

PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNICATION ANNUAL

Pennsylvania Communication Association
Special Online Issue for the
75th Anniversary of the PCA Annual

Letter from the Editor Cem Zeytinoglu.....	8
“It’s Just Practical”: The Benefits and Barriers of Talking to a Partner about Sexting Elizabeth M. Jenkins.....	11
How Instructor Political Beliefs Influence Student Emotional Responses Caroline Waldbuesser & Scott Titsworth.....	32
When a Television Series Misses the Mark: Identity Politics, Whiteness and Televisual Representations in <i>Off the Map</i> Alese Devin & Michaela D.E. Meyer.....	55
“Even with the Professors it’s Expected”: An Analysis of College Students’ Discussion of Campus Drinking Culture Mary E. King & Angela G. La Valley.....	71



Editor

Cem Zeytinoglu, Ph.D.
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Communication Annual as published is the property of the Pennsylvania Communication Association. The right of reproduction of its contents is expressly reserved by the association. The association waives the requirement of permission in the case of fair use of brief quotations for scholarly purposes and criticism, requesting only that appropriate credit be given for each quotation. Persons and publishers wishing to reproduce articles should contact the editor for specific permission.

Please follow the journal archive at Pennsylvania Communication Association website @ <http://pcasite.org/pca-journals/annual-archive/>

The Pennsylvania Communication Annual is now also indexed by the EBSCO Host.

The price per copy for non-members is \$20.00. All business correspondence regarding membership, payment of fees, and matters pertaining to the Communication Annual other than submission of manuscripts should be addressed to the Executive Director:

Ronald C. Arnett, Ph.D.,
Executive Director
Duquesne University,
600 Forbes Avenue,
340 College Hall,
Pittsburgh, PA 15282,
Phone: 412-396-6446,
Fax: 412-396-4792,
arnett@duq.edu

Associate Editors

Amanda McKendree, *University of Notre Dame*
Andrea McClanahan, *East Stroudsburg University of PA*
Ann Debra Jabro, *Robert Morris University*
Annette M. Holba, *Plymouth State University*
Beth Rajan Sockman, *East Stroudsburg University of PA*
Bill Broun, *East Stroudsburg University of PA*
Bryan Kampbell, *Buena Vista University*
Brian Gilchrist, *Mount St. Mary's University*
Charles R. Warner, *East Stroudsburg University of PA*
Colleen M. Merrick, *Westminster College*
Cory Williams, *Concord University*
Donna Weimer, *Juniata College*
Eric Grabowsky, *Dickinson State University*
Fadoua Loudiy, *Slippery Rock University of PA*
Hans Schmidt, *Penn State University, Brandywine*
Janie Marie Harden Fritz, *Duquesne University*
Jeanne Pursuit, *University of North Carolina, Wilmington*
Jenna LoCastro, *Point Park University*
Jennifer Jones, *Seton Hill University*
Jennifer Snyder-Duch, *Carlow University*
Jill K. Burk, *Penn State University, Berks*
Joel Scott Ward, *Geneva College*
John DuVal Lawson, *Robert Morris University*
John Prellwitz, *University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg*
Kelley Crowley, *Shenandoah University*
Leeanne M. Bell McManus, *Stevenson University*
Margaret Mullan, *East Stroudsburg University of PA*
Mary Mino, *Penn State University, DuBois*
Melissa Cook, *Washington & Jefferson College*
Michael Boyle, *West Chester University of PA*
Nichola Gutgold, *Penn State University, University Park*
Patricia Kennedy, (Retired) *East Stroudsburg University of PA*
Paul Lippert, *East Stroudsburg University of PA*
Robert McKenzie, *East Stroudsburg University of PA*
Sheryl Goodman, *Ursinus College*
Stephen Kriss, *Eastern Mennonite University*
Tatyana Dumova, *Point Park University*
Wenjie Yan, *East Stroudsburg University of PA*

The Pennsylvania Communication Annual, 75.2, 2019

Pennsylvania Communication Annual Submission Guidelines

The Pennsylvania Communication Annual is dedicated to advancing our undertaking of human communication. Manuscripts should be original and should discuss instructional, theoretical, philosophical, and/or practical aspects of any area of communication. Reviews of recent books and/or videotapes in any area of communication are also considered at the editor's discretion. While articles authored by Pennsylvanians and articles covering Pennsylvania topics are especially welcome, manuscripts on all topics and from all regions, including international submissions, are invited and will receive full consideration for publication.

The Pennsylvania Communication Annual is a refereed journal of the **Pennsylvania Communication Association**. Manuscripts for the 2020 issue (v.76) are now being received. The acceptance rates for 2018 and 2019 journals were respectively fewer than 34 and 20 percent. Submission should follow the latest APA style sheet. Please format your papers for blind review and remove anything that may give away your identity. *Manuscripts should not exceed 8000 words including references, notes, tables and other citations. Also book reviews should not exceed 2000 words.* Please submit your articles to *The Pennsylvania Communication Annual* at my.ejmanager.com/pca website. The submission deadline is May 1, 2020. PCA Annual is indexed by the EBSCO Host's *Communication Source* database. Please visit www.pcasite.org for more information.

Some important details to follow when submitting your manuscripts, if you use footnotes or endnotes: Endnotes only and without formatting, no footnotes.; no superscript font to indicate an endnote, just regular numbers and we will superscript upon editing; insert tables and illustrations as images only or send separate PDF files of these portions of the documents; formatted hanging indents only on references or no formatting at all; no "return" and "tab" to create the look of a hanging indent.

Editor: Cem Zeytinoglu, Ph.D., Professor of Communication Studies, Monroe Hall 320, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, East Stroudsburg, PA, 18301-2999. Phone: 570-422-3911. Fax: 570-422-3402. Email: czeytinoglu@esu.edu

The Pennsylvania Communication Association (PCA) promotes teaching, scholarship, service, and an ongoing commitment to the discipline of human communication. The Association believes in:

Teaching

- Advancing and developing communication curricula
- Responding to student and societal needs
- Attending to and caring for the student inside and outside of the communication classroom

Scholarship

- Promoting communication scholarship within the Keystone State
- Providing a disciplinary commitment to Pennsylvania scholars, reaching out to the larger discipline
- Being a dwelling place of Pennsylvania communication scholarship history

Service

- Connecting the larger community to the communication discipline
- Supporting efforts to professionalize students in communication fields
- Serving our students inside and outside of formal institutional structures

Commitment to the Discipline

- Nurturing the grassroots application of communication in the wider community
- Caring for the discipline on the local academic campus
- Supporting the larger discipline at the regional, national, and international levels

The Organization

The Pennsylvania Communication Association was originally founded as the Speech Communication Association of Pennsylvania (SCAP) in 1939. Its current title, the Pennsylvania Communication Association (PCA), commenced in 2003.

Pennsylvania Communication Association

2018-2019 Executive Committee

President

Jen Jones
Seton Hill University
jjones@setonhill.edu

Immediate Past President

Amanda McKendree
University of Notre Dame
amanda.mckendree@nd.edu

First Vice President

Jill Burk
Penn State, Berks
jkb20@psu.edu

Second Vice President

Joel Ward
Geneva College
jsward@geneva.edu

Publicity Officer

Maryl R McGinley
*University of Pittsburgh
at Johnstown*
mrr53@pitt.edu

Executive Director

Ronald C. Arnett
Duquesne University
arnett@duq.edu

PA Scholar Series

Editor Ronald C. Arnett
Duquesne University
arnett@duq.edu

PA Communication Annual

Editor Cem Zeytinoglu
East Stroudsburg University
zeytinoglu@po-box.esu.edu

Member at Large

Rich Talbert
Geneva College
rich.talbert@geneva.edu

Member at Large

Dr. Naomi Bell O'Neil
Clarion University
noneil@clarion.edu

For more information about the Pennsylvania Communication Association visit the website at <http://www.pcasite.org>.

From the Editor

Cem Zeytinoglu
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

I am pleased to introduce another special online issue of the *Pennsylvania Communication Annual* this year. 2019 marked the 75th anniversary of the PCA's journal. PCA annual was previously published under the title of the *Journal of the Speech Communication Association of Pennsylvania*, and later it was published as the *Pennsylvania Speech Communication Annual*. We wanted to take this opportunity to feature a series of special issues to celebrate the remarkable history of our organization's rich tradition in scholarship in the discipline.

In a similar manner, five years ago, in 2014, at the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the *Pennsylvania Communication Association*, we published a special online edition of the annual that included notable scholars who are associated with PCA in their background, which was published as the volume 70 issue 2 of the *PCA Annual*. It featured articles from Julia T. Wood, Mark Hickson III, Martin J. Medhurst, and a special interview with Roderick Hart. This time, we wanted to provide an academic platform to introduce young scholars with the Special Online Issue for the 75th Anniversary of the *PCA Annual*.

We aim to publish couple more special issues under the 75th volume. One of these will be related to the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing and protecting women's constitutional right to vote: Women's Vote Centennial. Another one that I would like to plan will be on diversity which will feature communication scholarship based on gender, race, and culture. The fourth one is planned to be on climate crisis. All of these issues are planned to be published as special online issues of the 75th anniversary of the *PCA Annual* before the 81st convention of our organization in October 2020.

In this issue, we have four separate essays that come from seven authors. Three of these are from authors affiliated with institutions outside of Pennsylvania. As a part of our mission and dedication to the communication discipline, we are continuing to expand beyond the borders of the state.

The first article is from Elizabeth M. Jenkins of Ohio University. Jenkins seeks to extend the Theory of Planned Behavior perspec-

The Pennsylvania Communication Annual, 75.2, 2019

tive to young adult sexting communication in order to help young adults engage in safer sexting. In particular, this research aims to demonstrate how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control impact intentions to talk about sexting with their intimate partner as a form of safer sexting.

