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**Copycat Mass Killings: How Personality Might Moderate Identification
with Antisocial Characters**

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Keywords: Copycat Crime, Mass Shootings, Personality Traits

Abstract

Research indicates that certain personality traits are prevalent within mass killers. Aggression, social rejection, narcissism, fame-seeking, low self-esteem, and depression are commonalities with mass killers, specifically mass shooters. Identification or idolizing antisocial fictional characters is also a common behavior within these types of offenders. These types of killers often draw inspiration for their own crimes from past criminals or from film and TV, thus committing what is known as a copycat crime. The purpose of the current study will be to examine the effects of social rejection and instigation on the likelihood of identifying with an antisocial character in young adults aged 18-25. I expect that participants in the social rejection with instigation group (Group 1) will identify with an antisocial character more than the other groups. This experiment is a 2-Factorial between-subjects design. The independent variables that will be manipulated are social rejection and instigation, and the dependent variable that will be measured is each participants' likelihood to identify with antisocial characters. The Identification with Fictional Characters Scale will be administered to measure the likelihood of identifying with antisocial characters.

Introduction

A young boy named Luke, who was 27-years-old, fantasized and identified with the Columbine killers his entire life. He was diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder, with narcissistic and schizoid traits, claimed to gain enjoyment from agonizing others, and he had very fragile self-esteem (Suit, 2017). He was issued a restraining order by a young girl after stalking her and threatening her and others with homicide. While already having a whole host of issues, he was also an avid gambler and felt socially isolated, and felt solace knowing the Columbine killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, felt the same as he did (Suit, 2017). What makes Luke different from many others is that instead of lashing out in violence against the world, he actually sought help. When he was first institutionalized for his destructive behaviors, he opened up about his fantasy about the Columbine killers, his reveling in their massacre, and his development of an online Eric Harris alter-ego (Suit, 2017). Not unlike Luke, many have sought inspiration from the Columbine killers, while others have sought inspiration from films and TV.

In contrast, a 14-year-old boy was inspired by the *Natural Born Killers* movie and decapitated a young girl because of it (Pennell, 1998). In this case, the boy did lash out in violence, but instead of a real-world criminal inspiration, he was inspired by fictional violence. According to Helfgott (2015), *Natural Born Killers* has more linked crimes than any other film, book, or TV show. The “average American child or teenager views 10,000 murders, rapes, and aggravated assaults on television each year” (Huston et. al, 1992, p. 15). While this statistic is frightening in and of itself, violence in movies can be even worse and have worse implications, especially on a younger audience. For example, two 10-year-old boys murdered a man named James Bulger and claimed *Child’s Play 3* and *Juice* to be their fictional inspiration (Kettle & Phillips, 1993). Younger offenders are more vulnerable to crime influenced by film/TV/video game violence (Pennell, 1998). Interestingly, research reviewed by Helfgott (2008, p.47) has stated “media of pop-culture has played a part in the crimes of 25% of offenders.” These cases

beg the question: how many crimes are influenced by either past crimes or by crimes from films and TV?

A crime that “must have been inspired by another previous publicized crime” either in the news or “fictionally/artistically represented” where the offender “incorporates aspects of the original crime” into their own is what is known as a copycat crime (Helfgott, 2008 p. 47). Surette (2012) stated that copycat crimes can be of any crime, ranging from homicide (most serious) to lesser offenses like civil disobedience or petty theft. There are three sources that can influence a copycat crime: media content, persons at risk, and immediate and wider cultural/social settings (Surette, 2012). In his other research, Surette identified seven mechanisms for identifying a crime as a copycat crime related to film and TV: “time order, time proximity, theme consistency, scene specificity, repetitive viewing, self-editing, offender statements, and second-party statements” (Surette, 2015). Surette (2015) primarily stated that the crime must occur after the viewing of the film, that there must be an effort by the offender to keep consistency with the film, that the film must be viewed repetitively, and that the offender statements and second-party statements must identify a film/fictional inspiration by name. Copycat crimes have garnered a lot of attention because of their possible connection to mass shootings.

The main theory associated with the concept of copycat crime is social learning theory, or that people learn from those around them. Imitation can occur from TV, film, or even if a person’s actions are simply described out loud (Meindel & Ivy, 2017). While some copycat criminals do draw inspiration from fictional crimes of TV and movies, Luke and many others have drawn inspiration from real-life criminals. Many mass shooters specifically have named the Columbine killers as their inspiration to commit massacres of their own. People are more likely to imitate someone similar to themselves (Meindel & Ivy, 2017). Age, gender, social status, and competency level are all traits people imitate from others (Meindel & Ivy, 2017). The Columbine killer’s actions were broadcasted on all platforms being called the deadliest mass shooting in the United States (at the time). Numerous mass shooters were inspired by this level of notoriety and wished the same for themselves. The Virginia Tech shooter named the Columbine killers as his inspiration for committing his own massacre, killing 32 people

(Langman, 2018). Langman, in 2018, mentions countless fame-seeking shooters open up to fantasizing about past shooters, having dreams about them, and wanting to imitate their language, dress, and behaviors. The Columbine killers inspired multiple other killers who aimed to pay homage to them in their own attacks by honoring the date of the attack or changing their profile picture to that of Eric Harris, like the Munich killer did before his massacre (Langman, 2018).

Mass shootings, in general, are a current issue within the United States, especially within the last few decades. Despite the US “only having five percent of the world’s population, about 31% of the world’s mass shootings” have happened in the United States (Meindel & Ivy, 2017, p.368). The copycat effect has been suggested to be correlated to mass shootings; they are labeled as a contagion, as they can spread across the nation quickly. When one mass shooting happens, another one is expected to occur about 13 days later (Meindel & Ivy, 2017). A mass shooting will occur in the United States approximately once every 12.5 days (Meindel & Ivy, 2017). However, mass shootings are not new, and have been documented as far back as 1949. What is relatively new, of the last few decades regarding these mass killers, is a fascination or identification with either past mass shooters or with violent fictional characters from films or TV shows. Hundreds of films, TV shows, and even books have been cited to be inspiration for certain criminals. A great deal of mass shooters in the United States have also been known to commit their massacres with gaining fame as one of their motives. Fame-seeking is one of many traits mass shooters tend to have in common. What makes a copycat criminal, and what makes a mass shooter? Are there certain traits that are shared between mass shooters and people who identify with fictional characters, and are these people more likely to commit a copycat crime?

High levels of narcissism and aggression are cited the most when discussing specific examples of mass shooters. With the story of Luke, he empathized greatly, to the point of alter-ego fantasization, with the Columbine killers and felt that they were just like him (Kohut, 1971; Suit, 2017). However, they were also incredibly narcissistic. Bushman (2017) discovered that narcissism and large egos are very common traits among mass shooters. Twenge (2003) noted that narcissism is also a key factor in feeling socially rejected; high levels of narcissism are also linked to aggression and

violence, and narcissists react badly when they “fail to win.” This makes sense considering that many mass shootings revolve around the offenders feeling rejected by society with the belief that they deserve better because they are better, so they lash out against the world as punishment for being wronged.

Fame-seeking, as mentioned before, is associated with many mass shooters. United States culture, in particular, stresses the importance of fame and glorification of celebrities. Lankford (2017), mentioned that some people are willing to do whatever it takes to be famous- including killing people. Younger people are more likely to seek fame and idolize famous people in America (Lankford, 2017). Lankford (2017) also states that younger people are more likely to be affected by acts of violence and participate in mass killings. Fame is a motive for some, but not generally a primary motive for all mass shooters. Newman and Fox (2009) mentioned that suicidality and depression were also common among most mass shooters. Specific traits mentioned more than once, and that will be examined in this experiment are: narcissism, aggression, depression, fame-seeking, self-esteem, and social rejection.

Another potential danger alongside these personality traits, is the likelihood to identify with antisocial fictional characters. As mentioned previously, many past killers and other criminals have used fictional characters as inspiration for their crimes. Even the Columbine killers have mentioned *A Clockwork Orange* and *Basketball Diaries* as other inspirations for their massacre (Segal & Enos, 1991; Coleman, 2004). Identifying with antisocial fictional characters is something many people do on a daily basis. As previously mentioned, people imitate others that they see as similar to themselves (Meindel & Ivy, 2017). What if the characters being observed are violent or dangerous? What if the person observing that violent character already has high levels of aggression, social rejection, narcissism, etc.? Are people who are high in these traits more likely to identify with antisocial fictional characters and possibly copy criminal acts of violence?

