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From the Director

It is with a heavy heart that I write this final message to our journal readers and all supporters of Middle Tennessee State University’s (MTSU) Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. We were notified in September 2012 that the program will not be refunded for another five-year cycle. MTSU’s program was first funded in 1999. We have concluded 13 years of successful service to MTSU students who were first-generation college students and from financially disadvantaged families; or, a member of a group underrepresented in graduate education (Black, Hispanic, Alaskan native, or American Indian).

MTSU’s McNair Program has been a successful program because of the accomplishments of its students, who have blossomed into phenomenal scholars – including five PhD’s, one MD, one JD, 40 master’s degree recipients, and dozens of others who are currently enrolled in graduate school. MTSU McNair students have published and presented research findings at symposia and professional conferences across the nation and internationally. Despite these outstanding outcomes, a $10 million cut to the McNair budget by the Department of Education resulted in no funding for approximately one-third of existing programs. Unfortunately, MTSU’s program fell into this unfunded category.

But as Andrea Green, president of the McNair Challenger Alliance, suggested, “Remember Dr. Seuss, who said, ‘Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.’” So, I want the remainder of this message to recount the many successes of the program and to express my appreciation for the campus support received from administrators, faculty members, and staff.

The successes are easily reflected in the McNair students who have graduated and moved on to graduate schools across the nation. MTSU’s McNair program has served 162 students, including 20 students currently participating, representing all colleges at MTSU. In the last 13 years, 137 students have graduated (85%) with a baccalaureate degree. Fifteen others are on schedule to graduate in December 2012 or May 2013. In addition to the students cited above who have already completed a graduate degree, several other students are nearing completion of this milestone in their lives. Graduate schools that former McNair students have attended or have been accepted to include Vanderbilt University, Brandeis University, North Carolina State, University of California-Davis, The Ohio State University, University of Maryland, Notre Dame, Boston College, and University of Florida, to name a few.

This is the eleventh volume of the McNair Research Review. Its professional appearance and polished articles are credited to Steve Saunders, Assistant Director. Steve joined the program in 2004, and has been invaluable to the operation of the program and to the students served. In addition to being a full-time employee in the program, Steve is completing a Ph.D. in political science at Vanderbilt University; so, in many ways, he has been an exemplary role model for the McNair students.

Cindy Howell has been with the program from the beginning. Her service as program secretary and administrative assistant for 13 years has included numerous responsibilities that have contributed to the success of the students and the program. From greeting people as they enter the McNair office, to keeping supplies on hand, to managing all budget records, Cindy reflects the true heart of the McNair program because she is all about the students. Much of the program’s task of keeping track of graduates has fallen to Cindy and she has done an outstanding job by continuing personal relationships through email messages, note cards, friending students on Facebook, and truly caring about students’ welfare.

Over the years, MTSU’s McNair Program has had two directors before me, Dr. Ray Phillips and Dr. Peter Cunningham. It has also benefited from the leadership of two assistant directors, Linda Brown and Steve Saunders and academic coordinators, Dr. Tom Cheatham, Dr. Dwight Patterson, Dr. Judith Iriate-Gross, Dr. Mary Martin, Dr. Mary Enderson, and Dr. Charles Apigian. McNair graduates assisting the program were Monte Hendrickson, Terri Proctor, Tiffany Hughes, Monique Richard, and Johnathan Gilliam, who were former McNair students, have also served the program. Through these people, McNair students have witnessed success and benefited from their experiences. My sincere appreciation is extended to all of these people for the contributions they made to the successes of the McNair program.
Each of our students has been guided by MTSU faculty mentors over the years. Space does not permit naming them all, but their contributions to the success of the students and the McNair program cannot be overstated. The initial support of President James E. Walker and the continued support of President Sidney A. McPhee are greatly appreciated. Vice President and Provost Barbara Haskew, Executive Vice President and Provost Kaylene Gebert, and Provost Brad Bartel have also been instrumental to the success of the McNair program through the financial support provided by Academic Affairs.

Countless others across campus have contributed to the success of the McNair Program. Deans, department chairs, secretaries, department faculty liaisons, student organizations, particularly the Student Government Association, and people who have made referrals and offered support in ways that may not be recorded.

Volume XI of the *McNair Research Review* contains the research of 19 students in a variety of disciplines. They and their faculty mentors, Steve Saunders, Cindy Howell, and Johnathan Gilliam deserve all the credit for the outstanding papers published in this volume of the *Review*. I also want to acknowledge all the colleges (listed on page 4) and the James E. Walker Library who contributed to the production of previous volumes of the *McNair Research Review*. Without their support these publications would not have been possible.

My sincere hope is that the University will submit an application for a McNair Program in 2017 because the MTSU students who are eligible to participate deserve the opportunities and the support that McNair provides. It has been both an honor and a privilege to serve as the director of the McNair program since 2004. I congratulate all the students who graduated with their baccalaureate degree. Special recognition goes to those who completed a master’s and/or a professional degree. My highest praise goes to those who completed a Ph.D. in their discipline. Helping students complete a doctoral degree is the primary mission of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. My best wishes for success to those students who continue to reach this educational goal.

Sincere thanks to everyone,
L. Diane Miller, Ph.D.
Director
Scholars in This Issue

Jacob Basham
Elischa Dennison
Elijah Dillehay
Kellum Everett
Andrea Green
Michael Harris
Philena Haynes
Tamara Jones
Zaver Moore
Joy Oduor
Shelby Rehberger
Paige Stubbs
Scholars in This Issue

Laurence Tumpag  Anne Uselton  Melody Vaughan  Jake Verhoeff
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Born October 21, 1950, in Lake City, South Carolina, Ronald McNair graduated valedictorian of his high school class in 1967. He earned a B.S. degree from North Carolina A&T State University in 1971 and a Ph.D. in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1976. He conducted research on electro-optic laser modulation for Hughes Research Laboratories until chosen by NASA in January 1978 to train as an astronaut. Ronald E. McNair died onboard the space shuttle Challenger when it exploded on January 28, 1986.

Later that year, Congress created the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. This was the sixth TRiO program (named after the original three programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services). The purpose of the McNair Program is to help disadvantaged students (first-generation college/low-income or under-represented) complete their undergraduate degree, enroll in graduate school and earn a Ph.D.

The McNair Program at Middle Tennessee State University was established in October 1999. It is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education under the Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, and by MTSU.
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Nitrocyclopropanation of Amino Acid-Derived Enones

Jacob H. Basham

Dr. Norma K. Dunlap
Chemistry Department

Cyclopropane-containing amino acids are of particular importance in the field of medicinal chemistry because of their use as building blocks for bioactive compounds. Several syntheses of this family of compounds have been reported. These conformationally constrained propane rings show reduced entropy effects and thus improved metabolic stability. A general approach to the synthesis of cyclopropyl peptidomimetics from various protected amino acids has been developed in our laboratory whereby addition of ethyldimethylsulfuranylidene (EDSA) to amino acid derived-enones affords cyclopropyl keto-esters. Building on this approach, the addition of bromonitromethane to electrophilic alkenes, namely amino acid-derived enones, produces nitrocyclopropanes in good yield. Due to the great versatility of the nitro group that may be converted into several other functionalities, the nitrocyclopropanes are considered very important building blocks.

 REPORTED HERE IS the general approach for the conversion of various Cbz-protected amino acid derived-enones to their respective nitrocyclopropyl analogs.

THIS RESEARCH GREW OUT of another project in this lab that focuses on the total synthesis of the antitumor compound belactosin A from commercially available Cbz-protected amino acids. Isolated from a strain of Streptomyces bacteria, belactosin A exhibits a novel proteasome inhibitory mechanism of action, making it an interesting and novel lead for potent anticancer agents. At the core of belactosin A lies an aminocyclopropyl ring (in box). This ring is the largest difference between belactosin A and its antitumor analog belactosin C, which is isolated identically (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Structure of Belactosins.

Considering both this lab’s previously reported efficient method for cyclopropane generation from amino acid-derived enones and the novelty of belactosin A’s proteasome mechanism, the project for its synthesis report here was a natural choice.

The original proposed synthesis of belactosin A relied on this lab’s reported approach for cyclopropanation followed by a Curtius rearrangement in order to incorporate a necessary primary amine into the structure that would later be coupled to a di-carbonyl hexanoic acid by a method previously reported. However, it was soon realized that addition of bromonitromethane to enones yields a nitrocyclopropyl, in effect creating a cyclopropane ring with an attached NO₂ group. With a quick reduction of the nitro group, a primary amine is created to generate in two steps what would have taken up to five steps with a Curtius rearrangement (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Synthesis of Belactosins.

Good yields and the flexibility of the produced nitro group drove this team to apply this sequence to other commercially available Cbz-protected amino acids that are readily available.
with TLC-dependent reaction times and chloroform as solvent. The yields for these conditions were not satisfactory (<30%) and so an attempt was made to improve them. It was found from previous reports that the use of potassium carbonate (K₂CO₃) as base in the solvent acetonitrile (CH₃CN) with timed sequential additions of bromonitromethane drastically improved yields, even by a factor of four in some cases. It is believed that the use of DBU as base partially decomposes much of the bromonitromethane and so it is unable to nitrocyclopropanate by addition to the enone.

### Typical Experimental Procedure using Cbz-L-leucine

1. **N-(Cbz)-L-leucine**: (0.265 g, 1 mmol) was dissolved in 6 mL of methylene chloride followed by the addition of N-(3-dimethylamino)propyl N'-ethylcarbodiimide hydrochloride (EDCI) (0.192 g, 1 mmol), triethylamine (0.101 g, 1 mmol), and N,O-dimethylhydroxylamine hydrochloride (0.098 g, 1 mmol).

2. The solution was stirred at room temperature overnight and subsequently washed with 1M HCl.

3. The aqueous layer was extracted with 25 mL of meth-
ylene chloride twice. The organic layer was then washed with aqueous sodium bicarbonate and brine. The organic layer was dried over anhydrous magnesium sulfate, filtered, and the solvent was evaporated. The crude product was chromatographed on 25 x 120 mm silica gel eluting sequentially with 1:10, 1:9, 1:1, and 3:1 ethyl acetate-hexane. The yield was 0.264 g of the known Weinreb amide (94%).

(5S)-benzyl (6-methyl-3-oxohept-1-en-4-yl) carbamate [3]. The previous Weinreb amide (0.264 g, 0.94 mmol) was dissolved in 3 mL of tetrahydrofuran (THF) followed by the addition of vinylmagnesiumbromide (1.2 g, 2.82 mmol) under argon. The solution was stirred at 0° C for three hours and subsequently washed with 1M HCl. The aqueous layer was extracted with 25 mL of ethyl acetate twice. The organic layer was then washed with aqueous sodium bicarbonate and brine. The organic layer was dried over anhydrous magnesium sulfate, filtered, and the solvent was evaporated. The crude product was chromatographed on 25 x 120 mm silica gel eluting sequentially with 1:9, 1:6, 1:4, and 1:2 ethyl acetate-hexane. The yield was 0.143 g of the known Cbz-L-leucine enone (62%).4

Benzyl ((2S)-4-methyl-1-(2-nitrocyclopropyl)-1-oxopentan-2-yl) carbamate [4]. The previous enone (0.143 g, 0.62 mmol) was dissolved in 5 mL of acetonitrile (CH3CN) followed by the addition of potassium carbonate (0.072 g, 0.52 mmol) and bromonitromethane (0.073 g, 0.52 mmol). The reaction was carried out at 0° C for the first hour after which another equivalent of bromonitromethane (0.073 g, 0.52 mmol) was added and the ice bath removed to allow the reaction mixture to warm up to room temperature. One more equivalent of bromonitromethane was added to the reaction mixture 30 minutes after the ice bath was removed. After three hours the reaction mixture was extracted twice with ethyl acetate, washed with brine, dried over anhydrous magnesium sulfate, filtered, and the solvent evaporated. The crude product was chromatographed on 25 x 120 mm silica gel eluting sequentially with 1:7, 1:5, 1:3, and 1:1 ethyl acetate-hexane. The yield was 0.109 g of the novel nitrocyclopropyl product (63%). The identity was confirmed using 1H-NMR, 13C-NMR, and mass spectrometry.

Results

Table 1 lists the yields achieved for nitrocyclopropyl formation using various Cbz-protected amino acids as precursors to enone generation.

Attempts to separate syn/anti isomers by high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) using the Cbz-L-serine nitrocyclopropyl ketone analog and Cbz-L-leucine nitrocyclopropyl ketone analog have been previously unsuccessful. Separating the isomers would allow us to confirm the syn/anti ratio produced by this method of nitrocyclopropagation. Furthermore, the pure stereoisomers could be collected and fully characterized upon successful separation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amino Acid</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Yield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L-phenylalanine</td>
<td>CH2Ph</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-leucine</td>
<td>CH2CH(CH3)2</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-valine</td>
<td>CH(CH3)2</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-serine</td>
<td>CH3OH</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-alanine</td>
<td>CH3</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-proline</td>
<td>-(CH2)3N-</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Yields for Nitrocyclopropagation.

Conclusions

Through this lab’s work on a complete synthesis of belactosin A, an efficient method for generating flexible precursors to cyclopropyl peptidomimetics from amino acid-derived enones has been accomplished. The flexibility of the nitro group and the good yields afforded in the nitrocyclopropagation process make this an important tool for building blocks in organic synthesis. Further research is being undertaken to determine the exact cyclopropyl syn/anti stereoisomeric ratio generated by the nitrocyclopropagation reaction as reported. This lab’s approach to cyclopropane-containing amino acids aims to improve access to them and their respective analogs for further research into their use as bioactive compounds in the fight against disease.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Department of Chemistry at Middle Tennessee State University and in part by the McNair Program at MTSU. I would like to thank the McNair staff for their support through this research and in particular Dr. Diane Miller for her enthusiastic encouragement to join the program and her generous exceptions as they relate to deadlines for application to the program. I would also like to thank my unrivaled mentor Dr. Norma Dunlap for her support in problem-solving when things just were not working out in the lab, her vast bank of knowledge from which I made frequent withdrawals, and for showing me how to transform my innate curiosity into scientific results, effectively making me a scientist. I am more than grateful to all.
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The Other Side of Domestic Violence: Female-Perpetrated Intimate-Partner Violence

Elischa Dennison

Domestic violence has several names and definitions, but generally the term refers to physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, and/or economic abuse of power. It does not discriminate. Victims of intimate-partner violence can be found among people in all races, economic statuses, and sexes. Many individuals hear the term intimate-partner violence or domestic violence and picture a female victim with a male abuser. However, this is not always the case. This literature review will look at intimate-partner violence among male victims. While men are just as susceptible to domestic violence as women, many will not speak up or seek help. This examination of female-perpetrated domestic violence against males is intended to increase awareness of this social problem, and eventually help establish more interventions for male victims.

For the purpose of this literature review, domestic violence and intimate-partner violence are used interchangeably. The concept applies equally to female and to male victims. “More than one hundred published studies show almost equal reports of abuse of men and women” (Anderson, 2002). Domestic violence is a serious social problem that has been widely researched for more than 30 years. However, when domestic violence or intimate-partner violence is mentioned, it is usually assumed to be against a female (Barber, 2008). The assumption is that a male is always the abuser and part of the problem. However, men are victims of intimate-partner violence every day but it is not mentioned or publicized. Suzanne Steinmetz (1977) is a pioneer in the area of intimate-partner violence against males. Steinmetz’s work discusses the fact that male victims do not have the same resources available to deal with domestic violence, which is why more research needs to be done in this area.

Domestic-violence shelters are scattered across the country, but they are usually only open to women and children. Males involved in intimate relationships experience domestic violence in many forms: “domestic violence is physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, and/or economic abuse of power” (Barber, 2008). Males are just as capable and as likely to experience all forms of domestic violence, but it goes unnoticed to the public because of extreme underreporting. There are several reasons for this. American society enforces strict gender roles. As Barber (2008) explains, males are supposed to be strong and in control, while women are supposed to be nonthreatening and emotional. Assigned gender roles suggest that women are only capable of being victims and men are the abusers. This limitation on men and women creates stereotypes. Holtzworth-Munroe (2005) argues that violence against men has become a joke in American culture, but violence against women is deemed a serious problem. However, abuse is abuse, regardless of gender. The more research that is done on domestic violence against men, the more people will become aware that this is a social problem. Once there is awareness, then interventions can be established; namely, group counseling and therapy for male victims and eventually the establishment of shelters.

Battered Husbands

Suzanne Steinmetz (1977) introduced the issue of abused men in her article, “Battered Husbands.” While some used her information to slam feminists and say they were wrong, others said there was no way men experienced the same amount of abuse as women. In either case, Steinmetz’s work was highly criticized, and it was very controversial material, but she continued with her research. By the 1980s, she had done several studies that all showed her initial hypothesis as being correct.

Michael P. Johnson (2005), in his studies on domestic violence against men, found that men and women experience the same amount of relationship abuse, but that there are different types of intimate-partner violence. According to Johnson, there are three types of intimate-partner violence, which include intimate terrorism, violent resistance, and situational couple violence. There are distinct differences in each type, so they cannot be generalized as simply one phrase or term. Intimate terrorism is used to dominate and control one’s partner. This type of intimate-partner
violence is described by Johnson (2005), Anderson (2007), and Holtzworth-Munroe (2005). It is what most people imagine when domestic violence is mentioned. However, intimate terrorism is not the most common form of relationship abuse, but it is the most severe. Men are typically the abuser in cases involving intimate terrorism, but that is the only type of violence almost entirely perpetrated by men (Johnson, 2005).

*Violent resistance* refers to violence to counteract intimate terrorism. It is not self-defense, although it may sound somewhat like it. Johnson does not go into great depth about violent resistance. It is stressed that it does not always legally meet the standards of self-defense for women who retaliate with violence to an abuser. *Situational couple violence* “is not embedded in a general pattern of power and control but it is a function of the escalation of a specific conflict or series of conflicts,” (Johnson, 2005). There is not necessarily a pattern of abuse or just one perpetrator. Situational couple violence is not used for control or domination of one’s partner. This is the most common form of domestic violence, and men and women are equally likely to perpetrate this type of relationship abuse (Anderson, 2007).

Kristen L. Anderson (2007) finds that there is more than one form of abuse, and men are just as likely to be victims of intimate-partner violence as women. Amy Holtzworth-Munroe (2007) confirms these results in her research studies. As mentioned, gender roles are believed to be strongly related to domestic violence. The American culture emphasizes conforming to these roles; anyone who does not comply with what is socially acceptable is considered deviant. Situational couple violence is gender symmetrical (Holtzworth-Munroe, 2005). That is, research shows that males and females perpetrate this type of violence at an equal rate; they are equally aggressive. Surveys by Johnson (2005) and Anderson (2007) show that men and women involved in situational couple violence are indeed similarly aggressive. It is often believed that violence itself is a gender issue, which is not true. Men do not abuse women because they are men, and women do not abuse men because they are women.

**Research Design**

Much of the literature is in agreement that males are just as likely to be victims of partner violence as females. However, much of male abuse goes unreported. Therefore, future research by this author will look at and measure severity and magnitude of physical partner violence involving males. The Index of Spouse Abuse (ISA) will be administered to male students attending Middle Tennessee State University. The male respondents will vary in age, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic level. To obtain the male respondents, this researcher will contact several professors in different departments at the university to get permission to pass out the ISA to male students in their classes. It is likely that the return response rate will be higher if the survey instrument is passed out in classrooms versus the student union or elsewhere on campus. Taking the survey will be voluntary basis and all responses will be kept confidential.

Walter W. Hudson developed the ISA to measure the degree or severity of abuse in an intimate relationship. The ISA contains 30 questions, each rated one to five: one being never, two rarely, three occasionally, four frequently, and five very frequently. Two scales are scored. One scores the severity of physical abuse, and one scores the severity of nonphysical abuse. Each question is scored by the respondents based on the magnitude of abuse they have experienced. All 30 questions contribute to the total number of points, based on the severity of abuse. For example, the question, “My partner is jealous and suspicious of my friends” is worth eight points, but the question, “My partner beats me so badly that I must seek medical help” is worth ninety eight points. The number of points each question is worth is located at the end of the question in parentheses.

There is a formula for scoring the survey. First, multiply the item score given by the respondent, 1-5, by the item weight, the number in parentheses the question is worth. Next, do this for every question and add up all scores. If a question is not answered, then it should be left out completely. Subtract this score from the number found after adding up all 30 scores. Finally, multiply that number by 100 and divide it by the initial score. This process is done twice, once for physical abuse and once for nonphysical abuse.

After finding the scores for physical abuse (ISA-P) and nonphysical abuse (ISA-NP), the next step is to compare and contrast the numbers, following Hudson’s example in his research of married graduate and undergraduate students, of social work majors, and of women from shelters and other protective agencies. According to Hudson, the means of non-abused groups of physical abuse is 8.3 and the means of non-abused groups of nonphysical abuse is 3.8. Hudson deems these numbers the norm. Regarding the subscale of physical abuse, a score over 10 indicates the respondent is experiencing severe physical abuse. On the subscale for nonphysical abuse, a score over 25 reveals the respondent is experiencing severe nonphysical abuse.

By looking at variables, such as physical spouse abuse and nonphysical spouse abuse that affect males, an additional step toward a more realistic understanding of domestic violence will result. This, in turn, will provide
a justification for intervention in the lives of males who are experiencing partner abuse. Intervention could take the form of shelters for males and other protective services from agencies.

References


The Bates Dance Festival: Festival Finale

Elijah Dillehay

Erin Law
Speech and Theatre

Elijah performed at the Festival in fulfillment of his creative project for the McNair Program.

**Bates Dance Festival**
Bates College
Lewiston, Maine

**FESTIVAL FINALE**
Saturday, August 11, 2012
Alumni Gymnasium
7:30pm

THANK YOU FOR attending this performance by Festival students. The Bates Dance Festival welcomes you to our community of dance and invites you to join us in supporting the artists’ journeys. Tonight you will see the outcome of many long hours in the studio -- exploring ideas, experimenting with movement, engaging in group problem solving, collaborating with composers, videographers, lighting and set designers, and divining the final form of a work.

At the festival we invest in artists and their creative process. Through our training, outreach and performance activities we help connect artists to one another, to other opportunities and to you. By providing extended residencies in a nurturing environment, we showcase new work as it comes to life on the stage. In doing so, we honor the central role the creative process plays in art making while acknowledging the risks inherent in the creative journey. We invite you to take this journey with us tonight!

**Our Mission:**
Our mission

The Bates Dance Festival brings an artistically and ethnically diverse group of the best contemporary dance artists to Maine during the summer season to teach, perform, and create new work; encourages and inspires established and emerging artists by providing them with a creative, supportive environment in which to work; and actively engages people from the community and region in a full range of dance activities. Learn more about contemporary performance -- visit our website and listen to About Modern Dance- a radio interview with Jessica Lockhardt at: http://abacus.bates.edu/dancefest/danceaudio.php.

**Festival Finale**
THE CLEAN GREEN EARTH SAVING MACHINE

Conceived and created by Dana Reed, Terrence Karn, Priscilla Rivas, Yvonne Hernandez, Jillian Grunnah, Analyn Lehning, Scotty Hardwig, Rob Flax, Corina Dalzell, Samantha Hyde, Kylie Phillips, Franki Trout and the students of the Youth Arts Program.


Music: Mary J. Blige, “Chicago” Soundtrack, Diplo, Gorillaz, Timothy Heinz, Queen Latifah, MGMT, Outkast, Lil’ Wayne, The Lorax Singers, Dance, Rhythm, and Chant from Liberia/Nigeria

Rap Video team: Katie Aylward, Sarah Bodnar, Rachel Boggia, Lindsay Caddle LaPointe, Shawn Hove, Peter Richards, Liz Saluke
The Youth Arts Program would like to thank the following people: Adam Barruch, Daudet Fabrice, Sara Hook, Michel Kouakou, Kay Mann, Paul Matteson, Ryan Morrill, Kate Weare Company, Dave Willey, Laura Faure, Nancy Salmon, Christine Schwartz and the Bates Dining Commons staff, The Kelley Family, and all our fantastic parent volunteers, our awesome teen helpers Sarah Choroszy and Lilia Conway, our awesome interns and the amazing YAP community of families and friends that help give our program such a vibrant spirit!

**ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHERS**

**MICHAEL FOLEY** has been involved in the professional dance world for over 20 years. He started dancing at Bates College under Marcy Plavin, and earned a BA in English and Spanish. Michael has performed internationally in the companies of over two dozen choreographers, including Doug Elkins, Kevin Wynn, Seán Curran, Donna Uchizono, Ruby Shang and Eun Me Ahn. He has taught workshops and master classes throughout the US, Europe, Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico, and has taught on the faculties of New World School of the Arts, Bates College, la Escuela Profesional de la Danza de Mazatlan, and Dance Space Center in NYC. He also teaches technique and has set choreography for the Cirque du Soleil organization. Michael has maintained choreographic residencies at over 30 colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad. His choreography can be found in the touring repertoires of dance companies throughout the US, as well as in Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Ireland and Italy. He formed his own company, Michael Foley Dance, in 1994, touring the US and Europe. Michael has a 28-year affiliation with the Bates Dance Festival where he has been a student, emerging choreographer, faculty, and co-director of the Young Dancers Workshop from 1996 - 2007. He holds an MFA in Dance from the University of Washington and is an Associate Professor of Dance at the University of South Florida. He also directs a yearly study abroad program in Paris. In 2009 Michael was a Fulbright Scholar in Mexico working with Delfos Danza. http://www.michaelfoleydance.com/

**OMAR CARRUM** is a founding member of the internationally touring dance company, Delfos Danza Contemporánea, where he continues to serve as a choreographer, dancer and teacher. He has been a featured performer in over 60 works of dance, theater and opera, working with an international roster of choreographers performing in some of the world’s most prestigious theaters and festivals for dance. In 2000 he was awarded as the Best Male Dancer at the 21st Annual INBA-UAM International Choreographic Competition. As a dancer, he has been the recipient of the FONCA grant (National Fund for Culture and Art in Mexico) in 1995 and 2001, and the FOECA grant (State Fund for Culture and Art in Mexico) for artistic development in 2001. In 2009 he became recipient of a three-year FONCA “Scenic Creators with Trajectory.” In 2009 he became the first Mexican choreographer to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship to develop his project, Armoire for hate, fragility and uncertainty. In 1998 he co-founded, with Claudia Lav-
CLAUDIA LA VISTA is a dancer, choreographer and teacher, who has been involved in arts since the age of eight. In 1992 she founded Delfos Danza Contemporánea along with Victor Manuel Ruiz. The company has since grown into one of Mexico’s foremost internationally touring modern dance troupes. Claudia has received many awards for her outstanding artistic works including Best Female Dancer in 1998, 2002 and 2005, and “One of the 10 Best Mexican Dancers of the XX Century” by the specialized critics in 2001. In 2008 and 2011 she received the prestigious National Arts Creators Fellowship from the Mexican National Endowment for the Arts. In 2011 the University of Chicago chose her as a Mellon Fellow to create a collaborative project with the music department. She has been a featured performer in over 70 works of dance, theater, video and opera, working with an international roster of choreographers and performing in some of the world’s most prestigious theaters. Claudia has created more than 40 choreographic works and has collaborated with theater and opera directors, photographers, video artists, poets and other choreographers for nearly two decades. In 1998 she created, along with Victor Manuel Ruiz and Omar Carrum, La Escuela Profesional de Danza de Mazatlán/EPDM, which has emerged as one of the leading dance conservatories in Mexico and Latin America. http://www.delfosdana.com/

LARRY KEIGWIN is a native New Yorker and graduate from Hofstra University, where he received a BA in Dance. He founded KEIGWIN + COMPANY in 2003 and as Artistic Director, Keigwin has led the company as it has performed at theaters and dance festivals throughout New York City and across the country. In addition to his work with K+C, recent commissions include Works & Process at the Guggenheim, The Juilliard School, The New York City Ballet’s Choreographic Institute, and The Martha Graham Dance Company, among many others. In 2010, Keigwin was named the Vail International Dance Festival’s first artist in residence, during which time he created and premiered a new work with four of ballet’s most prominent stars. Also in 2010, he staged the opening event of Fashion Week: Fashion’s Night Out: The Show, which was produced by Vogue. In 2011, Keigwin choreographed the new musical, Tales of the City, at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, as well as the new off-Broadway production of RENT, now running at New World Stages. Keigwin has most recently been commissioned to create a new ballet on the Royal Ballet of New Zealand. Keigwin’s other choreographic credits include work with the pop band, Fischerspooner, comedian Murray Hill, and as an associate choreographer for The Radio City Rockettes. www.LarryKeigwin.com

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Nutritional Deficiencies at Gordontown: The Effects of Weaning and Agriculture on Subadult Health and Mortality

Kellum K. Everett

Dr. Shannon Hodge
Sociology and Anthropology Department

In order to better understand the role health plays in bone development and remodeling, I analyzed the remains of 36 subadults recovered from the Mississippian Period village of Gordontown (40DV6) looking for evidence of nutritional deficiencies. Fetuses, infants, and young children of Gordontown suffered a high mortality rate, likely resulting from scurvy and anemia, often existing co-morbidly. In bone, these nutritional deficiencies are characterized by porosity and hypertrophy. Here, I discuss the prevalence and possible etiologies of these conditions among the subadult inhabitants. I also discuss some of the ways that anemic and scorbutic lesions can be differentiated from each other, as well as many of the difficulties that are often encountered when interpreting such lesions. This research supports recent studies that suggest the type of hypertrophic bone, as well as porosity on specific bones, such as the sphenoid, can help differentiate anemia from scurvy in paleopathologic cases.

Malnutrition affects every system of the body. In bone, evidence of malnutrition can be observed as various lesions, most notably porosity and hypertrophy. The etiology of these lesions may not always be clear, especially in immature remains and in bone that is in the initial growth or healing stages. Cribra orbitalia and porotic hyperostosis are two common conditions that manifest in these types of lesions; however, there is still some debate as to whether or not the two conditions merely represent different expressions of the same etiology, which many believe to be anemia. Furthermore, scurvy can cause similar lesions, which can easily be confused with lesions caused by anemia.

Due to the increase in the demand for many nutrients that growth and development require, and to weaker immune systems, children often bear the brunt of any nutritional stresses in a population. In agricultural societies, these nutritional deficiencies often start to show up in skeletal remains between 3 to 4.5 years of age, an age many believe to be anemia. Furthermore, scurvy can cause similar lesions, which can easily be confused with lesions caused by anemia.

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the mortality rate for children four years of age and under was possibly as high as 45 percent (Breitburg et al. 1998).

This paper suggests that the same deficiencies that led to the lesions I observed also caused the children of Gordontown to suffer the highest mortality rate in the region and may have even contributed to the fact that, soon after, the Mississippian people would practically disappear from the region (Eisenberg 1986, 1991; Moore et al. 2006; Smith 1992; Cobb and Butler 2002). Here, I address the possible causes of the lesions at Gordontown, which I believe often result from weaning a child from nutritious milk and on to less nutritious maize.

**Weaning and Nutritional Stress**

Human milk is the only single food source that contains all the nutrients required to feed a child up to roughly six months of age. It also contains beneficial immunological properties. While milk is low in iron and several other nutrients, a baby is usually born with enough reserves to last up to about six months. After that the child’s stores start to run out and the mother’s milk slowly becomes less concentrated with the proper nutrients to meet the child’s full dietary requirements. At that point, a child needs to have his or her milk intake supplemented with other foods to get the adequate level of nutrients. If the mother is moderately nutritionally deficient, the baby will most often still get adequate nutrition, even at the expense of the mother’s own health. It is not until the mother is severely deficient that the child’s health will be adversely affected, if it even survives birth (Colson 2002; WHO 2001; Ek 1983).

In maize-dependent garden agriculturalist societies, weaning would mean more maize consumption for a child. Not only is maize lacking in many nutrients, such as iron, and vitamins B12, folate, and C, but the phytates it contains actually inhibit the absorption of iron into the blood stream. Consuming vitamin C or foods of a heme source, such as meat, fish, and shellfish help make iron more bioavailable. These nutritional deficiencies not only have direct repercussions, but also weaken an individual’s immune response (WHO 2001). Without the addition of meat and more nutritious fruits and vegetables, a heavy reliance on maize can lead to both anemia and scurvy.

**Anemia**

Anemia is the pathological condition of having a low red blood cell count. The iron component in hemoglobin carries oxygen to our cells, so a deficiency in iron can lead to anemia. However, insufficient vitamins A, B12, B6, and folate can also lead to anemia. Vitamin B12 deficiency is a common cause of anemia because it can only be obtained from animal sources. Babies who are fed vitamin B12-deficient milk (e.g., the milk of some vegetarian and vegan mothers) are likely to develop megaloblastic B12 anemia. Vitamin B12-deficient individuals are also at greater risk for bone mineral loss and osteoporosis (WHO 2001; Walker et al. 2009).

**Scurvy**

Scurvy is caused by inadequate vitamin C (ascorbic acid) intake (e.g., a diet low in fruits and vegetables). Vitamin C aids in the absorption of iron and folate, as well as maintenance of connective tissues, such as bone collagen and blood vessels. Scurvy leads to weakened blood vessels and weakens the periosteum that covers the bone, both of which can lead to hemorrhaging. Hemorrhaging of the orbits is well documented in clinical cases of scurvy (Hood and Hodges 1969; Ortner and Ericksen 1997; Ortner et al. 2001; WHO 2001; Aufderheide and Rodriguez-Martín 1998). Since bone contains collagen, scurvy also inhibits proper bone formation. Symptoms usually appear within one to three months after vitamin C is completely removed from the diet (WHO 2001; Aufderheide and Rodriguez-Martín 1998).

**How Can We Observe This in Bone**

Anemia and scurvy are two common nutritional deficiencies that can be observed in bone. Both are most easily observed as porous and hypertrophic bone, which can manifest in a number of ways. The specific ways the lesions are expressed are key to determining possible etiologies. Anemia is often attributed to cases of porotic hyperostosis and cribra orbitalia. As the name suggests, porotic hyperostosis is characterized by porosity and hypertrophy of the cortical bone. Cribra orbitalia is essentially the same lesions on the orbital roofs. The porosity of the cortical bone is due to resorption caused by an expanding diploë, which is the trabecular bone that is sandwiched between the inner and outer tables of cortical bone and is the site of red blood cell production. The expansion of the diploë is due to an increase in the demand for red blood cell production. These lesions have often been attributed to iron-deficiency anemia, but recent studies argue that megaloblastic anemias, such as those caused by deficiencies in B12 or folate may in fact be the cause (Ortner et al. 2001, Ortner and Ericksen 1997; Walker et al. 2009). As I stated earlier, porosity and hypertrophy can be manifest in different ways, depending on etiology.