The second piece is written by Caroline Waldbuesser of Western Connecticut State University & Scott Titsworth of Ohio University. Their research examines how students' perceptions of shared political identity with their instructor influences their willingness to communicate in class and emotions during class. Using a mixed methods approach, the study asked students to report how their instructors discussed politics in the classroom. Results from a qualitative analysis revealed that students reported few instances where instructors discussed politics in class.

The authors of the third study are Alese Devin & Michaela D.E. Meyer of Christopher Newport University. In their essay, they explore the unfortunate story of the television series *Off the Map*. Using an ideological critique, Devin and Meyer argue that the show failed due to its possessive investment in whiteness, that is based on systematic racism and racial prejudice.

Last, but not least, Mary E. King & Angela G. La Valley from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania introduce a research study that was supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. They conducted focus groups of undergraduate students about college drinking and alcohol related experiences. Emphasizing the narratives and experiences of undergraduates, this research sought to identify themes related to student perceptions of drinking on campus. Consistent with previous research, study identified nine themes related to students' experience and make recommendations for future research.

I hope that the reader will find these inquiries intellectually stimulating and informative. As usual, I would like to thank the authors and everyone who contributed to the publication of this special issue; reviewers, colleagues, mentors, and students.

Sincerely,



Cem Zeytinoglu, PhD

“It’s Just Practical”: The Benefits and Barriers of Talking to a Partner about Sexting

Elizabeth M. Jenkins
Ohio University

The current study sought to extend the Theory of Planned Behavior perspective to young adult sexting communication in order to help young adults engage in safer sexting. Specifically, this research sought to demonstrate how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control impact intentions to talk about sexting with their intimate partner as a form of safer sexting. The quantitative results in the current study were non-significant. However, descriptive statistics pertaining to the benefits and barriers of talking to a partner about sexting desires, needs, and limits are discussed as a potential future direction for this research. Importantly, the author argues that non-statistically significant results for health campaign research must be reported within academic journals because of the dire outcomes of creating and perpetuating misinformation to the public through ill-advised health campaigns.

Keywords: sexting, health campaigns, sex communication, benefits and barriers, practical significance

Sexting has become a prevalent behavior for teens and young adults and has been empirically researched for over ten years (Walrave, Van Ouytsel, Ponnet, & Temple, 2018). The public has shown great interest in the phenomenon of teen and young adult sexting (Hasinoff, 2012). In fact, researchers have argued that sexting for teens and young adults is not a phenomenon that will be leaving society soon (Wiederhold, 2015). However, the general public and researchers alike are divided about the level of risk, danger, and negative consequences of sexting for these populations (e.g., Albury & Crawford, 2012; Hasinoff, 2015; Jenkins & Stamp, 2018; Perkins, Becker, Tehee & Mackerprang, 2014). After ten years of empirical research (Lenhart, 2009) and public outcry including parental fear (Jenkins & Stamp, 2018), a closer look at the expressed dangers is needed through a communication perspective.

This specific research study aims to address this call by demonstrating that young adult sexting partners perceive benefit to engaging in conversations with their intimate partner about sexting. If partners are not engaging in these difficult conversations about

sexting, then their ability to negotiate their sexting desires, limits, and goals could be misunderstood, misinterpreted, or lack adequate clarity. This project is intended to be a first step toward developing perspectives of sexting consent. The study seeks to demonstrate that behavior change models need to incorporate the benefits and barriers to intimate partner sexting research if to create meaningful behavioral change through safer sexting. Consequently, this study contributes to the sexting communication sub-field by providing an investigation into a micro-level (i.e., intimate partner outcomes) health topic with the intent of informing macro-level health communication initiatives (i.e., health campaign development).

Sexual communication, in general, is face threatening (Denes & Afifi, 2012), has cultural implications because of the stigma involved (Liong & Cheng, 2017), yet is vitally important to our sexual empowerment (Robinson et al., 2017) and sexual sense-making (Rubinsky & Cooke-Jackson, 2017). The current research approaches sex communication, and specifically sexting consent communication, from a stance of sexual empowerment and from a sex-positive perspective as a way to augment the deleterious aspects of sexting consent communication. Young adults could be taught how to discuss their sexting desires, limits, boundaries, and rules with their intimate partner as a way to empower future sexting encounters. This sexting positive frame is based on the literature surrounding consent communication and safer sex communication campaigns. Consent communication and safer sex communication each focus on the individuals involved in the sexual encounter with an emphasis on feedback, partner check-ins, and willingness to openly discuss the sexual encounter. For example, Van Ouytsel, Ponnet and Walrave (2014) argued that practitioners and campaign designers should consider including interventions and campaigns focused on aspects of sexual media consumption, broadly and sexting, specifically. Moreover, Speno & Aubrey (2018) asserted that comprehensive sext education focused on masculine culture could help corroborate the pressure placed on women to sext and help men recognize their contribution to that pressure. These campaign and intervention approaches are important for young adults to become aware of the contributing risk factors involved in sexting.

Conversely, the current study argues that sexting health campaigns should help individuals use intimate partner communication to discuss their sexting needs, desires, and limits. In other words, this study attempts to understand the factors involved in

Jenkins

having a conversation about sexting with an intimate partner in order to inform future sexting health campaigns. A sexting health campaign focused on empowerment of young adults to discuss sexting with their intimate partner is one way to help individuals advocate for their needs and to communicate a firm “no” when needed. Therefore, this study hopes to contribute to the literature by establishing the benefits of creating a culture of consent within intimate relationships. However, the goal of the present study is to focus less on sexting consent communication, in particular, and more on the broader conversations about sexting between intimate partners. Specifically, this study seeks to contribute to the development of a sexting health campaign through demonstrating the need to focus on the limitations of sexting health behavior change models that neglect to include the benefit and barriers of practicing safer sexting.

Contextualizing Sexting Health Campaigns

Naugle and Hornik (2014) described that one indicator of an effective health campaign is the inclusion of formative research. Formative research, in this context, is the use of empirical studies that take a slow, step-by-step process to develop a sound, theory-driven, well-developed health campaign (Cerdeño et al., 2012). Noar, Zimmerman, Palmgreen, Lustria and Horosewki (2006) have also advocated for the inclusion of theoretically-driven and empirically-tested health campaigns. The goal of conducting formative research prior to the distribution of a health campaign is to increase the potential adoption of the specific health behavior change (i.e., helping intimate partners participate in sexting consent communication). Health campaigns are often distributed to the public without any pretesting within research settings and are often underfunded with formative research perceived as an unnecessary aspect of getting health messages out to individuals (Naugle & Hornik, 2014). Consequently, there is little evidence if the messages are effective prior to their distribution. The unintended potential outcome is that these non-research-based health campaigns could negatively impact the individuals receiving the messages.

For the specific focus of the current research, other aspects of sexting health campaigns are also necessary to consider. For instance, For instance, I conducted a Google Image search of “sexting health campaigns” in the summer of 2019. Although, these searches are based on algorithms, only a few of these messages focused on the communicative aspects of sexting. Of these

few campaigns about the communicative features of sexting, most of the campaigns focused on parents telling their teens how unsafe sexting is. While parent-teen communication about sexting is a vital aspect of understanding the communicative behavior (Speno & Aubrey, 2018), researchers have found that peers and intimate partners have more influence on teen sexting behaviors than parental figures (Walrave, Heirman & Hallman, 2014).

Moreover, many of the anti-sexting messages fail at the opportunity to impact young adults' sense of sexual agency and/empowerment. For example, *Megan's Story* was an anti-sexting health campaign in Australia intended to dissuade young women from sexting. The YouTube video and accompanying guidebook point all attention at "Megan's" ill-advised choices, rather than the larger cultural issue of teen safety (Albury & Crawford, 2012). Some scholars may even call this campaign a part of a victim-blaming rhetoric that discusses little about how to help young adults take control of their own bodies and choices to instead police their bodies (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013). This particular sexting health campaign and others like it could benefit from a focus on consent rather than on vilifying young adults (Albury & Crawford, 2012; Hasinoff, 2015).

Continuous positive partner feedback demonstrating signs of safety and privacy could increase other aspects of the relationship, such that sexters could experience feelings of empowerment, increased comfort with sexual communication, and enhanced self-image (Hudson & Fetro, 2015), as well as the potential for increased relationship satisfaction (McDaniel & Drouin, 2015). In addition, young adults may experience increased perceptions of sexual-esteem and sexual empowerment if their sexual self-concept influences their overall identities (van Oosten, de Vries & Peter, 2018). Taken together, the potential for increased self-efficacy within sexting consent communication, specially, and sexual communication, broadly, could be an additional positive outcome for individuals who sext when they feel safe to do so.

However, the lack of health campaigns focused on consent or partner communication, in general, is contradictory to research that demonstrates a strong positive relationship between negative mental health outcomes for partners who are coerced into sexting (Drouin, Ross, & Tobin, 2015) and the shift in outcomes of sexting, based on the gender of the sexter (Hasinoff, 2015; Ringrose et al., 2013). Consequently, Döring (2014) advocated for a shift

Jenkins

in focus from a sexting abstinence perspective to a consensual, safer sexting perspective for teens and young adults. The author argued that the deviance discourse of sexting negatively impacts young adults who are exploring their sexuality. Specifically, this discourse of deviance reinforces gendered stereotypes rather than empowering young adults to advocate for their sexual agency and needs (Döring, 2014). Further, messages received during the teenage and young adulthood years surrounding sex are foundational to individuals' later understanding of themselves as competent sexual beings who have sexual agency (Rubinsky & Cooke-Jackson, 2017).

