of showing more detail about attitudes toward bisexuality than previous studies. The present study’s first hypothesis is based on findings from previous research about gendered attitudes toward bisexuality (Herek 2002; De Bruin and Arnt 2010):

H1: Females will have more positive attitudes toward bisexuality than males.

Although Herek (2002) did not measure sexual orientation, De Bruin and Arndt (2010) found that heterosexuals had more negative attitudes toward bisexuality than homosexuals. Homosexuals could be more likely to support bisexuality because both experience stigmatization from mainstream, heteronormative society. Since all sexual minority groups (including gay men, lesbian women, bisexuals, transgendered people, and people who identify as queer) share this common experience of stigmatization, they may be more willing to accept a
non-normative orientation or worldview. Both De Bruin and Arndt’s research and this idea of shared experiences lead to the present study’s second hypothesis (2010):

H2: Sexual minority groups (homosexuals and bisexuals particularly) will have more positive attitudes toward bisexuality than heterosexuals.

A quantitative study of how gender and sexual orientation affect one’s attitudes toward bisexuality will hopefully add more accurate data to previous literature. Up to this point, most studies on bisexuality have been exploratory. Exploratory research can help researchers form definitions of bisexuality and individuals’ opinions of it, but there is a lack of research on how large populations feel about bisexuality. Knowing whether or not there is a relationship between gender, sexual orientation, and attitudes toward bisexuality can help future researchers pinpoint where attitudes come from and why certain populations feel the way they do. Understanding these attitudes can hopefully change them in the future; it is impossible to reverse prejudice without studying how it develops. With this knowledge, researchers can determine effective methods for integrating bisexuals into mainstream society.

METHODS

To gather data necessary to measure attitudes toward bisexuality, one survey question was contributed to a class social survey constructed by students in the Fall 2011 Methods of Social Research class at the University of New Hampshire. Students used a convenience sampling method with the help of the professor, who gained permission from a few professors within the sociology department who were teaching large lower-level courses. These courses were the best available option for sampling because they contained the largest numbers of students and, since many students choose Introduction to Sociology as a general education fulfillment, students in Methods of Social Research thought the backgrounds and opinions of these students would be diverse. However, the problem remaining with convenience sampling is that the existence of bias in the direction of those students who are more interested in the topics covered by the survey. In addition, the opinions of those in sociology classes might differ from those enrolled in other courses; students who choose to take sociology classes may be not only more interested in, but also more aware of sociological issues covered in this survey. This could lead to bias of the results in the direction students who know more about sociological studies in general. To conduct the survey itself, representatives from the Methods of Social Research class visited a number of lower-level classes and read those students a verbal recruitment statement. This statement ensured anonymity by strongly discouraging students from writing names on their surveys. Students received no compensation for completing the surveys.

The present study posed minimal risks to participants. One minor risk was emotional harm to participants due to the personal nature of some of the questions. Representatives’ assurance of anonymity most likely reduced this risk, but it is still possible that some questions could stir emotions within participants by reminding them of harmful past experiences.
However, the benefits of collecting this personal information outweigh the slight risk of psychological harm. Since subjects come from sociology courses, the participation in this study could inspire them to learn more about sociological research methods in their future years at UNH. The data collected from subjects provides innovative descriptions of their own community on campus. Knowing the social state of the community can bring to light social problems that students may not notice in daily life.

Regarding attitudes toward bisexuality, it was difficult to conceptualize a definition that would cover every opinion one may have about bisexuality. Previous literature has suggested that one of the most common negative attitudes toward bisexuality comes from the doubts that it is a legitimate sexual orientation (Herek 2002; Israel and Mohr 2007; Lewis et al. 2009; Parker, Adams, and Phillips 2007; Welzer-Lang 2008). If one does not believe bisexuality exists, it is not likely that he or she would be able to answer any other questions about attitudes toward bisexuality. Thus, the question used to measure attitudes was a Likert Scale with the statement: “I do not think it is possible to be bisexual; one must be heterosexual or homosexual.” Agreement with the statement would indicate more negative attitudes (disbelief in the legitimacy of bisexuality), while disagreement with the statement would indicate positive attitudes (belief in the legitimacy of bisexuality). Although asking more questions would have helped distinguish specific reasons for negative attitudes, this seemed the most appropriate and useful question for the purpose of this small study. Simply asking whether one believes it is possible to be bisexual can explain if gender and sexual orientation actually influences attitudes toward bisexuality.

RESULTS

Characteristics of the Sample

A total number of 378 students from lower-level sociology classes responded to the social survey (N=378). As seen in Table 1, the majority of respondents (about 72%) identified as female. Another 27% identified as male. One respondent identified as intersex, another single respondent as queer, and the remaining two respondents selected “Prefer not to answer” and “Don’t know.” The overwhelming majority of females are potentially problematic, as this percentage is not representative of the UNH population as a whole. Only 339 of the respondents answered this question, which means some data on this variable is missing. This is most likely due to the placement of these particular survey questions, as they appeared at the end of the survey; it is likely that many respondents did not have time to complete the end portion.

Table 2 describes respondents’ sexual orientation. Most of the respondents, an astounding 92%, identified as straight (heterosexual). Meanwhile, 2% identified as gay and another 2% identified as bisexual. Almost 2% claimed to be questioning their sexuality, and less than 2% either did not know their sexual orientation or chose not to disclose it. Only 341 of the respondents answered this question, which means data is also missing from this variable. Once
again, this question appeared at the end of the survey, where some students may not have had adequate time to respond.

**Table 1: Respondent’s Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to Answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>339</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Respondent’s Sexual Orientation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to Answer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>341</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender and Attitudes toward Bisexuality**

Table 3 displays data for the relationship between gender and attitudes toward bisexuality. Specifically, it shows how people answered the question: “I do not think it is possible to be bisexual; one must be either homosexual or heterosexual.” As discussed in the Methods section, agreement with the statement indicates negative attitudes toward bisexuality and disagreement indicates positive attitudes. This study utilized an alpha level of .05, ensuring 95% confidence that results are not due to pure chance. According to the Chi-Square probability result (.841) the null hypothesis could not be rejected for the present study (p > .05). This means statistically, there is no significant relationship between gender and attitudes toward bisexuality.

However, if one looks closely at the numbers displayed in Table 3, there are some subtle patterns. Percentages of people who did not think it was possible to be bisexual were low. Only 3.3% of females and 1.1% of males strongly agreed with the survey statement. Meanwhile, 34.6% of females, 33% of males, and the one participant who identified as queer strongly disagreed with the survey statement. This shows that despite the lack of significant differences between genders, attitudes are more positive than negative.
The “Neutral” category also tells a story about attitudes toward bisexuality. The table shows that 23% of females and 26% of males either could not decide on their agreement with the statement or did not have an opinion either way. This result could be due to either lack of knowledge about bisexuality or, possibly, social desirability bias. Since the bisexual community is so invisible within society, it is possible that students simply did not understand the term, thus, felt incapable of formulating an opinion. Even those who knew what the term “bisexual” itself meant may have indicated neutral feelings simply because they felt uncomfortable divulging truly negative attitudes toward another social group. Even though the recruitment statement before the survey ensured anonymity, the act of marking a response that would indicate a negative attitude may cause the respondent to feel guilty about his or her opinions.

Table 3: Does Respondent Think it is Impossible to be Bisexual - Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Queer</th>
<th>Prefer not to Answer</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>(74)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>(84)</td>
<td>(30)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t Apply</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(243)</td>
<td>(91)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square: 13.785  Pr: 0.841

Sexual Orientation and Attitudes toward Bisexuality

Table 4 shows the relationship between sexual orientation and attitudes toward bisexuality. Once again, the Chi-Square test’s probability results of .387 shows that at a .05 alpha level, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected (p > .05). This table still shows some interesting results regardless of the lack of a statistical relationship. Like the results shown in Table 3 (the relationship between gender and attitudes toward bisexuality), the largest percentages of people of all sexual orientations strongly disagreed with the statement claiming bisexual status cannot exist. Almost 32% of straight people strongly believed bisexuality was legitimate, while another 29% showed at least some positive attitudes. Straight respondents were the only sexual orientation group to show any negative attitudes toward bisexuality at all. Still, less than 15% of straight people responded in this manner. This is a larger percentage
compared to other sexual orientation groups, but less than 15% is still only a modest portion of people in the whole study.

Meanwhile, 67% of gay respondents strongly believed in bisexuality as a legitimate status. None of the sexual minority respondents (gay, bisexual, or questioning) believed it was impossible to be bisexual. Even though the Chi-Square test showed a lack of statistical significance, this still shows that sexual minority respondents generally reported more positive attitudes toward bisexuality than heterosexuals did. Not surprisingly, bisexuals reported the most positive attitudes in general, as almost 89% of bisexual respondents (all but one) strongly supported the legitimacy of bisexuality.

Another group with high levels of support for the legitimacy of bisexuality was the group of respondents who identified as “Questioning” their sexuality. Eighty percent of these respondents strongly supported the legitimacy of bisexuality while another 20% showed at least some support. Those questioning their sexuality may consider if they are actually bisexual, thus, indicating more positive attitudes toward this option for a sexual orientation. Once again, this table shows the high percentages of “Neutral” responses. Thirty-three percent of gay respondents indicated neutrality while almost another 25% of straight respondents did. This shows the opposite effect of those who identified as “Questioning.” As previously discussed, this may be due to pure ignorance of the existence of bisexuals and their experiences. However, it is interesting to note that only those respondents on either polar “side” of sexuality (that is, identifying as strictly heterosexual or strictly homosexual) may not have the same understanding of sexual fluidity as bisexuals. This is similar to Fairyington’s (2008) and Israel and Mohr’s (2007) suggestion that society may not understand the bisexual experience because people are so used to viewing sexuality on simple, dichotomous terms. Respondents may have experienced difficulty answering this question because they simply cannot imagine sexuality as fluidly as bisexuals might. This could lead to an inability to properly formulate an opinion, thus, leaving “Neutral” as the only reasonable response choice.
CONCLUSION

The goal of the present study was to examine the differences between men and women’s attitudes toward bisexuality and the differences in attitudes amongst people identifying with different sexual orientations. Findings showed that this study could not reject either of the null hypotheses, however, the data itself still presents some interesting information about attitudes toward bisexuality. Although there were not large differences within the independent variables, the respondents still gave a clear statement of their opinions as a whole. The first main finding of the study is that the majority of respondents did think that bisexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation. The percentages of people who blatantly believed that being bisexual is impossible were low. This indeed shows that college students at UNH may have more positive attitudes toward bisexuality than the populations in previous studies. The second main finding slightly contradicts the first: Not quite the majority, but still a large portion of people reported having merely “neutral” attitudes toward bisexuality. This suggests that the invisibility of the bisexual population makes it difficult for people in other groups to form accurate or even comfortable opinions about bisexuality. It is possible that social desirability bias played a role in students’ selection of the “neutral” option. If a respondent does not know enough about bisexuality to form a proper opinion, he or she may not feel comfortable agreeing or disagreeing that it is a legitimate status. This finding supports the point that bisexuality is more invisible than researchers have considered in the past.

There are several significant limitations of the present study. One major limitation is the fairly poor sample used for surveys. Not only are there specific problems with convenience
sampling (as discussed in the Methods section), but the sample used for the current study turned out to be even more disproportional than expected. Diversity was nearly impossible to obtain with the convenience sampling method used for this study. Future studies should use random sampling methods including a much larger, diverse group of individuals in order to report accurate findings that represent the whole population. Another limitation is the survey itself. Since this survey presented questions from a whole class of sociology students, there was not enough space for more than a few questions per person on the survey. Only one question was included to measure attitudes toward bisexuality, and there are likely better ways to phrase this question than in the present study. Future research should not only dedicate an entire survey to measuring such attitudes, but should also take more time formulating questions that will measure attitudes accurately.

This study was one of very few yielding quantitative data on the topic of bisexuality. Even though this study did not produce statistically significant results, it adds at least a bit more information on a topic that empirical research generally ignores. The findings from this study suggest that researchers should focus on bisexuality in order to capture the true opinions of the whole population. Hopefully, future research can contribute to the inclusion and recognition of bisexuals in both mainstream society and within LGBTQ groups. Bisexual individuals can likely form better self-concepts and worldviews with more acceptance from other sexual minority groups. If bisexuals can exist in harmony with both other sexual minority groups and the rest of mainstream society, they may be able to lead happier, healthier lives in the future.

REFERENCES


A Comparative Examination of Suicide Rates among Hetero- and Homosexual Adolescents and Young Adults

Arianna Schaaff

ABSTRACT

The focus of this literature review will be on the comparison of suicide rates between heterosexual and homosexual adolescents and young adults (ages 14-24), and the possible contributing factors. Age, the degree to which adolescents are open with their sexual identity, and the social support they receive are examined as contributing factors to the cited differences in suicide rates across sexual orientation identities. In this literature review, I will conclude that suicide rates are higher among homosexual adolescents and young adults; however, this significant difference disappears once the individuals enter adulthood. Researchers may pursue this relationship in order to find the best ways to assist homosexual adolescents through the period of potential suicide risk and into their adult years, and therefore perhaps begin reducing the rate of adolescent suicide.

BACKGROUND

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention report in 2006, within the last sixty years, suicide rates have quadrupled and doubled for males and females respectively between the ages of 15 and 24, resulting in suicide being the third leading cause of death among this group in 2005 (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:53). In examining this increase, Kaplan and Sadock suggest that the majority of these suicidal youths suffer from the inability to cope with stressors and difficult situations (2003; Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:53). Based on this assertion, and the understanding that the self-acknowledgement of sexual orientation, and the process of making that identity known to the public has the potential of being stressful, the suicide rates of homosexual and heterosexual adolescents and young adults are compared to determine if there is a significant variation (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2011).

The importance of determining the relation between the sexual orientation and suicide rate is to identify the causes of this relationship, and seek a way to eventually lower suicide rates among these groups of adolescents and young adults. Based on the findings of an Austrian study, if 10% of the overall population identified as homosexual then 47% of suicide attempts would be committed by sexual minority individuals (Ploderl and Fartacek 2005:667). This study involved members of German-speaking countries; therefore a similar study would have to be done in the U.S. to determine if the findings would be comparable (Ploderl and Fartacek 2005:661). By establishing if there is a significant difference in suicide rates between hetero- and homosexual young individuals, the appropriate support groups may be established.
to help these individuals. Furthermore, the identification and modification of the aspects of society that contribute to the rate of homosexual youth suicides may also lead to greater equality among sexual orientation identities.

SUICIDE IN RELATION TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Evidence across various research studies has shown individuals who express same sex attractions have significantly higher rates of suicide than individuals who strictly express opposite sex attraction. This relationship is also found in the comparison of bisexual individuals’ suicide rates and heterosexual individuals. A study involving 11,911 middle and high school students measured suicidal tendencies, and same-sex attraction, as well as some of the potential contributing factors, such as social support (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:295-297). Eighty middle and high schools were involved in the study, with about thirty-four male-female pairs collected from each grade level, resulting in about two hundred students gathered from each location (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:295). This method of participant selection resulted in fairly equal representation of male and female students (48% and 52% respectively) (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:298). The average age of participants was 15.9 with a deviation of about a year and a half (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:299). Of the roughly 12,000 students, 7% (n = 787) reported same sex attraction (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:303).

A study consisting of 1,533 adolescents, mean age of 15.8 years, shows similar findings (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:59-60). Students were collected from several locations: an urban high school, a program for truant adolescents, and a youth delinquency center (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:63). The sampled youth consisted of 48% female participants; 50% of the overall sample of adolescents self-reported as African-American, the remaining majority of the sample (37%) self-reporting as Caucasian (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:60). The sample was broken down into three variations of sexual attraction (opposite-, same-, or both-sex attraction) and suicide proneness was found to significantly differ across the three status groups (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:66). Seventeen percent of both-sex attraction adolescents reported suicide ideation, while 6% of those experiencing strictly same-sex attraction reported suicidal ideation (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:67). Three percent of opposite-sex attracted, or heterosexual, youth reported suicide ideation (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:67). The frequency of suicidal tendencies between different sexual orientations was significantly found again when examining past suicide attempts (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:68). Of those adolescents who reported past suicide attempts, 23% reported both-sex attractions, 19% reported same-sex attractions, and 7% reported opposite-sex attractions (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011:68). By regarding two variations of suicidal tendencies, ideation (suicidal thoughts) and past attempts, it is shown that the suicide rate is significantly increased among sexual minority adolescents. The significant difference between bisexual adolescents and homosexual adolescents does not
contradict the hypothesis; however, it should be considered as an area of exploration to determine what causes the difference.

GENDER

Within the variation between suicide rates among hetero- and homosexual adolescents, there is similarly a variation within a gender comparison of these adolescents. Two hundred and twelve male junior and senior high school students and 182 female junior and senior high school students who identified as either bi- or homosexual participated in a statewide survey assessing the relationship between sexual orientation and suicide risk (Remafedi 1998:57). Of the female participants, 20.5% of bi-/homosexual students reported suicide attempts, compared to 14.5% of heterosexual female students (Remafedi 1998:57). Of the male participants, 28.1% of bi-/homosexual students reported suicide attempts, as opposed to the 4.2% of heterosexual males within the study (Remafedi 1998:57). When comparing bi- and homosexual students to heterosexual students within gender, the students who report both- or same-sex attraction reported higher levels of suicidal intent and attempts (Remafedi 1998:58). The comparison of female participants across sexual orientation status, however, was not significant in any of the measures of suicide risk (Remafedi 1998:58). Sexual orientation was found to have a significant relation to suicide risk among sexual minority male participants in regard to suicidal intent and attempts (Remafedi 1998:58).

The variation in suicide rates and sexual orientation among gender may be explained by the high rates of mental health problems among homosexual males (Bybee, Sullivan, Zielonka, and Moes 2009:145). The influence of shame and guilt are examined to explain the increased rate of mental illness and suicide rates among sexual minority males. Shame “draws attention to real or imagined deficiencies of the self... [and]...is intricately tied with attempts to conceal and with retaliation” (Bybee et al. 2009:146). Ferguson and Stegge, and Tangney define guilt as a feeling that “draws attention to the specific lapse, engenders concern for the victim, and is accompanied by feelings of regret and remorse” (1995; 1998; Bybee et al. 2009:146). Shame felt by homosexual males may stem from a discomfort with one’s own breaches of masculinity and the “male sex role stereotype” due to one’s sexual orientation (Bybee et al. 2009:146). Guilt may arise as a result of shame. For example, males who conceal their sexual orientation from family or peers may feel the need to lie in order to do so, and therefore feel guilty for their dishonesty (Bybee et al. 2009:146). The persistence of shame and guilt among homosexual males, (chronic shame and chronic guilt), as result of continued concealment of one’s sexual identity or rejection from family/peers following disclosure, is significantly correlated with suicide among young adult homosexual males (Bybee et al. 2009:149).

The significance between sexual orientation and suicide rates that is found among a male comparison, though not a female comparison may indicate a contributing factor from the larger society (Remafedi 1998:57). As stated in regard to causes of shame/chronic shame, the influence of social expectations of sex roles and gender presentation is immense (Bybee et al. 2009:146). Male homosexuals may experience the highest rates of suicide attempts because
males have more rigid gender expectations placed upon them by society than do females. The cost of breaking such expectations, therefore, may be considerably heavier. As result, homosexual males may experience increased levels of chronic guilt and chronic shame, which, as previously stated, may increase the likelihood of suicide among these adolescents.

**FACTORS OF POSSIBLE INFLUENCE ON SUICIDE RATES**

*Age*

Consideration of age is particularly important when examining the comparison of heterosexual and homosexual individuals and suicide rates. Among heterosexual individuals, there appears to be no significant difference in issues of mental health between young adulthood (under the age of 24) and adulthood (above the age of 25) (Bybee et al. 2009:149). Among homosexual individuals, however, the comparison of the younger age group to the older group revealed a significant difference in mental health issues (Bybee et al. 2009:149). Older homosexual male individuals were found to report fewer mental health troubles than the younger homosexual males (Bybee et al. 2009:149). Homosexual adult males show similar mental health to heterosexual adult males as well as reporting less anger, depressive symptoms; greater self-esteem and emotional stability (Bybee et al. 2009:151). Suggested contributing factors to the decline in mental health problems after the transition from adolescence to adulthood include more refined coping skills, less societal pressure to conform, and less negative parental influence (Bybee et al. 2009:151). Furthermore, as age increases, the presence of chronic shame decreases, indicating improved mental health among these individuals as both shame and guilt are not specific to sexual orientation; rather, it is significantly related to poor mental health (Bybee et al. 2009:151-152).

*Degree of “Outness”*

As a sexual minority, those who are bi- or homosexual go against the norms of the larger society, which may lead to feelings of separation from the in-group, and consequently anxiety regarding the reception of the group upon attempted reintegration. Adolescence is a socially stressful period in general, along with of pressures such as concealing one’s sexuality or “coming out” may lead to decreases in mental health, and by extension, increased risk of suicide. Meyer suggests that the concealment of sexual orientation has been cited among the leading causes of poorer mental health among homosexual individuals (Bybee et al. 2009:145). “Concealment serves to cut off channels of support...Attendant lies, cover-ups, and hiding secrets can lead to harmful, ongoing feelings of guilt and shame, serving to further undercut mental well-being” (Bybee et al. 2009:145).

There are several proposed degrees of concealment and openness, also referred to as degree of “outness.” These levels of “outness” include “Not Out and Confused”, “Not Out and Upset”, “Not Out, Not Self-Accepting”, “Partially Out”, “Out, Proud, but Angry”, and “Out and Integrated” (Bybee et al. 2009:148). These levels of “outness” were shown to be correlated
with chronic shame and chronic guilt in a study of 81 gay men between the ages of 18 and 48 (Bybee et al. 2009:146). Participants reporting the level of “outness” categorized as “Not Out and Confused” and “Not Out and Upset” were positively correlated with chronic guilt; those categorized as “Not Out, Not Self-Accepting” were positively correlated with chronic shame (Bybee et al. 2009:150). Individuals who were considered “Out and Integrated” exhibited a negative correlation with both chronic shame and chronic guilt (Bybee et al. 2009:150). To summarize, the individuals who concealed their sexuality were found to have significant correlations with chronic guilt and chronic shame, both of which are found to be significantly correlated with increased suicide rates. By contrast, the individuals who had revealed their sexuality and been reaccepted by society reported decreased levels of both chronic guilt and chronic shame, suggesting a decrease in suicide rates.

The findings of this study were mirrored in another, which looked specifically at females of a sexual minority. Though the study of lesbian and bisexual women involves adult women, there is reference to the subjects’ adolescence and remains applicable to the overall argument. In this study, 637 heterosexual, 524 lesbian, and 143 bisexual women were surveyed regarding mental health issues (Koh 2006:33). Homosexual women whose sexual identity remained concealed were found to be 2.5 times more likely to have occasional or frequent suicidal ideation compared to heterosexual women (Koh 2006:46). Further, homosexual women whose sexual identity remained concealed from the public were found to be 90% more likely to have attempted suicide then heterosexual women (Koh 2006:47). The likelihood of suicide ideation and attempts were also increased in not-out bisexual women compared to heterosexual women (Koh 2006:46-47).

Further research explores a parallel cause of increased likelihood for suicide among adolescents, specifically the impact of nondisclosure to parents, and the reactions of parents when the adolescent reveals his/her sexuality. A study of 350 lesbian, gay and bisexual adolescents between the ages of 14 and 21 were surveyed to investigate the relation between suicide patterns and sexual orientation (D’Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington 2001:252). Forty-two percent of the participants reported occasionally or often considering suicide; 25% of the sample reported serious suicidal considerations (D’Augelli 2001:254). Of these individuals, 22% reported that their suicidal ideation was strongly related to their sexual orientation; 26% reported that sexual orientation was related to some degree (D’Augelli 2001:254). In order to assess causation in this study, parental reaction to sexual orientation disclosure, or the “coming out” of participants, was analyzed. Though causation was not found to be significant in this comparison, the variables were found to be significantly related. Forty-eight percent of those who attempted suicide reported fathers who were intolerant or rejecting of the adolescent’s sexual identity; 28% of those who attempted suicide reported mothers who were intolerant or rejecting (D’Augelli 2001:260).

The rejection from parental figures may be significantly related to suicidal tendencies based on the assumption that, the family is the primary, private area of society that one is exposed to; a “haven in a heartless world” (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:293). Perhaps the
rates of suicide increase in those who are met with negative responses from parents after coming out based on the idea that if parents, who are generally believed to love and accept children unconditionally, reject a child because of sexual orientation, how will the public domain of society, which is generally one of harsher criticisms, accept the adolescent.

**Social Support**

Adult acceptance, particularly parental acceptance, of an adolescent who makes their sexual identity known to them is a crucial part of social support. The support of adult figures is found to be more significantly correlated with lower risks of suicide among adolescents, than the support of peers. This contributing factor may be viewed as an extension of “outness” in that the two contributing factors to mental health are related in various ways. The perceived lack of social support may also be what hinders the “coming out” process, which, as stated previously, may lead to decreased mental health and increased suicide proneness.

Compared to heterosexual individuals, homosexuals were found to report less perceived social support from close family members, including the mother and father (Ploderl and Fartacek 2005:665). Of the variables considered in this particular study, such as gender role conformity, victimization, and drug use, the effect sizes when comparing hetero- and homosexual individuals were found to be small (Ploderl and Fartacek 2005:665). This was not the case in the analysis of social support from family, which was found to have a medium effect size. This suggests that one of the areas of greatest difference in regard to factors of poor mental health between sexual orientations was the social support, or lack thereof, felt by individuals (Ploderl and Fartacek 2005:665).

Cobb defines perceived emotional support as “information leading the subject to believe that s/he is cared about and loved” (1976; Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:292). According to the research of Cohen & Wills, and Turner & Lloyd, this is suggested to be the form of social support that has the strongest link to emotional well being among individuals (1985; 1999; Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:292). Researchers argue that poor mental health reported by sexual minority adolescents may be explained by the low levels of support they receive from society (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:293). Oetjen and Rothblum found social support to be the strongest indicator of varying degrees of depression among lesbians, and Vincke and Bolton found similar results among gay men (2000; Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:293). Furthermore, Hershberger et al. state that the loss of friends as result of an individual becoming publicly open with his/her sexuality was found to be significantly related to suicide attempts (1997; Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:293). In a small sample study of 29 gay and bisexual male adolescents, 41% reported losing friendships as result of their sexuality (Remafedi 1987:333). In a significantly larger study, social support was found to account “for 22% of the relationship between same-sex attraction and suicidal tendencies” (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:303).
As the closest social group, parental support is the most important for healthy development of mental well being. Teachers have also been found to fit into this category of social support. Adolescents who experience social support from parents and teachers were found to experience less suicidal proneness (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:303). Curiously, the support of peers seems to have the opposite affect of adult support (Teasdale and Bradley-Engen 2010:303). This finding perhaps alludes to those individuals who have the support of their peers, but not their family. Based on the assumption that family, as the most immediate social network, is fundamentally considered most important in regard to acceptance and support, adolescents who are without the support of their family have increased suicidal tendencies, despite the social support of their peers.

CONCLUSION

There is a significant difference found in suicide rates among heterosexual and homosexual youths between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four; suicide ideation and attempts are both increased among homosexual youths. This increase of suicide tendency among homosexual adolescents may be result of negativity experienced from being a minority. Examining this relationship, significance in regard to suicide rate is only found among males (Remafedi 1998:58). While suicide rates are increased in homosexual females compared to heterosexual females, this difference has not been found to be significant (Remafedi 1998:58). Therefore, while homosexual adolescents, regardless of gender, have significantly greater suicide rates than heterosexual adolescents; regarding gender, male homosexual adolescents report the highest suicide rates. Girls are generally allowed greater freedoms in moving between gender expressions, to an extent, which may contribute to lesbians having less significant suicide trends comparably to gay males. The significant increase found among male homosexuals may be because of stricter gender expectations for males and higher importance placed on masculinity.

Concealment of one’s sexuality is significantly correlated with increased suicide rates for reasons relating to emotions such as shame and guilt (Bybee et al. 2009:148). In order to successfully conceal sexual orientation, it may be necessary for gay youths to lie to those close to them, or even to themselves if they feel they must alter their behaviors or personalities in order to keep their sexual identity hidden. This may cause feelings of guilt and shame, which, if persistent over time, have a significant relationship with increased suicide ideation and attempts among homosexual adolescents (Bybee et al. 2009:148). Concealment would hypothetically be nonexistent in regard to sexual orientation if being gay or bisexual was as accepted as heterosexuality in all of society. While homosexuality is more accepted presently than it was previously, there is still a level of rejection in the overall society that allows “the closet” to remain prevalent in the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals. Shame may be felt by homosexual adolescents because they go against the sexual orientation norm, which then may cause them to feel they must conceal their identity. Further, generally speaking, lying to one’s family and friends is considered an unacceptable practice. Therefore, the concealment
of sexual orientation from these close social networks is fundamentally lying, which may evoke feelings of guilt.

Rejection from parents is significantly tied with increased suicide rates among homosexual adolescents (D’Augelli 2001:260). This may be so influential on the mental health of adolescents because parents are expected to express unconditional love, despite the actions of the child. If an adolescent reveals his/her sexual orientation to a parent and is rejected, they may feel as though because of this failure of acceptance in the family, society outside the family will be even less accepting. This also pertains to the findings that show suicide rates being significantly lowered when there is support of adults, such as parents and teachers, present in response to an adolescent’s sexual orientation. Important adult figures may be more highly valued than peers by adolescents; therefore, the acceptance of sexual orientation by these figures may be significantly more crucial to the mental health stability in adolescents.

To return to the original research question, the consideration of age is specifically examined. To ask if there is a difference between the suicide rates of heterosexual and homosexual individuals would not lead to questions that would provide answers that completely address what is causing the difference. Examination of homosexual individuals in relation to suicide rates reveals that during adolescence and young adulthood, this status of poor mental health is significantly present (Bybee 2009:149). During post-adolescence, however, the presence of decreased mental health and increased suicide rates loses its significance (Bybee 2009:149). Explanations such as improved social networks and decreased reliance on parents and their approval, have been suggested for this change in mental health status during the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Bybee 2009:149). The influential contributions, such as degree of “outness” and social support, potentially lose their significant hold on the homosexual individual as he/she moves out of the vulnerable state of adolescence, into the proposed more fortified state of adulthood.

REFERENCES


Experience of Bullying between Genders: A Quantitative Study done at the University of New Hampshire

Kiley Schlieper

ABSTRACT

Many studies have focused on the issue of bullying; however, few have specifically done research on the experience of bullying in a college setting between genders. This study was conducted at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) where 312 undergraduates enrolled in sociology classes were surveyed. There were significant results that supported that almost half of UNH undergraduate females who reported experienced bullying also reported they have experienced being emotionally bullied by other females. UNH undergraduate males also reported a significant incidence of physical bullying perpetrated by others males. Further research, including a more representative sample would improve findings.

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the experience of bullying between college men and women. Experience was broken down between emotional bullying perpetrated by males, physical bullying perpetrated by males, emotional bullying perpetrated by females and physical bullying perpetrated by females. The sociological relevance of this study is seen with the interaction between and across genders and its effect on society. It is important to have a good understanding of bullying and where it occurs before it leads to further consequences like mental health issues or animosity between people. Gaining knowledge about which gender is experiencing which type of bullying would assist future research in solving this social issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bullying is an important topic that needs to be studied. The majority of studies that have been reviewed are among elementary, middle and high school students. The literature reviewed did produce similar results to the study that was conducted at the University of New Hampshire about bullying.