I want to examine whether or not there is a connection between personality traits and identifying with antisocial characters. I believe that being socially rejected and being instigated may also influence a person’s likelihood of lashing out. An analysis, reviewed by Twenge (2003), stated that most school shooters have experienced rejection by their

peers. People who have been instigated or frustrated are also more likely to act aggressively and reject others than those who haven't been instigated (Rule, Dyck, & Nesdale, 1978). Thus, I have chosen social rejection and instigation to see if those, too, may have a connection with identifying with an antisocial fictional character.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effects of social rejection and instigation on the likelihood to identify with antisocial characters. Both social rejection and instigation will be manipulated, and four groups will experience different levels of each. One group will experience social rejection and instigation, another will experience no social rejection with instigation, another will experience social rejection with no instigation, and the last group will not experience social rejection or instigation. The initial hypothesis is:

1. The social rejection with instigation group will identify with antisocial characters significantly more than the other groups.
2. Participants that have low self-esteem and high levels of narcissism, depression, social rejection, aggression, and fame-seeking will identify with antisocial characters more than other participants (regardless of the condition they are placed in).
3. Participants that have low self-esteem and high levels of narcissism, depression, social rejection, aggression, and fame-seeking, if placed in any of the groups experiencing either social rejection or instigation, or both, will identify with antisocial characters the most out of any participants in any condition.

Materials and Method

Participants

For this experiment, I will need 100 participants. I would like our participants to be a diverse group of people for race and ethnicity. However, I want our participants to be within the age range of 18 to 25-years-old. Participants will be selected using convenience sampling, meaning they will be volunteers. I plan to reach out by flyer or

email to college campuses to gather participants for the study.

Research Design

For this experiment, I am examining two independent variables: social rejection and instigation. Instigation is a cause of aggressive behavior, so I chose this variable as well (Rule, Dyck, & Nesdale, 1978). I will examine each of their effects (personality, social rejection, and instigation) on the likelihood to identify with an antisocial fictional character. I will have four groups: social rejection with instigation (Group 1), social rejection with no instigation (Group 2), no social rejection with instigation (Group 3), and no social rejection with no instigation (Group 4). This is a 2x2 Factorial between-subjects experimental design.

Materials

- The participants will be asked about their sex, date of birth, and their race (see Appendix A).

Preliminary questionnaires

- In order to measure narcissism, I will administer the Narcissistic Personality Inventory or the NPI (see Appendix B) (Raskin & Hall, 1979).
- In order to measure self-esteem, I will use the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (see Appendix C) (Hyatt, et. al., 2018).
- In order to measure fame-seeking I will be administering the Desire for Fame Scale (see Appendix D) (Gountas, et. al., 2012).
- In order to measure social rejection I will administer the Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale (see Appendix E) (Chipts.ucla.edu, 2020).
- In order to measure aggression, I will be using the Reactive/Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (see Appendix F) (Hyatt, et. al., 2018).
- In order to measure depression, I will be giving out the Patient Health Questionnaire (see Appendix H) (PHQ-9 Depression Scale).

Other materials

- Acer CB3-532-C47C 15.6" Chromebook (with Chrome OS, Intel Celeron N3060 Dual-Core Processor, 2GB RAM, and 16GB Internal Storage) and Basic On-Ear Headphones with 3.5mm Jack. We will need 25 pairs of headphones and 25 computers.
- The computer game is The Impossible Game (2019) (accessible online at impossiblegame.org).
- Ocean noises on a Blackweb Rugged Bluetooth Speaker, IPX5 Splash Proof Rating, which will also take about 5 minutes using a clip from Youtube (AmbienceTV, 2013).
- A clip from the movie *The Joker* which will last four minutes and 57 seconds (*The Joker*, 2019). The clip will be used on an RCA 480p Home Theater Projector (RPJ143-BLACK).
- The dependent variable, identification with fictional characters, will be measured using the Identification with Fictional Characters Scale, which will be administered after the clip has been finished (see Appendix G) (Igartua, 2010).
- Then, each participant will be debriefed and receive a debriefing form (see Appendix J).

Confederates

- I will be using 25 confederates. Twenty-four for the social rejection groups, and one for the instigation groups. Recruitment will be using the same mechanisms as gathering participants, but it will be advertised that “actors” will be needed instead of participants.

Procedure

Those who have volunteered for this study will first be given a consent form (Appendix I). Then, after having consented to the study, will complete the preliminary questionnaires, including the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A). Participants will then be randomly assigned to one of the four groups: Group 1, 2, 3, or 4. The

preliminary questionnaires will be given so that I can understand each individual's level of narcissism, aggression, social rejection, self-esteem, depression, and fame-seeking.

Each group will be in a classroom setting with the same setup and same prompter, at the same time on different days. On their day of experimentation, they will choose popsicle sticks with numbers from one to 100 from a bag and each participant will be asked to write that number on each of their questionnaires. These numbers will indicate their participant ID which they will write on the top and will ensure anonymity. After the questionnaires have been taken, the groups will begin their part of the experiment. Each participant will be told to hand in their questionnaires when they are finished; the experiment will not proceed until everyone is finished.

Social Rejection Manipulation

Social Rejection will be manipulated using inspiration from Twenge (2003) and also by Leary, Tambor, Terdal, and Downs (1995); Nezlek, Kowalski, Leary, Blevins, and Holgate (1997); and Twenge et. al., (2001). Participants in the social rejection groups, Groups 1 and 2, will individually enter a room of 24 confederates and be told by the experimenter, "For our next piece of this study you will all spend the next five minutes getting to know each other, and at the end you will write down two people you would most like to be partnered up with." There will be a waiting room full of magazines, books, a TV, snacks and drinks for the participants waiting for their turn. At the end of the "getting acquainted" task, I will collect the papers with each person's desired partners, read through them quickly, and pair the confederates up. The participant will be left alone, and will be approached by the experimenter who will say, "It seems like no one wanted to work with you, so we will proceed to the next activity with you working alone."

Those in the social rejection groups will be told this first and will then proceed on to their instigation tasks right after experiencing the social rejection. Each participant will complete these tasks one by one. The no social rejection groups (Groups 3 and 4) will be told they can get to know each other for about five minutes, and they will simply wait for further instruction. The no social rejection groups will be in a room with the other

participants in their condition, no need for confederates.

Instigation Manipulation

For those in the instigation groups (Groups 1 and 3), the computers and headphones will be given out and they will participate in *The Impossible Game* (2019). The participants in the social rejection groups (Group 1 and 2) will be in a room full of confederates. Since Group 2 does not experience instigation, the participants will be dismissed after the social rejection experience. Group 1 will experience the instigation as they are in the room with the confederates. The participants in the instigation groups will be told they are playing a computer game against someone random online. The computer game will be pulled up on the computer before the participants open it. As they are playing “against ” the random person (in reality there is a confederate sending messages to them via chat room), the messages on the chat room (inspired by Caprera et. al., (1983) will say things like: “You’re not doing it right,” “you’re really bad at this,” “why is this so hard for you?” etc. In the cases of Groups 2, 3, and 4, the confederates will not be in the room; the participants will each receive a computer and a pair of headphones. They will continue to play the game for about five minutes. The non-instigation groups (Groups 2 and 4) will listen to ocean noises (AmbienceTV, 2013) for five minutes, and will be told by experimenters to relax or close their eyes if they want to.

Measuring Identification with Fictional Characters

After the groups complete their social rejection and instigation parts, each participant will rejoin the other participants (if they had been with the confederates) within their condition and will watch a Youtube clip of a scene from the movie *The Joker* that exhibits violence (*The Joker*, 2019). This clip was chosen because the character of the Joker exemplifies antisocial behavior and shows the traits we are looking for in this experiment (depression, aggression, social rejection, fame-seeking, low self-esteem, narcissism). This clip will last four minutes and 57 seconds. After the clips have finished, the participants will all complete the Identification with Fictional Characters

Questionnaire. Then, each participants' questionnaires will be collected and kept locked away by the experimenter to ensure confidentiality. Finally, each participant will go through a debriefing, be given a debriefing form (see Appendix J) and will be told of any and all deception used within the experiment.

I am collecting all of the questionnaires and I am going to compare the means of each group's Identification with Fictional Characters. I am then going to compare each individual's personality trait questionnaire scores with their individual level of identification with fictional characters. Then, I will see where the largest correlation lies, and see which of my predictions are correct.

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Appendix A

US Census Bureau Demographic Questionnaire

“ 1. What is your sex? *Mark an X on line* ___ Male ___ Female

2. What is your date of birth?

___ Age in years Month___ Day___ Year _____

3. What is your race? *Check all that apply*

___ White

___ Vietnamese

___ Black or African American

___ Korean

___ American Indian or Alaskan Native

___ Japanese

___ Chinese

___ Native Hawaiian

___ Filipino

___ Samoan

___ Chamorro

___ Other Pacific Islander

___ Other Race: _____”

United States Census Bureau (2019). The American Community Survey.