The current examination's goal is to conduct formative research for the development of a health campaign focused on young adult communication with their intimate partners about sexting. In order to conduct formative, theory-driven campaign research, this study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior's framework to determine which variable (i.e., attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) best predicts intentions to talk to a partner about sexting. The Theory of Planned Behavior (i.e., TPB, Ajzen, 1991) is used as the theoretical and methodological framework for the current study and is described next.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (hereinafter referred to as TPB) is divided into its various components (Ajzen, 1991). For example, the goal of TPB is to predict behavioral intentions. Behavioral intentions are typically predicted through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Overall, behavioral intentions are quite predictive of actual behavior when these two constructs are very similarly measured (Ajzen, 2012). The factor of attitude toward the behavior essentially is how much a person favors or does not favor the behavior in question (Ajzen, 2012). The second factor in TPB is subjective norms, which is defined as the perceived social pressure from important people in a person's life (i.e., referents) to perform or not perform a certain behavior (Ajzen, 2012). Both the attitudinal belief about the behavior in question and the subjective norms surrounding that behavior were a part of the predecessor theory: The Theory of Reasoned Action (hereinafter referred to as TRA; Ajzen, 2012). However, there was a limitation of TRA and TPB tried to ameliorate that issue by including the final predictive factor of behavior intentions: perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2012). Perceived behavioral control refers to the control an individual has to per-

form a certain behavior and is related to the construct of self-efficacy (Ajzen, 1991).

TPB: Sexual Behaviors

Montaño and Kasprzyk (2008) described how TPB can be used to create health behavior change because:

TPB provide[s] a framework to identify key behavioral, normative, and control beliefs affecting behaviors. Interventions can then be designed to target and change these beliefs or the value placed on them, thereby affecting attitude, subjective norm, or perceived control and leading to changes in intentions and behaviors (p. 76).

Further, these authors described how TPB has been applied to understand and later change risky health behaviors (Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2008). Moreover, Fishbein and Cappella (2006) argued that health communication campaigns using behavioral change theories (e.g., TPB) can effectively predict behavioral intentions that can later be used to increase positive health behaviors within health campaigns. Therefore, formative research with the theoretical framework of TPB will inform this project by demonstrating the important components of sexting consent communication intentions and later that understanding of sexting consent communication can be used to influence a health campaign about the adoption of sexting consent communication between intimate partners.

Several research projects have used TPB to influence safer sexual health behavior adoption and practices (Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2008). Related to the current study is research investigating predictors of various sexual behaviors in adult populations. For example, TPB has been used to inform health campaigns about condom use (see Albarracín, Johnson, Fishbein & Muellerleile, 2001 for a review), as well as how niched adult populations practice condom use (Andrew et al., 2016; Boldero, Sanitioso, Brain, 1999; Cha, Doswell, Kim, Charron-Prochowinik & Patrick, 2007). Safer sexual behavior intentions, practices, and adoption are related to sexting behaviors (Parker, Blackburn, Perry, & Hawks, 2013), but that focus is outside of the current study's scope. The current study aims to understand what aspects of TPB best predict intentions to talk to a partner about sexting. As such, the next section connects prior sexting research of TPB and TRA concepts to frame the predictions and research questions for the

Jenkins

current study.

TPB: Intentions to Talk to a Partner About Sexting

The current study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior to theoretically and methodologically ground the investigation to determine the strongest predictor for young adults to talk to their intimate partners about sexting. As such, the hypotheses and research questions for the current study will be largely informed from the research that has focused on aspects of sexting from a TPB or TRA perspective (Ajzen, 2012) with an acknowledgment that talking to an intimate partner about sexting (i.e., sexting consent communication) is related to, but different from sexting behaviors.

Within the specific context of sexting, the TRA constructs of attitudes and subjective norms of sexting were used to predict intentions to sext and sexting behavior (Hudson & Fetro, 2015). The TRA constructs of attitudes and subjective norms accounted for a significant amount of the variance. Thus, the first hypothesis for the current study will pose that TRA constructs will explain a significant proportion of the variance for intentions to talk to a intimate partner about sexting.

H1: The TRA constructs (subjective norms and attitudes) will significantly predict intentions to talk to an intimate partner.

Following H1, it seems important to focus attention on the specific strength of the predictor variables on subjective norms and attitudes. However, the distinction of which should have the most predictive power is somewhat complex within the current literature. Subjective norms have been shown to strongly predict sexting intentions (Walrave et al., 2015). Specifically, subjective norms are the most important predictor of intentions to sext for individuals who had sent a sext message at least once in their life, but attitudes toward sexting were the most important predictor of intentions to sext for individuals who had sexted in the last 30 days and for individuals who had never sexted before (Hudson & Fetro, 2015). These findings point to something important about attitudes and subjective norms for sexting intentions, but the conflicting results and the current study's distinction of sexting consent communication makes it difficult to determine explicit predictive strength. Therefore, the first research question asks:

R1: Which TRA construct (i.e., subjective norms or attitudes) best predicts intentions to talk to a partner about sexting?

Furthermore, the influence of the TPB constructs of perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy could also impact the predictive power of this model. In particular, a meta-analysis which examined 185 independent studies using TPB found that perceived behavioral control explained 39 percent and 27 percent of the unique variance for intentions to practice safer sex behaviors and the enactment of those safer sex behaviors, respectively (Armitage and Conner, 2001). Therefore, individuals could have increased intentions to talk to a partner about sexting if they feel that sexting consent conversations are within their control. As such, the second hypothesis states:

H2: Perceived behavioral control will explain additional unique variance when included as a predictor of intentions to talk to a partner about sexting, above what the TRA constructs (i.e., subjective norms and attitudes) will predict.

Mediator effects are demonstrated in sexting TPB studies. For example, gender is an important mediator to consider in the context of mediated sexual content (Liong & Cheng, 2017; Speno & Aubrey, 2018). In particular, Speno and Aubrey (2018) demonstrated indirect gender effects related to sexual objectification and intentions to sext. Men rated their level of subjective norms for sexting higher than women and their beliefs about other's engagement in sexting predicted their sexting behavior (Liong & Cheng, 2017). As such, for men sexting frequency is predicted by stronger subjective norms related to sexting. Therefore, the third hypothesis argues for gender differences:

H3: Men and women will differ on each of the TPB constructs (attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions).

Several studies have examined motivations for sexting (Döring, 2014; Drouin, Tobin & Wygant, 2014), perceived risks of sexting (Renfro & Rollo, 2014; Symons, Ponnet, Walrave & Heirman, 2018; Van Ouytsel, Van Gool, Walrave, Ponnet & Peeters, 2016), and other individual difference variables (Beadnell et al., 2007; Noar, Cole & Carlyle, 2006). However, to the researcher's knowledge, the explicit study of the potential benefits and barriers

Jenkins

ers involved in the communicative behavior of engaging in sexting consent communication has not been studied empirically. Understanding the benefits and barriers to having hard conversations about sexting with an intimate partner is foundational to helping young adults express their sexual needs and wants. Therefore, the second research question asks:

R2: What benefits and barriers, if any, do individuals experience related to intentions to talk to a partner about sexting?

Finally, as described above, some sexting studies have demonstrated gender differences for sexting. In particular, literature has pointed to gender differences in motivations to sext (Drouin & Tobin, 2014; Drouin et al., 2014; Hasinoff, 2015; Van Ouytsel et al., 2016). Therefore, the last research question asks:

R3: What gender differences, if any, exist for the benefits and barriers of talking to a partner about sexting?

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 208$) for this study were undergraduates from a Midwestern University Communication Studies (COMS) subject pool. The participants received partial course credit for participating. The current study reports findings from only those participants who were in committed relationships at the time of the study ($n = 192$). Committed relationships were operationalized for the participants as “being in a relationship with a romantic partner, who you are dating exclusively or who you have been partners with for a relatively long time.” The definition was intentionally ambiguous to allow participants to determine if their relationship was committed or not despite the amount of time in their relationship. Participants’ average age was 19.11 ($SD = 1.18$). The majority of the sample self-identified as female ($n = 132$), straight ($n = 171$), and White/Caucasian ($n = 170$), which matches the subject pool sample at the University.

Procedures

The participants received an email to their university email account indicating that they were selected for this study. The participants followed a hyperlink within that email to the Qualtrics survey. Participants first provided credit-granting information. The credit-granting survey was not connected to the actual survey

instrument.

Then, participants were taken to the study's online survey. Participants first read a consent form and provided their consent to participate in the study. To be included in the study, participants had to be in a romantic relationship (either committed or casual). During the online study, participants responded to several Likert-type items and bipolar-style items related to the TPB constructs. Participants also responded to demographic questions. Prior to ending the survey, participants were thanked for their time.

Measures

All items were assessed on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), unless otherwise indicated. Also, all scale scores were averaged. Therefore, higher scores indicate higher levels of the construct. Finally, all of the measures within this project were adapted from Szalai (2015).

TPB: Attitudes. The survey questions for this scale related to the attitudes that the participants have about discussing sexting with their partners. The participants responded to the following prompt: "Having conversations with my partner about sexting within the next week would be" Each of the scales had different tails (i.e., Very Bad-Very Good; Very Pleasant-Very Unpleasant, etc.). There was a total of 5 attitude items. Two of the items were reversed coded so that a higher score meant a stronger attitude ($M = 6.07$, $SD = .03$). The measure was found to be reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$).

TPB: Perceived behavioral control. The survey questions for this scale asked about the perceived behavioral control of participants related to having conversations with their partners about sexting. Two sample items were, "I am confident that I can have conversations with my partner about sexting in the next week," and "My having conversations with my partner about sexting in the next week is up to me." There were 4 questions in total ($M = 6.07$, $SD = .03$) and reliability for the measure was strong (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$).