The types of bullying that males and females are involved in showed differences among gender. Jolliffe, Darrick and Farrington (2011) found that males were more likely to be involved in name-calling or violent bullying compared to females who were not. Jolliffe et al. did find that females who were involved in bullying generally had lower cognitive and affective empathy. Cognitive ability is defied as the ability to understand the emotions of another, and an affective trait is defined as the ability to experience the emotions of another person (Jolliffe
et al, 2011:59). Duncan and Owens (2011) note that there has been a lot of research on girls and their relational aggression, which includes psychological and emotional attacks on other girls. An example of this would be purposely ignoring a friend for no reason, which can lead to distress. These studies focused on how males experienced physical bullying and girls experienced emotional bullying. These two studies helped draw the research question for the study done at UNH. Drawing from these findings, two categories were created for the research at UNH, which include emotional and physical bullying.

Dukes, Stein and Zane (2009) do not focus their study on gender differences but rather on the effect that relational bullying has on students’ attitudes, behavior and injury among students who were considered bullies, victims or bully-victims. The results of this survey found that students that report that they have neutral feelings on bullying have higher self esteem, the best school attitudes, the least problem behavior, the least injury and are the least likely to perpetrate physical bullying or to be physically bullied (Dukes et al 2009). This study shows that the victims of bullies have worse outcomes than the others who were either neutral or the bullies themselves (Dukes et al 2009). Dukes et al also found that there were more female victims of bullying but both girls and boys were still likely to participate in relational bullying (2009). This finding supports the hypothesis that UNH undergraduate women are more likely to experience bullying than UNH undergraduate men.

Limitations were found in all of these studies. Peeters, Cillessen and Scholte found that a limitation to their study was only studying one grade. Dukes et al. also found the same limitation on only studying one grade. Peeters et al. and Dukes et al. both noted that if a longitudinal study would be performed, the effect of bullying would be able to be seen over time. Jolliffee et al. saw small levels of students who said they were involved in bullying which limited their research. This was also seen as a limitation in the study at UNH. Due to the smaller number polled at UNH, there were fewer people who responded to experiencing bullying, but the data is still suggestive and if there was a more representative sample more significant results would be found.

**HYPOTHESES**

The null hypothesis of this study is that college women are not more likely to get bullied than college men.

The alternative hypothesis of this study is that college women are more likely to get bullied than college men.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

*Sample*
This study examines gender differences in the experience and perpetration of bullying at the University of New Hampshire. Surveys were administered to sociology students in pre-selected classes. Of the sample (N=312) a high 72.12% of respondents identified as female (N=225) while only 35.29% identified as male (N=87) (Figure 2). Close to half (40.85%) of the students were freshman, with sophomore leading second at 35.25%. There were fewer upper class students with only 17.32% juniors and a small 6.54% as seniors (Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>FREQ.</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>40.85%</td>
<td>40.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>76.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.32%</td>
<td>93.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.54%</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FREQ.</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>CUM.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>72.12%</td>
<td>72.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methodology, Protocols and Procedures

The protocol for this study explains the in depth research that will be performed. The setting of this project was in classrooms at UNH. The study personnel include the students of Sociology 601, Professor Glauber and teaching assistant Jessie French. The classes that were surveyed were pre selected by professor Glauber. Surveys were administered to four pre-selected classes in the sociology department. Catherine Moran, Marybeth Mattingly, Cliff Brown and UNH graduate student Justin Young agreed to let Sociology 601 students field a survey on their respective students. Beginning in November 2011 Sociology 601 students attended the preselected classrooms, stood in front of the class, read a verbal recruitment statement and handed out surveys to the students. The front page of this survey contained a consent form for students to read. Researchers did not ask for signatures from students because this survey was anonymous. The participants who agreed to complete the survey anonymously took it and then dropped it into a box at the front of the room when completed. No compensation was rewarded at the end of the survey. A convenience sample was used because it was less time consuming and easier to conduct. However, a limitation to a convenience sample is that it is not representative of the whole population intended to study and therefore lacks generalizability. Benefits of this study were that it was convenient and easy to conduct. Our limited time and budget restricted how we could conduct our study. Another benefit of this study was that it was easy to perform with results in days. Data were analyzed using quantitative methodologies. Data were collected anonymously and held in a Google Document that was only accessible by Sociology 601 students and staff members.
Risks and Benefits to Participants

Risks to subjects may be emotional or psychological harm. Bullying can be a sensitive topic to those who may have experienced traumatic events in the past, but if at any time a subject felt like they were not able to finish this survey they were able to stop. The anonymity of the students was protected by not allowing the students to place their name anywhere on the survey so they would never be able to be identified. The benefits of this survey include gaining knowledge of bullying on campus so if there was a large issue there could be means to stop this in the future. Since this study was anonymous participants could choose not to answer.

RESULTS

The STATA computer program was used to produce results for this study. Research found that women are more likely to be bullied than men. 14.55% of undergraduate women responded they have been bullied compared to 8.33% of undergraduate men who reported they had been while enrolled at UNH (Figure 3 and 3a). However, this was not shown to be significant at 0.148 (p<0.05). Even though these results are not significant it is suggestive that if there were a larger sample size that it would seem to be significant.

Women are more likely to be emotionally bullied by another female. It was found that almost half (46.67%) of UNH undergraduate women who responded that they had been bullied while enrolled at UNH responded that they had been emotionally bullied by another female (Figure 4 and 4a), but only 14.94% of men. This was statistically significant at 0.00 (p <0 .05).

Men are more likely to experience physical bullying perpetrated by other men. It was found that out of the UNH undergrad males that said they had been bullied, 13.79% responded that they had experienced physical bullying by another male, whereas only 6.67% of women experienced physical bullying by a male. This was statistically significant at 0.045 (p < 0.05) (Figure 5 and 5a). According to research, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that UNH undergraduate women experience more bullying than males.

Darrick and Farrington (2011) found similar results to the study that was conducted. It was found that UNH undergraduate males were more likely to experience physical bullying by males, and Darrick et al. found that males were more likely to be involved in physical bullying. There were no results in either study that showed that females were heavily involved in physical bullying.
Have you ever been bullied? (Figure 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.55%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>12.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.45%</td>
<td>91.67%</td>
<td>87.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi2 (1) = 2.0977 Pr = 0.148

Have you ever been bullied? (Figure 3a)

Experienced Emotional Bullying (Figure 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.67%</td>
<td>14.94%</td>
<td>37.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.33%</td>
<td>85.06%</td>
<td>62.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi2 (1) = 28.8505 Pr = 0.00

Experienced Emotional Bullying (Figure 4a)
It was found that undergraduate females at UNH experienced more emotional bullying perpetrated by females (46.67%) and males experienced more physical bullying perpetrated by males (13.79%). These were both statistically significant, with the alpha level of (p<0.05).

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that the sample was not representative of the population. As seen in Figure 1, a majority of the respondents were freshman and sophomores. As seen in Figure 2, 72.12% of the population studied was female which is highly skewed. This research project would be more representative if the sample was larger and had a more equal distribution of gender and grade. Another limitation of this study was what seems to be an underreported number of bullying experiences. This may be due to the fact that a student may not know what they experienced was actually a bullying behavior, and therefore did not self-report. The questions about bullying and gender were at the end of a 118-question survey, and by the end of the survey some students were rushed and did not complete the questions at the end. Therefore, a lot of data were not collected on this specific topic of bullying and gender.
REFERENCES


The Effect of Advertising on Gender Roles within American Marriages

Victoria J. Browall

ABSTRACT

The following literature review is designed to explore existing scholarly literature addressing the effect of advertising on marriages in American society. Marriage is an ever-present, ever-evolving social structure, and as such, it is an important topic for sociological research and analysis. Background information about traditional definitions of marriage and contemporary definitions will be discussed in the body of the paper. Gender roles are examined, specifically in terms of household labor distribution, and how the portrayal of gender roles in advertisements is reviewed. The literature points to an evolution of expectations about marriage structure and corresponding gender roles. Advertisements present married couples in gender roles that do not necessarily correspond with contemporary marriages. There is also a general consensus that marriages and long-term partnerships resembling marriages have positive effects on children raised within these unions.

INTRODUCTION

According to the US Census Bureau, the percentage of American women aged 20 to 24 years who had ever been married in 1975 was 62.5. This same percentage drops sharply to 38.5 by 1990 (Norton and Miller 1992). Looking at this statistic, we may ask ourselves if this change is a signal of the decreasing value of traditional marriage in American society. Consequently, this leads to the main research questions of the literature review: Is the advertising industry encouraging marriage? What is the wife’s role as prescribed by advertisements? What is the husband’s role? Do these depictions align with marriage norms in everyday life? To investigate these questions, I will first research literature focusing on the traditional structure of marriage and gender roles within marriage. I will then move into contemporary gender roles within marriage and finally, I will examine marriage roles as they are portrayed in advertisements. Through the existing literature, I intend to illustrate the way American advertisements portray gender roles within marriages.

TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE STRUCTURE

An article written by researchers Sherif Girgis, Robert P. George, and Ryan T. Anderson presents two definitions of marriage, and then contrasts the ideas in the context of how marriage is viewed in American society. Conjugal marriage is a union for the sake of
reproduction and thus must be heterosexual, while revisionist marriage is based on an emotional connection between two people of any gender (Girgis, George and Anderson 2011). As evident from the researchers’ definition, conjugal marriage is the traditionally accepted marriage model in American society. The authors frequently mention a “healthy marriage culture” and suggest that all marriages, whether conjugal or revisionist, contribute to an ideal social environment (Girgis et al. 2011). One critique of this article is that the researchers do not formally define what they mean by a “healthy marriage culture;” they simply suggest a healthy marriage culture is an environment comprised of love and respect.

Another study conducted by Paul Amato (2011) also splits the concept of marriage into two categories: definitions based on marriage as a system, and those based on marriage as a partnership. Amato’s core argument is that, “Children raised by two happily and continuously married parents have the best chance of developing into competent and successful adults” (Amato 2011). One of Amato’s research questions was whether or not it is a good idea for governments to create pro-marriage policies. He examines statistics gathered by other studies and states that evidence shows children raised by parents who were married and happy together grew up to be more stable adults than children without this experience. Amato suggests that gay and lesbian marriages also supply children with this ideal environment. To conclude, he outlines a few options for policies which he feels would support married couples and make it more likely for them to stay together. Amato states that governments should create policies to increase the rate at which married couples foster healthy environments for their children. He gives examples including funding for marriage counseling and parenting courses to help marriages that might be struggling.

CONTEMPORARY MARRIAGE STRUCTURE

With a basic understanding of traditional definitions of a marriage, we can proceed to examining the changes that have developed in recent years. Marriage roles are evolving since two-income families are becoming the social norm. Traditionally, the husband worked full-time and the wife took care of the home and children (Bartley, Blanton and Gilliard 2005). Subjects from five different workplaces filled out four surveys about marriage, decision making, and gender roles within their marriages. To be able to participate in the survey, the subjects had to be heterosexual and married, live with their spouse, have one child or more, and be in a double income household. The first hypothesis was that differences would exist between genders regarding the topics discussed in the surveys, such as their perceptions about decision making in the family. The researchers’ major finding was that wives were a little bit more likely to perform traditional homemaking chores and do more of them than their husbands (Bartley et al. 2005). Another finding was that the women in the study spent more time doing these home chores than the men do. A second hypothesis stated that the way husbands and wives thought about marriage roles and gender equality would predict the way this actually panned out in their own marriages (Bartley et al. 2005). The survey results supported this hypothesis, although there was some variance in the sample. The researchers utilized a regression model
and found that, “The model accounted for 9.4% of the variance in perceptions of marital equity” (Bartley et al. 2005).

Data gathered from a survey about the division of household tasks between husband and wife provides information about marriage norms (Krausz 1986). The subjects who took the survey were married women between the ages of 23 and 42, and they each had at least one child enrolled in a preschool in Staten Island, New Jersey. About half of the women who responded were working mothers, and 46 percent of those working mothers worked more than 30 hours each week (Krausz 1986). The major results of the survey suggest that most households follow the expected gender norms. Chores traditionally assigned to females were found to be done by the wives more often than the husbands. The survey also noted that childcare was most often provided by the wives.

More specifically, less than one out of nine “traditionally female tasks” was equally shared in the families questioned (Krausz 1986). Another interesting observation was that the more hours worked by the wife, the more variation in which partner performed which chores appeared. As the wife’s work hours increased, so did the number of male-designated tasks she performed, such as household repairs and financial responsibilities. The husband simultaneously performed more female-designated tasks, including childcare and meal preparation (Krausz 1986).

In summary, examination of the survey information leads to the conclusion that the degree to which traditional gender roles are followed in a marriage correlates with the employment status of the wife. One criticism of this study is its small sample size. A sample of 130 individuals is not necessarily enough to truly represent society as an aggregate. Additionally, the fact that the sample is from a single geographical location and was facilitated through schools attended by the children of the subjects is questionable. Variability in terms of geography and financial status may yield different results if this study were to be repeated. It would be interesting to see an updated version of this study since it was conducted 25 years ago.

Marriage is where a person’s tendency towards one gender role or the other comes out the strongest (Lucier-Greer and Adler-Baeder 2011). Researchers conducted a longitudinal study from 1980 to 2000 to gather data for their hypothesis. The goal was to compare the way subjects perceived marriage roles based on what type of relationship they were in at each respective point in the study. Interviews were conducted with married individuals chosen from a random national sample. Three major sets of interviews were done; first in 1980, then in 1988, and finally in 2000. This longitudinal approach helped to observe whether or not there were changes in the subjects’ perceptions over time. The most significant finding of the study is that the data shows a trend towards equality in marriages. (Lucier-Green and Adler-Baeder 2011). The most interesting part of the study is the connection made between a person’s beliefs about marriage equality and gender roles, and his or her own relationship status. It is
particularly useful that the study was longitudinal and conducted over a 20 year time period with the same participants.

**MARRIAGE ROLES AS PORTRAYED IN ADVERTISING**

Through a meta-analysis, Martin Eisend (2009) establishes that the advertising industry has perpetuated gender roles for approximately 40 years. The following quote stood out the most in his analysis: “Although advertising systematically under-represents several aspects in life while making other aspects more important, changes in advertising content are more likely to correspond to changes in society than vice versa” (Eisend 2009). To synthesize, Eisend believes that advertisers alter their marketing methods to keep up with evolving societal norms.

As we focus on how marriage roles are portrayed in advertising it becomes useful to ask research questions specific to different types of advertising. One such question is whether or not advertising in print magazines is keeping up with the changes in a woman’s role in a marriage (Robinson and Hunter 2008). Specifically, the researchers wondered about the portrayal of chores around the house and what the advertisements were showing in terms of getting these chores done. To gather data, popular women’s magazines were chosen and their advertisements were examined using content analysis methods. The advertisements were categorized based on the content of the photos, and then the actual words were categorized based on who they were “speaking” to. In other words, the analyzers scanned for target audiences and then looked at the messages about marriage roles being sent to the target audiences through the advertisements. These results were then compared to precedents set by previous literature discussed in the study. The findings of the content analysis study showed a change in language so that the target audience was broader, not just directed towards wives and mothers (Robinson and Hunter 2008). The advertisements steered away from only addressing one gender, which supported the researchers’ hypothesis that a woman’s marriage role has changed over time.

An article by Gayle Kaufman (1999) looks at the other side of the coin, so to speak, by examining the role of the father in a marriage and family, and how fathers are portrayed in television advertising. The article also looks at what products are advertised during shows or specials that target one gender over the other. Content analysis techniques were used to evaluate the advertisements. Major findings include messages in the advertisements that suggest mothers have more childcare responsibilities than fathers, and that fathers are supposed to instruct their children on how to perform tasks more often than mothers. Another interesting finding was that men are more likely to be pictured eating with children on television commercials than women. The article suggests that even though many television advertisements rely on the traditional marriage roles and are projected towards one gender, a gradual shift is occurring and more gender equality is being presented through advertisements. Kaufman provided a different perspective on this topic because her study focused on husbands and fathers instead of wives and mothers.
One last important focus is the ways in which gender roles are portrayed in advertising. Existing content analysis not only shows differences in the types of domestic responsibilities taken on by men and women, but in the ability to fulfill these responsibilities (Scharrer et al. 2006). Scharrer et al. examined television commercials and noticed that husbands and/or fathers are typically shown as unable to accomplish household tasks, especially in comparison to their female counterparts (Scharrer et al. 2006). The researchers also made note of the way this male failure is received during the advertisement. Roughly 23 percent of the husbands and/or fathers in analyzed commercials who are unsuccessful in their attempts at a chore were met with laughter, and then presented with a product that either saved them from their “difficult” task or made it easier for their wives to take charge of the chore (Scharrer et al. 2006). This humor-based picture of a husband’s lack of domestic capabilities reinforces the hypothesis that gender roles in marriage are often scripted by advertisements.

The final idea examined is whether or not young children who see advertisements that prescribe certain gender roles to parents are influenced by these portrayals. Presumably, adults watching television commercials are able to understand that the marriage structures being portrayed are not to be taken seriously. Pamela Cheles-Miller (1975) asks if children have the same sense of discernment. Cheles-Miller’s observations suggest a real possibility that children viewing these types of advertisements can internalize the portrayals of husband and wife, and expect the stereotypes to be true and applicable in their adult lives (1975). Cheles-Miller’s article was based on data collected in another study (Blatt et al. 1972). The original study was conducted from a set of statements summarizing the traits of an advertised husband and an advertised wife. 276 children in either fourth or fifth grade were asked to choose which statements they believed to be accurate. The children then took a questionnaire based on the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale in order to find out about each child’s perception of himself or herself (Cheles-Miller 1975). The major finding of the Blatt et al. study was that “a child scoring high on the stereotype acceptance test would have a relatively low self-concept” (Cheles-Miller 1975). This would suggest that there is a relationship between a child’s knowledge of advertised marriage roles and his or her self image (Cheles-Miller 1975). A follow-up study to examine how these results might have changed since 1975 would be valuable.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to examine the relationship between advertising and the structure of American marriages. The literature reviewed in this paper is interconnected; each article focuses on gender roles within marriage and the relatively recent shift from traditional expectations to a more balanced approach. The research is significant because in order to understand any effect advertising has on marriage roles, there must be a baseline for what’s happening to these roles out of the advertising context. All of the articles’ main findings concluded on a similar point: that what used to be expected in terms of gender roles in marriage is now something different, or at least is becoming something different.
The articles directly addressing advertisements and their portrayals of marriage roles were also all similar in their findings. The studies conducted by Robinson and Hunter (2008), Kaufman (1999), and Scharrer et al. (2006) suggest that the once-standard picture of the respective tasks of a husband and a wife have changed, and that advertising is changing to reflect this cultural shift. One inference is that over the last few decades, the scripts of husband and wife have changed, and the lines separating the once-distinct roles have become blurred. Another suggestion is that the American advertising industry is attempting to keep up with the changes occurring in marriage structure by portraying more two-income families who share some of the household responsibilities formerly left only to wives. No matter the conclusion drawn from the literature, the connections among these variables should not be ignored.

REFERENCES


How Parents Influence Deviant Behavior among Adolescents: An Analysis of their Family Life, their Community, and their Peers

Amber Carlson

ABSTRACT

The goal of this literature review is to analyze the effect the family has on an adolescent’s behavior. It is believed that parents have direct and indirect control. Previous research has found that parents directly influence their children’s behavior through the parenting techniques utilized. Parental support is the largest influence on creating preferable behavior in adolescents. Along with the direct influence from parents, the parents have indirect control over the community through which the adolescents lives in and socializes with peers in. Adolescents require strong bonds in their community. Through these bonds, adolescents are watched over and other families reciprocate the actions. When these conditions are not provided an up-rise in juvenile crime may overtake the community. Adolescents learn greatly from their peers. The family has an indirect control over peers through community watch and their parenting techniques; teaching the child not to succumb to peer pressure. This information is vital due to the presence of juveniles in the criminal justice system.

INTRODUCTION

An analysis of how parents directly and indirectly affect deviant behaviors among adolescents will be addressed. There are three main areas in an adolescent’s life that a parent influences. These are the family and home life, a child’s community, and their peers. The research question driving this study is; how do parents influence deviant behavior in their adolescents? It is believed that a parent will directly affect deviant behavior through parenting and the family structure, while indirectly affecting the behaviors through the adolescent’s community, and their choice of peers.

The background information concerning deviant behavior will be addressed. This section will discuss the increase in crime rates and the importance of the research. Next, there will be a discussion about the main theories that are prevalent in this topic, social control theory and social disorganization theory. Following will be a discussion of how parents directly affect the family through their parenting techniques and the structure of the family. The community in which a child resides in will be conversed. A topic in which has been defined as being their school and the neighborhood they live in. The third area of influence will be how the parents influence the child’s choice of peers. The last section to be discussed will be the implications
and the future research that can be performed. For reference, the term children and adolescents will refer to the age group of 10-17 year olds.

BACKGROUND

In 2004, 2.2 million adolescents were arrested (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). Despite the trend that overall juvenile arrests have decreased, adolescents continue to engage in criminal behaviors (Wiesner and Silbereisen 2003). The criminal behavior an adolescent is involved in is numerous. These crimes range from violent crimes, such as murder, to simple assault, motor theft, vandalism, and disorderly conduct. In 2001, violent crimes represented about 4% of arrests, while assaults compromised 23.8% of offenses (Wiesner and Silbereisen 2003). Secure detention facilities have also increased over the years. These facilities are structurally designed to prevent escape and restrict the movement of the juvenile offender. In the ten-year period of 1993-2002, capacity has increased by 120% and in the last five years of that period, capacity was increased by 71% (Fagan and Tyler 2005). This increase in capacity depicts the increase in juvenile arrests. Portrayed by the need for larger juvenile facilities, and a high juvenile crime rate, an increase in the understanding of juvenile delinquency is warranted for policy changes.

The participation in delinquent crime continues to increase, unless we can identify the factors that have the potential to lower the rate (Barnes, Hoffman, and Welte 2006). Understanding these factors can put into affect social changes that can help our society improve. These changes can include new policies for juveniles or education for those who are a part of a deviant adolescent’s community.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Social control or self-control is an individual characteristic that is established early in life and can account for deviant behavior (Teasdale and Silver 2009). This self-control is established through strong attachments to social foundations, such as school or a community. These social bonds can weaken and has the ability to influence the level of deviance engaged in (Knoester and Hayne 2005). Individuals who engage in such behaviors do so because it can provide an immediate way to receive gratification (i.e. stealing), it requires little thought process, and does not have a long-term goal (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). These results are appealing to children with low self-control because they lack self-regulation. Self-regulation is the ability to set and attain goals, refrain from problematic behaviors, and focus on long term goals (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). An adolescent will not be able to maintain goals or restrain their behaviors. The inability to control deviant tendencies will influence the child to partake in delinquent/deviant behaviors.

To understand why adolescents may be partaking in deviant behaviors one may refer to social disorganization theory. The main theme of this theory is community social control (Law and Barber 2007). The essence of social disorganization theory is that high rates of delinquency
arise when a community’s informal social control deteriorates. Concerning juvenile delinquency, an especially important aspect of a neighborhood is the relationships among adolescents, their parents, and other adults (Osgood and Anderson 2004). This means that the more adults in the neighborhood who know one another, the more they will take responsibility for supervising one another’s children, which in turn will lower the delinquency rates.

THE FAMILY

A parent is a model towards their children. Research on modeling has shown that when parents are held in high esteem and are the main sources for reinforcement, they child is more likely to model them (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, and Conger 1991). If a parent acts in a negative way, the child is more likely to follow their parent’s negative attitude. They are also more likely to generalize this attitude to the rest of society. Thus, parents have much influence over their child’s behavior. From birth, a parent will mold and shape behaviors suitable to the norms of society through childrearing. However, there are certain parenting techniques that have a greater impact on a child’s behaviors. The largest is parental support (Barnes et al 2006). Parental support is behaviors toward the child, such as praising, encouraging, and giving affection. They show the child that he or she is valued and loved. In multiple studies, it has been found that support from parents bonds the adolescent to institutions and builds their self-control (Barnes et al 2006). This building of self-control will hinder deviant behaviors from forming.

To prevent deviant behaviors from appearing, parents must use effective discipline, monitoring, and problem solving techniques (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). Effective discipline is recognizing deviant behaviors and keeping track of when they occur. Consistent discipline must be insured at the sighting of these behaviors in order to prevent the development. However, overly harsh punishments will not stop the behavior; it will enhance it (Simons et al 1991). The child may view the punishment as unfair and unjust and this can cause them to act out. Monitoring involves the awareness of where their child is, who their friends are, and what they do in their free time. In a study performed by Barnes et al in 2006, it was found that monitoring is a strong predictor for adolescent’s deviant behavior, after peer deviance was controlled for. This illustrates how important parents are in a child’s life and how their involvement can make a difference in deviant behavior. Problem solving skills are important in a child’s development of communication (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). A lack of communication can cause a child to be defensive, reject their responsibilities, and increase their anger. These traits can influence delinquent behaviors and the association with deviant peers.

Coercive parenting exacerbates the negative traits influencing delinquency. This type of parenting is characterized by explosiveness and threats that are normally coupled with little consistency or follow-through (Simons et al 1991). Parents should instead engage in positive parenting by continually supporting their child’s pro-social behaviors. Parents who do not reinforce positive behaviors and who do not effectively punish deviance are more likely to
experience weak bonds with their child (Crosswhite and Kerpelman 2008). It is through these weak bonds that a child is more likely to participate in deviant behaviors.

Weak bonds between a parent and their child can also be explained through strain theory. Strain theory suggests that individuals become deviant because of their inability to achieve, “positively valued goals” (Hollist et al 2009). The valued goals for a child are the feeling of being loved and supported. This is their expectation from the parent. When the child does not experience these expectations, they are likely to experience anger and frustration, which can lead into deviant behaviors. Glueck and Glueck performed a study in 1950 and found that juvenile offenders were more likely to come from homes where parents used coercive parenting, where did not feel love or support (Hollist et al 2009). Sixty years later, this study remains true. Coercive parenting that consists of low monitoring and support and ineffective discipline with overly harsh punishments, influences deviant behavior among adolescents.

The quality of parenting affects peer associations. Parents have the ability to directly influence whom their child associates with. Through effective monitoring and discipline, a youth’s access to an affiliation with deviant peers is affected (Simons et al 1991). Through effective monitoring, a parent keeps track of their child’s whereabouts. In doing this a parent can limit where the child goes and who they associate with. Along with monitoring and disciplining, a strong parent-child bond is also influential. An adolescent who is closer to their parents is more likely to care about their parent’s opinions regarding their friends. Coercive parenting can weaken this bond. When this bond is weakened through parental conflict, there are higher levels of the youth externalizing their problems (Buehler 2006). A youth externalizing a problem may occur after a parent’s divorce, in which the child causes a fight at school because of the anger they feel from their parents. Externalizing troubles leads the adolescent down a path of deviant behavior, beginning with parenting.

Divorce is becoming a commonality in our society. Many children are experiencing their parents fighting and later divorcing. This can cause direct stress to a child (Amato and Cheadle 2008). Children may blame themselves for the conflict, leading to feelings of guilt and low self-esteem. The conflict between parents may also spill over and decrease the quality of parenting, weakening the bonds between the child and the parents. With these bonds weakened, self-control decreases, causing the adolescent to act out and engage in deviant behaviors. Once the parents are divorced, the child may live in two separate households. This cannot only weaken the child’s bonds to each parent, but it can also result in ineffective parenting (Dornbusch, Carlsmit, Bushwall, and Ritter 1985). This can be an effect of the difficulty in monitoring and supervision of the child. Krohn et al performed a study in 2008 showing that adolescents living in families who experience more transitions, such as divorces or economic hardships, experience lower levels of parental attachment and supervision, as well as less consistent discipline, and more hostile family environments (Krohn, Hall, and Lizotte 2008). A child will be more likely to turn to deviant behaviors when their parents utilize coercive parenting techniques or when their techniques are lacking and ineffective.
After a child experiences the large transition of divorce, they must next face living in a single-parent home. Social control theory assumes that two parents are better able to provide affection and supervision to their children than single parents (Mack, Leiber, Featherstone, and Monserud 2007). Dornbusch et al’s study in 1985 verifies the social control theories assumption by drawing the conclusion that two or more adults parenting, always resulted in greater social control (Dornbusch et al 1985). This study shows how the more parenting a child receives; social bonds to the parents will strengthen, therefore decreasing deviant tendencies.

COMMUNITY

Durkheim argued that deviance is more likely to increase after societies undergo changes that disrupt the community’s social bonds (Knoester and Haynie 2005). When these community bonds weaken, disorganization sets in. The social disorganization theory states that when traditional or effective community social bonds that prevent crime and delinquency are absent, delinquent behaviors will increase (Knoester and Haynie 2005). These social bonds can be found in neighborhoods. An adolescent has bonds with their parents and their neighbors in the community. There are three necessary conditions in which a neighborhood must provide for children: monitoring, recognizing deviant behaviors, and punishing the behaviors. These can be achieved through intergenerational closure. Intergenerational closure occurs when adults and children in a community have a strong bond to each other. The conditions can also be attained through “reciprocated exchange,” the strength of interfamily and adult interaction when it comes to parenting techniques for the community (Teasdale and Silver 2009). When parents do not provide these conditions than an up-rise in juvenile crime overtakes the neighborhood.

In a society where divorce is common, the possibility for more single-parent households in disadvantaged neighborhoods increases. This increase signifies a lack of community informal and formal social controls. This occurs because single parent families have difficulty in providing the necessary conditions that prevent crime and delinquency (Knoester and Haynie 2005). The community groups and institutions that provide formal social controls take time and energy to participate in. An example of these groups would be churches, schools, libraries, and recreational centers. Single parents have less money and therefore need to work more to make ends meet. This can limit their relative time and energy that is needed for these social institutions. Therefore, these local organizations are weak and so are the bonds they provide to adolescents (Knoester and Haynie 2005). The demands for a single parent can also make it difficult for them to monitor not only their child, but also the other children in the neighborhood (Barnes et al 2006.) The informal control of monitoring is then lacking and inadequate to stop deviance from occurring. Thus, a higher proportion of single-parent families results in a greater opportunity for an adolescent to commit a deviant act. In 2005, Knoester and Haynie found that the proportion of single-parent families in the neighborhood is positively associated with an adolescent’s risk of committing violence, even after accounting for feeling of family integration (Knoester and Haynie 2005). This depicts how when an adolescent has weak
bonds with their community, due to single-parent families, they are more likely to be deviant, even in the presence of successful family integration.

Within the community, schools bring children together. A child is required to attend 5 days a week, 180 days of the year, and for 12-14 years. A youth who is weakly attached is more likely to deviate from norms and engage in norm-violating acts. When youths never learn to conform to the norms of society/school they are free to be deviant (Vazsonyi and Pickering 2003). Parents play a role in helping the child to understand the norms and create bonds within their school. They teach their children the prosocial behaviors accepted in these facilities, such as being considerate, helpful, polite, caring, and cooperative. However if parental attachment is low, they will not learn these behaviors, and will therefore experience difficulties in school (Simons et al 1991). These difficulties can range from being disruptive and off-task in the classroom, to playground fights, and to lower grades. Simons et al’s study in 1991 concluded that youths who fail in school strive to increase their self-esteem by disregarding society’s norms and decide to take part in deviant behaviors. Consequently, the adolescent will be labeled negatively. Through this labeling the student is rejected by teachers and conventional peers, leading to associations with deviant peers.

**PEERS**

Research shows that adolescents with positive feelings toward their school are less likely to be deviant (Dornbusch, Erickson, Laird, and Wong 2001). When parents do not have a strong bond with their child and do not teach them pro-social values, the adolescent has difficulties in school. These difficulties lead to rejection by conventional peers and they drift into association with deviant peers. This form of participation in deviance is a direct affect from deviant peers (Simons et al 1991). Now that the adolescent is relatively unrestrained from the opinions of parents, teachers, and conventional peers, their new deviant friends encourage and reinforce them to participate in deviant behaviors. Deviant friends are accepting of each other and their deviant actions.