Appendix B

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) (YES OR NO)

Raskin, R. N., & Hall, C. S. (1979).

Appendix C

Rosenberg Self-esteem scale

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle SA. If you agree with the statement, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD.

- | | | | | |
|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. | SA | A | D | |
| SD | | | | |
| 2.* At times, I think I am no good at all. | SA | A | D | |
| SD | | | | |
| 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people. | SA | A | D | |
| SD | | | | |
| 5.* I feel I do not have much to be proud of. | | | | SA |
| A | D | SD | | |
| 6.* I certainly feel useless at times. | | | | SA |
| A | D | SD | | |
| 7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. | SA | A | D | |
| SD | | | | |
| 8.* I wish I could have more respect for myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 9.* All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself. | | | | SA |
| A | D | SD | | |

Scoring: SA=3, A=2, D=1, SD=0. Items with an asterisk (*) are reverse scored, that is, SA=0, A=1, D=2, SD=3. Sum the scores for the 10 items. Maximum score is 30 and the higher the score, the higher the self-esteem.

Appendix D

The Desire for Fame scale (YES OR NO)

Gountas, J., Gountas S., Reeves, R. A., Moran, L., (2012).

“One day I would like to be famous.

I love the idea of becoming a famous person.

I would like to be famous because other people would perceive me as having more power and influence.

I would like to be a famous celebrity because it would give me a higher social status.

The lifestyle of famous celebrities appeals to me a lot.

If I were famous I would be happier.”

Appendix E

Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy scale

Chipts.ucla.edu. (2020).

1= Very Often or Very Confident, 2= Fairly Often or Fairly Confident , 3=Sometimes or Slightly Confident, 4=Once in a Great or While Not Very Confident, 5= Practically Never or Not Confident At All

1. How often do you feel inferior to most of the people you know?
2. How often do you have the feeling that there is nothing you can do well?
3. When in a group of people, do you have trouble thinking of the right things to talk about?
4. How often do you feel worried or bothered about what other people think of you?
5. In turning in a major assignment such as term paper, how often do you feel you did an excellent job on it? (R)
6. How confident are you that others see you as being physically appealing? (R)
7. Do you ever think that you are a worthless individual?
8. How much do you worry about how well you get along with other people?
9. When you make an embarrassing mistake or have done something that makes you look foolish, how long does it take you to get over it?
10. When you have to read an essay and understand it for a class assignment, how worried or concerned do you feel about it?
11. Compared with classmates, how often do you feel you must study more than they do to get the same grades?
12. Have you ever thought of yourself as physically uncoordinated?
13. How confident do you feel that someday the people you know will look up to you

and respect you? (R)

14. How often do you worry about criticisms that might be made of your work by your teacher or employer?

15. Do you often feel uncomfortable meeting new people?

16. When you have to write an argument to convince your teacher, who may disagree with your ideas, how concerned or worried do you feel about it?

17. Have you ever felt ashamed of your physique or figure?

18. Have you ever felt inferior to most other people in athletic ability?

19. Do you ever feel so discouraged with yourself that you wonder whether you are a worthwhile person?

20. Do you ever feel afraid or anxious when you are going into a room by yourself where other people have already gathered and are talking?

21. How often do you worry whether other people like to be with you?

22. How often do you have trouble expressing your ideas when you have to put them in writing as an assignment?

23. Do you often feel that most of your friends or peers are more physically attractive than you?

24. When involved in sports requiring physical coordination, are you often concerned that you will not do well?

25. How often do you dislike yourself?

26. How often do you feel self-conscious?

27. How often are you troubled with shyness?

28. How often do you have trouble understanding things you read for class

assignments?

29. Do you often wish or fantasize that you were better looking?

30. Have you ever thought that you lacked the ability to be a good dancer or do well at recreational activities involving coordination?

31. In general, how confident do you feel about your abilities? (R)

32. How much do you worry about whether other people regard you as a success or failure in your job or at school?

33. When you think that some of the people you meet might have an unfavorable opinion of you, how concerned or worried do you feel about it?

34. How often do you imagine that you have less scholastic ability than your classmates?

35. Have you ever been concerned or worried about your ability to attract members of the opposite sex?

36. When trying to do well at a sport and you know other people are watching, how rattled or flustered do you get?

Appendix F**Reactive/Proactive aggression questionnaire**

Raine, A., Dodge, K., Loeber, R., Gatzke-Kopp, L., Lynam, D., Reynolds, C.,
Stouthamer-Loeber, M., & Liu, J. (2006).

Instructions: There are times when most of us feel angry, or have done things we should not have done. Rate each of the items below by putting a circle around 0 (never), 1 (sometimes), or 2 (often). Do not spend a lot of time thinking about the items—just give your first response. Make sure you answer all the items (see below).

- How often have you..
1. Yelled at others when they have annoyed you 0 1 2
 2. Had fights with others to show who was on top 0 1 2
 3. Reacted angrily when provoked by others 0 1 2
 4. Taken things from other students 0 1 2
 5. Gotten angry when frustrated 0 1 2
 6. Vandalized something for fun 0 1 2
 7. Had temper tantrums 0 1 2
 8. Damaged things because you felt mad 0 1 2
 9. Had a gang fight to be cool 0 1 2
 10. Hurt others to win a game 0 1 2
 11. Become angry or mad when you don't get your way 0 1 2
 12. Used physical force to get others to do what you want 0 1 2
 13. Gotten angry or mad when you lost a game 0 1 2
 14. Gotten angry when others threatened you 0 1 2
 15. Used force to obtain money or things from others 0 1 2
 16. Felt better after hitting or yelling at someone 0 1 2

17. Threatened and bullied someone 0 1 2
18. Made obscene phone calls for fun 0 1 2
19. Hit others to defend yourself 0 1 2
20. Gotten others to gang up on someone else 0 1 2
21. Carried a weapon to use in a fight 0 1 2
22. Gotten angry or mad or hit others when teased 0 1 2
23. Yelled at others so they would do things for you 0 1 2

Appendix G

The identification with characters scale.

Igartua, J. J. (2010). Identification with characters and narrative persuasion through fictional feature films. (YES OR NO)

- I thought I was like the characters or very similar to them
- I thought that I would like to be like or act like the characters
- I identified with the characters
- I felt “as if I were one of the characters”
- I had the impression that I was really experiencing the story of the characters
- I felt as if I “formed part of ” the story
- I myself have experienced the emotional reactions of the characters
- I understood the characters’ way of acting, thinking or feeling
- I tried to see things from the point of view of the characters
- I tried to imagine the characters’ feelings, thoughts and reactions
- I understood the characters’ feelings or emotions .
- I was worried about what was going to happen to the characters
- I felt emotionally involved with the characters’ feelings
- I imagined how I would act if I found myself in the place of the protagonists

Appendix H

Patient Health Questionnaire

PHQ-9 Depression Scale. (n.d.).

Racial Discrimination of Gay Men In Online Dating

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Kean University Class of 2021

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Keywords: Online Dating, Racial Discrimination, Gay Men

Abstract

In hopes of promoting understanding of the supposedly welcoming gay community, the racial gap for power within the community must be brought to light. By understanding sexual racism, fetishization, and the dynamics within a gay relationship, a major problem arises that shows a trend in the dominance of white men within the society. The online gay dating scene is an area that is underrepresented in the field of research, as is any study of sexuality and sexual orientation. In this research, racism is analyzed by comparing the experience gay men of color have in the dating scene with the added effects of sexual racism. Experiences from gay men of color are documented through a series of interviews done in an extensive literature review. To understand the role that online dating applications such as Grindr were used to document any forms of blatant discrimination on users' profiles around the Kean University area.

Introduction

It is contradictory that a community of minorities would be so prejudicial, distasteful, and vile towards each other. A group of people who have been, and still are, looked down upon for expressing themselves by society for centuries, still have their own problems within their own group. Despite what is shown by the mainstream media, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community is not a safe place or free haven for many of those who identify as part of the queer world. In this paper, the gay male community will be of focus. To call it a single gay community would be wrong and would show the lack of diversity within the divided community (Epstein, 1999). According to Niels Teunis, a professor in Human Sexuality Studies at San Francisco State University, some wish to acknowledge this view “because they want to draw attention to the power imbalance that exists within the gay community” (Teunis, 2007). Some people, on the other hand, want to be called a single gay community to show those outsiders of the community how there are no divides within the community.