TPB: Subjective norms. For the current project, subjective norms were operationalized as descriptive norms. The researcher notes that there is more involved in subjective norms than only descriptive norms from a standard TPB perspective. However, a meta-analysis of the TPB constructs demonstrated that descrip-

Jenkins

tive norms uniquely contributed an additional 5% of the variance after attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Rivis & Sheeran, 2003). Therefore, this variable seems to be an important contributing predictor within TPB. Rivis and Sheeran (2003) define descriptive norms as the subjective norm component that encompasses “what significant others themselves do”. The descriptive norm measure focused on the level at which participants believed people who were similar to themselves on certain qualities also engaged in conversations with their partners about sexting. The descriptive norms scale for this study had 4 questions ($M = 4.80$, $SD = .01$) and was found to be very reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$). A sample item from this descriptive norms scale was: “Most people like me have had conversations with their partners about sexting.”

TPB: Intentions to talk to a partner about sexting. A measure related to intentions to talk to a partner about sexting was used as the operational definition for this variable. The survey questions for this scale asked about the participants’ behavioral intention for having conversations with their partners about sexting. A sample item was, “I am likely to have conversations with my partner about sexting in the next week.” There were three total behaviors included ($M = 4.73$, $SD = .01$) and the measure was found to be highly reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .97$).

TPB: Benefits. The survey items for this scale asked about the perceived benefits for the participants if they talked to their partner about sexting. A sample item was, “My future will be more comfortable for me if I have conversations about sexting with my partner.” There was a total of 8 items for this scale ($M = 5.06$, $SD = .20$). Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$, which displays strong reliability.

TPB: Barriers. The survey items for this scale asked about the perceived barriers for the participants if they talked to their partner about sexting. A sample item was, “my partner will not follow my wishes if I talk to him/her about sexting.” There were 13 total items ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.47$). Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$, which demonstrates strong reliability for the measure.

Gender. The gender survey item asked: “How do you identify your gender?” The response options were “male,” “female,” “transgender,” “gender nonconforming,” and “other.” For the response option “other,” participants were able to also respond with a typed in answer. The researcher acknowledges the unintentional conflation of sex and gender for the response options on

this item and recognizes the impact of this conflation on the conceptualization of the gender construct for this specific project and the potential impact on the participants who completed the survey. The only responses given for the gender item were: male ($n = 54$) and female ($n = 132$).

Results

A multiple regression was used to test H1, which predicted that the TRA constructs (i.e., subjective norms and attitudes) will predict intentions to talk to an intimate partner. Results of the multiple regression showed that attitudes and subjective norms of talking to a partner about sexting explained a significant amount of variance for intentions to talk to a partner about sexting, $AdjR^2 = .11$, $F(2, 164) = 11.64$, $p < .001$, attitudes emerged as the only individual significant predictor (R1) of intentions to talk to a partner about sexting, $t = -4.43$, $p < .001$ (subjective norms, $t = 1.44$, $p = .15$). The predictor variables combined to explain 11% of the variance in intentions to talk to a partner about sexting. The model was significant, but the model explained a small percentage of the variance. Additionally, there was an inverse relationship present such that worse attitudes toward talking to a partner about sexting predicted higher intentions to talk to a partner about sexting (R1).

A hierarchical regression was used to test H2 because of the theoretical basis of the prediction. H2 predicted that perceived behavioral control would explain additional unique variance when included as a predictor of intentions to talk to a partner about sexting, above what TRA constructs (i.e., subjective norms and attitudes) alone can predict. Results of the hierarchical regression showed that the overall model that includes all three TPB variables was significant, $AdjR^2 = .13$, $F(3, 163) = 7.76$, $p < .001$. Attitudes, in the TPB model remained as the only significant predictor of talking to a partner about sexting, $t = -4.34$, $p < .001$ (subjective norms, $t = .12$, $p = .15$; behavioral control, $t = -.37$, $p = .71$). The predictor variables combined to explain 13% of the variance for intentions to talk to a partner about sexting.

Four independent samples t-tests were used to analyze H3, which predicted that men and women would differ on each of the TPB constructs related to talking to a partner about sexting (attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intentions). None of the independent samples t-tests reached significance (attitudes, $p = .61$, subjective norms, $p = .21$, perceived behavior-

Jenkins

al control, $p = .80$, and intentions, $p = .94$). Therefore, H3 was unsupported; men and women did not differ on any of the TPB constructs.

To examine the second research question about benefits and barriers related to intentions to talk to a partner about sexting, simple frequency distributions were created. For both constructs, “strongly agree” was used to indicate barriers or benefits that are important to the participants’ perceptions talking to a partner about sexting. The two largest barriers were “I don’t think about sexting very much,” ($n = 42$) and “I have many other more important concerns” ($n = 28$). Consequently, these two constructs focus on the individual’s lack of consideration of sexting and their more pressing needs.

Individuals focused largely on individual-level barriers toward talking to a partner about sexting. However, participants saw many benefits to talking to a partner about sexting. Several items that participants responded to as “strongly agree” focused on the relationship-based outcomes associated with talking to their partner about sexting (e.g., “Having conversations about sexting will help my partner know what my wishes are for sexting,” $n = 57$, “Conversations about sexting will give my partner guidelines for what I am comfortable with doing within our relationship,” $n = 56$, “I want my partner to know what I want in terms of sexting,” $n = 49$). The strong ratings for these items indicate that having difficult conversations about their sexual needs clearly has perceived benefits. Furthermore, participants seem to realize that partner communication about sexting is related to prevention of negative outcomes because 37 participants strongly agreed that “Having conversations with my partner about sexting will prevent me from having to deal with the potential consequences of the behavior that I do not want to happen.” Therefore, this benefit could be related to the avoidance of a negative future outcome.

From these descriptive statistics, the barriers of talking to a partner about sexting could be described as individual-level barriers. However, the benefits of having this conversation seem to impact the individual by way of the intimate partner becoming more aware of the individual’s sexting needs. Regardless of the specific barriers or benefits of engaging in sexting consent communication, these descriptive statistics point to the need for further understanding of why intimate partners are resistant to discussing their sexting needs with an intimate partner, even if they see benefit in the conversations.

Finally, a *t*-test was used to determine if gender differences existed regarding the benefits and barriers of talking to a partner about sexting (R3). Results indicated that men and women did not differ on barriers ($p = .11$) or benefits ($p = .46$) of talking to a partner about sexting.

Discussion

This study sought to determine the best predictors of intentions to talk to a partner about sexting from a Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) lens. A secondary goal was to determine the perceived barriers and benefits of talking to a partner about sexting. The study found little evidence for the hypotheses, which mostly connected to TPB. Attitudes toward talking to a partner about sexting was the only significant predictor of intentions to engage in sexting consent communication. However, it should be noted that attitudes negatively predicted intentions to behave. In other words, individuals who had worse attitudes about talking to a partner about sexting were more likely to have a conversation with their partner about sexting. These results oppose most demonstrations of TRA and TPB. In both TRA and TPB, the theoretical predictive power stems from positive associations between each predictor variable and the outcome variable of intentions to behave. In particular, perceived behavioral control, attitudes, and subjective norms should be positively related to intentions to behave from the TPB perspective (Ajzen, 2012). However, a key component of this theory is the similarity in measurement that is essential to increasing the predictive power of behavioral intention (Ajzen, 2012). The current study had a limitation in the fact that it measured attitudes using a bipolar scale, rather than following the other predictor variables' methodological design of Likert-type scales. While this was perhaps ill-advised, it followed the model of another study's design, which was found to be valid and reliable (Szalai, 2015). Future research should ensure the consistency of all TPB-related scales.

Dainton and Berkoski (2013) argued "the advent of any new communication technology...is fraught with warnings associated with the negative effects that time spent using the technology might have on an individual's relationships" (p. 45) but the authors notice that contradictory results should set forth the next step in research in these ever-evolving new media landscapes. Similarly, despite the contradictory omnibus results in the current study, it does aid the research community's understanding of sexting and should inform future research about sexting consent

Jenkins

communication. In particular, an important contribution of the current study was the inclusion and examination of perceived benefits and barriers to talking to a partner about sexting. This finding is based on descriptive statistics but does add to our understanding of the potential good aspects of sexting consent communication while balancing that perspective with a better understanding of the negative aspects of sexting consent communication. The participants perceived that engaging in this communication could help their partner meet their sexting need.

Sexual empowerment could be one possible explanation for the driving factor behind these benefits for individuals to have conversations with their partners about sexting. Researchers have argued for the need of using an empowerment frame for communicating about sexual needs and sexual health status (Robinson et al., 2017). Specifically, communicating sexual desires and needs is positively correlated with higher rates of consent communication self-efficacy (Satinsky & Jozkowski, 2015). In other words, perhaps if people feel empowered to have conversations with their partners about not only their sexting needs, but other intimate partner needs as well, they also could experience higher levels of self-efficacy related to that communicative behavior. In regard to sexting, evidence has demonstrated that individuals, who willingly consented to sexting without being coerced and did so with a trusted partner perceived sexting as a more positive intimate relationship behavior than those who sexted because they were coerced (Burkett, 2015). An adherence to sexting consent communication could be viewed as an example of sexting empowerment. In the current study, this empowerment may be related to the finding of engaging in sexting consent communication with an intimate partner as a way to explain sexting needs. However, the link between empowerment and safer sexting would need tested in future research.

The descriptive statistics also demonstrate a potential dichotomy about this form of sexual communication. Specifically, the perceived benefits of talking to a partner pointed to a potential for individuals to experience sexual empowerment to tell their partner their sexting needs. However, the perceived barriers were most focused on internal awareness of consent communication and processes. This dichotomy seems to focus on the interpersonal benefits of sexting consent communication and the intrapersonal barriers for engaging in this face threatening communication (Denes & Afifi, 2012). In a recently published measurement design study, researchers demonstrated that there is an im-

portant distinction between sexual communication that is self-threatening versus other-threatening. In particular, the threat to self was experienced to a greater degree during sexual conflict communication compared to nonsexual conflict communication (Rehman, Balan, Sutherland, & McNeil, 2018). Researchers should consider how sexual communication that is self-threatening versus other-threatening could moderate the benefits and barriers of sexting communication.