The age at which an adolescent begins associating with deviant peers influences the level of delinquency the child will participate in. Some children begin to affiliate with delinquent friends during adolescence because it can be deemed as normal (Buehler 2006). In 2005, Vitaro et al’s study analyzed three different groups of deviant affiliations. The first is the early group, which begins their relationship during childhood and throughout adolescence. The second is the late affiliative group starting during early adolescence only. The third is a never group who never befriends deviant peers. Disruptiveness, social acceptance, academic performance, parent-child relationship, and delinquency were measured. The early group showed the highest overall amount of delinquency throughout adolescence. They also had the highest level of disruptiveness, lowest level of academic performance and the weakest bond with their parents. The late group’s deviant behavior steadily increased, until age 13 where it peaked and began to level off at age 15. This group overall had the lowest levels of disruptiveness and the strongest bond with their parents. The never group maintained the lowest amount of deviance, but
increased slightly. This increase could be due to the rapid decrease in academic performance (Vitaro, Brendgen, and Wanner 2005). The never affiliated group illustrates how deviant peers are not the only factors contributing to deviant behavior. The conclusion of this study shows how important it is for parents to monitor their child’s friends and academic performances. Effective monitoring is critical in the reduction of deviant behaviors influenced through peers.

CONCLUSION

Parents directly and indirectly affect their adolescent’s deviant behaviors. From the enlarging crime rates to the rise in secure detention facilities, juvenile crime is increasing. Three factors have been found that have the ability to aid in decreasing these rates. These factors are the adolescent family, community, and peers, with an overall factor of parenting. Parents directly influence deviant behavior in their children through their parenting techniques and the family structure. Effective monitoring and support, as well as consistent punishments are vital to raising a child. When these areas are lacking an adolescent is more likely to turn to deviant behavior. Parents directly affect family structure. Divorces are a large transition and they cause adolescents to experience a low level of parental attachment and supervision, thus leading toward deviant behaviors. Once a divorce is finalized, a child will then move to living in a single-parent home. Single-parent living environments reduce social control and lead to an increase in delinquency. A parent indirectly influences deviant behavior through a community. A single-parent community holds a greater number of opportunities to take part in deviant behaviors. Part of a child’s community is their school. A parent will teach values to their children that are accepted in school. When these values are not taught, an adolescent’s school bond is broken, causing their academic performance to suffer. Without a strong bond to school, an adolescent will begin to associate with deviant peers. Deviant friends pressure the adolescent to begin or continue partaking in deviant actions. The underlying theme of social control theory and social disorganization theory further explains parents and juvenile deviant behaviors. When a child has a weak bond with their parents or the community, their self-control is decreased and social disorganization results.

This research can be used to benefit society in a number of ways. It may be used to create educational programs. These programs can educate parents on how large a role they have in their children’s life. They would be able to learn how to parent effectively and what parenting techniques are important. They could also learn how to benefit the community they live in and understand what communities would be best to raise a child in. These programs could benefit schools as well. Teachers would know what factors they should watch for in students, whether it is antisocial behaviors, disruptive behaviors, or the beginning of an affiliation with deviant peers. Teachers and facility could learn how to approach the student and later the parent about the behavior. Schools could offer programs for a child and a parent to work together to establish a closer bond. This closer bond could increase self-control and decrease the probability that the child will turn to deviant behaviors.
This topic is heavily researched; however, more research can be done. Increases in longitudinal studies are warranted. It should begin at adolescence and continue until adulthood. More factors could be identified for what influences deviant behaviors and if these behaviors continue into adulthood. A cross-cultural study would also be beneficial. Childrearing practices are different in other countries. It would be noteworthy to learn what influences deviant behaviors in those countries. In certain areas of the U.S., transient neighborhoods are common. Research should be conducted in these communities to see if they influence delinquency. Many of the studies researched controlled for individual characteristics, such as anger. A study needs to be performed to compare different characteristics and deviant behavior. Then have the results compared to the findings on how parents influence the same behaviors. This would provide insight to see if parents influence deviant behavior, or if the child’s individual characteristics pre-disposition him/her to deviance. As the rates of divorce and single parent families increase, more research needs to be done. Stepfamilies are becoming widespread and it would be beneficial to understand how these types of families may or may not contribute to deviant behaviors. To fully understand deviant behavior among adolescents all the factors influencing it need to be researched.

REFERENCES


Race Differences in the Perception of African-American Inclusion on the UNH Campus

Kelby Mackell

ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that people of racial minorities feel that white people don’t understand how they feel in a community setting. This present study investigates whether students of racial minorities feel that black acceptance on the UNH campus is different than the way that white students view the acceptance of black students. A sample of 326 undergraduate students was surveyed to see how they perceived the acceptance of black on the UNH campus. The data was expanded to include how students of all races feel, not just white students and black students, because the N of black students was so low. It is hypothesized that white students would feel that black students are accepted on the UNH campus. It was also hypothesized that minority students would feel that black students are less included than white students believe. The results show that there is a significant difference between the way that white students view black inclusion and the way that minority students view black inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

As we depart the year 2011, many would think that racial tension would be at an all-time low, considering how far we have come from the nation’s past. In the United States we have progressed from slavery and segregation but unfortunately there is still much racial tension that still exists today. Although many might not see racial disparities it is manifested within the mind of many minorities, where “for them, racism materializes at every juncture of society... shaping every decision and guiding every step” (Morrison:2010). This manifestation not only shapes how a person of a racial minority interacts with the people around them, it also shapes how that person thinks of themselves. Attending a university that is very low in racial diversity, with the majority of students identifying as white, this racial division is greatly elevated. The current study seeks to examine the way white students think black students feel when it comes to being included on a mainly white campus. This view will be compared with how minority students think that black students feel. This research will provide a better understanding of how the racial majority views the social inclusion of the racial minority and if there is a significant difference. Further research can be done to educate both the minority and the majority of the way both parties view each other. For this paper, social inclusion is defined as “a psychological sense of identification and affiliation with the campus community” (Hausmann 2008:660). Throughout the rest of this paper, “inclusion” is going to encompass “social inclusion”. Furthermore, this research will also allow integration on a white college campus to occur effortlessly because every part of the racial spectrum will have a better
understanding of each other. Hopefully, after presenting this research, there will be a deeper understanding of racial differences on the UNH campus and the racial gap can recede slightly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Finding out how students in the majority race view the feelings of the minority races is an important part in the integration of a university campus. According to a study done by Leslie R.M. Hausmann, et al., “sense of belonging had a direct, positive effect on a students’ institutional commitment” (Hausmann 2008:665). Commitment will be defined as a sense of devotion or dedication. Having a commitment to the university that you attend makes for a better atmosphere for everyone to live in. If someone has a high sense of commitment to their place of education they are more likely to try academically and they are less likely to cause a disturbance in the college community. Throughout Hausmann’s study she talks about how important it is to feel “integrated into the social and academic systems of the university” (650) which is one of the main reasons this current study was conducted. This relates back to understanding the way white students view minority students. Students are unable help each other integrate if they do not understand how the other is feeling. Integration also cannot occur if student do not understand how important social integration really is.

The thought of racism is another cause of lack of integration and feelings of inclusion on a predominantly white campus. Many stereotypes have been placed on minority students and attending a college that is predominantly white may bring these racial labels to light. Even though these stereotypes may be untrue, students of minority races have to work hard to show that they don’t fit into the stigmas that have been given to them. A study done by Shaun Harper discusses how a student of color can show the college community that they can be academically successful, can work hard and that they are able to achieve success. In this way, many areas of the educational realm can begin to break down racial barriers that still exist today (Harper 2009:709). Changing stereotypes is only possible if students of color feel included on a white campus, allowing them to feel comfortable to branch out and interact more with the community around them.

Gina Zanolini Morrison conducted a study that focused specifically on students of color at predominantly white universities, a parallel to the study presented in this paper. This research revealed that lack of awareness of students of each race created “two separate worlds”. This means that neither race was integrated with each other, causing a lack of awareness in the way that each felt. It is commonly known that first year college students have a mixture of emotions, ranging from excitement to nervousness. However, students of color go into college with another emotion: frustration. “They felt “odd”, “out of place” and “left out”. They found it “hard to fit in” a campus culture in which so many of the white students, staff and faculty had so little experience with diversity” (Morrison 2010:997). This frustration is also escalated because the student of color “felt expected to play in educating the whites about diversity” (Morrison 2010:998). This study shows what is occurring on the UNH campus. There are programs, such as CONNECT and the Black Student Union, that white students feel
uncomfortable joining because of the lack of integration within the races. The fact that there is a lack of awareness between races and that it is repeatedly being reported, is a major cause of concern.

A study done by Matthew Hughey examines participation of minority students in predominantly white sororities and fraternities sheds some light into how integration does occur on predominantly white campuses. This study found that even though students of color are joining these predominantly white organizations, integration is still not occurring the way it should (Hughey:2010). Minority students are immersing themselves into the white community rather than allowing the white students a chance to be a part of the minority community. One finding in the study showed that a fraternity brother’s “race qualified him for the domain of service work”. It also stated that his “black identity gave [him] “insight” into poverty and qualified [him] for being a “better fit” for community service aspects of the [fraternity]” (Hughey 2010:661-662). This shows that even though there could be integration into the outside community through this racial outlet, there are still jobs that are racial divided and keep the line of division strong. The white students could take the time to interact with different races but because many believe that blacks come from impoverished communities they feel that community service in these communities are better suited for their black fraternity members. This is a regular occurrence on many predominantly white campuses because there are so many more predominantly white organizations. Many of these students of color who are joining these organizations have grown up in mostly white communities so it isn’t a big step for them to join these groups (Hughey 2010: 657). This is not an answer to closing the racial divide and is only perpetuating it. Students need to become aware of the social barriers that still exist and learn how to break them down.

The above studies, though helpful in gathering background information, do not offer much insight into how to change the problem of racial misinformation. There are many articles, dating back decades, that have examined the issue and unfortunately it is still a dilemma today. For these researchers, further information should have been gathered that examined ways to integrate students, lawfully and considerately. Another issue is that these articles lack tables or diagrams and it is hard to grasp their data. The research presented in this paper will include a series of solutions as well as present data in clear-cut tables.

HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis for this study is that white students feel that African-American students are more included on the UNH campus than minority students feel that they are included in the UNH campus. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between race and the feeling of inclusion of African-American students.

RESEARCH METHODS

Sampling
A survey was used to collect the data that was used to answer the research question. Prior permission was granted that allowed a group of students to conduct a survey in four introductory level sociology classrooms. Each participant was given the same survey with a wide variety of questions on it. The sample size was 326 students and a convenience sample was used.

Once the survey was constructed, it was submitted to the University of New Hampshire’s Internal Review Board. Upon approval from the IRB the survey was administered to the classes by groups of the students whose questions were on them. The participants were fully aware that the survey was completely anonymous. They were also informed that if they did not want to answer a question or if they did not understand it, they were welcome to skip over that question. Once the surveys were taken and returned the data was analyzed. The group of students who made the survey are the ones who did the analyzing. The data was entered into Excel spreadsheets and then administered to the researching students once it was all compiled.

Using a survey and surveying the classes that were selected was the easiest, although not necessarily the most accurate, way of attaining student’s view of the inclusion of minorities. This was not the most accurate way because there was a small number of minority students who were surveyed (N= 35). There may have also been some inaccuracies in the way that people answered because the question that was asked of them may have been hard to answer, may have been uncomfortable to answer or some of the students may not have had many interactions with minority students since the number on campus is so low.

The main disadvantage of using a survey to collect data is that the question may have been unclear. There was no definition of “inclusion” provided so the question was left up to the interpretation of the participant. For many, inclusion many have a universal meaning but some people may stray from the dictionary definition or not know what inclusion means altogether. The question also only asked for “inclusion” and not “social inclusion” so some of the participants may have answered the question differently if “social inclusion” was used instead.

**Risks and benefits to subjects**

There were very minimal risks for the participants of this study. If some of the variables were analyzed together then it was possible to discover a student’s identity. However, UNH’s Internal Review Board restricted the study so that certain variables could not be analyzed together, making this a very safe study. The benefits of this study for the participants are that they were able to assist many students in their research. This gives participants a chance to benefit from conclusions drawn about their society and have a better understanding of the views around them.
Variables

The independent variable measured in this research is race and the dependent variable is view of minority inclusion. The reason a survey was used to measure these variables is because it was the easiest way to see how UNH students felt about minority inclusion. The question that was asked to measure the dependent variable was “African Americans are very included on the UNH campus” and was measured using a Likert scale with the categories of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The independent variable was measured by asking what the student’s race was with the categories of American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, black or African-American, Hispanic or Latino/a, white or Caucasian, multi-racial or other.

RESULTS

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino/a</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>89.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Views of Inclusion Based on White and Minority Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Race</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that African Americans are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>included on the UNH Campus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.65</td>
<td>10.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.14</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>37.80</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrality</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.58</td>
<td>11.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>32.65</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32.21</td>
<td>10.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>326</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s chi²(30)=51.6570 Pr = .008

Table 1 shows how many people from each racial category participated in the survey. True to the UNH campus, a very strong majority of the students identified as white. According to the 2010 UNH Profile, 92% of the students who are enrolled at UNH identify as white. This sample is very representative of the UNH campus considering 89% of my sample is white. Table 2 is a breakdown of how the question “African-Americans are very included on the UNH campus”. This table has two categories, non-white and white, where the non-white category is a combination of students who selected of American India or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, black or African-American, Hispanic or Latino/a, white or Caucasian, multi-racial or other on the survey. This table shows that 48% of the students who identified as white felt that African-American student were included on the UNH campus whereas only 25% of the students who selected a race other than white felt that African-American student were included. The majority of the students who did not identify as white disagreed or strongly disagreed with the surveyed statement. Out of the 35 students that are non-white, 13 felt that African-American students were not included on the UNH campus, or 37%. This differs greatly from the white population that was surveyed; only 16% of them felt that African-American students were not included on the campus.

According to the research, the null hypothesis was rejected meaning that based on an alpha level of .05 the research presented is statistically significant. There is a distinct difference between the way non-white students and white students view the inclusion of African-Americans.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the null hypothesis was rejected indicating statistical significance. White students and non-white students have a very different view on the inclusion of African-American students. A Chi\(^2\) significance test was used to measure the probability of the result occurring from chance using a .05 alpha level. The results show that there is a .008 alpha when comparing non-white students and white students view of African-American inclusion.

This is a very important study to note when looking at the UNH campus. UNH is a community that is focused on increasing the amount of diversity on their campus. Before expanding diversity there needs to first be focus on making every students view of each race’s inclusion in the UNH community the same. It is virtually meaningless to encourage diversity on a campus where minority students feel that inclusion doesn’t occur.

One weakness of this study is that there is no examination of what grade level the participants belonged to. This is very important when examining this question because this would show how long they had been a part of the UNH community and whether they had the time to interact with the community extensively. If the pool of participants were freshmen and sophomore students I think there is hope for the UNH community to start forming a stronger feeling of inclusion among minority races. There is a greater possibility of creating inclusion among first and second year students because they have more time on the campus to be educated about the problem and do something about it.

Another weakness of this survey is that the question that was used to measure the dependent variable was open to a significant amount of interpretation. The students who were taking this survey could have thought that inclusion meant something other than what the researcher intended, skewing the data altogether. As stated before, inclusion means social inclusion. Social inclusion encompasses inclusion within extracurricular groups, social groups and the community as a whole.

Overall, this study was very representative, proportionately, of the UNH population. The majority of the students were white which is correct of the UNH campus. One of the reasons why the students who were non-white felt that there was so little inclusion is because they see a majority of the same race on campus. Not seeing students of different races may make it seem that students aren’t included on campus but in reality, the students who are of minority race may actually feel included. In this case, inclusion wouldn’t be defined as social inclusion but rather presence in a group.

In future research interviews may be a better route to take. This would allow an in-depth view of how students of racial minority really feel and why they do feel this way. Interviews would be helpful in finding out why students who identify as white feel the way they do as well. The interview process will not only uncover how a student views inclusion but also
why they feel that way as well. Finding out exactly why students feel the way they do will allow the community to take steps towards racial inclusion.

REFERENCES


The Effects of Income, Gender, Parental Involvement on the Education of Children with Single-Parent and Step-Parent Families

Halie Olszowy

ABSTRACT

This literature review examines the findings of various authors on the topics of family structure and educational success. By examining the dynamics of income, gender, and parental involvement within both single-parent and step-parent families, we are able to better understand how those three dynamics vary between both single- and step-parent families and may cause differences academically for children living in those family structures. Reviewing the literature, we are able to determine that there are differences between single- and step-parent families in terms of income, gender, and parental involvement. Unclear though, is whether or not, over time, it is most beneficial to a child’s academics to have a step-parent in addition to their one biological parent, or if that parent should remain single. Further research is needed on this topic in order to be better implicated into society by means of parental awareness, or mentoring programs within schools and communities.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the differences there are educationally amongst children who live in single-parent families and step-parent families. The questions which I am projecting to answer are: What academic differences can be found in students living in step-parent and single-parent family structures; is one generally more beneficial than the other? And, what elements within those structures are commonly different and why might those elemental differences affect education? I propose that income, gender, and parental involvement will all contribute to whether remarriage is more beneficial to a child, in terms of education, compared to remaining a single parent.

This topic has such sociological relevance that there are many reasons to want to explore it. To start, each human being is brought up in some type of family setting. Those settings which we are each brought up in set the foundation for how one will not only view, but interact within society. For that reason alone, it is important to explore the differences amongst different family structures. Secondly, education is an institution within society, often used to rank people. Through both formal and informal education, people learn in accordance to their settings and available resources. Additionally, it is commonly known that what is thought to be the “traditional” two-parent family has steadily declined in the last couple of decades.
Statistically, half of all marriages will eventually end in divorce, leaving one-million children per year with the experience of divorce (Boggess 1998:220). This has undoubtedly changed society as a result. Lastly, there are movements amongst public policy makers which encourage single-mothers, especially those with fewer resources, to remarry for the benefits that a child is believed to receive from such actions (Shaff et al 2008:700; Wagmiller et al 2010:220). It is particularly important to explore this topic because of the common conceptions behind such public policies.

Drawing from various forms of literature, it is important to create uniform definitions for terms used throughout this review. For example, education is measured throughout this review by academic achievement. The measurement of academic achievement, however, varies between the different literatures. In most cases, it is measured by standardized test scores, but in other cases may be measured by grade point average, graduation rates, or general attitudes towards education. The review also draws upon a number of different family structures that are important to identify. An intact family consists of a two-parent, biological family. A family is considered divorced when there is legal separation between the two biological parents. Biological parents could also be separated or never-married, however, very little of the literature takes these family structures into account. A single-parent family consists of only one biological parent present in the child’s life. It is important to note that almost all of the literature reviewed chose to disregard data collected on single-fathers because of infrequency. For that reason, I will only focus on single mothers. Lastly, is the step-parent (remarried) family structure, which describes a family in which there is a biological parent married to a non-biological step-parent. Again, because of the lack of data collected on single-dads, the step-families that I discuss will only focus on biological mothers and step-fathers. Within this review, income is generally measured by the monitory resources earned within a family; however, some literature took into account low-income aid. Transitions are the moves that a child makes when they go from living within one family structure to another—such as when one’s parents’ divorce. A family can be categorized as disrupted if they have moved through one or more transitions; otherwise, they are considered a non-disrupted family.

The purpose of this literature review will be to examine the differences that numerous authors have found between income, gender, and parental involvement, dependent on family structure—specifically, single-parent and step-parent families. Within this review, remarriage could be treated as an independent variable which has an effect on education; however, this review will examine how the independent variables of income, gender, and parental involvement vary between family structures with the overall purpose of determining whether or not it is beneficial to remarry from a single-parent family status. I will continue this review by examining the findings on income, gender, and parental involvement in order to draw a conclusion on whether it is most beneficial to remain a single-parent or remarry, based on the authors’ literature. After doing so, I will then propose implications and future research, based off of the findings.
INCOME

William H. Jeynes (1997:385, 1998:80, 2008:77), of the University of Chicago, introduces a rather common misconception amongst educators based on a child’s family structure. He says that educators recognize those in divorced or single-parent family structures as being potentially more prone to having difficulties academically, but do not recognize those students which live in step-parent families. Naturally, many educators believe that because there is a second adult in the family, that there is a second source of income, more resources, and another person who will automatically support and provide for the student. However, Jeynes points out that this is not necessarily true.

In fact, Scott Boggess (1998), of Georgetown University, also points out that the income from a step-father may have little effect on the resources provided towards a child’s education for a couple of different reasons (p. 207). To start, a step-father has no legal obligations to provide to a step-child and in some cases will not feel obligated to. Secondly, step-families go through a period of adjustment from being a single-parent family; within that time, a step-father may not be financially capable of contributing further resources which would go on to benefit the child’s education. Boggess finds that, statistically, following the re-marriage of a mother, the natural father will lower his contribution. Legally, a father paying child support would need to continue doing so, but in the other ways a father can contribute to a child’s education (such as paying for an extra-curricular activity) he may take on the mindset that the step-father is there and can just as easily take on that responsibility.

Even before remarriage, 50% of single mothers live below the poverty line (Boggess 1998:207). According to the Social Capital Theory (Shriner et al 2010), the more resources that are available to a child, the better they will do academically (p. 459). The main resource that all authors who discuss monitory benefits pointed out as being most important, was income itself. All of the literature actually agrees that there is a positive correlation between income and education (Boggess 1998; Jeynes 1998; Jeynes 2002; Sun and Li 2011). Interestingly though, Boggess (1998) finds that there is a stronger positive influence on education with the more money a family earns through a job, whereas there is a stronger negative influence on education with the more money a family earns from welfare or other aid programs (p. 220).

Jeynes (2008) finds that even when a single mother chooses to marry and the family’s income roughly doubles, the academic achievement stays the same for children in that setting (p. 97). Jeynes concludes that this must be the result of other factors within remarriage, such as adjustment to having a step-parent, that overthrow the benefits of having more finances in a step-family setting. Regardless of family structure, the literature all agrees that income does have a huge effect on educational achievement. Numerous authors discuss the importance of controlling for socioeconomic status (SES), because of the difference it makes within the data. Yongmin Sun and Yuanzhang Li (2011) conclude that lower academic achievement could always at least partially, if not wholly, be due to low levels of income and parental resources (p. 552). In some households, parents are able to provide additional educational support to their
children, such as extra-curricular activities or tutors, because of monetary advantages. In fact, Boggess (1998) expresses the belief that single-mother families are only connected to low academic performance because of their general lack of financial stability to provide such additional academic support systems, and not necessarily because of their parenting (p. 221).

In relation to my research question, the literature demonstrates that income is an element that varies between the different family structures and has an effect on education. In reviewing the literature and seeing the consistency amongst the different author’s opinions, I am confident that there is in fact a correlation. I am able to conclude that this point that while there generally is a substantial difference in incomes between single-parent and step-parent families, step-children do not necessarily benefit educationally from that advantage when compared to their peers from single-parent families.

GENDER

Within the literature, some authors question the role that gender has on education. Barry D. Ham (2004) found that male and female students combined have similar success rates within both step-parent families and single-parent families (p. 174-5). In addition though, Ham found that when male and female students were looked at separately, males show a greater benefit from having a step-parent family compared to a single-parent family. Keep in mind that generally, the data collected is on male step-parents. This positive effect could be the result of having a male-figure in the household to look after.

In the case of coping with transitions in family structure, Kathleen Boyce Rodgers and Hilary Rose (2001) found that females are more likely to turn to friends for support, assumingly because of being more socialized than males (p. 49). In terms of academics, Boyce Rodgers and Rose (2001) determined that white female students, particularly, who have a mom who has earned a higher degree of education were most likely to be successful amongst peers academically (p. 49). From this, we can find the importance of adult female figures in the lives of female students, although there was no discrepancy between whether or not it is most beneficial for that mom to be in an intact, single-parent, or remarried family setting. It was not as significantly true in cases which switched either to a male student or father.

Most significant of my findings on gender differences within family structures, is the information presented by Herbert Zimiles and Valerie Lee, of the University of Michigan. They were able to determine which family structures most frequently have students drop-out of high school, by gender, as well as determine the likelihood of dropping out based on gender like and unlike-ness within a family structure. Zimiles and Lee (1991) find that male students are most likely to drop-out of high school when living in intact and single-parent families, when in contrast, female students are most likely to drop-out of high school when living in a step-parent family setting (p. 316). Additionally, a student in a single-parent family is most likely to drop-out of high school when they are living with an unlike gendered parent, whereas a student living in a step-parent family setting is most likely to drop-out of high school when living with a
biological parent that is like-gendered. This data was very interesting and beneficial in demonstrating the significance in not only the gender of the student, but the gender of the parent in relation.

In reviewing the literature, I am able to determine that there is a connection between gender within family structures and education. Specifically, we see that the gender of both parents and children within different family structures can affect education. In relation to my research question, gender is certainly an element to be considered, although I think that this topic could benefit from additional research, as the literature was limited.

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Multiple pieces of literature bring forth the element of support, attitude, and general parental involvement in relation to education, and the differences in support that may be between different family structures (Boggess 1998; Boyce Rodgers and Rose 2001; Casanova et al 2005; Shriner et al 2010). Boyce Rodgers and Rose (2001) find that with each transition that a student goes through, their view of parental support goes further down (p. 56). Boyce Rodgers and Rose (2001) also finds that divorced and remarried moms are the most likely to spend less time with a child and show their support (p. 49). This situation can often be the result of needing to work longer hours, or the addition of work that may be done by a second parent in other family structures; it is not necessarily the mom’s parenting abilities, but rather the need to support a family’s finances and functionality, as discussed earlier.

As a result of having multiple transitions often associated with them, step- and single-parent divorced families are the structures that are most dependent on school attachment to create a positive influence on education (Boyce Rodgers and Rose 2001:57). Boyce Rodgers and Rose (2001) indicates that it is especially important for school officials and teachers to reach out to these types of students, as they may lack the support they are supposed to receive from home and therefore the support they receive at school remains the only source which school attachment can be developed from (p. 50). A positive correlation can be found between school attachment and parental support in single-parent and intact family structures. However, the author thinks the lack of correlation in remarried family structures is likely due to complexities within the structure, such as relationship dynamics with step-parents (Boyce Rodgers and Rose 2001:56).

Pedro F. Casanova et al (2005) finds that one in two students in high achieving groups have parents who use a democratic parenting style (p. 432). The democratic approach to parenting revolves around the concept of setting limits and rules for children, but still allowing them to make some choices on their own—it is a combination of the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles (Life Matters 1996). They are also able to find consistency with other literature in finding that students who achieve more academically continually report higher rates of acceptance, control, involvement, and expectations from parents (Casanova et al 2005:433). A last positive correlation found in the literature, indicates that the higher
educational degree that a parent has obtained, the higher a student might achieve academically, in general (Shriner et al 2010:461).

In reviewing the literature, all of the authors who speak to the effects of parental involvement are in agreement—there is undoubtedly a connection and a need for support and involvement in some form in order to build educational attachment. The authors found that different levels of support, attitudes towards education, and general involvement yield different results educationally and that different trends can be found within different family structures. Referencing back to my research question, I am able to conclude that parental involvement in educational matters is definitely an element to be considered within different family structures.

REMARRIAGE

Throughout this literature review, I have presented different perspectives on single-parent and step-parent family structures. I would like to now explore what the literature indicates overall about remarriage—is it most beneficial to remain a single-parent, or should one remarry for the educational benefits it will reap to one’s child?

According to multiple sources of literature (Boggess 1998:221; Jeynes 1997:388; Jeynes 1999:385; Jeynes 2000:141; Jeynes 2006:85; Shriner et al 2010:499; Wojtkiewicz and Holtzman 2011:516), even after controlling for income, having a step-parent has the greatest negative impact on a child’s education, when compared to other family structures. Jeynes (2001) indicates that having a step-parent even creates a more negative impact on education when compared to children who have a widowed parent, as a result of the other parent dying (p. 335). Roger A. Wojtkiewicz and Mellisa Holtzman (2011) build off of this argument further by adding that students living in step-parent families are least likely to graduate from college when compared to peers from intact and single-parent families (p. 516).

In contrast though, Kimberly Anne Shaff et al (2008) argues that having a single mom who remarries can actually be most beneficial to a student when compared to other non-intact families (p. 699). The key difference between the Shaff et al data (2008) and the data collected by authors of the literature with counter arguments, such as the Jeynes Meta-Analysis (2006), is the length of data collection. The data which Jeynes (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001) frequently draws from is the 1988-1992 National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS). Jeynes is able to draw his conclusions based off of six-years of data. In contrast, Shaff et al (2008) uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) from between the years of 1979-1996, and 1986-1996. While the data sets are each unique, they are each nationally representative—meaning that each should provide data that can be applied to the greater population as a whole. Shaff et al indicates that the idea that remarriage has a negative effect on student’s academics is likely a result of lack of data collection over longer time spans. Reading this literature opens up many ideas for future research, to be discussed.
In support of remarriage being beneficial to a student’s academics, Robert L. Wagmiller et al (2010) concludes that it can be beneficial to remarry, but not necessarily in all cases (p. 220). They state that it is only beneficial in cases when the single-parent is at least somewhat privileged, compared to single-parents who are not as advantaged. They state that this is a result of underprivileged single-parents statistically remarrying to people who are in similar situations, which often times does not help the student in this situation. Secondly, Sun and Li (2011) find that both non-disrupted step-families and intact families consistently outperform their peers (p. 551). The key point to their findings is that these families are non-disrupted. Non-disrupted single parent families however, did not outperform peers. Sun and Li (2011) conclude that this was highly likely the result of less access to resources, as well as the lack of measurement of parents’ dating transitions within single-parent families (p. 553).

In relation to my research question, I am unable to make a solid conclusion on whether it is most beneficial to a child’s academic achievement for a parent to remarry or remain a single-parent. While some literature concludes that there is a negative connection, other literature indicates that there are other elements that should be taken into consideration that may show remarriage to be beneficial to academic performance. With such discrepancy, there is undoubtedly future research to be done. Until then, there is more to be considered and I am unable to fully conclude that either family structure is more beneficial to the greater student population.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature, I am able to conclude that income, gender, and parental involvement all play different roles within each family structure, and as a result, affect students’ education. What remains unclear though, due to refuting evidence, is whether it is most beneficial to a student’s education for a parent to remain single, or to remarry. In relating back to my thesis, I am supported by the literature in my views on income, gender, and parental support, but do not have enough consistent information at this point to draw a concrete conclusion about remarriage itself. I was, however, more successful in answering both of my research questions: What academic differences can be found in students living in step-parent and single-parent family structures; is one generally more beneficial than the other? And, what elements within those structures are commonly different and why might those elemental differences affect education?

There are certainly some limitations within the literature which once uncovered could help clear up discrepancies. One limit within the literature is consideration for the length of time between a transition to another family structure and the time at which a student is part of a study. I, and many of the authors, feel that this can have a significant amount of impact on the results found in the literature—a child whose parents have recently divorced may survey differently than a child whose parents have been divorced for several years. Secondly, we are limited in that we are unaware of what age the students were when they transitioned to another family structure. I feel that this could as well have a great deal of impact on the data, as
parental divorce at different developmental stages may yield different effects. Examining the literature, many of the authors drew their data from the same pools, such as the NELS. I believe that doing so may contribute to why most of the literature is able to come to the similar conclusions. Also in relation to the NELS, as well as other data pools, is the limitation in relation to this data’s age. I was surprised to see that many recent works of literature used data collected in and around the 1980s. I feel that this definitely limits our findings, as twenty to thirty years have passed since some of the data was collected.

