

16th Annual McNair Research Presentation Abstracts

Foot-In-The-Door Phenomenon: Its Relationship to Perceived Legitimate Authority

Presenter: Jesse Badoe
Research Supervisor: Professor Joe Nedelec

The purpose of this research is to study the effects and nature of the ‘foot-in-the-door’ phenomenon as it relates to perceived authority. The study focuses on the role that sequential request techniques play when administered by an expert versus legitimate authority figure. This was demonstrated through an experiment wherein participants responded to a series of hypothetical scenarios and increasingly more coercive requests for compliance during an interactive computer session. This research is important because it fills a gap in the body of research by accounting for an under studied dynamic between authority and obedience. Furthermore, it allows us to better understand the power of perceived legitimate and expert authority, as well as the significance of the foot-in-the-door technique.

Feminist Smut(?): A Study of Anaïs Nin’s Erotica

Presenter: Angela M. Carter
Research Supervisor: Dr. Christine Harker

Anaïs Nin’s diaries are hailed for their insight into women’s sexuality. Still, similar elements within her erotica, *Little Birds* and *Delta of Venus*, have been overlooked. Nin prefaces the collection saying it presents sexuality from “a woman’s point of view,” yet her female characters seem alarmingly coherent with patriarchal stereotypes, leading scholars to see Nin’s erotica as misogynistic. However, it is through this troublesome motif that Nin is able to explore the complexities of female sexuality, specifically the sorrowful consequences of internalized sexual oppression/repression. Furthermore, by writing from what she saw as a woman’s perspective, Nin was able to advocate persistently for sexual self-awareness and liberation. Thus no embarrassment to her legacy, Nin’s erotica too has a place in the feminist literary canon.

Factors that Influence English Word Learning in Bilingual Children

Presenter: Liza Castillo
Research Supervisor: Dr. Mary Alt, University of Arizona

The purpose of this study was to determine how phonotactic probability and word length affect the way bilingual children learn English words. A fast mapping task was conducted with 41 pre-school children (mean age 5 years) who were either monolingual (English) or bilingual (Spanish/English). Participants played a computer game to assess their expressive and receptive word learning skills. Preliminary data show that bilingual children performed worse when words were phonotactically frequent and long than when words were short. Statistically, the monolingual children's scores were equal for all word types; however, a trend for better performance with phonotactically frequent words was revealed. There was no significant difference in accuracy in the task between groups. Preliminary findings show that phonotactic frequency influences word learning in bilingual children, and appears to have a different effect than on monolingual (English) children. Phonotactically frequent and long words were hardest for bilingual children compared to monolingual children who did better with high frequency words. Word length did not have an effect on the monolingual group.

BRAVE NEW GIRL: *Girls' Life* and Answer-Seeking Adolescents

Presenter: Jacqueline Gonzalez
Research Supervisor: Dr. Marilyn Yaquinto

The relationship between media and tweens (9-13 year old girls) is often not understood. Yet studies have suggested a strong relationship between young readers and the literature they choose to read. The purpose of this research is to examine concerns of tweens by looking at reader-submitted questions to the columnists of *Girls' Life* magazine, a magazine that claims to be the top publication for 10 to 15-year-old girls. By analyzing the contents of this particular magazine, the researcher has developed a few points of notice: girls are much less frequently concerned about their self-perception via their body than assumed; girls are developing stronger senses of confidence in terms of romantic relationships (yet, they also seem to want to rush physical intimacy); they are seemingly comfortable with discussing more controversial subjects than previously thought (such as rape and cutting); lastly, relationship issues with those closest to them ("BFF" or family member) are the most concerning to these girls, expressing strong signs of anxiety and fear when approaching the subject.

Narcissism, Empathy, and Prosocial Behavior: An Online Survey

Presenter: Joshua Hallows
Research Supervisor: Dr. Michele Breault

This study used an online survey to explore a relationship between narcissism, empathy, and prosocial behavior. We hypothesized that students scoring higher on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory would be less likely to participate in a follow-up survey. There was a strong negative correlation between scores on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and Mahrebian and Epstein's Emotional Empathy Scale. This was consistent with the notion that narcissism and empathy would operate differently to influence prosocial behavior. However, narcissism and empathy were not related to

the likelihood of future helping. With a follow-up survey, we hope to find that a more direct measure helping will provide support for our hypothesis.