Scurvy is also associated with porosity and hyperostosis on the orbital roofs, as well as certain cranial and post cranial elements. However, in scurbitic bone, hyperostosis refers to new bone deposition on top of existing cortical bone due to the subperiosteal hemorrhaging often observed.
in scorbutic individuals, such as on the orbital roofs (Hood and Hodges 1969; Ortner and Ericksen 1997; Ortner et al. 2001). Studies by Ortner et al. (2001) and Ortner and Ericksen (1997) have also linked other cranial porosity to scorbuty, such as porosity on the mandible, zygomatic, maxilla, and most notably the greater wing of the sphenoid. Ortner et al. (2001) note that the region where temporal and frontal meet the sphenoid may also exhibit porosity. These studies also suggest that some cases of scorbutic orbital lesions may have previously been misinterpreted as anemia in the bioarchaeological record (Ortner et al. 2001; Ortner and Ericksen 1997).

Due to the similarity in the lesions, length of deficiency, and age of individual, a confident diagnosis may not always be possible. Also, scorbuty and anemia are not the only conditions that cause porosity and new bone deposition, so other conditions, such as rickets, infectious disease, and some other causes of inflammation (Lewis 2004) cannot be ruled out when macroscopically evaluating bone. However, I will not go into all of these possibilities in depth here. Possible co-morbidities also further complicates finding a definitive etiology, because it is likely that more than one deficiency may exist in an individual. Furthermore, the developmental porosity and woven bone of very young infants and fetuses can mimic or disguise certain pathologies (Ortner et al. 2001). Limited availability of photographic documentation, especially of less severe cases of scorbuty and anemia, can make comparison difficult to a less experienced observer. However, I found illustrated publications from Brickley and Ives (2006), Ortner and Ericksen (1997), and Lewis (2004) to be helpful when I needed documented cases for comparison.

**Methods and Materials**

Due to time and storage constraints, I was limited regarding the number of individuals I was able to analyze. In order to survey the health status of the population as a whole, I requested adult females, adult males, and subadults. To do this, I used a random number generator, entering all of the individuals who, according to the inventories from the Tennessee Division of Archaeology, were likely to have enough elements to analyze. The result was nine females, ten males, and ten subadults. However, since the bone boxes contained more than one burial each, I was able to analyze 36 subadults, which is the focus of this paper. I found that several of the subadults lacked sufficient cranial fragments for analysis, so they were excluded. The resulting sample consisted of 26 subadults with observable crania and 20 with at least partially observable orbits.

In the lab, I visually analyzed all of the subadult crania under strong light and a 5x magnifying lens. Under the guidance of my mentor, I compared the observed morphology with the current research listed in the references as well as with four subadults from the David Davis collection. I documented each burial with detailed notes describing the size and shape of the lesions observed, including porosity, new bone deposition, and diploë expansion. I also took photographs of a majority of the lesions I observed for future research and comparison.

Most of the remains from Gordontown were highly fragmentary and poorly preserved, which made it difficult to analyze all of the bones necessary to evaluate pathology. There were several perinates of which I was unable to confidently differentiate pathology from age-related morphology and taphonomic damage. However, I do believe that many of those individuals did have lesions that were outside of the normal range, so actual rates of malnutrition are likely higher.

**Findings**

Seven of the subadult crania (n=26) had porosity and expansion of the diploë (51A, 62, 67, 74, 77, 78, and one of the infants in burial 82). While I did analyze post-cranial elements, I was unable to find any trends or conclusive evidence in location and frequency of post-cranial porosity. I observed porosity and possible diploë expansion in some adult crania as well, although not to the same extent as with the subadults. It is likely these children, as well as several adults, suffered from anemia that resulted in porotic hyperostosis (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Cranial fragments from 51A, characteristic of porotic hyperostosis.**

No less than seven of the subadults who had observable orbits (n=20) had orbital porosity (31, 32, 37, 51A, 62, 63 intrusive, 82B). At least two of those individuals had
obvious diploë expansion (51A, 62) (Figure 2). One juvenile (62), exhibited what one might call “classic” characteristics of cribra orbitalia. The orbital roofs of that subadult had diploë expansion that not only resulted in a complete removal of the outer table of cortical bone, but also extended past the original cortical elevation (Figure 3). Thus, I am confident that these individuals suffered from anemia, likely resulting from vitamin B12 deficiency.

At least three individuals who exhibited orbital porosity also had new bone deposition on the orbital roofs (32, 37, 51A). The new bone deposition on the orbital roofs of 37 (Figure 4) was a smooth layer on top of the existing cortical bone and may have been in the healing stages, while the new bone deposition on the orbital roofs of 51A was mostly thick and raised (Figure 5).

Figure 2. Cross-sectional view of right orbit showing expansion of the diploë in the same individual (51A).

Figure 3. Extreme porosity of the left orbital roof and frontal in 62, indicative of cribra orbitalia.

Figure 4. Porosity and new bone deposition of the left orbital roof, possibly from scurvy, in 37.

Figure 5. Cross-section view of left orbital roof of 51A showing new bone deposition.

It is possible that 32, 37 and 51A may have had vitamin C deficiency. Further supporting evidence for scurvy is that fact that 37 and 51A also had porosity of the sphenoid (Figure 6), which Ortner and Ericksen (1997) argue is almost pathognomonic for scurvy. Subadult 51A exhibited porosity of the temporal (Figure 7), posterior maxilla, and palate (Figure 8) as well, all of which Ortner et al. (2001)
and Ortner and Ericksen (1997) believe are common lesions in scorbutic crania. At least one of the children in the comingled burial 82 (82A or 82B) also had porosity of the temporal bones, but hypertrophy was less clear.

**Figure 6.** Abnormal porosity of the greater wing of the sphenoid in 51A.

**Figure 7.** Abnormal porosity of the right temporal, also in 51A.

**Figure 8.** Abnormal porosity of the left maxillary palate of 51A.

**Discussion**

The children of Gordontown likely suffered severe nutritional stresses. Many of the subadults with observable elements exhibited some degree of abnormal porosity and many more would have likely died before lesions had a chance to develop. Once they bounced back from any nutritional stresses experienced during weaning, most individuals seem to have survived until middle adulthood. This is backed by the fact that there are very few older children and young adults in the burial sample. Even though the mortality rate was high and many of the children show signs of malnutrition and other illnesses, it could be argued that the population as a whole was quite healthy, in spite of inadequate nutrition. The fact that there were so many children 3 years old and younger, and almost no older children or young adults, suggests that the weaker individuals may have died very young, while the healthier individuals survived into middle or older adulthood. However, the children that did have lesions should not be considered the weakest, since they did live long enough for the lesions to form.

Since perinates do not have much, if any cranial diploë (Lewis 2004), I believe several more young infants may have had abnormal porosity and hypertrophic bone cranially and post-cranially. However, as I stated above, if...
I was unable to confidently determine whether or not the morphology of the bone was due to some other cause, other than pathology, I did not include it as a pathologic case. In the future, I hope to compare those individuals to other skeletal samples to determine how bone development is affected at different stages by malnutrition and infectious disease.

I believe these lesions were caused more by diet than by the weaning practice or by another factor. We cannot know with certainty whether or not a diet with a high maize and low meat intake was one of the leading factors in the nutritional deficiencies that the residents of Gordontown suffered from, but it does seem like a very probable scenario. This is supported by the fact that I did observe a few adult crania with porotic hyperostosis. Hopefully, as technology continues to allow for better photographic and x-ray documentation and more research is conducted comparing clinical cases to bioarchaeological cases, we will be able to better understand the causes of these and how they came about in specific populations.

References Cited


Universality in the First Person: Aesthetics in the Poetry of Anne Sexton

Andrea D. Green

The genre of confessional poetry is gendered by many critics as women’s writing. The work is evaluated for its focus on how the author deals with the female experiences and issues of gender identity. Most critics unconsciously code the male voice as ‘universal,’ so female confessional poetry is depreciated and not adequately critiqued. But the critical approach used to analyze confessional poetry needs to be broadened so that there may be a better understanding of how the genre contributes to the poetic canon. One of the most widely known confessional poets is Anne Sexton. Because she is a female writer labeled as a confessionalist, her work is most frequently analyzed via the ‘universal’ male voice. This project will investigate the fallacy within literary criticism of Anne Sexton and explicate the aesthetic qualities of her poetry by analyzing her use of affect and comparing her poetic techniques with those of canonical poets such as William Blake and Walt Whitman.

If you put your ear close to a book, you can hear it talking. A tin voice, very small, somewhat like a puppet, asexual.
–Anne Sexton

In a 2011 essay entitled, “Philip Levine and Other Mediocrities: What it Takes to Ascend to the Poet Laureateship,” critic Anis Shivani denounces confessional poets as writers who practice “self-absorption and lassitude” and calls their poetry “content-free, indecorous, and emotionless … trash” (1). While Shivani critiques male poets Robert Lowell and Philip Levine, his argument centers upon female authorship. He states that modern female poets are hampered by the “post-feminist” idea that “womanhood” exists as an “unfathomable conspiracy” (Shivani 2). Shivani ultimately asserts that “whenever a poet gives reign to her inner voice, she practices madness” (2). The article’s “self-absorption” critique typifies a long-held belief that women are unable to write without saturating their works with their personal unhingings. The erroneous concept that women are not equipped to generate material as suitable as their male counterparts is not a new perspective. For example, in an 1855 letter to his publisher, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote, “America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash-and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed” (quoted in Frederick 231). Over a century apart and with events such as the women’s rights movements between Shivani and Hawthorne, the crux of their criticisms of feminine works is guided by an androcentric tradition that places limitations on the female writer.

One such writer whose art has drawn the scorn of this androcentric tradition is Anne Sexton. Since her beginnings as a poetry student of Robert Lowell, Sexton’s position has been at the hub of a scholarly debate about the value of confessional poetry. Critics tend to regard confessional poetry as either “egocentric” or “incredibly distinguished and compassionate” (qtd. in Middlebrook 18-19). Those who laud Sexton commend her decision to delve into the intimate and intensely personal details of womanhood. Her poetry initiates a needed discussion on the taboo realms of “impurity, impiety, and social abortion,” and simultaneously investigates the universal experiences of life (Capo 24). However, because Sexton’s universal truth is one that is defined “through her relationship with the male Other,” she had to first “deconstruct … masculine language from within” (Kumin xxxix, McGowan 2). Her poetry seeks to simulate the real-life experience both sexes undertake and in order to do so, she “invented a tone of resistance to patriarchy which made her voice exemplary” (Capo 22).

Yet there is still a mass rejection of Sexton’s poetry by critics who claim her work is nothing more than a formless, shameful expulsion of ‘feminine’ emotions. As Brenda Ameter points out, “established traditional writers and critics (especially male ones) criticize [Sexton’s] view of the universal, blaming her female outlook for an excess of emotion” (82). Sexton is not regarded as a real artist in part because of the supposed excess of femininity. However, the mass of Sexton’s work examines what she calls the “the life-death cycle[s] of the body,” but because she
is compartmentalized into the category of ‘confessionalist’ poetry, her examination of the human body is restricted to a feminine perspective (Sexton, Interview with Barbara Kevles, 109). Biographical writings by women are “especially susceptible to a type of unsympathetic or hasty interpretation” with “value judgments” placed upon their “style and form” (McGrath 138-139). Critics blindly accept that ‘confessionalists’ practice absolute veracity, thus they link the biography of the author to the images, themes, and ideas within the work.

Sexton’s acceptance as an authoritative poet suffers due to her female gender but most importantly because her controversial themes do not meet the standard of the ‘universal male voice.’ Anne Sexton was a female poet at the beginning of the nascent women’s movement of the mid-century and the taboo subject matter she wrote about made audiences, both male and female, extremely uncomfortable. Moreover, traditional criticism assumes that the ideas and values presented in a work of literature are those of an educated, white male. Consequently, the experiences mimicked within all literary works should be from the masculine perspective. Critics accept that this perspective might include biases, preconceived notions, personal limitations, and/or value judgments; however, it should not have any characteristics that are distinctly feminine. The masculine hegemony that dominates poetic criticism habitually assigns literary texts a gender, thus before a work by a female author can be explicated, it is set against a strict rubric that prescribes everything from content to form. Critics use the rubric to judge poetry “neither by its sound nor by its power to communicate but by its conformity to certain arbitrary rules” (Lewis 35). Women writers should not be limited by this archaic traditional structure but rather be allowed to enjoy the freedom of writing within a female tradition, a tradition that has its own literary conventions. Women have a dual capability as writers. As women, they can explore a territory of literature that has been historically overlooked, but they can also investigate the universal experiences of life as readily as a male writer.

The literary critic’s decision to wallow in the prosaic restrictions of the past hinders an effective navigation through Anne Sexton’s poetry. These same critics misunderstand her narrative and misconstrue her use of I. Because she is a ‘confessionalist’ and a woman, critics feel the first person pronoun can only be appointed to the poet, the mad scribbler. The erroneous claim is that her work is wholly autobiographical, therefore the I stands for her voice alone, removing the possibility of a persona/speaker. However, for years, poets from the Romantics to the Transcendentalists have embraced the subjective form and were praised for their poetic abilities. William Blake’s use of the subjective form in “Infant Sorrow” is not necessarily regarded as Blake. When the speaker of the poem states, “I thought best / to sulk upon my mother’s breast,” Blake is not demeaned for expressing solace and emotion (7-8). His work is accepted first as having a unique speaker or persona, and also as a paradigm of the lyrical form. In A Handbook to Literature, Harmon and Holman define lyrical poetry as “a brief subjective poem strongly marked by imagination, melody, and emotion” while confessional poetry is defined as poetry that “features a public and sometimes painful display of private, personal matters” (324, 122). Blake’s poem is categorized as lyrical, thus it stands alone without the reader placing conditions upon Blake or his gender.

Unfortunately, the work by female poets is most often preemptively denigrated for being born from the female gender. Male poetry that conforms to the standards of style and form is extolled for its ‘imagination.’ In John Keats “Ode to a Nightingale,” the poem is coded as having a male speaker, and the poem and the poet have achieved canonical status. The speaker references “heart aches,” “opiates,” and eventually “death” (1, 3, 52). Sexton and her contemporaries are rebuked for speaking of issues that could be read as autobiographical, but as poet Billy Collins comments, “don’t try to take away our frail, tubercular John Keats. The Odes … stand by themselves as aesthetic monuments” (91). Poetry about heartache, drugs and death from intelligent, strong female writers is doomed to castigation. As illustrated by Anis Shivani’s article, the current critical rejection of confessional poets and their work stems in large part from the refusal of the critic to understand what Phil McGowan calls the “burden of biographic” (x). McGowan points out that the work by confessional poets is read as if the entirety of their writing is an “urge to anecdotal evidence” (x). In Anne Sexton’s case, critical attention is diverted from her poetry toward her contentious struggle with mental illness.

Critics who are unable to understand depression and mental illness hope that through biography, they will eventually comprehend what is alien to them. By focusing on Sexton’s personal history as the only plausible justification for why a woman would write controversial content, critics relieve themselves of having to construct a basis of analysis that stands outside the traditional male voice. They can simply rely on the details of her life to make cursory judgments. In the end, these critics place Sexton in a position where her work is encumbered by her biography but also by the stereotypical claim of the female ‘madness.’ Diane Wood Middlebrook acknowledges that the issue in the praise or criticism is the question of “what use Sexton has made of a widely shared, frightening, humiliating, and fascinating human experience: the loss of social functioning labeled ‘mad’” (19). Unfortunately, Sexton’s 1974 suicide
exacerbated her image as the mad woman whose literary ability is stymied by mental degeneration.

Regardless of this image, there is no doubt that Sexton was a prolific poet with revolutionary ideas. During the two decades in which she wrote, Anne Sexton produced several works with a variety of different themes. In her first published work, To Bedlam and Part Way Back, Sexton investigates the universal human emotions of loneliness, deprivation, discontent and ennui. With Live or Die, she begins to question the fragility of physical existence and the relationship between life and death. The personas in several of her poems are often too ambiguous to exact a specific gender; however, there are works that give sovereignty to the female voice. Thankfully, several feminist writers such as Anne Sexton revolt against the universal male voice, refusing to “accept the parameters set by men for correct poetry” and instead articulate a true universal voice (Ameter 85). It is a voice that “transforms a culturally defined saga of feminine passivity and victimage (sic) into a heroic tale” (Capo 25). Sexton’s works disprove the claim propagated by Anis Shivani that female confessional poetry centers upon the “anti-heroic female.”

The critics who fault Sexton’s poetry due to her status as a female poet and to her subject matter fail to examine her works for what they do. Critics disregard the aesthetic value of Sexton’s work. Her poetry is diminished to a string of ideas that never asks the question: How does the work speak to the reader or how do readers respond to poetry? In essence, through aesthetics, critics can study why texts have the effects they do on their readers. Aesthetics analyzes the emotional response a text evokes in readers by critiquing how the author controls the language and ideas within in a work. Philip McGowan states that aesthetics “allow for the partial understanding of ethics, of otherness, of what is not currently comprehensible” (9). Authorial intent and ‘meaning’ are shadowed while the poem itself is illuminated for what it does. Because confessional poetry invites the reader to respond to its intimate details, lyrical characteristics, and controversial subject matter, aesthetic literary criticism is the most appropriate tool for analysis. The reader’s analysis of the poem does not need to conform to the guidelines of such literary schools of thought as formalism or structuralism. Aesthetic criticism asserts the value of confessional poetry by allowing an emotional relationship between the reader and the poem. Value is derived from the poetry functioning as a substitution for real life experiences that are universal. As Stein Haugom Olsen states in The End of Literary Theory, by recognizing the “raw material of literary works” the critic can utilize the aesthetic argument to produce “conviction by directing the addressee’s perception and the interpretation of what he perceives” (6). Thus, works by Anne Sexton are not marginalized as poetry meant only for feminist audiences, but become collectively valued by all. Sexton included in many of her works the perspective of both the male and female genders. By utilizing a unique form and incorporating both genders, often simultaneously in a single work, Sexton creates a balanced perception as she analyses life’s experiences. Yet not unlike traditional male poets, Sexton uses a speaker, I, to mimic real life occurrences.

The confessional poet’s use of I is not unlike that of William Blake’s. Returning to “Infant Sorrow,” readers can accept that when Blake uses the first person pronoun to proclaim that “bound and weary / I thought best / To sulk upon my mother’s breast” that he may be, however unlikely, speaking of his own memory of birth (7-8). They may also review the lines and hear the ‘speaker’ of the poem suggesting the innate relationship that exists between mother and child. The brevity and fluidity of the eight-line lyric can remind the reader of the terseness of childhood, relationships, or life itself. The bond presented in the last line of the poem of the mother and, as far as the audience is concerned, genderless child, works to instigate an emotional reaction from the reader concerning his or her own parent-child relationship. The same aesthetic qualities that are applied to the works of William Blake can be applied to the works of Anne Sexton.

An example of Sexton’s ability to manipulate perceptions is evident in one of her most controversial poems, “Unknown Girl in the Maternity Ward.” Similar to Blake’s lyric, the poem presents a child and mother relationship: Child, the current of your breath is six days long You lie, a small knuckle on my white bed; lie, fisted like a snail, so small and strong at my breast. Your lips are animals; you are fed with love. (1-5)

In this piece, an “unknown” speaker gives birth to an unnamed baby. The persona in this poem is undoubtedly female, an isolated woman who speaks of the “man who left me … full of child” (13, 15). Even though the speaker of the piece is female, the experience within the poem is not one that would “speak to Sexton’s own experience” (McGowan 16). Sexton never gave a child up or gave birth to an illegitimate child. Sexton utilizes the actual experience of parenthood and blends it with the imagined experience of losing a child. She funnels the creation through a female speaker. The subject matter of creation, no matter the gender, is just as central to the work as the idea of the shamed, unwed mother. The aesthetic features that suggest love and loss are specific to the audience. It is the readers who must first “succeed in assigning the pattern a function” within each individual poem (Olsen 4). Does the line “you blink in surprise / and I wonder what you can see, my funny kin, as you troubled my silence” recall to the reader
a memory of fatherhood, motherhood, or even siblinghood (29-31)? Is the knowledge of the birth of a child unknown to the reader or is it an experience that recalls a particular moment in life? By examining the aesthetics of the experience of creation, the poem becomes akin to Blake’s “Infant Sorrow”; it becomes a poem about the universal concept of creation.

Sexton’s poetry is filled with themes that are universal, but due in large part to the fact that “femaleness in our culture signifies Otherness,” many critics deem her selection of topics as grotesque and misinterpret her use of I (qtd. in Whitman, Comments and Questions 890). In “Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator,” Sexton relates the act of self-gratification through a female first-person narrator. Her position as a controversial, confessional poet has no relation to her ability to convey the independent universal act of masturbation. Male and female poets before her have traversed into similar subject matter. In “Song of Myself,” Walt Whitman allocates an independent section to masturbation. The opening sentence to section twenty-eight begins, “Is this then a touch? … quivering me to a new identity” (616). The identity the speaker relates is new, completely independent from the sexual aid of others. Whitman’s poem does not have the titular admission that Sexton’s has, but it acknowledges the act of sexual independence through a discussion of the body’s reaction:

Flames and ether making a rush for my veins, / Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them. My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is hardly different from myself, / On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs, Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip, Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial. (619-630)

The physical response that Whitman’s speaker relates does not belong solely to the male sex. Men and women both experience physiological changes during sexual acts. Moreover, females encounter an immense stigmatization for the licentiousness that Whitman references. Whitman’s choice of “me” and “my” does not necessarily relate his history with masturbation, but rather the experience of the act as it affects the senses.

Similarly, the I in “The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator” does not refer to Sexton. The I represents the individual sexual freedom that both men and women are capable of obtaining. Sexton’s speaker uses the personal pronoun to discuss the act of sexual gratification from the perspective of a jaded woman. The triumph of this work comes through the use of a female persona inverting the concept of marriage. Sexton takes the masculine experience of masturbation and applies it to the female form. By doing so, she makes the experience universal. Audiences can relate to the idea of marriage as it is an openly discussed and celebrated union whereas masturbation is not only an extremely private subject, but is seen as masculine behavior. Because she is female, Sexton’s speaker personifies her masturbatory act as a replacement partner in marriage:

The end of the affair is always death. / She’s my workshop. Slippery eye, out of the tribe of myself my breath find you gone. I horrify those who stand by. I am fed. / At night, alone, I marry the bed. (1-6)

Sexton’s use of the word “marry” in her speaker’s refrain illustrates the societal concept of both sex and marriage. In “The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator,” the speaker is cognizant of the constructs of the male-female relationship and tells her reader that her deed will “horrify / those who stand by” (4-5). Whitman acknowledged the fact that his act was “licentious,” but Sexton’s speaker must go further in order to relate the female experience of masturbation (623). In order to align the act with the acceptance of the audience, Sexton uses the metaphor of marriage. By doing so, the audience can view a female within the structure of an accepted union. However, Sexton’s speaker feels the need to further justify her desire by relating the culpability of her partner. Her mate has been enchanted by a “black-eyed rival” and no longer requires the speaker’s “little plum,” but the necessity for gratification is not removed because her union ceases to exist (25, 23). As a female she has the same desires and needs as a man. Just as “Song of Myself” does not speak to Walt Whitman’s personal truth, “The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator” does not speak to Sexton’s own practice of masturbation. Rather, it relates the act that both sexes are capable of experiencing. The value of her poem comes from its aesthetic characteristics that convey a universal sexual act from the perspective of a woman. Readers achieve simulated pleasure by reading how masturbation is a solitary, but universal act that unifies a persona’s mind with their body. Sexton used sexuality as a recurrent theme in her poetry.

Sexuality and its effect on individual lives persist as an eternal, undecipherable quandary. Sexton focuses on sexuality and other issues that humanity’s existence prompts. She tackles the subjects of sexuality, motherhood and mental illness candidly and with an acute awareness of her reader’s moralistic ideals. She discusses the moral ambiguity that exists over how to control death. Sexton varied the themes in her poetry, but her poems that center upon suicide and death are the most often critiqued. Because Sexton committed suicide, it is easy to accept her use of death as a logical source for inspiration. However, through aesthetic criticism and comparative analysis, her poems become less about her own demise and more about the precariousness
and fragility of the life.

Sexton often recounts how humans respond to their inability to understand death. In “Wanting to Die,” Sexton investigates the questions of the relationship between life and death and uses her speaker to hit on the questions that plague humanity. Her speaker begins by immediately calling attention to the human indifference to death: “Since you ask, most days I cannot remember / I walk in my clothing, unmarked by that voyage / Then the almost unnameable lust returns” (1-3). The lust the speaker relates is a yearning to understand the “voyage” (2). The speaker hopes to accomplish some unattainable comprehension of life and its meaning. Since no specific details are given to identify of the gender of the speaker, the reader may assume it could be female or male. The gender of the speaker is irrelevant as the theme of the poem can be found in the first stanza: the voyage of life. Sexton’s use of the word voyage is precise as a voyage is literally a journey between the beginning and the end. The speaker is trying to identify his or her place in that voyage. In the second stanza, the speaker confesses, “I have nothing against life” and canvases the entire physicality of the world by commenting on the “grass blades,” or nature, and “the furniture you have placed under the sun,” or the materialism of man (4, 5-6).

As the poem progresses, the third stanza comments on the pivotal question: “Like carpenters they want to know which tools / They never ask why build” (8-9). The last two lines of the third stanza observe the way humans deal with life and death. With both, there are prescribed tools that aid in the process. Births are as ritualistic as funerals. Both require moral and ethically correct modes of affection to be shown. In birth, the new child ushers into the world with congratulatory gifts and a hope to withstand the claws of death for as long as possible. In death, the reverse occurs. Mourners comment on the shortness of life and how one can never truly be ready. Sexton renders the tangible incidents of birth and death irrelevant as she attempts to investigate the “balanced” relationship between the two (28). The desire of the poem is to know why (9). As in “The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator,” Sexton once again uses personification to relate the issue of life and death. Death is not simply an end to life, it is the “enemy” of the living (11). Death has no gender; therefore, Sexton declares it is both “his craft, his magic” and that “she waits” for life to exhaust itself (12, 25). Life, death and the voyage between the two have a tenuous relationship. While the title of the work might suggest that the author welcomes death, the text of the poem shows how the title references the desire to know death as one knows life.

“All My Pretty Ones,” a poem from Sexton’s 1962 All My Pretty Ones, works with the same theme as “Wanting to Die.” The speaker proclaims:

I’m afraid of needles.
I’m tired of rubber sheets and tubes.
I’m tired of faces that I don’t know
and now I think that death is starting. (1-4)

In the first three lines, the fears and weariness of the speaker can as easily be assigned to a newborn babe as to an elderly individual. “Needles,” “rubber sheets,” “tubes,” and unknown “faces” do not give any defining evidence of the age or sex of the speaker (1-3). It is not until the fourth line that the reader receives any clue relevant to a specific persona. The amalgam of the catalogue of hospital items with “death” hints at an elderly speaker (4). Unlike “Wanting to Die,” the speaker in “Old” does not look toward death for answers, but rather back toward life because of the closeness of death. Sexton uses the notion of liminality to display the delicateness of existence. The speaker’s life nears the end, thus they relate a memory of youth:

We are young and we are walking
and picking wild blueberries
all the way to Damariscotta.
Oh Susan, she cried,
you’ve stained your new waist.
Sweet taste—
my mouth so full
and the sweet blue running out
all the way to Damariscotta. (7-15)

The audience now finds out the sex and name of the speaker. Susan conveys her memories of youth and the “sweet taste” not just of the “wild blueberries” but of childhood (12, 8). In order to overcome the obstacle of death, Susan revisits the experiences of life. Sexton uses the last three lines of her poem to cement the fact that there is no escape from death and that for the masses life is spent dreaming of an alternate state. The elderly Susan attempts to flee the end of her journey only to be awakened by her inescapable reality. She angrily questions those around her: “What are you doing? Leave me alone! / Can’t you see I’m dreaming? / In a dream you are never eighty” (16-18).

The concept of the dreaming as a way of living life is at the center of “Old” and “Wanting to Die.” Susan states that “Death starts like a dream,” but she is no longer at the start (5). She is close to the enemy of death and the new dream is to escape the end and return to the youthfulness of life. The two poems have different speakers at presumably different ages. Despite the difference in speakers, the idea of the dream as a form of existence is found in both works. Sexton’s own trials with death are irrelevant to the poem. The aesthetic use of death as an unconquerable, undecipherable adversary beckons the reader to an awareness of his or her state of life. Life’s only escape is death, which no man or woman can fully understand. Death is indifferent to
Sexton’s capability to convey universal experiences such as life and death from the point of view of both the male and the female genders is one of her greatest achievements. Through her poetry, Sexton strives to shed light on the societal mandates that women and men place upon themselves and each other. Often deemed a feminist writer, Sexton’s work does not exclude the male sex, but instead, her poetry examines the position of both sexes from an asexual point of view. In “Man and Wife,” the speaker elucidates how marriage can become a monotonous, laborious event. However, Sexton does not place the blame on a patriarchal society that condemns women to be traded as a commodity. Her speaker creates a balance between the sexes as she offers up her introduction:

We are not lovers.

We do not know each other.

We look alike

but we have nothing to say.

We are like pigeons . . . (1-5)

The initial focus of the work combines the husband and wife into one creature, “we.” The use of the word “pigeons” followed by an ellipsis directs the reader’s attention to the image of an endless volery of birds, so similar in appearance and behavior, that they are known primarily through their relationship with one another. The imagery of the pigeons as part of a whole allows for the man and woman also to be seen as two parts of a whole. Without one, the entity of marriage does not exist and in the marriage, they create a sort of balance. When the speaker returns in the second stanza, the theme of the poem is introduced. The speaker tells of “that pair who came to the suburbs / by mistake” and the focal point of the work becomes the “mistake” that the man and woman are together (6-7). The couple “bumped / their small heads against a blind wall,” not sure of the responsibilities that are attached to the roles they have accepted (8-9). As seen in “Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator,” Sexton uses marriage to convey a normalcy with which men and women can identify. In the work, her speaker breaks away from the idea of the man and woman in holy matrimony as something normal or serene, and the last stanza analyzes the similarities and relationship between the two. In “Man and Wife,” Sexton begins by introducing the creation a marriage makes, the “we.” In “The Black Art,” the speaker begins by setting up two opposing forces. In the first stanza, the speaker proclaims:

A man who writes feels too much,

those trances and portents!

As if cycles and children and islands

weren’t enough; as if mourners and gossips

and vegetables were never enough.

She thinks she can warn the stars.

A writer is essentially a spy.

Dear love, I am that girl. (1-8)

The final line pronounces a female speaker and her relationship to the man within the poem. Their relationship is one of “love” (8). They are bound by the intangible sensation, but have issues that belong to them alone. By the separation of the stanzas as well as the proclamation of “I am that girl,” the reader can experience the world of a female writer first (8). Sexton’s speaker purposely separates herself from her male counterpart. She initiates the conversation by blatantly calling attention to the erroneous concepts of the female writer. As previously stated, one of the central issues with female, confessional poetry is that critics believe, as the speaker states, that “a woman who writes feels too much” (1). The speaker mocks the idea that a woman is constrained by her sex. The speaker jests that “cycles and children and islands” should be enough (3). Facetiously she claims that a female writer dare to write, that she thinks herself so powerful that she presumes she can “warn the stars” (6). The stereotypes that a woman’s position in life is best suited as a mother, creator and perpetual caretaker command that in order for women to write, they must take on the characteristics of a “spy” (7).

In the second stanza, the speaker introduces the restrictions pressed upon men:

A man who writes knows too much,
such spells and fetishes!
As if erections and congresses and products
weren’t enough; as if machines and galleons
and wars were never enough.
With used furniture he makes a tree.
A writer is essentially a crook.
Dear love, you are that man. (9-16)
The similarities between the man and the woman take
the form of the stereotypes placed upon them. A woman may
feel too much, but a man who writes “knows too much”
(9). While the speaker battles against the stereotypes of
woman, she is cognizant of the man’s battle against sexual
domination, industry and the image of the ruling male. The
two stanzas work to outline the issues that each sex has in
regards to creative freedom. The restraints are not the same,
but both men and women are shackled by the obstacle of
expectation. In the final stanza, Sexton’s speaker joins
the man and woman together and the speaker announces
that she and her love have become a “we” (19). When the
speaker states “we marry,” she reconciles the similarities
between the issues that plague both sexes. They are not
joined in union solely as husband and wife, but are joined
by the experiences they encounter. The poem demonstrates
how men must be avid thinkers of industry while women
must resign themselves to be emotional, nurturing creators.
In both “Man and Wife” and “The Black Art,” Sexton at-
ttempts to deconstruct the concepts of the ruling, patriarchal
man and the submissive, objectified woman. Her prowess
as a poet allows her to illustrate the similarities between
the sexes in two very different ways. The poems work to
simulate the difficulties that both sexes face. By stepping
into the dual roles, Sexton successfully creates works that
speak to male and female audiences alike.

Sexton’s poetry transgresses the presupposition that
works by female writers can only speak to female audienc-
es. In Anne Sexton and Middle Generation Poetry, Philip
McGowan states that Sexton’s work is a “deployment of
poetic language that asks fundamental questions about, and
seeks the possibility of answers to, the condition of Be-
ing” (7). Critics and readers must disregard her label as a
confessionalist and resist criticizing her work against the
‘universal’ male voice. Other female poets that are also cat-
ergorized with the term ‘confessional’ are read in the same
restricted manner. Sylvia Plath, a close friend and contem-
porary of Sexton, is one of the most well-known confes-
sional poets. In her poem “Daddy,” Plath’s speaker vents
against the tumultuous relationship she had with her father
and her lover:

If I’ve killed one man, I’ve killed two--
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year,
Seven years, if you want to know.

Daddy, you can lie back now. (75-79)
Just like Sexton, Plath’s position as a confessionalist re-
stricts the critique of this poem. Critics have condemned
“Daddy” for its use of Nazi and Holocaust symbolism as
well its supposed reference to incest. In the same 2011 arti-
cle in which Anis Shivani calls confessional poetry “trash,”
he comments on how Plath uses her “Daddy” as a tool for
“overseeing her imagination of herself as the archetype of
wandering suffering” (Shivani). Once again, Shivani is
centralizing his criticism on a female author as a character
in her own poetry, an “anti-heroic female” (Shivani). How-
ever, similar to Sexton, “it’s only because of biographical
reasons that we question its tone. If we were ignorant of
[Plath’s] biography, we would readily accept it as a poem of
rage” (Dunn 177). The aesthetic characteristics of the
second to last stanza of “Daddy” fuel the reader with rage
with the repetition of the word “kill.” Confessional poetry
may be autobiographical to an extent but it is more often
than not “intensely personalized yet not personal” (Mc-
Gowan 33). With Sexton, part of the contention between
her and her critics lies in the fact that not only in her poetry,
but in her interviews and public appearances, she was an
ingenious creature. She knew how she would appear to
her audience and began each of her poetry readings with
recitation of “Her Kind.”