To uncover the discrepancy between whether it is most beneficial to remarry or not, more research is needed to be conducted. In seeing Shaff et al propose that the length of a study could be a determinant factor, I would like to propose a longitudinal study that takes into account the time span between different transitions, and which collects data for a longer time period following those transitions. I think that with recent movements in public policy, it would be highly beneficial to research the effects of gay marriage and parenting, and whether any connections can be made with education. Other values that researchers may want to collect data on are parent conflict and values of education, as they likely have an effect. Lastly, I would like to propose that more research be done on the number of family transitions that a student goes through and how that effects their education.

Within the literature, and from personal observation, it is clear that not all cases of remarriage are the same and that not all cases of remarriage effect step-children in the same ways. With that knowledge, I would like to further investigate what it is within step-families that have high achieving students that aids in that achievement. As sociologists, we can determine that more research is needed to be done to show differences in age, transitions, and time since a remarriage has occurred, but we must go beyond the surface of this topic to determine what it is within how each family is structured and functions, that creates the differences we observe.

While it remains unclear as to whether or not it is most beneficial to a student’s education for a parent to remarry or remain a single-parent, the literature is clear in showing that income, gender, and parental involvement play different roles within each family structure and affect education. Larger implications that could be drawn from the literature and integrated into society more, include programs for parental awareness of the topic, as well as mentoring programs in schools and communities.

REFERENCES


Teen Magazines and Parents: Their Impact on Adolescent Female Sexual Scripts and Contraceptive Use

Audrey Hickey

ABSTRACT

This literature review examines how magazines and parents portray cultural ideas about sex, how girls use these ideas to understand their own sexuality, and how these ideas impact their contraceptive use in interpersonal relationships. Simon and Gagnon’s Sexual Script Theory is used as a theoretical framework to explain these three levels of sexual scripts: cultural, interpersonal and personal. American teen magazines and parents are compared with their Western European counterparts to illustrate how cultural presentation of sex impacts contraceptive use. In the United States, where there were 41.5 births per 1,000 to girls aged 15-19 in 2008, sex is portrayed as a guilt-producing activity. Similarly, contraceptive use is seen as burdensome. Conversely, in Germany the birth rate in 2008 was 9.8 per 1,000 and 5.2 per 1,000 in the Netherlands. These significantly lower birth rates are explained by the presentation of sex as pleasurable, as well as high acceptance of contraceptive use. While a national change in the presentation of teenage sex is impossible, increased discussion of contraceptive use in the United States could help remove the stigma, thereby decreasing both sexually transmitted disease and pregnancy rates among teenagers.

TEENAGE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE UNITED STATES

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2009 girls aged 15-19 reported the greatest number of chlamydia and gonorrhea cases as compared to other age and sex groups. In addition, the CDC reports that two-thirds of births to females younger than eighteen were unintended. The explanations for these statistics include: a lack of information about contraception, an inability to pay for it, and fear of possessing it because of parents’ sexual attitudes (CDC 2009). Nevertheless, a poll conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that 88.9% of girls describe consistent birth control use as “very important” or “somewhat important” (2000: 1). This poll indicates that teenage girls are well informed about safe sex practices; however sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and pregnancy rates suggest otherwise. This phenomenon cannot be explained by government statistics alone. Cultural mechanisms, such as teen-focused magazines and parents, which girls interact with daily, help to explain the gap between what girls believe in regarding contraception and how they actually use it.
Presentation of sex by magazines and parents to teenage girls reflects the dominant views of sex in the United States, and perpetuates ideas about appropriate female sexual behavior. Studying the ideology of sex in the United States explains why girls fail to use contraception consistently. Consequently, failure to use contraception on a regular basis leads to the high STD and pregnancy rates.

The goal of this literature review is to study how magazines and parents reflect cultural ideas about sex, how girls use these ideas to understand their own sexuality, and how these ideas impact their contraception use in interpersonal relationships. A cross-cultural comparison between the United States and Western Europe highlights how different sexual ideologies result in different understandings about sexuality, as well as impacts contraception use.

INTRODUCTION TO SEXUAL SCRIPTS

Simon and Gagnon’s (1986) definition of Sexual Script Theory refers to how individuals understand their sexuality and how this understanding affects which sexual acts individuals pursue and enjoy (Jones and Hostler 2002). There are three scripts within Simon and Gagnon’s model: cultural, interpersonal, and intra-psychic (personal). Mass media, like teen magazines, and authority figures, such as parents, represent cultural-level scripts. These mechanisms reflect and perpetuate dominant cultural ideas (Simon and Gagnon 1986). Individuals internalize cultural-level messages and adapt them to fit idiosyncrasies. The product is the intra-psychic script. Both cultural messages and internal beliefs structure interpersonal interactions.

CULTURAL SCRIPTS

To understand magazines’ and parents’ messages about sex, it is essential to examine how the United States conceptualizes sex. The United States almost always constructs sexuality in heterosexual terms (Joshi et al. 2011). In this view, men are the pursuers of sex, whereas women are the objects of male sexual desire (Diamond 2005; Fine 1988). In addition, women should be passive, and should see men’s sexual desire as more important than their own (Kim and Ward 2004). Aside from creating a dichotomous view of sexuality along gender lines, the heterosexual script works to make female sexual desire deviant (Tolman 1994). Similarly, the majority of adolescent girls accept a lack of pleasure from sex as normal (Tolman 2002), while at the same time stress the importance of the male’s pleasure (Kim and Ward 2004).

Hofstede’s (2001) distinction between masculine and feminine countries is helpful in explaining these norms. In masculine countries, the United States being the quintessential example, sex is viewed as a negative and guilt-producing activity (Hofstede 1998). The masculine stance on sex in the United States is especially evident in discussions of teenage sexuality. Sex is viewed as risky, dangerous, and something the bad kids do (Carpenter 2001; Sinikka 2010). The potential consequences of sex are frequently cited as justification for why teenage sexuality is so dangerous (Pinkleton et al. 2008). Conversely, feminine countries
conceptualize sex as pleasurable and natural (Hofstede 1998). A more in-depth discussion of sexual ideology in feminine countries will be discussed later in the review.

Teen Magazines

Teen magazines are a useful cultural medium through which to study national ideas about sex because of their prevalence. For example, three-quarters of adolescent females report reading an issue or more per month (Klein et al. 1993). In addition, Hearst Magazines (2011) report selling 20 million copies of Seventeen magazine annually. Magazines inform readers about the female role in relationships and within American society (Carpenter 1998; Kim and Ward 2004). Moreover, they explain socially accepted ways of being sexual (Carpenter 1998; Joshi, Peter and Valkenburg 2011). It is frequently the case that magazines portray females as passive (Josh et al. 2011) or as objects of men’s desire (Garner and Sterk 1998; Kim and Ward 2004). Girls are not supposed to want sex (Tolman 2000). This is a far from complete picture of female sexuality (Kim and Ward 2004), as it fails to acknowledge the desire for sex girls experience (Tolman 2000). The result is that girls feel trapped in the contraction between the sexual feelings they experience and the lack of discussion about these feelings in magazines. Consequently, girls experience confusion about how to portray their sexuality (Carpenter 1998).

Not only do magazines tell readers to be passive when it comes to sex, but they frequently present sex as a risk (Carpenter 1998; Kim and Ward 2004). For example, Carpenter (1998) found half of the articles about sex in Seventeen referred to girls being victims of unwanted sexual advances. It is also the norm for magazines to attribute responsibility of sexual consequences to girls, thereby absolving males of any responsibility. Clarke (2009) found that the majority of magazines told female teenagers it was their responsibility to prevent sexually transmitted disease, pregnancy, and to generally avoid sexually-driven males. The only solution given for these issues was abstinence. By treating sex as dangerous, and by giving girls full responsibility for the consequences of sex, magazines perpetuate dominant American norms that state that girls should be passive in sexual relationships. This unequal treatment of female sexuality is also prevalent amongst parents (Carpenter 2001).

Parents

Parents, similar to teen magazines, problematize female sex more than male sex. For example, parents worry about their daughters’ sexual behavior much more than their sons’ (Clarke 2009). Furthermore, when discussing sex with their daughters, parents frequently emphasize female defenselessness and sexual hazards, whereas sons are encouraged to explore their sexuality through experimentation (Sinikka 2010).

Beyond these gender differences, the majority of American parents hold conservative beliefs regarding teenage sexuality; many disapprove of premarital sex, especially among teenagers under age 16 (Carpenter 2001). Sinikka (2010) attributes American parents’
conservatism to the conflicting opinions about appropriate teenage behavior and to the fears about their children’s future job opportunities.

Sinikka (2010) claims that it is a commonly held belief in the United States that teens are not mature enough to learn about sex and they are too hormonally charged to be trusted with such information. In response to these conflicting discourses, many parents adhere to the view that teen sex should be restricted (Carpenter 2001). Another means by which parents navigate the barrage of conflicting information about teens is to adopt the opinion that their own children are asexual, while viewing teens as a demographic as hormonally charged (Sinikka 2010). By doing this, parents maintain their own children’s innocence.

Another factor Sinikka (2010) discussed as an explanation for parents’ construction of their teens as asexual was The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This law stipulated that sex education programs should teach children that marriage is the only acceptable outlet for sexual behavior. In all other areas, abstinence was crucial. Also, sex was only appropriate when an individual was financially independent. Teen sexuality violates both of these conditions and thus, became further stigmatized.

The legislation accompanied changes in the United States’ economy including: the outsourcing of manufacturing, a rise in minimum wage service positions, and increasing economic inequality (Sinikka 2010). In this climate, individuals became more aware of their personal responsibility for future prospects, which meant preaching abstinence to teenage children in order to ensure their future success. In other words, parents “present their children as deserving, worthy citizens by desexualizing them” (Sinikka 2010: 208).

WHEN MAGAZINES AND PARENTS OPPOSE DOMINANT CULTURE

Magazines and parents often work in concert to perpetuate gendered norms about sexual behavior. The research shows that contradictory messages about sex in fact occur, which further creates a fear of sex among girls. For example, although Seventeen usually discourages teens from having sex, they also present it as a recreational activity by including quizzes that girls can use to decide if they are ready to have sex (Carpenter 1998). While Seventeen warns girls about the dangers of sex, it is also the case that editors advise readers to direct their desires towards fantasy or masturbation (Carpenter 1998), rather than simply encouraging abstinence or disregarding the sexual feelings girls experience.

A study conducted by Joshi et al. (2011) studied the depictions of pleasure in teen magazines and found that pleasure was given equal treatment, regardless of sex. This finding indicates that presentation of sex and gender roles are becoming less binary than in the past (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004).

While it is more common for magazines to oppose cultural norms, some studies have shown that parents contradict dominant ideologies, as well. Sinikka (2010) and Clarke (2009)
found that parents viewed girls as aggressive temptresses to adolescent boys, namely their sons. In addition, these parents saw their sons as naïve and too immature to be interested in sex (Sinikka 2010). These findings confirm Sinnikka’s belief that parents view their own children as asexual, while hyper-sexualizing other teens, but these ideas do go against gender norms.

THE FORMATION OF INTRA-PSYCHIC SCRIPTS BY MAGAZINES AND PARENTS

Girls internalize dominant messages about female sexuality from culture to a great extent. They adopt the opinions that boys are sexually aggressive, that females should be passive, and that engaging in sex is a major risk (Carpenter 2001; Joshi et al. 2011). However, Sinikka (2010) demonstrated that girls do not uncritically accept these culturally dominant messages: teenagers do not “absorb these lessons uncritically; youth play an active role in this process” (Sinikka 2010: 208). Rather, they seek out other scripts to explain their desires in a world that constantly tells them they should be devoid of sexual feelings. Various sexual scripts are common in heterogeneous societies, like the United States, where diversity is inherent (ibid). While the United States’ heterogeneity has led to confusion about which sexual scripts are appropriate, the positive side of this diversity is that adolescents have more scripts from which to form their sexual identities (Carpenter 1998).

Thus, magazines and parents both perpetuate dominant norms that stipulate that female sexuality is dangerous, and that boys should be allowed to experiment with their sexuality. And furthermore, that sex is only acceptable within marriage. At the same time, studies indicate that magazines and parents do present sexual scripts that are discordant with dominant norms (Carpenter 1998). As a result, girls must navigate a variety of scripts in order to shape their sexual identities. The form that this identity takes is the basis for interpersonal relationships (Simon and Gagnon 1986).

CULTURAL AND INTA-PSYCHIC SCRIPTS DICTATING INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONS

The position a girl espouses through reading magazines and parental interactions results in a variety of outcomes. For example, a teenage girl may subscribe to the notion that men are inherently more aggressive than women (Kim and Ward 2004). Such a belief may lead a teenage girl to act in accordance with this belief, resulting in what Merton (2010) calls a self-fulfilling prophecy. By doing so, the girl conforms to the culturally constructed view of normative female sexuality.

However, it could also be the case that differing scripts help a girl solidify an identity that opposes dominant scripts through reading about gay peers, peers who have experienced sexual assault, or those who have a sexually transmitted disease (Clarke 2009). The presentation of alternate scripts in readily available cultural mediums may lead to a girl feeling more comfortable with her own sexuality.
Although there is more presentation of alternate sexual scripts and a more egalitarian presentation of gender roles (Blozindahl and Myers 2004), normative gender roles continue to be most prominent. The stigma surrounding sex and the lack of open discussion about it is still apparent in the United States. Consequently, girls feel unsure of who they are sexually. This confusion then leads girls to not speak about their desired contraception use, as demonstrated by the results of the Risky Business Poll (2000). The majority of girls know contraceptive use is important, but 30-38% fail to use it consistently (1). In addition, the poll found that 54.2% of girls did not use contraception regularly because they believed their partner was against it. This indicates the lack of power girls feel in their sexual relationships. It also highlights the way in which cultural messages dictate personal understandings of sexuality and how these understandings affect interpersonal relationships, specifically contraception use within these relationships.

A cross-cultural comparison with Western Europe serves as proof of culture’s power in dictating adolescent sexual scripts and their contraception use. Western European countries serve as effective comparisons to the United States because both regions are industrialized, wealthy, and have democratic governments (Carpenter 2001).

**SEXUAL ATTITUDES IN WESTERN EUROPE**

In 2008, the birthrate for teens 15-19 was 41.5 per 1,000 in the United States, 9.8 per 1,000 in Germany, and 5.2 per 1,000 in the Netherlands. The discrepancy between the United States and similar European countries is the result of a liberal presentation of sex in Europe (Carpenter 2001), as well as positive attitudes towards it (Furstenberg 1998).

Carpenter (2001) found that sex-related material (including nudity) was frequently shown in mainstream media and that contraceptives were widely advertised. Bravo! magazine from Germany presents virginity loss as positive and emphasizes that contraceptives are essential for sexual pleasure (ibid). Joshi et al. (2011) studied three Dutch teen magazines and found that sexual “wanting” was given equal coverage for both genders and that Dutch magazines placed little emphasis on sexual risks.

Western European parents also reflect dominant messages about sexuality. Adults view teen sex as a normal part of development (Furstenburg 1998). Consequently, teens do not have to hide their sexual activity from their parents, and they feel comfortable discussing contraceptives with them (Carpenter 2001).

These European examples are a stark contrast to the presentation of sex in the United States. Carpenter’s 2001 study compared Germany’s Bravo! with the United States’ Seventeen and found that Seventeen presented virginity loss as negative. In addition, contraception was viewed as a burden and an afterthought to sex. In comparing Dutch magazines with American teen magazines, Joshi et al. (2011) found that there was more emphasis on sexual risks in American publications.
The liberal stance towards sexual behavior in Europe is one explanation for these findings, as is Hofestede’s (2001) discussion of feminine societies. Feminine countries, like the Netherlands, focus on the pleasure of sex and see it as a means to strengthen a relationship. Also, unlike in the masculine United States, teen sex is not viewed as dangerous. Although the teens are educated about pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease protection, neither is given as a justification for not having sex (Schalet 2000).

As the low pregnancy rates show, the open and accepting presentation of sex in Western European countries leads girls to feel more comfortable discussing sex and using contraception than is the case in the United States. This shows that a culture’s view of sex impacts how cultural mediums present it, which influences how individuals view sex. This in turn impacts their behavior in interpersonal relationships.

CONCLUSION

Overwhelmingly, teenage female sex in the United States is viewed negatively. Girls are instructed to not want sex (Tolman 2000) and to be passive in sexual situations (Joshi et al. 2011). Cultural mediums, specifically teen magazines and parents reinforce these scripts. As a result, girls’ personal understanding of their sexuality reflects these cultural messages. The passivity they are encouraged to display leads them to remain silent about their desired contraception use. When girls fail to use contraception, STDs and pregnancy result. A cross-cultural comparison with sexually liberal Western Europe shows that the United States’ conservative stance on sexuality is a contributing factor to its high STD and pregnancy rates. When discussion about sex and contraception is acceptable, as it is in Europe, individuals (especially girls) feel comfortable insisting on contraceptive use. The result is lower STD and pregnancy rates.

While a change in the United States’ stance on sex would help to alleviate the high STD and teen pregnancy rates, it would be nearly impossible to institute such a wide-scale change. However, a revitalization of sexual education programs, in which abstinence-only programs were abolished and discussion of contraception was more open, could lead to less of a stigma surrounding sex and could increase contraceptive use. Therefore, research on how changing sexual education programs influences cultural ideas about sex is recommended.

REFERENCES


Brown, Jane D., Kelly L. L’Engle, Carol L. Pardun, Guang Guo, Kristin Keneavey and Christine Jackson. 2006. “Sexy media matter: exposure to sexual content in music, movies,
television, and magazines predicts black and white adolescents’ sexual behavior.”

Carpenter, Laura M. 1998. “From girls into women: scripts for sexuality and romance in

and German teen magazines.” Youth Society 33 (31): 31-61.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010. “Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2011. “Teen pregnancy: the importance of

Clarke, Juanne. 2009. “Women’s work, worry and fear: the portrayal of sexuality and sexual
health in US magazines for teenage and middle-aged women, 2000-2007.” Culture,

Diamond, Lisa M. 2005. “I’m straight but I kissed a girl: the trouble with American media

Fields, Jessica and Celesye Hirschman. 2007. “Citizenship lessons in abstinence-only sexuality

Fine, Michelle. 1988. “Sexuality, schooling, and adolescent females: the missing discourse of

Furstenberg Jr., Frank F. 1998. “When will teenage childbearing become a problem? The


30 (http://www.seventeenmediakit.com/r5/showkiosk.asp?listing_id=4068752&category_i
d=31771).


------. 2010. “Teen sexual behavior and contraceptive use: Data from the youth risk behavior survey, 2009.”


Labeling Theory and the Effects of Sanctioning on Delinquent Peer Association: A New Approach to Sentencing Juveniles

Nathaniel Ascani

ABSTRACT

This is a review of contemporary theory and studies published in various scholarly journals regarding the labeling effect of criminal justice system involvement at a young age on offenders. Drawing on studies that have taken place over the past several decades in order to increase the generalizability of the conclusions, this paper discusses the relationship between formal sanctioning and delinquent peer association among offenders. Results from the studies lend support to the tenets of labeling theory. They also suggest that the relative rate of increased recidivism among offenders is positively correlated with an operationalized measure of their “stakes in conformity” (e.g. marriage, employment, civic involvement, etc.). This literature review highlights the need for a reassessment of current sentencing policy for juveniles, as their life-course orientation is particularly vulnerable to negative influences. More generally, this review brings together theory and data to call for a rejection of sentencing policies which claim to “get tough on crime.”

INTRODUCTION

Labeling theory posits that individual deviants who are identified and sanctioned may interpret their “offender” stigma as a master status, thus altering their social identity, and consequently, their behavior. Offenders may also encounter social obstacles that effectively bar them from the benefits of conventional society as a result of serious stigma. Difficulty obtaining meaningful work, earning a high school diploma or post-secondary degree, or building a strong, participatory civic life because of a criminal record severely limits the professional networks open to labeled offenders. Informal sanctions may reinforce the label, weaken the social support of family and friends, and create community expectations of deviant behavior from the individual. Because of this, the offender may withdraw his or her stakes in conformity, reject the institutions that they feel rejected them, and seek out deviant peers who may be seemingly less judgmental and willing to provide a system of social support. Subculture formation that approves of or condones deviance may be conducive to further criminal behavior on the part of the individual offender, as well as on a societal scale (Braithwaite 1989).
These influences may affect juveniles and delinquent youth particularly strongly. Because the transition from youth to adulthood is largely a process of increasing one’s investment in conformity and developing one’s social identity, an interruption as stigmatizing and socially crippling as serious involvement in the criminal justice system early in life may have serious long-term implications. Does justice system involvement at a young age increase the likelihood of an individual becoming a career offender? Does it independently increase the likelihood that he or she will recidivate? How does labeling affect a juvenile’s selection of his or her peer group? These questions may directly follow an examination of current juvenile crime policy, one that is increasingly directed towards “cracking down on crime” or “making examples” out of individual offenders with the expectation of a general deterrent effect (Myers 2003).

LABELING THEORY

In its most superficial form, labeling theory merely suggests that individuals may feel obligated to act out roles dictated by their new status as criminals. Since peer delinquency and other controls do not fully account for delinquent behavior, it is possible that an altered self-concept independently affects recidivism (Bernburg, Krohn, and Rivera 2006). Indeed, the relationship between self-identification as deviant and actual deviant behavior cannot be overlooked. However, it is possible that the relationship between identity and behavior is mediated by social influences (Chiricos, Barrick and Bales 2007; Mouttapa et al. 2010).

In a study examining the behaviors and attitudes of 91 incarcerated youth from four different youth detention camps in southern California, Mouttapa et al. (2010) linked serious alcohol abuse with a shared social identity with the “gang member” image. Participants were asked in a self-report survey about their behaviors prior to their detention, as well as their experiences leading up to and during detention with feelings of anger. They were also asked to select from a list of 16 different social “identities” the one that they felt best represented their peer group. The list was compiled by the researchers and detention camp staff. This list included, but was not limited to identities such as, “skaters”, “stoners”, “jocks”, “taggers”, “heavy metalers”, “loners”, and “actors”. What the researchers in this study found was that of the majority of participants who identified themselves as “gang members”, 63% had consumed alcohol heavily in the 30 days prior to their incarceration, as opposed to 30% among those who did not self-identify as gang members (Mouttapa et al. 2010). The results remained statistically significant after controlling for self-reported levels of anger. Although this study does not account for the possibility that offenders’ self-concept may be the result of their incarceration, it does take some steps towards clarifying the relationships among an individual’s identity, peer group and behavior. This may be especially detrimental to the life-course orientation of juveniles with a developing self-concept.

It also follows that those offenders who undergo the greatest change in status may also exhibit the greatest change in behavior. Chiricos et al. (2007) observed this in a study involving 71,548 men and 24,371 women convicted of a felony in Florida between 2000 and 2002.
Florida law at the time granted judicial discretion over the decision to withhold the legal “felon” status for those convicted of a felony. Having the status withheld means that the individual does not legally need to report the conviction on applications for employment, retains his or her eligibility for government programs including federal student financial aid, and does not have his or her voting rights curtailed or revoked. This, in theory, preserves some measure of the convict’s stakes in conformity and incentives to avoid further deviant behavior. The researchers found that among offenders convicted of a felony, women, whites, those with greater educational attainment and those without a prior record were among those most likely to be affected by felony status compared to those who had the status withheld, measured in terms of increased recidivism. Contrary to some initial expectations that these groups should be the most able to insulate themselves from the effects of criminal labeling, these data point to the opposite conclusion that, simply put, those who have more to lose from a criminal conviction lose more.

Myers (2003) found in his study of violent youths in Pennsylvania that offenders who were judicially waived to adult criminal court exhibited higher rates of recidivism. The study was of 494 youths convicted of a violent crime, 79 of which were waived to adult court. Statistical controls were in place for prior record, age, whether or not a weapon was used to commit the crime, location, parents’ marital status and school enrollment. While the group waived was roughly 50% more likely to be rearrested for a violent felony in the follow-up period according to Pennsylvania arrest records, statistical controls cannot completely account for the risk of selection bias. The waived offenders on average did have more extensive prior records that the youths retained in juvenile court, as well as a higher average age at the time of arrest, even though, surprisingly, they were less likely to use a weapon in committing the crime. However, the study revealed an interesting correlation that accords with the implications of the study by Chiricos et al. (2007). Offenders who had obtained a diploma or GED before their initial arrest, or were enrolled in school at the time of their arrest, were significantly more likely to reoffend compared to those who had dropped out of school. Myers (2003) offers the explanation that perhaps those who had completed their education might have lost employment as a result of their arrest. Additionally, those enrolled in school might have elected not to return following their arrest and encountered difficulty obtaining employment.

DELINQUENT PEER ASSOCIATION

Serious criminal sanctioning may produce social obstacles that discourage investment in conventional society. Rejection from conventional groups may come in the form of difficulty obtaining employment, barriers against qualifying for student loans, and informal exclusion from conventional social networks. Punishment that generally excludes the offender from the majority—physically or socially—such as incarceration, increases the risk of offenders’ alienation from society and consequent “rejection of their rejecters” (Braithwaite 1989; Okimoto and Wenzel 2009). Incarceration may also fail to adequately prepare released offenders to reintegrate themselves into conventional society due to ineffective treatment or underdeveloped reintegration programs (Halsey 2006; Heide et al. 2001). A sufficient mass of
offenders in society allows for the formation of deviant subcultures (Braithwaite 1989). This kind of association with deviant peers after a term of incarceration may create environments conducive to recidivism by providing appropriate opportunities, values and definitions.

In their 2006 study, Bernburg et al. examine the ensuing criminal embeddedness following juvenile justice system intervention. Using panel data of 870 adolescents in the 7th and 8th grade, researchers coded participants’ individual delinquency as well as the delinquency of their peers. The study sought to establish a connection between formal justice system intervention and subsequent delinquency. Data was collected three times at six-month intervals in face-to-face interviews conducted in private. After controlling for other variables such as race, gender, initial levels of delinquency, family impoverishment and substance abuse, they found that “juvenile justice intervention is significantly associated with serious delinquency in a subsequent period” (Bernberg et al. 2006: 82). Also, because of the longitudinal nature of the study, some evidence was gathered on the temporal ordering of variable influence. According to the results, association with deviant peers significantly mediated the relationship between formal justice system intervention and later delinquency. The authors write:

Deviant groups represent a source of social support in which deviant activities are accepted. Moreover, deviant groups often provide social shelter from those who react negatively toward the deviant status. The labeled person is thus increasingly likely to become involved in social groups that consist of social deviants and unconventional others (Bernberg et al. 2006: 68).

CONCLUSION

This concept of causality between formal criminal labeling and later deviance is especially relevant to the juvenile justice discussion. Movement towards the sentencing of juveniles in adult courts in the spirit of “getting tough on crime,” or “holding kids accountable”, may exacerbate the problem of recidivism among individual offenders (Myers 2003). Strong, automatic labeling that results in social rejection is an extreme response on the part of policy-makers (Okimoto and Wenzel 2008; Scheff 2010), and one that is largely unsupported as an effective method of crime control (Myers 2003). As mentioned before, adolescents who are developing their identities may be particularly affected by a strong stigmatization; and because they are just beginning to develop their stakes in conformity, the presentation of serious social obstacles such as difficulty finding employment, ineligibility for student loans and exclusion from conventional social networks may affect their life-course orientation.

Rather than discourage participation in conventional activities by labeling and isolating offenders, juvenile crime policy should be remedial and foster reintegration following shame (Braithwaite 1989; Okimoto and Wenzel 2008). This may happen through academic mentoring, career advising, or providing alternative activities. Again, if the evidence suggests that a deviant
self-concept and weakened stakes in conformity contribute to further delinquent behavior, juvenile criminal policy should be structured to attenuate the influence of these variables.

REFERENCES


The Female Perspective of Hooking-Up on College Campuses

Maura Gallagher

ABSTRACT

Hooking-up is a new trend in the lives of today’s young adults. It has become the most common heterosexual form of a relationship on college campuses. But what exactly is hooking-up? According to social scientist, hooking-up is “a sexual encounter, usually lasting only one night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances.” This literary review will look at the social norms, benefits, and personal factors that have caused many students to make the switch from traditional dating to hooking-up. Some of the serious consequences that can go along with hooking-up for females are depression, unplanned pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. Research has shown that college females may not be as comfortable with these new sexual encounters as it may appear.

INTRODUCTION

The culture on college campuses has gone through many changes in the last several decades. The social norms of society have undergone many transformations. One major aspect of college culture that has developed is the tradition of dating. Years ago dating or “going steady” was seen as a customary feature of life that students were expected to partake in. Since the 1960’s, the roles and expectations of dating have completely changed (Gross 2005). It is now much less common for students to participate in the dating world. In today’s college culture, it is becoming much more conventional for students to “hook-up” than partake in a traditional heterosexual dating relationship.

There is much discrepancy surrounding the definition of hooking up. It can be defined differently depending on who is talking, where you are, and whom you are talking to (Sacco et al 2011). Hooking up is defined by social scientists as “a sexual encounter, usually lasting only one night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances.” Hook-ups are casual sexual encounters that do not necessarily always include sexual intercourse. Most importantly, a hook-up takes place outside of the realm of commitment. This is an extremely vital component of the definition because on today’s college campuses, students constantly feel overwhelmed and pressed for time. Hook ups give them the opportunity to have their physical needs met without the time commitment expected in a steady relationship. Hooking up does not imply emotional interest in the other person, but it also does not exclude for it to
eventually develop (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). For example, a hook-up could be two people that meet at a party and decide to engage in sexual activity. Hooking up has become more common than heterosexual dating on college campuses around the United States.

In this paper, I will examine empirical literature to gain further insight into the stigmas, social norms, motivations and hypocrisies that go along with hooking up on college campuses to find out how the attitude and level of comfort relative of hooking up vary by gender. I will look at three factors to determine how the different sexes feel about hooking up: emotional benefits, social acceptability and personal influences. By looking at these factors, the attitude and comfort that female college students feel towards hooking up will be evident.

WHO BENEFITS?

When it comes to dating versus hooking up, males and females tend to take opposing sides. Males are more likely to favor hooking up, whereas females prefer dating (Eshbaugh 2010). Sociologists have found after analyzing the costs of dating and hooking up that each gender gains greater benefits from its respective preference. Part of the reason that men prefer hooking up over dating is because traditionally dating requires much more effort on the male’s part. Men are more vulnerable during the traditional dating process. Men also like to hold on to a sense of freedom that comes along with hooking up. It is also more likely that men will gain status after the hook-up among other male peers. Contrary to males’ opinion of hooking up, females tend to be more hesitant about the idea. Females prefer the sense of security that goes along with having a steady boyfriend. Females also are more likely to lose status after hooking up among their female peers (Rohen 2010). When asked about relationship goals, men’s goals usually involve some type of sexual accomplishment whereas females focus more on companionship, nurturing, and adventure (Bradshaw, Kahn and Saville 2010).

Traditionally, a man asks a women out with the chance of being rejected, plans the date, picks the women up, pays and is to initiate the second date. For women, dating gives them the option of saying yes or no to a male’s offer. They are responsible for getting ready, going on the date, getting brought home and allowing, accepting, or rejecting the second date. This customary pattern of dating allows the female to have less stress and vulnerability during dating than males do. This may be part of the reason as to why males are not always so fond of dating. The “traditional” gendered script of dating is hardly present anymore on college campuses (Uecker and Rengus 2010). Women are more likely to seek long-term relationships than men are. Overall, traditionally in dating, men are the active participants and women are the reactive participants.