Many people wish not to show the diversity within the community in order to show an image that would further help their political agenda that would appeal to the mass public (Han 2009; Han & Choi, 2018; Teunis, 2007). This is prominent when it comes to advertisements that fight for gay rights, such as gay men fighting in the military to gay marriage. These advertisements usually just depict gay men as being wealthy, conservative, and white (Bérubé, 2001; Han 2009; Han & Choi, 2018; Seidman, 2002; Walters, 2014). This image is not something that just came into existence by the media but rather it started in the 1970s as a push for homogeneity by the gay community themselves (Armstrong, 2002). When referencing the same work of Elizabeth Armstrong who is a professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley and a writer of the gay movement of the 1900s, Teunis says that in order to become more homogenetic, the community must “assume(ing) whiteness in many of its main organizations” (Teunis, 2007). In order for the community to become one, the community tried to make themselves

appear as “white” as they can to the mass public.

However, throughout this paper, to cause less confusion, the author will refer to the gay community as a single gay community, or refer to a specific gay community. For example, the gay Asian community or the gay white community. While they are both communities of gay men, different groups face different problems within the community while some overlap with other groups. Many of the overlapping issues come from racial discrimination.

No matter what community someone goes to or looks at, there is always a form of racial discrimination. The gay community is no different. When dealing with racism in the gay community, gay white men and gay men of color will view the racism within the community in two completely different ways. To a gay man of color, “racism is racism”, no matter who is being racist or who is being discriminated against based on their race and ethnicity. However, gay white men will not see it as racism, but just as a “personal preference” by excluding gay men of color when looking for sexual and romantic partners (Han & Choi, 2018). It has been shown in many studies that a gay white male will prefer another white gay male rather than a gay man of color for their sexual and romantic partners (Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Teunis, 2007; Smith, 2014; Lundquist & Lin, 2015; Rafalow et al., 2017; Han & Choi, 2017).

When conducting his own research, Teunis found an interesting issue when asking gay white men about the racism in the gay community, getting one of two responses. The first would be a white gay male saying he has a non-white gay friend who only dates other non-white gay men; the combination that would always appear was an African American friend who only dated Asian men (Teunis, 2007). The second response given is how the gay white man will try to switch the question about “the perceived ‘homophobia’ of African American communities” (Teunis, 2007). For a gay white man, it is unlikely that all of them have been exposed to the sexuality problems within the African American community to make such a claim. This just goes to show and further exemplify how the words racism or race automatically, to white man, equated to something involving African Americans.

When looking at racism in the gay community, the focus must be on sexual

racism. High levels of racism within the gay community are targeted at black men, Latino men, and Asian men by gay white men (Bérubé, 2001; Choi et al. 2011; Colon, 2001; Han, 2007; Han et al., 2013; Ramirez, 2003; Ridge et al. 1999; Teunis, 2007). Chung-suk Han, professor of sociology and anthropology at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont, and Kyung-hee Choi, professor at the University of California in San Francisco, California, explains the concept of sexual racism created in 1976 by Charles Herbert Stember by saying it was “to examine racialized sexual desires between heterosexual men, the deep-rooted sexual stereotypes of black women and men lead to such desires, as well as the role that such stereotypes play in preventing interracial relationships” (Han & Choi, 2018). Sexual racism shows that these stereotypes lead to the fetishization of racial groups for sexual pleasure and used the stereotypes to push away potential partners just based on race.

The sexual fetishization of race is a huge issue for gay men of color that plagues the gay community. Firstly, the roles within a gay relationship must be looked at and understood. There are three main roles in a relationship that gay men identify as: they are top, bottom, and versatile. While they do refer to the sexual positions in which the men take, they also have more of an unlining meaning to them. According to Teunis, “a top is expecting to take initiative and be concerned about the sexual pleasure of the bottom, whereas the bottom literally receives the pleasure more passively” (Teunis, 2007). It indicates a power relationship (Teunis, 2007) between those two is that the bottom is in control and the top is there to make sure his bottom feels good and safe.

When race is involved, the roles get changed. When Teunis interviewed a 48-year-old African American man, the man explains his experience with a white man and why he does not go out with white men who identify as tops. Paul, the African American man, says that he has had times when he was a bottom and that the top, who would always be a white top, would call him racially derogatory terms while being in a sexual act. Paul goes on to talk about a guy he met online that seemed okay until he invited Paul to his home to engage in sexual acts and called him a racial term. Paul says he always turns these men down, but for some reason,

he said he went to the guy's house. Paul said the guy was excited, so he let it happen even though he knew it was not okay (Teunis, 2007).

Teunis also interviewed many other gay African American men, such as a 43-year-old named Thomas, who has had white men who will only care about the size of his penis. Thomas has said that he has had a white man walk up to him and ask about his penis size and not even ask about his name (Teunis, 2007). The man instantly becomes objectified by the white man, as if the body is just disregarded for the man's penis. Thomas also went on to say that the white men will assume he is just a top. If he said he was a switch, they would end the conversation and walk away. The white men only cared if he was top based on the stereotype of black men having a large penis. If he was anything but a full top or did not have a large penis, the white man would have no interest in him.

Going back to how Teunis first explained the dynamics of the roles a top and bottom play in the relationship, it can be seen that his statement would work if the two partners were of the same race. When the partners are of different races, as it is in the cases when talking about the two African American men, that the white man will always be put in the power role by forcing their African American partner into a role without giving them room to want something different. If a black man is to be in the top position, he must be big and rough, and yet he must always do what will make the white man who is in the bottom position feel good at all times. If a black man is to be in the bottom position, he will be controlled by the white man and be subjected to verbal, racial derogatory terms in the name of race play.

In research done by Han and Choi, they interviewed a gay Latino man about the problem of the desirability of whiteness. The Latino man said, "It's like the more European that you have, the better off you are. And then the more like indigenous you look, it's, it's not the same" (as cited in Han & Choi, 2018). For a gay Latino, he has to look more European and less native. He must have had a lighter skin tone and be able to pass off as white to be considered desirable as a sexual partner to the larger gay white community.

Gay Asian men are also highly subjected to sexual racism. Gay Asian men

are considered unattractive in the west by the large white gay community and are always perceived as feminine, making these men highly subjected to “sissyphobia” (Ayres, 1999; Chesebro, 2001; Drummond 2005; Han, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010; Phua 2002). Sissyphobia is when gay masculine men have a hatred towards gay men who express more feminine because they hate the stereotypical of the gay feminine man which the media portrays. These men who have sissyphobia are usually gay men who exert hypermasculinity to show that they are a “man’s man”, and not a tiny feminine man. Those who have this hatred towards more feminine gay men act this way as a sign of inner homophobia.

Since the stereotype of gay Asian men is that they are feminine, these men are automatically considered to be the bottom and be submissive. Han, Proctor, and Choi noticed two facts during their research; one, that some gay Asian men would try to pass as more masculine or even non-Asian, and two, some gay Asian men would try and distance themselves from other gay Asian men and only wanted to be associated with gay white men (Han et al., 2013). The reason was that, as one person they interviewed noted, “Physical beauty, the standard is the model, and all the models are white” (as cited in Han et al., 2013). The participant understood that in the large gay community, physical beauty was the most important aspect of attraction when a gay man looked for a partner. However, the standard of beauty was based on the models that are being used and shown in the gay community. The problem is that all the models are white men who all follow the same gym-body look. In order to seem more appealing to gay white men, some gay Asian men tried to fit this standard of beauty, resulting in them pushing away from their own racial and ethnic groups.

In 2009, Han noticed that most of the gay Asian men he spoke to during an experiment understood that the hostility by highly masculine gay men comes from the racial stigma that Asian men were submissive and feminine (Han, 2009). These gay Asian men, instead of trying to fit in with the rest of the gay masculine community, decided to embrace the stereotype that Asian men are feminine and became drag queens. Drag queens, however, face discrimination within the gay

community because they are seen as failed men who symbolized the highly feminine gay man (Berkowitz et al., 2007; Han, 2009; Rupp & Taylor, 2003; Schacht & Underwood, 2004). Even though more discrimination can happen, there is still an upside to being a drag queen. As Han points out “gay Asian drag queens understand that being in drag is a way for them to gain notoriety and social capital in the larger gay community” (Han, 2009). By being a successful drag queen, a gay man can move up the social hierarchy in the gay community. In the sense with a gay Asian man, it can make him more desirable as a partner and can move him up to gain new opportunities within the gay community that he would not have been able to get before. Han also notes, that being a drag queen has helped gay Asian men feel more comfortable with their bodies and improve their self-esteem (Han, 2009).