In “Her Kind,” Sexton creates three different women:
a witch, a housewife, and an adulteress. In the first stanza,
the speaker is a witch, “braver at night,” having to com-
plete her task out of the sight of others (2). The first stanza
evokes the associated stigma of a woman out of her place,
a woman bewitched by a world unpermitted to her. She
is “not a woman” but rather the symbol of what a female
writer becomes. In the second stanza, the speaker is con-
finned to the “warm caves” with “skillets … closets …
silos,” essentially all the “innumerable goods” that a good
housewife requires (1-3). This speaker accepts her place as
the housewife, but is “misunderstood” (5). In the final stan-
za, the speaker embraces her desires and as an adulteress,
claims she is a “survivor … not ashamed to die” (3,7). The
speaker’s triple refrain, “I have been her kind,” conso-
lates the three characters into one creature (7, 14, 21). The
adulteress, the homemaker and the witch become I, a crea-
ture that as Walt Whitman famously claimed in “Song of
Myself,” “contain[s] multitudes” (58). The I in “Her Kind”
exemplifies the nature of Sexton’s writing. Sexton wanted
her readers to obtain a connection between her poetry and
their own lives yet understood that in order to do so, she
would need to create multiple personas.

Sexton’s and her confessional brood’s use of language
“interrogates the difference between experience and under-
standing” (McGowan 33). Her inclusion of sordid, person-
al details does not negate her manipulation of language to
anticipate her reader’s perception. Unfortunately, the term ‘confessional’ is a mill stone for the female poet. In order to remove the restrictions that plague female writers, confessional or not, and explicate the universality of their works, aesthetic analysis needs to be applied. The aesthetic form of criticism is the most appropriate as it “forms [the] necessary if circumscribed route to knowledge of the real,” thus simulating the experiences that men and women encounter but may not be able to discuss or verbalize (McGowan 10). Ironically, the characteristics of Sexton’s poetry that critics use as fuel for condemnation are what make her a unique poetic presence. She is not a female writer solely for female audiences any more than she is the enemy of male audiences. Sexton’s status as one of the most debated poets of the 20th century derives from the fact that her works have surpassed what historically has been accepted and expected from women writers. Rather than practicing the “madness” of giving “reign to the inner voice,” Sexton gives voice to the universal human experience, if only we are willing to listen.

Works Cited


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Synthesis of α-Helical Peptide (AAAAAK)$_4$AAAAAY

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Clarification of protein structure (such as α-helix, β-sheet etc.) is important to correlate the function of a protein with its structure. X-ray crystallography is a powerful technique to elucidate the protein structure in atomic level. However, X-ray crystallography requires proteins to form a single crystal structure and lots of proteins do not meet this requirement. Therefore, the development of the novel technique which is able to address the structure of non-crystallized proteins is important. Recently, FTIR has been reported to be able to clarify the structure of a peptide with $^{13}$C isotopic labels in $D_2O$ water. On the other hand, the peptide with 25 residues (with a sequence of (AAAAK)$_4$AAAAAY) has been shown to be a model peptide of α-helix. Since α-helix is a fundamental type of protein structure, we attempted to apply the $^{13}$C labeled FTIR technique to clarify the structure of (AAAAK)$_4$AAAAAY. In this paper, (AAAAK)$_4$AAAAAY was synthesized and the success of the synthesis was confirmed by mass spectroscopy.

To correlate the function of a protein with its structure, the structure of the protein is necessary and X-ray crystallography is a powerful technique to elucidate the protein structure in atomic level (Wikipedia). However, a lot of protein structures cannot be clarified by X-ray crystallography because they cannot form single crystal structures, which is required by X-ray crystallography. Furthermore, proteins in a single crystal are in a static environment, which may differ to the dynamic in vivo nature. Therefore, a technique which can elucidate the dynamic structure of proteins in aqueous solution is important.

Recently, residue-level peptide/protein structure has been elucidated by the detection of amide I bands (between 1700 to 1590 cm$^{-1}$) in infrared (IR) spectroscopy when the carbon in the carbonyl group (C=O) of an amino acids residue is replaced by $^{13}$C isotopic label (Decatur, 2006). Proteins are usually composed by various secondary structures (such as α-helix, β-sheet, random coils etc.),(Sreerama and Woody, 2000) among which α-helix is a fundamental and important structure (Wang, et al., 2008a; Wang, et al., 2010). Thus, the $^{13}$C labels has been introduced to the α-helical peptides/proteins to address the helical structure in residue level (Barber-Armstrong, et al., 2004; Decatur and Antonic, 1999).

The regular amide I band of an α-helical conformation appears around 1650 cm$^{-1}$ in $H_2O$ solution and decreases to 1630 cm$^{-1}$ in $D_2O$ solution because of the hydrogen bond formation between the amide groups in neighboring strands (as shown in Scheme 1A) (Decatur, 2006). The $^{13}$C labeled residue has been reported to decrease the amide I band to 1600 cm$^{-1}$ when forming a H-bond with regular $C_{12}$ residues (Scheme 1B) (Decatur, 2006). If both neighboring residues contain $^{13}$C labeled residue (Scheme 1C), a strong coupling between $^{13}$C=O occurs and the amide I band will further decrease to 1595 cm$^{-1}$, which can be used as a fingerprint peak to determine the neighboring residues in helices (Decatur, 2006).

The amide I band of $^{13}$C labeled peptide/protein can be only detected in $D_2O$ solution because the strong IR absorption of $H_2O$ (from 3100-3400 and 1600-1700 cm$^{-1}$) will mask the amide bands from peptide/protein (NIST). Since all of the proteins function in $H_2O$ in vivo, development of a technique which can avoid intensive $H_2O$ absorption will help a lot to apply FTIR spectroscopy with $^{13}$C labels to clarify the structure of peptides/proteins. Recently, a newly developed technique (Bio-ATR) has been reported to be able to detect the amide I and II bands of peptides/proteins successfully in $H_2O$ solution (Wang, et al., 2008a; Wang, et al., 2008b). Consequently, we plan to use Bio-ATR technique to resolve the structure of $^{13}$C labeled peptide by FTIR.

As mentioned above, α-helix is a fundamental and important secondary structure to comprise proteins. We plan to accomplish the proof-of-principle experiment to show that the Bio-ATR technique is able to clarify the structure of an α–helical peptide by FTIR spectroscopy with $^{13}$C labels. A peptide with 25 residues (i.e., (AAAAK)$_4$AAAAAY) has been used as a model peptide of α-helix for a long time (Barber-Armstrong, et al., 2004). As a result, double $^{13}$C labels were introduced into (AAAAK)$_4$AAAAAY and the synthesis was confirmed by mass spectroscopy.
Materials and Methods

Materials. Wang resin, Fmoc-protected amino acids (including 13C labeled amino acids), diisopropylcarbodiimide, and 1-hydroxybenzotriazole were purchased from Anaspec Inc. (San Jose, CA). Piperidine, trifluoroacetic acid, and organic solvents (i.e., ethyl ether, dichloromethane, N,N-dimethylformamide, etc.) were obtained from Thermo-Fisher Scientific Inc. (Pittsburgh, PA). Water was purified by a Millipore system (Billerica, MA) to be 18 MΩ•cm and used for the preparation of all aqueous solutions.

Peptide Synthesis and Mass Spectrometric Measurements. (AAAAK)4AAAAY was synthesized via solid-phase Fmoc chemistry (Kates and Albericio, 2000). The Fmoc groups were deprotected with 20% piperidine in dimethylformamide (V/V) after the coupling reaction had proceeded for 30 min. The peptide was cleaved from resin by trifluoroacetic acid and the crude peptide was precipitated by the addition of cool ethyl ether into the trifluoroacetic acid solution. Mass spectra of peptides were conducted on a LC-TOF mass spectrometer from Waters Inc. (Milford, MA). The crude peptides were dissolved in water containing 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid and the concentration was around 1 mg/mL.

Peptide Synthesis and Mass Spectrometric Measurements. (AAAAK)4AAAAY was synthesized via solid-phase Fmoc chemistry (Kates and Albericio, 2000). The Fmoc groups were deprotected with 20% piperidine in dimethylformamide (V/V) after the coupling reaction had proceeded for 30 min. The peptide was cleaved from resin by trifluoroacetic acid and the crude peptide was precipitated by the addition of cool ethyl ether into the trifluoroacetic acid solution. Mass spectra of peptides were conducted on a LC-TOF mass spectrometer from Waters Inc. (Milford, MA). The crude peptides were dissolved in water containing 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid and the concentration was around 1 mg/mL.

Results

The mass spectrum of (AAAAK)4AAAAY was shown in Figure 1 below. The theoretical molecular weight of (AAAAK)4AAAAY is 2116, which is exactly the same as detected by mass spectroscopy. The mass spectrum of double 13C labeled peptide at residues 9 and 13 was similar to Figure 1, because the 13C labels will not change the molecular weight significantly.

The UV-vis spectrum of (AAAAK)4AAAAY is shown in Figure 2. The peak at 210 and 275 nm are assigned to amide group and the Y residue (i.e., the benzene ring in Y), respectively. Since the extinction coefficient of Y at 275 nm is 1450 M⁻¹ cm⁻¹ (Decatur, 2006) the concentration of the aqueous solution of (AAAAK)4AAAAY can be accurately determined. Both Mass and UV-Vis spectra have clearly shown that the synthesis of (AAAAK)4AAAAY was accomplished.

Figure 1. Mass spectrum of (AAAAK)4AAAAY.

Figure 2. UV-Vis spectrum of (AAAAK)4AAAAY.
Future Work

Double $^{13}$C labels will be introduced into \((\text{AAAAK})_4\text{AAAAY}\) sequence at different positions and the FTIR spectra of all of the peptides will be measured by Bio-ATR system. As a result, the structure of \((\text{AAAAK})_4\text{AAAAY}\) will be clarified in H$_2$O solution.

References


Fears of Falling among Older Adults: A Review of the Literature

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In 2008, over 19,700 older adults died from unintentional fall injuries (CDC, 2012). Falling is one of the leading causes of injury-related death and morbidity problems related to aging. Statistics show that 28 to 35 percent of individuals 65 years of age or older will fall within a year’s time (Landers, Durand, Powell, Dibble, & Young, 2011). Concerns the elderly have about falling may lead to an anxiety that is referred to as a fear of falling, which can lead to stress and decrease in activities of daily living (ADL). This in turn may lead to a reduction in social activities and a diminishing belief in one’s own ability to maintain independence as an older adult. Additionally, these fear factors may contribute to falls among the older adult population. This literature review focuses on studies examining fear of falling and factors that make this a growing problem within the elderly population.

Factors Associated with fear of falling include but are not limited to medication intake, cognitive state, footwear, physical function, vision, inside and outside environment. The primary commonality found among those who have a fear of falling is their restriction of activities of daily living (ADL). Restriction of ADL leads to declination of functionality and a decline in overall independence. Falling, with or without physical injury, may result in negative psychological issues, including a fear of falling. While the definition for fear of falling varies in the literature, for purposes of this paper, the Tinetti and Powell (1993, p. 36) definition will be used: a “lasting concern about falling that leads to an individual avoiding activities that he/she remains capable of performing.”

This literature review focuses on risk factors, instruments used to measure, and prevention methods associated with fear of falling. Risk factors are considered conditions or behaviors that increase the possibility of developing a disease or injury. The published literature regarding this issue often presents conflicting measures of fear of falling. More generally, the literature mostly comprises research that reflects selection criteria of only older adult inpatients; fewer studies have focused on adults in the community.

Prevalence

It stands to reason that, like many other correlates of disability, falls and fears of falling among the elderly can be decreased with prevention methods and awareness. Fear of falling has been reported to occur in 12-65 percent of older adults who live independently in the community and do not have a history of falling (Legters, 2002). The variability in statistics reported in studies is a result of differences in definitions, measurements, and age criteria. The participant criteria for studies focused on fear of falling commonly includes persons aged 65 and over. However, there are studies that investigate restricted age groups; for example, only examining participants ages 65 to 84. Fear of falling is experienced by 29-92 percent of older adults who have experienced a fall (Legters, 2002).

Many studies show the prevalence of fear of falling is even higher for women, which alone is a risk factor. This could possibly skew results of surveys because of a substantial difference in the women/men ratio in these studies. In the literature, 13 out of 13 studies had notably higher female participation than male participation. For example, in a cross sectional investigation of activity-related fear of falling among adults transitioning to frailty there were 287 participants, 17 male and 270 female subjects. This huge disparity may derive from male unwillingness to admit fear of falling or low need for care home assistance since males are more likely to be cared for by female family members than vice versa.

In terms of race, according to Kressig, et al. (2001), African-Americans are twice as likely to be fearful of falling as Caucasians. Interestingly, another study shows Caucasians are more likely to actually experience a fall (Friedman, Munoz, West, Rubin, & Fried, 2002).

Risk Factors

Identified precursors for falls range from medication usage to footwear (Huang, Gau, Lin, & Kernohan, 2003). A
variety of risk factors are presented in the literature because the circumstances of falls differ by case. Risk factors can be sub-classified as internal or external. Internal factors that have been identified are demographics, cognitive status, vestibular, physical function, and medical status (Huang et al., 2003; Kempen, Haastregt, McKee, Delbaere, & Zijlstra, 2009). External factors are considered to be environmental influence. For instance, external factors include non-level surfaces, poor lighting, improper footwear, or improper use of walking aids.

Developing a fear of falling is a multifactorial process; therefore all contributing components should be evaluated to determine the possible cause. The relationships between falls and fear of falling in the older adult population have been examined in a number of studies. Friedman, Munoz, West, Rubin, & Fried (2002) suggest that fear of falling can be either a dependent or independent variable: (1) the experience of falls may cause fear of falling or (2) fear of falling may cause falls. Identification of risk factors in evaluation of fear of falling can aid in prevention and indicate productive avenues for future studies.

Medication

An assessment of medication intake is vital when assessing the risk for falls in the elderly population. Psychotropic drugs that alter perception, cognition, behavior and emotion are most often associated with falling. In a study by Ruthazer and Lipsitz (1993), use of antidepressants was found to be predictive of falls for institutionalized women. The results showed 73 out of 488 women and 23 out of 147 men fell during a one-month observation. Additionally, polypharmacy, the combination of medications, drastically increases the risk for falling.

Antidepressants have been repeatedly found to contribute to falls in older adults. The primary adverse effects of antidepressants are sedation, insomnia, movement disorders, increased reaction times, and impaired postural reflexes. The results of the 1993 Ruthazer and Lipsitz study were consistent with the finding that psychotropic drugs (antidepressants, antipsychotics, benzodiazepines) and gender are risk factors for falling in elderly people in long term care in the age range 70-105.

These findings are supported in a more recent study by Kallin, Jensen Olsson, Nyberg, and Gustason (2004) who found that antidepressants are independently correlated with falls. The psychotropic categories of benzodiazepines and neuroleptics were found to be involved in the majority of the falls. This study was designed to identify predisposing factors for falls among adults aged 65-97 years in residential care. Results showed acute diseases and adverse effects of drugs are primary causes of a fall.

Vestibular

The term ‘vestibular’ refers to one’s sense of balance orientation. The association between fear of falling and low balance confidence have been repeatedly shown in studies to predict falls (Friedman et al., 2002). The older adult population is likely to experience a decrease in balance and muscle strength due to lack of exercise, medication intake, and overall decline in bodily functioning due to age. A study conducted by Binda, Culham and Brouwer (2003) suggests that elderly participants’ fears of falling result in decrements in balance ability and balance confidence. The limitations presented by the participants could not be explained by muscle weakness, which suggests that the cause may be psychological and supports the notion that individuals with fear of falling will avoid activities they may be capable of performing. Although these researchers examined participants’ health problems associated with balance issues, they neglected to conduct an assessment of medication usage. Determining medication intake is imperative in the assessment of balance because of common adverse effects such as dizziness, delayed reaction times, and problems with coordination which can contribute to a fall.

In a study by Brouwer, Musselman, and Culham (2004), it was found that independent-living older adults who were afraid of falling presented low ABC (Activities Balance Confidence) scores and weaker muscle strength. These researchers found that slower walking speed and less muscle strength, rather than balance confidence, were significant predictors for falls. The purpose of this study was to find whether deficits in balance ability, physical function and health status among fearful subjects were risk factors associated with falling.

In recent literature, a study by Hadjistavropoulos et al. (2011), challenges the concept that fear of falling in older adults leads to physical activity curtailment. The researchers manipulated anxiety by having participants walk either on the floor or an elevated platform which yielded less stable gait and a negative effect of balance performance. The authors of this study suggest that situational anxiety associated with walking should be assessed as a part of fall risk assessments.

To assess fear of falling and activity level, Hadjistavropoulos et al. (2011) used Survey of Activities and fear of Falling in the Elderly (SAFFE, Lachman et al., 1998) and ABC scale (Powell & Myers, 1995). Binda et al. (2003) only used ABC; Brouwer et al. (2004) used ABC and the Human Activity Profile (HAP). In Hadjistavropoulos et al., the authors suggest that SAFFE provides more prediction
of gait parameters than the ABC, which is not sufficiently sensitive to assess fear of falling among higher functioning older people.

**Disease**

As adults age, the chance of developing a disease with detrimental effects increases. The debilitating disease known as Parkinson’s disease is more common in older age and has been found to greatly influence falls. Seventy percent of those with Parkinson’s disease fall annually, and 13 percent fall more than once a week (Wood, Biclough, Bowron, & Walker, 2002).

Robinson et al. (2005) designed a study to determine which risk factors for falls are potentially modifiable in those with this disease. The authors conclude that falling risk factors can be identified by clinical history-taking, a medical review, and physical examination. The study was designed as a group comparison between 19 fallers and 21 nonfallers with Parkinson’s disease. (Fallers were subjects that had one or more falls within the previous year.) Results yielded risks factors that include dyskinesias and sleep disturbance associated with the use of dopamine medications; orthostatic hypotension; freezing; gait and other functional mobility problems; compromised fine motor control/agility; psychological disturbances such as depressions and post-fall anxiety; compromised posture and postural stability; and compromised proximal lower limb strength and muscular endurance. Freezing of gait is commonly referred to as “freezing” and is associated with longer disease duration and higher severity.

In a later study exploring falls in relation to a specific disease, Chung et al. (2009) investigate Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) levels and factors predictive of PTSD post-fall in older adults admitted into hospitals. Fear of falling and PTSD both present similar symptoms in which avoidance of circumstances usually results from a traumatic event. Researchers argue that PTSD and fear of falling are overlapping constructs; fear of falling may be a reflection of underlying PTSD (Chung et al., 2009). The study methodology consists of assessing participants on a medical history, falls history, Groningen activity restriction scale (GARS), falls efficacy scale (FES), posttraumatic stress disorder scale (PDS), and hospital anxiety and depression scale (HADS). Results show full or partial PTSD in older people after a fall as well as full or partial chronic PTSD; however, a pattern of predictive factors of PTSD post-fall could not be determined.

The study of falls is important to the health of an aging population. Fear of falling can be an antecedent or consequence of a fall. The relationship between fear of falling and the actual event of falling is viewed as controversial in that it has not been determined whether or not fear of falling is related to risk of falling (Maki et al., 1991). In fact, the development of a fear of falling before a fall experience was once a questionable belief. Legters (2002) claims an average prevalence of fears of falling of 30 percent or more in older adults who do not have a history of falling while the presence of fear is doubled for those who have experienced a fall.

**Assessment**

There are a variety of scales that have been developed and used in studies addressing fear of falling in the older adult population (Moore, Ellis, Kosma, Fabre, McCarter, & Wood, 2011; Legters, 2002). There is controversy concerning which measurement scale is more valid in assessing the construct of fear of falling (Moore et al., 2011). The most commonly used measurement tools in fear of falling research are Falls-efficacy scale (FES; Tinetti, Richman, and Powell, 1990), Activities-specific Balance Confidence scale (ABC; Powell & Myers, 1995), and Survey of Activities and Fear of Falling in the Elderly (SAFE; Lachman et al., 1998).

Difficulties in measuring fear of falling relates to differences in operational definitions of the term, which has been operationally defined as fall-efficacy, balance confidence, and fear of falling. Thus, a combination of measurement tools may be advantageous to a study because it would increase the likelihood of assessing all aspects of this multifactorial issue. In earlier studies, fall-efficacy and fear of falling were treated as identical constructs; research shows they are related yet different (Li et al., 2002). Fall-efficacy refers to a person’s self-confidence in his or her ability to avoid falling while performing everyday activities; fear of falling is a psychological response manifesting heightened anxiety and activity restriction. Preference in use of a specific measurement tool varies by researcher. An overview of the common instruments is presented below.

The Falls-efficacy scale (FES) was developed in 1990 by Tinetti, Richman, and Powell to assess the degree of perceived efficacy while performing activities of daily living. The FES is a 10-question survey which was formed with professional recommendations from therapists, nurses, and physicians. This instrument measures fear of falling based on the operational definition, “low perceived self-efficacy or confidence at avoiding falls.” The primary aims of creating this scale were to measure fear of falling, develop a reliable and valid instrument, and identify factors associated with fear of falling. The questions on the FES include:

- “How confident are you that you can take a bath or shower without falling?”
- “How confident are you that you can get in and out of
bed without falling?”
• “How confident are you that you will not lose your balance or become unsteady when you walk around the house?”
• “How confident are you that you will not lose your balance or become unsteady when you reach for a small can off a shelf at eye level?”
• “How confident are you that you will not lose your balance or become unsteady when you get into or out of a car?”

Participants are asked to rate each question on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being very confident and 10 being not confident at all. The scores are then summed giving a total score between 0 and 100. The most common FES limitation mentioned is that it only measures indoor activities. Therefore, FES is recommended for studies focusing on participants that are homebound.

The ABC scale (1995) was created to address the noted limitations of the FES and emphasize “balance confidence” in relation to fear of falling. ABC is a 16-item survey that asks participants to rate their ability to perform an activity without losing balance or becoming unsteady on a scale of 0-100 with 0 representing no confidence and 100 representing complete confidence. The ABC was developed for high-functioning older adults to assess balance confidence while performing 16 activities of daily living. This scale includes a wider variety of activities, compared to the FES, including situations in outside environments. The ABC includes questions such as the following:
• “How confident are you that you will not lose your balance or become unsteady when you walk around the house?”
• “How confident are you that you will not lose your balance or become unsteady when you reach for a small can off a shelf at eye level?”
• “How confident are you that you will not lose your balance or become unsteady when you get into or out of a car?”

The ABC scale is the only scale that distinguishes between fallers and nonfallers. Most research studies (Binda, Culham, & Brouwer, 2003) state that the ABC predicts future falls and yields the most reliable results. A study by Moore et al. (2011) shows that the ABC is the only fall-related psychological instrument that significantly predicts falls.

The instrument, Survey of Activities and Fear of Falling in the Elderly (SAFE, 1998), measures fear of falling as a worry or concern. This instrument measures the negative consequences of fear of falling and activity restriction by evaluating 11 activities ranging from ADL to social activities, and including going to the store, getting out of bed, visiting a friend, and reaching for something overhead. Scores are calculated on a 5-point Likert scale with a higher score indicating a greater fear of falling. For each activity, participants are asked the following questions:
• Do you currently do it?
  • If you do the activity, how worried are you that you might fall?
  • If you do not do the activity, do you not do it because you are worried you might fall?

Intervention

Although falling within the elderly population is a rising concern, prevention is attainable by implementing strategies into activities of daily living and/or participating in fall-prevention programs. The assessment of falls aids in individualizing prevention measures to the person’s specific needs. A multifactorial intervention approach to falls prevention includes the following components: educational awareness, strengthening exercises, balance training, environmental modification, and medication modification.

An education-awareness component provides information and promotes discussions concerning fall experiences, fear of falling, and prevalence of falls within the community. Intervention also focuses on leg-strengthening exercises since lack of physical activity leads to a decrease in muscle strength which in turn leads to falls. Medication management is also important since evaluation and adjustment of medication regimens have been found to decrease the chance of falls. Effective environment modification can be achieved by reducing tripping hazards by altering carpet locations, improving lighting, and adding assistant rails. A combination of intervention methods can boost the confidence of a fuller or non-faller, which aids in gradually decreasing fear. In a study by Rubinstein and Josephson (2006), multidimensional intervention programs decreased the risk for falling by 18 percent and reduced the average number of falls by 43 percent.

Conclusion

Fear of falling is a common occurrence after an experience of a fall; therefore it must be examined alongside
this topic. Fear of falling can also be present before experiencing a fall. Risk factors for falls include medication intake, vestibular state, diseases, improper footwear, and environmental hazards. Causes of fear of falling vary and may involve more than one factor. Research studies examining falls and the fear of falling most commonly use the FES, ABC, or SAFE as assessment tools.

This literature review will serve as a base for a future study that will examine fall risk factors, including fear of falling, in a sample of older adults living in residential care facilities. Participants will be assessed using one or two of the fear of falling measurement tools previously addressed. The survey will include medication intake, falls and fear of falling status, and a balance evaluation component. The purpose of this research study is to further identify risk factors and prevalence associated with falls and fear of falling. The results should also reveal restrictions in activities of daily living affected by the fear of falling. The aim of this study is to contribute to increased awareness, aid in development of prevention programs, and add to other literature pertaining to the topic of falls and fear of falling among older adults.

References

Patriarchal Implications of Southern Tradition in Beth Henley’s *The Jacksonian*  

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*Beth Henley’s The Jacksonian, which premiered in Los Angeles in 2012, revolves around the relationships between the sexes and the violent outcome of losing control. As in her previous dramas, the characters at the Jacksonian Motel grapple with issues pertaining to denial and pride as they contend with patriarchal norms in relation to marriage. This new play gives Henley’s audience the opportunity to examine the Southern domain and come to the realization that, in the South, women are still regarded as the weaker sex. As traditional values collide with contemporary principles, the wedding ring becomes a symbol of death and destruction. Looking at a wedding band in this context exposes a vicious cycle of perpetual bondage and reveals that much about society has not changed since the 1960s.*

**Welcome to the Jacksonian Motel circa 1964, “a haunting memory, a sort of purgatory that was Jackson, Mississippi” (Henley [i]).** Eva White, the motel’s waitress and maid, has committed perjury to protect Fred Weber, the bartender, and she believes she is engaged to him. Bill Perch has been kicked out of his home by his wife, and he has taken a room at the motel. Susan, Bill’s wife, visits him regularly and drags their daughter Rosy along. The Jacksonian is where Rosy encounters Fred, the bartender, and eventually asks him to take her away from her tortuous life. As these characters contend with personal issues, they come to terms with their place within the patriarchal Southern culture.

*The Jacksonian,* by Beth Henley, premiered on February 15, 2012 at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, and many of the past criticisms of Henley’s oeuvre are as relevant to *The Jacksonian* as they are to her earlier works. *Crimes of the Heart* delves into many of the same issues as this new play, including domestic violence, characters coming to terms with their lives, and women placating the men in control. According to Larry G. Mapp, “The three women at the heart of [Crimes] have been ruled by men who tell them what to do and enforce their wishes either by fiat or by appealing to traditions that dictate how women (and men) should behave” (34). This is also an accurate assessment of *The Jacksonian,* in which Eva, Susan, and Rosy attempt to find their way within the framework of the patriarchal precedent. While other feminist writers create female characters who are at first subservient and ultimately empowered, Henley’s characters remain subjected, and she explores the consequences of their oppression. Henley uses her familiarity with the South and its nuances to create characters who feel inadequate and incomplete. She also gives her audience the opportunity to examine the Southern domain and come to the realization that, in the South, women are still regarded as the weaker sex.

Janet Gupton asserts, “In Henley’s … plays, the [female] characters are not Southern ladies. Instead they [are] unruly women” (127). A woman who is unhappy becomes balky and acts out because this is the only avenue through which she can vent her frustrations. To be considered respectable, a woman must adhere to the customs dictated by the males in her life. Eva, Susan and Rosy show that this socially appropriate behavior is not always beneficial as they suppress who they are and cater to the males exerting control. Henley shows that a woman must step out of the norm to break the bonds forced upon her. According to Miriam M. Chirico, “Henley does not invite us into a pristine, sugar-coated world of genteel Southern living, but one of pent-up hatred and self-loathing” (11).

The female characters at the Jacksonian Motel display their repressed anger and self-hatred by taking actions that have negative outcomes. Because they lack positive outlets, Eva, Susan, and Rosy revert to self-destructive behavior. By chasing undesirable men, visiting an abusive husband, or purposefully becoming unattractive, these women display an indifference to their own well-being. Gupton states that the females in Henley’s plays, “through their acts of unruliness, offer models of transgressive behavior for other Southern women. Their resistance to the patriarch’s definition of a Southern lady challenges the social structure on which the patriarch bases his aristocracy.”
... The destabilization of the identity of the Southern lady sends shock waves through the rest of the South’s social structure” (132). This bridled contempt serves to motivate Henley’s characters despite potentially fatal consequences.

When looking at the history of Southern societal norms, one sees these stereotypes as born of an era when the Southern gentleman maintained complete control over his property and family at all costs, and his wife was to be subservient to the point of becoming an accessory to his violence and domination. Today, the stereotype of the old South continues to endure. By placing her play in 1964, Henley illustrates that while women have taken many strides toward equality, they still have a long way to go. Mapp states, “In the six plays [in volume 1] she deals with issues of family and community and with the struggle of individuals to find an identity within a family or community that is oppressive, often is fragmenting, and no longer has a center that will hold. In all of the plays tensions arise when women, and sometimes men, begin to challenge the traditions that have constrained them” (33). Once again, in The Jacksonian, Henley constrains her characters in situations where they feel compelled to struggle against conventions. While Mapp speaks about the six plays published in volume 1, his assessment remains true even for Henley’s newest play.

By viewing contemporary issues through the lens of the past, Henley brings to the forefront the fact that much about society has not changed since the 1960s. The characters at the Jacksonian Motel are grappling with issues pertaining to denial and pride through the experience of patriarchal norms in relation to marriage. To tear down the gender barrier, Henley takes the audience on a trip back in time that accentuates the disconnect between the sexes. By depicting men as the guardians of the status quo, she shows how women continue to accept patriarchal control over their lives. Bill Pullman, who performed the part of Fred in the premiere of the play, has observed: “[Henley] is extremely connected to the female perspective in the characters but ... her men are incredibly important activators in the play, and they offer really strong contrasts of instincts” (72). She writes from a feminine perspective while giving the male characters a strong presence that counteracts and conflicts with the female point of view.

Henley replicates realistic interactions between the sexes and uses this natural divide to display the ever-present inequality. “It is these culturally ingrained, often competing paradigms, whether old or new, that potentially create so much anxiety” (Richards 46). These contrasts show that many in the South are still stuck in the past when it comes to dealing with the interactions between men and women. The play suggests that some men and women today still perpetuate the actions and stereotypes taking place within this play. All the characters at the Jacksonian Motel are plagued by societal expectations, and they fail in their attempts to maintain the pretense of Southern tradition. They challenge the confinement found within the institution of marriage. In The Jacksonian, Henley explores gender roles, how they pertain to society, and the methods women employ in attempts to break ingrained societal molds.

By setting these interactions between the sexes within a cheap motel, Henley shatters the distinction between the respectable and the unacceptable. Susan and Eva represent these two social classes within Southern society. Susan is the wife of a dentist and lives in an upscale neighborhood. She is expected to present the proper example of how a woman is to act and be seen; initially she seems respectable. Eva, on the other hand, typifies the lower class and is undesirable. She scrambles about searching for any man who can provide a ring and a semblance of acceptability. Despite being from different backgrounds, Susan and Eva have been duped by the same fantasy: A woman must obtain a wedding ring from a man in order to live happily ever after.

All three women at the Jacksonian Motel exemplify the notion that having a wedding ring on one’s finger is akin to committing emotional suicide. Marriage means a woman no longer belongs to herself but to her husband. These female characters are all bound to the wedding ring: Susan is trapped within the institution of marriage, Eva is desperate to get married, and Rosy suffers the consequences of the previous generation’s decisions. Seeing marriage through the rose-colored lenses of the Southern fantasy has prompted generations of women to accept the role of wife and mother, thus perpetuating this lifestyle.

As Henley’s characters work through their conflicts, the wedding band emerges as an emblem of bondage and death. Susan has already accomplished her goal of being married to the ideal man who can provide for and protect his family; however, she has come to the realization that the perfect life does not actually exist, and she wants out. The wedding band literally leads to Susan’s death and the emotional breakdown of her daughter. Rosy is so distraught about the disintegration of Bill and Susan’s marriage that she seeks out Fred to obtain a wedding ring of her own. In the meantime, Eva comes to her awakening through her misplaced trust in Fred. She learns not all men are the Southern gentlemen she was brought up to assume. The first inkling she receives that Fred is not planning to marry her is when she broaches the subject of their marriage and the wedding ring:

EVA. I know what it is. ... What ya got me in my stocking. ... It’s a surprise.
FRED. No.
EVA. Want to know what I got you? It’s easy to
guess. You wear it on this finger. I'm saving it for Christmas. Like we said. ... You said you're my fiancé. Fred my fiancé.

FRED. Don't say it like that. ... It's not going to work out like everybody hoped. (Henley 2)

Eva's only assurance of security is marriage, and she has no thought beyond marrying Fred. She is simply in love with the idea of a wedding. Eva is knowingly deaf and mute as Fred blatantly tells her he does not want her. Fred murdered a woman at the Texaco station and stole her ring. Fred needs an alibi, and he makes a bargain with Eva: He promises to marry her in exchange for committing perjury on his behalf. It does not cross Eva's mind that Fred is using her for his own ends just as she is attempting to use him for hers. Eva hungers for the wedding band Fred has stolen from the woman he killed. As Eva admires the dead woman's wedding band she has placed on her finger, Fred proclaims,

FRED. I have to take the ring back. I borrowed it from a friend and it has to be returned.

EVA. I know ... It looks good on me. Could I keep it for tonight? ... It's still true though ... We're engaged. You're my fiancé ... I swore it on a courtroom Bible.

FRED. Eva, the ring. (Henley 16).

Eva commits perjury in an attempt to gain social status, yet her testimony as Fred's alibi undermines the social situation she aspires to uphold. Eva tears down the standard of decency by lying about having sex with Fred out of wedlock while the murder was taking place. This action is offensive to Southern sensibility. According to Gupton, women who "exhibit unruly behavior and commit crimes against Southern culture ... perpetrate cultural and social disobedience that threatens the Southern hierarchy" (128). Eva completely disregards society's norms by fabricating an intimate moment as Fred's alibi and divulging it to the court. This action dismantles Eva's virtue, and she loses the opportunity to be considered a modest woman, as is evidenced through her statement, "I wanted people to believe I was a virgin" (Henley 50).

Eva at once tries to uphold the stereotype while tearing it down. Eva is not capable of upholding the virtues or standards expected of the ideal. She does not possess the qualities and manners imperative to becoming an upstanding example of a Southern woman; that is, one who is "silent, pure, and gentle," which "emphasize how the South has constructed the concept of white womanhood to fit a conservative patriarchal notion" (Gupton 124). Eva, in contrast, is brash, outspoken, and greedy; she will never be able to quash these traits. She seeks out the moment to become what she assumes society holds in esteem, but she is simply not capable of upholding and living up to her role. Eva's motivation is to conform. She is more concerned with social conventions than she is with herself or her well-being.

Even as Eva speaks of their engagement, Fred distances himself from her and her proclamations of their pending nuptials. He tries to dissuade Eva from her intended course, using the methods Southern men perfected generations ago. He talks down to her, he deems her like she is incapable of comprehending the truth, he lies to her, and he attempts to placate her:

FRED. There's a muscular constriction. My heart's hard. It's not pumping as much blood as it should. It'll kill me. Two or three months. Could be days. The heart is a muscle and mine is decayed.