Hooking up tends to have more negative consequences for females, such as pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, depression and sexual assault. College women consistently express less comfort with hooking up than college men do (Bradshaw et. al. 2010). Women often feel pressured to go along with whatever sexual advances their male partner is attempting out of fear of rejection. Many of these occurrences could be legally considered rape
(Rohen 2010). Men enjoy hooking up because it allows them to feel as if they are not losing any freedom. In contrast, 37% of women feel that they have been overly sexually compliant in their relationships (Uecker and Rengus 2010). Sexual compliance is when one party agrees to partake in an activity without having any desire to and does not feel as if they are capable of voicing their want to omit from the activity (Bradshaw et. al). When a woman feels like this, she is also more likely to feel less of a sense of commitment from her partner. The force of sexual behavior actually distances the couple and can result in the women suffering from depression (Katz and Tirone 2009).

The sexual double standard can make women feel guilty about hooking up. Researcher Elaine M. Eshbaugh (2010) argues that females sense more regret of action than men. Eshbaugh administered a voluntary survey to 152 college females at a Midwestern University in the United States to gauge the level of regret that sexually active students feel after a hook up (Eshbaugh 2010). 72% of female college students say that they have had at least one sexual encounter in college that they truly regret. Men, Eshbaugh believes from her research, sense more regret of inaction, meaning that they have more regret from omitting from an action than they do if they partake in said action. This statement provides insight into the fact that it is more socially acceptable for men to be sexually permissive than it is for women. This causes a gender-based double standard.

SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY

In recent years, it seems to be just as acceptable to hook-up as it is to date on college campuses. Hooking up is now considered a social norm, which makes students believe it is more acceptable. In their survey, Bradshaw et. al. (2010) found that 77.7% of females and 82.4% of males reported hooking up at some point in college with a mean of 10.8 hook ups and a range of 0-65 hook ups. Previously, hooking up with strangers would instantly ruin a person’s reputation. Now it is not so commonly viewed as something to necessarily be ashamed of. College students tend to view their peers as much more promiscuous then they think of themselves to be, but this is not always the case (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). Society tends to push two contradicting messages: sexual deviance is completely acceptable but it is only acceptable if you are a male.

It is so common now for words like “slut” and “whore” to be tossed around as if they have no negative connotation. The media reinforces that females are to try to pursue loving and committed relationships. Men are expected to pursue sexual strictly relationships (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009.) This message is attainable in many of today’s media, such as wedding advertisings in female-directed magazines and television shows like “Say Yes to the Dress.” Television shows, movies, books, and magazines that promote the idea of the “traditional” wedding style tend to be marketed towards women. These types of media are a constant reminder to females that they must be looking for loving and committing relationships, not just moving from hook up to hook up. Media that is directed towards males tend to be much more sexualized.
Women who attempt to pursue sexual relationships tend to be called names and talked poorly about by their peers (Rohen 2010). Researchers have found that when it comes to sexuality women are judged more harshly than men. Women who attempt to gain sexual gratification outside of a committed relationship can have their reputation completely diminished by their peers. On the contrary men who pursue hooking up over a serious committed relationship are seen as “studs” and “players,” words that are more playful than hurtful (Rohen 2010). Men gain status from having sexual experience, where as female college students lose status and are seen as not having any self-respect. This shows that females are more likely to sense regret due their peers’ reactions.

Our society is becoming very sexually driven. Today’s media consistently reinforces the gender-based double standard and acceptance of sexuality. College students very rarely get the opportunity to directly observe their peers sexually, so what they gather as social norms they get from the media. A theory that can accurately describe this is the cultivation theory. The cultivation theory is responsible for explaining the effects of viewing television shows. This means that there is a consistent stream of similar images fed to every household via television programs. These images reinforce the ideas of sexuality and allow the majority of households to have similar views on the topic (Chia and Gunther 2006). Now, the cultivation theory is not only limited to television, but is extended to all types of media. Where today’s media is so sexualized, college students are repeatedly reminded of the acceptance of sex in society. Chia and Gunther performed a study in 2006 that explored the media and its contributions to the misconceptions of social norms about sex that are believed by college students. They hypothesized that college students believed that their peers were much more sexually active due to what they saw in the media. Chia and Gunther gained information for 312 male and female students in a sociology lecture at a United States University. They found that the hypothesis proved correct after what was gathered from the survey. A limitation of this study was that it was only performed in the United States. This is a limitation because many Western countries have much different media laws that the United States. I think it would have been very interesting to see how the difference in laws would affect the outcome of the students’ responses.

**INFLUENCES**

There are a plethora of factors that can influence a female’s decision to participate in hooking up. One large reason that girls decide to hook-up is because they believe that it will serve as a starting point to a relationship. 18% of female students surveyed view hooking up as a stepping-stone towards a future relationship (Bradshaw et. al. 2010). In reality, men will not usually just hook up with a woman they see a potential relationship with. Men have an easier time separating sex and love. Women on the other hand tend to intertwine the two believing that they go in hand. 60% of women surveyed say that they went into college expecting to find a husband. Seeing that most hook-ups occur in college, it can be inferred that women do use hook ups to potentially further relationships.
Another factor that can influence a girl’s reasons to hook-up is religion. Girls who indicate strong religious beliefs are less likely to indicate a high level of regret related to hook-ups (Eshbaugh 2010). Much to contrary belief, women of Catholic belief are more likely to hook-up at college than females with no religious affiliation. Extreme conservative Protestant women are the least likely to hook up while at college and women who attend a university with some type of religious affiliation are more likely to hook-up than those who attend a school with no religious affiliation. (Burdette, Ellison, Hill and Glenn 2009).

Alcohol can play a large role in hooking up on college campuses, especially for females. Sociologist have found that hooking up usually occurs after activities involving drugs and alcohol and after being at establishments such as frat houses, house parties, and bars (Bradshaw et. al 2010). Alcohol is a disinhibiting force, meaning that they can use alcohol as an excuse or a justification for hooking up. 35% of students surveyed following their first year of college reported that they had been swayed to partake in sexual behavior after consuming alcohol (Beck 2009). Students tend to believe that consumption of alcohol will also boost their chances of hooking up when in reality alcohol lowers the presence of the hormone testosterone in the bloodstream, lowering sexual desire. This proves that alcohol psychologically makes people want to hook-up, not physically. Female students tend to use the “because I was drunk” response when it comes to talking about hook-ups. They feel regret and guilt. Alcohol acts as an explanation for actions that they would not have normally committed if sober. The only situation that on average women prefers hooking-up to dating is when alcohol is present (Bradshaw et. al. 2010).

CONCLUSION

Hooking up on college campuses is hardly a phase. I strongly believe that this is a new transformation our culture is going to be seeing for a long time. Marriage rates are declining and people are waiting longer to get married. This shows that commitment is going on the back burner compared to personal gratification. Uecker and Rengus (2010) found in their study that due to the fact that men tend to be less present on college campuses than females, there is less motivation for women to partake in the traditional patterns of dating.

I believe that women still aim for a loving, strong commitment instead of a hook-up but where hook-ups are becoming more socially acceptable, traditional dating will become a much more rare occurrence. Hooking up also provides much more risks for the female involved. Risks associated with hooking up are unwanted pregnancy, sexual assault, sexually transmitted diseases and depression (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). Due to these factors it is clear to see that women, on average, prefer dating opposed to hooking up for the sense of security and comfort.

Overall, female college students tend to hook up with out being comfortable with it. Though hook ups are on the rise, it is not necessarily what female college students are trying to
get them into. Where on average, females out number males on college campuses it can be a challenge to find a dating partner for females. With the age of first marriage being delayed, commitment is less and less on the minds of college students. College is now more viewed as a time to “have fun,” as portrayed in the media.

REFERENCES


Edited, Directed and Produced by Danielle Sacco, Laura Cummings, Liz Rodriguez and Shannon Reynolds http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okjmCgy8yWE.


Individualism, Environmentalism, and Social Change

Alex Chelstowski

ABSTRACT

Market logic encourages the idea everything can be bought and sold, and in effect creates an individualized society. This individualization affects consumption habits, environmental action, and social change. It argues that many green consumer products are not solutions to our environmental crises, but mask the larger institutional problems that have led to environmental degradation and diminished civic participation. Society needs to reframe what it means to be environmentally sustainable. In order to generate lasting sustainable social change, action needs to come from community awareness and participation to influence social forces and structures that impact the environment.

Capitalism’s current focus on unlimited growth balanced against the need to preserve the environment and natural resources has reached a critical tipping point with shrinking non-renewable resources and the threat of global climate change. The growth model assumes that the environment has an unlimited amount natural resources and leads to environmental exploitation. Yet, how do we sustain our way of life as well as the environment? In our quest for a sustainable economy, development, and lifestyle current mainstream culture has disregarded a key element in the environmental crisis, consumerism. The belief that our current economic model can solve the issues of climate change is unlikely because this system needs constant growth, and that means increasing consumption. Consumerism not only adds to our environmental crisis because of its use of natural resources and waste but also because of the mentality that it creates, the market logic, that everything is for sale (Brueggemann 2010). This includes not only consumer products but also values, ideals, our communities, and ourselves.

American society’s environmental problems consist of more than just environmental degradation and global warming, but also include social issues. In Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed, Jared Diamond points to the fact that no society has collapsed solely due to environmental problems. Other factors such as the specific type of damage caused, climate change, hostile neighbors, decreased support by neighbors, as well as society’s response to environmental change shapes the ultimate outcome (Diamond 2005). To understand these issues requires a critical examination of what shapes our society. Social institutions and social forces have produced these issues, in part due to an economic system, whose market logic has grown outside it symbiotic relationship with other institutions. Thus merging into other aspects of social life where it was once kept in balance (Brueggemann 2010). The market logic mentality has created an individualistic outlook and commodified environmentalism, affecting a society’s ability to create social and environmental change.
The problem with attempting to facilitate broader social change that will focus on more sustainable alternatives is that our society has become highly individualized. Modern society has alienated people from not only the environment but also their communities to the point where it creates a “hyper-individualist” society (McKibben 2007). We are increasingly seeing ourselves as separate, from other people and from the environment.

One characteristic of market logic that has spread outside of the economic realm and into other aspects of society is competition. Competition creates narrow views in an attempt to advance one’s social position, status, and wealth, “We’ve gotten so used to the idea that our own individual selves should be the center of our lives that we’ve taken to calling it “human nature” (Mckibben 2007:30). In the famous words of Michael Douglas in Wall Street, “Greed for the lack of a better word, is good”. Consumer culture encourages individuals to feel the need to accumulate more and out-do the neighbors. This idea of competition is fed to us through socialization, advertising, media, and technology encouraging an individualized culture. Competition does not foster a common identity; it puts people against one another, weakening the chances of creating strong social ties and change for a common good.

In Montana’s Bitteroot Valley major class divisions separate the residents, the wealthy vacationers and the locals. Both are in competition over land use, whether for recreation or sustaining local ways of life, and fail to focus on the larger issues of environmental and economic sustainability and favor selfish behaviors to advance their own position (Diamond 2005). This competition does not foster a responsible or mutual relationship over resource use; it will always benefit one group over the other. The Bitteroot community experienced animosity within their community thus adding more stress the environment by failing to reach a mutual consensus.

Competition is not the only thing to create an individualized attitude. New personal technologies such as cell phones, social networks, IPods, and tablet computers reshape the way people interact and experience their immediate surroundings. Technology disconnects people, privatizing leisure with television, personal computers, and the internet. There is a clear generational change in the way people are participating in leisure as well as civic engagement in large part due to how “wired in” people are (Putnam 2000). Americans spend hours starring into televisions. In 2009, the average time spent watching television daily was four hours and forty-nine minutes (Freierman 2009). During these many hours of viewing advertisers attempt to convince consumers they need more things. Technology is a tool for distraction. It is so readily available at every moment of the day that we ignore our surroundings and focus more on staying connected in a digital world. This constant exposure to technology, advertising, and media has transformed our purpose as humans into consumers.

Environmentalism refers to conserving and preserving the natural environment and its resources through a sustainable long-term lifestyle. However, particular current marketing trends have blurred the lines between consumer goods and environmentalism. This process
impacts the way people see the environment, corporations have commodified the idea of environmentalism. It is rational capitalist behavior, turning environmentalism into a profitable marketing scheme. One can buy their way into helping or protecting the environment without having to leave the house. Environmental action becomes consumption based and less as an ideal or value by which to live, contradicting the idea of environmentalism, by promoting consumerism. It is not that green consumer products are ineffectual, in fact they represent critical forward progress but “the individually responsible consumer is encouraged to purchase a vast array of “green” or “eco-friendly” products on the premise that the more such products are purchased and consumed, the healthier the planet’s ecological process will become (Maniates 2001, 43)”. There needs to be less consumption, not more consumption of eco-friendly products, it acts as a Band-Aid concealing the overall issues of consumption and economic growth. Environmentalism has become consumer based on a large scale, privatizing environmentalism.

By turning environmentalism into a commodity it increases the individualization of society. By focusing on the individual and commodifying environmentalism, consumer based environmental action does not take into account the fact that environmental degradation is a social and political problem. The focus on the environment around the individual, the home, car, and family disregards the issues of the use of natural resources, deforestation, water, and air pollution that are created by the collective society. These problems are less immediately visible and therefore not a central focus of individual action.

The individualizing of society alters the way that society views the environmental crisis. Society frames these problems as personal consuming issues. The focus comes to the responsibility of the individual, “publications such as the “Green Consumer Guide” and “personal Action Guide for the Earth” frequently highlight individual responsibility without considering the broader social pressures (Robottom, Ian, Hart, Paul 1995). By individualizing environmentalism it loses one of the major driving forces in social change, group action. The “individualization of responsibility” conceals the fact that environmental degradation is an institutional issue and limits our ability to pursue productive responses. People are first consumers and then citizens (Maniates 2010). Environmental action has become focused around personal pleasure. Instead of working to change the society, the spotlight turns to consuming, promoting growth within the system that created the problem in the first place. Individualizing environmentalism limits the ability to create larger structural change. Voting with your dollar encourages the notion that change should occur through economic means, detracting from the importance of social ties to the larger community. Slavoj Zizek points out an example of this greening through consumerism with an advertisement from Starbucks, the ad says,

*When you buy Starbucks, whether you realize it or not, you’re buying into something bigger than a cup of coffee. You’re buying into a coffee ethic. Through our Starbucks Shared Planet program, we purchase more Fair Trade*
coffee than any other company in the world, ensuring that the farmers who grow the beans receive a fair price for their hard work (Zizek 2010, 53).

Zizek refers to this as “cultural capitalism”, people buy these products to be a part of the experience they provide, “we buy them in order to render our lives pleasurable and meaningful (Zizek 2010, 52). It gives the illusion of caring and global awareness while buying into the status quo of capitalist domination. By attaching more meaning to something as simple as a cup of coffee, such as sustainability and righteous business practices, it creates an illusion that we are not just consumers but environmentalists. The higher meaning of the product replaces meaningful social awareness, action, and change. Buying environmentalism also reinforces socioeconomic statuses adding to class separation and perpetuating individualism while also weakening social cohesion.

As our society becomes highly individualized and separated through the division of labor, technology, and consumption it creates a crisis of the community. In Robert Putnam’s Bowling Alone, he discusses the decline of civic life. People are less likely to participate in social clubs, organizations, and even to vote (Putnam 2000). Technology allows people to stay connected but physically distant. Through social network sites such as Facebook and MySpace people may feel as though they are a part of one another’s lives and the larger community while in reality people have become more spatially separated (Brueggemann 2010). The average house size has doubled since 1970, while there are fewer people living in each home, on average two people per acre (Mckibben 2007). Urban sprawl has destroyed wetlands and forests, bourgeois ideals have led to manicured lawns and substantially larger homes, and a decentralized infrastructure has contributed to our “Drive-In” culture. With an average of two people per acre, American culture has grown up around the idea of personal transportation to the point where there are not only drive-in theaters and food but also liquor stores and pharmacies. John Brueggemann states that “the individual conscience develops in the context of social groups (2010, 15)”. If much of our time is devoted to individual technology and as these become increasingly important in daily lives, people will develop an individualized attitude and close out the outside world.

We are increasingly living in a built world. Much of the population has moved to urban areas and “by 2025 about two thirds will be urban dwellers (Buttel, Humphrey, Lewis 2002, 73)”. We are increasingly disconnected from immediate surroundings as well as the natural environment, reinforcing an out of sight out of mind mentality. This mentality has allowed for the justification of locally undesirable land uses that affect minority and low socioeconomic classes and influences “Not In My Back Yard” attitudes. Modern society has built up walls. Market logic has made ourselves the most important thing, and as a result we tend to forget about neighbors and the community.

With the decline of civic life, social groups have less influence on the individual conscience that makes choices regarding consumption and environmentalism. People surround themselves in consumer goods, creating an illusion that the world is fine, ignoring the
consequences of conspicuous consumption’s impact on the environment. This “fetishistic denial” of how consumer goods are produced and where they come from leave individuals alienated from the mode of production and their consequences; people are aware of the damage that they are doing but continue to do it (Zizek 2010, 37). Consumers continue to purchase and practice harmful actions, assuming that technology will be the solution but addressing ecological problems requires more than technology, it involves choices and decisions on how we live our lives. These issues need more than technological solutions but political as well as social (Zizek 2010). Developed nations have to look to their collective conscious and social ties for a sustainably future.

Social capital is a major determinant in levels of community action. Social capital refers to “trustful relationships (vertically between citizens and government and horizontal among citizens) and a civic society characterized by dense organizational networks” and these play a major role in the way that communities deal with conflict (Duit 2011). This trust is formed by citizen participation in civic organizations and local networks (Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti 1993). Yet strong social capital is fairly limited within our current society. The number of people with zero discussion networks has gone up 14.6 percent, and all respondents showed a significantly smaller number of confidants in 2004 than in 1985 (Mcpherson, Smith-Lovin, Brashears 2006). Weak social capital impacts a society’s effectiveness in addressing social problems and limits the pressure applied to key social institutions involved in implementing change. A study by Andreas Duit found that institutional quality affects the levels of participation in voluntary social organizations (2011). As people are increasingly unsatisfied with social institutions such as governmental or economic institutions, the less likely they are to participate in civic organizations. Breuggemann points to the fact that this trend can be described by the invasion of market logic, weakening other social institutions that work to balance society (2010). The weaker the social ties, the less likely communities are able to create social change.

Being a part of the larger society forces people to look past their own individual needs. It focuses on the collective and what each community views as the greater good. What the current social structure does is fragment our everyday lives, as well as increases our mobility. People are less connected to their surroundings, neighborhoods, and communities, which affect the ability to fully participate as citizens of a community (Maniates 2001). There needs to be a change in our social mentality that focuses less on the individual and more on the collective. When people have a closer relation to problems they are more likely to be conscientious of their actions that are link to environmental degradation (Brueggemann 2010). Individuals who feel as though they belong whether to a group or community are more likely to have higher social interest (Curlette & Kern 2010) and overall more invested in the community and the problems it faces. Also, connection to a community will generate a greater interest in long-term viability and builds relationships as opposed to a “one night stand” economy that lacks in accountability for environmental and social justice (PBS NOW 2010). Strong communities are going to want to stay strong, for the benefit of themselves as well as future generations.
An example of community action working to solve environmental issues comes from John Cronin and Robert Kennedy Jr. in their book The RiverKeepers (1997). The Hudson River was polluted by industrial waste and runoff that threatened ecosystems, wildlife, recreation, and community water sources. To prevent contamination, a community of writers, naturalist, lawyers, students, and residents came together in an effort to save the Hudson River habitat. The group needed citizens to report violations, environmentalist to study the damage, fisherman to bring intimate knowledge of the river, lawyers to prosecute the companies, and students to help with the case. To end the pollution it required an entire community. No individual could possibly do it alone, these issues need countless resources, much more than any one person could have. This communal action has a significantly larger societal impact as opposed to individual consumer habits that only effect personal surroundings. By coming together to solve environmental issues the entire community was ultimately stronger.

The problems that communities face also create social cohesion. Working together as a community creates social capital, linking people together outside their personal bubble. By supporting local communities people are supporting friends, family, and neighbors, opposed to big box corporations based out of state. Charles Heying points out that “corporate delocalization” reduces social cohesion and civic leadership, it creates an impersonal market place (Putman 2000). By supporting local economies you support job growth, living wages, and equality through initiatives such as co-ops that focus on social capital and collaborative efforts while also minimizing the impact on the environment (PBS NOW 2010). Communities face the larger societal issues that individuals fail to either acknowledge or feel as though they cannot change. Many of the environmental issues the world faces involves more than addressing just the environment, it has to be looked at from a community standpoint, politically and socially.

The environmental crisis consists of much more than what many people seem to recognize and requires societal changes, not just altering consumption habits. Market logic’s role in commodifying environmentalism has led people to believe that environmental issues can be solved with more conspicuous consumption. Also, market logic’s stress on individuality has created a hyper individualistic society that fails to recognize the importance of community action in creating social change. Individualization has only added to the stress applied to earth’s ecosystems through urban sprawl, increased consumption, and the alienation of people from natural and social environments. By individualizing environmental issues people fail to address the fact that it is the larger institutions that shape our culture that have led to these problems.

The decline of civic life has greatly impeded the progress towards an environmentally sustainable future because the focus on the greater good has turned to the individual. Communities play an integral part in development whether sustainably or socially because they have the power to redirect social action to change existing systems. Our current instrumentally rational thinking tells us that more and bigger is better. It is not just a matter of changing our habits to create sustainable development but changing the system. Reforms only work to shape a system that was unsustainable to begin with. Current structures need to be dismantled
and rebuilt from their foundations. As a part of the global ecosystem, humans need to take a sharp turn; there need to be radical fundamental changes in the way people think about development, sustainability, and growth. To truly solve the issues of environmental degradation and global warming our entire society needs to reflect on the choices it makes not only economically but socially as well.

REFERENCES


Sustainable Agriculture in Rural Central American Countries: Grassroots Effectiveness in Initiating Cultural Change

Zach Field

ABSTRACT

This study examines grassroots organizations with respect to their effectiveness in initiating a cultural change in the agricultural practices in Central American countries. This study used qualitative data from a study conducted by Sustainable Harvest Internationals’ Honduras Affiliate. The study was done to assess the long-term impacts of the grassroots organization Sustainable Harvest International. They determined that a vast majority of participants had indeed improved their living conditions and were using sustainable agricultural practices. Additional successful grassroots are provided, exemplifying the advantages of grassroots organizations in making change. The success for these grassroots organizations could provide a format for other grassroots efforts across the globe.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is one of the most common methods of reducing our impact on the environment. It allows for continual cultivation of natural resources, while minimizing the degradation of the environment around it. With the advanced level of technology that pervades every corner of the United States comes the ability to increase sustainability in our agricultural practices. This is expensive however, and comes at the cost of government subsidies and regulation.

However, many nations around the world do not have the financial ability to subsidize technologically advanced sustainable agriculture. Nor do they have the governmental capacity to regulate the unsustainable practices and inform the people of alternative methods. Even if there is regulation and legislation in place to promote sustainability, farmers often ignore it. As Hellin and Schrader (2003) note, “Farmer adoption rates... are low and many development organizations have reverted to using direct incentives, such as cash payments and food-for-work, to attract participating farmers. Research in Central America shows that whilst these incentives stimulate implementation of soil and water conservation (SWC) technologies, many of the farmers abandon the technologies once the direct incentives are withdrawn.”

There are, however, grassroots organizations that work independently of the government and run on the sweat, tears, and support of their members. These organizations
focus on an individual level. They interact with the issues and the people involved, in ways that bureaucratic and institutional organizations never will. Sustainable Harvest International is one of those organizations.

SUSTAINABLE HARVEST INTERNATIONAL

Sustainable Harvest International is a non-profit group, founded in 1997. Their mission is simple, “provide farming families in Central America with the training and tools to preserve our planet's tropical forests while overcoming poverty” (sustainableharvest.org). They, like many other grassroots organizations, focus on the people involved in the issue. The issue here is the slash and burn farming techniques, in which local people cut and burn vast expanses of lush rainforest to provide fertile farmland. Once the land loses its fertility, or erodes, the farmers move to cut and burn another section of rainforest. The people who do this are not mean or malignant; they are poor and uneducated farmers attempting to make a living in some of the most rural areas in the world.

Sustainable Harvest understands this; they understand that these people want to preserve their land. “Desperate farmers longed for practical training to protect local forests and restore degraded lands. Not only concerned with increased agricultural yields, these farmers also wanted to leave a healthy ecosystem for future generations” (sustainableharvest.org). Sustainable Harvest employs people native to each region and trains them. These people then work with the rural communities to educate and train community members on sustainable practices. Sustainable Harvest has programs across four countries, in over 100 communities.

To determine the effectiveness of these programs, Sustainable Harvest conducted a survey in 2010. Overall, Sustainable Harvest is responsible for the planting of nearly three million trees, preventing thousands of acres of clear cutting, and teaching sustainable farming practices to over 550 families. Additionally, they have been responsible for the creation of local Sustainable Harvest groups, cooperatives, and even a number of rural banks. Of the families interviewed for the survey, over 80% had left a portion of their land as forest preservation. Over 75% had stopped slash and burn techniques, and the communities as a whole had mostly given up slash and burn. Finally, all of the families noted an improvement in their livelihood and well-being, citing an average income increase of 39% since graduating the Sustainable Harvest program.

While no one would argue that there is still much to be accomplished, Sustainable Harvest has achieved much over the past 14 years. They sought to change the mindset and the practices of the individuals and were successful. Humphrey, Lewis and Buttel (2002) measure success in an environmental movement as having five key components. It has membership growth, organizational survival and longevity, attainment of goals, acceptance into mainstream life, and acceptance into the political system. Sustainable Harvest has been successful in the first three of these components. The last two components are rather subjective, but the communities, socially and politically, appear to accept Sustainable Harvests’ program and
results, as the data indicates. This has led to the creation of localized groups who focus on maintaining, promoting and educating current and future community members about the benefits and techniques of sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable Harvest reached out to the people, not with just money and food, but with a commitment, a relatable face, and a strategy that has proved successful repeatedly. They are not looking to change the policies surrounding the issues, they are not looking to change the institutions that may promote or ignore unsustainable practices. They look to change the individuals, the communities, and to make a lasting impact on them.

SUCCESSFUL GRASSROOTS EFFORTS

There are plenty of other examples of successful grassroots organizations, which demonstrate the advantages of the grassroots individual approach. From the story of the Riverkeepers in New York, to the Occupy Wall Street movement, grassroots organizations range in size, scope and mission. However, they all have the same methodology in focusing on reaching out to the people and communities to instigate change.

In the case of the Riverkeepers, a group of dedicated individuals, led by Boyle and Richie, fought to rid the Hudson River of all the corporations that polluted it. They were told “‘we’re dealing with top officials in industry. You just don’t go around treating those kinds of people like that’” (Cronin and Kennedy, 1999). They were nothing if not persistent however, and were soon involved in successful litigation against some of the biggest polluters on the river. Richie’s comments before a Congressional Committee typified the movement, saying he was “‘simply just a citizen who grew up along the Hudson,’ and who, like other who loved the river, was … ‘simply an American’” (Cronin and Kennedy, 1999). Their movement encompassed individuals from scientists to commercial anglers, anyone with an interest in the river was encouraged to get involved. Today, the Hudson River is one of the cleanest on the East Coast.

In Washington State, a community came together to work as a cohesive unit, united under a simple idea. They want to create local jobs, sustainable business, and keep the money in the community. They organized to “reconnect farmers with eaters, investors with entrepreneurs, and businesses like this one with the communities and ecosystems that they serve” (Fixing the Future, 2010). Their focus is promoting sustainable living, sustainable business, and sustainable agriculture. This community, as the documentary points out, is not just working but thriving.

Finally, the Occupy Wall Street is a grassroots organization that is successful in much the same way the aforementioned movements were. They are still very early in the stages of “grassroots-dom,” but the very fact that they have brought to light a topic that was taboo is a success in itself. Income disparity, ever present, has now become a popular topic of conversation, whether around the dinner table, or around legislation committee tables. They seek institutional change, but maintain a grassroots organizational base. They have spread, they
have grown, and as they say, they continue to evolve (occupywallst.org). The other movements all started out by framing the issue, gaining an audience and enlisting support. The Occupy movement has done the same, and as one of their many goals undoubtedly is, they seek to end the corporate exploitation of the environment.

One might critique these movements as focusing too much on changing the policies surrounding these issues. However, there is a distinction, though perhaps subtle. These groups are focusing on changing the perceptions, framing the topic to gain support, to inform and mobilize for a cause. In the case of the Riverkeepers, the policies were already in place to regulate pollution; no one was enforcing the policies. The Riverkeepers worked to change public views on the issue, to take the matter into their own hands (Cronin and Kennedy, 1999).

**BUREAUCRATIC EFFORTS**

While many of the grassroots movements do ultimately result in legislation and bureaucratic changes, the initial grassroots effort shapes the process and discussion surrounding the changes. These grassroots efforts are what instigate a cultural change, they are the most effective at creating an atmosphere that promotes and sustains a cultural change, which policies only supplement. Granted, there are examples of successful initial managerial changes that result in cultural changes. However, they are infrequent.

A case in Cuba successfully demonstrates this, when in the mid-1990s, the state turned parking lots into organic gardening, turning businesses into co-ops. These cooperatives now make up a majority of the agricultural output of the Cuba. The State, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, no longer had an abundant supply of oil, and needed a way to maintain agricultural production. This is an instance of cultural changes following bureaucratic ones (Cuba: The Accidental Revolution, 2006).

However, it is often the case that managerial changes prompt cultural ones. The Riverkeepers is ironically an example of this. In 1899, the federal government passed the Refuse Act, which was then never enforced. It took a community to take action before the Refuse Act was enforced.

Jared Diamond’s book, *Collapse*, illustrates the lack of influence a managerial approach has to creating environmental sustainability. In his example of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, he talks about the Haitian government attempting to stem the massive clear cutting of the precious little remaining forests. The government imported alternative cooking fuels, to curb the coal creation that resulted in massive deforestation. However, the poverty was so pervasive, that this did not work; the people did not stop, their lives depended on it. Across the border, a similar situation was taking place. While the government was largely much more successful at preserving the forests, there was little commitment from the rural communities to follow the dictators’ wishes. While some may consider this a success, the fact that many poor
rural farmers continue to clear-cut is an indication of a disconnect between the instituted managerial changes and the individual cultural needs (2005).

Devra Davis, in her book, *When Smoke Ran Like Water*, illustrates how the government struggled to institute change in the automobile industry. The automobile industry fought for decades to keep lead in gasoline, as it helped maintain the integrity of the car engine. Even with the litany of evidence showing the disastrous effects of leaded gasoline, it was not until the mid-1990s that last gasoline became lead free. Every step of the way, regardless of evidence, the automobile industry has fought change. The corporate interests are more powerful and overrepresented in the government legislation than the interests of the people. The effect is a slow and cumbersome process that, if eventually implemented, then requires dutiful regulation and oversight (2003).

Institutional change is often ineffective because it is difficult to implement, regulate, and enforce. Individual needs often trump institutional demands, corporate greed often stymies legislative processes, and institutions often do not have the resources to enforce positive legislation.

CONCLUSION

Grassroots organizations however, are the counter balance to individual needs, corporate greed, and resource depleted institutions. They focus directly on the individual needs and desires. They get to the core of the issue; they frame the issue and rally support to either make change themselves, or present a strong case for institutional change. Sustainable Harvest works directly with the individuals to improve their economic, social and environmental situation. These changes have resonated with the communities where they take effect, ultimately creating a community of sustainability and economic purpose otherwise unattainable.