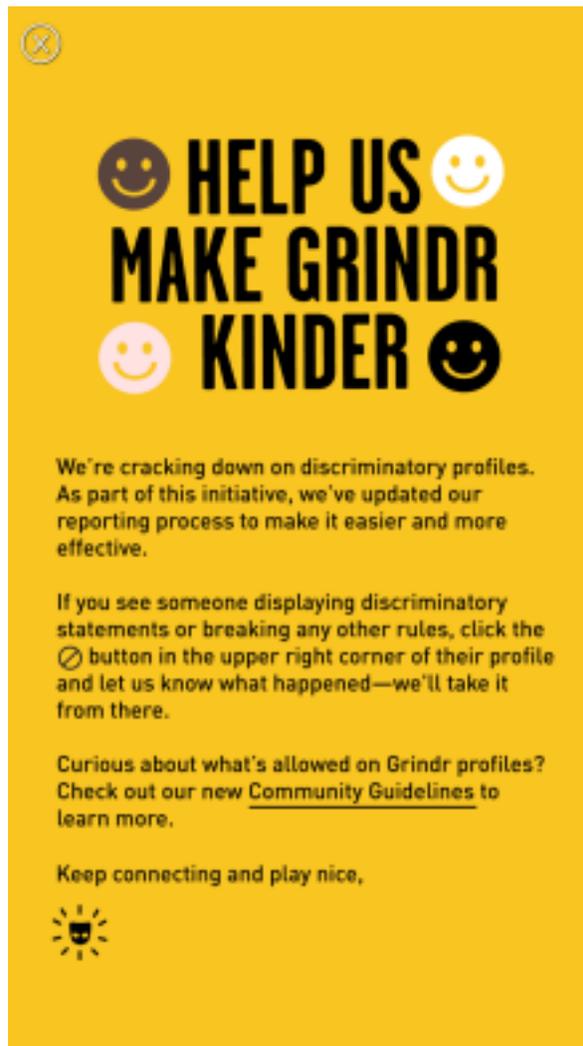
Method and Methodology

Looking at the research, the majority of the researchers used the method of asking gay men who went out to gay clubs looking for a partner about their experiences with racism in the gay dating environment. However, my question is whether the same racial discrimination issues are faced when using online dating websites. For this experiment, I used two websites. The first being the popular gay dating website named Grindr and the second being the website named Douchebags of Grindr. Grindr is a gay dating website that allows someone to chat with other gay men in their area. The phone application would find gay men, transgender men and women, bisexual men, and men who want to be sexual with other men. The website Douchebags of Grindr is a website where people can post screenshots of users of Grindr whose profile shows blatant discrimination or rudeness.

Results

When using the site myself, I did not find anyone who would say on their profile that they exclude a particular group of people. What I did find were people who would state what they were specifically looking for in terms of physical traits. These traits would say that these gay men are looking for would be “prefer black,”

“fem bttm only” or “only looking for latinos.” These traits would not show any direct



racial discrimination but would show direct racial exclusivity.

When going on the website, Douchebags of Grindr, anyone can see that there are plenty of racial discrimination profiles that exist on Grindr. However, Grindr has stated that they do not tolerate discrimination on their dating website. When opening the dating website application on a phone for the first time, the user will get a message that tells them to report any profiles that are “displaying discriminatory statements” in order to make the website a better environment. However, my experiment and gathering information based on gay men’s dating profiles did not show as much racial discrimination as the other researchers have found.

Conclusion

There is, without a question, the problem of racial discrimination within the gay community. Researchers have found that gay men of color have been subjected to racial sexualization and fetishization. As stated before, most of the researchers went out and asked gay men of color about the racial discrimination they faced. In my experiment, I used online dating profiles as my method of research. However, the dating profiles did not show as much racial discrimination as what is reported by those who go out to clubs; that does not mean there is no racism on online dating sites. There are many reasons as to why my research came out differently than that of other researchers.

First, I only used one dating website called Grindr. There are many different dating websites and some are only for gay men. Different websites have their own ways and means of dealing with discrimination. There can be one website where there is no racial discrimination at all and there could be another website that completely excuses one's race or ethnicity. A different dating website can have more or less racial discrimination depending on the website.

Secondly, people on a dating website can lie on their profiles. Someone's profile may be fine, but when talking to them they can show their true colors. Over half of the profiles on Grindr do not show their face, have a picture that is not of a person, or just do not have a profile picture at all. Lying on a profile happens too often these days. If people can pretend to be a whole different person online, there is nothing stopping them from pretending to be kind and not racist upfront.

Thirdly, my location plays a factor in the outcome. Since the dating application uses the users' location to find other gay men, location plays a major role. For me, the men who would pop up for me would be those in the New Jersey and New York area. Most of the research I read about was done on the west coast of the United States in cities like San Francisco. If I went down to the south of New Jersey or even west, closer to Pennsylvania, I would have gotten different profiles and users to pop up. These people could behave and act very differently than those in my area.

Lastly, my race plays a part in my own findings. Just because someone does not exclude a race on their profile does not mean they aren't racist. What they say to people in direct messages, in DMs, may be very different. As a white man, I did not have anyone message me calling me a racial slur or making derogatory remarks based on my race. My research has major flaws in terms of using my own picture on my profile. If the picture I had used was from a racial minority, then it would be highly likely that I would receive some racially derogatory messages.

Further and more in-depth research would need to be done in order to see the differences and similarities between racial discrimination in person and online. Either way, racial discrimination is still prevalent in the gay community. This is an issue that must be tackled from the inside and those within the community must try to make it changes.

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Future Forward

Prepared by Giancarlos Miranda, B.F. A. Graphic Design, Kean University, Class of 2021

With Denise Anderson, MPS, Kean University

Keywords: College, Planning, Future, Mobile, Stress

Abstract

As high school students begin to lay the groundwork for their careers, many are under pressure to succeed. According to the Global Organization of Stress, the number one health concern for high school students is stress. The added pressure of making an impression in high school and dealing with family circumstances can present emotions that can be hard to manage. A survey of high school students revealed that students are unsure how to plan for the future, what path they should take, and if they're doing it for happiness, money, family, or others. "Future Forward" is an online platform providing career resources for high school students, parents, and teachers. Its purpose is to alleviate stressful emotions associated with career choices.



MICHAEL GRAVES COLLEGE
 ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Problem

How to reduce stress in students graduating high school?

Research

"Stress is the #1 health concern for high school students."
 - *Global Organization of 50+ nations (G.O.S.S.)*



54% of teens have diet-related health problems due to stress.



50% of teens have felt too exhausted due to stress.



- 2014 survey by American Psychological Association

Insight

Why do high school students struggle with getting ahead?

"They grow up learning to fear failure and chance."
 - *Thomas Corry*

"No idea what kind of career choices they want to take."
 - *Jennifer Blaine*

"The pressure and feeling of being overwhelmed."
 - *Samantha Carter*

Solution

Inform high school students on career choices and opportunities.



Future Forward

Informing high school students on career choices

About

Future Forward is a mobile application providing career resources and job opportunities for high school students as well as their parents and teachers. Its purpose is to alleviate stressful emotions associated with career choices and expose students to different jobs and opportunities.

Survey

What do high school students stress about?



"Overdue assignments, high expectations, time consuming stuff, the pressure of the future."
 - *College Freshman, My way old*

How do high school students ready for college stress about?



"I just endure it and try to get through what needs to be done."
 - *High School Sophomore, My way old*

When do high school students start planning?



"Especially getting ready for all those college applications."
 - *High School Senior, My way old*

Insights

- For some children, they don't know how to manage stress well, and it becomes more challenging to manage as they get older with additional problems such as family finances, grades, and bullying at school
- High school students don't always know what their planning for the future such as what path they should take or if their motivation is for happiness, money, or to satisfy others
- Some students are too focused on grades, social appearances, and clubs that they become increasingly disinterested from planning their futures

Takepoint



Interests

Students select interests when building their profile. This is to provide an accurate and personal experience.



Explore

The explore page will be filled with relevant information and other resources depending on the student's interests.



Chat

Professors are able to be in contact with their students and provide the connections and resources for them.

Homelessness, Dehumanization, and the Role of Empathy

Prepared by Christina Esker, M. A. Forensic Psychology, Kean University, Class of 2021

With Verneda P. Hamm Baugh, Ph.D., Kean University

Keywords: Dehumanization, Empathy, Homelessness, Disgust

Abstract

Dehumanization reflects a psychological process that denies individuals and groups the positive traits and attributes that make them human. Those experiencing homelessness are frequently dehumanized and perceived as social outcasts in American society. This study demonstrates the tendency of others to dehumanize individuals that are homeless and how increased empathy changes how this social outgroup is perceived. Results revealed that when exposed to information that humanizes a man experiencing homelessness, participants' levels of empathy increased, and levels of disgust decreased. However, general attitudes and beliefs of homelessness were unchanged. The implications of increasing empathy levels for this social outgroup are discussed.