EVA. I don't believe you have such a heart like that. A decayed heart.

FRED. It's the way it is with my heart. (They look at each other steadily) I won't make a widow out of you. Wouldn't be right. I can't let a young woman marry a terminal man. God would strike me down for selfish pride. You don't wanna make me look bad in the eyes of the Lord?

EVA. No. Not that.

FRED. No. Set your sights on the living. (Henley 3)

Telling Eva he has this heart condition is not far from the truth. In one sense, he does have a hardened heart. He cares for no one but himself. When this tactic fails, Fred points her toward Bill, stating, "Keep me out of hell, Eva. The dentist is single. ... Separated. A long time. For good" (Henley 3). Fred has what he wanted from Eva so now it is time to discard her. He continues to lead her on until she confronts him, and he finally asks her, "Do you know who you are talking to, Eva? You are talking to a murderer" (Henley 26). Fred is intentionally trying to scare Eva. Earlier he has bragged to Bill he can sense what people want, and here he uses this ability to prey on Eva's vulnerabilities.

Fred also tells Bill what he wants to hear so he can manipulate him and build a sense of camaraderie; he wants to assist in Eva's plan to entrap Bill. Fred plays the supposed gentleman in order to prey upon those around him. He has perfected this role, and is extremely slippery and convincing. Fred fishes for information on Bill, information he can use to entice Eva to chase Bill instead of himself:

FRED. My peripheral vision is keen. ... I can sense what people want. ... Nice smile. Many men don't have nice smiles. You have got one.

PERCH. I'm a dentist.

FRED. You work here in Jackson? ... How long are you visiting us?
PERCH. Not long … A day or two here in May. (Henley 12-3) Fred not only gains Bill’s confidence but makes him feel at ease and in control by affirming everything he says:

PERCH. Do you take care of your teeth, Fred?
FRED. My teeth are very important to me.
PERCH. If you would like to make an appointment, I have a business card.
FRED. Alright.
PERCH. I don’t like to advertise myself but will not stand on false pride concerning your teeth. … I’m known as the Painless Dentist.
FRED. I’ll make an appointment. (Henley 13).

Fred, unlike the other characters, has the capability to gain the upper hand through subtle manipulation. Fred’s secret to getting people to do his bidding is to make them consider his ideas as their own and go willingly into whatever territory he decides to lead them.

Bill’s wife Susan, meanwhile, is a woman at a critical juncture, grappling with whether or not to leave him. Bill hits Susan, and he permitted a doctor to remove her uterus without her consent. As a result, Susan has serious self-esteem issues. She admits to her hopeless position as a representative of Southern convention as she bemoans, “I’m a wife and mother, a nonentity” (Henley 30). Susan has placed herself in the category James C. Cobb describes, in his study of Southern women, as “defer [ring] to masculinity as a matter of habit” (208). Susan accepted Bill’s dominance as the natural order until he authorized the hysterectomy. She can no longer live under the prescribed circumstances and states, “You should look for a nice apartment. I keep telling you that,” but then seems to waffle as Bill reminds her of their past encounter at the motel (Henley 31). She wants a divorce but though she does not wish to epitomize the meek Southern woman neither does she want to be the feminist standing on her own. She prefers to live in a gray area with little responsibility while Bill takes responsibility for their finances. She blames him for her attitude because he authorized the hysterectomy, and he has fallen short on his duty to provide financial security. She blames him for her own actions as well as his. She advises him, “There are medical reasons for [my mood swings]. They take things out of you and you are not the same. You’re different. Very changed. There’s no money in my checking account” (Henley 28).

Bill has lost his dental license due to malpractice, and he has not told Susan his willful actions led to the loss of his career. He answers her questions with vague statements such as “I made an error in judgment” and “I’ll always provide for you. You’re my wife.” (Henley 57). His attitude parallels the Southern stereotype Gupton describes: “The protection of the Southern woman closely aligns with the identity of the Southern male” (126). Susan does not understand that Bill is trying to protect her from all he deems harmful, and she informs Bill that he has “failed in every way a man can fail” (Henley 73). Susan wants out of her marriage because of Bill’s decision. She does not consider she has also arrived at this point in her life because of the decisions she has made.

Bill feels he has provided for his family despite his mistakes, and he should not have to lose them. He has not only caused physical harm to Susan, but he has pulled all of the teeth out of the mouth of self-confessed KKK member Phil Boone:

PERCH. Phil Boone? He’s fine. Let me explain. I made an error in judgment. There need to be more precautions in dentistry. Some safeguards. … In the future devices will be invented and errors will be a thing of the past. There may be accidents but not errors. No deliberate errors.
SUSAN. Bill are you…? Could they take your license?
PERCH. My Dental License? Where did you hear that? Dentistry is the meat and potatoes of my goddamn life. (Henley 56)

He is in denial. Bill’s ultimate goal is to convince Susan she should allow him to return home. Bill blames their situation on Susan and her attitude toward their marriage. He sends flowers to Susan every week to provide a visible reminder that he belongs in their home and in her life. Bill is convinced his persistence will pay off until Eva informs him, “Mrs. Perch is filing divorce papers on you” (Henley 40). As a result, Bill tells Susan, “I’ve thought it over. Given it thought. I’m better off here. I can’t make it work. The marriage. I’m not made for marriage. Fooled myself” (Henley 41).

Susan confirms his suspicions: “I spoke with an attorney, I just wanted some information” (Henley 41-2). His begging words are an attempt to glean sympathy and convince her to allow him back into her life. Bill strives to convince himself he is in charge, and his expectation is that Susan will become remorseful about the position she has taken and possibly beg him to stay. Bill needs to prove to Susan he is the master of his domain, and he uses the argument, “I need you to understand everything isn’t my fault” to shift the bulk of the blame onto Susan, who disagrees: “I think it is” (Henley 28). During this conversation Bill also states, “Things keep going downhill. I try to stop them but they keep sliding” (Henley 29). In his floundering quest, Bill persists in his attempt to control any situation possible in order to get home.

Bill uses Rosy as an accessory for his manipulations. He demeans Susan by informing Rosy that her mother has problems, and he insists that Rosy be the witness to this
fact. When Rosy knocks on his door bearing a Christmas tree and decorations from Susan, he says, “I don’t want a tree in here” (Henley 7). Bill then checks himself and asks Rosy to bring in the tree. His attitude adjustment is calculated: if he accepts the tree, Susan will eventually come around and accept him. Right after Bill states, “Bring it in. We don’t want to upset your mother,” he says, “Your mother is crazy. You know that?” Rosy responds to this attack on Susan by “[s]hrugging slightly in agreement” (Henley 7). He dances around the subject of finding “a psychiatrist in New Orleans to take [Susan] to” (Henley 10). Bill deliberately places Rosy in a position where she cannot express herself and where she feels compelled to agree with her father. His interaction with Rosy reflects his abusive pattern with his wife.

Bill’s disdainful treatment of his wife and daughter is inherent and intentional. He makes both of them feel incapable of success. Rosy not only needs assistance with her homework but has failed to make the drill team or learn to parallel park. Bill gives Rosy a spiel about how and why she should get good grades; he then tells her, “I can help you” (Henley 47-8). He does so by completing Rosy’s homework himself, thereby conveying to Rosy that she is not competent enough to succeed without the assistance of a man. Bill also asks, “Didn’t your mother teach you [how to parallel park]?” and Rosy replies, “She doesn’t know how” (Henley 9). He is communicating to his daughter that women do not need brains. After encouraging Rosy, he denigrates her appearance, thus bringing her back to her expected role: “Someday you’ll be out of the ugly duckling phase” (Henley 48). Statements like this serve to further drive her toward Fred. Bill, in his self-centeredness, views Rosy’s education as an after-thought. For Bill, Rosy’s grades and abilities are merely a reflection of him.

When with Susan, Bill makes a run for her affections and devotion. He tells her, “Rosy had dinner. A T-bone steak. I made her eat it without ketchup” (Henley 24). He is demonstrating that he is a good husband and father by ensuring that Rosy’s dinner met Susan’s specifications. Susan then states, “[Rosy] hardly eats anything I cook” (Henley 25). When Rosy protests, Bill tells her, “Don’t contradict your mother” (Henley 25). He is ordering his daughter to suppress her opinion in favor of his. In this moment and at her father’s behest, Rosy lives up to her role as a Southern woman and says, “Yes, sir” (Henley 25). Rosy ceases to speak. He then tells Susan, “We don’t have to go to Mama’s and Daddy’s for Christmas” (Henley 25). Susan has already decided she is not going to go to his parents’ home. Bill frames the situation to make it appear to himself he has made the decision. Susan’s response, “They love to see you. I bought gifts you can take from us,” makes her an unruly woman who does not acquiesce to her husband’s wishes (Henley 25). Bill will not go to his parents’ house for Christmas without her or Rosy because he cannot face his parents knowing he has failed and his life is falling apart. If his family is not intact, he is no longer a man who can hold his head high.

The night of Susan’s murder, Eva enters Bill’s room under the pretense of giving him towels. Bill is distraught due to his earlier conversation with Susan and invites Eva into the room: “Whatever you got! Bring it in! I need it” (Henley 44). Bill and Eva get high on alcohol and cocaine; she “strut[s] around the room in her undergarments … feeling her breasts, ass, mouth and crotch” (Henley 59). She is throwing herself at him, and in her stupor she asks Bill if he would marry her. Bill replies, “I don’t think I would. But could I do something to you? … I’d like to look inside your mouth” (Henley 60). Eva hears, “I would,” and takes Bill’s words as a promise of marriage. She wants to enter the state of matrimony so badly she convinces herself that Bill has agreed to marry her (Henley 60). Once again, she has misplaced her trust for the sake a ring. Bill is excited and states, “Alright, that’s a deal” (Henley 60).

Bill, like Fred, tells Eva what she wants to hear so he can get what he wants from her. He yearns to live in the past and resume control. He misses examining mouths because he finds it erotic, explaining, “Let me feel the lips. Upper, lower, vermilion border. Full of nerve endings, blood vessels, erogenous outside organ” (Henley 60). He speaks in a soothing tone while requesting, “Now please, Miss White, I’m going to need for you to open up your mouth. Wider, please. Wider” (Henley 61). However, when he scrutinizes her mouth, Bill mentions his father. “He’s a good man, my father. He always told us, ‘Every right must be balanced by an accompanying responsibility’” (Henley 62). Eva corrects him and informs him he is quoting a KKK pamphlet: “I got a good memory for things said out loud” (Henley 62). Bill insists that he is quoting from the Bible and fumes, “You don’t know basically shit, Eva” (Henley 62). This incident, combined with Susan’s accusations, lead to the convergence of Bill’s problems.

During this episode, Susan calls Bill’s room, and Eva answers the phone. Bill realizes Susan is aware he is spending time in his room alone with Eva and begins to worry: “Oh God, God, God. Things have gotten—They are going down the hill. She’s divorcing me. Susan. She is” (Henley 63). Bill is not concerned about Susan’s feelings until he realizes that he has reached the point of no return in regards to their relationship. Susan reacts like a concerned wife and arrives at Bill’s room, bangs on the door until Bill opens it, and finds Eva inside, unconscious. She accuses Bill of being intimately involved with Eva, and she attempts to attack him. Bill reacts violently, lashing out at Susan “almost for the sport of it” (Henley 73). In reaction
to the painful strike, Susan suddenly blurs,
   All you do—you hurt people! That’s why they took your Dental License away. To stop you from hurting people. They’ve dismantled you and you’re not a dentist. You’re not allowed to dispense toothpaste, hand out toothpicks in a box! I’m divorcing you. You provide nothing. Your KKK daddy’s sending you checks. You’re lies. Full of hate like him. (Grabbing a sheet) Here’s your sheet! Join the lynching! (Henley 73-4)

Susan’s words finally push Bill over the edge. By declaring the truth about his failure and his father’s involvement in the KKK, she incites Bill to further violence. He shakes her, bangs her head, and strangles her. Bill no longer wants to exist in the world he has created for himself, so he escapes into drugs and alcohol, slides into a sense of oblivion, and kills Susan. She pays for Bill’s crimes because she is not willing to live in his reality.

Throughout the play, a timeless Rosy recalls the progression of incidents leading up to the night of her mother’s death. In these scenes, Rosy, who is wrapped in a bloody blanket, exposes the audience to events by “break[ing] theatrical conventions that are established for the rest of the play” (Henley [i]). Speaking directly to the audience facilitates an understanding of Rosy’s pain and her nightmare, and she feels time as a fleeting entity she cannot stop or control. Rosy desperately wants to live in the past, to go back; she bemoans the fact she is growing up and states, “I try not to bleed so much—to be so fertile. I try to stop time” (Henley 32).

At the beginning of the play, Rosy states, “There’s been an accident, there’s going to be, I need to stop an accident at the motel” (Henley 1). She refers to the slaying of her mother as an accident because she cannot face the reality that her father has murdered her mother. She does not want to digest the truth. She desperately wants to return to the past when she could pretend all will be fine because “[t] here would still be time” (Henley 76). To become a woman means she must conform to the society in which she has been raised, and she is not ready to accept the burdens that are cast upon her as a result. Rosy is struggling with how her life has been impacted by the actions of her parents. Her father was only to be at the Jacksonian as a temporary measure until her parents could work things out; he was only supposed to stay “an amount of time that is not always” (Henley 12). Time marches on despite how badly she wishes to make it stop. Becoming an adult means things change, and not for the better. Rosy chooses to live in the past because she cannot endure the present. She relives the events of the play in order to cope with the death and destruction of her family.

In Rosy’s view, there can be no reason for her parents’ separation and the subsequent murder of her mother. She cannot reconcile her life with the idealized Southern dream, and she comes to the realization that everything is not going to turn out the way she anticipated. She has fallen into the abyss of truth and is coming to understand that her ending will not be the one she once foresaw. Rosy does not believe all things happen for a reason. Life is an all-encompassing “swamp,” and the reasons for her mother’s murder “are not real” (Henley 44). She does see and grudgingly recognizes that her mother was seriously considering divorcing her father: “Mama spoke to an attorney” (Henley 58). As she looks back, she echoes her mother’s realization to Fred, “He’s not coming home. I believe he’s not” (Henley 58). She also understands that her father pulling out Phil Boone’s teeth was an intentional, “deliberate error” (Henley 58). As a result, she feels the swamp “rising” (Henley 58). In this moment, Rosy realizes that growing up means accepting what one knows but has refused to acknowledge.

RosaY tries to reconcile the fairy tale with her existence in the context of her parents’ marriage. The past clouds the future and renders it unbearable. Rosy has no hope for her future and gives up trying to achieve the standard of social graces. She sees her world falling apart, so she deals with the situation with denial and later hopelessness and thoughts of dying. Rosy cannot face life without the construct of the Southern tradition that has been passed on to her from her parents. She concludes that “only trashy people [divorce], or movie stars who are rich trashy people,” and her parents do not belong in these categories (Henley 22). When she declares that her “parents don’t believe in divorce,” she reveals she has trouble adapting to reality (Henley 22). No one can live up to the Southern standard of perfection, not even her parents. Their pending divorce has decimated her dreams. Rosy’s devastation prompts her to turn to Fred, and toward the end of the play, after she has ascertained Fred is a murderer, she suddenly proclaims:

ROSY. I’ll go away with you. Anywhere. Would you give me the ring? The one you gave Eva. I know you have it. I know where you got it from. From the cashier. Off her finger. I know other things. You should take me away and I would never return.

FRED. Maybe we could go somewhere. To greener pastures. You really want to go with me? (Henley 68-70)

Fred likes Rosy because she is a “good judge of character,” and she accepts that Fred has committed murder (34). The fantasy of taking her away and killing again motivates him to offer the ring to her.

FRED. Come here, Rosy. I want you to come here behind the bar and let me show you something.
I’ve got something for you. Right here. But you have to come back here to get it. Come on. I’ve got a ring for you. (He gives her the same ring he gave EVA earlier.)

ROSY. That’s nice. I’ve always wanted something around my finger. I like putting my finger in this little gold hole. (Henley 70-1)

She seeks Fred’s attention because he gives her approval, acceptance, and validation and because she is terrified she will not only repeat her mother’s mistakes but also end up sacrificing herself to the ideal. By suggesting that Fred take her away, give her the wedding ring, and kill her, she takes control of her situation. Rosy is terrified she does not have the ability to live up to the standard of society’s perfection, so she seeks out Fred to fast-forward to the ultimate end.

Regardless of her flawed and tragic upbringing, Rosy has bought into the cliché of living happily ever after, and she hopes to have a ring on her finger. Contemplating and accepting her fate literally and figuratively, she requests, “After you kill me, don’t take back the ring” (Henley 72). Rosy views the ring as a symbol of her ultimate freedom. She will no longer have to live under the oppressive conditions Bill imposed upon her and her mother. Fred offers Rosy an escape. Gene A. Plunka observes that, as a rule, “Henley’s characters are deeply wounded victims of broken dreams and unfulfilled lives” (Henley 44). Rosy has been damaged by her upbringing, and she chooses to become a victim in order to gain a sense of control. Even in this position, having a ring on her finger is of utmost importance. By choosing to put on a wedding ring, Rosy acknowledges that men are in control, so she may as well submit rather than rail against societal expectations.

Rosy’s anguish is due to her parents’ inability to manage their lives. She has not been given an alternative means of coping in order to break the cycle, and her parents’ decisions have placed her in a position in which she is predisposed to duplicate her mother’s mistakes. Rosy’s intention is to run off with Fred, deliberately placing herself in a submissive role similar to that of her mother. Her plans are thwarted by the murder of her mother. Fred absconds, leaving her behind. As Plunka has observed, “Henley’s females seem to repeat a pattern of adhering to patriarchal values to the extent that by mirroring the misery of their mothers, they make a statement about how the lack of progress for women is cyclical” (41).

By remaining in an unhappy, unfulfilling, and destructive marriage, Bill and Susan have set their daughter up to repeat their mistakes. They have failed to instill a sense of worth in her. Bill and Susan are responsible for Rosy’s lack of self-respect because Bill has always placed her and her mother in a secondary role, treating them as if they were inferior, and Susan has accepted this ill treatment. For example, Bill is completely out of touch with his daughter’s life and so he has to ask her, “What grade are you in?” (Henley 46). He is not even aware of her inability to pass her driver’s test or that she failed to make the Murray Miss drill team at school until she blurts it out.

As for Susan, his contempt for her is blatant. At one point he confesses, “I hit her. It may have been more than once. Most men in their right minds would not be able to stop themselves” (Henley 58). Susan must take responsibility for accepting and enabling Bill’s abusive behavior. Even after she has kicked Bill out of their home, she cannot let go. She repeatedly returns to the motel with Rosy in tow. By continuing her relationship with Bill and accepting the oppression he forces upon her, Susan sends the message to Rosy that an abusive situation is preferable to severing the bonds of matrimony. Susan also displays her careless attitude in the way she treats her daughter:

SUSAN. I’m divorcing your father. Poor Rosy. Poor Rosy. I hope sometimes she’ll die young of something so she won’t have to be in this world. It’s not her world. (Handing Rosy her bag) You drive. I can’t drive.

ROSY. Please, don’t get divorced! Mama, please don’t! Please! I beg you, Mama! Please!

SUSAN. STOP IT! STOP IT RIGHT NOW.

ROSY, STOP!

ROSY. Yes, ma’am. (Henley 43)

Susan shuts Rosy down in the same way Bill does. Neither of her parents seems to properly care for her. As a result, Rosy will most likely place herself in a similar situation to that of her mother and be destined to repeat her mistakes. Rosy’s personal choices such as wearing a coat indoors for security, wanting to be unattractive, and requesting to go with Fred show she does not have the self-esteem to break out of the cycle of abuse. Like her mother, Rosy does not seem capable of overcoming the past. According to Plunka,

Women who are subservient in these relationships almost always exhibit insecurity with regard to their physical appearances and emotional well-being. Moreover, Henley’s females seem to repeat a pattern of adhering to patriarchal values to the extent that by mirroring the misery of their mothers, they make a statement about how the lack of progress for women is cyclical (41).

Rosy’s desire to have a ring on her finger before her death is a result of her mother’s repeated acquiescence to the patriarchal ideal and her father’s unrelenting need to maintain the status quo. The acceptance of this recurrent pattern suggests the wedding ring as symbolic of an end, in essence of death.

The Jacksonian revolves around the relationships be-
tween the sexes and the violent outcome of losing control. In the end Rosy tells us that a murder was committed, Fred has disappeared with the ring, Eva lost her mind from chloroform, Susan will die, Bill will go to jail to wait on the gas chamber (Henley 76). Rosy, who is covered in blood, is left to live in the past, contemplating what could have been. Loss of control leads to violence and oppression, followed by the need to maintain the status quo. As Cobb states, “It requires no great exertion to find vestiges of the Old South still flourishing in what many insist is now the irrevocably assimilated and indistinguishable” (7). Henley confines her characters within the remnants of the past, and, as a result, these characters carry the burden of conventions that are thrust upon them. They struggle with their identity and try to come to terms with their lives. When held to the strictest standard of southern tradition, the wedding ring becomes a symbol of death and destruction. When traditional values collide with contemporary principles, they sometimes create lethal combinations. When looking at the ring in this context, the wedding band represents a vicious cycle of perpetual bondage.

Note

I am grateful for the generosity of the Geffen Playhouse in providing me access to Henley’s new and unpublished play.

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Beyond Communication Style: The Effects of Stress, Empathy, and Forgiveness on the Quality of Intimate Relationships

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The way couples communicate during conflicting discussions has been found to be a reliable predictor of relationship satisfaction. However, in previous research, there has been little exploration into other variables that could also influence satisfaction. The present study examines whether stress, forgiveness, and empathy play a role in predicting relationship satisfaction using a sample of 116 participants. I hypothesized that low stress, communication style, forgiveness, and empathy would be significantly correlated with and be strong predictors of relationship satisfaction. Using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, the Perceived Stress Scale, the Forgiveness subscale of the Values in Action Scale, the Empathy subscale of the Temperament and Character Inventory, and the Communication Patterns Questionnaire, the results show that low stress, forgiveness, empathy and positive communication style are all significantly correlated with satisfaction, but empathy and positive communication style are the most important predictors of relationship satisfaction. The results also show that length of the relationship/ marriage and race also influence satisfaction.

RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION in couples plays a major role in psychological well-being, physical health, and longevity (Cohen, Schulz, Weizz, & Waldinger, 2012). Studies have suggested that communication is a key factor to consider when looking at relationship satisfaction (Gottman, Howard, & Notarius, 1977; Lavner & Bradbury, 2012). However, other studies have found that several different variables also play the same role as communication (Boettcher, 1977; Fincham, Beach & Dalvia, 2007; Neff & Broady, 2011). I have investigated whether stress, empathy, and forgiveness would have an effect on relationship satisfaction beyond that of communication style.

Stress

One of the major events that people everywhere have to deal with is stress. For some people, it may be difficult to deal with life as well as being in a relationship. “Even the happiest intimate relationships encounter fluctuations in day-to-day interactions” (Neff & Karney, 2009, Neff & Broady, 2011). Having stress in one’s relationship does not necessarily mean that the couple is not happy; a small amount of stress in a relationship is normal. It is when the stress becomes overwhelming that it affects the couple in an unsettling manner. In their article about stress and reactivity in daily relationship experiences, Neff and Karney explore whether or not external stressors (stress outside of the relationship) have an effect on the daily intimate process that couples go through and, if so, how big of an influence it is. They hypothesize that “individual differences and external circumstances would independently predict adaptive processes in the marriage” (p. 438). They find that couples react to specific experiences in drastically different ways. Some men and women are able to separate their external stress from the relationship while others are not completely able to achieve a separation.

Another group of researchers in this area are Ledermann, Bodenmann, Rudaz and Bradbury (2010). They use a similar study design to better understand the similarities between external daily stress and daily relationship stress. They have two hypotheses: 1. “one’s own external stress is positively related with one’s own relationship stress, which, in turn, is negatively associated with one’s own, as well as the partner’s, marital quality” and 2. “marital communication in conflict situations mediates the association between relationship stress and marital quality” (pp. 196-197). They find that outside stressors contribute to the daily stress within a relationship and negatively affect it by influencing communication, which is the factor that determines how much the stress affects a relationship. They also report that one’s relationship stress is related to their own external
stressed more than their relationship stress is related to their partner’s external stress. Finally, the authors show that low relationship stress with high positive communication is important for positive relationships.

Many new couples believe that having stress early in their marriages leads to divorce later on. Researchers Neff and Broady became interested in this topic and in 2011 designed a two-part study to see if having stressors early in the marriage helped to make the marriage more resilient to future stressors. In their study, the mean age for husbands is 25.6 (SD = 3.8) and for wives the mean age is 23.5 (SD = 2.3). Overall, “among spouses displaying more effective problem-solving behaviors, those who experienced moderate stress during the early months of marriage exhibited fewer future stress spillover effects and reported greater increases in felt efficacy” (p. 1050). This, in turn, would affect the relationship positively.

This study looks at how much of an effect stress will have on relationship satisfaction when coupled with other variables. I hypothesize that high relationship satisfaction will be significantly correlated with low stress. I also hypothesize that low stress will be a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction in a multiple regression equation.

**Communication**

In the area of relationship satisfaction, many researchers have focused on ways to improve communication for couples so that their relationships can have a better chance to survive. Those who consider communication to be a major contributor to strong relationships include Gottman & Driver, 2005; Rogge, Bradbury, Hahlweg, Engl, Braunschweig, & Thurmaier, 2006; Baucom, Angeles, Sevier, Eldridge, Doss, & Christensen, 2011; Lavner & Bradbury, 2012.

Gottman, Howard, and Notarius (1977, p. 464) say, “The direct expression of feeling is usually assumed to be characteristic of good relationships.” Therefore, in order to have great communication in a relationship, it is pertinent to express one’s own emotional state to the partner. Most couples believe this notion to be true and try to work on communicating better with their partner. However, expressing one’s feelings to another person can become a difficult task if the situation causes strong conflict between the partners. This is why it is very important for members of a couple to know and understand each other. Without this understanding of the other person’s feelings and intentions, elements of conversations have the potential to be mistaken as a hostile comment or gesture. In her article about misunderstandings in marital communication, Noller (1980) says that marriages are vulnerable to miscommunication issues, and the situation is intensified in relationships where hostility and negative expectations happen often.

Many researchers have looked into what communication consists of and what it is related to, but few of them have investigated what about communication style helps couples’ relationships last. Within this small group, Noller (1982) examines differences in the “between channels” (conversations) of couples within each marital adjustment group to see if the discrepancies during each channel provided some reason for why a couple scored lower on the Marital Adjustment Scale. She finds that couples in the high adjustment group had more positive conversations than couples in the other two groups (i.e. the neutral and low adjustment groups). She also notes that in the neutral group “positive messages in particular come across more negatively than intended, with males especially having difficulty sending positive messages” (p. 739). This does not mean that males purposely send negative messages, they just use words that sound positive to them, not knowing that they come across as a neutral or negative to their partner.

Sullaway and Christensen (1983) look at dysfunctional interaction patterns in couples. Specifically, they seek to determine whether both partners can accurately report and agree on the types of communication and interaction patterns that occur in their relationship. The couples choose from a “forced-choice adjective checklist” that consists of 15 traits that often occur either in a symmetrical or asymmetrical interaction pattern. Sullaway and Christensen discover that most of the couples are able to agree and accurately describe the “occurrence of a particular pattern and on the assignment of roles taken by each in the interaction” (p. 658). This is important because this shows that couples are able to see the same events and interpret them in similar ways.

Because of the push from researchers to have reliable checklists and questionnaires to use for research, Christensen and Sullaway created the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ) in 1984. This questionnaire measures how couples make use of different interaction strategies before, during and after a conflict. Noller and White (1990) test the validity of this questionnaire by having subjects complete the CPQ along with the Dyadic Adjustment scale to see if the CPQ really does have a significant correlation with relationship satisfaction. All of the items can be placed in four subscales labeled: Coercion, Mutuality, Post-Conflict Distress, and Destructive Process. In this study, “ten out of the 29 items were related to Coercion, nine out of the 29 items were related to Mutuality, five out of the 29 items were related to Post-Conflict Distress and seven out of the 29 items were related to Destructive Process” (p. 481). The reason the number of items adds up to 31 is because two of the items were related to two of the four factors. The Com-
communication Patterns Questionnaire is highly related to the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and accurately links communication scores with relationship satisfaction.

Gottman and Driver (2005) link two dysfunction modes of marital conflict (“attack-defend” mode and “withdrawing” mode) to everyday interaction with couples. They observe people making what they call “bids (attention-getting) for emotional connection” to their partners and the partners either turn toward, away or against these bids. There are several levels of bids that are used on a daily basis by couples, and these bids range from “bid for play” to “bid for self-disclosure.” The authors argue that: 1. “the place to look for the conversation they needed to have but did not is in their everyday failed bids,” 2. “the two dysfunctional modes of marital conflict may have a basis in specific forms of failed bids,” and 3. “some marital conflict may be changed merely by changing the way couples make/respond to bids” (p. 76).

Franzoit, Davis and Young (1985) wanted to see if private self-consciousness (habitually attending to one’s own private thoughts and feelings) would be related to self-disclosure and if there would be a positive correlation between self-disclosure and happiness in the relationship. Their sample consists of 131 heterosexual student couples at Indiana University. Thirty of the couples are married or engaged and the others date their partners exclusively. Franzoi et al. say, “Scores on the private self-consciousness scale were predictive of reported self-disclosure, and self-disclosure scores were predictive of satisfaction with the intimate relationship” (p. 1591). They conclude that talking about how one feels about a situation to a partner helped the partner to better understand the situation, and the couple therefore has a greater chance of staying together.

Although more research needs to be done in the area of communication, the current study simply looks at the way couples interact before, during and after a conflict situation. Under these three different conditions, a couple may use positive or negative techniques to deal with conflict. With this information, I investigate whether or not certain styles of communication play a significant role in relationship satisfaction.

Empathy

Like communication, empathy also plays a role in improving relationship satisfaction. Many studies describe empathy as being “a crucial part of relationship satisfaction” (Hines & Hummel, 1988; Giblin, 1994) and a “major player in improving communication” (Boettcher, 1977). Mark Davis, one of the premier researchers in the field of empathy, stated in 1983 that “Empathy in the broadest sense refers to the reactions of one individual to the observed experience of another” (p. 113). He created the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) which measures individual differences in empathy, using it to establish the relationship between four Interpersonal Reactivity Index subscales (Perspective-taking, Fantasy, Empathic Concern and Personal Distress) and Social Competence/Interpersonal Functioning, Self-Esteem, Emotionality, Sensitivity to others and Intelligence. The four subscales predict relationships with the other scales and to the other empathy measure, confirming the hypothesis that there is a multidimensional structure to empathy.

Davis and Oathout (1987) propose a model of relationship satisfaction. In their general theoretical model, empathic concern, perspective taking, and personal distress all lead to specific relationship behaviors and those behaviors lead to the partner’s perceptions of those specific behaviors. All of these perspectives and actions may predict one’s partner’s satisfaction. To test this model, Davis and Oathout give students from psychology classes at Eastern Illinois University a questionnaire that measures dispositional empathy, perspective taking, empathic concern, degree of satisfaction and personal distress. The data does in fact support the theoretical model of relationship satisfaction: empathy “can influence one’s relational competence in romantic relationships through its effect of mediating behaviors” (p. 406). Looking at the situation from someone else’s eyes and willingness to experience your partner’s distress all influence the behaviors that leads to partner satisfaction.

One of the most recent studies in this area ties empathic accuracy and perceived empathic effort with one’s own and a partner’s relationship satisfaction. In the Cohen, Schulz, Weiss and Waldinger (2012) study, participants report their own emotions and their perceptions of their partner’s emotions and empathic motivations during intense discussions of upsetting events that have happened between them. Findings show that men’s relationship satisfaction is related to accuracy in reading their female partners’ positive affect. In contrast, women place greater value on their partners’ empathic effort, “perhaps because this behavior emphasized the desire and investment of their male partners to be attentive and emotionally attuned in the relationship” (p. 5).

The study here looks at how empathetic one tends to be towards others and how that affects the level of satisfaction within a relationship or marriage. I hypothesize that high relationship satisfaction will be significantly correlated with high levels of empathy. I also hypothesize that high empathy will be a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction in a multiple regression equation.
Forgiveness

Fincham & Beach (2002) state, “Marital conflict and marital communication have been at the forefront of marital research for the past 25 years, yielding a relatively clear picture of the topography of functional and dysfunctional patterns of behavior” (p. 239). Scientists have found that patterns of forgiveness may also play a role in affecting relationships. A number of studies show that greater forgiveness is related to higher satisfaction in intimate relationships (Fincham, Beach & Dalvia, 2007; McNulty, 2008; Gordon, Hughes, Tomcik, Dixon & Litzinger, 2009).

In 2002, Fincham and Beach defined two dimensions of forgiveness. Positive forgiveness is forgiving the offender because one recognizes his/her action was motivated by internal hurt. Negative forgiveness is forgiving the offender so that one feels better about being hurt by the partner. The Fincham/Beach study assesses how positive and negative dimensions of forgiveness affect a faux aggressive situation brought on by a partner. The two forms of forgiveness (positive and negative) are weakly correlated with partner psychological aggression, which consists of verbal aggression and nonverbal behaviors that are not directed at the partner’s body. Interestingly, they find that more positive forgiveness led to less aggression with the partner and negative forgiveness led to more aggression. Despite weak correlations, the two dimensions of forgiveness fit the data better that the traditional one-dimensional model.

Paleari, Regalia and Fincham (2005) collaborated on a study about forgiveness, empathy and rumination (repetitive thinking) to see if those variables have an effect on marital quality. They hypothesize that marital quality, rumination, emotional empathy, un-forgiveness, and benevolence would all be related to each other. Studying 119 husbands and 124 wives over a six-month interval, they discovered that “rumination and empathy independently predict concurrent marital forgiveness and forgiveness in turn predicts concurrent marital quality” (p. 375). To summarize, rumination about positive events and more empathy predict longer forgiveness in marriages and hence higher marriage quality over time.

These two studies led to more research into forgiveness and how it works in intimate relationships. Most of the early studies looked at how forgiveness impacted concurrent relationship satisfaction, but later studies began to investigate how forgiveness might impact relationships in the future. Fincham, Beach and Davila (2007) ask if forgiveness predicts future conflict resolution. Their reasoning: “forgiving the partner for the transgression is a potential means of providing closure with regard to a painful or disturbing relationship event and reducing the extent to which that event can intrude upon future interactions” (p. 542). Their hypothesis for the study is that one partner’s report of forgiving the other partner’s wrongdoing would be reversely linked with the other partner’s report about unproductive conflict resolution. Based on the results of 65 couples’ questionnaires, wives’ positivity in forgiveness or benevolence lead to their husbands’ later reports of improved conflict resolution. For husbands, the only predictor of their wives’ reports was the starting level (beginning) of conflict resolution.