Grassroots organizations change the culture of the issue, they reach people in relatable ways, and they serve the interests of communities. Occupy Wall Street exemplifies how quickly grassroots organizations can spread in this day and age, as well as how a previously taboo topic can become a common topic of discussion almost overnight. The community in Washington State shows how cooperation and a commitment to sustainability can benefit the entire community and promote growth. These are all evidence of how effective grassroots organizations can be.

The examples of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the automobile industry show the difficulties faced by institutions in attempting managerial changes. Whether through ineffective implementation and regulation, or through insistent individual needs, institutional changes face difficulty in changing the cultural attitudes, particularly in poverty-stricken areas.
That is not to say that grassroots organizations do not have their difficulties. They often are limited in scope, and focus on one specific issue, in one specific area. They often remain small, are limited to specific locations, and their achievements usually limited.

However, they are still much more effective than larger, more cumbersome, managerial changes. The future of grassroots organizations is boundless. In fact, following the grassroots model portrayed by Sustainable Harvest, it would be interesting to see implementation in Africa and parts of Asia. Sustainable Harvest has done what institutions have not been able to do; they educated rural communities and introduced sustainable agricultural practices. They understood, worked with, and met the needs of these communities in ways that bureaucracies never could, and that is why they are so effective.

REFERENCES


Video: Fixing the Future. 2010. PBS / NOW
A Literature Review on Vital Elements to a Successful Health Education Program in Central America

Whitney Mills

ABSTRACT

The prevalence of poor health in developing regions of Central America is a growing concern in the world today. Inadequate sanitation, unavailability of clean water, and fierce malnutrition are socially and culturally rooted issues that fuel poor health and medical problems in these regions. The purpose of this article is to review the literature on hygiene education programs in rural, impoverished communities of Central America. Research shows that NGOs and government-run health and hygiene education programs may vary in method and success. Regardless of their individual differences, there are four basic elements that help ensure a successful program. Research suggests that the core of successful health education programs is made up of 1) initial needs based evaluations, 2) local support, 3) long-lasting partnerships, and 4) low-technology resource tools. Unfortunately, research in this area is limited. While many programs are active, very few have been evaluated. Increased research efforts will undeniably improve the implementation of successful health and hygiene education programs in underdeveloped Central American rural regions.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of poor health in developing regions of Central America is a growing concern in the world today. In Honduras, only 44% of water provided to rural regions is effectively disinfected; in Nicaragua, only 34% of the rural population has access to sanitation facilities (WHO 2006). These statistics reflect the inadequate sanitation, unavailability of clean water, and fierce malnutrition that rural regions of Central America are currently experiencing. These are socially and culturally rooted issues that fuel poor health and rampant medical problems. In response to the poor status of health in these rural regions, implementation of health and hygiene education programs offer opportunities for communities to improve their lifestyles and overall health. This paper serves as a literature review focusing on the elements of hygiene education programs in rural, impoverished communities of Central America. It explores the ways in which the following elements are vital to an effective hygiene education program: specific needs-based evaluations, local support, sustainability, and low-technology resource tools.
SPECIFIC NEEDS-BASED EVALUATIONS

More research is pivotal if Central American hygiene education programs are going to successfully meet the needs of its citizens. Using a model that aims to implement primary health care systems into rural communities of Honduras, Rennert and Koop\(^1\) began their research by conducting background needs assessments which outline vital deficiencies in the current health care resources. The prevalence of certain medical problems varies from region to region in Central America. Evaluating the status of health in a needy village allows for the health education program to be customized according to those specific needs. The idea behind this approach is that a customized program will be more successful for meeting the needs of a community and ultimately, improve the overall quality of health.

Heck, Bazemore and Diller (2007) assert that Shoulder to Shoulder, a non-governmental organization (NGO), uses a similar evaluation approach. Shoulder to Shoulder sends representatives to visit villages and witness the pressing medical issues in a specific area. The representatives talk with villagers and community leaders to identify the problems and why those problems continue to persist. The representatives and community members work together to brainstorm solutions to decrease the prevalence of health ailments. Using this method to investigate the determinants of ill-health is essentially a way to evaluate and determine what specific needs a community of poor health and sanitation requires for improvement.

The importance of needs-based evaluations is not limited to revealing the medical problems of an area. While this aspect of the evaluations is significant, it must also be noted that assessing a community’s need for health education presents a broader view of the medical problems at hand. Moll et. al. (2007) illustrate this perfectly in their evaluation of the American Red Cross’s relief efforts in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch in 1998. The researchers assert that by implementing a basic infrastructure for water sanitation, health/hygiene education programs were given an advantage. Creating infrastructure for sanitary water is a crucial part of the health education dynamic and improving hygiene is facilitated by the availability of clean water. Programs implemented in places that have access to sanitary water are more likely to be successful and sustainable.

---

\(^1\) Rennert and Koop (2009) conduct an investigation on the health education program(s) implemented by the non-governmental organization Shoulder to Shoulder; Shoulder to Shoulder seeks to implement effective health care education in rural communities of Honduras. The research concerns two health education programs (in Community A and Community B) that are largely operated by Community Health Workers (CHWs): citizens of the target communities that are trained to identify, treat, and record medical problems. Furthermore, the health education programs and the CHWs are re-evaluated over time and adjusted to meet the needs of the communities; results from this research show notable improvements in the performances of the CHWs. It should be noted that during the model’s first fifteen months in practice, the Community Health Workers of Communities A and B combined to attend 2,347 patients, treating 3,025 health problems providing valuable services for health education, case management and preventive healthcare in a rural community.
Initially conducting background needs assessments in potential programming regions is crucial in discovering what core aspects of health and hygiene are/are not present (Moll et. al. 2007). The literature describing the application of this process suggests that successful programs follow thorough specific need-based evaluations. However, this is not to say that programs that do not administer needs-based assessments do not yield success. Unfortunately, research in this area is lacking and it is therefore difficult to make conclusions regarding these no-evaluation programs. One hypothesized disadvantaged is that without taking the time and energy to learn and understand what medical problems and infrastructure needs a target community is facing, there is no way to adequately assess the true needs of the community. It is important to note, however, that is solely a hypothesis. Regardless, research surrounding the real importance of needs-based evaluations is widespread throughout the research world, and although there are other components that contribute to the success of these health education programs, having identified the core needs and medical problems is certainly a significant advantage.

LOCAL SUPPORT

Research reveals that having local support is a vital component to successful health and hygiene education programs. In Rennert and Koop’s (2009) study on implementing community health programs, the researchers discovered the value of community support in the form of Community Health Workers (CHWs). CHWs often take the form of citizens or elders of a community that are willing to commit their time and effort to better the health status in their communities. They are educated and trained to identify, treat, and make record of a number of different medical problems. Often times they are also instructed on how to instruct and educate other community members to take preventative measures to health issues (Rennert and Koop 2009).

Involving the community in this way can play a significant role in making health education programs successful. When stakeholders invest themselves in a common cause that benefits all, the likelihood of success increases. According to Rennert and Koop (2009), providing training to the CHWs in their rural Honduras programming gave the citizens a sense of investment in the health education program and helped bridge the gap between the westernized researchers and doctors and the developing community. In this way, the use of CHWs is an effective way to create a successful and communicative partnership with a target community.

Caniza et. al. (2007) illustrate the importance of local support in a more specific manner. In this example, the researchers ask for feedback from participants in a study that evaluates the effectiveness of using flipcharts to facilitate hygiene education. Asking for feedback from the participants after using the flipcharts to facilitate hygiene education gave the participants a chance to respond with their opinions on this tool for education. In doing so, the researchers gained the opportunity to improve their use of flipcharts, while at the same time giving the participants a voice in the education process and once again allowing the participants to invest
in the program. His aspect of health education programming has the potential to strengthen a partnership.

While the research highlighted by Caniza et. al.(2007) and Rennert and Koop (2009) focuses on health education programs that establish good relationships with local communities, there are others that do not foster as much local support. Lack of support poses a threat to people, agencies, and organizations that actively seek to implement health education programs throughout Central America. The lack of support can lead to loss of trust, loss of funding, and loss of partnerships for organizations that work internationally to implement health education programs. For example, Oxfam International, Project HOPE, and Shoulder to Shoulder are all high esteemed and well-renowned organizations that work internationally to implement health education programs. However, these organizations (like all others) risk opposition if they do not obtain and maintain local support.

Vázquez (2011) explores this potential opposition by examining the attitudes and perceptions towards non-governmental organizations (NGOs) held by students in higher education in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Vázquez discovered that although students are in overall support of NGO developmental aid, they are skeptical of the projects into which NGOs are putting money. The table below represents a portion of the data collected by Vázquez (2011) in his study:

| Table 4. Agreement With Statements Concerning NGOs Among Central American Undergraduates |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| In your opinion,                              | M    | SD     |
| The work NGOs do is of great importance       | 1.42 | 0.90  |
| NGOs are organizations worthy of trust        | 0.39 | 1.12  |
| The effect NGOs’ projects have is barely     | 0.35 | 1.35  |
| appreciable in the places in which they are   |      |       |
| located.                                     |      |       |
| The projects NGOs undertake are unsustainable | 0.32 | 1.38  |
| and are of little benefit to those they are   |      |       |
| meant to help                                 |      |       |
| NGO personnel misappropriate a large part of  | 0.23 | 1.22  |
| the money and material allocated to the      |      |       |
| projects                                     |      |       |

Note: NGO = nongovernmental organization. –2 = completely disagree, 2 = completely agree.

The data above indicates that students support and are in favor of NGOs and the work they do. However, when asked more specific questions regarding NGOs, opinions begin to vary. Apparently, students are in favor of the idea of NGOs, but are skeptical of actual practicing NGOs. Furthermore, the summary data suggests that student participants were skeptical of the sustainability of programs, appropriation of money and funds, and trustworthiness of NGOs (Vázquez 2011).
Skepticism such as this indicates the importance of having local support when implementing a health education program. If lack of trust in a community or region prevails, NGOs and others who are trying to improve the health status will certainly run into disagreement with target villages. Lack of trust could someday mean loss of funding and loss of partnership for many NGOs and target communities. Hence, another reason project planners should work hard to gain local support and healthy, inclusive partnerships with their target communities.

Instituting a program simply cannot take place without the consent of the target community. Without agreement from the target community, a program implemented from an outside source risks suffering from lack of commitment and support from the target community. It also risks neglecting a community’s area-specific needs as well as valuable insights. Therefore, obtaining local support and optimizing the reception of new programming translates into a richer community commitment over the long term.

**LONG-LASTING RELATIONSHIPS**

A long-term partnership is not necessarily a requirement of hygiene education programs. There are a number of people, agencies, and organizations that do not return to the sites where they initially do health education work; follow-up is not required. However, the literature suggests that maintaining an established partnership over multiple years is an effective way to improve health issues in a specific community.

The importance of sustainable partnerships is discussed in Heck’s (2007) research on Shoulder to Shoulder health education programs. Shoulder to Shoulder establishes the long term partnership at the very beginning; before any money is spent or project work is started (Heck 2007). They do this by talking with community members, working with elders, and asking these communities if they are willing to commit to a health education program for multiple years. In fact, the organization seeks only communities that can commit to a program for several years. However, beyond verbal communication and agreement, the literature does not indicate the exact criterion for how this long-term partnership is established. Regardless of this missing piece of information, Heck (2007) discovered that maintaining the relationships that Shoulder to Shoulder initially created with communities provided the opportunity for sustainable changes to take place over years of volunteer/education partnerships and project work.

This approach is quite sensible. First, by spending time and money on a limited number of communities, those communities have the advantage of receiving personal attention from the agencies implementing programs. Furthermore, the long-term maintenance of close partnerships over a span of years has the ability to create a large-scale impact on the overall status of health in a community that traditional short-term volunteer brigades do not possess (Heck 2007). The Shoulder to Shoulder programs illustrate this long-term approach and impact. Shoulder to Shoulder now has seven partnerships that effect several hundred smaller villages.
and in turn, reach approximately 50,000 people. Furthermore, its projects have created educational opportunities for over 1,600 US Community Health Workers (Heck 2007).

The research conducted by Rennert and Koop (2009) also supports the maintenance of long-lasting relationships between provider and consumer. In their model, the researchers provide ongoing education and guidance to Community Health Workers (CHWs) over a period of fifteen months. Throughout those months, officials checked in with the CHWs and on the health program itself to see where improvements were needed. By doing so, the two communities participating in the study made statistically significant improvements on their rate of inaccurate treatment decisions between the months of six and fifteen. In fact, fifteen months after Shoulder to Shoulder’s two programs had been first implemented the CHWs of Community A had increased their rate of treating patients accurately from 50% to 76% (P<.001). Furthermore, the improper use of antibiotics for diarrhea and non-febrile upper respiratory tract infections decreased a significant amount. Likewise in Community B, the CHWs had improved their rate of accuracy from 27% to 93% (P<.001), had been keeping more accurate records of height and temperature, and had also been prescribing the use of prenatal vitamins in an appropriate manner. By periodically re-evaluating the medical situation in the communities and continuing the education and training of the CHWs, researchers aided in facilitating the former improvements.

This study makes it clear that providing valuable services for health education requires more than initial implementation. The program and the partnership require nurturing and maintenance for optimal, long-lasting effects in a community. Moll et al.’s (2007) study on water sanitation and hygiene programs supports the same conclusion: long lasting solutions to sanitation and hygiene in developing countries requires long-term commitment from both parties. All of the former research studies demonstrate how a sustainable partnership is vital to the impact of a health education program. This is not to say that traditional programs without long-term components are not successful. The literature is simply asserting that projects that are nurtured and maintained are not as likely to fall apart over time, and are more likely to make long-term differences in a community.

LOW TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH TOOLS

Implementing a health and hygiene education program in rural regions of Central America must recognize and account for the resources that target communities have available. Although the literature on this topic is limited, implementing programs that use low-technology resource tools communicates clear and effective messages to participants. Caniza et. al.(2007) demonstrate this element very well in a study regarding the use of flip charts to teach basic hand hygiene. Flip charts as a method of training proved to be the most well received method (other forms of training included video presentations). Furthermore, it is low-cost method that meets the needs of most developing countries in the sense that educational flip charts do not demand any outstanding technological resources; they are a smart, feasible and effective way to educate people in developing nations that require little to no translation.
Yet flip charts are not the only low-cost, low-tech method available. Video presentation is also effective (Caniza et al. 2007), and art as a tool may also have merit. For example, basic illustrations using specific colors may help communicate how to identify certain medical problems, whether a medical problem requires medical treatment, methods of treatment, etc. In addition, if working on implementing a hygiene education program for children, the use of art and/or play would likely enhance the learning experience for the participants.

Using song as a medium for communicating healthy living practices is also a potential method for education. Bastien (2009) researched the use of music in AIDS education in Tanzania; in her research, she discovered that using song narrative that is historically and culturally bound to an area of poor health is an inexpensive and entertaining method that can stimulate awareness and attitudes of the target community. And although this research focused largely on radio communication, Bastien (2009) suggests that simple, live song interaction in a group setting may also prove effective and enjoyable for the target group. In this case, using educational songs to decrease any stigma surrounding health issues, as well as to serve as a memory tool for proper hygiene practices, might warrant merit if more research was conducted in this area.

More importantly is the idea that the use of high-tech education tools in the rural areas of Central America would not be effective. Simply, tools like PowerPoint presentations, email, online training modules and DVDs require a level of technology that is not likely to be available in the areas that are being discussed. And if these technologies are not available resources, it is unlikely that their use—and the program in general—could effectively not survive over time. Hence, low-technology tools are a vital element to the implementation and success of a health and hygiene education program in rural Central America.

CONCLUSION

Hygiene education programs in developing regions of Central America vary in method and success. Yet despite their individual differences, there are four basic elements that programs can seek for success. Research suggests that the core of successful health education programs is made up of low-technology resource tools, long-lasting partnerships, local support, and initial needs based evaluations. However, research in this area is still limited. In relation to how many programs are active, very few have been evaluated. Furthermore, more information regarding what teaching tools are effective and still low-tech would help layout options for someone looking to implement a health education program of their own. More research would also be valuable on the attitudes of the local community regarding health education programs in their region. Efforts to improve the status of health in developing countries mean to do well, but what potential target communities actually think and feel about receiving help is unfortunately unknown at this point.
Ultimately, research on this topic is important because the poor health status fostered by Central America and other developing regions is a threat to the well-being and survival of hundreds and thousands of individuals. The rampant medical problems that Central Americans are facing should not be ignored—especially by highly-developed nations like the United States. Knowledge about how to implement a successful health and hygiene education program creates the opportunity for health status improvement in these areas. By working with one village at a time to create infrastructure for sanitation, small steps are taken towards a healthier future for thousands of rural, impoverished, and unhealthy Central American communities.

REFERENCES


Examining the Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Access to Nutritional Food

Rebecca White

ABSTRACT

America has recently seen an increasing epidemic of diet related diseases in people of all backgrounds. However, the brunt of these health risks, especially those stemming from obesity, seem to disproportionately fall on those of lower socioeconomic status. One contributing factor is that those of lower social status simply do not have the geographic access to food stores whose products are nutritionally healthy. Instead, convenience store food, as well as fast food, is more readily available, leaving these people to not only consume too little of the right foods, but too much of the wrong foods. It is also apparent that individuals who are at a socioeconomic disadvantage are less informed about their choices, and continues to choose less nutritious food even when it is within their financial means. A wide variety of components, including, race, class, education level, occupation, and domestic location all have an impact on this issue, which makes it extremely complicated to work towards a solution.

INTRODUCTION

While nutrition is a vital element of a healthy lifestyle, nutritious food is not equally available to all. The significance of this inequality is that a healthy diet greatly reduces the chances of diseases and medical conditions that can shorten and lower the quality of life. When differences in diet can be attributed to socioeconomic factors, it can be reasonably assumed that differences in lifespan and instances of disease can also be attributed to socioeconomic factors when access to nutrition is considered. When dissected, this can contribute to research seeking to understand disparities in health and lifespan of varying socioeconomic statuses, including factors such as race, income level, class, education level, occupation, and domestic location. This paper will review the literature on how these socioeconomic factors affect the following varying aspects of access to nutritional food: food store access, fast food consumption, and overall nutritional value of foods consumed. A correlation is visible which shows that those who exhibit characteristics of low socioeconomic status have the poorest access to sources of nutritiously healthy food, and therefore consume the least nutritious diets. On the contrary, those who exhibit characteristics of high socioeconomic status consume diets which are much more nutritious, and have a greater access to sources of nutritious food (Dubois and Girard 2001). This clearly illustrates how socioeconomic factors shape life chances, and specifically reviewed in this paper, access to nutritious food.
FOOD STORE ACCESS

Geographic proximity to various types of food stores plays a pivotal role in determining what types of foods are available to residents of different neighborhoods. Chain supermarkets, followed by non-chain supermarkets, grocery stores and, finally convenience stores are more likely to have nutritionally valuable and freshly prepared food (Powell et al. 2004). Referring to the suburbanization of supermarkets in a study conducted in London, Ontario, Larsen and Gilliland (2008) express that “While more and more large-format supermarkets are erected on suburban lands, smaller grocers in older central-city neighborhoods seem to be rapidly disappearing, leaving potential food deserts in their wake” (p. 1). This is a change from a comparison study conducted by Larsen and Gilliland in 1961, which showed that at the time, more supermarkets were located in the inner city, in areas of higher socioeconomic distress. Since then, supermarkets have decentralized and convenience stores and fast food restaurants have taken their place. This is in part due to the decentralization of the population, which is happening in many major cities. A small customer base consisting of consumers of low socioeconomic status in central urban areas drives larger, more expensive supermarkets to relocate to suburban areas of more wealth in order to create a customer base of people who have more money to spend on food (Larsen and Gilliland 2008).

Trends show that higher income areas with more Caucasian residents currently have more chain supermarkets and fewer convenience stores, while lower income areas with less Caucasian residents currently have more convenience stores. Specifically, African American neighborhoods have access to only half the amount of chain supermarkets as their white counterparts in America (Powell et al. 2004). However, many studies suggest that this substantial difference in access based on socioeconomic deprivation is visible only in America (Pearce et al. 2007). For example, a study done by Pearce, Blakely, Witten, and Barley in 2007 notes that “With the exception of a few local studies, there is little evidence outside of North America to suggest that more deprived neighborhoods have less geographic access to shops selling healthy food. In fact, in New Zealand, the results at the national level suggest that access to supermarkets and other shops potentially selling healthy food is better in more deprived neighborhoods” (p. 6).

Convenience stores are more prevalent among areas lacking supermarkets and are more likely to have less nutritionally valuable food. Instead, these stores typically sell packaged food containing high levels of sodium and refined sugars (Powell et al. 2004). Since the 1980’s, dietary guidelines have suggested a lowered intake of both sugar and salt, along with saturated fats (Mennell et al. 1992). Shoppers who mainly buy food from convenience stores are less likely to meet their recommended daily nutrient values because they are simply consuming the wrong foods. However, foods made with ingredients such as sugar and salt are cheaper and more available to those within close proximity to convenience stores. Despite discouragement from dietitians, these are the foods that are ultimately consumed more frequently. Immediate availability within budget certainly serves as a strong predictor of consumption.
Trends suggest that food stores typically set prices at levels affordable to residents of nearby neighborhoods. Neighborhoods whose residents display characteristics of medium to high socioeconomic status tend to have greater access to supermarkets and stores with a slightly greater variety of fresh fruits and vegetables (Ball, Timperio, and Crawford 2008). However, prices of the same fruits and vegetables sold at nearly all food stores were shown to be significantly higher in these stores. Supermarkets within close proximity to neighborhoods of high socioeconomic status also showed a slightly greater variety in the fruits and vegetables available, meaning that more exotic, rare produce was more likely to be found at these supermarkets rather than at convenience stores or small grocery stores (Ball et al. 2008).

Such poor access to supermarkets and the nutritious food sold in them means that inevitably, other food suppliers will move into neighborhoods of deprivation. These suppliers are more frequently becoming fast food establishments, whose food not only lacks the nutrition found at supermarkets, but adds in additional fat, sodium and sugar.

**FAST FOOD CONSUMPTION**

In contrast to the limited availability of supermarkets to socioeconomically deprived areas, fast food establishments follow the opposite pattern; fast food restaurants are more likely to be found in less affluent neighborhoods. In areas of high socioeconomic status, travel distance to fast food establishments has been found to equal twice as much as the travel distance for areas of low socioeconomic status (Pearce et al. 2007).

It has also been noted that among schools where the students were of lower socioeconomic status, there is closer geographic access to fast food restaurants. This trend was particularly visible among schools with high percentages of black students. The same study also noted that in New York City, fast food restaurants were actually most concentrated around predominantly black high schools of high income much more so than predominantly black high schools of low income (Kwaate and Low 2010). This could indicate that race is just as powerful as economic status, and that socioeconomic status is a multi-faceted indicator.

Education is another major factor that influences nutritional decisions. Those with a higher level of education, particularly greater than a grade school education are more likely to have been exposed to information regarding nutritional requirements. It is also likely that in this case, education is also independently associated with economic status. This increases the likelihood that those with a higher education also have more money, meaning they have access to healthier foods. A study conducted by Thornton, Bentley, and Kavanagh in 2010, showed results that “In models adjusted for confounders, having either vocational education or no post-school qualifications were both significantly associated with an increased likelihood of purchasing fast food monthly.” (P. 875). “Blue collar” workers were also substantially more likely to consume fast food weekly than those whose occupations were considered “professional.” This comparison remained valid even when all other indicators of socioeconomic status were considered (Thornton 2010).
The strongest indicator shown was income. The same study conducted by Thornton, Bentley and Kavanagh (2010) showed that “In adjusted models, we found that income was more strongly related to the purchasing of fast food weekly. Compared with the highest income earners, those in the lowest income households were over four times more likely to purchase fast food frequently.” (P.875) In essence, this can be interpreted as those who earn the least consume four times as much fast food as those who earn the most. The study did note that this observation might be partially attributed to the increased likelihood of “blue collar” workers working irregular hours and overtime hours. And therefore, more expensive sit-down restaurants were not always an option. Instead, workers opt for quick and inexpensive fast food that can be obtained and consumed quickly on breaks and before or after a long shift, when fast food establishments may be the only ones open (Thornton 2010). This validates the meaning of the terms “fast food” and “convenience store”; their purpose is not to provide nourishment, but rather to serve quickly and conveniently.

All of these indicators independently point towards the same trend of increased consumption of fast food by those whose socioeconomic status is categorized as low. This improves the validity of the findings because it can be assured that while the various factors of socioeconomic status certainly affect each other, this does not account for visible trends. Ultimately, these factors discussed lead to increased or decreased consumption of nutritious food from larger supermarkets, processed food from smaller food stores and fast food.

NUTRITION ADEQUACY

The point of measuring frequency of consumption of the various food providers is to assess overall nutritional value of the diets of people of varying socioeconomic status. A study conducted by Dubois and Girard (2001) showed that levels of nutrient intake were negatively graded with social status. This study looked at four different indicators of socioeconomic status to further assess whether results varied from when these indicators were assessed individually versus when they were combined. These four indicators were relative education, income level, working class status and a global socioeconomic status scale.

All the factors were found to individually show a negative gradient with nutrient intake, but all the factors work in different ways. “For example education level is important for the comprehension of the information regarding the relationship between diet and health on a long-term basis. Family income plays a direct role in food expenditures in stores and restaurants, while the type and place of work could relate to food availability at lunch time and time allowed for meal preparation and consumption.” (P. 380). This illustrates that different factors can more directly or indirectly play a role in access. While income immediately dictates what can and cannot be bought, education affects what is known about certain foods, and increases the likelihood of these foods being purchased (Dubois and Girard 2001).
In the instances of malnutrition among those of low socioeconomic status, it is interesting to note that most of the malnutrition was not due to inadequate food supply or starvation. It is difficult to measure true malnutrition, because it takes various forms, and nutritional needs vary greatly from person to person. It is reasonable to assume that most people do not achieve perfect levels of every recommended nutrient, but true imbalances often result in health issues. In developing countries, these health issues generally stem from hunger and lack of vital nutrients. By contrast, malnutrition in developed countries more often stems from an overabundance of the types of food that are suggested to be eaten only in moderation. While developing countries simply do not have enough to eat, some developed countries eat too much of the wrong foods, leaving no room for the right foods. In both cases, the vital nutrients are not consumed (Church 2007).

Race has also been found to be a telling factor of overall nutritional intake. A study conducted in metropolitan Detroit by Fahlman, McCaughtry, Martin, and Shen (2010) compared nutritional knowledge and the actual diets of black students of low socioeconomic status versus white students of higher socioeconomic status. As a part of their public education, these students had received between two and three weeks of nutritional education at school. The results support the notion that increased consumption of nutritious food decreases consumption of less nutritious food, and vice versa. The black students of low socioeconomic status were not as likely as the white students to meet the daily recommended levels of nutrients. They were however, more likely to consume “empty-calorie food, meat, and fried food and less likely to eat fruit, vegetables, dairy products, and grains.” (P. 13). The results of the tests assessing nutritional knowledge may partially account for why these variations in diet exist. Black students were far less knowledgeable about nutrition in general, and scored lower on tests asking how much of certain food groups are to be eaten daily, and which food groups are the most vital. These students also could not as easily draw the connections between diet and disease. The latter point is perhaps the most important because the entire point of a healthy diet is a healthy life.

CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed the literature on how socioeconomic factors affect the following varying aspects of access to nutritional food: food store access, fast food consumption, overall nutritional adequacy of foods consumed. Access to various types of grocery stores is mainly impacted by geographic location of neighborhood, and determines the type of food that will be offered at available food stores and how much it will cost. Fast food consumption often replaces nutritional food when nutritious food is either not geographically close enough or too expensive. Overall nutritional quality of foods consumed has been shown to follow a positive gradient which illustrates that higher socioeconomic status means greater likelihood of access to nutritional food, and consequently a nutritious diet (Dubois and Girard 2001). The three aspects assessed are extremely interconnected, as are the factors of socioeconomic status. The research and literature in this subject area is very clear because it has been shown that each factor of socioeconomic status independently supports very similar
findings. This is important because the term “socioeconomic status” refers to a wide spectrum of factors, each of which must be assessed individually to ensure validity in findings.

Varying classes, races, education levels, occupations and geographic domestic locations have all shown independent correlations with access to nutritional food, as well as combined correlations. Therefore, each factor of socioeconomic status has its own effects, as well as interconnectedness with the other factors. It is clear that a higher socioeconomic status greatly improves the chances of receiving a nutritious, healthy diet.

REFERENCES


The Effects of Social Integration on Stress and Risk of Depression in College Students

Cristina Calderan

ABSTRACT

This study looks at how college students’ levels of social integration in the campus community affects their feelings of stress and depression. The sample of undergraduate students (N = 378) completed a survey designed to measure various social aspects of college life. Four questions which demonstrated a relationship between social integration and depression were specifically used to obtain data for this study. However, this study found no significance relating social integration and stress. Further research would benefit from a more focused research question as well as a stratified sampling method.

INTRODUCTION

College is a time of change, new experiences, and independence. Along with these more enjoyable aspects comes the pressures of academia, the reality of being away from home, and the responsibility of taking care of one’s self. Some students cope with this better than others, however, stress is still a fairly universal experience despite the different circumstances that create it. Stressful situations and prolonged exposure to stress can lead to an increased risk for depression, which is more common among college students than it was only a decade ago (U.S. National Library of Medicine 2011; Neighmond 2011). It has been reported that a common time for people to experience depression for the first time is between the ages of 18 to 24, the ages of most college students (Lifespan 2011). This is a cause for concern, particularly as depression can lead to suicide and suicide is the third leading cause of death in the college population of America (Suicide Prevention and Resource Center 2009). To help prevent stress and depression it has been recommended that students participate in extracurricular activities which can help develop support networks of friends (Center for Disease Control 2011; Mental Health America 2011). The current study aims to establish if being socially integrated with the campus community is beneficial to the mental health of students by helping to establish a reliable support network of friends, or if being too involved only increases stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress

Established in the literature as having negative effects on ones physical and psychological health, stress has been used in multiple studies, sometimes as an independent
variable and at other times a dependent variable (Herrero and Gracia 2004; Friedlander et. al 2007; Flynn, Kecmanovic, and Alloy 2009; Auerbach et al. 2011). Each study reviewed looks at stress as a variable and also includes social support as another factor, indicating that the two are connected in some way. One study looks at multiple variables’ effects on social integration; one of those variables is perceived stress (Herrero and Gracia 2004). While the independent and dependent variables are opposite from this research, Herrero and Gracia’s (2004) study found that among the undergraduates sampled, those who have higher levels of perceived stress are less likely to create and maintain friendships or activities within community organizations. This could have implications for the current study. If stress inhibits participation and a lack of participation reduces the opportunity for social integration, which may help decrease stress, a negative cycle could be created. This is similar to the concept considered in another study, where the researchers examine if dissatisfaction with social support causes people who are “depressive ruminators” to intentionally create stress in their social relationships. In this case the researchers find the relationship to positive, which creates negative consequences by also preventing people from being socially integrated (Flynn et. al 2009). Auerbach et. al (2011) study the relationship between social support, stress, and depressive symptoms in adolescents. They find that stress is a mechanism between total, parental, and classmate social support and depressive symptoms, but not with peer social support. Although stress is not researched in exactly the same fashion as the current study, its importance in relation to depression is highlighted through this literature.