Furthermore, participants perceived that engaging in this difficult conversation with their intimate partner had the potential to prevent the negative outcomes involved in sexting. In particular, the descriptive statistics pointed to participants' perception of risk associated with engaging in sexting. More importantly, the participants perceived that sexting risks could be minimized by talking about sexting with their intimate partner. The degree to which these conversations were perceived to impact their beliefs about sexting risk cannot be determined from the current data. Perceptions of behaviors, ability to behave, and outcomes involved in sexual health leads to future planning, decision making, and behavioral enactment (Crissman, Adanu, & Harlow, 2012). Therefore, if young adults perceive high levels of risk, the actual experience of risk may not actually matter for their future behaviors. In fact, Dir and Cyders (2015) demonstrated that individuals' experiences of negative repercussions were inversely associated with engaging in sexting, but their perceptions of the same negative repercussions were positively correlated with engaging in sexting. Future research should further clarify the relationships between TPB constructs, as well as the barriers and benefits to sexting consent communication.

Practical Significance

Despite some methodological issues in the current study, the practicality of conducting a study using Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to support the creation of a sexting consent health campaign should not go unstated. The goal of this study was to inform health campaigns focused on conversations about sexting between intimate partners through using a TPB perspective and to understand the perceived benefits and barriers of such sexual communication between intimate partners. Without conducting this formative research, campaign messages focused on attitudes of sexting consent communication could negatively impact individuals' intentions for (and potentially their enactment of) such conversations. Health campaigns should be thoughtful, well-

planned, and theoretically-driven by formative research (Cerdeño et al., 2012; Noar, et al., 2006). As such, this study's lack of statistically significant omnibus findings support an adherence to health campaign development that is slow and purposeful. Cho and Salmon (2007) argued that careful formative research in situations such as this are necessary because there is great potential for misinformation to be shared through health campaigns. Therefore, prior to dispelling health campaigns to the general public, researchers should determine the effectiveness of such campaigns and the potential impact of such campaigns.

In sum, this study calls for researchers to reexamine the perceptions and experiences of risk for engaging in sexting before proceeding with the theoretical testing of TPB or the implementation of a sexting consent communication health campaign. When individuals' sexual health practices are in jeopardy, health campaigns must weigh the immediacy of awareness to an issue against the potential for ill-advised effects. As a parallel to the current study's findings that talking to a partner about sexting could produce interpersonal benefits despite perceived individualized barriers -- additional formative sexting health campaign design research could benefit the public, if the barriers to such research were mitigated.

References

- Albarracín, D., Johnson, B. T., Fishbein, M., & Muellerleile, P. A. (2001). Theories of reasoned action and planned behavior as models of condom use: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *127*, 142-161. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.1.142>
- Albury, K., & Crawford, K. (2012). Sexting, consent and young people's ethics: Beyond *Megan's Story*. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, *26*, 463-473. doi:10.1080/10304312.2012.665840
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*, 179-211. doi:10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-t
- Ajzen, I. (2012). Martin Fishbein's Legacy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *640*, 11-27. doi:10.1177/0002716211423363
- Andrew, B. J., Mullan, B. A., de Wit, J. B. F., Monds, L. A., Todd, J., & Kothe, E. J. (2016). Does the Theory of Planned Behaviour explain condom use behaviour among men who have sex with men? A meta-analytic

- review of the literature. *AIDS and Behavior*, *20*, 2834–2844. doi:10.1007/s10461-016-1314-0
- Armitage, C. J., & Talibudeen, L. (2010). Test of a brief theory of planned behaviour-based intervention to promote adolescent safe sex intentions. *British Journal of Psychology*, *101*, 155–172. doi:10.1348/000712609x431728
- Beadnell, B., Wilson, A. Wells, E. A. & Morison, D. M., Gillmore, M. R., Hoppe, M. (2007). About having sex: A test of sufficiency of the Theory of Planned Behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *37*, 2840–2876.
- Boldero, J., Sanitioso, R., Brain, B. (1999). Gay Asian Australians' safer-sex behavior and behavioral skills: The predictive utility of the theory of planned behavior and cultural factors. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *29*, 2143–2163. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1999.tb02299.x>
- Cerdeño, F. A., Martínez-Donate, A. P., Zellner, J. A., Sañudo, F., Carrillo, H., Engelberg, M., ... Hovell, M. (2012). Marketing HIV prevention for heterosexually identified Latino men who have sex with men and women: The Hombres Sanos Campaign. *Journal of Health Communication*, *17*, 641–658. doi:10.1080/10810730.2011.635766
- Cha, E. S., Doswell, W. M., Kim, K. H., Charron-Prochownik, D., & Patrick, T. E. (2007). Evaluating the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain intention to engage in premarital sex amongst Korean college students: A questionnaire survey. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *44*, 1147–1157. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2006.04.015
- Cho, H., & Salmon, C. T. (2007). Unintended effects of health communication campaigns. *Journal of Communication*, *57*, 293–317. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00344.x
- Dainton, M., & Berkowski, L. (2013). Positive and negative maintenance behaviors, jealousy, and Facebook: Impacts on college students' romantic relationships. *Pennsylvania Communication Annual*, *69*, 35–50.
- Denes, A., & Afifi, T. D. (2014). Pillow talk and cognitive decision-making processes: Exploring the influence of orgasm and alcohol on communication after sexual activity. *Communication Monographs*, *81*, 333–358. doi:10.1080/03637751.2014.926377
- Dir, A. L., & Cyders, M. A. (2014). Risks, risk factors, and outcomes associated with phone and internet sexting among university students in the United States. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *44*, 1675–1684. doi:10.1007/s10508-014-0370-7

Jenkins

- Döring, N. (2014). Consensual sexting among adolescents: Risk prevention through abstinence education or safer sexting? *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 8. doi:10.5817/cp2014-1-9
- Drouin, M., Ross, J., & Tobin, E. (2015). Sexting: A new, digital vehicle for intimate partner aggression? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 50, 197-204. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2015.04.001
- Drouin, M., Tobin, E., & Wygant, K. (2014). "Love the Way You Lie": Sexting deception in romantic relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 35, 542-547. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.047
- Hasinoff, A. A. (2012). Sexting as media production: Rethinking social media and sexuality. *New Media and Society*, 15, 449-465. doi:10.1177/1461444812459171
- Hasinoff, A. A. (2015). *Sexting panic: Rethinking criminalization, privacy, and consent*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Hudson, H. K., & Fetro, J. V. (2015). Sexual activity: Predictors of sexting behaviors and intentions to sext among selected undergraduate students. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 49, 615-622. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2015.03.048
- Jenkins, E. M., & Stamp, G. H. (2018). Sexting in the public domain: Competing discourse in online news article comments in the US and the UK involving teenage sexting. *Journal of Children and Media*, 12, 1-17. doi:10.1080/17482798.2018.1431556
- Lenhart, A. (2009). Teens and sexting: How and why minor teens are sending sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images via text messaging. *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. Retrieved from <<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Teens-and-Sexting.aspx>>.
- Liong, M., & Cheng, G. H.-L. (2017). Sext and gender: examining gender effects on sexting based on the theory of planned behaviour. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 36, 726-736. doi:10.1080/0144929x.2016.1276965
- McDaniel, B. T. & Drouin, M. (2015). Sexting among married couples: Who is doing it, and are they more satisfied? *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18, 628-634. doi:10.1089/cyber.2015.0334
- Montaño, D. E., Phillips, W. R., Kasprzyk, D., & Greek, A. (2008). STD/HIV Prevention Practices Among Primary Care Clinicians: Risk Assessment, Prevention Counseling, and Testing. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 35, 154-166. doi:10.1097/olq.0b013e3181574d97

- Naugle, D. A., & Hornik, R. C. (2014). Systematic review of the effectiveness of mass media interventions for child survival in low- and middle-income countries. *Journal of Health Communication, 19*, 190–215. doi:10.1080/10810730.2014.918217
- Noar, S. M., Cole, C., & Carlyle, K. (2006). Condom use measurement in 56 studies of sexual risk behavior: Review and recommendations. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 35*, 327–345. doi:10.1007/s10508-006-9028-4
- Noar, S. M., Zimmerman, R. S., Palmgreen, P., Lustria, M., & Horosewski, M. L. (2006). Integrating personality and psychosocial theoretical approaches to understanding safer sexual behavior: Implications for message design. *Health Communication, 19*, 165–174. doi:10.1207/s15327027hc1902_8
- Perkins, A. B., Becker, J. V., Tehee, M., & Mackelprang, E. (2014). Sexting behaviors among college students: Cause for concern? *International Journal of Sexual Health, 26*, 79-92. doi:10.1080/19317611.2013.841792
- Rehman, U. S., Balan, D., Sutherland, S., McNeil, J. (2018). Understanding barriers to sexual communication. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407518794900>
- Ringrose, J., Harvey, L., Gill, R., & Livingstone, S. (2013). Teen girls, sexual double standards and “sexting”: Gendered value in digital image exchange. *Feminist Theory, 14*, 305–323. doi:10.1177/1464700113499853
- Rubinsky, V., & Cooke-Jackson, A. (2017). “Tell me something other than to use a condom and sex is scary”: Memorable messages women and gender minorities wish for and recall about sexual health. *Women’s Studies in Communication, 40*, 379-400. doi:10.1080/07491409.2017.1368761
- Szalai, L. C. (2015). *Predicting Young Adults’ Engagement in Advance Care Planning* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ohio University, Athens, OH.
- Speno, A. G., & Aubrey, J. S. (2018). Adolescent Sexting. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, doi:10.1177/0361684318809383
- Symons, K., Ponnet, K., Walrave, M., & Heirman, W. (2018). Sexting scripts in adolescent relationships: Is sexting becoming the norm? *New Media & Society, 20*, 3836–3857. doi:10.1177/1461444818761869
- van Oosten, J., de Vries, D. A., & Peter, J. (2018). The importance of adolescents’ sexually outgoing self-concept:

Jenkins

- Differential roles of self- and other-generated sexy self-presentations in social media. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21, 5-10. doi:10.1089/cyber.2016.0671
- Van Ouytsel, J., Ponnet, K., & Walrave, M. (2014). The associations between adolescents' consumption of pornography and music videos and their sexting behavior. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 17, 772-778. doi:10.1089/cyber.2014.0365
- Van Ouytsel, J., Van Gool, E., Walrave, M., Ponnet, K., & Peeters, E. (2016). Sexting: adolescents' perceptions of the applications used for, motives for, and consequences of sexting. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20, 1-25. doi:10.1080/13676261.2016.1241865
- Walrave, M., Heirman, W., & Hallam, L. (2014). Under pressure to sext? Applying the theory of planned behavior to adolescent sexting. *Behaviour and Information Technology*, 33, 85-97. doi:10.1080/0144929x.2013.837099
- Walrave, M., Ponnet, K., Van Ouytsel, J., Van Gool, E., Heirman, W., & Verbeek, A. (2015). Whether or not to engage in sexting: Explaining adolescent sexting behaviour by applying the prototype willingness model. *Telematics and Informatics*, 32, 796-808. doi:10.1016/j.tele.2015.03.008
- Walrave, M., Van Ouytsel, J., Ponnet, K., & Temple, J. R. (2018). *Sexting: Motives and risk in online sexual self-presentation*. Nottingham, UK: Palgrave Studies in Cyberpsychology. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-71882-8
- Wiederhold, B. K. (2015). Does sexting promote adult sexual relationships? *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18, 627. doi:10.1089/cyber.2015.29014.bkw

How Instructor Political Beliefs Influence Student Emotional Responses

Caroline Waldbuesser
Western Connecticut State University

Scott Titsworth
Ohio University

Through emotional response theory (Mottet, Frymier, & Beebe, 2006), the current study examines how students' perceptions of shared political identity with their instructor influences their willingness to communicate in class and emotions during class. Using a mixed methods approach, the study asked students to report how their instructors discussed politics in the classroom. Results from a qualitative analysis revealed that students reported few instances where instructors discussed politics in class. Further, quantitative results showed support for willingness to communicate as being an approach-avoidance behavior based on emotional response theory. Last, students' perceptions of having a shared political identity with their instructor was related to student enjoyment of the class and emotional valance.

Keywords: political communication in the classroom, emotional response theory, student shared political identity, social identity theory

In recent years, political tensions between Republicans and Democrats in the United States have increased (McConnell, Margalit, Malhotra, & Levendusky, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2016) to the point of influencing people's everyday lives. For instance, "more than half Democrats (55%) say the Republican Party makes them 'afraid,' while 49% of Republicans say the same about the Democratic Party" (Pew Research Center, 2016, p. 1), demonstrating current political divisions in the U.S. In fact, political tensions have influenced many parts of American lives, with 45% of Americans reporting arguments with a friend, family member, or co-worker over political issues (Edwards-Levy, 2016). Similarly, political tensions have influenced education (Crouere, 2016). Since the 2016 presidential election, media sources have alleged that colleges and universities are increasingly indoctrinating students into liberal viewpoints (Crouere, 2016). Even though people have claimed colleges liberally indoctrinate students since the 1950's (Mariani & Hewitt, 2008), the topic has received greater attention with the election of Donald Trump and

the appointment of Betsy DeVos as U.S. Secretary of Education. For instance, at a conference on conservative political action in February, 2017, DeVos commented:

The fight against the education establishment extends to you, too. The faculty, from adjunct professors to deans, tell you what to do, what to say and, more ominously, what to think. They say that if you voted for Donald Trump, you're a threat to the university community. (Bahls, 2017, para. 1)

Research about the influence of college instructors' politics on undergraduate students is mixed (Linville & Havice, 2011; Mariani & Hewitt, 2008). For example, one study found that students' political beliefs were not influenced by their professors' politics (Mariani & Hewitt, 2008). In contrast, another study found that students felt their instructors shared biased liberal political views in the classroom (Linville & Havice, 2011). Consequently, research both refutes and confirms the idea of liberal indoctrination in the college classroom. The larger question, however, is how students perceive instructors discussion of politics in the classroom. Although some authors argue that classroom political conversations are appropriate (Brady et al., 2010; Hess & Gatti, 2010), others have found that students perceive such discussions as inappropriate (Hafen, 2009). What has not been explored in these studies is how students' perceptions of their instructors' political beliefs influence students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness.

Rationale

In order to understand how politics affect students, we examined students' perceptions of their instructor's political identity to better understand how important politics are to students in the classroom. Previous research on political identity salience has demonstrated that people tend to like others who are in the same political group as them more than those who are not (Greene, 2004). Additionally, researchers have observed that identity salience influences peoples' emotions (Smith, 1993). Because politics is an important social concern, the topic elicits strong emotional reactions (Barbalet, 2006). Under researched, however, is the link between emotions and politics in the classroom. Previous research has already found that instructor behaviors have influenced students' emotions in the classroom (Titsworth, Quinlan, & Mazer, 2010). In order to extend research on emotions and

politics in the classroom, the current study looks at how student perceptions of shared political beliefs with their instructors' influences their classroom emotions.

Additionally, Mottet and colleagues (2006) call for more research using instructional communication theories. The current study answers that call by exploring how emotional response theory (ERT) explains students' reactions to instructors' political communication in the classroom, as well as testing students' willingness to communicate as an approach-avoidance behavior. Emotional response theory posits that teacher communication behaviors elicit certain emotional responses within students, which cause the students to either approach or avoid their instructors (Mottet et al., 2006).

The cultural divide between liberals and conservatives is growing, and its effects on classroom culture require attention by researchers. To explore the impact of politics on higher education, the current study examined how students perceive their instructors discussing politics, as well as how classroom political conversations relate to students' perceptions of shared political beliefs with their instructors, emotions in the classroom, and willingness to communicate in class with their instructors. In addition to using surveys, we asked students to provide open-ended comments about their teachers' discussion of politics to better understand students' perceptions of those behaviors. A thematic analysis was then used to provide a mixed-methods analysis of students' perceptions. After presenting results, we conclude by discussing the implications and limitations of the study.

Review of Literature

Emotions in the Classroom

Past scholarship has posited that emotions are not only present in the classroom, but necessary in student learning (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Meyer & Turner, 2006). Further, researchers have noted that emotions lead to positive experiences in the classroom, which creates better learning environments for students (Meyer & Turner, 2006). One way to conceptualize how emotions operate in the classroom is through ERT, which explains that a student's emotional responses can predict whether they approach or avoid the teacher, class, or course material (Mottet et al., 2006). In addition, certain teacher behaviors potentially elicit emotions within students, which then influence both

their perceptions of teachers and their behaviors. These verbal and nonverbal behaviors can include implicit messages that convey particular attitudes or feelings (Mehrabian, 1981; Mottet et al., 2006). While emotions can be difficult to define, ERT uses Russell and Barrett's (1999) view of emotions as *core affects*. Core affects refer to "consciously accessible elemental processes of pleasure and activation, has many causes, and is always present" (Russell & Barrett, 1999, p. 805), meaning that emotions are broad experiences rather than clear-cut feelings or moods.

Further, ERT explains that student emotions can be examined through three dimensions: "(1) pleasure-displeasure, (2) arousal-nonarousal, and (3) dominance-submissiveness" (Mottet et al., 2006, p. 261). The pleasure domain refers to a student's level of liking, arousal describes how intense a student's emotions are, and dominance defines if a student approaches a teacher. Often, these emotional dimensions work together to predict whether a student will approach or avoid an instructor. For example, a combination of the arousal, pleasure, and dominance domains would mostly likely result in a student approaching a teacher. Further, these domains often lead to students experiencing certain discrete emotions (Mottet et al., 2006). In fact, recent studies have found that discrete emotions, such as pride, hope, and enjoyment, are outcomes of emotional responses in the classroom (Titsworth, McKenna, Mazer, & Quinlan, 2013). Overall, ERT posits that instructors engage in certain communication behaviors, which cause students to respond emotionally and either approach or avoid instructors (Mottet et al., 2006) as well as experience discrete emotions (Titsworth, et al., 2013). Student approach behaviors include behaviors such as spending time on tasks and paying attention in class (Mottet et al., 2006). Avoidance behaviors, however, would be behaviors that indicate students do not want to be in the class, such as not talking in class or not attending class (Mottet et al., 2006).

When applying ERT to the classroom, Titsworth, Quinlan, and Mazer (2010) found that teacher behaviors could affect students' classroom emotions in three ways: emotional valence, emotional support, and emotion work. For instance, emotional valence explains that students feel either positive or negative emotions toward a certain course. Further, emotional support deals with if a student believes that their instructor will emotionally support them on topics both about and unrelated to the class. Lastly, emotion work deals with how much emotional energy a student expends in the classroom (Titsworth et al., 2010).

Researchers have used ERT to explain how certain teacher communication behaviors, such as communication competence and nonverbal immediacy, influence students' emotions (Titsworth et al., 2010). For example, teacher communication competence and nonverbal immediacy were found to be significant predictors of student classroom emotions, showing that teacher behaviors impacted students' classroom emotions. In addition, teacher nonverbal immediacy and competence positively predicted emotional valence, while negatively predicting emotion work. Further, in another study researchers explored how students' emotional processes were related to discrete emotions (i.e., individual emotions), including enjoyment, pride, and hope (Titsworth et al., 2013). Titsworth and colleagues (2013) concluded that teacher immediacy, clarity, and communication competence negatively predicted emotion work and positively predicted emotional support in the classroom. Emotion work then negatively predicted the discrete emotions of enjoyment, pride, and hope. Emotional support, however, positively predicted student enjoyment, hope, and pride (Titsworth et al., 2013). Therefore, demonstrating how teacher communication behaviors impact both student classroom emotions and student discrete emotions in the classroom. The current study expands ERT by looking at how emotional processes about a specific class relate to student shared political identity with instructors and student willingness to communicate in the classroom.