Introduction

Inhumane treatment, degradation, and horrific acts of violence are common occurrences in the lives of individuals affected by homelessness. Poverty and severe mental illness frequently force these individuals to live on the streets, in cars, or homeless shelters plagued by violence. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2020), over 567,000 people were homeless in the United States on any given night in January 2019, with over 98,000 of those experiencing chronic homelessness. Negative perceptions of people that are homeless are a global issue, and these individuals are the subjects of extreme forms of dehumanization and discrimination.

As described by Haslam (2006), dehumanization is a phenomenon whereby a person strips another individual of the characteristics that make them uniquely human. Similarly, Harris and Fiske (2011) defined *dehumanized perception* as the failure to perceive another as a human being with an actual mind and emotional experiences. Rather than perceiving them as people, they are perceived as objects or animals associated with disgust. Empirical research has consistently documented negative and dehumanized perceptions of people impacted by homelessness. Additionally, dehumanization may be a mechanism that enables a person to morally disengage and perpetuate inhumane acts against this vulnerable population.

This research study aimed to document the public's tendency to dehumanize individuals that are homeless and to determine whether empathy plays a role in lowering levels of dehumanization. This study hypothesized that participants provided with a limited narrative would score higher on dehumanization and lower on empathy than participants provided with a personalized narrative.

Literature Review

Perceptions of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

The public's perceptions of individuals affected by extreme poverty and homelessness and their broader thoughts and attitudes toward homelessness are quite diverse. Dittmeier and colleagues (2018) conducted a study to examine the varying perspectives on homelessness held by various genders and generational groups. The participants in this study consisted of 455 university students, most of whom were female (69%) and in the Millennial generation group (60%).

Participants responded to an online survey eliciting their opinions on housing and economic factors contributing to homelessness. The survey also asked participants questions regarding their perceptions of persons that are homeless. These included the beliefs that homeless persons are dangerous and that personal attributes like laziness or poor choices contribute to or are the cause of their homelessness. Researchers also

inquired about participants' prior experiences volunteering or contributing to efforts to end homelessness and their willingness or intention to participate in these activities in the future.

Dittmeier et al. (2018) analyzed results by gender and generational age group, noting that most participants (over two-thirds) belonged to the Millennial generation group. Millennials were also found to have significantly more negative attitudes toward people experiencing homelessness than the other generations in the study. In comparison to older generations, Millennials expressed a greater belief that negative personal characteristics such as laziness or irresponsible behavior contributed to homelessness and that homeless individuals were generally to blame for their situation. In contrast, older generations exhibited less personal judgment regarding factors that contribute to homelessness. Older generations attributed greater blame to factors such as a lack of familial support and a scarcity of affordable housing. These findings suggest that Millennials have significantly less empathy for people impacted by homelessness than previous generations. They may also lack an awareness of other environmental factors contributing to the homeless problem.

In addition to age group, gender was also analyzed in this study (Dittmeier et al., 2018). Consistent with prior research, females demonstrated greater empathy and support for housing and community programs than males when asked about factors that contribute to homelessness. Females were also more likely to report that they would live in a community with shelters or housing for the homeless. This response could indicate that females have a greater awareness of the environmental and social hardships facing homeless populations. Furthermore, females may report greater support for homeless shelters due to their increased scores on empathy, which could indicate greater tolerance for the homeless population than males.

This study exposes the critical need for increased education on homelessness among the Millennial generation group and males. These data also add to the existing literature on how different generational groups and genders perceive this disadvantaged population.

The Role of Disgust

Public policies addressing homelessness receive varying levels of support from the public, and the public has frequently backed policies that both aid and criminalize the homeless. Clifford and Piston (2017) hypothesized that disgust sensitivity would contribute to this contradictory support for policies that help the homeless and policies that seek to exclude them from the public and society. They described disgust as an evolutionary adaption designed to keep humans away from objects that can potentially cause illness or toxicity. According to Clifford and Piston (2017), disgust sensitivity concerning homelessness elicits a desire for physical separation from persons that are

homeless, as they are frequently viewed as unclean or contaminated (Clifford & Piston, 2017).

In order to research the phenomenon of disgust sensitivity, Clifford and Piston (2017) conducted a study in two waves. In Study 1, researchers collected quantitative data from 861 participants, including participants' attitudes toward people that are homeless and their general disgust sensitivity to pathogens. The second wave randomly assigned subjects to one of four stimulus conditions and assessed their attitudes toward two exclusionary policies and two assistance policies to the homeless. The authors recruited 504 subjects for Study 2 via Amazon's Mechanical Turk; as with the previous study, researchers assessed attitudes toward the same four homeless policies and participants' pathogen disgust sensitivity.

Clifford and Piston (2017) discovered that in both samples, participants that rated higher on disgust sensitivity were equally likely to support policies that assisted people in transitioning out of homelessness. While disgust sensitivity was found to be significantly associated with participants' support for exclusionary policies and a desire to keep homeless people at a distance, it did not diminish participants' support for aid policies. These findings are significant because they imply that disgust is a motivating factor behind policies that keep the homeless at bay and out of public space. The public's support for exclusionary policies and negative attitudes toward the homeless does not negate the public's desire to assist the homeless.

Positive Imagined Interactions

Discrimination against social outgroups is a significant issue in the United States, and it is well-known that individuals that are homeless experience this type of exclusion frequently. Hodson et al. (2015) investigated whether mental simulations of imagined contact can help reduce prejudicial attitudes toward outgroups. Researchers randomly assigned participants to one of three groups: the control group was instructed to visualize a neutral, outdoor scene; the imagined contact (IC) group was instructed to visualize themselves having a relaxed, positive interaction with a homeless stranger; and the elaborated imagined contact (EIC) group were instructed to visualize themselves having a relaxed, positive interaction with a stranger who is homeless. Hodson et al. (2015) assessed disgust sensitivity, intergroup disgust sensitivity, intergroup anxiety, feelings of trust, and attitudes toward the homeless. The authors discovered that the EIC group rated the homeless as more trustworthy and that both the EIC and IC groups experienced less disgust than controls. These findings are an essential contribution to the existing body of knowledge regarding discrimination against the homeless. Additionally, they may pave the way for novel clinical interventions to reduce dehumanization and prejudice toward social outgroups such as the homeless.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 423 people was recruited via Facebook to participate in an online survey. In this study, only participants residing in the United States and those with completed surveys were included in the analysis. Also, a disproportionate number of respondents were female, so male participants were excluded from the analysis. Thus, the total number of participants included in the sample was reduced to 270. The majority of participants were between the ages of 25-39 (38.1%) and 40-59 (44.8%), with the remainder in the age range of 18-25 (7.8%) or over 60 (9.3%). Participants were primarily white, consisting of 85.9% of the sample (n = 232). More than three-quarters of the sample (87%) reported attending college, while 34.4% hold a bachelor's degree and 23% hold a graduate or professional degree. Most participants lived in suburban communities (74.8%), and only 5.2 % reported living in an urban setting (n = 14). Very few participants have experienced homelessness themselves (7.8%, n = 21); however, 25.2% (n = 68) reported having a friend or family member who has been homeless.

Materials

Two narratives were used in conjunction with an image of a man who is homeless. Narratives included either limited, non-personalized information (name, major life events, how he came to be homeless), and both groups viewed the same image. The survey consisted of demographic questions (gender, age, level of education, type of community residing in) and personal experiences with homelessness. A series of questions were asked to measure dehumanization, empathy, general attitudes and beliefs, and likely behavior toward the homeless (altruism, avoidance, demeaning).

Procedures

A convenience sample was recruited via Facebook and linked to a survey on qualtrics.com. Participants were randomly assigned to two groups: the limited narrative group (n = 141) or the personalized narrative group (n = 129). They were instructed to view the image of a homeless man, read the accompanying narrative, and complete a series of questions measuring perceptions of the homeless, dehumanization, empathy, and demographic information. Upon completion, participants were then debriefed, informed of the fictional nature of the narrative, and linked to the factual story of the man in the image.

Results

Analysis

An independent samples t-test was conducted to test whether participants given the humanized narrative will rate higher on empathy and lower on dehumanization than the limited narrative group. There was a significant difference in empathy scores for the personalized group ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.39$) and the limited narrative group ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.71$) conditions; $t(264) = 4.680$, $p < .001$.

There was not a significant difference in total scores for dehumanization for the personalized group ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.20$) and the limited narrative group ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.45$) conditions; the results approached but failed to reach significance $t(268) = 1.91$, $p = .057$. However, when disgust/repulsion was analyzed separately, there was a significant difference between the personalized group ($M = 1.32$, $SD = .673$) and limited narrative group ($M = 1.57$, $SD = .856$) conditions $t(262) = 2.75$, $p = .006$.