Religiosity and Attitudes toward Violence in Hispanic Street Gang Members

Presenter: Joshua Harris

Research Supervisor: Professor Joe Nedelec

The purpose of this project is to determine if gang members consider religiosity, defined as devotion to religion, to be an important aspect of their daily lives in spite of harboring attitudes favorable to the commission of violent acts. Most research concludes that there is an inverse relationship between these two variables. However, the respondents' gang affiliation may lead to high levels of "pro-violence" attitudes despite factors that generally signal high levels of religious salience, such as low socio-economic status and having immigrated to the United States in the past two generations. Data collected via two Likert surveys measuring religiosity and attitudes toward the justification of engaging in violent behavior is analyzed and reported. Additional discussion of the relationship between these two variables is also provided.

The Conflict of Passing: Hypermasculinity in African American Male Educational Experiences

Presenter: Amber Jones

Research Supervisor: Dr. James D. Anderson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This is a study on the role of hypermasculinity in regards to academic achievement in African American Males. I conducted individual and group interviews aimed at collecting information pertaining to hypermasculinity and the African American male educational experience. The participants in this study were 18 years old or older and within the Champaign –Urbana area. Data collected from the interviews suggested that hypermasculinity in many forms did have an impact on the educational experiences of the respondents and their African American male peers. Participants often discussed a conflict between social acceptance and academic achievement. Many also argued that hypermasculinity was often more of a survival skill rather than a coping device. Once more data is collected further research will involve creating a hypermasculinity in education index as a tool for school institutions to better understand the needs of their students.

How Should Undergraduates Deal with Interpersonal Stress? A Comparison of Catharsis, Guided Relaxation, and Sitting Quietly

Presenter: Harold Kaid
Research Supervisor: Dr. Jeffrey Vittengl

The purpose of this study compared catharsis, guided relaxation, and sitting quietly as stress relievers after a debate about a topical issue on which participants disagreed. Undergraduate participants ($N = 28$) completed measures of positive and negative affect, as well as their experiences in the debate. In partial support of the hypotheses, participants in the guided relaxation and sitting quietly groups experienced a significant decrease in negative affect after the debate, whereas participants in the catharsis group did not experience a reduction in negative affect. This study adds to previous research in suggesting that catharsis is an ineffective way to reduce stress compared to guided relaxation and sitting quietly.

Race, Identity, and Power--Where Art and Popular Culture Unite: George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* and Philip Guston's *Flatlands*

Presenter: Michele Kaminski
Research Supervisor: Dr. Julia DeLancey

During the late 1960s Philip Guston chose to defy convention and return to his roots in comic art. Popular culture during the 1920s centered on the daily comic strip. This paper establishes a connection between George Herriman's June 29, 1920 *Krazy Kat* comic strip and Philip Guston's 1970 painting *Flatlands*. Analyzing stylistic influences from *Krazy Kat* and social issues such as race and identity establishes themes of power, violence, and punishment in each man's work. Confronting these issues through the illogical and absurd allowed Guston to accept his identity and illustrate how popular culture can penetrate our lives.

What Explains Variation of Women's Representation in Sub-Saharan Africa's Parliaments?

Presenter: Sammone Kidd
Research Mentor: Dr. Marijke Breuning, University of North Texas

This research paper attempts to explain the variations of women's representation within Sub-Saharan African parliaments. Currently Sub-Saharan African countries vary widely in the number of women present in the region's legislatures. Despite the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa is considered to be one of the poorest regions in the world, the number of women in parliament exceeds that of some wealthier countries, including the United States. I hypothesize that gender quotas and whether or not a country is democratic will have a greater effect on the number of women in parliament. These findings however, illustrate that the type of government does not matter, but the presence of gender quotas significantly increases women's representation in legislature.