Social Identity Theory and Politics in the Classroom

In addition to teacher behaviors in the classroom, group membership can also affect a student's emotions (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In fact, Smith (1993) argues that a person's social identity can influence their social emotions and emotional action tendencies. For social emotions, group membership can influence an individual's appraisals of the actions of someone from their outgroup. For example, students may perceive other students as their in-group members, but teachers as their out-group members. Therefore, if a student sees a teacher punish another student, they may appraise the teacher as unreasonable or mean. These reactions could then elicit certain emotions, such as frustration or even anger. When these emotions refer to both the self and the current situation, they are defined as social emotions (Smith, 1993). These social emotions can lead to certain prejudice beliefs about out-group members. When a person reacts based on these emotions, they enact emotional action tendencies based on their social identities. Overall, social identities can elicit emotional reac-

tions within people (Smith, 1993). Therefore, a student's emotions may be influenced in the classroom based on whether they consider their teacher to be a member of their in-group or out-group.

One way to conceptualize group membership is through social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). SIT explains that people tend to categorize others as well as themselves based on group identities and memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). SIT also discusses how a person's membership in certain groups influences their perceptions of both themselves and others (Greene, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Further, depending on the status of the group, members will sometimes attempt to create a larger social distance between themselves and members of their out-group or a group that is contrary to an individual's primary in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, if a student is republican, they could consider other students and faculty members who are liberals as part of their out-group. These perceptions, however, are based on self-perceptions of memberships and do not need to be formal memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In other words, if a student perceives another student to be part of their in-group, regardless if the student actually is, they will treat that person as part of their in-group. In addition, social identity often influences a person's self-esteem and emotions. People are often emotionally attached to their group membership, and if their group is negatively viewed, their self-esteem can be lowered (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

One group membership that may be particularly prone to emotions in the classroom is a political affiliation (Linville & Havice, 2011). Teachers often struggle with deciding whether to share their political beliefs in the classroom or avoid the topic completely (Hess & Gatti, 2010). One view argues that students should be challenged to critically think about politics in the classroom, while another suggests that classroom political discussions potentially indoctrinate students to a particular political identity, mainly liberal in the context of higher education (Hess & Gatti, 2010; Horowitz, 2009). At the center of these arguments is how a teacher's political identity and disclosure of politics influences students in the classroom (Brady et al., 2010; Hess & Gatti, 2010; Mariani & Hewitt, 2008).

To explore how teachers' political beliefs affect students, Mariani and Hewitt (2008) studied how students' political beliefs changed over time and how faculty members influenced those changes.

The researchers concluded that while students do tend to become more liberal over their years in college, their change has little to do with faculty involvement. In fact, faculty political orientation (i.e., whether they identified as liberal or conservative) did not significantly predict student political orientation change during college. Thus, the researchers posited in the study that college students tended to move more toward societal norms during their time in college, but were not significantly influenced by their professors' political identities (Mariani & Hewitt, 2008).

Further exploring how politics influence students, researchers looked at how students viewed political biases in the classroom (Linvill & Havice, 2011). Linvill and Havice (2011) found that students often felt professors guided discussion based on their political interests, regardless of whether the discussion was related to course material. Further, students felt the instructors purposely avoided talking about political views with which the instructor did not agree. Overall, students felt that they were only receiving one viewpoint in the classroom, and not getting the complete benefits that education could offer if their instructors were not politically biased (Linvill & Havice, 2011). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that while instructors might not influence the political beliefs of students (Mariani & Hewitt, 2008), students do feel that instructors are politically biased in the classroom (Linvill & Havice, 2011).

In addition to looking at how instructor political orientations influence students, previous researchers have also considered whether or not political discussion is appropriate in the college classroom (Brady et al., 2010; Hafen, 2009; Hess & Gatti, 2010; Horowitz, 2009). As mentioned previously, some scholars have encouraged professors to discuss politics in the classroom in an effort to expand students' critical thinking and tolerance for disagreement (Brady et al., 2010; Hess & Gatti, 2010), while others accuse faculty of forcing their political opinions on students (Horowitz, 2009). In addition to looking at how instructors view discussing politics, Hafen (2009) explored students' perceptions of discussion of political dissent post 9/11. Generally, students felt that professors leading discussion on any political dissent was inappropriate, whether or not the conversation was rationalized through the classroom pedagogy. Since previous scholarship is mixed on how instructors discuss politics in the classroom (Hafen, 2009; Linvill & Havice, 2011; Mariani & Hewitt, 2008), further investigation of student perceptions of how

instructors talk about politics during class is warranted. The current study extends previous research by examining how students perceive their instructors discussing politics in the current divided political environment. A thematic analysis was used to explore the following research question:

RQ1: How do students perceive instructors discussing politics in the classroom?

When a teacher shares certain political beliefs in the classroom, it could cause students to become emotionally aroused depending on whether or not the teacher shares the same political beliefs as them (Smith, 1993). Therefore, viewing teacher disclosure of politics in classroom as a teacher behavior in the framework of ERT, students may respond emotionally when instructors talk about politics during class, influencing student levels of emotional valence, emotion work, and emotional support. If a teacher shares their political identity with their students, students may perceive them as either in their in-group or out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which could then influence their emotional responses to that teacher. One way to understand how students are influenced by instructor political disclosures is to examine if students believe their instructor shares their political identity, or is in their political in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In order to explore how student perceptions of a shared political identity with their instructor influences their emotional processes in the classroom, the following research question is explored:

RQ2: How is a student's perception of shared political identity with their instructor related to their emotional valence, emotional support, and emotion work in the classroom?

One outcome of ERT is discrete or individual emotions (i.e., hope, anger, anxiety, enjoyment; Titsworth et al., 2013). Additionally, these emotional responses could lead to the experiences of discrete emotions, such as anxiety, anger, and hopelessness. On the other hand, if a student perceives the instructor to share the same political identity, they may perceive the classroom and instructor more positively and experience positive emotions, such as hope and enjoyment. In order to explore the links between student perceptions of their shared political identity with their instructors and their discrete emotions, the following research question is proposed:

RQ3: How is a student's perception of shared political identity with their instructor related to their enjoyment, anger, and anxiety about the class?

Willingness to Communicate in Class as an Outcome of ERT and Instructor Politics

In addition to student emotions in the classroom, ERT also explains that students either approach or avoid teachers in the classroom based on how the teacher interacts with them. One possible approach-avoidance behavior that can be considered within the classroom is a student's willingness to communicate in class. Willingness to communicate in class explains whether a student is willing to talk in class or not (Richmond & McCroskey, 1989). Students communicate in class based on both interpersonal and functional motivations (Myers, Martin, & Mottet, 2002). For example, if a student wants to learn more material or form a relationship with the teacher, they will talk more in class (Myers et al., 2002). Willingness to communicate in class could also be defined as an approach-avoidance behavior in the classroom. Since a student's willingness to talk may be a result of emotional responses in the classroom, whether a student approaches a teacher or not based on their emotional experiences in the classroom could be related to willingness to communicate in class.

Similar to students' emotions, willingness to communicate in class is influenced by teacher behaviors (Menzel & Carrell, 1999; Myers et al., 2002). For instance, Menzel and Carrell (1999) found that if a teacher was more immediate in the classroom, students were more willing to communicate during class. Further, in another study researchers concluded that if instructors were more assertive and responsive, the students were more willing to communicate in the class (Myers et al., 2002). Although research has not considered willingness to communicate in class through an ERT lens, previous scholars have found that teacher behaviors do influence how much a student talks in class. Therefore, willingness to communicate seems to function as an approach-avoidance behavior. Further, a student's willingness to talk in class may be influenced by their emotional processes, including: emotional valence, emotion work, and emotional support. To explore the relationship between willingness to communicate in class and emotional processes, the following hypothesis will be explored:

H1: Student emotional support (1a) and emotional valence (1b) will be positively related to student willing-

ness to talk in class, whereas emotion work (1c) will be negatively related to student willingness to talk in class.

In addition, willingness to communication may also be influenced by whether or not a student sees the instructor as part of their in-group or out-group (Mottet et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Shared political identification can influence how people interact with others (Green, 2004). Therefore, students may be more willing to talk in class with professors they view as similar politically to them. In order to explore the connection between student willingness to communicate in class and shared political identification with instructors, the following research question is examined:

RQ4: How is a student's perception of shared political identity with their instructor related to their willingness to communicate in class?

Method

A mixed methods analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis and answer the research questions. Convenience sampling was used to collect data from 256 participants from a large Midwestern university. The age range of the participants was 18-25 years old ($M = 19.19$, $SD = 1.21$). One hundred and fifty-five of the participants identified as female (60.55%), 94 identified as male (36.72%), and seven participants chose not to answer or felt the above descriptions did not fit them (2.73%). Further, the sample included 122 freshman (47.66%), 64 sophomores (25%), 44 juniors (17.19%), 21 seniors (8.20%), three fifth year or above (1.17%), and two declined to answer (0.78%). Participant GPA ranged from .400 to 4.00 ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.93$). Additionally, 85.6% of participants identified as White/Caucasian and 14.4% identified as non-Caucasian (nine participants identified as Asian, one as Native American, 16 as Black/African American, one as Hispanic/Latino, two as Arab/Arabian, three as mixed race/multi-racial, one as Middle Eastern, and three declined to answer or did not know). Common majors reported included: communication studies, education, business, journalism, and undecided.