*Depression*

Depression is much more widely researched as a dependent variable than stress is, particularly in relation to social support or connectedness. In the three studies reviewed that contained depression as a dependent variable, all found significant relationships between their independent variable, which often included some aspect of social integration and depression (Williams and Galliher 2006; Armstrong and Oomen-Early 2009; Auerbach et. al 2011). However, the study by Auerbach et. al only finds that low support by parents and classmates is correlated with higher depressive symptoms. When it comes to social support provided by peers they find no significant relationship with depressive symptoms for adolescents; it is acknowledged that findings may differ for college age students who tend to rely on peer social networks more than adolescents (2011). Depression is noted to be a “significant health concern on college campuses” by Armstrong and Oomen-Early (2009:523) who researched whether being part of a team as an athlete results in better social connectedness and less risk of depressive symptoms for students than those who are non-athletes. They find that athletes generally had higher levels of social connectedness which is correlated with lower levels of depression (Armstrong and Oomen-Early 2009). Part of what Williams and Galliher sought to examine is how social support and connectedness contributed to depression in college students (2006). Results of their study reveal that there are strong relationships between the two, though social support is found to have more indirect effects while social connectedness has a stronger direct relationship with experience of depressive feelings (Williams and Galliher 2006). The results of the literature maintain the idea of social functioning being essential to the
psychological and physical well-being (Williams and Galliher 2006), as well as supporting the relevance of the current study.

Each of these studies relates stress, depression or depressive symptoms, and some form of social support or connectedness. However, of those that use college students in their sample some still have a limited frame for the purpose of the current study, one to student athletes and one to first-year students (Friedlander et. al 2007; Armstrong and Oomen-Early 2009). Perhaps the most relatable study to the current research was conducted by Auberbach et. al, yet it is not done with college age students, leaving a gap in the literature (2011). This study makes an effort to fill a part of that gap by researching how social integration affects stress and depression levels. The three hypotheses that are used are:

HYPOTHESIS 1: The amount of social integration experienced by a college student could increase stress levels.

HYPOTHESIS 2: The amount of social integration experienced by a college student could decrease stress levels.

HYPOTHESIS 3: The amount of social integration experienced by a college student has a corresponding effect on the chance of becoming depressed.

In opposition to these three hypotheses, the null hypotheses of this study are that (1) there is no relationship between the amount of social integration experienced by a college student and stress levels and (2) there is no relationship between the amount of social integration experienced by a college student and the risk of becoming depressed.

METHODS

Procedure

A convenience sample of students in four introductory sociology classes at the University of New Hampshire is used as the sampling frame for this research study. The professors were contacted at the beginning of the semester and each agreed to allow that a survey be fielded to their class. A member of the Social Research Methods (SOC601) read a verbal recruitment statement to the participants, with those under eighteen being asked not to participate. Participation was completely voluntary and anonymous. Students who chose to take part were given a 117 question survey that had been compiled by the students in SOC601. No compensation was given and participants risked experiencing some discomfort when answering certain questions due to the slightly personal nature of them. However, participants may have directly benefited from the experience of completing a sociological survey and observing what sociology majors study. Participants may have also indirectly benefited by helping student researchers have a greater understanding of undergraduate perspectives and experiences. The benefits of using this convenience sample are that it had no cost, limited time
demands, and allows for a larger amount of responses from which to generate results. Conversely, it creates the limitation of only surveying students in sociology classes, who may not be representative of the entire undergraduate population.

Participants

Of the four classes surveyed, 378 surveys were handed out and returned, though not every question was answered by all participants, resulting in varying response rates. The sample is composed mostly of women, of those who identified their gender (n=332) there are 71.7% who identified themselves as female. Only 27.1% identified themselves as male, no participant identified as transgender, .3% identified as intersex, and .3% identified as queer. Of those who responded to the question about class standing (n= 339) the majority are freshmen (41.9%). Sophomores composed 34% of the sample, juniors 16.9%, seniors 6.6%, and .6% classified themselves as other.

Conceptualization and Operationalization

Social support and social connectedness are the variables most commonly used in research. Social support generally refers to an individual’s perception on the availability of interpersonal resources for emotional support and social connectedness refers to a general “sense of self in relation to the world” (Friedlander et. al 2007; Williams and Galliher 2006). According to Herrero and Gracia (2004) social integration within a community can be defined as a combination of actual participation in the community and a sense of connectedness with the community (710). In this study, social integration is conceptualized very similarly to the definition given by Herrero and Gracia. Furthermore a “sense of connectedness” is understood to include social support and connectedness as aspects referring to a strong social network.

Measurement

Social Integration. Social integration is measured using two questions. One measured the actual number of clubs, sports teams, or other group activities students participated in on a weekly basis. The second question measures whether or not students develop strong friendships, meaning they talk to people and spend time with them outside of the organized activity, through clubs, sports teams, or other groups. Stress. Stress is measured by having students respond to the statement “during the school year I feel stressed” with response categories ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Depression. To measure depression, which is defined on the survey as “severe despondency and dejection, accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy”, students are asked how often in the last month they had experienced feelings of depression.

RESULTS
All collected data is analyzed using the SPSS statistics program and results are generated using descriptive frequency charts and cross-tabulations, including a Pearson chi-square test. As can be seen in Figure 1 below, an overwhelming majority of respondents state that they have never been diagnosed with depression by a health professional. Only 14% said they have been officially diagnosed with it, but 83.5% have never been diagnosed. A smaller percentage (1.4%) did not know, and 1.1% declined to answer. As so few people have actually been diagnosed with depression in this sample, it may be more difficult to discern if the effect of social integration on depression levels is representative, however these numbers do not account for those who experience depressive symptoms but do not get diagnosed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Been Diagnosed with Depression</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four cross-tabulations and Pearson chi² tests are calculated for comparison: (1) number of clubs participated in on a weekly basis and feelings of depression in the last month (2) number of clubs participated in on a weekly basis and feeling stressed during the school year (3) developing strong friendships through clubs and feelings of depression and (4) developing strong friendships through clubs and feeling stressed during the school year. Significance is measured at an alpha level of .05 for all comparisons. For the questions on developing strong friendships through clubs and feeling stressed during the school year, response categories are collapsed. “Strongly agree” and “agree” are combined into one category and “strongly disagree” and “disagree” into one category, to make analysis slightly easier. Additionally the category “does not know/does not apply” is eliminated. The two categories on the question about feelings of depression are also collapsed and due to the small number of responses, “always” and “often” are combined.

The comparison for number of clubs and feelings of depression yields a probability of .410 which is not significant at the .05 level. The number of clubs and feeling stressed during the school year, is also not significant, with a probability of .703.

Overall students who agree that they make strong friendships through the clubs, sports teams, or groups they were involved in, report a lower rate of experiencing depressive feelings in the past month. Observing the results in Figure 2, it can be seen that of those who agreed they make strong friendships 35.1% have never experienced depressive feelings in the past month and almost 39% have rarely experienced depressive feelings. About 16% of participants agreeing say that they sometimes have felt depressed in the last month, and only 10% of those with strong friendships say they often have depressed feelings. Comparatively, 25.7% of
respondents who disagree that they make strong friendships through club participation often feel depressed, whereas only 20% say they never have experienced feelings of depression in the past month. While 40% of those who disagree about making strong friendships say they rarely experience depressive feelings, these findings are significant with a probability level of .007.

Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depressive Feelings</th>
<th>*</th>
<th>Strong Friendships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson chi²: 17.812 Probability: .007

The results of comparing strong friendships through clubs and feeling stressed during the school year have a probability of .307 and therefore are not significant.

DISCUSSION

The lack of significance concerning participation of clubs on a weekly basis in both comparisons is somewhat surprising, though less than ten percent of respondents participate in three or more clubs, sports teams, or other group activities. It is reasonable that participation in no groups or participation in only one or two groups would not cause high stress or depression levels. That feeling stressed during the school year is not significant in either comparison is also surprising, particularly as it leads to the failure to reject the first null hypothesis, showing that for this study there is no relationship between social integration and stress levels. For those to whom it applied, developing strong friendships as a result of participation in clubs, sports teams or other group activities did display significance in decreasing feelings of depression in the last month. This result follows with the expectations of this study and allows for the rejection of the second null hypothesis, proving that there is a relationship between social integration and risk of depressive feelings. However, as the definition of social integration used for this study was two-fold, it must be noted that the first part of the definition, that of actual participation in the community did not display a relationship to the risk of depressive feelings. It is only the second part, that of a sense of connectedness, or having a
network of social support, that shows a relationship. This relationship between strong social support and a decreased risk of depression is consistent with current research.

CONCLUSION

The main finding of this research study is that there is a significant relationship between social integration, as measured by strong friendships made as a result of participation in clubs, sports teams, or other group activities, and risk of depressive feelings, measured by the frequency of depressive feelings within the past month. Results pertaining to level of participation in clubs, sports teams, or group activities and stress levels are not significant. These results show that the research question prompting this study is significant and has sociological value. The relationship between the variables of social integration and depression as shown by this study, demonstrates the need for further research in this area. This could potentially help college health centers develop stronger programs for catering to the needs of students.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study contains many limitations, one of which is the initial clarity and intent of the research question and hypothesis; future research would benefit from narrowing the topic and perhaps conducting several smaller, more specific studies. Some of the initial research questions included on the survey could not be successfully used in data analysis as they ended up being double-barreled questions. Simpler, more direct questions would be useful in future research. Additionally, no specific definition for stress was given which left the interpretation of the feeling up to participants. Another minor limitation of this study is that less than one-fifth of participants responded that they had been diagnosed with depression, which makes it slightly more difficult to see if there is a true relationship between depression and social integration. Future studies conducted on this topic or similar topics, may benefit more from using either a stratified sample or contingency questions on the survey.

REFERENCES


Funding for the Future

Mackenzie Colburn

ABSTRACT

This research paper touches on the fundamental issues surrounding inequality in the American educational system, specifically between race and class. Prior research has indicated that minorities and lower class families experience far less ideal and adequate educations than white families with higher incomes. This paper brings together work done by Jonathon Kozol and the Civil Rights Project while using examples from New Hampshire schools in order to emphasize the disparate treatment of children in American schools.

The amount of materials a school uses to administer learning and engage students in extra-curricular activities is obviously dependent on the amount of money they have available for funding. The quality of teachers is also dependent on how much a school’s district can offer as an annual salary based on the teacher’s qualifications, (i.e. experience and number of degrees attained). Children who are exposed to more in-depth and widespread learning are more likely to be cultured and educated by the time they go to college or begin working. Unfortunately, the appropriate funding needed for each child to experience the level of cultivation that is essential for obtaining the knowledge and confidence to succeed is not equally dispersed. Because funding comes from property tax rates, lower income families and minorities are negatively affected. Attitudes revolving around race are arguably the determining factors pushing the segregation that separates many families from living in communities that provide a more than adequate education.

Many people would expect or at least agree that funding for public schools in America should be equal in order to provide each child with the same tools to achieve their educational and/or career goals. However, that is not how public educational funding works in America. The amount of funding a school receives is dependent on that district’s property tax rate and rates vary by each district. Therefore, the more property taxes a district pays, the more resources their public schools receive and ultimately a better education is provided to those children. In other words, if you’re wealthy and live in a big house within a nice community then you pay higher property taxes. Therefore, you contribute more to the public school in your district where your children experience ample resources in the education system. However, just forty minutes away in the bustling inner-city, another family lives in a run down two bedroom apartment in a crime infested neighborhood where they pay much less in property taxes. Do they enjoy their community? Would you? Probably not, but they have to live there because they cannot afford a better living situation. Their children have to attend the local elementary school with broken windows and a rodent problem where they have limited resources and overcrowded classrooms (Kozol 2005). The children in these two families were given a life they
had little choice in and absolutely no responsibility for. The disparate educations given to children based off of geographical location and amount of parental income, rather than the child’s own abilities and aspirations, is unjust.

In his book, *The Shame of the Nation*, Jonathan Kozol exemplifies this issue by the wealthy parents who have the money to either move to a better district or apply to be accepted in a prestigious school. The end result is that lower class families are left behind in these subpar schools. Lower income families do not have the financial or social capital required to either move to a better community or gain acceptance to a prestigious school for their children. The application process is very extensive and requires a lot of preparation. Many lower income families may not have the time to practice interview questions with their child or the money to hire a consultant to help. They also are more likely to lack the networks to these institutions that can help with advising about preparation (Kozol 2005). In sum, lower income families are at a disadvantage because they do not have the resources, or the social capital to compete with these wealthy families that are able to provide so much for their children. A segregation of schooling is the result when privileged families benefit and unprivileged families must accept what they are handed within the education system.

The differences between an outstanding and adequate school are stark. Kozol (2005) cited that in the 2001-2002 school year, there was about an $8,000 difference in spending per pupil from the lowest to highest spending districts on Long Island, New York (p. 151). When considering what the $8,000 provides to students, it is no wonder why competition to get into such selective schools is so fierce. Hunter College Elementary School in New York City uses tables and chairs instead of desks among other tactics to help the children develop necessary skills and understanding of what they are learning (Kozol 2005). By providing such a rich learning experience, these prestigious schools set their students up to continue on through prestigious high schools and universities. They provide students with a deep knowledge and understanding that sets them apart from the students that attend ordinary elementary schools.

In comparison, students in a fourth grade classroom from Boston described what they thought of their school. One student wrote, “I see dirty boards and I see papers on the floor. I see an old browken window...I see cracks in the walls and...pigeons flying all over the school.” Another student wrote, “I see new teachers omots every day,” (Kozol 2005; 162). The conditions that these children are exposed to are unthinkable and it is hard to believe that they encourage learning. These inner city schools do not provide a safe and stimulating environment for their students. They are short on supplies that encourage learning such as books, pencils, and project materials. Instead of promoting widespread knowledge, a lot of these inner city schools prepare their students for managerial work and standardized testing. Most students are not even given options (Kozol 2005). The saddest part is that most of the students blame themselves for their situations. When they are exposed to what students from better schools experience compared to what they have, for example, new playgrounds and extensive libraries, they begin to wonder why they do not have those simple luxuries. These feelings of doubt spiral
into a self-fulfilling prophecy where the students will begin to believe that they do not deserve and cannot have a better education (Kozol 2005).

These patterns of segregation are not only present in Boston and New York inner-city schools. They are visible throughout the country and even in places one would not expect. These patterns can be examined throughout the education system of New Hampshire. Statistics from the New Hampshire Board of Education were compared between two different districts throughout the state: Durham and Manchester. Durham is located in the seacoast region in the eastern part of the state with 2,037 students enrolled in K-12 in the district. Manchester is located in the center of the state and is one of New Hampshire’s largest cities with 15,732 students enrolled in K-12 in the district (NH Department of Education, 2010). Each of these districts pays different rates on their educational tax. In Durham, 15.7% of taxes go to education. Only 6.7% of taxes go to Manchester’s schools (NH Property Tax Rates, 2011). When comparing the schools’ student-teacher ratios, annual cost per pupil, pupil demographics, and number of safety incidents to the tax rates and school population, it is evident that more attention is given to schools in better off communities and a denser white population.

For example, the district that spent the most on each of their students in the 2009-2010 school year was Durham with $15,748. There were 11 students for every teacher and only 23 safety incidents per 1,000 students in a year. 92% of the students were white and only 5% were on reduced or free lunch (NH Department of Education). When comparing Durham to Manchester, the social differences between the students are apparent. Manchester spent $9,375 per student. In 2010-2011, there were 14 students per 6 teachers and 154 safety incidents per 1,000 students in that year. Only 69% of the students were white and 46% of the students were on reduced or free lunch (NH Department of Education 2010). Not only is there a difference between the socioeconomic status of these students, depicted by percent of reduced lunches and property tax rates their parents pay, but the racial makeup is disparate as well. Kozol (2005) stated that, “a segregated inner-city school is ‘almost six times as likely’ to be a school of concentrated poverty as is a school that has an overwhelmingly white population” (p. 20). These demographic patterns resonate not only through inner cities but throughout other parts of the nation too, as shown in New Hampshire. Although the levels of racial and socioeconomic segregation are not as prominent in New Hampshire schools in comparison to Boston or New York, it does exist.

Is it mere coincidence that poor minorities are receiving less of an education than middle and upper class whites? Tara Jackson (2004) seems to think it is not. In her study contributing to the Civil Rights Project, Jackson found that personal racial preferences are the greatest determinant factor for where people live followed by housing market discrimination and economic differences. The argument for economic differences driving racial housing segregation relies on the assumption that non-white populations simply cannot afford the same housing that white populations can and therefore are separated by economic community lines. However, research is inconsistent on this explanation. Racial discrimination in the housing market takes the theory a step further by suggesting that real estate agents, banks, and lenders
control segregation by limiting the residential mobility of non-white populations. They do this by providing them with fewer residential options that pin point them in and away from certain neighborhoods. However, it is through racial preferences that most affect where a family will choose to reside. Jackson noted that whites prefer lower percentages of diversity in their neighborhoods than minorities do and that these preferences are what cause segregation (Jackson 2004). If a community becomes too diverse, then whites with these racial attitudes will move to more desirable communities, if their finances allow for it. Meanwhile, minorities can withstand higher levels of minority population in their area so they stay in these communities while white families leave.

The end result is communities filled with white families with uniform attitudes and communities left with black and Hispanic families. These minorities end up getting stuck there because of plummeting property values due to the white flight and lack of demand to live in a minority neighborhood (Brown Lecture 10/17/11). Because property values drop in these neighborhoods, the monetary support towards education from property tax rates diminishes with them. It is a vicious cycle where because of racial discrimination and prejudice; minorities are forced into living situations where it is increasingly hard to escape due to the fall in property values. Additionally, property taxes that feed into the education system of that district depend on those property values. In the end, lower income and minority children face the burden of people that consciously and even subconsciously discriminate against race.

Nearly sixty years ago, in Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the Supreme Court decided that segregation of schools by race went against the Fourteenth Amendment and wheels were set in motion to remedy this issue. However, it is evident that racial segregation exists still today. This segregation has more of an impact on children than one would expect. Edelman and Jones (2004) claim that black children are nearly twice as likely to drop out of school as white children. Also, a black boy has a one in fifty-five chance of earning a master’s degree but a one in five chance of going to prison before he turns thirty (p. 134). The impact does not only affect their experience in school, what they learn, and how they view themselves but it affects their futures as well. The fact that black men are more likely to go to jail than get a master’s degree by that magnitude is an example of how seriously some children are being affected.

In conclusion, the issues surrounding segregation are almost as apparent as they were sixty years ago. Despite efforts made to give children equal opportunities to learn, not every child is receiving the education they deserve. Patterns of racial and class segregation are widespread throughout the country and even exist in unexpected places, like in New Hampshire. Racial preferences, housing discrimination, and economic differences have been used to explain segregation in America. Despite any efforts by the government and the Supreme Court, full integration can be said to only be achieved when the American people have more similar and favorable racial attitudes and can exist side by side whether that is in the classroom or in the community. Funding each child an equal education provides them with a
future they can choose for themselves without the limitations of scarce resources, inexperienced teachers, and hopeless attitudes.

REFERENCES

Brown, Benjamin. 2011. Class Lecture. Presented at University of New Hampshire, October 17, Durham, NH.


The Effect of Working for Pay during the School Year on Academic Achievement

Makenzie Keene

ABSTRACT

Are college students who hold paying jobs systematically disadvantaged in terms of academic achievement? This study draws on a sample of 340 undergraduate students at a large public university to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Socioeconomic status was measured by the presence of a paid job during the school year, and achievement was measured using GPA. The findings indicate that students who worked during the school year were less likely to be “A” students than students who did not work during the school year. This relationship was more pronounced for female college students than for male college students. Future research on this topic should use a larger sample that is more representative of the population, in order to generalize these results. The results of this study show possible reproduction of inequality present in post-secondary education.

INTRODUCTION

Are college students who hold paying jobs systematically disadvantaged in terms of academic achievement? Education is one of the most important social institutions in our world. School is the main arena where we obtain academic, social, and cultural knowledge. Some students are able to utilize this knowledge to improve their position in society. However, there are many students who are systematically disadvantaged due to their socioeconomic status (SES). Lack of resources, a stressful home life, and especially a lack of time for studying can impact how students perform in the classroom. This study seeks to expand on previous research in order to show the relationship between SES and academic achievement, specifically for college students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiple research studies have examined the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Most of these studies have found that those of lower SES have lower levels of academic achievement. However, these variables are measured in various different ways.

Albrecht and Albrecht (2010) describe the social importance of education as a way for the disadvantaged to elevate themselves in society. However, the possibility for the reproduction of inequality within the educational system is also addressed. Those who are
More economically advantaged are believed to have higher education goals, get better grades in school, perform better on tests, and are more likely to finish high school and attend college (Albrecht and Albrecht 2010). In this study socioeconomic status is measured by using household income and parent’s educational attainment. Academic achievement is measured by using GPA and percentile rank in high school. Using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and data analysis researchers find a positive significant relationship between household income and high school GPA and parent’s education level and GPA (Albrecht and Albrecht 2010). This study supports the idea that socioeconomic status has an effect on academic achievement.

Edgerton, Peter and Roberts (2008) focus on the relationships among education, economic opportunity, and the reproduction of inequality. They describe education as the “Great Equalizer”, when in reality there is inequality present within the educational system as well. One of the main hypotheses in this study expresses the belief in a positive significant relationship between socioeconomic status and all academic achievement measures. A large survey was used to obtain information about the achievement levels of 15 year old students in math, reading and science. In order to measure these subjects, students were given a test, and scores were then generated by how many questions students got wrong and the difficulty of those questions. Socioeconomic status was measured by parents’ education levels, occupational status, and an index of household possessions. The researchers found a positive significant relationship between their measures of socioeconomic status and their measures of academic achievement. This study suggests that higher socioeconomic status leads to a higher level of academic achievement for students.

As shown above, many studies rely on parent income to measure socioeconomic status. This measure is again used in a study by Crosnoe (2009), however, this number is then compared to the Census poverty threshold in order to generalize low, middle, and high class. This study also examines the relationship between SES and academic achievement, but it looks at both individual students and public high schools. A stratified sampling technique was used with a random selection of high schools. Those incomes that were up to 185% of the poverty threshold were considered lower class. Those incomes that were anywhere from 185% to 300% of the poverty threshold were considered middle class, and incomes higher than 300% of the threshold were considered high class. Academic achievement is measured using students GPAs, exposure to challenging work in school, and ability to meet college requirements. The authors found that those students of middle or high family income had better grades and less depressive symptoms than low income students (Crosnoe 2009). They also found a positive significant relationship between SES and academic achievement.

Other studies have analyzed the relationship between SES and academic achievement using qualitative methods. In a study by Dunne and Gazeley (2008), in-depth interviews were performed in order to obtain information from teachers about students’ achievement levels. Teachers were able to give their own definitions of academic achievement, so researchers had little control over definitions for the study which is a limitation. Biographical information was
collected about pupils, and then teachers were asked to identify which students were underachieving. In addition, teachers were also asked to identify the perceived social class of those students. Of the students that were considered underachievers, 70% were also considered to be low/working class (Dunne and Gazeley 2008). This study shows that even when using qualitative data, the relationship between SES and academic achievement remains the same.

As seen above, previous research has focused on a few general measures of SES and mostly high school or elementary school students. Household income and parents’ education levels are strong measures of SES for students, especially in primary or secondary school. However, these may not be good measures of SES for college students. This is due to the fact that many college students live independently from their parents and have their own incomes and expenses. There is little research that examines the relationship between SES and achievement for college students. Since college students have already taken the step to better their education, researchers may overlook the fact that inequality in education could still be present. Just as SES affects academic achievement in high school it may affect academic achievement in college. This reproduces inequality within one of the main institutions that is- at least superficially- meant to break the cycle of inequality. For these reasons, this study will measure the SES of college students, through the presence of a paid job during the school year. Academic achievement will be measured using GPA.

HYPOTHESES

The main hypothesis for this research project states that working for pay during the semester negatively affects student’s grade point averages. This means that students who work for pay during the semester will have lower grade point averages than students who do not work for pay during the semester. Alternatively there may be no relationship between working for pay during the semester and GPA.

METHODS

Sampling

In order to find a sample for this research project, convenience sampling was used. Professors in four large general education classes at a large public university were contacted, and agreed to have their students participate. A survey was administered during class time to students in order to collect data. Students were assured that the survey was completely anonymous, and reminded that their participation was greatly appreciated. There was no compensation.

There was limited psychological risk to the participants, as some questions were very personal. Participants benefitted by having the satisfaction of helping other students. The community could also benefit, because there will be a greater understanding of the makeup of
the student body. This could lead to university policy changes that could better the community as a whole.

By using convenience sampling researchers were able to save time, money, and effort. There was no need to find a sampling frame, use a random number generator, or contact countless professors at the university. Classes that fulfilled a general education requirement were chosen in the hope that this would bring a diverse sample of students. However, there are limitations to convenience sampling. Due to the fact that the sample was not chosen using random sampling, the results cannot be directly generalized to the university population, or the U.S. college student population. There can be no assurance that this sample is representative of either of these populations.

Variables

The underlying goal of this research project is to further examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. As discussed above, previous research has found a negative relationship between SES and academic achievement. However, these researchers often use parents’ income and educational attainment as measures of the students’ SES (Albrecht and Albrecht 2010; Edgerton, Peter and Roberts 2008; Crosnoe 2009). These measures do not necessarily represent the SES of a college student. It is also important to measure whether or not students have to work during the year in order to pay for school or living expenses. For this reason, the independent variable in this study is whether or not respondents hold a paid job during the semester. This variable is measured with the following survey question “During the school year, about how many hours per week do you work for a paid job?” Response options included an option for those who do not work for pay during the school year, five different options for hours worked per week, and two options for those who wished not to respond or did not know. During data analysis categories were collapsed in order to have a group of those who work and those who do not work.

A student’s grade point average is a relatively universal measure of their academic achievement. For this purpose, GPA will be used as the dependent variable to measure academic achievement. This was measured with the following survey question “What is your overall grade point average (GPA)?” Freshmen were asked to provide their overall high school GPA. Response options were divided into five different ranges for GPA, which were accompanied by their associated letter grade (i.e. A, B, C, D, F). Again, categories were collapsed during data analysis. Few respondents answered in the C, D or F range. This is most likely due to the small sample size. Therefore, the categories were collapsed into those respondents who were “A” students, and then all of the respondents with a less than an “A” average.
RESULTS

In order to discover the relationship between working for pay during the semester and GPA, raw data from the surveys was analyzed using Small STATA 10. Characteristics of the sample as well as cross-tabulations of the variables are reported below.

Sample Characteristics

The surveys generated approximately 340 respondents, out of the 394 that were given surveys. This produces a response rate of approximately 86%. Of those respondents almost 72% are female and 27% are male. Responses are available for multiple other measures of gender, but there were very few responses. This is reflected in Figure 1 below. According to university statistics, the population is 55% female and 45% male. Therefore it can be said that this sample is not representative of the gender breakdown at the university. Also included in Figure 1 is the breakdown of those who work for pay and those who do not. Approximately 51% of the sample work for pay during the semester and approximately 49% of the sample do not work for pay during the semester. Figure 1 also displays how GPA was condensed into students with “A” averages and students with averages below an “A”. Approximately 72% of students in this sample had averages below an “A”, and about 28% had “A” averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1. Sample Characteristics</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>71.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work for Pay</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>50.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do NOT Work</td>
<td>49.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GPA/A Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-A Students</td>
<td>72.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Students</td>
<td>27.81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-Tabulations

As seen in Figure 2 below, a cross-tabulation was conducted to show the relationship between working for pay during the school year and GPA (which has taken the form of “A” students and Non-A students). Results show that a majority of respondents (72%) fall into the Non-A category, but those students who work for pay were 8 percentage points more likely to
be Non-A students. Of the 28% of respondents that are “A” students, those who do not work are 8 percentage points more likely to be “A” students. This shows that there is a negative association between the two variables.

A chi-square test shows a probability value of .094, which means that the results are statistically significant at a .10 alpha level. These values indicate that there is less than a 10% chance that the significant relationship is due to some other unknown factor or error. Therefore at the .10 alpha level, the null hypothesis is rejected. Working for pay during the school year has a negative effect on GPA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Do NOT Work</th>
<th>Work for Pay</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.67-3.66 Non-A Students</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67.76%</td>
<td>76.22%</td>
<td>72.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.67-4.0 A Students</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.24%</td>
<td>23.78%</td>
<td>27.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pearsons Chi2= 2.8075**  **Pr= 0.094**

To further examine this relationship, the sample is broken up by gender and then the variables are analyzed, where the results are presented in Figure 3. When looking at female respondents, those who work for pay are about 14 percentage points more likely to be Non-A students. Those females who do not work for pay were 14 percentage points more likely to be “A” students. There is an association between these two variables. A chi-square test reveals a probability value of .030. This indicates that there is statistical significance at a .05 alpha level. It can be said that there is a less than 5% chance that this relationship is due to random outside factors or error. When comparing these female results to the results of all of the participants, it is evident that the relationship between work and GPA is even more significant for females. Therefore, the null hypothesis can again be rejected.

There is no significant relationship present for males or the “other gender” response categories. This is most likely due to the fact that the sample is not representative of the university population in terms of the male/female divide. If a larger, more representative sample was obtained it could be possible to find a significant relationship for male respondents as well.
CONCLUSION

A statistically significant relationship was found between the measures of socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Those who hold a paid job during the school year are less likely to be A students, than those who do not hold a paid job. The significant relationship is even stronger when simply looking at female respondents. Due to these results, the null hypothesis is rejected.

These findings are incredibly important for the university population as well as the United States population. The significant relationship discussed above shows reproduction of inequality at the college level. Those who work for pay during the school year, perhaps to pay for school or living expenses, are disadvantaged in terms of their academic achievement. This could have future implications when these students graduate and try to find jobs. They may not reach the professional level of those with higher GPA’s who already have a higher SES. These results could be very important to university administration when deciding where to cut funding and who to give financial aid to. In the future more attention and funding could go towards financial aid to ease the burden for many students. These results could also be helpful for U.S. government administrators, by showing the importance of funding for universities. In our tough economic climate, funding for education is being cut which may exacerbate this issue.

In order for this study and these results to really produce change at the university or within the U.S. government, methodological changes would need to be made. The sample for this study was obtained using convenience sampling. Therefore, the results cannot necessarily be generalized to the greater population at this university or college in general. The sample was not representative of the university population, especially in terms of gender. Also, the sample was quite small. Future research could use similar variables and techniques, but should use a larger sample size. Also, a random sampling technique should be used in order to obtain a representative sample that can be generalized to the greater population being measured. If this topic was examined further with these suggested changes in methodology, the lives of many students could be improved.
college students would change. Reproduction of inequality within one of our main social institutions could be reduced.

REFERENCES


The Impact of Multilingualism on Grade Point Average among College Undergraduates

Alexandra Kovalik

ABSTRACT

Very little research is available regarding the effects that multilingualism has on academic success. This specific study looks at 305 students at a large public university in the northeast who were surveyed about their grade point average and the number of languages that they are fluent in. After administering a survey to various preselected classrooms, data was entered and collated using STATA. The data shows that within our findings, there is no significant relationship between multilingualism and grade point average. Only 12% of our respondents were multilingual. 71% of multilingual students had a grade point average between 2.67 and 3.66, and 28% of students who spoke one language had a grade point average between 3.76 and 4.0. With further research, this study could have important implications for understanding multilingual student populations.

INTRODUCTION

There is a lot to be said for the ability to speak more than one language, and as globalization spreads, that ability could become even more important. Within our society, fluency in multiple languages is a growing trend, but it is also one that is understudied. By gaining information about multilingualism, and its impact on grade point average, we will have an opportunity to track success based on the number of languages that an individual can speak. With this research it might become clear that early second language education in more than one language should be implemented in our school system. Or, it might also become clear that multilingualism has no direct impact on success and should therefore not be mandated.