The studies presented thus far all link forgiving transgressions to overall relationship satisfaction. Braithwaite, Selby and Fincham (2011) believe that there is a piece missing. They say studies have not investigated how forgiveness might be tied to greater relationship satisfaction. They propose that the likeliness of the partner to forgive increases relationship satisfaction by increased relational effort and lower negative conflict. By using the Tendency to Forgive Scale, the CPQ, the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale and the Behavioral Self-Regulation for Effective Relationships Scale-Effort Scale they find that both increased relational effort and lower negative conflict “significantly mediated the association between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction” (p. 557). That is, the impact of forgiveness on relationship satisfaction was greater when couples put more effort into conflict resolution and when the conflict was less negative.

In summary, forgiveness has been found to be significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction. The impact of forgiveness can directly influence how couples communicate and it can also have an impact through relationships with relational effort, empathy, and rumination. Therefore, forgiveness appears to be an important variable in any investigation of relationship satisfaction.

Hypotheses

The present study investigates whether positive communication style, empathy, forgiveness, and level of stress can predict high relationship satisfaction. It is hypothesized that:

1. High relationship satisfaction is significantly correlated with high forgiveness.
2. High relationship satisfaction is significantly correlated with high empathy.
3. High relationship satisfaction is significantly correlated with positive communication style.
4. High relationship satisfaction is significantly correlated with low stress.
5. In a multiple regression equation, forgiveness, empathy, positive and stress will be significant predictors of rela-
relationship satisfaction after the effects of communication style have been controlled for.

**Method**

**Participants**

There are 116 participants, 37 male and 103 were female. The ages range from 18 to 21 years (63%), 22 to 25 years (25%), 26 to 29 (5%), 30 to 50 (6%) and 51 and over (1%). The majority of the participants are not married and not living with their partner (13.3% married, 87% not married) and had some college-level education (4% had a high school diploma/GED, 83% had some college experience, 8% had graduated college, 2% had some graduate school training, and 2% had a graduate/professional degree). As far as ethnicity goes, 77 percent of the participants are Caucasian, 19 percent African-American, and 2 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. In terms of sexual orientation, 92 percent of the subjects are straight, 6.3 percent bisexual and .7 percent lesbian. The majority of participants are students, primarily undergraduates attending Middle Tennessee State University. They could complete the questionnaire either online or on paper, sometimes for extra credit in their classes. The remainder of the participants from the general public completed the questionnaire online.

**Materials**

Relationship satisfaction is measured with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). The Dyadic Adjustment Scale is a 32-item measure of marital adjustment frequently used for research purposes (Spanier, 1976). Spanier reports a test-retest reliability of .96. The higher a person's score, the more likely his/her relationships are satisfying. The four subscales along with Cronbach's alpha coefficients are: Dyadic Satisfaction (.94), Dyadic Cohesion (.86), Dyadic Consensus (.90) and Affectual Expression (.73) (Spanier, 1976). Unlike many questionnaires, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale uses both six-point Likert scales and yes-no response formats for various questions. Examples of the items are: “Do you confide in your partner?” “Do you kiss your partner?” and “How often would you say that you and your partner laugh together?” The total score has been shown to discriminate between satisfied and dissatisfied couples (Spanier, 1976).

Stress is measured with the Perceived Stress Scale, a 10-item measure of general stress (Cohen, 1983). The Coefficient alpha (reliability) is .78. In terms of construct validity, scores are moderately related to other measures of stress (Cohen, 1983). The higher the scores on this scale, the less stress perceived. This measure uses a five-point Likert scale that ranges from 0 = Never to 4 = Very Often. Examples of the items are: “In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?” and “In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?”

The measure of forgiveness, appropriately named the Forgiveness subscale, is taken from the Values in Action (VIA) Survey of Character (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The test-retest reliability is .76 and the construct validity is at a moderate level (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It is an eight-item measure of people’s tendencies to forgive or show mercy (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The higher the person scores on this measure, the more forgiving they tend to be towards others. This measure uses a six-point Likert scale that ranges from 0 = Not Applicable to 5 = Very Likely. Items include: “How likely are you to believe that it is best to forgive and forget?” “How often are you able to try to respond with understanding when someone treats you badly?” and “How likely are you to hold grudges?”

The measure of empathy is the Empathy subscale taken from the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) (Cloninger, 1994). The Cronbach’s alpha (reliability) is .79. The Empathy subscale is a nine-item measure of people’s tendencies to be empathetic to others. It has high internal consistency and construct validity. The higher the person scores on this measure, the more he/she tends to be empathetic to others. This measure uses a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = Not Applicable to 5 = Very Likely. Examples of items include: “How often are you able to feel others’ emotions?” “How likely are you to reassure others?” and “How often are you able to anticipate the needs of others?”

The measure of relationship communication is the Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ). The CPQ is a 28-item measure designed to assess the extent to which couples make use of various interaction strategies during and after conflicts in their relationship (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the full CPQ is .84 and the items discriminate clearly between spouses in the high, moderate and low marital adjustment groups (Noller & White, 1990). Noller and White (1990) state that the Cronbach’s alpha for the four subscales are: Coercion (.86), Mutuality (.88), Post-Conflict Distress (.73) and Destructive Process (.79). For the purposes of this study, the questions are reformatted to a six-point Likert scale (0 = Not Applicable to 5 = Very Often). The higher the score, the more a person tends to use positive communication with a partner. Examples of items include: “When issues or problems arise, how likely is it that there is mutual discussion about the issue(s) or problem(s)?” “During a discussion of issues or problems, how likely is it that you are verbally aggressive?” and “After a discussion of issues or problems, how likely is it that you try to reconcile and your partner withdraws?”
Procedure

As mentioned earlier, participants answered either an online or a paper version of the questionnaire. The online version was created using kwiksurveys.com. In both versions, participants completed the Informed Consent page before beginning the questionnaire. Demographic questions were followed by the questionnaire part of the survey. Results were placed into a spreadsheet by the online survey service. No names were recorded on the spreadsheet. Paper versions of the questionnaire were distributed in university classes by the instructors. Participants who completed the questionnaire by paper took the questionnaire packet (which consisted of the informed consent page and the questionnaire) home. Once they finished within 3-7 days, they brought the packets back to their instructors. Answers were then transferred to the master spreadsheet in preparation for analysis.

Results

Cronbach alpha coefficients were computed for each scale. The reliabilities for the scales are as follows: DAS (.86), Perceived Stress (.87), Empathy (.82), Forgiveness (.55), and CPQ (.91). Frequencies for all variables are in Table 1. The means and standard deviations are similar to those found in other studies. The pairwise correlations among all scales are reported in Table 2.

No demographics data were significantly correlated to the total score on the DAS. Using pairwise correlations, the following were significantly correlated with the DAS subscales: how long they had been in a relationship was significantly correlated with the Dyadic Cohesion subscale (r (139) = -.14, p = .05) and race was significantly correlated with the Dyadic Satisfaction subscale (r (135) = -.20, p < .01). Education level was marginally correlated with the Dyadic Satisfaction subscale in a listwise correlation (r (94) = .16, p < .06).

Hypothesis one states that higher scores on the DAS would be positively related to higher scores on forgiveness. Results indicated that the DAS is significantly correlated with forgiveness (r (120) = .46). All subscales of the DAS were significantly correlated with forgiveness: Dyadic Satisfaction (r (125) = .40), Dyadic Cohesion (r (128) = .39), Dyadic Consensus (r (126) = .36), and Affectual Expression (r (127) = .24).

Hypothesis two states that higher scores on the DAS would be positively related to higher empathy scores. Results indicated that the DAS is significantly correlated with empathy (r (125) = .43). In addition, dyadic satisfaction is significantly correlated with empathy (r = (132) = .26), dyadic cohesion is significantly correlated with empathy (r (134) = .39), dyadic consensus with empathy (r (133) = .40), and affectual expression with empathy (r (127) = .24).

Hypothesis three states that higher scores on the DAS would be positively related to low stress, and, in fact, DAS is significantly correlated with low stress (r (123) = .34). Dyadic satisfaction is significantly correlated with low stress (r (130) = .28), Dyadic cohesion with low stress (r (132) = .27) and Dyadic consensus with low stress (r (131) = .30). Lastly, affectual expression is marginally correlated with low stress (r (131) = .15).

Hypothesis four states that higher scores on the DAS would be positively related to higher scores on the CPQ. Pearson correlations indicate a large and significant correlation between the DAS and the CPQ (r (107) = .72). All subscales are also significantly correlated: dyadic satisfaction with coercion (r (119) = .56), mutuality (r (121) = .56), post-conflict distress (r (126) = .54), and destructive process (r (124) = .56); dyadic cohesion with coercion (r (123) = .32), mutuality (r (125) = .53), post-conflict distress (r (130) = .29), and destructive process (r (128) = .31); dyadic consensus with coercion (r (121) = .44), mutuality (r (122) = .54), post conflict distress (r (127) = .48) and destructive process (r (125) = .48). Lastly, affectual expression with coercion (r (120) = .30), mutuality (r (122) = .41), post-conflict distress (r (127) = .28), and destructive process (r (125) = .33).

Hypothesis five says that in a multiple regression equation, forgiveness, empathy, and stress would be significant predictors of relationship satisfaction beyond the effects of communication style. In a series of forward regressions, the following variables were added to the equation on step number one: race, length of relationship, education, and CPQ. The demographics were included because they showed marginal relationships with two DAS subscales. On step number two: empathy, stress, and forgiveness were all added to the equation.

When the total score on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is the dependent variable, the equation for step one is significant (R = .75, F (4, 89) = 29.01, p < .00). The addition of the empathy, stress and forgiveness variables in step two is also significant for both the equation (R = .79, F (7, 86) = 20.82, p < .00) and the R² change (R² change = .06, F (3, 86) = 4.87, p < .01). However, in the final equation only the following variables are significant: race (t (86) = -2.92, p < .01), CPQ (t (86) = 7.29, p < .00), and empathy (t (86) = 2.24, p < .03). Therefore, hypothesis five is partially supported for the total score on the DAS. However, only empathy adds significantly to the equation.

When the Dyadic Satisfaction subscale of the DAS is the dependent variable, the equation for step one is significant (R = .76, F (4, 92) = 32.27, p < .00). With the addition of the empathy, stress and forgiveness variables in step two of the equation remains significant (R = .78, F (7, 89) =
19.37, p < .00); however, the R² change is not significant (R² change = .02, F (3, 89) = 1.48, p < .23). In the final equation, race (t (89) = -4.23, p < .00) and CPQ (t (89) = 7.65, p < .00) are significant. Therefore, hypothesis five is not supported for the Dyadic Satisfaction subscale of the DAS. When the Dyadic Cohesion subscale of the DAS is the dependent variable, the equation for step one is significant (R = .48, F (4, 96) = 7.20, p < .00). With the addition of the empathy, stress and forgiveness variables in step two of the equation is significant (R = .58, F (7, 93) = 6.63, p < .00) and the R² change is significant (R² change = .10, F (3, 93) = 4.75, p < .01). In the final equation, only CPQ (t (93) = 2.32, p < .02) is significant, while stress (t (93) = 1.90, p < .06), empathy (t (93) = 1.82, p < .07 and forgiveness (t (93) = 1.69, p < .09) are marginally related. Therefore, hypothesis five is somewhat supported for the Dyadic Cohesion subscale of the DAS.

When the Dyadic Consensus subscale of the DAS is the dependent variable, the equation for step one is significant (R = .61, F (4, 94) = 13.75, p < .00). The addition of the empathy, stress and forgiveness variables in step two show the equation remains significant (R = .65, F (7, 91) = 9.62, p < .00) and the R² change is also significant (R² change = .06, F (3, 91) = 2.96, p < .04). However, in the final equation only the following variables are significant: CPQ (t (91) = 4.77, p < .00) and empathy (t (91) = 2.21, p < .03). Length of relationship (t (91) = 1.79, p < .08) is only marginal. Therefore, hypothesis five is partially supported for the Dyadic Consensus subscale of the DAS. However, only empathy adds significantly to the equation.

When the Affectual Expression subscale of the DAS is the dependent variable, the equation for step one is significant (R = .46, F (4, 94) = 6.25, p < .00). With the addition of the empathy, stress and forgiveness variables in step two of the equation is still significant (R = .50, F (7, 91) = 4.32, p < .00), but the R² change is not (R² change = .04, F (3, 91) = 1.60, p < .20). In the final equation only CPQ is significant (t (91) = 3.34, p < .001), while education is marginal (t (91) = -1.72, p < .09). Therefore, hypothesis five is not supported for the Affectual Expression subscale of the DAS.

**Discussion**

This study marks the first attempt to assess simultaneously the effects of stress, empathy, communication, and forgiveness on relationship satisfaction. The aim was to investigate the association among these variables to see if they were related and to see if any contributed more toward increasing the levels of satisfaction.

The results show that the DAS is highly correlated with forgiveness. This suggests that being forgiving of others may play a role in helping the relationship be more satisfying. The results also indicate that the Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Cohesion, Dyadic Consensus and Affectual Expression subscales are all highly related to forgiveness. This suggests that forgiveness influences satisfaction levels and cohesiveness of the relationship (based on the Dyadic Satisfaction and Dyadic Cohesion subscales) while improving the consensus between the partners and helps the couple to better express physical affection (based on the Dyadic Consensus and Affectual Expression subscales).

DAS is also strongly associated with empathy. This suggests that showing empathetic concern for others might play a large part in improving relationship satisfaction. The results for the Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Cohesion, Dyadic Consensus and Affectual Expression subscales show that these subscales are significantly related with empathy. As with the overall DAS scale, having empathetic concern for others helps increase satisfaction between couples, keeps the couple together longer, improves understanding between the partners and makes it easier for the partners to express affection.

DAS is highly correlated with low stress. This shows that having less stress in general can make a relationship more satisfying to both partners. Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Cohesion, Dyadic consensus and Affectual Expression subscales are significantly related to low stress. This could mean that having less perceived stress would help the couple to be more satisfied (Dyadic Satisfaction), have a better connection with each other (Dyadic Cohesion), understand the point of view of the partner (Dyadic Consensus) and help them express affection toward one another (Affectual Expression).

Moreover, DAS is significantly related to the CPQ and all of its subscales (Coercion, Mutuality, Post-Conflict Distress and Destructive Process). Since some of the items on the CPQ were reverse-coded, the results could suggest that using less coercion, having mutual communication (e.g. both partner’s discussing, expressing opinions, negotiating issues, etc.), and talking about conflicting situations all make for a better relationship for both people.

The fact that high relationship satisfaction goes with high forgiveness, high empathy, positive communication style and low stress is not surprising and fits with previous findings. It should be understood that these findings could be important to fostering better-quality relationships and marriages. The results obtained when testing hypothesis five, however, may help clarify the interactions among these variables and how that may impact relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis five posits that forgiveness, empathy, and stress would be significant predictors of relationship satisfaction beyond the effects of communication. What we find is a little more complicated: predictors depend on the
Finally, how long the respondents had been in a relationship and their level of education are both marginally significant predictors of relationship consensus and affectual expression, respectively. Future research is necessary to discover why these variables are important to relationship satisfaction.

In conclusion, my findings show that stress, communication, forgiveness and empathy are all related to higher relationship satisfaction, but communication and empathy are the most powerful predictors of relationship satisfaction. The findings from this study also suggest that interventions designed to increase relationship satisfaction may benefit from adding empathy training to instruction in positive communication.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Empathy, Forgiveness, Stress and Communication Pattern Questionnaire measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
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Note: All bold numbers are significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Married = yes/no, How long = how long in current relationship,
Live together = yes/no, Gender = male/female,
Age = age range, Race = racial ethnicity, Orientation = sexual
orientation, DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale, DSAT = Dyadic
Satisfaction, DCOH = Dyadic Cohesion, DCON = Dyadic Consen-
sus, AE = Affectual Expression, CPQ = Communication Patterns
Questionnaire, COE = Coercion, MUT = Mutuality, PCD = Post-Conflict Distress, DPRO = Destructive Process, EMP = Empathy, FORGIVE = Forgiveness, Stress = Stress

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Biological, Environmental, Economic, and Sociocultural Theories of Obesity

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In this literature review, I explore various kinds of theories of obesity. I begin by defining the relevant terms associated with obesity research, and then provide an overview of the theories before mentioned. I will then examine the flaws in these theories in order to demonstrate that biologically centered arguments shift blame from other elements which actually have a higher correlation with obesity risk. Using the American Indian/Alaska Native population as an example, I will highlight statistics which cannot be explained by biological arguments alone and therefore require further study of sociocultural elements in order to better understand trends of obesity within population groups.

OBESITY IS DEFINED by the World Health Organization as “abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health.” The current standard for measuring obesity is a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or above (“Obesity and Overweight”) because it identifies a range of weight that has been proven to increase the likelihood of certain diseases (“Defining Overweight and Obesity”) such as some cancers, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Obesity can also be defined as a cultural problem, in which Sander L. Gilman states is “in the eye of the beholder.” Every culture sets different weight standards considered ideal, and each culture has a point beyond which weight is unacceptable (Gilman 3). Gilman states that this point is “constantly negotiated within the general culture and within medicine” (78).

Regardless of how it is categorized, anyone can agree that obesity is a growing problem worldwide. It was once considered a disease of civilization, reserved for industrialized countries, and the wealthy and affluent in non-industrialized countries. Now obesity is affecting the poorer segments of the population more so than the wealthy, especially in industrialized countries.

While the World Health Organization recognizes that individuals can make choices to improve their health, the organization also recognizes that individuals can only be responsible if they are in an environment that is socially supportive and allows them to have access to the tools necessary to promote a healthy lifestyle (“Obesity and Overweight”). A unique characteristic of obesity is that it is a result of a broad range of causes that society creates, and does not stem purely from individual behavior. If the problem were individual, it would be as simple as consuming less and burning more calories. However, this simplicity does not explain the obesity epidemic because it assumes that individuals have complete control over both factors (Oliver 101).

Biological Arguments

Members of the scientific community have been searching for decades for genes linked to obesity. The argument is that in order for the human body to express a state of obesity, genes must exist for it. Likewise, every aspect of our metabolism is under genetic control (Lev-Ran 2001). In 1962, Geneticist James Neel published the theory of a “thrifty genotype” to explain the prevalence of diabetes in the world. The theory explains that in human evolutionary history it was advantageous for humans living in hunter-gatherer societies to store fat deposits efficiently because they were often faced with periods of famine. He rationalized his theory by first saying that there was plenty of evidence that a predisposition to diabetes begins at birth and that, in the early years of life, those predisposed are extremely efficient in the utilization of food in their bodies. He then goes on to discuss that at one point in life, humans existed as hunter-gatherers, and were often subjected to times of feast or famine. Therefore the human body, during the process of evolution, found it an asset to store food more efficiently when faced with difficult food circumstances. Now these genes have become a liability in the wake of modern times of plenty (Neel 1962). Even though Neel was explaining diabetes, his theory has been extended to genetic predisposition for obesity because of the high association of diabetes with obesity (Fernandez and Shiver 2004).

Genetically, our genes have not changed very much in
the last 10,000 years, but our culture has changed dramatically. The scientific community claims that the mismatch between our “Stone-Age” genes and Western culture results in “diseases of civilization,” which are not found in our ancestors. However, since some population groups tend to have a higher overall BMI than others, some of the scientific community argue for the idea that subgroups are genetically susceptible to obesity. Also if any one subgroup is susceptible, then another subgroup must be resistant (Friedman 2003). It has been suggested that, for descendants of the peoples of the Fertile Crescent and Western societies, obesity would have been selected against because the risk of starvation was not prevalent due to the domestication of plants and animals (Friedman 2003). For these societies, obesity was a negative trait and selected against, therefore these societies are more resistant to a genetic susceptibility for obesity, while non-Western societies are more susceptible. When peoples from ancestrally non-Western societies are placed in a Western industrialized nation, or are influenced by Western culture, the mismatch creates obesity.

The problem with this line of thinking is that it takes for granted that health status is influenced by the combination of nutrition, exercise, and exposure to harmful substances and genetic biochemistry (Eaton, Konner, and Shostak 1988), yet it does not consider that outside influences have an effect on those lifestyle factors. Also, the logic that Western societies and descendants of the Fertile Crescent are the subgroups of the human race most resistant to obesity is flawed. It is based on the premise that more famines existed in hunter-gatherer societies than in the aforementioned. Lev-Ran argues that these genes must exist in all peoples because obesity exists everywhere. She points out that there were numerous famines that existed throughout history in Western Europe and Russia; therefore, the “picture of prosperous Europeans in no need of thrifty genes is patently false” (Lev-Ran 2001). J.R. Speakman is cited frequently for disagreeing with Neel and published his own theory of “drifty genes” in 2008. He explains that Neel’s hypothesis cannot be true because famines do not affect reproduction and survival in the ways necessary to support “thrifty genes.” Instead, Speakman suggests that random genetic drift is responsible for the worldwide obesity epidemic (2008). Regardless of whether or not genes exist for obesity, genetic theories, for the most part, regard the genes to be a predisposition and are therefore not the root cause (Brewis xxii).

More recently, epigenetics (which studies the effects of the environment on the body’s genome) suggests that genes are involved, but more so in expression than in hardwiring. In short, the environment can determine how genes are expressed and whether or not they are expressed. Studies with rats suggest that fetuses that receive insufficient nutrition in the womb become programmed for a “thrifty phenotype” in that they have a more efficient metabolism than babies born at a normal birth weight. Research suggests a relationship between what the fetus experiences in the womb and what would be experienced after birth. A “thrifty phenotype” hypothesis suggests that if a fetus is exposed to food shortages and later in life is exposed to an abundance of food, the fetus has a higher risk for becoming obese (Brewis 42). A “thrifty phenotype” hypothesis is also consistent with the findings that a stronger link exists between a maternal influence on type 2 diabetes than a paternal influence (Hales & Barker 1992). Studies of the Dutch hunger winter famine from 1944-1945 also give evidence that fetal programming causes small neonates to become overweight adults (Francis 56). This happens because the body’s cells are influenced by events outside of the body (Francis 32). The difference in the “thrifty phenotype” hypotheses from epigenetic studies and the “thrifty genotype” hypotheses is that a “thrifty phenotype” occurs because of a biological reaction in response to the body’s environment, whereas a “thrifty genotype” hypothesis removes the body’s environment from the equation (Francis 56).

Obesogenic Environments

An environment that creates or causes obesity is known as an obesogenic environment. Such an environment can be created in a physical or social sphere. An obesogenic physical environment is one that includes accessibility and availability of unhealthy foods. Living in an area of low socioeconomic status where there is less accessibility to supermarkets and greater accessibility to convenience stores, is consistent with a prevalence of obesity (Giskes 2011). This phenomenon is known as a “food desert” because it is difficult to access fresh and healthy food affordably. Other types of physical obesogenic environments include areas with a heavy reliance on cars to get places (Oliver 147), versus living in an environment which encourages people to walk places. As cited by Brewis, 84 percent of the population in the United States walks for recreation, with neighborhood streets being the most walked places. Studies show that “walkable neighborhood streets” result in lower BMI. A neighborhood that is perceived as unsafe because of elements such as no sidewalks, high traffic, high crime, or poor lighting reduces the likelihood that people will do much walking there (Brewis 60-61).

There is also evidence that social environments can be obesogenic in that they can cause elevated stress responses which affect our body’s metabolism and cause a biological reaction of weight gain and a higher susceptibility to obesity (Francis 56, 59). Obesogenic social environments are those in which an individual is placed in a setting where he
or she has feelings of little control or discrimination. In a documentary presented by the National Minority Consortia called *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*, racial discrimination, social isolation, political discrimination, and high-demand/low-control jobs are all cited as risk factors for obesity. They all add additional stress factors, even more so when in combination, thus raising cortisol levels in the body. Raised cortisol levels over a long period of time are a result of chronic stress and lead to weight gain. The documentary does also recognize that people everywhere have all sorts of stresses to deal with. However, according to the findings of Sheldon Cohen from Carnegie Mellon University, those with higher education and incomes had overall lower levels or cortisol released in the body (*Unnatural Causes*).

**Economic Consequences**

In stratified societies, an individual’s risk of being in an obesogenic environment is strongly linked to his or her socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is determined by individual, family, or group position in social and economic ranking. Socioeconomic factors generally include income, education, and long-term family wealth. There are currently no standards on what measurements should be used, but studies reveal that in the United States, income and education are generally correlated with opportunity and resources in regards to health status (Braverman et al. 2010). A feedback loop is created between economic capacity and health status that can impact people for generations, which Brewis calls “transgenerational risk focusing” (45).

Studies show that obese people earn less money and are discriminated against in the workforce and labor market (Rashad 2003). This happens because a social stigma is attached to obesity, in that obesity is a “failure of will” (Gilman 102) and that the obese individual is not a good citizen (Gilman 8). Social discrimination against obesity places obese individuals and their families in a vicious cycle of poverty from which they are unable to escape. Limited economic capacity translates into obese individuals and their families living in neighborhoods with obesogenic environments, causing snowballing transgenerational risk (Brewis 45).

Low socioeconomic status can cause individuals to make decisions which are not in the best interest of their health but are more convenient because of time, money, and opportunity costs. Individuals can be fully educated about exercise and nutrition, but ultimately live an unhealthy lifestyle leading to weight gain because the costs of living a healthier lifestyle are too high (Finkelstein, Ruhm, and Kosa 2005). Moving to a healthier diet usually consists of an increase in food spending, which can be a financial burden on low-income households (Rosin 2008). It could also mean spending more time and money traveling to a supermarket with healthier food options, which is just not feasible for some.

While studies show that population groups with the highest poverty rates and the least education also have the highest obesity rates (Rosin 2008), obesity and health status in general are affected more negatively by minority status. In the United States, minority status generally lowers an individual’s position in society (Brewis 78). According to the documentary *Unnatural Causes*, “more African-American, Native American, Latino and Pacific Islanders are in poor or fair health than whites at every income level.” Minorities are placed in this situation because racism can cause residential segregation and job discrimination, which in turn affect wealth. Essentially, minorities are automatically placed into a lower position in society and thus a lower socioeconomic status, regardless of their actual annual incomes, placing them in obesogenic environments.

**Sociocultural Elements**

While the biological, environmental, and economic theories presented above seem sound, they cannot, on their own, explain the patterns of obesity found in all culture groups. A large component of the study of obesity within a defined population is an investigation of sociocultural elements. People are a part of social networks and are influenced by others (Gilman 26). Humans have health concepts which are perceived from their biological interactions with cultural and social experiences (Winkelman xvii). Sociocultural elements provide explanatory value beyond that offered by biological, environmental, and economic factors.

Culture is defined as the learned shared behaviors found in a particular group of people. Culture determines our social and physical environments, which in turn expose us to, or protect us from, certain diseases (Winkelman 3). Culture also determines an individual’s physical and social resources which affect health conditions (21). There is also a difference between social and cultural effects of health. A social consequence of health is defined as a pattern of health behavior in a particular culture that occurs as a consequence of effects from outside institutions or external groups. An example is the culture-of-poverty, which is learned behavior of the poor (93). Social consequences place entire populations of people in an obesogenic social environment rather than just an individual. In order to remove preventable determinants of disease, the lifestyles and behaviors of a community must change, not just a single individual (103).
The American Indian Experience

Worldwide, indigenous populations have overweight and obesity rates which surpass those of the general population living within the same country. For example, in Australia, 29 percent of the indigenous population is considered obese compared to 26.8 percent of the rest of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2008). The same picture but with greater disparity is painted in Canada with 38 percent of the indigenous population determined to be obese compared to 19 percent of the general population (Garriguet 2008). In the United States, 30.1 percent of the American Indian/Alaska Native population was identified as obese compared to 20.5 percent of the rest of the population (Urban Indian Health Institute 2008). All of these indigenous populations share common struggles of being removed from their homelands, have a majority of the population living in poverty, are small minority populations, and are engulfed by a different, more dominant Western culture attempting to assimilate them.

The American Indian/Alaska Native experience is unique in that unlike any other minority group in the United States, the federal government made promises to provide free health care for this population through laws and treaties in exchange for land (Urban Indian Health Commission 2009). Taking a glance through American history, it is obvious that the government has not been very fruitful in fulfilling its treaties with this population group, nor have they been granted health services which compare to that of other American citizens (Dixon and Roubideaux xix). Over time, the United States government took more and more land, which caused some tribes to be completely relocated or to reside in a smaller portion of their homelands. Relocation caused a shift from traditional diets, among other things, which resulted in detrimental health effects (Shelton 13).

The American Indian/Alaska Native population accounts for less than two percent of the entire U.S. population, and claims about 5.2 million people (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel 2010). Of the 5.2 million people, nearly one-third of the urban American Indian/Alaska Native population is obese compared to only 20 percent of the rest of the U.S. population (data is based on urban American Indian/Alaska Natives mainly, as data for the population living on reservations and in non-urban areas is not available, or is not made public) (Urban Indian Health Institute 2008). A disparity ratio of 1.5 between the two population categories is computed by taking the rate of obesity found among American Indian/Alaska Natives and dividing by the rate of obesity in the general population (Urban Indian Health Institute 2009). In other words, American Indian/Alaska Natives are 1.5 times more obese than the general population. While income does play a role, as discussed earlier, other factors must contribute significantly because obesity rates for the American Indian/Alaska Native population do not change as much as those for the general population when income is considered. Lower income American Indian/Alaska Natives are identified as 32.4 percent obese while 32.0 percent in the higher income group are obese. Although the rate does decrease slightly, there is not much of a difference in this population group compared to the general population. For the general population, 24.8 percent of the lower income group are obese, while only 18.6 percent of those in the higher income group are (Urban Indian Health Institute 2008). In the general population, the environmental and economic theories help explain the gap in obesity rates. However, as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System report concludes, there must be other factors which exist to explain the significant differences in health in the American Indian/Alaska Native population (Urban Indian Health Institute 2008).

As stated earlier, social consequences of health are patterns of health behavior in a particular culture that occur as a consequence of effects from outside institutions or external groups (Winkelman 93). Relocations from ancestral homelands positioned the American Indian/Alaska Native population in some of the most remote geographic areas in the United States (Dixon 61). The acts of relocation on this population brought about “historical trauma” for all and cultural isolation for many. “Historical Trauma” is a theory presented by mental health researchers which “suggests that genocide, mass expulsion, forced assimilation and oth
er cruelties against groups shatter the lives and health not only of direct victims but those of their descendants” (Urban Indian Health Commission 2009). An interview, “Rez Talk,” conducted in the American Indian Quarterly, features an elder, Greg, who says that reservation life has limited opportunities and options. He mentions that the quality of housing is poor because of the difficulty in being able to finance a home mortgage on the grounds that banks will not take the risk since they have no authority to foreclose reservation properties. Job options are also very limited and young people are able to get jobs in reservation businesses with no education, so formal education is forgone (Lone-Knapp 2000). As previously mentioned, lower education usually translates into lower socioeconomic status because “geographic location, unemployment, poverty and education are interrelated.” Living in a remote area also reduces the attraction for new employers, and high unemployment and poverty are the result (Dixon 63). The combination of “historical trauma” and geographic isolation provides a set of circumstances that place the American Indian/Alaska Native population in an obesogenic environment that is impossible to escape from, regardless of upward mobility in socioeconomic status.

Along with relocation to reservations came assimilation into the dominant culture and bans on previous healthcare and religious practices (Shelton 15). In American Indian/Alaska Native culture, religion is not considered as separate from government (Dixon 35). Religion is also not seen as independent of health, which is seen as a spiritual and religious issue. American Indian/Alaska Native concepts of health are perceived as a balance between the body, the mind, the soul, and the heart. Therefore illness is disharmony or the consequence of imbalance and not just disease. Proper healing of diseases, therefore must take the root causes of the disease, i.e. imbalance, into consideration. Traditional health practices help to “reintegrate their identities” because American Indian/Native Alaskan populations, and indigenous populations worldwide, are captured between their own belief models of well-being and those of Western cultures (Culture 17).

In addition to facing changes in healthcare and religious practices, American Indian/Alaska Native communities are confronted with different ideas about body image. Body size carries cultural meaning (Brewis 84) and is part of a social concept (Polluck xiv). Western culture perceives a fat body to be negative and assigns blame on an individual level (Brewis 100). Obesity represents “the very decay of modern life” (Polluck xi). However, other societies do not necessarily associate a larger body with a negative connotation, but often a positive one associated very often with power (Brewis 100). In the American Indian/Alaska Native culture, an obese or overweight body image is seen as healthy and the norm (Roubideaux and Acton 205). When body size is viewed with an understanding of cultural attitudes, obesity is seen as a part of body image formed around a society’s idea of an acceptable body size because the body is both a biological and a cultural entity. Therefore, the body must be considered through anthropology and sociology as well as physiology (Polluck xiv).

Western concepts of health differ greatly from American Indian/Alaska Native perceptions. Westernized culture is very medically and scientifically oriented. When looking at minority cultures, scientists recognize that cultural ideas can affect health, but often do not recognize that as scientists in a Western society, they are themselves operating under medically scientific cultural beliefs (Brewis 7). Because the American Indian/Alaska Native culture is a different culture within the dominant Western culture in the United States, it is important that research recognizes these differences and explores how cultural ideals impact health. After all, the biological, environmental, and economic factors for obesity do not account for the disparity rates found in the American Indian/Alaska Native culture, so further study into the sociocultural elements is necessary to determine why the patterns of obesity exist in a different way from the general population.

**Conclusion**

With further study of this population, more can be learned about the complex factors that impact disease. Additionally, more effective, culturally relevant, health policies can be implemented to help lower high rates of chronic diseases associated with obesity that currently plague the United States. Because medicine is so advanced, obese individuals are surviving longer but are in poor health because they are often ailing with associated diseases requiring costly treatment (Lev-Ran 2001). Finkelstein, Ruhm, and Kosa find that more visits are made each year to physicians by obese individuals than non-obese individuals, and cite papers by Wolf and Colditz stating that the government, via taxpayer money, finances about 50 percent of annual medical costs related to obesity (2005). Until we stop blaming the individual and realize that lack of willpower is not the only determinant that controls an individual’s weight (Friedman 2003), we cannot fully understand how health is a product of society’s “interrelationships among biological and sociocultural factors” (Leonetti 198).

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Scalping and Decapitation at Gordontown: A Collision of Theory Paradigms in Current Bioarchaeological Thought

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This topic was born out of a realization that the theory paradigms in bioarchaeology are rapidly changing. The main schools of thought in bioarchaeology, how they compare and contrast, how they work and how they do not work will be discussed here and applied to scalping and decapitation and the way that bioarchaeologists see evidence of these practices in a lab. Theories are examined in the context of two case studies performed on the Gordontown burial population, focusing on Burials 7 and 10. The discussion concludes with thoughts on the implications of contending theories in bioarchaeology along with suggestions for future projects regarding these two particular case studies.