These results suggest that when people are exposed to information that humanizes individuals affected by homelessness, they feel more empathy and less disgust for this vulnerable population and the suffering and hardships they have experienced.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of empathy on people's tendency to dehumanize individuals that are homeless. This hypothesis was largely supported. The results demonstrated that when exposed to information that humanizes a homeless man, the participants' levels of empathy increased, and levels of disgust decreased. However, the personalized narrative did not impact the total level of dehumanization, which included levels of both disgust and anger. One explanation for this is that disgust, rather than anger/contempt, might be a more reliable indicator of dehumanization.

The present study found no significant differences in the general attitudes and beliefs of the homeless when presented with the personalized narrative. These findings suggest that humanizing the homeless does not affect the overall perception of this social outgroup, even when empathy is evoked. Additionally, results also demonstrate that humanizing the homeless does not impact a person's likelihood of giving to the homeless or their likelihood of avoiding or demeaning the homeless.

Some limitations of this study should be noted. First, the participants in this study were predominantly white, educated females who lived in suburban communities; thus, the sample was not representative of the general population. Second, the measurement to assess dehumanization may not be a valid measurement, which might explain why this variable failed to reach significance. Further research would benefit from valid,

reliable measures to assess dehumanization and additional methods of evoking empathy for people that are homeless, potentially leading to increased awareness for the inhumane treatment of the homeless and education aimed at increasing empathy for this group.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT

Title of Project: Attitudes Perceptions of the Homeless

Researcher: Christina Esker

Department: School of Psychology

Email: eskerc@kean.edu

Faculty Advisor: Verneda P. Hamm Baugh, Ph.D.

Department: School of Psychology

Contact Information: Telephone (908) 737-5874 Email: vbaugh@kean.edu

Invitation to Participate:

You are being asked to participate in a research study. It is my hope to gather information about the current attitudes and beliefs of America's homeless population.

Subject Selection:

Approximately 200 subjects were approached and invited to participate. Participants must be at least 18 years of age

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of the study is to investigate people's general perceptions and beliefs of the homeless. The potential goals of this study are to learn if certain attitudes or beliefs are associated with the portrayal of the homeless.

Procedures: You will be asked to view an image of a homeless man and read a description that may contain sensitive information. You will then be asked to complete an 18 question survey. Questions will pertain to your attitudes and beliefs as they relate to the image and description as well as non-identifying demographic information. This survey will take approximately 5 to 15 minutes to complete.

Participation:

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time

without penalty.

Potential Risks:

Risks associated with participation in this study are low to moderate. The image and/or the accompanying description may be sensitive to some participants, particularly those that have experienced homelessness. Potential risks include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, anxiety, or stress associated with viewing and reading about a homeless individual, prior experience with someone who has been homeless, or personal experience with being homeless

Potential Benefits:

No potential benefits will be experienced directly by you, but you will aid in helping expand our knowledge of this topic.

Financial obligation:

There will be no financial obligation to the respondent.

Compensation:

There is no compensation associated with this study.

Confidentiality:

No names will be associated with the data collected. All data in the form of printed documents will be stored in a locked cabinet, while electronic files will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive, also stored in a locked cabinet. Data will be kept until the completion of the Fall 2020 semester (approximately mid-December).

Questions/Comments:

You can contact the primary investigator or faculty advisor for questions about this study

Primary Investigator: Christina Esker, (732) 343-5063, esker@kean.edu

Faculty Advisor: Verneda Hamm Baugh, Ph.D., (908) 737-5874, vbaugh@kean.edu

Agreement to Participate:

Please sign and print your name where indicated below if you agree to participate in the study. Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the information provided in this document, and that you agree to participate in the study. If at any time you have questions or concerns regarding this study, you should feel free to contact the

primary investigator or faculty advisor at the telephone numbers or email addresses provided in this document.

Q1.2 By selecting "I agree", I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years old and that I voluntarily consent to the conditions described above.

I agree

I do not agree

Appendix B

DEBRIEFING FORM

Title of Project: Attitudes Toward the Homeless

Researcher: Christina Esker

Department: School of Psychology

Contact Information: Email: eskercc@kean.edu

Faculty Advisor: Verneda P. Hamm Baugh, Ph.D.

Department: School of Psychology

Contact Information: Telephone (908) 737-5874, Email: vbaugh@kean.edu

Thank-you statement: Thank you for electing to participate in this study. Your participation is very important to understanding this topic.

Recap Statement: The purpose of this study is to investigate the general attitudes and beliefs people have of the homeless. The potential goals of this study are to learn if induced empathy impacts these attitudes, and whether a relationship exists between certain demographical information and the way this marginalized population is perceived.

The image in this study is of a real man named David Magadini, and he is a homeless man from Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The story of this man's life in the long version of this survey is fictional; it is a compilation of several true stories of people that have lived on the streets. The author retrieved his name, age, and image from an article in The Berkshire Edge, dated January 7, 2015. The article can be found here:

<https://theberkshireedge.com/david-magadini-jail-sentence-delayed-homeless-man-still-street/>

Compensation/Treatment: There is no direct reward or compensation for participating in this study.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the primary investigator or faculty advisor.

Primary investigator: Christina Esker. (732) 343-5063, eskercc@kean.edu**Faculty Advisor:** Verneda P. Hamm Baugh. (908) 737-5874, vbaugh@kean.edu

Appendix C

Q2.1 Do you currently live in the United States?

- Yes
- No

Skip To: End of Survey If You currently live in the United States? = No

Q2.2 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Q2.3 What is your age?

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 39
- 40 - 59
- 60 or older

Q2.4 How would you describe yourself? Please select all that apply.

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other

Q2.5 What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- Less than a high school diploma
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- Some college, no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate degree (master's, doctorate or professional degree)

Q2.6 What is your current employment status?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

Q3.1 Please view the image and read the description below.

This man is homeless and lives on the streets in Massachusetts. He is regularly seen with his cart on Main St. in downtown Great Barrington. He has been homeless for 15 years.

Q3.2 Have you had any of these experiences with homelessness?

Check all that apply.

- Been homeless
- Have a friend, family member, or acquaintance who has been homeless
- Given money, food, or clothing to a homeless person on the street
- Had a negative experience with a homeless person
- Had a positive experience with a homeless person

Q3.3 Keeping the image and description of the homeless man in mind, please rate the extent you feel the following emotions:

I feel compassion or sympathy:

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A moderate amount
- A great deal

Q3.4 I feel disgust or repulsion:

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A moderate amount

- A great deal

Q3.5 I feel warmth or affection:

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A moderate amount
- A great deal

3.6 I feel anger or contempt:

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A moderate amount
- A great deal

Q3.7 Keeping the image and description of the homeless man in mind, please indicate the extent to which you believe....

Homeless people use the system when they could pay their own way

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q3.8 You cannot reason with a homeless person

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree

- Strongly agree

Q3.9 Resources that go to homeless people take away from resources from people like me

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q3.10 Homeless people have very different values than people like me

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q3.11 Homeless people only care about themselves

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q3.12 Homeless people infect outdoor areas

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral

- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q3.13 Homeless people have likely committed felonies

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q3.14 Homeless people are lazy

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q3.15 If homeless people were smarter, they would not be homeless

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q3.16 To what extent are you likely to behave in the following ways toward the homeless:

Say bad things about homeless people (directly or to others)

- Not at all likely

- Slightly likely
- Somewhat likely
- Moderately likely
- Very likely

Q3.17 Offer a homeless person money, clothing, or food

- Not at all likely
- Slightly likely
- Somewhat likely
- Moderately likely
- Very likely

Q3.18 Go out of your way to avoid a homeless person

- Not at all likely
- Slightly likely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Moderately likely
 - Very likely

Q3.19 Act aggressively or commit violence against a homeless person

- Not at all likely
- Slightly likely
- Somewhat likely
- Moderately likely
- Very likely

Q4.1 This is David, a 68-year-old homeless man from Massachusetts. David was born into a white, suburban, middle class family. His father owned the local mom-and-pop grocery store, his mother was a homemaker, and he was the youngest of 3 boys.

In 1967, at the age of 15, David's family suffered a terrible loss when his oldest brother was drafted into the military and later killed in action during the Vietnam War. The loss had a huge impact on him and his family, and David later became estranged from his parents and surviving brother.

After graduating high school, David began working at a local plant manufacturing autoparts. He married his high school sweetheart, Barbara, at the age of 23, and their only son was born two years later. David was a devoted husband and father, and over

the years his work ethic helped to elevate him to a management position within the plant.

In 2005, David's wife of 30 years died of cancer. In the midst of his grief, his only son was killed in a fatal automobile accident five months later. Still struggling with unresolved trauma and loss, he was laid off from his position at the manufacturing plant when they closed their doors a year later. David has been homeless ever since.

Q4.2 Have you had any of these experiences with homelessness?

Check all that apply.