Multilingualism cannot only help to bridge gaps in communication, but it can also lead to more respect among people of different backgrounds. This shared respect for others of different cultural and social backgrounds can create cohesion within the world that has the potential to result in a better society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the continuing discussion surrounding multilingualism and its impact on success, there is very little research on the topic. Lutz and Crist (2009) authored one of the few articles that looks directly at multilingualism and grade point average. The study looks at data collected from a survey and compared the results to when the survey was re-administered. The results
show that overall students who have some sort of ability to speak Spanish have a higher GPA than those who do not. While this data seems useful to determine bilingualism’s effect on GPA, the results may be less reliable. Another study, by Coombs and Cebula (2009), used a survey and looked at rewards for language skills among nurses. The study examined data gathered from the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses. The data showed that there is really nothing to support the idea that bilingualism has an impact on earnings among nurses (Coombs and Cebula 2009). This data was examined from 2000 and 2004, however, and current research is warranted.

A third study by Martin (2010) uses case studies to examine the impact of multilingualism on a student’s identity. While this research doesn’t look at grade point average, which is a more tangible form of success, it uses personal experiences regarding schooling and multilingualism. All of the participants reported feelings of racism and exclusion due to the lack of space given to embrace their multilingualism; they felt a sense of segregation from these universities instead of unity. Rather than their multilingualism and culture having a positive impact on their experiences, these students felt that their cultural differences were ignored. Some of the participants actually reported attending complementary education programs to compensate for what was not being offered in regular classes. The study explores the importance but also lack of concern for and integration of those who are culturally different within their universities (Martin 2010). These case studies, while not directly connected to multilingualism and grade point average, are indicative of the negative impacts that can occur when multilingualism and different cultures are not addressed properly within the education system.

A final study by Milambiling (2011) looks at students’ personal assessments of their own multilingualism. This particular study investigates students who wish to learn English as another language. After analysis of various assessments, the author determined that students benefited from language appreciation that helped to “bring one language to another,” meaning that they used their language skills to help them when learning another language. While this study doesn’t look at grade point average, it is clear that multilingualism is present among students and that it needs to be addressed properly.

While much of the research that is present addresses multilingualism, almost none of the research focuses explicitly on grade point average. Previous studies all focus on various aspects of multilingualism yet none of them focus on a tangible form of academic success like the research question being answered in this study, which uses GPA. The previous research used a survey method which suffers from limitations like this current study. The data is self-reported and is also obtained conveniently, meaning we got the data in a way that was easy for us, but didn’t necessarily eliminate all biases. The research question being answered in this study will provide another form of evidence to measure the impact of multilingualism on grade point average. This is not an area that is researched and will hopefully provide a starting point for further research of this kind.
HYPOTHESES

Null: There is no difference in grade point averages between college students who speak one language and college students who are multilingual.

Alternative: College students who are multilingual have higher grade point averages than college students who only speak one language.

RESEARCH METHODS

Sample and Procedure

The research was gathered at a large, public university in the Northeast in large general education Sociology courses. Prior to the start of the term, professors in these classrooms had granted permission for a fifteen-minute survey consisting of 118 questions to be administered within their class during the Fall 2011 term. About mid-way through the term, the study personnel went into these classrooms and read a verbal statement before handing out the surveys. After completion, students dropped their anonymous surveys into a box at the front of the classroom. A total of 353 surveys were returned.

There was very little risk involved for participants taking this survey. There was potential for psychological discomfort because participants might find some of the questions embarrassing since they involve sensitive and private topics like drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, and political views. This data is anonymous, and therefore, we will not be able to match survey with their participants, which limits the amount of risk that there was for participants taking this survey. As far as benefits are concerned, participants will help other students studying sociology gain a better understanding of our undergraduate community. This might also have an impact on students who wish to pursue sociology. Students who take this survey will also gain experience in taking surveys of this format, which will become useful if they end up taking a course in research methods.

While we acknowledge that this is a convenience sample due to the close proximity and the lack of random selection for our sample, this method was beneficial. It was less time consuming and easier to conduct with the available resources. Due to this form of sampling, however, the data gathered does not give us a very good representation of the entire university undergraduate population.

Survey

The survey administered to participants was created based on various topics that the students in Methods of Social Research during the Fall 2011 term wished to gather information about. Each student was given the opportunity to have a total of two questions on the survey—one for their independent variable and one for their dependant variable. The survey had a total
of 118 questions encompassing topics such as drug use, political beliefs, socio-economic status, multilingualism, and grade point average.

*Variables*

In order to test the hypothesis that multilingual students have a higher grade point average than students who speak one language there were two questions on the survey that pertained to this. The first question asked students to indicate how many languages they are fluent in. Participants were given the option of 1, 2, 3, 4 or more. For the purpose of this research, fluency was defined as the ability to express oneself readily and effortlessly. The second question asked participants to disclose their overall grade point average (GPA). If students were first-year students they were asked to give their high-school GPA. Options for this question were broken into the following categories: 0.00-0.66 (F), 0.67-1.66 (D), 1.67-2.66 (C), 2.67-3.66 (B), 3.67-4.00 (A), Prefer not to answer, and don’t know.

**RESULTS**

*Sample Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>72.12</td>
<td>72.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>27.88</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 shows the distribution of respondents based on their gender. This table shows that of the 312 participants that answered this specific question on the survey, a majority of
them, 72%, were female while only 29% were male. This indicates that there is an unequal gender distribution among students who completed our survey.

Table 1.2 shows the distribution of respondents based on their current grade point average. About 65% of respondents reported having a GPA of somewhere between 2.67 and 3.66 which corresponds to a B. Only 6% of participants claimed to have a GPA between 1.67 and 2.66, which is the equivalent of a C. Of the respondents, 28% reported a GPA between 3.67 and 4.0, which translates into an A.

Main Findings

Table 1.3 How many languages are you fluent in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 language</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>87.58</td>
<td>87.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more languages</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 Fluency and Grade Point Average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>1 Language</th>
<th>2 or more Languages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.67-2.66</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.67-3.66</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>6.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.42</td>
<td>71.05</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>65.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.67-4.0</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.46</td>
<td>23.68</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>27.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson chi2 (2) = .6630  Pr = .0718

The results for the question concerning whether or not multilingualism has an impact on grade point average among university college students were different than expected. Table 1.3 shows the distribution of students based on their language fluency. Of the 306 students who answered this question, only 38 or 12% of them identified themselves as multilingual; an overwhelming 88% of students surveyed only spoke one language.

Grade point average is not significantly correlated with multilingualism. When measuring this against grade point average, which is visible in Table 1.4, the data are more transparent. A majority of the sample, 65%, indicated that they had a GPA between 2.67 and
3.66 while another 28% of respondents reported a GPA of 3.67 to 4.0, however, only 9 of those respondents spoke two or more languages. A small percentage of respondents, 7%, reported having a GPA between 1.67 and 2.66. Of the 21 students who reported a GPA of 1.67-2.66, only 2 of them spoke two or more languages.

When using an alpha level of $p > .05$, the null hypothesis, that there is no difference in grade point average between college students who speak one language and college students who are multilingual, cannot be rejected. The results from Table 1.4 show that the level of significance is .07, which suggests that there might be a correlation between multilingualism and grade point average, but in the opposite direction than expected. That is, multilingualism might be negatively correlated with GPA.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between multilingualism and grade point average among undergraduate students at a large, public university in the Northeast. The main findings suggest that there is no significant relationship between multilingualism and grade point average, or if there is one, that the relationship is negative. While the majority of respondents only spoke one language, the participants who reported being multilingual had similar GPAs as students who spoke one language. If anything, the participants who spoke more than one language had slightly lower GPAs.

The findings are interesting because they contradict much of the increasing value that is being put on learning multiple languages. While this particular study doesn’t seem to suggest that multilingualism leads to a better grade point average, part of this could be the relatively small sample size for our study. Interestingly enough, only 9 of the 305 respondents spoke more than one language and had a reported GPA between 3.66 and 4.0. Another aspect that could contribute to the results that GPA is not affected by multilingualism might be related to the way the data was obtained. While a survey is affordable and easy to administer, it also relies on self-reporting, which might skew the data. Another limitation of this study is that data was only gathered within one department at one school in one Northeastern state. Not only is this non-representative, but the state is not a very diverse state and does not represent the entirety of the United States.

If this study were to be completed again, it would be beneficial and probably more accurate to use another form of sampling, such as cluster sampling, which would give us data from various sampling frames. Another aspect that could be added to this study would be to look at respondents whose first language is not English and compare it to those whose first language is English. Results might show that students who do not speak English as their first language struggle to keep up in a predominantly English speaking school system. Although the findings in this study do not suggest that there is a positive relationship between multilingualism and grade point average, there are many limitations to this survey that if changed, might provide different results. Given the current findings, it does not seem that
initiating early language education in multiple languages in our school system would have much of an impact. Yet, with further research it might become clear that early second language education fluency could significantly improve grade point average.

Multilingualism and its impact on grade point average are not widely researched and yet there is a significant amount of discussion surrounding this topic. Although this research question doesn’t confirm that multilingualism positively impacts grade point average, it cannot be concluded that it doesn’t impact other aspects of one’s life.

REFERENCES


Martin, Peter, 2010. “‘They have lost their identity but not gained a British one’: non-traditional multilingual students in higher education in the United Kingdom.” Language and Education. 24:1, 9-20.

Influential Factors Contributing to College Student Spending Habits and Credit Card Debt

Kristi Leclerc

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how access to credit, familiarity with debt and financial education, socialization agents and social identities, academic performance, and financial aid and family income influence college student spending habits and credit card debt. Being in credit card debt is common for many college students, but exploring the specific factors that contribute may help prevent future generations of students from participating in unhealthy spending habits and accumulating credit card debt. After a close comparison of eleven studies, I was able to conclude that easy access to credit cards makes students susceptible to accumulating debt. Students who perform poorly academically, are female, minorities, and who are older tend to be more likely to be in debt than other students. Family income and the amount of financial aid a student receives also affects their financial situation, as does the student’s own level of financial education, and financial socialization from parents. Although future research is needed on this topic, it is important to note that students’ social environment has an effect on their financial health.

INTRODUCTION

Many college students have credit cards. In fact, according to a Sallie Mae National Study of Usage and Trends, 84% of undergraduates have at least one credit card (Robb and Pinto 2010). These students don’t just possess the credit cards; they accumulate unhealthy amounts of debt and practice irresponsible spending habits. Although not all credit card debt is detrimental, the debt students are accruing is a result of shopping for clothes, entertainment, and other luxury items. This paper will explore how access to credit, financial education, socialization agents and social identities, academic performance, and financial aid and family income influence spending habits among college students. The implications of student credit card debt and spending habits have significant importance to sociology. Family background, socioeconomic status, age, race and other social factors pertaining to students are all sociological topics related to how undergraduates access credit and acquire debt. The purpose of this literature review is not only to highlight these issues, but also to understand why undergraduates graduate college with amounting credit card debt. According to scholarly research, students who are primarily females, of a minority racial group, have easy access to credit, perform poorly academically, receive insufficient financial aid, have a low family income, and are improperly financially socialized are more likely to be in credit card debt. These factors
and financial decisions could have serious negative consequences for students later on in their lives.

**EASY ACCESS TO CREDIT**

The first reason many college students fall victim to credit card debt is because credit cards are incredibly easy to obtain. Banks deceivingly are willing to take a risk with college students because they assume the students will only make minimum credit card payments but carry high debt loads (Hoover 2001). As a result, credit card companies earn money from the interest students are paying, and they end up paying that interest for a long time – on average for about 15 years (Hoover 2001). After graduation they are left paying student loans and credit card bills, which leaves many students in difficult financial positions. In a study conducted by Eric Hoover (2001), a student says, “I felt ashamed about having put myself in that position, but I should never have been able to get all those cards at such a young age” (1). According to a Sallie Mae study in 2000, college undergraduates carry an average of $2,748 in credit card debt. Credit card debt contributed to over 120,000 people under the age of 25 filing for bankruptcy in 2000 (Hoover 2001).

A study conducted by Sallie Mae proposed that 84% of college students have a credit card, and the average number of cards that are possessed is 4.6 (Robb and Pinto 2010). Yet another study proposed that 14% of students who possess a credit card carry a $3,000-$7,000 balance, and ten percent owed more than $7,000 (Roberts and Jones 2001). The same study also claims that 55% of students obtain their first credit cards during freshman year and 25% of students first used one in high school (Roberts and Jones 2001). Colleges all over the country have banned credit card marketers from campus spaces based on these staggering statistics and the concern for their students’ financial wellbeing. At the same time, many credit card companies have teamed up with college campuses that still allow them to solicit on campus (Hoover 2001). This scenario creates a contradiction in the minds of the student body in which they are told to be financially responsible, but are solicited by the same institution trying to launch them into adult life.

Another reason students feel the urge to use credit so liberally is because the credit cards act as a way to establish independence from parents. Hoover (2001) writes, “When you get to college, credit cards are one of the many ways of proclaiming...freedom from Mom and Dad” (36). Once college students get themselves into credit card debt after proclaiming this independence, it is harder for them to get out. “Students are graduating from college with nearly twice as much debt as a decade ago” (Hoover 2001:35). College students today have been raised in a culture where spending is celebrated and saving is looked down upon (Roberts and Jones 2001). Students feel better about themselves and their social well being if they can purchase items like electronics and designer clothing that raise their social status. This is an excellent example of conspicuous consumption, the act of purchasing items simply to display one’s wealth (Brueggemann 2010). This psychological analysis could explain why few people
question college students’ access to credit and sometimes encourage it. Conspicuous consumption may also influence students’ needs to continually be purchasing items.

**FAMILIARITY WITH DEBT AND FINANCIAL EDUCATION**

In addition to easy access to credit, important factors in predicting college student debt are whether or not incoming freshman already know someone who has been in debt and if students are financially educated. Adults fulfilling role model positions such as parents, relatives and teachers, who also are in credit card debt, reinforce the beliefs, attitudes and norms that overspending is acceptable. A likely outcome of this attitude of overspending is compulsive buying, which has been proven to lead to credit card debt (Roberts and Jones 2001). Based on a survey of students at a private university in Texas, there is an increasing level of compulsive buying with each successive generation. When a credit card was available, students were more likely to spend, to spend more, and participate in compulsive buying more often than if a credit card wasn’t available. Credit card usage furthers the problem of compulsive buying. A majority of college students carry a significant amount of debt because they have been raised in a credit card society where debt is the societal norm (Roberts and Jones 2001). Interestingly, this financial independence and freedom does not always start when students enter college.

In a study conducted by researchers Roberts and Jones (2001), some students had credit card debt before they entered higher education. According to one study, 62% of incoming college freshman had access to a credit or charge card, and 50.9% had some kind of debt (Jones 2005). Today, college students have grown up in a culture of debt. They have been surrounded by credit card debt because some of their older role models carry amounting debt (Roberts and Jones 2001). In a study conducted at the University of California in Los Angeles, 75% of the 750,000 college students surveyed reported that one of the reasons they decided to go to college was to make more money (Roberts and Jones 2001). In addition, Robb and Pinto (2010) wrote that, “Americans’ definition of what constitutes a ‘need’ has clearly changed from generation to generation” (826). If college students experienced their parents participating in compulsive buying and/or irresponsible accumulation of debt, they are more likely to accumulate debt as well. Students should be properly financially educated before they acquire a credit card.

Financial education plays a significant role in how students make use of their money and their credit. Graduating students leave college with an average of $20,402 in education and credit debt (Robb and Sharpe 2009). Credit card debt and financial education are not areas colleges tend to monitor when it comes to their students (Stanford 1999), and they don’t normally provide educational opportunities for them. One of the most popular ways of measuring credit knowledge is asking students what their annual percentage rate (APR) is. Researchers Robb and Sharpe (2009) found that few students are even able to define or understand the term APR. Jones (2005) claims that, “education regarding credit may be needed before students enter college...to help them make informed decisions and avoid having
excessive debt [that] affects current and future financial security” (15). Many universities are losing more students to credit card debt than they are to academic failure (Roberts and Jones 2001). Hence, colleges should take the responsibility and educate students regarding topics of credit card debt and responsible spending.

Although many students practice irresponsible spending habits some students seem to be financially responsible. One report showed that 56% of undergraduates pay off their balances each month, as opposed to the general population, of which only 43% pay off their debt each month (Hoover 2001). The downside to this study was that a credit card company sponsored it so it may have been biased (Hoover 2001). Even if these results are biased, other studies have shown that financial education can be valuable to students. High school and college students taking financial education courses were shown to have higher savings rates (Robb and Sharpe 2009). Robb and Sharpe (2009) write that, “a higher level of financial knowledge is negatively related to whether one carries a revolving balance...among those with a revolving balance a higher level of financial knowledge is associated with a lower reported balance” (29). In general, Pinto, Parente, and Mansfield (2005) write that, “middle school and high school administrators need to be aware that children are getting credit cards at ever-younger ages” (364). Educators aware of adolescent credit card behavior and high rates of debt can increase financial education courses at both the high school and college levels.

SOCIALIZATION AGENTS AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES

Pinto, Parente, and Mansfield (2005) found that one of the most important factors regarding college students and their financial habits were their socialization agents - significant people, groups, and institutions that shape our sense of self and social identity. These same agents help us to realize our human capacities, and teach us to negotiate the world in which we live (Ferrante 2011). Parents, peers, mass media, and schools are all socialization agents that influence the psychological, emotional, and behavioral development of college students. Cude, Lawrence, Lyons, Metzger, LeJeune, Marks, and Machtes (2006) state that, “advertising, peer pressure, and the thrill of an expensive purchase as a ‘status symbol’ were all mentioned as influences” (107). Many students also reported the frequency of which they saw signs like “bad credit, no problem” and “no credit, no worries” on storefronts, and how that influenced their spending. These types of phrases might have been internalized and encouraged students to spend more freely and give them an excuse to throw away financial inhibitions (Cude et al. 2006). Nevertheless there are ways to prevent this carefree attitude from occurring. Those with greater social support in general are reported to have less credit card debt, especially the social support given by parents (Wang and Xiao 2009).

The amount of credit card information and education given by parents is greater than any other socialization agent. Mothers and fathers are the two most important sources of influence on college students’ money beliefs and attitudes. There is a correlation between the amount of credit card information learned from parents and student credit card use. Students who had a lower credit card balance were more likely to be educated by their parents about
proper spending and credit debt (Pinto, Parente, and Mansfield 2005). Seventy-five percent of American children learned most of their money management skills from their parents, and 87% of college students still rely on their parents for financial advice (Borden, Lee, Serido and Collins 2008). Cude et al (2006) explains that, “students reported that their parents influenced their money management behaviors” (108). Schools provide more information about finances when compared to peers and the media, and there is no difference in influence between peers and media (Pinto, Parente, and Mansfield 2005). To reiterate an important point, parents are the most important socialization agent when it comes to financial behaviors.

Family structure also had an impact on how students made use of their credit. Students of divorced families reported having higher credit card debt (Borden et al 2008). One thing that parents must keep in mind is that television may rival many of the traditional socialization agents such as parents, schools, and religion. Pinto, Parente, and Mansfield (2005) write, “parents’ proactive efforts today may be the best defense against their children’s financial problems” (364). In general, college students must be aware of the socialization agents like media advertisements that influence their buying and credit use, and make the best financial decisions possible.

In addition to socialization agents, several social identities, including gender, age, and race, were predictors of students deemed financially at risk and used their credit irresponsibly. Those who were defined as financially at risk were those who used credit cards with a greater frequency for a variety of purchases and engaged in less responsible behaviors based on credit card use (Robb and Pinto 2010). According to one study, financially at risk students were more likely to be female, black, and financially independent of their parents. Female students also possessed less financial knowledge, but were more likely to possess a credit card and carry more debt (Robb and Sharpe 2009). White students, compared to other racial/ethnic groups, possessed more financial knowledge than their counterparts. The study also confirmed that females were more likely than males to have an outstanding credit card balance, and typically had more debt than male students (Robb and Sharpe 2009). This is sociologically relevant because girls may be conditioned to look and dress a certain way, and participate in certain activities, such as shopping online or in stores, and shopping at certain stores that are viewed as socially favorable. As a result, this may entice them to spend more money on appearance items than males, and acquire more debt.

Gender was also influential when observing financial management practices. Females performed more financial management than males, but female students who performed fewer financial management practices were more likely to experience a higher number of financial stressors such as significant credit card debt (Wang and Xiao 2009). One report claims that men have the higher responsible financial attitudes, and women have the lower responsible financial attitudes (Borden et al 2008). Gender also influenced what types of purchases students were making on their credit cards. Females tended to spend more money on clothes, while men spent more money on entertainment and eating out (Wang and Xiao 2009). This is sociologically interesting because females feel more pressure to look a certain way and spend
more money on clothes and cosmetics, while men keep up appearances in ways that involve social activity.

According to a study by Jones (2005), age was the only predictor of credit card debt. In that same study, age and race were predictors of the number of credit cards that were held by each student. Older students had more credit cards, but white students had fewer cards than other racial identities (Jones 2005). Older students (juniors and seniors) appeared to have more debt than underclassmen (freshman and sophomores) in college (Robb and Sharpe 2009). Another study reported that single, never married individuals had less debt than married or formally married students. Students who reported coming from high-income families reported participating in risky financial behavior more often (Borden et al 2008). This is an important sociological insight because these spending choices may have implications for each student’s financial well being after graduation. If students never learn financial responsibility, it could affect them when they become financially independent, and determine if they can buy a house, and other important milestones.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Another interesting indicator of credit card use and debt is students’ academic performance. Low academic performers reported a greater need for employment to pay off credit card debt they had accumulated during college. Those who were high academic performers said they had more anxiety relating to credit cards and therefore, used them less frequently (Robb and Pinto 2010). The study conducted by Jones (2005) reinforces this finding that those who only paid the minimum balance each month and were behind on payments were more likely to have a lower grade point average, and a lower personal income. Students found that their debt affected their overall academic performance. Many had to reduce their course loads in order to hold a part-time job to pay off debt, and in some cases students had to drop out of school (Jones 2005). This cycle defeats the purpose of seeking higher education, in that students who drop out of college are more likely to end up working less favorable or less advantageous jobs.

FINANCIAL AID AND FAMILY INCOME

Financial aid and parental income were also factors related to college student spending habits and credit card debt. Parental income can be used as an indicator of a student’s lifestyle, social class, and the resources and opportunities that are available to them (Robb and Sharpe 2009). A greater proportion of financially at risk students reported charging items to their credit cards because they received insufficient financial aid (Robb and Pinto 2010). Consequently, these students must use their credit cards as a means to pay for their tuition. According to a Sallie Mae and Gallop Poll (2009) 3% of all families with 18-24 year-old college students had their students using credit cards as a means to pay for college. The average amount borrowed on these credit cards was $2,542 (Ferrante 2011). Students from lower income households may be more likely to accrue higher debt. They may not have had enough
exposure and experience in financial markets to spend their money and use their credit wisely (Robb and Sharpe 2009). Students with high amounts of debt are more likely to receive need-based financial aid, have at least $1,000 in other types of debt, and have acquired their credit cards from malls, retail stores, and on college campuses. More students who were designated as financially at risk came from low to middle income households (Robb and Pinto 2010). Renting an apartment and working more than sixteen hours a week were predictors that individuals would not pay their credit cards in full each week (Jones 2005). The added pressure of paying for rent and trying to work may have had financial implications on students, and correlates with the ideas proposed earlier – that low income students are more likely to struggle academically, as well as financially.

CONCLUSION

Being in credit card debt is common for an abundance of college students. The purpose of this literature review was to focus on the specific sociological factors that influence college students to become irresponsible spenders and later, holders of credit card debt. This review explored access to credit, familiarity with debt and financial education, socialization agents and social identities, academic performance, and financial aid and family income in relation to college students’ spending behaviors. Based on this article review, I can conclude that easy access to credit cards makes students susceptible to accumulating debt. Students who are female and of a minority race, who perform poorly academically, and are older are more likely to be in debt compared to other students. Family income and the amount of financial aid a student receives affect their financial situation, as does the student’s own level of financial education, and financial socialization from parents. Future research calls to explore other sociological factors that may influence student spending behaviors. Also, it may be valuable to follow up with students who accumulated debt in college and see how they fared in the “real world.” Overall, it is important to take away that college students do not form their financial habits and their credit card use independently. Students must be careful about the consequences of their financial decisions because they will impact their future.

REFERENCES


Acknowledgements

The editors would like to thank Professor Rebecca Glauber and Sociology graduate students and Senior Consulting Editors Matthew Cutler and Angela Mitiguy for their help with this year's edition. The editors would also like to thank all of the professors who encouraged their students to submit articles and all of the student authors who worked long and hard to make this year's edition such a success.
Author Biographies

Nathaniel Ascani is completing his sophomore year at the University of New Hampshire. He is dual majoring in Sociology and Justice Studies. He wrote this paper for last spring’s Sociological Theory class. Next year, Nathaniel will study abroad in Budapest, Hungary, with the UNH Justice Studies Budapest Program. He plans on studying law and community planning after graduation, and he is interested in pursuing a career in public service.

Victoria J. Browall is completing her junior year at the University of New Hampshire. She will graduate in May of 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. Her research interests include demography, medical sociology, and public policy. Her literature review about advertising and gender roles was written for Sociological Analysis. Victoria’s other academic interests include criminology and economics.

Cristina Calderan is completing her senior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is majoring in Sociology and minoring in Outdoor Education. She wrote this paper for Methods of Social Research. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society, and Alpha Phi Omega, the nationally recognized co-ed Community Service Fraternity. She is also the co-founder and president of the UNH Ballroom Dancing Club. She studied abroad in Australia during her junior year and looks forward to traveling to more countries. She plans to take a year off before returning to graduate school to pursue a dual master’s degree in Social Work and Outdoor Education.

Amber Carlson is completing her junior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is a dual major in Sociology and Justice Studies. She wrote this paper for Sociological Analysis. She plans to enroll in graduate school and obtain a master’s in Justice Studies. Her goal is to become a district attorney.

Alex Chelstowski is a senior at the University of New Hampshire where he is majoring in Sociology. He wrote this paper for Environmental Sociology. Alex volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Seacoast. He is an inspired cook, passionate traveler, and enthusiastic outdoorsman.

Mackenzie Colburn is completing her senior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is dual-majoring in Sociology and Justice Studies. This paper was written for Class, Status, and Power. She is planning on applying to law school in the fall.

Zach Field is completing his senior year at the University of New Hampshire. He is majoring in Sociology and International Affairs and minoring in Italian. He wrote this paper for Environmental Sociology. He will graduate this spring with departmental honors in Sociology. He is a member of Gamma Kappa Alpha, the National Italian Honors Society. He plans to enroll in graduate school at UNH to obtain his MBA.
Maura Gallagher is completing her sophomore year at the University of New Hampshire. She is majoring in Sociology and minoring in Women’s Studies. She wrote this paper for Sociological Analysis. She is a member of the Chi Omega Fraternity.

Audrey Hickey is completing her junior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is double majoring in Sociology and Psychology. She wrote this paper for Sociological Analysis. Her research interests include environmental sociology and education.

Makenzie Keene is completing her senior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is majoring in Sociology and minoring in Business Administration and Justice Studies. She wrote this paper for Methods of Social Research. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society. She hopes to work in social policy research. She studied abroad in London, England.

Alexandra Kovalik is completing her senior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is majoring in Sociology and minoring in English. She wrote this paper for Sociological Theory. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society, and she is interested in going to graduate school for public policy. She has been involved on campus with Oxfam UNH, which works to raise awareness about social injustice. She also studied abroad in London during her junior year and she is hoping to return in the future.

Kristi Leclerc is completing her sophomore year at the University of New Hampshire. She is majoring in Sociology and Justice Studies and minoring in Classics. She wrote this paper for Sociological Analysis. She currently serves as a resident assistant in one of the freshman dorms on campus. She plans to enroll in a master’s program for higher education and student affairs after receiving her undergraduate degree.

Kelby Mackell is completing her junior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is a dual major in Sociology and Justice Studies. She wrote this paper for Methods of Social Research. She plans on studying abroad in Budapest, Hungary next fall. After graduation she plans to enroll in graduate school and obtain her master’s in Justice Studies. Her overall career goal is to become a prosecutor in the Washington, D.C. area.

Whitney Mills is completing her junior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is dual-majoring in Sociology and Justice Studies and minoring in Spanish. She wrote this paper for Sociological Analysis. Whitney has an interest in women’s health and is considering a career in reproductive health education in developing nations.

Halie Olszowy is completing her second year at the University of New Hampshire, where she is majoring in Sociology. She wrote this paper for Sociological Analysis. She is a member of the University Honors Program. She is also a Hamel Scholar and a resident assistant on campus. She has an interest in child socialization in relation to family systems, gender norms, and marketing influences.
Ali Puchlopek is entering her senior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is a sociology major. She wrote this paper for Methods of Social Research in Fall 2011. She will spend her next year at UNH writing a senior honors thesis. She enjoys learning about topics in gender studies, and she hopes to continue researching in the future.

Arianna Schaaff is completing her sophomore year at the University of New Hampshire. She is majoring in Psychology and Sociology. She wrote this paper for Sociological Analysis. Outside of class she volunteers for the Wildcat Youth Mentor program and is a research assistant in Professor Katie Edwards’ psychology lab. Her future goals include further research on mental health of adolescents and members of the LGBT community, squeezing in every sociology class as possible before graduation, and then graduate school. Ari hopes to eventually find a career in youth counseling.

Kiley Schlieper is completing her senior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is majoring in Sociology and minoring in Women’s Studies. She wrote this paper for Methods of Social Research. She is a proud member of Alpha Phi Sorority. She studied abroad at Bond University in Australia during her junior year and is eager to travel more in the future.

Rebecca White is completing her sophomore year at the University of New Hampshire. She is double majoring in Sociology and Geography. She wrote this literature review for her Sociological Analysis class. Rebecca is an avid member and officer of Oxfam UNH, and she would like to pursue a career in sustainable community planning.
Editor Biographies

Kendall Clark is a senior majoring in Sociology and International Affairs with a minor in Spanish. This is her first year being a part of the Perspectives’ editorial team and she thoroughly enjoyed reading the submitted papers this year. She published an essay from Karen Van Gundy’s Sociological Analysis class titled How Do Social and Economic Factors Affect Academic Achievement among Adolescent Students? An Observation of Community Social Capital, Peer Relationships, and Economic Composition in the 2011 journal. She also worked closely with a research fellow at the Carsey Institute and continued research on education inequality. She studied abroad in Argentina and Peru her junior year, and plans to return to South America to volunteer in the future. Kendall plans on taking a year off before enrolling in a master’s program focusing on either international relations or urban policy planning.

Zach Field is completing his senior year at the University of New Hampshire. He is majoring in Sociology and International Affairs and minoring in Italian. He wrote this paper for Environmental Sociology. He will graduate this spring with departmental honors in Sociology. He is a member of Gamma Kappa Alpha, the National Italian Honors Society. He plans to enroll in graduate school at UNH to obtain his MBA.

Samantha Story is completing her senior year as a Sociology major at the University of New Hampshire. She will be attending graduate school at the University of New Hampshire in the fall studying Elementary Education. During the 2012-2013 academic year she will be interning in a first grade classroom in Dover, NH. While her ultimate goal is to become an elementary school teacher, she is also interested in completing sociological research looking at gender in the elementary classroom. While at UNH, Samantha has been a Student Admissions Representative and was recently inducted into the Golden Key International Honor Society. This edition of Perspectives was Samantha’s first experience with editing an academic journal, and she greatly enjoyed the experience.

Meredith Underwood is completing her senior year at the University of New Hampshire. She is majoring in both Sociology and Justice Studies. She studied abroad in London during her junior year and is eager to return to travel Europe. She plans to teach English in Thailand next fall before enrolling in graduate school abroad.

Angela Mitiguy and Matthew Cutler provided oversight for this journal. Angela and Matthew are both Ph.D. students in Sociology at the University of New Hampshire.