Bioarchaeology is a subfield of archaeology, which, in the United States, is a subfield of anthropology (Willey and Phillips 1958) that deals solely in human remains. Bioarchaeology is a young science: Jane Buikstra (1991) first said that bioarchaeology needs to exist just over two decades ago. As the discipline emerges, so do contending theories. The discussion they create is one of the many self-correcting ways that bioarchaeologists can field the problems within the discipline, and it is important to keep the discussion going, even if it at times can be unflattering (Kelley 1988). Bioarchaeology is evolving as new ideas are brought to the table, such as coupling the analysis of human remains with the analysis of mortuary patterns (Buikstra 2006). The current paper deals with precisely this topic.

The current paper began with the notion of examining a burial population for evidence of scalping. Before conducting any lab work, a review of the literature was undertaken on both the topic of scalping and the burial population to be studied. All of the literature on the burial population from the Grey Literature published by the Tennessee Division of Archaeology to the unpublished skeletal inventories flagged one particular individual, Burial 7, as a possible scalping victim (Moore et al. 1998). However, when Burial 7 was examined it only had one obvious cut mark on the occipital bone on the back of the skull. After conversing with many different individuals it became obvious that calling this tiny, half inch cut mark on the back of the skull a scalping was a very liberal way to describe this bone trauma. So the discussion went further: What makes two archaeologists look at the same skull and see two different possibilities as to what happened to the individual in their lifetime? The answer was that these two bioarchaeologists must have had different theory paradigms at work in their education and experience.

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Human Pathology defines scalping as, “The excision of a variably sized segment of scalp. While this can occur accidentally in antiquity it was almost invariably carried out for the purpose of acquisition of a human trophy” (Aufderheid 1998). A current flaw in research about scalping is that there are few articles on the subject and they are often written by the same handful of specialists, who continually cite each other.

Going from the concrete to the abstract is not always straightforward. Phillip Walker has said that “Several flint arrow points embedded in a person’s spine are not symbolic constructs. They say something indisputable about physical interactions that occurred between those bones and those stones” (Walker 1991). What scalping says about a person’s life within a population and within a culture is necessary for us to understand the rest of that person’s life and death.

The burial population discussed in this article is Gordontown. Sometimes known as T. F. Wilkinson’s farm, Gordontown is a late Mississippian era burial population from Davidson County, Tennessee (Moore et al. 2006). Its approximate location is pictured in figure 1, which is taken from the Moore et al. Grey Literature from the Division of Archaeology. Gordontown has been excavated several times over the last 100 years, most recently as a preservation effort to save a portion of the site from being destroyed by subdivision development (Moore et al. 2006).
About 100 individuals were retrieved from approximately 85 burials during the most recent excavation (Moore et al 2009). At least one burial mound was left untouched because it was not at risk of being destroyed by the construction plans (Moore et al 2006).

**Figure 1.** Gordontown’s approximate location on a topographic map is marked by a star (Moore et al 2006).

During the late Mississippian era, archaeological populations in Tennessee were dealing with a time of change just before widespread European contact (Smith 2006). At this time around the world, and particularly in the southeastern United States where Gordontown is located, climate was changing slightly and crop returns were falling. This caused conflict levels to skyrocket, leading to regional warfare. This, of course, can leave markers on bones (Smith 2006, Milner et al 1991).

Scalping results in several distinctive cut mark patterns visible on skulls, when the skulls are preserved in the burial. Dawnie Wolfe Steadman describes the cut marks on skull 4 Orendorf, a Mississippian era site in Illinois, as having “multiple short, overlapping cut marks on the frontal [bone] fragment” (Steadman 2008). Scalping and decapitation are two diagnostic bone markers of conflict. While these things can happen accidentally, widespread cases of either is probably indicative of a group of people in time of conflict. The bone markers related to scalping are typically horizontal, sometimes “V” shaped cut marks running across the frontal bones, sometimes also on the parietal or temporal and the occipital bones of the skull. Decapitation is usually associated with cut marks on the cervical vertebrae where the neck and head were separated.

**Theory**

Since the inception of archaeology the theoretical framework has been shaped by shifting paradigms. The flow of archaeological theory will be discussed here in a linear pattern of what began, what it gave way to, and what came from that. Watson puts the field in perspective by saying, “When archaeologists say ‘archaeological theory,’ they are usually referring to some aspect or level of archaeological interpretation, such as the plausibility of or justification for knowledge claims about a discrete piece of archaeological record or about a part of a broader explanatory formulation concerning the human past. They may be referring to the nature and status of a particular research problem, or of the research design selected for solving such a problem. Finally, under the rubric of ‘archaeological theory’ they may dispute the ultimate goals or purposes of archaeological endeavor” (2008). For this discussion I will use theory in all of these connotations.

Webster synthesizes such authors as Strong, Trigger, Lynman, Binford, Caldwell, Meltzer, Dunnell and Flannery, noting that “culture history” was the dominant perspective leading up to the shift to “New Archaeology” about 50 years ago. Webster disagrees with many who find fault in culture history, taking a balanced approach: “I have chosen to conceive of culture history – as a cultural historian should – as one among several archaeological traditions to which archaeologists contributed, mainly during the first half of the twentieth century. … As with any classificatory approach, culture history has benefits and weaknesses: [positively it] puts order to the unwieldy variation displayed by the massive cultural-historical literature [making it] possible [to make] comparisons with other such traditions” (2008).

“Processual archaeology” rose out of cultural historical archaeology and may be considered its polar opposite (Watson 2008). Processual archaeology comes from the perspective that inclusion of the scientific method is the only way to make archaeology a legitimate field of study. Researchers with this perspective believe that if enough data are gathered and if enough lab hours are clocked and if enough records are dictated and recorded, then the truth about what happened to a site can be learned (op cit).

Processual archaeology was heralded as bringing science to an esoteric abstract. As per Renfrew (1987), the discipline “has learnt to speak with greater authority and accuracy about the ecology of past societies, their technology, their economic basis and their social organization. Now it is beginning to interest itself in the ideology of early communities: their religions, the way they expressed rank, status and group identity.” Processualism made archaeology stand up and be counted among the sciences. However, it did not come without heavy criticism. The major critiques of processualism led to the creation of the post-processual movement. Chippendale (1987) in his colorful review of processual archaeology says, “The
Bioarchaeology is at a unique place in science in that some are splitters and some are lumpers. That is, some will be more comfortable identifying differentiations between objects and constructs while others are more comfortable finding the commonalities between them. When a splitter is working in an archaeology lab sorting a tray of artifacts that person will spend extra hours on the dusty, crumbly bits on the bottom of the tray trying to determine if they are rock, bone, or ceramic dust while the lumpers will simply bag them all as “fragments.”

Bioarchaeology is at a unique place in science in that it is not quite hard enough to follow a flow-chart method which might be used in a hard science like geology, but it is hard enough that people practicing bioarchaeology might have the urge to do that. In geology, for instance, a lab worker could easily categorize a series of rocks by following a flow-chart of yes/no question and answers about the rock. The lab worker could answer that “yes, this specimen is white, dusty, soft, and porous” and determine through the flow-chart that this specimen is pumice. However, a lab worker doing a bioarchaeology skeletal inventory could not follow the same flow-chart thought process and say “yes, this skull has a cut mark on the occipital bone” so it must be a scalping, because one of the possible bone markers in a scalping is a cut mark on the occipital bone. However, that may have happened with the Gordontown collection.

**Scalping**

Scalping is a kind of trauma. Hodge and Berryman define trauma as what occurs when “deliberate or accidental force is applied to the human body resulting in injury to the soft tissue and bone” (2008). The authors continue by saying that specific instances of trauma can be interpreted into trauma patterns which can be used to determine the biocultural environment the population lived in and that “Evidence of such indicators [of trauma patterns] on a single individual may indicate personal violence. Evidence of such indicators on many members of an entire segment of population suggest chronically socially sanctioned domestic violence or endemic warfare. Evidence of several traumatic injuries at various states of healing on a single individual indicate a chronic condition in which the individual engages in or is the victim of repetitive violence acts, a predisposition towards violent injury that is referred to as injury recidivism” (op cit).

Cases of scalping have been recorded in many parts of the world, and tend to be very similar across time and space. A scalping in 2nd Century Siberia looks a lot like one in 1250 AD Middle Tennessee. In “Prehistoric Old World Scalping: New Cases from the Cemetery of Aymyrlyg” Murphy, et al. (2002) describe a 2nd Century cemetery in Siberia that is one of the only cases of Iron Age scalping that have been discovered to date. Landau and Steele (1996) write about the Crow Creek Massacre in South Dakota in their article “Why Anthropologists Study Human Remains” and say that in the battle, about 490 people were murdered at roughly the same time and over 90 percent of the victims show signs of scalping attempts. In examining a New Mexico site, Largo-Gallina (dated to AD 900), for evidence of cannibalism, Turner et al. (1993) found at least one victim of extreme trauma and scalping. What indicates scalping? Milner et al. (1991), who identify 14 scalping victims in their, “Warfare in Late Prehistoric Central Illinois” article, say, “Scalping produced multiple more or less parallel transverse and oblique cut marks on the anterior lateral and posterior sides of the cranial vault. Usually the cuts are concentrated on the frontal bone.”

The origins of scalping in the Americas are controversial. Smith (1991) argues that although many believed scalping to have been brought to the New World, scalping is now known to have had a long existence in the Americas before European contact. However, European expansion through the American Southwest likely brought scalping to
people who did not previously practice it.

Brown and Dye (2007) say that scalping is a form of trophy taking and reference the reoccurring Morning Star/Birdman Mississippian imagery and his severed heads and scalps adorning his regalia as being, “trophy motifs [serving] not only as a symbol of success at war but as a metaphor for specific mythic narratives that identify prowess in mortal combat with high stakes gaming with the ultimate triumph of life over death.” The Birdman motif is a good way to introduce the culture that we call Mississippian. Worne (2011) says, “It is generally recognized among bioarchaeologists that inter-group violence was a pervasive threat to Mississippian populations in southeastern North America.” This is particularly relevant because the Gordontown population is Mississippian.

As mentioned previously, scalping occurred in Tennessee in more places than just the Gordontown site. In his 1981 dissertation on the Averbush site Berryman says, “Scalping has long been associated with warfare and conflict among Amerindians.” Berryman has written about several specific cases of scalping at the Averbuch while also explaining how scalping looks to a bioarcheologist: “Evidence of scalping appears as cut marks on the frontal, parietal and occipital bones. The frontal bone exhibits two areas of cutting on the right side near the coronal suture. The left parietal has a long discontinuous cut that appears above the posterior of the squamosal suture. Shorter, more delicate cuts are found superior to this one. A continuation of the cuts on the frontal bone is found on the right parietal near the coronal suture. Also short faint cuts appear on the posterior one-third of the right parietal near the lambdoidal and sagittal suture. The occipital exhibits one indistinct cut at the lambda and two short, deep cuts near the external occipital protuberance. The majority of the cuts over the cranial vault are short and appear in groups of two or three parallel lines” (Berryman 1981).

Burial 7 at Gordontown is believed to have been a possible scalping victim. Gordontown 7 is pictured in Figures 2 and 3. However, the cut mark on his skull was in such a place that it would be unusual for this to be the only marker left behind by a scalping.

As a contrast included as Figure 4 and Figure 5 are two photos of individuals Unknown and 15 from Arnold, a temporally and spatially contemporary site to Gordontown. These two individuals have extreme cut marks across their skulls demonstrating very likely scalpings.

With Gordontown 7 it is tempting to follow a flow chart type of thought process in the same way that one might in a harder science like geology, but when this practice is applied to archaeology, and particularly bioarcheology, it fails. In geology the most important thing about a stone is its physical characteristics. In bioarcheology we deal with not only the markers on the bones but the context in which the bones were found. (This will be discussed more in the following Decapitation section as relative to Gordontown 10.) With Gordontown 7 a tiny cut mark is on the back of a skull may have led a lab worker to fit symptoms to a diagnosis. Yet, there are thousands of ways that the back of the skull could get this cut mark before scalping should have been considered.

Figure 2. Gordontown 7’s skull with an arrow pointing to the cut mark. (Photo by Abigail Hyndman)

Figure 3. Gordontown 7’s skull. Detail shot of the cut mark. (Photo by Abigail Hyndman)
possibly tied up (though any fibers were not preserved), and is missing his skull, mandible, and cervical vertebrae one and two. Gordontown 10’s excavation photo is included as Figure 6. However, when cervical vertebrae three and four are examined they show no obvious cut marks. These vertebrae are included as figure 7.

![Figure 6. Moore 1998.](image6.jpg)

When the anomaly with Gordontown 7 was noted, Gordontown 10 came back into the foreground of discussion about this site. Gordontown 10 is an interesting individual that brings back the point of how impossible it is to apply a flow-chart-like thought process to bioarchaeology. Contextually, Gordontown 10 appears to be decapitated. He is buried face down, in a double wall stone box grave, it would be a highly unusual decapitation to cut only through the inter-vertebral disks, leaving no bone markers.

![Figure 7. Cervical vertebrae 3 and 4 from Gordontown 10.](image7.jpg)

![Figure 8. Provided by MTSU Anthropology Department.](image8.jpg)
To demonstrate a contrast, included as Figure 8 is a photo of a likely decapitation from the Castillian Springs site, a temporally and spatially contemporary site to Gordontown.

The extremely close space between vertebrae is demonstrated by Figure 9, an articulated plastic spinal column.

Figure 9. An articulated plastic spinal column used in a classroom. An arrow has been added to illustrate where the decapitation would have to occur to not leave a bone marker on the vertebrae.

What is especially interesting about Gordontown 10 is that there is disagreement about what happened to him. The Grey Literature published by the Tennessee Division of Archaeology says that he was decapitated, but the skeletal analysis on file with the division, done by another individual, is very adamant that there are no obvious bone markers to prove one way or the other that this individual was decapitated. This brings us back to a dilemma. Is context or hard data more important? There is no easy answer to this question. Only by growing, changing, and thinking will we ever come to a place as bioarchaeologists to have any kind of answer. Foregoing the context of the burial and almost even the humanity of a human burial to look at the presence or lack of bone markers to determine whether something did or did not happen is a very processual idea. Post-processual archaeology would lead a lab worker to come up with a very different conclusion about what happened to Gordontown 10.

Discussion

The two case studies discussed here have information yet to be gleaned from them, and can only be understood in greater depth after more study. For example, experimental archaeology projects could tell us if it is possible to scalp an individual and leave only a tiny cut mark on the occipital. Or we could learn if it is possible to decapitate an individual without leaving a mark on the cervical vertebrae. These projects could be done in future research.

When these two areas of bone trauma (scalping and decapitation) are looked at through the different lenses of theory discussed here it begins to make sense how an individual who has a more scientific background could slip into a pattern of thinking that would lead to completely different conclusions after seeing the exact same information as, say, a culture historian. It also needs to be said that neither conclusion can ever truly be proved wrong because we can never truly know what happened to an individual.

Further research needs to be done on all topics, as that is the only way to further archaeology in general. Mistakes will be made and splitters and lumpers will disagree on categorization. The Gordontown burials are not unique. Theory clashing against theory in archaeology is not unique either. Archaeologists, both practicing professionals and students in training, need to recognize these problems and know how to deal with them (Kelly 1988).

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move bodies and only the best of friends would move hundreds of them in 105-degree weather in July.

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African American Students’ Participation in STEM Majors: Factoring out Failure, Striving for Success

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The purpose of this research study is to identify and examine factors that contribute to the successes and challenges of African-American students in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines at Middle Tennessee State University. The number of African-American students in STEM disciplines is rather limited on a national level. Existing literature suggests that this is due to economic factors and academic preparation. A study (Education Research Project: Empirical Investigation of the Success Factors Impacting African-American Students in Engineering and Technology at Historically Black Universities) was conducted based on findings with the participation of the First STEP program and TLSAMP (Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation) at MTSU. Both programs aim to improve the quality of higher learning for underrepresented STEM students, with a goal to help foster an increase in the number of such students in STEM disciplines. This study provides concrete practical data to identify and support relevant factors that ultimately lead to students’ achievement and decision to pursue a degree in a STEM discipline at Middle Tennessee State University.

African-American students are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and there remains a need for more students in these fields. Very few African-American students major in STEM disciplines at the college level which results in low graduation rates for African-Americans in science-related fields. Research indicates that several different factors contribute to the performance of African-American students who major in STEM. A qualitative and quantitative research approach is used here in examining whether or not specific factors identified in the literature are indeed relevant to current students at MTSU. The purpose of this research is to identify factors that impact African-American students majoring in STEM disciplines, specifically factors that influence their career interest in STEM. Primarily, STEM students’ academic self-perception and aptitude are analyzed. Results of this study suggest that a variety of factors have an effect on African-American students’ decision to major in STEM disciplines as well as their academic experience as a STEM major.

Method

Participants

Two different groups participated in this study. The first group consists of 34 full-time, first-time freshmen with ACT scores ranging from 19-24, enrolled in the First STEP program. First STEP is a two-year enrichment program funded by the National Science Foundation with the goal of increasing retention of first-time, full-time freshmen STEM majors. The second group of participants for this study consists of members of the Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance Program (TLSAMP). This group of 50 participants ranged from undergraduate students currently enrolled in the program to alumni TLSAMP students. TLSAMP is a program designed to increase the enrollment and graduation rate of underrepresented minority students in STEM by at least 100 percent by the end of a five-year period.

Materials

A questionnaire, “Factors Impacting College Students’ Success,” was developed under NSF HBCU-UP Project #0714963 entitled Education Research project: Empirical Investigation of the Success Factors Impacting African-American Students in Engineering and Technology at Historically Black Universities. This survey instrument was administered to both groups.

Participants in the study completed the survey anonymously and filled out a separate consent form. The First STEP participants were given a paper copy of the questionnaire to complete by hand and the TLSAMP group completed the questionnaire via Survey Monkey. The debriefing for TLSAMP students was sent to all participants in this group through email. Instructions and background on the research study was also given.

In the very last section of the questionnaire participants completed a demographics section. In this section,
participants indicated their race, sex, employment status, major and other precollege factors (i.e., type of high school attended, were honors science or math classes available at your high school?).

Procedure

The first group to complete the survey was the First STEP group. Permission was received from the director of the program to administer the questionnaire on the second day of class for the participants. They were orally debriefed, given a consent form to sign and one to keep for their own personal records, and given a questionnaire. Consent forms were collected and any students who had no desire to participate were asked not to submit a signed consent form. Participants were instructed to fill out the questionnaire to the best of their ability and in its entirety.

Certain limitations apply to the First STEP group: because this group consisted of first-time freshmen, the students could not answer questions pertaining to their college experience. Students who did attempt to answer these questions were self-reporting how they perceive their college experience would likely be. Data were collected into Microsoft Excel the following day after the survey was administered.

The TLSAMP group participated via Survey Monkey. The participants in this group were debriefed via email and given all of the details of the study, including potential risks. A link was sent in the email to students so they could access the questionnaire and successfully complete it in its entirety. Students in this group were given about three weeks to complete the questionnaire. After the three-week period, the questionnaire was closed and no longer available to students. The data collection process ended after 50 questionnaires were received.

All participants were aware of the purpose of this research study and given the opportunity to indicate their willingness or unwillingness to participate. This study received IRB approval and followed applicable research guidelines.

Results

The results of this study indicate the academic perceptions and dispositions of STEM students from each group. Focus is given to pre-college factors concerning the First STEP group due to previously stated limitations. Out of the 34 participants, 13 are African-American. Fifteen percent of African-American students indicated that their participation in a college-preparation program was the key factor contributing to their choice of a STEM major. About 70% of these students reported that their mother always encouraged them to pursue a degree in a STEM discipline while another 15 percent said their high school teachers and guidance counselors occasionally encouraged them to pursue a degree in STEM. Two main factors that influenced the decision of African-American students to pursue a STEM major included salary potential and interest in the subject matter. Eighty percent of students reported that they were not first-generation college students.

Students were asked to report whether or not science or math honors courses were available at the high school they attended, and the majority reported that honors science-related courses were indeed offered and that they participated in those classes as well. Ten out of 13 African-American students attended a public school. One-fourth reported that their mother earned a bachelors or master’s degree, while 17% of students reported that their father earned a bachelor’s degree, 8% a master’s degree. Seventeen percent of the students indicated that their father earned a Ph.D. and eight percent reported that their mothers earned a Ph.D. While 42 percent of students reported that they did not know their parent/guardian’s household income, 17 percent indicated that their parent/guardian household income was $80,001-$100,000 and $100,001-above. When asked if either parent/guardian had an undergraduate degree in a STEM discipline, 45 percent of African-American students reported that their parents did have an undergraduate degree in a STEM discipline.

Results for the TLSAMP group were more detailed considering that this group could report on pre-college and college factors. More than 90 percent of the participants in this group are African-American, 4.4 percent are African, 2.2 percent Latin/Hispanic and 2.2 percent Asian & Pacific Islander. Participants strongly agree that potential employment opportunities, salary potential, interest in the subject matter, and potential to impact society are factors that influenced their decision to major in STEM disciplines. Forty-two percent of African-American students indicate that having a solid foundation in mathematics and/or science contributed to their academic preparedness as a STEM major, while 20 percent say that participating in a college preparation program (summer program, summer camp, academic prep, etc.) was also a contributor.

Focusing on African-American students, Table 1 shows how often certain individuals encouraged students to pursue a degree in a STEM discipline.

Table 2 shows which factors contributed to student success as a STEM major. The results from African-American students in the TLSAMP group.

Once again, shown here in Table 3, students more closely “agree” that academic preparation was a key contributor to their own personal success in STEM disciplines, as well as support from non-family members. These statistics support the ideal that academic preparation is a major factor impacting the success of African-American students.
in STEM disciplines, as well as the need to foster relationships with people who can encourage students to pursue STEM majors. Students are close to “strongly agreeing” that their willingness to learn contributed to their overall success, which is meaningful because students acknowledge on their own that they have to be willing to participate in their learning in order to be successful.

**Table 2. Factors contributing to students’ success in STEM majors.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to easily comprehend and apply math in high school</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance in college math courses</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship/Co-Op experience</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to easily comprehend and apply science in high school</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My religious beliefs</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of teaching by faculty members in STEM</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from family</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from STEM faculty</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with a STEM faculty member</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in study groups</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Class size</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere of department/college</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition in STEM classes</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Research Experience</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal motivation</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: N = 50. Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree)

**Table 1. Encouragement to pursue a STEM degree.**

![Bar chart showing encouragement to pursue a STEM degree](chart.png)

(TLSAMP students’ experience as students and whether or not their most effective STEM professors taught using specific methods are shown in Table 4. Fifty percent of African-American students from the TLSAMP group report that they are first-generation college students. These students believe that their most effective STEM professors lectured and posted some of the materials online. More students than any other category indicated that their most effective STEM professors did not implement group work and projects as one of their teaching methods.

The majority of African-American students from the TLSAMP group (77.8%) say they attended a public high school. Table 5 shows how many of them indicated whether or not honors, AP, and dual-enrollment classes were offered at their high school.

Although the majority of students indicate that advanced mathematics and science classes were offered at their high school, the more significant aspect is whether or not students participated in these advanced courses. More participated in honors math and science courses than AP (advanced placement) courses. Dual-credit math and science courses were not offered as much honors and AP, and for those who say they were offered, over half of the students did not take such courses at their high school.

**Demographics**

The demographic section of the questionnaire includes queries about type of current employment, how
many hours per week students work, the main reason that they work, and what effect work has had on their GPA. A sizable minority of African-American students (37.8 percent) report that they are employed off-campus. Only 8.9 percent have a stipend and none have work study.

The amount of time students have for study is quite a significant factor in their success, especially students who participate in STEM majors. While 37.8 percent of African-American students in TLSAMP work less than 10 hours a week, more than 17 percent work 30-39 hours per week, quite a lot for a STEM major. More than half the students who work, do so in order to pay for school, room and board. Twenty-nine percent report that they worked in order to support their family and meet other family obligations while 24.4 percent say they worked in order to gain more knowledge and experience in their field.

### Table 3. Personal success factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My success can be most attributed to:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self motivation</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from family</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from others, non-family members</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic preparation</td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to learn</td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: N = 50. Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree)

More students indicated that their GPA slightly decreased (26.7 percent) while they were working than those who reported that their GPA increased (15.6 percent). Only 2.2 percent had significant GPA increases while working and 13.3 percent had significant decreases. The number of hours per week that students spent studying was also reported. Most students spend 6-10 hours per week studying, but 26.7 percent spend 20 or more hours a week studying. The educational level and household income of the parents of African-American students are shown in tables 6a, 6b, and 7.

More than 30 percent of students report that their mother completed some college, while about 15 percent say their father completed some college. The percentage of students reporting that their mother or father earned a bachelor’s degree was not significantly different. Very few students indicate that either parent earned a Ph.D., but more mothers than fathers earned a doctorate. Only 20 percent of students from this group reported that their parent/guardian earned an undergraduate STEM degree, even though students rate their family’s influence as important in their decision to major in a STEM discipline (Table 1).

### Table 4. Effectiveness of STEM professors’ teaching methods.

A great percentage of students do not know their parent/guardian household income. More than 20 percent indicate that their parents made between $20,000 and $40,000. Slightly less than 10 percent make above $80,000. Socioeconomic status is frequently mentioned in the literature as a contributor to whether or not African-American students decide to major in a STEM discipline. Some researchers find that family income and socioeconomic status produce no significant effect on achievement (Stewart, 2006). Slaughter and Epps (1987) note that in certain studies of African-American youth, socioeconomic status has no direct correlation with students’ academic achievement. Others, however, suggest that income and socioeconomic status certainly do matter (Rankin & Quane, 2002). According to Mercy and Steelman (1982), “persons reared in socioeconomically advantaged families surpass their disadvantaged counterparts on ability tests” (p.532).

### Table 5. Types of math and science courses offered in high school.

A number of hours per week that students spent studying was also reported. Most students spend 6-10 hours per week studying, but 26.7 percent spend 20 or more hours a week studying. The educational level and household income of the parents of African-American students are shown in tables 6a, 6b, and 7.
Discussion

Both the First STEP and TLSAMP groups report that interest in the subject matter and salary potential were factors that influenced their decision to major in a STEM discipline. Previous research suggests that African-American students’ lack of participation in STEM disciplines has little to do with their disinterest in these particular subjects. In fact, African-American students are just as likely, if not more likely, to be interested in STEM fields as their Asian and Caucasian counterparts. Results of this study reveal that one of the main reasons African-American students decide to major in STEM is because of their initial interest in the subject. Degrees in STEM fields offer some of the most promising careers, and salary potential is obviously one of the more important factors that fuel African-American students’ decision to pursue STEM majors (Table 2).

Table 6a. Father’s educational level.

Table 6b. Mother’s educational level.

The TLSAMP group and the First STEP group differ in that the First STEP group had little to no intervention, or college experience. Intervention programs are successful strategies to promote college preparation. First STEP students often believe that their participation in a college-prep program leads to their academic preparedness. TLSAMP African-American students frequently believe that having a solid foundation in math and science contributed to their academic preparedness. Human and material resources are contributors to African-American students’ achievement in STEM. This finding is supported by Oakes (1990), who states that opportunities for African-American students to continue in the pre-college “science pipeline” are limited based on the unequal allocation of funding and educational resources provided to schools for people of color. An example of a successful intervention is the Meyerhoff Program located at the University of Maryland in Baltimore; it is one of the nation’s leading producers of African-American students going on to graduate and professional study and careers in mathematics, science, and engineering.

Parental involvement is a major factor determining students’ academic success. Both groups indicate that their parents, especially their mothers, were instrumental in encouraging them to major in a STEM discipline. Results indicate that high school teachers and guidance counselors were not as encouraging as the parents. Jones, Yonezawa, Balesteros and Mehan (2002) note that students of color often feel that their teachers lack interest in them as academic scholars.

Table 7. Household income.

The majority of TLSAMP students attribute their success to academic preparation. According to Johnson and Kristonis (2006), African-American students do not participate in science and engineering disciplines due to their lack of academic preparation. Research indicates that schools that offer gifted and advanced programs are setting their students up for success in the future. More than 70 percent of African-American students from the First STEP group report that honors, AP, and dual-credit math and science classes were offered at their high school, while more than 35 percent of TLSAMP students say the same. Given the opportunity to take such courses opens doors for
students at an early age, allowing them to decide as early as middle school whether or not to pursue a degree in a STEM discipline.

Socioeconomic status is a recurring factor in the literature. Tsui (2007) suggests that with access to proper human and material resources along with a demanding mathematics and science curriculum, a student’s achievement could greatly improve. It is an unfortunate belief in society that most African-American students come from poor economic conditions, and this in fact affects their ability to achieve on the same level as their Caucasian peers. To some degree socioeconomic status does play a major role in a student’s achievement. Proportionally more African-American students out of all other ethnicities from the First STEP group claim that their parent/guardian household income is greater than $80,000. TLSAMP students report the opposite: less than 10 percent report that their parent/guardian made that amount.

According to Stewart (2006), children whose parents are highly educated have significantly higher achievement than students whose parents are less educated. This could also be interpreted as an indication of whether or not students go on to pursue higher degrees in STEM disciplines. The First STEP group has better educated parents: 45 percent of these students report that their parents earned an undergraduate degree in a STEM field compared to only 20 percent of TLSAMP students.

Although each student is unique, the results of the questionnaire suggest that the above factors impact African-American students’ decisions to pursue a STEM degree. With each new discovery there is a greater hope of retaining more African-American students in STEM majors.

Acknowledgements

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References


An Investigation of MTSU Students of Mixed-Filipino Ancestry and Their Affiliation to a Filipino Identity

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Dr. Jackie Eller
Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology

Although Asian-Americans are growing in population in the United States at a higher rate compared to other racial groups, their presence in America is still marginalized, and their specific social issues are generally overlooked due to the perception that they are “model minorities.” The invisibility of the Filipino demographic and their issues are even more pronounced despite ranking as the second largest Asian group with a population of 3.4 million according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Various socio-historical factors have obstructed the development of a pronounced ethnic Filipino identity amongst Filipino-Americans such as the effects of racial ambiguity, upbringing, environmental experiences, and degree of indoctrination to Filipino heritage. Focusing on Filipinos of mixed ancestry, this research investigates the degree to which this demographic identifies with their ethnic heritage. The respondents are affiliated with a college university in the South, a region of the United States where racial lines tend to be more defined and relevant in society. The qualitative research of 12 students of mixed-Filipino ancestry presented the complexities of identity affiliation based on various factors such as phenotype, perceptions, external factors, and means of cultural maintenance. Filipino affiliation varied across respondents.

This qualitative research primarily focuses on the experiences of individuals of mixed-Filipino ancestry, who, in terms of their maintenance of a Filipino identity, may be one of the most vulnerable groups within the Filipino-American demographic. I focused primarily within a college university (Middle Tennessee State University) in the South where racial lines tend to be more defined and relevant than in other regions. While similar studies have been performed on Filipino students in Hawaii and California where there exist larger Filipino communities, little research pertains to the perception of Filipino identity among students living in the South.

Filipinos make up the second largest Asian group in the United States, and their history in this land spans hundreds of years. According to Nadal (2011), the earliest account of Filipinos in the New World dates back to 1587 in Morro Bay, California, when they were brought over as laborers during the Spanish galleon trade. Later in 1763, a group of “Manila men” escaped from a Spanish galleon and eventually made their way across the continent to form a permanent settlement known as St. Malo, located in the bayous of what is now the state of Louisiana. Yet despite this long history in the United States, the presence of the Filipino community in America is seldom felt or recognized.

Literature Review

Although Filipinos today are the second largest Asian group in the United States, numbering roughly 3.4 million according to the 2010 U.S. Census, their unique social issues and voices have largely gone unexplored (”Asian/Pacific American Heritage,” 2012). The invisibility of Filipino people has been attributed to various socio-historical factors such as their high degree of assimilation. Maramba (2008) expounds on this by stating that Filipinos are being “clumped” in the greater Asian-Pacific Islander category, thereby masking and overshadowing their uniquely distinguishing qualities, characteristics, and cultural and ethnic distinctiveness (p. 11). According to a study by Wing, Sue, Buccheri et al. (2009), one Filipino respondent stated her ethnic Filipino identity was often confused and ascribed as Chinese. Because of this, her Filipino identity was thereby masked. Furthermore as part of the Asian-American demographic, Filipinos can also face the misconception that they are model minorities well-acclimated to the American way of life. Unfortunately, this perception overlooks the adversities and struggles that this group experiences.

Filipinos rank low in education relative to other Asian-American groups. Furthermore Maramba’s (2008) study of Filipino-American college students in Southern California, finds that most Filipina/o students did not feel that the university acknowledges their presence on campus. Many of
them believe they are “clumped” with the APA category, or generalized as people of color with no distinction among their cultures (p. 11). Tuason, et al. (2007) explain this phenomenon of ethnic invisibility in greater depth by attributing it to several other factors: obscurity brought upon by Filipino’s high degree of interracial marriage, high proficiency in the English language, adoption of Catholic and Christian religion, the impact of Western acculturation early on during Spanish and American colonization, and even Filipino parents’ desires to further acculturate their children into the hegemonic mainstream as a means to protect them from discrimination. All of these factors have been shown to contribute to a weakened sense of ethnic self (Tuason et al., 2007: 362). Nadal (2011) describes Filipinos as “forgotten Asians” due to the lack of ethnic cohesiveness, and cites the maladaptive effects of “colonial mentality” or idealization of colonial powers. Furthermore, the effects of discrimination in America may have also further exacerbated the difficulty in embracing one’s ethnic Filipino identity through the development of shame, self-loathing, and desire to become more acculturated as a perceived means of circumnavigating discrimination (Nadal 2011: 10). Therefore it is difficult for Filipinos to construct a concrete identity for themselves. In the literature review and interview sections of this paper, I investigate four areas of concern among the Filipinos and their relation to identity maintenance: physical appearance, perceptions of identity, external forces, and means to maintain identity.

Physical features or “phenotypes” have been utilized as a determinant of Filipino identity. According to Tuason et al. (2007), a respondent stated that hair color and texture, skin color, and facial features were markers of her Filipino identity (p. 368). Nevertheless, this method of identifying an individual as Filipino may be more difficult when factoring in the multi-racial Filipino individual. Nadal (2011) states that due to the diverse physicalities of the Filipino people, Filipino-Americans are frequently considered “Latino, Pacific islanders, and Arab Americans” (p. 18). Similarly in Claborne’s (1998) study of a Filipino-American student group at Arizona University, lack of phenotype is due to the great number of mixed members, which obscures any typified Filipino characteristics (p. 4). The focus of phenotype as identifying one’s Filipino identity has also shown to have negative effects towards the physiological stressors of Filipinos. Kiang & Takeuchi’s (2009) study on phenotype states that an “incongruence” in one’s physicality’s and one’s ethnicity can cause “tension or confusion over one’s true self” (p. 441).

In respect to generalized characteristics of Filipinos, Tuason et al. (2007) say Filipinos born in the United States are typically polite and respectful. They value education and enjoy eating Filipino food. Although they may speak Tagalog, they generally maintain an American lifestyle.

