

# Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

## Online Proceedings

2U

### STEREOTYPING AND PREJUDICE

*Session Moderator: Allison Master, Psychology*

**175 JHN**

*3:45 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

#### **The Power of Discourse: Politics and Construction of the DSM**

*Anne Kennebeck (Anne) Wolken, Senior, Psychology,  
Anthropology: Medical Anth & Global Hlth  
Mary Gates Scholar*

*Mentor: Carolyn Pinedo Turnovsky, American Ethnic  
Studies*

*Mentor: Jos?? Antonio Lucero, International Studies/CHID*

Early medical philosophers describe psychiatric illnesses as natural, biologically bound entities with clear definitions. However, other thinkers have begun to trace the source of these definitions to a more political root. I argue that the very language we use to diagnosis, define, and treat mental illnesses is influenced by the social and political climate, and that this language has been creating an increasing number of borders within the spectrum of human experience since the introduction of the DSM (the primary mental health diagnostic tool in the U.S.) in 1952. Using discourse analysis as a tool to examine the four editions of the DSM, I will discuss how the change in language of the last 60 years has followed political and social movements of the times. In particular, an investigation into the changing language describing and defining gender and sexuality disorders will uncover these changes. Psychiatry has been using particular language to create and negotiate the line between “normal” and “abnormal” since the origin of the field. Individuals labeled using this fluctuating language have to negotiate all the legal, social, political and cultural consequences of this line, and understanding the origins of these borders will shed some light on the human experience behind them.

#### **Contemporary Representations and Perceptions of Disability**

*Riley Ilyse (Riley) Taitingfong, Junior, Communication  
Mentor: Ralina Joseph, Communication  
Mentor: Christy Ibrahim, School Of Law*

Approximately 54 million Americans have some form of cog-

nitive or physical disability. This minority status crosses lines of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. We are all subject to becoming disabled, should we experience illness, an accident, genetic difference, or the effects of aging. Despite such large prevalence, we are faced with limited and stereotypical images of disability as a problem that should ideally be fixed or eliminated. Such a view is the medical model, which contrasts with a more inclusive view of disability, the social model. The social model holds that being disabled is a neutral form of human difference. Problems come from the lack of accessibility for disabled individuals in a society built predominantly for people without disabilities. My project uses the social model framework; first, I will analyze representations of disability in contemporary media. This uncovers marginalizing portrayals of disability that manifest in television today, such as pitying attitudes, “supercrip” depictions, and disability as a burden. Second, I will use focus group methods to examine perceptions of disability among UW students with and without disabilities. I will ask students to interpret various media portrayals of disability and examine salient patterns among their responses. I hypothesize that students will tend toward stereotypical generalizations consistent with the medical model of disability. I predict these results will demonstrate a need for students to develop skills for critical media consumption. With the results of this project, we can identify points for intervention and reframing of harmful stereotypes about disability.

#### **Parasocial Contact and Prejudice Reduction: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Potential Advantages and Novel Applications of Mass Mediated Intergroup Contact**

*Alexandra Danielle (Alex) Kronz Kaethler, Senior,  
Linguistics, Psychology, Communication  
Mentor: Jason Gilmore, Communication*

This study explores mass media as a means of reducing intergroup prejudice. The theoretical impetus for this study was contact theory, the idea that interaction with individual mem-

bers of outgroups can reduce prejudice toward the group as a whole. The field has recently expanded to include non-interpersonal types of contact, including parasocial contact, and contemporary research points to parasocial effects comparable to and even wider reaching than those from interpersonal contact. Evidence of prejudice reduction through use of imagined contact scenarios and stories about ingroup members in contact situations sparked my interest in entertainment as a potential vehicle for prejudice reduction through mediated contact, a topic which surprisingly little research has examined. Synthesizing the literature on mass media cultivation effects in the field of communication, and perspectives in social psychological research, I examine mediated parasocial contact's potential application in situations in which geographic limitations or active cognitive filtering in prejudiced individuals act as a barrier to contact. I theorize that parasocial contact via mass media can be a viable alternative to interpersonal contact in these situations because it affords ease of exposure with one media artifact potentially viewed by millions, and it has the potential to subvert cognitive resistance to contact if put in the format of entertainment: viewers don't expect the message to be strategically crafted to influence them. Parasocial contact appears to be mediated by cognitive change (stereotype alteration) which could have a far more lasting effect on prejudiced behavior and beliefs than the affective change observed from interpersonal contact. This might prove an advantage of parasocial contact over even feasible interpersonal contact. The focus of the present study is theoretical understanding, with the ultimate goal of designing an experiment to explore the impact and potential mediators of parasocial contact via entertainment media on prejudice reduction.

### **"It Gets Better": Does It?**

*Elyse Laurelle Postlewaite, Sophomore, Pre-Social Sciences  
Jonathan Hoonhout, Non-Matriculated, Psychology, Seattle Central College*

*Sarah Saza (Sarah) Coburn, Junior, Psychology*

*Mentor: Krystle Archibald, Psychology, Seattle Central Community College*

Inspired by the "It Gets Better" project whose mission is to prevent LGBT teen suicide through personal stories of transcending similar adversity, this study seeks to understand the relationships between happiness and social factors for LGBT individuals. The data was gathered through a survey method of 50 questions and 2 open ended interview questions. Participants were able to report on their sense of personal well being and the presence of social factors (familial support, media influence, workplace environment etc.) both before the participants "came out" and present day. The expectation was that as positive social factors increase, so would levels of perceived happiness. The results showed that LGBT individual's perceived happiness increased after "coming out". Also, sur-

prising and unexpected results indicated that social influence as a predictor for happiness after participants "came out" was significantly less than social influence as a predictor for happiness before participants "came out". Given these findings a hypothesis could be considered that LGBT individuals depend on social factors and lifestyle for perceived happiness more before they "come out" than after, however, more research would be needed.