- Have been homeless
- Have a friend, family member, or acquaintance who has been homeless
- Given money, food, or clothing to a homeless person on the street
- Had a negative experience with a homeless person
- Had a positive experience with a homeless person

Q4.3 Keeping David's story and picture in mind, rate the extent that you feel the following emotions:

I feel compassion or sympathy:

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A moderate amount
- A great deal

Q4.4 I feel disgust or repulsion:

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A moderate amount
- A great deal

Q4.5 I feel warmth or affection:

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A moderate amount

- A great deal

Q4.6 I feel anger or contempt:

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A moderate amount
- A great deal

Q4.7 Keeping David's story and picture in mind, please indicate the extent to which you believe....

Homeless people use the system when they could pay their own way

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.8 You cannot reason with a homeless person

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.9 Resources that go to homeless people take away from resources from people like me

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral

- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.10 Homeless people have very different values than people like me

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
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- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.11 Homeless people only care about themselves

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- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.12 Homeless people infect outdoor areas

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- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.13 Homeless people have likely committed felonies

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
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- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.14 Homeless people are lazy

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.15 If homeless people were smarter, they would not be homeless

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Q4.16 To what extent are you likely to behave in the following ways toward the homeless:

Say bad things about homeless people (directly or to others)

- Not at all likely
- Slightly likely
- Somewhat likely
- Moderately likely
- Very likely

Q4.17 Offer a homeless person money, clothing, or food

- Not at all likely
- Slightly likely

- Somewhat likely
- Moderately likely
- Very likely

Q4.18 Go out of your way to avoid a homeless person

- Not at all likely
- Slightly likely
- Somewhat likely
- Moderately likely
- Very likely

Q4.19 Act aggressively or commit violence against a homeless person

- Not at all likely
- Slightly likely
- Somewhat likely
- Moderately likely
- Very likely

Schizophrenia and Prison Life

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Abstract

This literature review is meant to highlight individuals with schizophrenia within the prison system. Evidence from researchers suggests that there are also difficulties gathering data on such individuals when said individuals also have paranoid schizophrenia, as cooperation and blatant refusal to participate is common in these individuals.

Introduction

This paper will focus on incarcerated individuals who have Schizophrenia, the population sample in the prison facilities, data that have been gathered from studies on such individuals, an overview of the disorder, inaccurate media portrayals of the disorder, alongside the difficulties in collecting data on such individuals.

Overview of Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a major disorder that is identifiable via constant episodes of psychosis, a break with reality. It is a disorder that heavily affects the individuals' perception of reality, capacity to think clearly, severely affecting the ability to feel and behave appropriately as well. Schizophrenia is classified as a psychotic disorder within the DSM, and other disorders, specifically Bipolar type 1 can be mistaken for Schizophrenia due to the similarities of psychosis symptoms. However, the two mental disorders are different from each other regardless.

In order for an individual to be diagnosed with Schizophrenia, they must first meet the criteria as stated in the DSM (Ciccarelli, et. al 2014). The individual must exhibit two, or more symptoms over a course of one month and those symptoms must be present during that time as well to be considered for a diagnosis of Schizophrenia (Ciccarelli, et. al 2014). Delusions, hallucinations are two of the symptoms that are more commonly presented in schizophrenia. Disorganized speech, which are abnormalities that can make verbal communication difficult to comprehend is present as well. For example, their words may sound like 'gibberish'. They may speak in an unclear manner, say random things that are unrelated in a conversation topic, spout illogical topics, or change from one subject to another rapidly. (Ciccarelli, et. al 2014). The fourth symptom of Schizophrenia is disorganized and catatonic behavior. For example: generally unpredictable or inappropriate emotional responses, poor control of impulsive behaviors along with a steep decrease in daily functioning. Normal daily routines, such as bathing and other simple self care, are abandoned.

Negative symptoms such as reduced emotional expression and avolition are present as well. Avolition is generally the lack of motivation or capacity to complete tasks that have a time limit (examples can range from school assignments to paying bills to a work project deadline to name just a few). Avolition can not only be found in individuals with Schizophrenia but also individuals that have depression or even Bipolar disorder as well.

Demographics of Schizophrenic inmates in the prison system

Over half of all individuals incarcerated in jails and prisons have a mental health problem (Ramsey, et. al, 2011). In regards to Schizophrenia, little to no attention is given

to incarcerated people experiencing psychotic symptoms or a psychotic episode for the first time. Criticism of the results of early research of individuals with schizophrenia focuses on considerable bias involving the over-inclusion of chronically ill patients, and the fact that a majority of the psychosocial conditions that correspond with schizophrenia amass before receiving treatment (Ramsey et. al, 2011).

Ramsey, along with several other authors conducted a study of first time psychosis arrestees, although their population selection was a limited sample. Despite extremely high incarceration rates in the first-episode samples that authors Ramsey, et. al have gathered , it should be taken into consideration that that sample consisted largely of young, African American males, most of whom did complete high school, and their lack of education also placed them at high risk for incarceration (Ramsey, et. al, 2011). Socioeconomic status and factors are what made the authors population sample possible, although it is still limiting in terms of gender, age and race, as the study did not include women, adults, and individuals of varying other races.

Inaccuracies of in media on Schizophrenia and the reality of the disorder
Violence is sometimes directed at family, and friends, and mostly in private. Drug and alcohol abuse may lead to violence in schizophrenic individuals. It should be noted that violence is not a symptom of Schizophrenia, and many individuals with schizophrenia are far more likely to cause harm to themselves rather than another individual a majority of the time (Schizophrenia and Poverty, Crime and Violence, 2010).

The type of crimes that those with schizophrenia would be incarcerated for is not usually violence or homicide, but rather for causing misdemeanors instead. A great majority of individuals who have been incarcerated and are diagnosed with schizophrenia in jail have been charged with misdemeanors such as trespassing (Schizophrenia and Poverty, Crime and Violence, 2010). Those who discontinue their medication, or have paranoid or psychotic symptoms may have a higher rate of violent behavior. The news and entertainment, specifically television shows that depict a fictionalized portrayal of the disorder, and other forms of media tend to exaggerate. The reality is that this disorder is more often than not far from the fictional portrayal often witnessed in the media.

Difficulties in gathering data and life adaptation in individuals with Schizophrenia
There is a suggestion that prisoners that are mentally ill (this includes those with schizophrenia) do not integrate well into prison life. Individuals with schizophrenia often behave in a disruptive and difficult manner, through no fault of their own. Experience and reports that arose from treating these individuals with mental illness suggests and is consistent with the assumption that these particular inmates do not adapt well (Morgan, et al. 1993). Mentally ill inmates, including schizophrenic ones appear to remain incarcerated far longer than inmates who are not. They may present difficulties in understanding rules and regulations, thus increasing their stay behind bars as they proceed to violate more rules due to their mental illness. Studies presented on this

matter state that jail inmates were twice as likely (19% versus 9%) to be charged with facility rule violations and mentally ill inmates accounted for 41% of infractions even though they constituted only 19% of the prison population (Office of Research and Public Affairs, 2016).

Paranoid Schizophrenics are not uncommon within jails and prisons, and this could hinder accessibility as the individual may refuse to participate not only in studies but also become uncooperative as well. Collecting and measuring data becomes nearly impossible, as the subject is unwilling due to their disorder. The evidence comes to light when 31% of inmates who were asked to participate within a study blatantly refused cooperation, a trait that is part of many individuals who have paranoid schizophrenia (Office of Research and Public Affairs, 2016). In working with these types of individuals, difficulties arise and collecting/measuring data becomes near impossible or blocked if the subjects refuse to participate.

Discussion

Although there is research present on the lives and adaptations to prison of individuals with schizophrenia, researchers still have limited data and studies, along with certain aspects limiting the sample. While the socioeconomic status and lack of education of the arrestees made one population sample accessible, the sample is still limiting in that regard. Author Ramsey had noted that while rates of incarceration are high, the sample consisted solely of young, African American males, many of whom were highschool dropouts, which increased their risk of arrest (2011). Another problem with accessibility occurs when the prisoner is a paranoid schizophrenic. This could result in the subject (the prisoner) refusing to participate in studies or refusing to cooperate at times, making data collection all but impossible.

Conclusions

While there is much on the topic of incarcerated individuals with Schizophrenia, there are still limitations on sample sizes and populations. Gender, age, and race are other factors as well that should be taken more into consideration as well. The population sample that the authors mentioned consisted only of African American males who had not yet completed high school (Ramsey, 2011). Future studies should include women with schizophrenia, those of different racial identities too, as there could be cultural differences towards those individuals as well. If more studies were done to expand on this disorder in this particular environment, there would be more of an understanding and education involving this disorder than how the media portrays the incarnated individuals with schizophrenia.

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