While numerous positive ascriptions are assigned to a Filipino ethnic identity, this is foiled by negative self-perceptions. That is, because of the effects of colonialism, Filipinos can feel “inferiority” about themselves and their cultural group. They may feel “shame, embarrassment, or resentment” (David & Okazaki 2006: 9). This “colonial mentality” leads one to idealize Western superiority over indigenous Filipino precepts. Claborne (1998) claims that this is due to the belief that colonial powers were more civilized than Filipinos’ backward and savage pre-colonial existence (p. 13-14).

According to Castro, Gilbert, Gee, and Takeuchi (2008), the mass exodus of Filipinos from their homeland for a better life has resulted in a diaspora of Filipinos worldwide. Subsequently, discrimination, and more particularly, perceptions of discrimination have arguably become more of an issue for Filipinos in the United States, compared to other Asian groups such as the Chinese. In fact, say the authors, “Filipino-Americans appear to perceive the highest levels of discrimination, and these levels are fairly similar to those of African-Americans.” Furthermore, their study shows that a majority of Filipino workers found racism to be a substantial hindrance in their upward mobility (p. 520-521).

Tuason, et al. (2007) find that Filipino-Americans undergo negative biases about Asians in general. They also experience name-calling and feel singled out based on their ethnic features. One respondent describes how “his mother was often followed by department store clerks and asked how she was able to afford such expensive clothes” (p. 366). While the experiences are demoralizing, the respondents of the study generally express indifference and attribute these actions to ignorance. The discriminatory instances here are micro-aggressions. Defined as an alternate form of racial discrimination by dominant groups in society, micro-aggressions affect minorities in their daily interactions. Unlike the blatant racism once prolific in the pre-civil rights era, micro-aggressions in the 21st century are more abstract. Nevertheless, micro-aggressions have shown to still negatively impact the psychological health of those receiving this negative feedback. Such effects include depression and distress (Wing et al. 2009: 88-89).

More acculturated Filipinos may also discriminate against their counterparts who they perceive as being too “ethnic.” David and Okazaki (2006) attribute the distancing and apprehensiveness of acculturated Filipinos toward ethnic Filipinos to an apprehension of discrimination. These feelings of discomfort cause some to disconnect themselves from those of their community that they perceive as old-fashioned and “inferior” (David & Okazaki, 2006, 9-10). The authors call this “internal colonialism” (p.
4). One Filipino-American respondent disassociates herself so far as to say, “I was white in every way except for the color of my skin, my nose, and eyes” (p. 10).

In her 2008 study of a university Filipino Student Association, Maramba suggests that the remedy to the obscured Filipino identity issue can be found within the educational system. Instructors can facilitate solidarity by means of cultural sensitivity and acknowledgement through the incorporation of Filipino subject matter within the curriculum. It is thought that this will, in turn, combat the continuation of Filipino stereotypes and discrimination. Cultural immersion programs and other learning settings specific to the Filipino demographic and their cultures can also foster a more uplifting environment for both Filipino and non-Filipino student alike. It can also create greater awareness to the Filipino voice (Maramba 2008: 14). Given the high percentage of Filipinos living in this country, there is a legitimate need to tackle the social issues affecting these people, and education seems to be a likely means to do so.

Halaagao (2010) investigates the role Filipina cultural instruction plays for Filipino subjects. Her research centers around a program known as Pinoy Teach, in which college students mentored and instructed adolescent pupils on various facets of Filipino culture (p. 501). A student who developed more affirming perceptions towards her Filipino identity had previously felt inferior. Incidentally, these perceptions had been instilled during her early socialization (p. 502). In addition, the program had a positive effect on the Filipino instructors as well. Several other participants in the Pinoy Teach program also described coming away with a more profound understanding of their Filipino heritage, greater sense of personal esteem, and also feeling that their Filipino voices were finally empowered and heard (p. 503-504). Nadal (2008) also champions the power of education by recommending that instructors teach about Filipino-American identity. (See Appendix 1 for the actual interview questions.) For all interviews, I asked permission to utilize the curriculum. It is thought that this will, in turn, combat double marginalization in American society (p. 1). The authors discover that while “exposure” to ethnic heritage is positively correlated to identity, it is not consistent across all bi-racial individuals. “For some, religion was more influential while for others, phenotype was paramount . . . being acculturated to both sides of one’s heritage encouraged more identification to minority cultures” (p. 4). Williams & Thornton (1998) further conclude that Afro-American Asians are prone to feelings of isolation from both cultural heritage groups who are perceived to be at odds with one another. Furthermore, these multi-racial people may feel a heightened feeling of mental stress due to an enduring sense of “ambiguity” (p. 7). Interestingly, however, some respondents exhibit a level of resilience with their dual identities and even say they have the “best of both worlds” (p. 8).

**Methodology**

I use a convenience sample of 12 persons who are or were undergraduates of Middle Tennessee State University. I emailed members of MTSU’s Filipino Barkada: Asian-Pacific Islander Association to access respondents and ask them to recommend additional participants. I then conducted interviews in person and via telephone.

Personal in-depth interviews were supplemented by previous narratives provided in an anthology on Asian-American identity by Vickie Nam. For in-person interviews, I paired two individuals of mixed Filipino ancestry together in order to encourage dialogue. Over-the-phone interviews were on an individual basis. For all interviews, questions covered phenotype or physical appearance, self-perceptions, external factors, and means of maintaining Filipino identity. (See Appendix 1 for the actual interview questions.) For all interviews, I asked permission to utilize the data taken from the interview and later asked for written email consent to use true names and photographs from respondents. Those who gave this permission are named and shown below; the others were given aliases for anonymity. Participants were informed that they could refuse to answer any question.

Responses were recorded on tape and transcribed. Coding and analysis was primarily done manually. The data were correlated to the literature and previous interviews that have been done through the *Yell-Oh Girls!* anthology by Vickie Nam.
Findings

Physical Appearance

Kiang & Takeuchi (2009) argue that incongruence between one’s physicality and one’s ethnicity can cause “tension or confusion over one’s true self” (p. 441). In the current study, Jack identifies himself as black, white and one quarter Filipino on his father’s side. Confusion in relation to Filipino identity is a reoccurring theme in his statements. He states that he is often mistaken to be Puerto Rican or Italian. Likewise, Richard identifies himself as half black and Filipino on his mother’s side. He says that when people in the South see him, “they identify my Filipino side with being white. He would like to identify as Filipino but does not think that is feasible in the South. In this instance, his external appearance and how people categorize him leads to a disconnect in his ability to identify as Filipino. Fatima is also half black and half Filipino on her mother’s side. She was raised predominately in Memphis, where, she says:

There wasn’t that many racial differences so when everyone saw me, they saw my long hair and dark skin and assumed, okay, she must be Indian? And I’d say no, I’m Filipino and black, and they’d say what’s Filipino? So they don’t even know where it is on a map.
They never heard of it, or they never met that many people of different ethnicities.

Fayth is half white and half Filipino on her father’s side. She was raised in Oklahoma and recently Tennessee. “I get Mexican,” she says, “because of my looks, or Native American, and when I say Filipino, they think Asian, never Pacific Islander.” Fayth chooses to see herself as exclusively Filipina despite her external physicalities. Clarissa is half white and Filipino on her father’s side. She says that her ethnic makeup is also misconstrued by others. “If they pick up on the brownness, they assume that I am Mexican … but I feel like overall in American culture, especially anyone with slanted eyes is considered Asian, it doesn’t matter what country they came from.”

Edwin is half white and half Filipino on his mother’s side. He says, “people have placed me from Mexican to Italian to Russian, everywhere except deep African.” He thinks that he can seamlessly assimilate in practically any environment. For Edwin, culture is not a substantial factor in his identity. He says, “I be who I am. It’s kinda obvious from the way I dress [self-described as gothic]. It’s not really fitting into mainstream culture in the first place.” Similarly, Clarissa explains that, “race is the bottom of the list for my identity. Well, I identify as a person of color, but it’s not central.”

Mikey is half white and Filipino from his mother’s side. He sometimes feels “in the middle” when among either whites or Filipinos. Overall, Mikey does describe himself as generally more white or Americanized.

“I think when I’m around white people, they’re kinda look at me and think, oh this guy’s kinda dark.” But around Filipino people, “I have a feeling that they’re thinking, oh this guy looks different from us. Back when I visited my family in the Philippines, they want to flock but they’re kinda intimidated. I kinda feel outcast, but I know they don’t mean it to be like that because I don’t know their language and they’re scared to talk to me, and I’m kinda scared to talk to them.”

William F. is also half white and Filipino on his mother’s side. He was raised mostly in Tennessee and grew up in a predominately white school. He describes himself as being very detached from his Filipino identity, which he says is exclusively a physical characteristic such as tan skin. He would rather think of himself as white or American than anything else because that is all he has ever known. William H. is half British and half Filipino on his mother’s side although he was born and raised mostly in Tennessee. Like William F., he is detached from his Filipino heritage and describes himself as white. His exposure to Filipino culture is limited. He states that his Filipino features are not very dominant, and it takes a while for people to recognize he is mixed and that they typically question him about his background after he has known them for quite some time. His physical characteristics do not influence his identity perception to any significant degree.

Philip perceives himself as primarily African-American due to his dark skin. He does acknowledge his Filipino identity which has strongly influenced his facial features. His mother has played an influential role in shaping his Filipino identity, and, as a result, he would love to learn more about his Filipino identity despite his physical differences.
Kela is half white and Filipino on her father’s side. She has lived predominately in California, Miami, Florida, and recently moved to Tennessee for college. She describes herself as living in a diverse environment where racial distinction and identity are unimportant. Thus, she feels she was not able to develop a secure sense of her Filipino identity because everyone back home was “mixed.” Her means of finding her identity were also more complicated in Miami where she again felt a sense of detachment as the majority of the people were Hispanic and unlike her. Finally, moving to Tennessee and being self-described as “a brown person” amid a majority of white people has left her feeling confused. Like Philip, she would love to learn more about her Filipino culture in order to become more grounded in who she is.

Forrest is half white and Filipino, Puerto Rican, and Chinese on his mother’s side. He grew up predominately in Honolulu, where there is a greater diversity. It also has a large Filipino population as well. He moved to Tennessee in 2000 for school. Forrest strongly identifies with his Filipino background and used to have many Filipino friends which enabled him to become immersed in the culture; however, Forrest says that moving to Tennessee forced him to create friendships more among whites and blacks because that is simply the demographics of the region. He states that he is often mistaken for Hispanic or eastern European background such as Greek as he feels he has similar “olive skin.” Nevertheless, he still feels it necessary to correct those who misidentify him and is happy to tell them he is part Filipino.

External Perceptions

While U.S. census reports classify Filipinos under the Asian-American racial umbrella, respondents here had differing perceptions of how to classify Filipinos racially based on factors such as environment, upbringing, and personal experiences. Mikey states, “I think the Filipino race is just a mixture of the neighboring countries, so that’s why we always have different kinds of Filipinos, different colors.”

Jack views Filipinos as a separate race. He says, “It’s so confusing because I did a history report on it, and they were originally from Africa, and then – you know – all these other people came over from Asia and Spain. So it’s like its own race, you know? It’s just a tropical race.” Nevertheless, he has affinity with the Hispanic culture and people he describes as warm and welcoming. Due to the ambiguity of his physical appearance, he feels that he has been embraced more so by Hispanics than his African-American counterparts.

Forrest states that although he identifies as Pacific Islander, he does acknowledge that Filipinos are sometimes mistaken as Hispanic.

I think it’s a little bit about physical features, which leads some to classify them as Hispanic. Generally we’re kinda dark skinned, tanned, a little bit shorter, which is also the same for Hispanics. A lot of people make a connection between us being labor workers and always having the jobs that the white guys don’t want to do. … I think people make a quick judgment call based on our physical features and lump us along with Hispanics. I think it’s a snap call that people tend to make but I don’t think it’s the right one. Forrest explains that “there is a sense growing up in Hawaii, and I don’t mean this in any harmful way, that the Filipinos are the equivalent of Mexicans here in the States. So they’re from a lower social pool than pretty much everybody else, but I think in Hawaii, they are generally accepted as a Pacific Islander among the natives around there.”

On the other hand, Fayth states that although she admits to looking overwhelmingly Caucasian, she internally identifies as exclusively Filipino. “The reason I don’t turn my head towards Spanish heritage because I understand that the Philippines has a lot of Spanish influence, and so there’s a lot of similarities with their culture as far as warmth and food, but as far as Hispanic being my identity, no, but I get that a lot from looks aside from the name which sounds strongly Spanish. There’s similarity but definitely distinction between Filipinos and Hispanics.”

For Fatima and Edwin, Filipinos are part of the Asian race. Philip concurs, saying, “Personally, I’d classify Filipinos as Asian. I have been told that some people think we are Pacific Islander. I’m trying to see how we are Pacific Islander like through facial and skin tone. Some people I’ve seen are a little darker and tribal looking. I know that Hawaii has a lot of Filipinos so I can see why some people think Filipinos may be Pacific Islanders. But as of right
now I see us as Asian.” On the other hand, Fayth identifies Filipinos as Pacific Islander: “It’s what I’d put instead of Asian.” Clarissa says, “Well I think both Asian and Pacific Islander. In Vegas that’s sorta like the bourgeois thing to say. ‘I’m not Asian, I’m Pacific Islander.’ It’s like we’re different from the mainland.” (In order to investigate this concept further, I asked whether Japan was Asian or Pacific Islander. Again, opinion varied considerably among respondents.)

Fatima’s perceptions of Filipino characteristics stem from her Filipino mother and grandmother: “In America when I’m around my mom —— she always refers back to the greater emphasis of moral values behind life than what is found in America.” Fatima says her mother was not able to continue her education past grade school because she simply could not afford to it. This has led Fatima to appreciate the blessings of education in America.

She notes that in the Philippines, children are often raised by the grandmother while the parents are finishing up college, and adds that her parents came to the United States for education: “I would consider the Philippines a very warm culture, very traditional, and family-oriented, and maybe not geared so much towards privacy, unlike America where we value private boundaries. In the Philippines, they are more open. Overall, openness is often critical. They’re almost offended when you don’t open up to them.”

For Richard, Filipino characteristics are expressed though “just the way my mother has raised me to respect diversity – society as a whole and to respect everybody. My mother at least doesn’t see a lower class.” He goes on to say that Filipinos are hard workers. “I know my mom is at least. They’re also genuine people, genuinely honest, and beautiful.” Similarly, Mikey says that Filipinos are independent people, strong, and hard workers. Jack agrees that “Filipinos are a very skilled and attractive group of people.” As does Forrest: “There’s a massive population of Filipinos in Hawaii, and I worked with them growing up. Over there, they’re very hard-working people and generous. They are willing to take people into their house from what I remember. I think they are nationally proud of what their culture is and you can see that in their everyday activities. In Hawaii, they don’t assimilate into American culture very much. They do to an extent, but they carry a lot of their ancestral pride into everything they do.”

While both Richard and Jack describe Filipinos’ physical characteristics as beautiful, Edwin and Clarissa have other descriptions. Edwin says, “When I think of Filipinos, I immediately picture people who are dark skinned, short, with certain types of facial structures.” Clarissa: “Basically the same. People assume anyone with slanted eyes and our pug noses.” Kela agrees: “Well there’s the Filipino nose. I don’t really know but you can definitely see a Filipino by their nose.” Fayth too mentions a flatter, wider nose. But Clarissa thinks that in the South, a different feature is distinctive: “I sorta feel like we are gnomes or something. I don’t really see a lot, but you’ll see them, and they’re gone again. We’re mythical creatures in the Tennessee area.”

Philip says, “Judging by the Filipinos that I’ve seen, a lot of them are attractive, especially when they’re mixed.” Similarly William F. observes, “I would say that most mixed persons in general are very beautiful and in fact a lot of my friends would agree and say that mixed people are just better looking. I have tons of people tell me that they’re jealous that I’m tan all year around, and they love my skin tone.”

Philip says Filipinas prefer to “marry an American man just to get into the country. When I go to Filipino parties, I can actually see a lot of 23- or 24-year-old Filipinas and they’re married to these older men. I’m guessing it’s their way to get into the states so they can help their families back at home.” Philip’s remarks are reminiscent of American servicemen during WWII. Landi (2012) notes:

In the last century the Philippines has been a colony, then a Commonwealth, then an ally of the United States. Until 1992, the Subic Bay U.S. Naval Base was the largest outside mainland USA. Subic Bay, Philippines was described as a sexual playground where American servicemen could buy entertainment girls for under 10 bucks. This was a fishing village, a fishing
One mother explained how it was difficult to seek aid from the American father of her child. “He didn’t believe me. His friends told him, ‘Don’t believe her. That’s what Filipinas do. They say they are pregnant by you, even if the kid is not yours because you are in the navy and what they want is your salary.’” Filipino-Americans of mixed ancestry and Ameri-Asians back in the Philippines seem to be experiencing similar issues of identity. The lack of support from their immediate surroundings also seems to further exacerbate their dilemmas. For instance, the American law known as the Ameri-Asian Act permits Ameri-Asian children from other countries to become citizens of the United States, but Filipino Ameri-Asians are not included. They alone must be claimed by their American fathers. An estimated 52,000 Amer-Asians are living in the Philippines today. There are 737 U.S. military bases in the world. It remains unclear why Filipino Ameri-Asians are excluded from the act.

Richard’s surname stems from his African-American father. His parents met when his father was stationed in the Philippines. Richard identifies more as black, congruent with his outward appearance but he also identifies as Filipino. He has Filipino tattoos and displays a Filipino flag at home. It is even more complicated:

I told you I have a little sister, we have the same mother and father obviously, but she doesn’t look like I do, she’s not near as dark. She’s got really long curly hair. On standardized TCAP, I’m gonna put black/African-American. On standardized testing, she’s going to put Asian/Pacific.

Identity is partly defined by surnames. According to Saenz, Hwang, Aguiree & Anderson (1995), last names may effect one’s leaning toward a particular ethnic group, and while multi-racial respondents have a greater likelihood of having more diverse last names, the Philippines itself has a complex history in this regard. According to Santos’ website on a catalog of Filipino names:

One of the more obvious marks left by Spanish rule in the Philippines is the prevalence of Hispanic surnames among Christianized Filipinos. Those who lived in remote areas and were not subjugated escaped this fate. Many people in the mountain areas of Luzon, Mindanao, Mindoro, Palawan, and other places retained their way of life, their culture, and their way of naming themselves (Santos, 1995-1998).

Thus, in the Philippines, there can be a variety of surnames from indigenous to Hispanic to American. When asked whether one’s last name influenced his/her identity in anyway, Forrest stated:

My father’s last name is Tanskley. People don’t usually make a Filipino connection with that last name, which I believe is of German origin. There’s no display of any Asian culture. I’m 6’2” and because of my completion and dark hair features and such, a lot of people mistake me to be European such a Greek. But other than that I’ve been mistaken for Mexican as well. But I usually tell people I’m Filipino, Chinese, and Puerto Rican, and then white because I feel more of a connection between being Filipino than I do with Chinese, Puerto Rican, or white.”

William Foglesong also got his last name from his father; it is of German background meaning “birdsong.” He agrees that adopting an ethnic surname can influence one’s upbringing, “because other people would perceive you as more ethnic when they heard your last name.” Nevertheless, he states that overall, his Western last name, although unique, did not influence his own identity. “The only way it really impacted me is from the random few who were
curious because it’s not common, or like here on campus, they may know about my grandfather who was a Foglesong and was huge in the country music business.” He considers himself a white American. “I would just say essentially being raised around white people all the time, I would say that’s how I generally perceive myself, I mean I think myself more white than anything else.”

William Hoy got his western last name from his English father. He attributes it to Scottish ancestry. Like William F., he says his last name did not affect his identity.

Fayth’s surname is Acasio which is taken from her Filipino father. Interestingly, she is the only respondent who maintains with her identity as simply Filipino, despite it having a strongly Hispanic sound and her having predominately Caucasian features. Again, she was able to determine that Spanish was not her identity but simply an influence upon her greater Filipino identity.

Jack is white, black, Native American, and Filipino, with a last name that sounds Hispanic: “Yes, I would definitely say when I lived in New York, Spanish people considered mixed people and Puerto Ricans in one classification. You know with my last name being Spanish, people automatically assumed I was of Spanish descent and in the South of course, people just assumed that because my last name sounded Spanish, I was either Puerto Rican or Italian.” Because of his upbringing by his African-American mother and growing up in a predominately black neighborhood, he identifies more as a light-skinned African-American overall: “As for standardized tests, most of the time I put black.”

External Forces

The socio-historical experiences of western colonialism, indoctrination, and acculturation have shaped Filipino identity for hundreds of years. In the present era, acculturation into the dominant Western religions and cultures has been a means to which some Filipinos have taken in order to circumvent racism and discrimination. In order to investigate whether racist experiences have contributed to respondents veering away from a Filipino identity, I asked about their experiences with racism. Edwin says, “I actually had neighbors at one point start screaming at my girlfriend because she’s white, and she’s dating, quote, an Asian. He’s a racist anyway, but I had other people look at me, and be like, you’re not white, so you’re not good enough to hang with us.

Clarissa has experienced racism from other Filipinos: “It’s pretty interesting, how I’m not brown enough, that sort of thing, from other Filipinos. I had a friend and her dad didn’t want us to hang out. He didn’t want her to come to my house because I wasn’t dark enough. I wasn’t Filipino enough.” When I mentioned the research on “colonial mentality,” and the presumption that lighter-skinned Filipinos would be more embraced because of the idealization for whiter skin, Clarissa said that maybe it has a different context once Filipinos are in the States. Overall, she believes that her ethnic makeup is just one source of discrimination “because I’m also female in a very strong male culture, I have a funny last name, and I’m queer. You really can’t separate or talk about one thing. It’s all these intersecting ideas.”

I also ask if any respondents ever heard negative stereotypes about Filipinos. Regarding the stereotype that Filipinos eat dogs, Richard laughs, “I definitely have because I have been to the Philippines a number of times, and I myself have eaten a dog. I mean, it is what it is, it may be a negative stigma, but at least in my experience, it’s been true.” Fatima says, “If that’s a traditional something, you shouldn’t be ashamed where you came from because that’s why there’s differences in the world.” William F. has only come across general Asian jokes such as being good at math or really smart – positive stereotypes. Nevertheless, as Maramba (2008) points out, these assumptions of Asian-Americans conceal the struggles they face in general and have maladaptive consequences as they ignore experiences such as discrimination, stress, alienation, and pressures to succeed among others (p. 1). In fact, with regards to Filipino college students in California, they are cited to be “under-represented in colleges and universities” with high dropout rates. Furthermore, because of their classification within the “model minority,” they are also unqualified for affirmative action programs.

Williams & Thornton (1998) mention the effects of environment in impacting one’s identity. Interestingly, William F. states that this was not the case in his experiences. “Even in a school where I was one of the only ones that wasn’t completely white, I was never perceived as or treated differently.” However Richard’s experiences did coincide with the literature. “Here in the South, you’re either black or white. There’s not really anything in-between. So just from my personal experience, if you look black, you’re black.” Fayth has similar beliefs: “In the South, and I would say in most of the United States, the racial classification is more rigid than places like Brazil and the Philip-
pines. In those places, there’s more room for racial passing, but here, it’s like you’re black or your white or your Asian or your white. It’s just a more rigid blueprint I guess.”

Maintaining Filipino Identity

As presented, respondents are faced with a myriad of factors that can obstruct a Filipino identity. So how do they respond? Kela says she has one means of sustaining her Filipino culture wherever she may be:

“I really like the cultural aspects. We used to go to a lot of family gatherings and stuff when we were in California. I really enjoyed the atmosphere, the communal experience, and the food. Yea, food is like the one thing that I can hold as a constant because now I can go home and make Pancit or Adobo or something. That’s one thing I can continuously keep in my life even if I’m not in that community anymore.

For Jack, “I guess my knowledge of the history has helped me relate to them [Filipinos] more because I don’t look that Filipino. I’m light. … I don’t really look like them or talk like them or speak the language. It’s kind of a mixed feeling.” Fatima and Fayth both attribute the MTSU Filipino Barkada Student organization on campus as being one of their main means of associating with Filipinos outside their nuclear and extended family. Furthermore, Fayth – like Kela – emphasizes the power of food in Filipino culture: “Food is synonymous to my identity perspective,” she says. Edwin does not communicate often or seek to meet other Filipinos but he too mentions food. “I love Filipino food. Every chance I get, I’m going to be trying to eat some Filipino food. Other than that, I’m pretty much American food. Every chance I get, I’m going to be trying to eat some Filipino food. Other than that, I’m pretty much American I guess.”

Clarissa, who sees herself as white with Filipino interests, says, “Not here, but a lot of my friends back home are Filipino so I would hang out with them.” Like Clarissa, William F., and William H. see themselves as predominately white; however, unlike Clarissa, they do not seem to have any vested interest in pursuing their Filipino identity. Although they do acknowledge they are partly Filipino, they see it more so as simply a physical characteristic expressed in their skin tone. Mikey visits the Philippines as a means of sustaining a connection to his Filipino identity, but he acknowledges a language barrier. Kela considers it important to reconnect to her Filipino side in several ways: “Dual citizenship would be more culturally solidifying for me in terms of my racial identity. I think it would solidify it more and make me feel like I have more of a place and give me some grounding and desire to learn more.”

Scholars such as Kevin Nadal (2011) advocate education as a means to solve the problem of identity loss so I ask respondents how they would feel about cultural immersion education pertaining to Filipino studies. Philip remembers that his mother tried to teach the Filipino language to him and his siblings but he felt it was already too late to learn because he had already reached adolescence. Nevertheless, he added, “right now, I definitely would in order to communicate effectively with my mom and relate more to other Filipinos.” Philip states that he does have a desire to connect more to his Filipino identity which he feels can be accomplished through education. “I would like to as far as being able to be in their shoes, and as far as actually learning the language, I feel I could grasp being Filipino more.” Similarly, Mikey says his mother tried to teach him when he was little. Kela also feels that learning the Filipino language would help solidify her identity:

“If I learned Tagalog, I could have better conversations with my grandparents. I think it would be really important just for me culturally to have some grounding in where I came from and where my family comes from, and if I ever decided to visit, I’d be able to have some sort of working language base.

Fatima says that while she looked into taking Tagalog classes in college, unfortunately, it was not offered. Furthermore she notes that her mom said English was the medium of instruction back home in the Philippines.

Several respondents suggest that learning Tagalog is not particularly useful. Fayth says, “There’s not as many words in the dictionary for things. Maybe that’s why even in the Philippine school setting it’s English and Tagalog is more a personal language.” But she would “still definitely take the class” were it offered.

Forrest has reservations about learning the Filipino language because of its lack of marketability. “Honestly, I don’t think so, not unless there was a specific reason I would need it. It’s not a business language. I’d quickly say no because I don’t think its marketable.” Similarly, William F. says, “I don’t see it as practical or useful. I’ve just been so detached from it. It’d be different if I was around my family more. But here in Tennessee, my mom is losing a lot of her native language. I’m guessing she never uses it, or she doesn’t have to.”

William H. has not pursued his Filipino identity but, instead, has an interest in German because it relates to his major in music. “I’m a violinst, and I play a lot of Bach and German music. I actually took a German language course last semester.” Edwin does not have much interest in Filipino courses: “Probably not. I just never really have been interested in being part of a certain culture whether it’s by race or by ideology or subculture. When it comes to culture, for me, it’s like, ok that’s great, I usually just do what I do.” On the other hand, Clarissa says she would be interested in learning the language, but it would have to be a matter of convenience by being available at her school. She did express that it would be interesting to see how differently other Filipinos would interact with her if she could...
physical appearance.

Fatima would like to learn about the other half of her. She knows about the African-American experience, but would like a more solid foundation of her Filipino heritage and would like an equal balance in order connect with her Filipino identity. Fayth would like to learn more history “because without history, I wouldn’t be able to understand. I mean at one point my grandparents were being forced to speak Japanese in the schools rather than English. Overall I think it’s so interesting and cool how Filipinos are multi-lingual.” Richard also acknowledges the concept of diversity and says he would like to be bilingual in order to participate more fully in Filipino social gatherings.

Fatima, Richard, and Jack’s inability to connect to their Filipino heritage despite a desire to do so is a challenge beyond Tennessee residents. Maramba (2008) cites in her Southern California study how students felt that was not enough diversity in their curriculum and more particularly, the large absence of the Filipino experience in textbooks throughout K-12 and post-secondary schooling. The study also shows that Filipino-Americans had to resort to independent studies focusing on the Philippines and that “the only major access to Filipina/o history is through their parents’ and elders’ personal stories” (p. 6). Nadal (2008) confirms that education is necessary to “increasing knowledge about Philippine and Filipino-American culture and history, encouraging cultural and ethnic pride in Filipino-American students, and validating and celebrating Filipino-American experiences” (p 160).

Discussion

Physical Appearance

Jack, Mikey and Kela express difficulties in associating to a Filipino identity based on their phenotype. It has apparently made them sometimes feel “stuck in the middle” between white and Filipino communities. For others, phenotype was not necessarily the case for the other respondents. Richard attributes his difficulties in identifying with a Filipino identity to his Southern environment and how people misconstrue his Filipino ethnicity. Fatima alludes to the lack of education in the South and the lack of ethnic diversity, which causes people to label her as something other than Filipina. Similarly, both William F. and William H. feel detached from a Filipino identity due mainly to their environmental isolation from a Filipino community. Thus their brown phenotype has become irrelevant and is just a matter of happenstance as they see themselves as essentially white.

Fayth and Forrest were among the only respondents to have established a grounded sense of their Filipino identity despite having overwhelmingly few Filipino physical characteristics such as dark skin or Filipino facial structure. Philip has a partial association to a Filipino identity through his strong Filipino facial features. Fayth and Forrest have feelings that are analogous to Kiang & Takeuchi’s (2009) study which explains, “Skin tone and ethnic identity were not related for either males or females, but having more Filipino features was significantly associated with higher ethnic identity.” (p. 437). In essence, they establish their Filipino identity through internal rather than external means.

Perceptions of Identity

Respondents brought up several perceptions regarding education, food, family kinship, and values that were salient among interviewees of other studies. Furthermore, these perceptions are influential in their lives and help them identify with their Filipino ancestry. Fatima, Fayth, Richard, and William H.’s comments coincided with Cia_b20, a Filipina immigrant who wrote in the Yell-Oh Girls! anthology, “As a Filipino-American born in the Philippines and raised in America, I haven’t forgotten the importance of family values and traditions (Nam 2001: 126). Similarly, Celena Cipriaso, another contributor to Yell-Oh Girls! anthology highlights the importance of family and food in Filipino culture by writing:

And why did Filipinos always have to have roasted pig as the main course at all their parties? In our kitchen, there is a picture of my father proudly standing behind one of his pigs. He doesn’t smile in it, but you know he’s proud that all the Filipinos waiting in line want to take a morsel of his dish, and that they will later smile and give him praise (p. 95).

Generally, the interviewees’ responses aligned with the findings of Tauson, et al. (2007), who notes that U.S.-born Filipinos defined Filipino characteristics as imbuing, “respect; valuing education and diversity; and eating Filipino food” (p. 366).

External Forces

David & Okazaki (2006) suggest that at least some acculturated Filipinos discriminate against their more ethnic counterparts. Clarissa in the current study also faced discrimination from Filipinos, although in her case, it was due to her Caucasian features. David & Okazaki also observe the kind of discrimination Clarissa experienced:

Individuals with light skin or less ethnic traits experience negative outcomes since these individuals may be dubiously perceived or even ostracized by their dark-skinned peers until they have ‘proven’ themselves as legitimate members of their ethnic group (p. 431).

Environmental factors such as peer pressure seemed to be a reoccurring theme in molding identity for the majority of respondents. The PBS documentary Left by the Ship exemplifies this through the experiences of Ameri-Asian
JR and his difficulties growing up Black and Filipino in the Philippines:

I started getting into trouble when I was in elementary school. I hit a classmate of mine. [What did he say to you?] Aeta, negro, things like that. Negro hurts. Call me what you want, but not a Negro. But when I got used to that the insults changed. They started making fun of my family. I told them to mind their own business. She is still my mother regardless of her past. I don’t really have a choice. Me and my stepbrother left our mother’s house because of our stepfather. He has always been violent with us because we are not his real children (Landi, 2012).

Likewise, another Ameri-Asian youth named Charmaine explains how she was excluded by her peers in school because of her black and Filipino heritage: “My skin is dark and my hair is curly so I was not allowed to join. I learned to react, to fight back. Beauty contests are important because it’s my chance to prove who I really am” (Landi, 2012). My interviewees also express sentiments of resolve in the face of environmental adversities and racism. Fayth says, “I embrace it” Edwin, says, “It’s just the way people are.” While my findings suggest that racism is present in both the Philippine and American South environments, the interviewees’ resilience in spite of discrimination actually aligned more with Tauson, et al. (2007) whose respondents “generally expressed indifference and attributed much of these actions to ignorance” (p 362).

Maintaining Filipino Identity

There are varying means by which respondents were able to foster a Filipino identity. Kela, Fayth, Edwin, and Clarissa all mention their use of food in developing their sense of Filipino identity. This coincides with Claborn’s (1998) findings among members of a Filipino student organization at an Arizona university. She observes “food to be a powerful emotional magnet for personal cultural identification as well as a very palpable social currency for building broader communities.” Additionally for some respondents, food is associated with their Filipino mothers and thus brought sentimental qualities to the culture as well. For other respondents, the act of preparing uniquely Filipino meals is a bonding activity (p. 9-10). Richard describes his mother’s Filipino parties as his means of connecting to his Filipino heritage. Nevertheless, he further describes his ability to connect as limited. “I don’t speak the language, so it’s hard for me to identify too much in that aspect, and when they are speaking, I’m just sitting there.”

The majority of respondents mention how MTSU’s Filipino Barkada: Asian-Pacific Islander Association served a meaningful purpose in fostering a connection to Filipino culture. This resembles Maramba’s (2008) study in which students identify with a Filipino student organization on their campus in Southern California as a place relevant to them (p. 9-10).

Cultural education programs play an instrumental role in nurturing identity and improving education for other minority groups in America such as Mexican or Chicanos in the State of Arizona. The 2012 PBS documentary Precious Knowledge describes one such program:

In 1997, community activism led the Tucson city council to set up a study committee to look at ways of boosting Latino students’ achievement and reducing dropout rates. Based on its findings, the school board unanimously voted to create what was then called the Hispanic Studies Department. In 2002, the Hispanic Studies Department was renamed Mexican-American/Raza Studies. The district also has departments of African American Studies, Pan Asian Studies, and Native American Studies. The classes are open to all students (Palos, 2012).

A form of obstruction that comes from more internal means is colonial mentality, which has caused some parental figures to desire a more acculturated identity for their children. One documentary on an Ameri-Asian of white and Taiwanese ancestry exemplifies this. The 2010 film, Voices in the Clouds, follows Tony Coolidge’s journey to reconnect with his Taiwanese ancestry after years of feeling as though his mother was trying to conceal his Taiwanese heritage from him.

Growing up, my mother didn’t share anything about her culture. During the whole time I lived in the household, she didn’t mention anything about Taiwan. She wanted us to feel and to believe that we were American so we could fit in (Hose, 2010).