Environmental Criticism of the Late Roman Republic in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*

Presenter: Van Le
Research Supervisor: Dr. Rebecca Harrison

Lucretius' philosophical poem *De Rerum Natura*, or *On the Nature of Things*, discusses the ideas of life, death, nature, and humanity. Despite its numerous observations of the natural world and Lucretius' own scientific propensities, few scholars have examined it outside the scope of philosophy, history, or poetry. The purpose of this project is to examine the second half of the fifth book of *De Rerum Natura* as Lucretius' environmental assessment of the Roman Republic. This study specifically argues that Lucretius equates environmental exploitation with discord in the natural world, in human society, and in human nature.

College Students' Perceptions of Dialect Influenced English

Presenter: Sonia Mejia
Research Supervisor: Dr. Janet Gooch

The intent of this study was to determine if Truman students could correctly identify the 53 target words contained in The Goldman- Fristoe Test of Articulation – Second Edition, (GFTA-2). The phonological systems of Spanish and English contain some similarities and differences. The differences in the sound systems of the two languages may contribute to speech differences in Spanish speaking individuals who are communicating in English. Often when speaking English some Spanish influence is noted in the production of specific speech sounds. Sixteen Truman college students listened to a tape recorded sample of one male and one female bilingual speaker producing the 53 target words included on the GFTA2. Students wrote down the words as they perceived them. Results revealed that listeners misunderstood words produced by both speakers. The words most commonly misunderstood were similar across speakers and were characterized by sound differences typical of Spanish-influenced English.

Environmental Degradation and Genocide/Politicide, 1958-2007

Presenter: Anna Pechenina
Research Supervisor: Dr. John Ishiyama, University of North Texas

While several studies have examined the causes of ethnic conflict and genocide (Appadurai, 1998, p. 225; Horowitz, 1985, p. 37) -- little or no attention has been directed toward the relationship between environmental degradation and instances of genocide. Although recently mentioned by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon (2007) as a principal cause of the conflict in Darfur (p. 10), little or no empirical work exists to demonstrate the linkage between environmental degradation and genocide. This paper will empirically examine the relationship between environmental degradation (especially freshwater and land

degradation) and the incidence of a genocidal and/or political act. More specifically we examine whether environmental factors “trigger” genocidal and/or political acts across 27 countries from 1958-2007.

Creating a Space for Expression of Both the Black and Female Selves: An Examination of Toni Cade Bambara

Presenter: Gemmicka Piper
Research Supervisor: Dr. Hena Ahmad

This paper will examine the ways in which Toni Cade Bambara’s works, specifically, *The Salt Eaters* and *Gorilla My Love*, reflect the literary legacy of the Harlem Renaissance in the Black Arts Movement. Central to my thesis will be locating Bambara’s works in the context of the gap created by the exclusion of post-Harlem Renaissance women’s literary voices by the established African-American literary tradition. The portrayal of Bambara’s young female protagonists, informed as it is by Black Nationalist ideology, gives them agency and subjectivity. Making visible African-American women’s involvement in social movements in the community, Bambara’s works lessen the imbalance resulting from the ample attention paid to the hyper-masculine literary tradition.

Economic Inequity in Ancient Rome: A Study of the Elite Class and Its Role in Socio-Economic Disparity

Presenter: Jeffrey Sanders
Research Supervisor: Dr. Lynn Rose

This project intends to explore the dynamics of business and economic inequity in ancient Rome. Qualitative methods of textual analysis will be used to obtain literary evidence for the study of attitudes held by the Patrician ruling class, as they are reflected in the writings of major orators and satirists during the Roman era. These works will be investigated in order to determine the possible influence that societal elites may have exerted upon economic conditions present during the time period of early imperial Rome, especially the means by which they might have justified discriminatory economic and socio-economic practices relevant to that particular time period.

Bread and Circuses: How Red Meat Ballot Initiatives Feed Voter Turnout

Presenter: Casey Sharp
Research Supervisor: Dr. John Quinn

The use of ballot initiatives has become increasingly popular in the United States, especially recently. Political parties use ballot initiatives to mobilize their voters to the polls, whether it is the Republicans with abortion or the Democrats and minimum wage increases. These initiatives have become partisan and ballot initiatives created with the intentions of direct democracy have become tools to get key votes that otherwise may not be retained come Election Day. This research will strive to explain the effect ballot initiatives, pertaining to controversial social issues, have upon voter turnout.