### **Hidden Consequences: Can Multiculturalism Cause Increased Self-Stereotyping among Racial Minorities?**

*Drake Hunchberger (Drake) Apablaza, Senior, Psychology*

*Mentor: Cheryl Kaiser, Psychology*

*Mentor: Teri Kirby, Psychology*

Institutions employ various diversity efforts to promote inclusion of diverse members of society. Two dominant strategies for promoting diversity come in the form of multiculturalism (i.e., celebrating group differences) and colorblindness (i.e., ignoring group differences). The present research examines how multiculturalism's focus on group identities may ironically lead racial minorities to see themselves through the lens of group stereotypes. In two studies, racial minority participants read a multicultural or colorblind company recruitment brochure and then completed measures of self-stereotyping (i.e., describing stereotypes of one's group as self-descriptive) and racial identity (i.e., importance of racial group membership to one's sense of self). Weakly racially identified Black participants indicated that stereotypically Black traits were more self-descriptive when reading the multicultural brochure than when reading the colorblind brochure (Study 1). Strongly racially identified participants did not change their level of self-stereotyping. Likewise, we predict that weakly identified Asian American participants reading about multiculturalism will self-stereotype more than those reading about colorblindness or reading a control statement (Study 2). Despite its attempts to promote inclusion, multiculturalism may be limiting for minorities if it leads some to see themselves in terms of stereotypical expectations of their group. Because both positive and negative stereotypes can be threatening, this may further lead to decrements in minorities' performance in stereotype-related domains (i.e., stereotype threat).

### **Diversity Ideologies and Attributions to Discrimination**

*Polina Charters, Junior, Psychology*

*Mentor: Kerry Spalding, Psychology*

Organizations are increasingly expected to publish policies communicating their perspectives on diversity, but how do these diversity messages affect the racial minorities who work there? The current research examines whether the two most common ideologies in diversity messages, colorblindness, which focuses on individual qualities and minimizes the importance of group differences, and multiculturalism, which

emphasizes acknowledging and appreciating group differences, influence whether racial minorities interpret their experiences as due to discrimination. Asian American participants will imagine a scenario in which they work at a company that endorses either a colorblind or a multicultural ideology and are passed over for a promotion in favor of a less qualified White candidate. We expect that participants who are passed over for a promotion in an organization that promotes colorblindness, and therefore deemphasizes the importance of group memberships, will be less likely to interpret this treatment as discrimination than those who are passed over in an organization that promotes multiculturalism, and therefore emphasizes the importance of group membership. This research demonstrates that the perspectives organizations take on diversity have implications beyond recruiting minorities and reducing bias; they can actually shape whether racial minorities perceive the same treatment as discriminatory.

### **How are Positive Stereotypes Perceived? It Depends on Who Says Them**

*Hua (Wenwen) Ni, Fifth Year, Psychology*

*Undergraduate Research Conference Travel Awardee*

*Mentor: John Oliver Siy, Psychology*

*Mentor: Sapna Cheryan, Psychology*

Asian Americans respond negatively to being the target of a positive stereotype (e.g., Asians are smart) even though these stereotypes are often attempts at praising their group. The current work focuses on how targets' responses to positive stereotypes depend on the race of the stereotyper. Asian and Asian American participants imagined an interaction with a White classmate or an Asian classmate who stated a positive stereotype of their group or stated no stereotype. Results showed that participants responded more positively when the stereotyper was Asian compared to when the stereotype was White. Participants did not respond differently to White and Asian classmates who stated no stereotype, suggesting that it is positive stereotypes which lead to different responses based on who says them. These results show that group membership is an important consideration when thinking about stereotypes.

### **Using Group Work to Recruit Women to STEM: A Goal Congruity Approach**

*Amanda Kay Montoya, Senior, Psychology*

*Mary Gates Scholar, Undergraduate Research*

*Conference Travel Awardee*

*Mentor: Sapna Cheryan, Psychology*

*Mentor: Allison Master, Psychology*

It is well-established that women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields; however, the variability in women's participation among STEM fields is often underreported. Women received 60% of bach-

elor's degrees in biology but only 18% of computer science degrees in 2009. One explanation for this variation may be the differing social stereotypes of the fields. Male-dominated STEM fields are typically stereotyped as asocial, which may lead women to think that these fields will not fulfill their communal goals; that is, these fields will not give them opportunities to work with and help others. Three studies examined how communal goals relate to interest in six STEM fields. Study 1 (N = 120) found that women were more likely than men to endorse communal goals. Additionally, women were more interested in STEM classes they thought would fulfill their communal goals. Participants' personal communal goal endorsement was negatively correlated with their interest in male-dominated STEM fields like computer science. Study 2 (N = 296) examined group work as a potential factor that could affect perceptions of communal fulfillment in science classes. We found that classes with group work were perceived to be higher in communal fulfillment. Classes low in female representation, engineering and computer science, were perceived to have less group work than classes with higher female representation, biology and psychology. Additionally, preference for group work was positively correlated with communal goals. In Study 3 (ongoing) we experimentally manipulated group work in an introductory computer science syllabus, to see whether adding group work to a class would increase women's interest by appealing to their communal goals. These findings suggest that emphasizing the potential for communal interactions may be effective in recruiting women into STEM fields where they are currently underrepresented.