Conclusion

In summary, Filipino identity varies among the 12 interviewees. Idealization toward Filipino ethnic struggles have caused respondents such as Forrest and Fayth to embrace a predominantly Filipino identity despite their outwardly Caucasian phenotype. On the other hand, Fatima wants to encompass both black and Filipino heritage, although she feels it is difficult in the American South. Richard and Philip think that taking on a Filipino identity is obstructed by their outwardly black phenotype and their society’s mislabeling. Mikey feels similarly about being white and Filipino.

Environment has affected Jack because his identity has been shaped by upbringing among mostly light-skinned blacks. Although Edwin and Clarissa both experienced discrimination due to their mixed Filipino background, they both believe that racial makeup was of little importance in how they identified themselves and attributed their racial
makeup to be only one factor in how others viewed them. Overall, many respondents have some degree of affiliation to a Filipino identity principally through such means as admiration, appreciation of family values and education, and food. Others, however, are detached from a Filipino identity. Due to upbringing and environment, William F. and William H. feel their Filipino background is not really relevant in how they identify themselves. To them, Filipino ancestry is simply a physical trait.

The 12 respondents of Filipinos of mixed ancestry present a very complex web regarding identity. While they all had relatively positive feelings about Filipinos, it was difficult to ascertain to what extent they actually possess ethnic solidarity with one another. This is due to the fact that there is little consensus regarding Filipino identity in itself. This can be exemplified in the myriad of ways the respondents label Filipinos racially. Some see Filipinos as Asian, others as Hispanic or Pacific Islander. Jack identifies Filipinos as a separate “tropical race.” This notion of otherness has been used before by Gloria Anzaldua, a feminist writer who speaks of her own struggles as a mestiza or mixed person:

What I want is an accounting with all three cultures – White, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to stanch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – un cultura mestiza--- with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture (Anzaldua 2009: 558).

While this may be necessary for some, education has shown to have the potential to rectify and foster a greater sense of Filipino ethnic awareness, identity, and cohesion. While Filipino people have undergone historical and socio-cultural experiences that have done much to create a common identity among its people, researching one’s origins may provide another means to discover ones’ identity. Paula Gunn Allen, a feminist writer, speaks of her own struggles as a mestiza or mixed person:

I think this is the reason traditionalists say we must remember our origins, our culture, our histories, our mothers and grandmothers, for without that memory, which implies continuance rather than nostalgia, we are doomed to engulfment by a paradigm that is fundamentally inimical to the vitality, autonomy, and self-empowerment essential for satisfying, high-quality life (Allen 2009: 577).

This study was limited by the small pool of interviewees, and the sample itself which was limited to Middle Tennessee State University undergraduate students. While I did attempt to utilize snowball sampling, none of the referrals proved successful due in part to the short period of time to conduct the study and the difficulty in setting up meetings in the face of conflicting schedules and the large course loads of students.

Nevertheless, this study does highlight the need for a greater understanding of the mixed Filipino demographic. More precisely, I hoped to weave together the patterns found in such a way that the shared experiences of this demographic may better the understanding of mixed Filipinos and their Filipino identity in the South. Further research can investigate the use of parental imprinting to establish a more concrete Filipino identity as well as the implementation of secondary reinforcers such as Filipino student organizations and community centers. Any of these can serve both as a repository of one’s ancestry and a means of revitalizing identity for Filipinos of mixed ancestry.

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Appendix 1. Interview Questions

What is your name?
What is your major/minor?
What is your racial background?
Which parent is of Filipino ancestry?
What are your overall perceptions of Filipino people (such as traits, characteristics)?
Where did you get these overall perceptions?
How do you classify Filipinos racially?
Where did you get these perceptions of racial category?
How do you think society classifies Filipinos?
What do you think causes a possible lack of consistency in racial classification for Filipinos?
How do you display/personify your Filipino identity?
Does your last name affect your identity?
Do you associate/communicate with Filipinos in the community? If so how?
Have you come across negative stereotypes of Filipinos? If so, has it affected your desire to identify as Filipino?
Do you affiliate with other heritage/ancestry that you are also mixed with?
Do you lean more toward a certain race?
Do you feel you are able to empathize and/or understand the struggles of all races to which you are mixed with?
Do you lean more toward a certain race?
What race do you primarily pass for in daily interaction?
Do certain racial groups accept you more than others?
How does environment affect your choice of racial identity?
If offered, do you desire to participate in Filipino cultural/language courses?
What would you like to gain from such courses?
What is your overall degree of Filipino identity?
Would you like to express your Filipino identity more?
Homophobia and Discrimination in the Southeastern United States: An Examination of Sociocultural Literature on Gender and Sexuality

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This sociocultural literature review on gender and sexuality compares cross-cultural traditions and reactions to gender and sexual differences to the homophobia and discrimination prevalent in the U.S. Southeast. The review is informed by time spent abroad in Paris. During this examination I found there are varying gender systems and sexual practices in different cultures of the world throughout space and time, some of which do not discriminate against those who deviate from the norm. This has led me to conclude that gender and sexual difference is found all across the world, across space and time. A population’s acceptance of gender and sexuality as well as its understanding of difference is culturally constructed, and the homophobia and discrimination found against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex communities in the United States is a social issue that was culturally constructed by its citizens.

The subjects of gender, sexuality, and gay rights have been brought to the forefront of American discourse in recent years, with instances of anti-gay bullying, teen suicide, and hate crime regularly making headlines. Throughout history, anthropologists have studied the cultural construction of sexuality in different populations, some of which are more accepting of members of society who do not fit into the heterosexual norm. Why does the United States differ in its tolerance of same-sex relations? I sought to answer this question, focusing on the contributing factors to the homophobia and discrimination found throughout the United States against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex communities (which I will later refer to with the acronym LGBTQI).

I was particularly interested in this social issue occurring in the Southeast, commonly known as “The Bible Belt” – a region of the United States famous for its intolerance of difference. Although I grew up in this region, the social issue of homophobia and discrimination was something I could not understand, knowing there were parts of the world where it was “okay to be gay.” During this literature review, I learned how other cultures understand gender and sexual deviance. It became clear to me that the American Southeast’s construction of gender and sexual norms perpetuates a cultural intolerance that does not have to exist.

Research began the first week of May in 2012. I examined sociocultural literature on gender and sexuality, focusing on the LGBTQI population. On May 30th, I began my study abroad term in Paris, where I used participant-observation methods, engaging in conversation on the topic of gender and sexuality with local individuals. Upon returning to the United States on June 31st, I continued with the literature review with a new perspective of how gender and sexual differences can be tolerated differently across areas of the world.

When referring to gender deviance and same-sex relations, Gilbert Herdt (1994) suggests “third sex” and “third gender” are more appropriate terms for these categories than lesbian or gay concerning cross-cultural gender comparisons. During my cross-cultural examination of third sexes and third genders, I often found myself returning to Joseph Carrier’s (1980) theory that in regards to homosexuality, all cultures can be divided into different types of tolerance: approving, disapproving, or neutral. Two particular third genders stood out to me in their different ideals of tolerance – the Two-Spirits of the Mojave Native American tribe as well as the kathoey of Thailand.

Herdt (1997) mentions the Mojave Indians two-spirit roles in his exploration of gay and lesbian lives, Same Sex, Different Cultures. The Mojave Indians on the desert border of California and Arizona sanctioned both male and female “two-spirit” roles. The alya were males who preferred the occupations of women and homoerotic relations with men, and the hwame were females who favored the pursuits of men and domestic companionship with women. The two spirits were revered among the Mojave and were believed to be powerful in the spiritual realm. Anthropologist George Devereux (1937) indicated that the alya...
would go so far as to imitate menstruation by scratching between her legs with a stick until there was blood flow. The Mojave were accepting of these two-spirit roles, and the alyha and hwame were generally not teased or ridiculed because it was believed they could not help it.

Also mentioned in Herdt’s (1997) cross-cultural comparison of third genders are the kathoey of Thailand. Homosexuality has been long known in the country of Thailand and is generally more accepted than in many other cultures. Serena Nanda (2000) asserts that in Thai culture, biological sex, culturally ascribed gender, and sexuality are not clearly distinguished. Kathoey is a term for a biological male who dresses and acts as a woman, but also takes pride in his male genitals. While in certain situations kathoey are subject to attack and sexual assault, they are more visible and accepted in Thai culture than transvestites or transsexuals in Western countries.

These two cross-cultural variations of third genders exemplify just how differently populations perceive gender and sexuality. Nanda (2000) states that:

This emphasis on difference illuminates how sex/gender ideologies are experienced as identities that are practically unimaginable to people in different cultures. … cultural difference also emphasizes that there is no one correct or superior way to organize sex/gender categories or to treat sex/gender nonconformity.

(9)

The Two-Spirits of the Mojave tribe and the kathoey of Thailand illustrate how a population’s culture can be more tolerant of gender and sexual differences. This is a concept I was fortunate to observe firsthand during my time abroad in Paris. There I observed a more accepting attitude toward the gay and lesbian population of France, and thus became interested in the differing reactions to third sexes and third genders of other cultures. Cultural anthropologists have studied many populations whose gender and sexual norms differ from those of Western society. While gender and sex are both biological, the construction of gender and sexuality vary in each social and cultural setting. For example, Ann Oakley (1972) notes the variance between male and female somatotypes, or body types, in different ethnic groups – the Manus of the Admiralty Islands have no apparent difference in their somatotype between males and females as children, and later as adults, men and women obtain the same broad shoulders and chest, heavily muscled limbs, and little subcutaneous fat. The Manus differ greatly from Western society, where men and women have noticeably different somatotypes. This cultural variation exemplifies how different populations construct their own expectations and norms when it comes to gender and sexuality.

When I had conversations on homosexuality with Parisians during my summer study abroad program, they noted that while there is discrimination in rural areas toward homosexuals, their opinions were that one would never be killed for being homosexual. Some called the idea “barbaric,” and others expressed how they felt people in France do not realize the fact that murders occur in the United States because of an individual’s gender or sexual difference.

Culturally and politically, France is a country which strongly believes that all people are equal, their motto being “Liberté, égalité, fraternité,” meaning “liberty, equality, brotherhood.” In 1999, civil solidarity pacts (PACS) were enacted by the government for both same-sex and unmarried opposite-sex couples. A form of registered domestic partnership, the PACS affords couples most of the legal protections, rights, and responsibilities of marriage. While there are activists seeking more legal rights for the gay population of France, their civil solidity pacts illustrate a more progressive attitude toward third genders.

Equality is one of the most important cultural ideals of the French, as the desire for liberté, égalité, fraternité, is what the people strived for during the French Revolution. To the French, it is essential that the country still prioritize equality and the separation of church and state. This fact interested me because these ideals are mentioned in the American as well as the French Bill of Rights — yet these ideals are poorly executed in America where religion and politics are often found hand in hand, discriminating against the LGBTQI population. This brought me to the question as to why the United States’ tolerance toward same sex relations is so different from that of France — especially in the southeastern states. This, in turn, led me to seek out the historical factors of homophobia and discrimination in the Southeast.

During my research, I found three prominent factors which contribute to homophobia found in the Southeast today: Christian fundamentalism and biblical literalism, “against nature” ideology, and narrow concepts of masculinity. Most conservative Christian churches teach that homosexuality is a sin and an abomination. In regards to Christian fundamentalism, Kate Black and Marc A. Rhorer (2001) note in their study in the Appalachian Mountains that in most rural and small-town communities, churches and public schools are often the most important and influential social institutions. James T. Sears (2001) mentions in “Homosexuality in the Religious South” how, “Unlike people in other regions, […] Southern Christians often are more orthodox, their reading of the Bible is more literal, and their rituals are more flamboyant” (p. 24). Teachings against homosexuality in churches combined with the influence churches have in rural communities provide a society in which gender or sexual difference is often not accepted.

When Herdt (1997) poses the question as to why the
public is so interested in the search for an ultimate cause of homosexuality, he notes that while several factors are relevant, it may be that Western culture in general and Americans in particular remain wedded to the 19th-century idea that reproduction is the sole and ultimate reason for sexuality. Thierry Revel (2008) states that under the conditions of marriage and reproduction being the reason for sexuality, homosexuality does appear to be against nature, and relations between members of the same sex are considered an insult to nature. This ideology provides many who oppose same-sex relations with the argument that homosexuality or gender deviance is unnatural. This argument is often found in the rhetoric of those who oppose marriage equality in recent years.

Another contributing factor to the homophobia prevalent in more rural areas is the population’s concepts of masculinity, and its culturally constructed idea of how men should behave. A. Thorpe (1999) suggests that concepts of masculinity are narrower in country areas where there is little acceptance of those who are different. Mason and Thompson (1997) also point out in their study on homophobic violence that discrimination, harassment, verbal and physical abuse are thus directed at men who do not conform to notions of masculinity. They also note that homosexuals are perceived to have some moral failure by not conforming to the norm, and can be seen as complicit in their victimization. This perception often leads to feelings of disgust and contempt, which can lead to hate crimes – one of the many social consequences of homophobia and discrimination.

The social consequences of homophobia and discrimination range from disturbing to devastating. Black and Rhorer (2001) note in their study on being out in the mountains that though fear of being out was experienced in the city, everyone generally felt that the situation was more hostile in the mountains for gays and lesbians. Men experienced much more physical aggression at home, equating fear with physical violence. They also found that because organized religion played an important part in most of the interviewees’ lives socially, morally, and spiritually, many struggled with their homosexuality because of deep-rooted religious notions of sin and guilt. As argued by Gottshalk and Newton (2009) in “Rural Homophobia: Not Really Gay”:

McCann et al., (2009, p. 217) conclude that homophobia is a learnt attribute concerned with policing the boundaries of our modern concept of masculinity.” Growing up and living in a culture that is at best ambivalent toward homosexuality and at its worst violent to homosexuals, means that all people, whether they are conscious of it or not, are exposed to many negative attitudes and messages about homosexuality. The consequences of societal ‘homophobia’ included fear, depression, feelings of alienation and an internalized oppression that lead to negative self-concepts and constrain the development of a healthy gay or lesbian identity (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989).

In recent years, the media has been illustrating attacks on the LGBTQI community including: an anti-bullying law change in Tennessee which could protect students’ rights to speak out against gay students because of their religion (“Tennessee Anti-Bullying Law Change” 2012); a gay Boy Scout leader in Texas asked to step down from his leadership role (Watkins 2010); two gay teens physically attacked walking into church in West Tennessee (Phillips 2011); a gay teen in Texas who committed suicide after being bullied (Chávez 2012); and, outside the South, a California teen who killed his gay classmate (“California Teen Admits Killing Gay Classmate” 2011). These instances of bullying, social ostracism, physical violence, hate crime, suicide, and murder are clear evidence of a culture’s intolerance of gender and sexual difference.

This examination of sociocultural literature on gender and sexuality offers insight on the varying levels of tolerance of homosexuality cross-culturally. Third genders occur in all parts of the world throughout space and time, thus clearly existing in nature. The tolerance of the two-spirits of the Mojave tribe and the kathoey of Thailand provide models in which difference was accepted by society. The civil solidarity pacts of France provide an example of a country which prioritizes the equality of its people. Gender and sexual differences occur in all parts of the world, and they need not be discriminated against as seen in the United States. Why then is there so much stigma found in the United States surrounding same-sex relations as being unnatural and against nature? What is the gap in the “against nature” ideology which classifies homosexuality and gender deviance as unnatural, and how can this gap be filled in order to fully understand homophobia and discrimination?

In the United States and especially in the Southeastern region, those who do not conform to the heterosexual norm are living in fear. Children are being bullied, teenagers are committing suicide, and some are brutally murdered. Gilbert Herdt (1997) explains the dire situation of this social issue best:

The world has seen much bigotry posing as morality, even myth posing as science. But the prejudice against homosexuality continues and must never be underestimated; it is one of the most destructive forces of our time (p. 26). The social consequences of homophobia and discrimination have caused me to seek to better understand the cultural construct of homophobia and discrimination, and how sexuality is understood in the American Southeast. Perhaps with more research regarding this social issue, social
change can be brought to better the lives of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex communities in the United States.

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One of the most important factors that form an individual’s identity is the place that they come from. Their first home will always be a part of their emotional and cultural identity because individual preconceptions are usually influenced by proximity: “The place or places where one has lived with their attendant physical, historical, and cultural attributes, condition what one knows and how one sees.” McDaniel, C. & Robertson, J. (2005). Many people have the opportunity to travel far away from their beginnings. This project is a visual interpretation of what it means to go back. It consists of a series of lithographic prints that concentrate on the gap between memory and reality, and forgetting and rediscovering the once familiar.

My work consists of three themes: Memory, Identity, and Place. I am interested in the emotional and aesthetic quality of places, and how places resonate with people. My work meditates on the past through the vehicle of place. It relies on the process of remembering and forgetting. This is translated through the juxtaposition of rendered and minimalist aesthetics. There is a sense of longing as the works cycle between ideas and the contemporaneous moment.

All of the work that I do is extremely process-oriented, purposefully employing labor-intensive, old fashioned media and time-consuming processes that contribute to the time-based content of the work. This content has drawn me to photographs, as a tangible way to view places and collect moments from the past. A printed photograph is simultaneously as infinite and ephemeral as memory itself. My subject matter comes largely from the process of photographing places/objects that are thematically relevant. These are places that spark memories and places that inspire something new from the old. In addition to photography, I use antiquated words to influence my work. These are words that have dropped out of everyday use to such an extent that they have been excluded from many present-day dictionaries. These words that have unusually specific meanings, hard pronunciations, or they reference outdated topics. I use forgotten words to inspire and to title each piece, creating an interesting cyclical metaphor through recycling these old ideas.

Waterless Lithography

I chose waterless lithography because it is a challenging media to master and it seems to be in danger of becoming obsolete. After the invention of offset lithography, stone lithography lost its commercial appeal and is now used only by artists. I like to think that the work I am doing is helping to keep this antiquated way of making prints alive. This process parallels the theme of past and present in my work. The images for this specific project are all 18x22 inches. They are hand-drawn, then printed with a process called waterless lithography, a fairly new and experimental form of lithography that was initially developed by artists Nik Semenoff, Ross Zirkle, and Jeff Sippel. (1) It differs from traditional lithography because it utilizes aluminum plates rather than Bavarian limestone. It involves
the use of a water-soluble medium as a resist to silicon on an aluminum plate. The image is first hand-drawn onto an aluminum plate using a water or acetone-soluble medium. The plate is then processed with a silicon mixture. The silicon is heat-cured and the drawing material can then be washed out and replaced with rubber-based ink, then transferred to paper. The resulting print looks like a drawing. This time-consuming and labor-intensive drawing process has evolved into a tangible element of my concept.


Influences

I have included two artists who have influenced this project. These works help explain the concepts in my work and where they fit into the context of contemporary art. Laura Berman is an American printmaker. Her work centers on her rock collection, which has become a symbol of her movement though the world over her lifetime, representative of her transient relationship to the places in which she has lived. This nostalgic connection to places once inhabited is a key element of my work.

The second influence is Kenneth Josephson, a photographer whose work deals with the struggle between memory and reality. He takes old photographs of places and integrates the old photograph with current reality. The viewer is made simultaneously aware of the past and the present. His work underlines the difference between memory and actuality, and emphasizes the emotional importance of place.


Oblivescence (The process of forgetting)

The word “oblivescence” is defined as “the process of forgetting,” usually used as the antonym of “reminiscence.” The word itself is largely forgotten, and has almost completely dropped out of everyday use. The rediscovery of this word seemed absolutely appropriate for this series of prints. The series discussed above (“Peregination”) involves the gap between mental image and the reality of what a place is. “Oblivescence” instead deals with the fluctuations between memory of past places and the actuality of that place in the present. There are often gaps between what an individual recalls about home, what home actually is, and what it has become. The nature of memory is that it fluctuates, simultaneously increasing and decreasing over time. (4) This disillusionment with gaps between memory and actuality is what I attempt to investigate in the original artwork produced in this project. The places that I chose for this project are places from my own childhood. These images feature elements that are uniquely small town, distinctly Tennessee. They typify a broader mood of isolation that can sometimes be felt in a small town. The images are chosen for their aesthetic value, and are quickly photographed and painstakingly recreated through drawing. The labor-intensive, time-consuming process is as much a part of the concept as the images themselves. These places are honored, remembered, and rediscovered, through this process. Instead of rendering the drawing to photographic quality, the image is left with areas of blank space, paying homage to the elements of place that remain forgotten.
The definition of “peregrination” is “a course of travel; a journey.” I chose this word to inspire a series of lithographs that were informed by my ideas about exploring the world. Before I travel to a place, I have grand and imaginative mental images of what the place will be like. Upon arrival I find that places are always less surreal than my mental images of them.
To begin the prints in this series, I would choose a location that I knew very little about, and attempt to reproduce the mental image of that place in print. There is an element of the work that is not satisfying because the finished images could never capture the infinite possibility of imagination. These prints show the progression of ideas that are the foundation for my current work.
“Failed to Notice” 18x22 inch Lithograph 2012
“Reflection” 18x22 inch Lithograph 2012
“Ephemera” 18x22 inch Lithograph 2012
“Aoristic” 18x22 inch Lithograph 2012
Conclusion

It is sometimes said that sense of smell is the strongest memory trigger. I think it could be argued that place is stronger. Just as people have inherent individual identities, so do places. Place encapsulates everything that we do because it is where we do it. I think that issues surrounding nostalgia and themes of past and present, especially as they pertain to place, are relevant and need to be investigated. If our identities, preconceptions, and cultural attributes are influenced by proximity, how will we be affected when our global consciousness grows so influential that every place becomes largely the same? Already every city in the United States has a Wal-Mart, a McDonalds, and an organized church. Investigating the way in which place (natural or artificial) influences the way the mind works is key in understanding the identity of the global community that we will become.

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Stigmatization of PTSD: Is It Different between Active Duty and Reserve Military Forces?

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Before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military’s suicide rates were lower than that of the general public. With these wars, however, military suicide rates doubled, in part due to PTSD. This literature review examines post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) literature in Active Duty and National Guard populations. Prevalence rates of PTSD as well as utilization rates of mental health services among these groups are examined to differentiate levels of stigma. Systems theory and modified labeling theory (MLT) are used in this review of literature as a theoretical framework to develop a more thorough understanding of the forces that mitigate or alleviate the stigma of PTSD within Active Duty and citizen soldier communities. Understanding the forces that cause stigma will help in finding more effective ways to ameliorate its effects and improve utilization of mental health services.

More than two million military personnel have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Of that number, approximately 40 percent of them were National Guard or Reservists. Anywhere from 25 to 40 percent of deployed military personnel develop PTSD or other mental health challenges (Greden et al. 2010). “Despite the availability of specialty posttraumatic stress disorder care within the Veterans Administration Healthcare System, many VA patients do not seek needed PTSD treatment” (Ouimette et al. 2011). There is stigma surrounding military members who have PTSD, and especially for those who are treated for the condition. “Whereas the stigma attached to being a mental health patient may not be the same as the stigma associated with being a counseling client, researchers have found that people tend to report more stigma surrounding counseling clients than non-clients” (Vogel et al., 2007, pg. 40).

Nathaniel Wade, of Iowa State University, cites research by Corrigan on self-stigma: “in an attempt to prevent public and self-stigma, people may try to avoid the label of mental illness by deciding not to seek counseling services” (2011, pg. 1). This treatment avoidance has been seen in behavior by military members with PTSD. Yet, avoidance is not equal among the active and reserve components of the military.

Utilizing a cross-sectional, anonymous survey of over 10,000 Active Duty and Reserve troops, Kim et al. found that while there was an almost 10 percent increase in reporting mental health problems in Active Duty personnel when compared to National Guard soldiers (44 vs. 35 percent, respectively) 12 months after deployment, the opposite is true for utilization, with 27 percent of citizen soldiers & 13 percent of Active Duty soldiers seeking help for PTSD (Kim et al., 2010).

Greden’s research into utilization rates among Michigan National Guard members found that “less than half of their 9000+ members sought help for reported mental health problems” (2010, pg.91). The most common reported reason for not seeking help was stigma, fear of being seen as weak, concerns about confidentiality of military records, and fears about damaging their future careers. However if PTSD is left untreated, it can increase the risk of suicide. Research indicates that reduction in military suicide may be accomplished by increasing utilization rates of mental health services among returning OIF/OEF soldiers. (Kim et al., 2010) Therefore, reducing stigma may help to increase utilization rates of mental health services. This is a vital step in reducing suicides among our nation’s military members returning from deployment.

Stigma and Labeling

Stigma is a sociologically created construct that indicates disassociation of a person with an unwanted attribute from the rest of the sociological group. Ahmedani quotes Goffman’s seminal publication Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity to define stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting, that reduces someone “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Ahmedani, 2011, pg. 4). To understand how people
are conditioned identify and consequently stigmatize a person or group for this “unwanted attribute” it is necessary to understand a little about status, roles and what holds groups together.

Everyone belongs to a number of groups or organizations. These may include families, work groups, association memberships. “Each of us belongs to a number of organizations, and in each, we occupy a position or status” (Eitzen et al., 2010, pg. 29) There are three types of status: ascribed, achieved and master. Ascribed statuses are those that are assigned. Achieved statuses are those that are earned, and finally a master status is a situational status of precedence (op cit). Thus, when at home a soldier will have the assigned status of soldier, but may also have an ascribed status of father, and or husband. While at work, his master status could be logistics specialist, or combat arms specialist, yet he retains the statuses of father and husband, which will be a master status while at home. Any of these statuses (father, husband, soldier) may be the master status depending on the situation the soldier finds himself in, as well as how he looks at his role. Within each of these statuses, the group or organization assigns expectations or roles.

Roles are “the norms of a social organization which constrain the incumbents in a status to behave in prescribed and therefore predictable ways, regardless of their particular personalities” (Eitzen et al., 2010, pg. 30). These roles shape behavior, and behaviors of members change as their status changes. For example, as a soldier goes to work, his status (and therefore his behavior) changes from father/husband (ascribed) to soldier and specialist. When he returns home, his status changes again.

**How Status and Roles Create Stigma**

Charles H. Cooley postulated that people “understand themselves through the way in which other people act toward them” (Eitzen et al., 2010, pg. 115). Cooley coined the term “looking-glass self” to explain this idea. For example, a corporal in the Marine Corp sees himself not in how he thinks a marine should be, nor how others think a marine should be, but rather how he thinks others see a marine. How a patient sees himself and his mental health diagnosis is an important consideration when dealing with stigma. The extent to which stigma becomes a master status or part of one’s self-schema affects patients’ basic evaluations of themselves (Rosenfield, 1997, pg. 661, quoting Becker, 1963). Rosenfield goes on to say that “people with chronic mental illness often experience a profound sense of loss of the characteristics they valued in themselves and of cherished life goals and assumptions” (1997, pg. 61). This is because they see the challenges in overcoming the mental illness to be so profound, including the stigma of the illness, that they become overwhelmed. Thus, patients may view current ideas about their life and where they were headed as being unattainable. If this sense of loss of the valued characteristics continues untreated, suicide risk may increase.

**Labeling & Modified Labeling Theory**

Stigma is a natural result of societal groups identifying those who are included within a group, and those who are not. It is apparently quite common (Ahmedani, 2011). With the creation of any large group of people, frameworks for identification of those that belong to that group are made. For example, soldiers who defend a country may be viewed as needing to be strong, brave, patriotic and self-sacrificing. Only those who are believed to meet those expectations are considered part of the group. If anyone within the group begins to display characteristics that no longer conform to the expectations of the group, the group will react by attempting to modify the behavior of the individual, or no longer consider him to be part of the group. This process happens within all kinds of groups, businesses, and cultures.

When someone within the community exhibits behavior or traits that are not within the accepted norm for the group, they are labeled in some way, and become members of that labeled group. Not all labels are bad. Labels are merely names given to subgroups within our society. The label of fireman, police officer, soldier are all labels. These labels identify certain individuals as being extraordinary, not part of the general society, but within a subgroup. Ideas about their roles or behaviors are built into the label. Being labeled as having a mental illness also carries expectations about anticipated behavioral norms. When those anticipated behavioral norms are negative, and internalized by the person labeled, it becomes a stigma.

Socialization of cultural values and norms begins within the first few years of life. During socialization, individuals learn the attitude of the community toward many behaviors, objects, and attributes, and internalize these in the form of cultural beliefs. (Vogel et al., 2011). For stigma to be removed, the ideas of society must be changed. That change must then be internalized by the majority of the group or society for the stigma to be eliminated.

**Systems Theory and Stigma among Veterans**

Systems theory is an important concept in social work. It allows the social worker to see the various groups that are in a person’s life, and from that picture, understand some of the forces that may mitigate or alleviate the challenges that face clients. Systems theory “stresses the relationships and interactions among individuals, families, groups, organiza-
tions and communities as they function together” (Kirst-Ashman, 2012, pg. 9). Image a spider web. Each filament is connected to the other in an intricate web. If an event occurs that affects one small part of the network of a system, it is felt by the entire system. Systems theory can provide us with a picture of how the groups that interact with Active Duty and Reservists may affect how individual soldiers and their units apply and react to the stigma of PTSD. Influences may include family, friends, work or home environment, support systems and resources available. The eco-maps also display the groups that will be affected by the diagnosis of the soldier.

Figures 1 and 2 show differences in active duty and Reserve soldiers (called Citizen Soldier in the eco-map to encompass both Guard and Reserves) systems as experienced by one active duty and reservist’s experiences.

Military life is transitory in nature. Members of the armed forces are ordered to set tours of duty overseas or within the continental United States. Tours are called permanent changes of station. In addition to Permanent Change of Station orders (PCS orders) there are also Temporary Duty Assignments (TDYs) and deployment orders. A typical military family may move every three to four years, going from one overseas assignment to another, may mix overseas assignments with stateside assignments, or may try to homestead. Homesteading is when a military member requests to remain at a post past the original term of orders. While the military services usually attempt to comply with these requests (at considerable savings) they are subject to the needs of the military.

Due to the transitory nature of an Active Duty career, community, friends (those outside the military), and even active duty community relationships can be affected by the absences. As bonds fade or weaken, family and friends may be more willing to accept a stigmatized view of the military member who is labeled with the diagnosis of PTSD because it becomes harder for these groups to overcome the effects of stigma with their own experiences with the individual.

Reserve and National Guard soldiers have a greater opportunity to maintain a more meaningful relationship with their community, friends and co-workers (both within and outside the military) because of their ability to homestead in a particular location, when compared to active duty military members. For example, the 44th Aerial-port Squadron in Guam has members who were born, attended primary and secondary schooling and now work within the community. Some individuals, including their last commander, have been a part of the unit for decades.

**Figure 1.** Active duty Eco-map example; displaying the effects of the transient nature of active duty on the systems within a soldier’s life. (Thickness of arrow indicates relationship strength with regards to mitigating stigma).

**Figure 2.** Citizen Soldier (Reserve and National Guard Military Personnel) Eco-map which shows how a life-long involvement within a specific community may provide better social resources to ameliorate the effects of stigma and improves outcomes. (Thickness of arrow indicates relationship strength with regards to mitigating stigma).

**Findings**

As long as the stigma of PTSD continues to play a pivotal role in reducing veteran utilization of mental health services (Quimette et al., 2011; Alvidrez et al., 2010; Greden et al., 2010), suicide rates will continue to be elevated among veterans. Today, suicide is the third leading cause of death among military personnel (Barnes & Walter, 2012, pg. 18). In order to reduce stigma, authorities have attempted to redefine societal expectations of veterans,
in the hopes of ameliorating treatment avoidance. “Then president (George W. Bush) declared that the stigma that surrounds mental illness is the major obstacle to Americans getting the quality mental healthcare they deserve.” (Vogel et al., 2007) “The Surgeon General (1999) and The World Health Organization (2001) cite stigma as a key barrier to successful treatment engagement, including seeking, and sustaining participation in services” (Ahmedani, 2011). Research has indicated that one of the primary ways of reducing this alarming suicide rate is through increased utilization of mental health services by military personnel diagnosed with a mental health injury (Quimette et al., 2011; Alvidrez et al., 2010; Greden et al., 2010).

Several studies have demonstrated the positive impact of social interventions and treatment engagement by the afflicted individual (Ahmedani, 2011). Positive impact depends on the individual military member having strong social ties to community, friends, and family. The stronger the bonds, the more likely the members of these groups will be able to override societal expectations of PTSD sufferers.

Duty in the National Guard or Reserves provides an opportunity for long-term involvement within a community. This longevity within a stable neighborhood provides a deeper understanding of the soldier by those around him and the various groups within the community that are part of his ecosystem. For active duty military members this longevity is rare, and may be responsible for differences in utilization rates of mental health services between Active Duty and National Guard or Reserve members. It is possible that it could provide an effective means of mitigating stigmatization. However, current trends within military deployment routines may change this dynamic.

Before 9/11, Guard and Reserve military units (citizen soldiers) were generally trained to backfill Active Duty personnel at stateside bases should deployment be necessary. Citizen soldiers trained 89 days a year, compared to Active Duty personnel who trained 365 days in the same year. Resources within the military were also allocated first to Active Duty forces, with Reserve forces receiving remaining resources, inferior equipment, and so on. Citizen soldiers, before 9/11, have generally been relegated to a secondary mission posture and have been looked upon by their Active Duty counterparts as being below standard. This secondary status may mean that National Guard and Reserve members do not attribute the roles of that particular status (soldier, sailor, airman or marine) and may instead hold to a status of Reservist, and only need to meet the expectations of this lesser group. This different status may have a reduced stigma because citizen soldiers may not ascribe to the same roles as their Active Duty counterparts.

However, the post-9/11 environment continues to force military leaders within both groups to utilize citizen warriors in traditional Active Duty roles rather than their more common support and backfill missions. This evolution has caused a blurring of cultural differences within these two distinct groups. The individual’s self-identity of and those

Figure 3. Active duty / reserve differentiation filters military members reactions to being labeled with a mental illness like PTSD.

Figure 4. During step 3, support rolls become a factor, and may ameliorate utilization of mental health services by overcoming stigma associated with the military member and their mental health diagnosis.
of the units also begin to merge. Citizen soldiers may no longer have just a citizen soldier organizational culture, but may instead begin to identify with the Active Duty culture instead. If citizen soldiers begin to accept this status and begin adopting identical roles to their Active Duty counterparts, they may begin to be affected by stigma much in the same way as the Active Duty members.

Further research is needed to determine whether strong relationship bonds mitigate the stigma of mental illnesses such as PTSD. Specifically, which types of relationships are more able to overcome the stigmatization of mental illness, and how can we measure the level of stigma beliefs within this network? Until 2006, there was no direct measure of the level of self-stigma related to seeking mental health services (Vogel et al., 2006). Vogel has been successful in creating a 10-item scale to measure self-stigma. Whether this Self-Stigma of Seeking Help Scale (SSOSH) is also useful in measuring stigma levels of others within a soldier’s socioeconomic network, remains to be seen.

Stigma continues to dominate the concerns of mental health researchers who are trying to mitigate its effects to bring about a more positive trend with regard to escalating suicide rates. While there continues to be many areas of research that can be further developed, there has been a tremendous amount of progress in this area.

References


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