A mixed methods approach was used in order to more fully understand how instructors discuss politics in the classroom and how instructor politics influence students. Specifically, mixed methods allowed the researchers to qualitatively explore how students perceived instructors discussing politics in the classroom

(RQ1), while quantitatively examining students' shared political identity with their instructors, emotional responses, and willingness to talk in class (H1 and RQ2-RQ4). Further, using both qualitative and quantitative methods provides a form of data triangulation, which helps to strength the results of the study (Tracy, 2010).

After receiving approval from the university institutional review board (IRB), the participants were sent an e-mail inviting them to complete a survey. The survey included questions about shared political identity with instructor, classroom emotions, willingness to talk in class, and achievement emotions. Demographic questions included: age, gender, race, major, GPA, and year in school. Participants were part of a research pool were they received minimal course credit to participate in the study.

Instruments

Shared political identity. Shared political identity was measured using an adapted version of Aron, Aron, and Smollan's (1992) Inclusion of Self and Other Scale. This measure included two items answered on a seven-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). One question was: "I feel as if this instructor and I are members of the same political/political affiliation group." The scale originally included three items, but one was removed to improve the reliability of the scale. The reliability of the final scale was .93 ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.23$).

Classroom emotions. Classroom emotions were measured with the Classroom Emotions Scale (CES) created by Titsworth and colleagues (2010). The 14-item scale measured emotions on three levels: emotional support, emotional work, and emotional valence. The scale elicited responses on five-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). For instance, one question was: "My instructor is willing to help me make decisions about academic issues." The alpha reliability for each subscale was .85 for emotional support ($M = 3.33$, $SD = .75$), .73 for emotion work ($M = 2.52$, $SD = .83$), .89 ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .94$) for valence, and .86 for the overall scale ($M = 3.45$, $SD = .63$).

Achievement emotions. Emotions toward the class were measured with parts of the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011). This study

specifically focused on the emotions: enjoyment, anger, and anxiety. This scale included 49 items answered on a five-point Likert type scale with answers ranging from (*Strongly Disagree*) to (*Strongly Agree*). An example question was: "I am confident when I go to class." The alpha coefficient for enjoyment was .93 ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .85$), anger was .93 ($M = 1.94$, $SD = .90$), and anxiety was .95 ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.00$).

Willingness to talk in class. The participants' willingness to communicate during class was measured with the Willingness to Talk in Class Scale (Menzel & Carrell, 1999). The Willingness to Talk in Class Scale is the most commonly scale to measure a student's willingness to talk during class (see Myers et al., 2002; Sidelinger, 2010). This scale included 19 questions answered on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 (*Never*) and (*Always*). The scale asked students to rate how likely they were to talk in class depending on different situations, for instance: "The class is engaged in an open discussion" and "The topic is interesting." The reliability coefficient for this scale was .76 ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .44$).

Qualitative Data Analysis

In addition to the quantitative data collected, one open-ended research question was analyzed for this study. The question was "How does your instructor talk about politics in the classroom?" Out of the 256 participants who completed the survey, 244 students answered the open-ended question. Answers varied in length, from a few words to multiple sentences. To analyze this data, Owen's (1984) thematic analysis was used. This approach to thematic analysis uses three criteria to develop themes from the data, including: repetition, forcefulness, and reoccurrence. Repetition, the first criteria, involves looking for words that are repeated through the data. The second criteria, looks for forcefulness in answers, which can be displayed in open-ended questions through font size, underlining, italics, bolding, or punctuation to highlight the importance of an answer. Last, reoccurrence happens when similar meanings or ideas are represented in multiple answers (Owen, 1984). Once these rounds of coding were finished, the authors were able to compile a list of codes from the process. Thus, completing primary cycle coding by looking through the data set to identify an initial set of codes (Tracy, 2013). After this, the codes were collapsed into similar codes, completing second-level coding (Tracy, 2013). Following this, the authors then looked for similar themes across the second-level codes.

Results

Qualitative Findings

Research question one explored how students perceived instructors discussing politics during class. To examine how students perceived instructors talking about politics, answers from an open-ended question were coded. Findings from a thematic analysis yielded five themes: *Rarely or Do Not Discuss Politics*, *Open and Unbiased*, *Relevant to Class or Students*, *Through Comedy*, and *Indirectly or Before Class*. Examples from each theme are presented in table 1 in Appendix A.

For the *Rarely or Do Not Discuss Politics* theme, students mostly indicated that their instructors either rarely or did not discuss politics. A majority of the students did not perceive their instructors as discussing politics during class. Further, in the *Open and Unbiased* theme participants stated that their instructors talked about politics openly and without bias. Often, they mentioned that their instructors discussed politics fairly and tried to respect all sides. Additionally, for the *Relevant to Class or Students* theme students indicated that their instructors only talked about politics if the discussion was relevant to the class or if students brought politics up. Mainly students cited that instructors conversed about politics in relation to current events or course material. Next, in the *Through Comedy* theme, some participants stated that their instructors only joked about politics or used comedy to lighten the mood. Lastly, the *Indirectly or Before Class* theme described instructors that only subtly discussed politics or just talked about politics before or after class.

Quantitative Findings

To test the quantitative results of the hypothesis and research questions, we ran analyses in SPSS. Specifically, correlations and regressions were run to understand the relationships between the variables. Correlations for all variables are reported in table 2 (Appendix B) and table 3 (Appendix C). The first hypothesis predicted willingness to communicate would be related to emotional support, emotional valance, and emotion work. A Pearson correlation revealed significant positive relationships between emotional support and willingness to communicate ($r = .29, p < .001$), as well as emotional valance and willingness to communicate ($r = .16, p < .01$). However, emotion work was not related to willingness to communicate in class ($r = .11, p < .08$). To further ex-

amine the relationship, a linear multiple regression was run to see how emotional support, emotion work, and emotional valence predicted willingness to communicate. Results from the regression revealed that 11.2% of the variance in willingness to communicate was predicted by the model [$F(3, 255) = 11.77, p < .001$], with no outliers removed. The strongest predictor was emotional support ($\beta = .18, t = 4.18, p < .000$). Therefore, hypothesis one was partially supported.

Research questions two and three explored the relationships between emotional valence, emotion work, emotional support, anger, anxiety, and enjoyment and shared political identity. A correlation was performed to test these relations. There was a positive relationship between shared political identity and emotional valence ($r = .18, p < .003$) as well as shared political identity and enjoyment ($r = .24, p < .001$). Results of the rest of the correlations can be seen in table 3 in Appendix C. Research question four looked at the relationship between willingness to communicate in class and shared political identity. In order to understand these relationships, a correlation was run. There was no relationship between willingness to communicate in class and shared political identity with instructors ($r = .01, p < .86$). The correlations can be seen in table 2 in Appendix B.

Discussion

Through the current study, we aimed to understand how instructors communicate about politics in the classroom and the impact teacher discussion of politics has on students. Previous scholars and popular press sources claim that university faculty members are attempting to indoctrinate students into particular political beliefs through the college classroom (Crouere, 2016; Hess & Gatti, 2010; Horowitz, 2009). Research on how professor politics influence students, however, has yielded mixed results. For example, Mariani and Hewitt (2008) found that teacher political views did not impact student political beliefs later in college. Other researchers, however, have argued that professors only state biased political opinions in the classroom (Linvill & Havice, 2011). The current study sought to further investigate the influence of politics in the classroom by looking how professors discussed politics, as well as how students' perceptions of their shared political beliefs with their instructor influenced their emotions in the classroom and approach-avoidance behaviors with their instructors.

Results from the qualitative findings yielded the themes: *Rarely*

or Do Not Discuss Politics, Open and Unbiased, Relevant to Class or Students, Through Comedy, and Indirectly or Before Class. These themes revealed that largely professors avoided discussing politics or were careful about how they approached politics during class. Further, quantitative analyses for the first hypothesis demonstrated that emotional valence and emotional support were related to willingness to communicate in class. Further, a regression demonstrated that emotional valence, emotional support, and emotion work significantly predicted 11.2% of the variance in willingness to talk in class. For research questions two-four, the only positive relationships were between shared political identity and enjoyment, along with shared political identity and enjoyment.

Contrary to the popular press reports (Crouere, 2016) and some scholarly sources (Hess & Gatti, 2010; Horowitz, 2009; Linvill & Havice, 2011), results from research question one, which asked students how their instructors discussed politics in the classroom, found that largely professors did not talk about politics in the classroom. In fact, a majority of the students (74.18%) stated that their professors rarely talked about politics or did not talk about politics at all in the class. Further, the other themes revealed that instructors were open to multiple viewpoints in the classroom, only discussed politics related to course material, just joked about politics, or indirectly talked about politics. These findings directly contradict Linvill and Havice's (2011) claim that instructors often share political biases in the classroom, but supports Mariani and Hewitt's (2008) argument that instructors' political beliefs do not impact student's political views. Further, even with the contentious political environment, only a few people mentioned anything about biased teachers or Trump (examples: "Barely. He holds some anti trump sentiment, but who doesn't at this point?" and "Some don't. The ones that do usually bash Trump or others do a good job of just inciting questions in us. Sometimes it's more of a Q & A with little actual input from the Prof. but they are asking the right questions.") but even these answers stated that instructors rarely discussed politics in the classroom. These findings could partly be because instructors do not want to share their political views given the current state of the political environment in the country. Further, faculty members could be afraid of retaliation or objection from students who do not share their political viewpoints in the classroom; therefore, they are not willing to discuss politics. In addition, another reason why student might not have perceived instructors to discuss politics in the classroom could be that students political beliefs converged with the beliefs

of the teacher, therefore the students did not actively notice the discussion of political views. Considering the idea of selective listening (i.e., listening to only what you believe is important or matches your own views), students may have only listened to viewpoints that supported their own biases or political views (Brown, 2008). Overall, from these results, instructors do not seem to be pushing students toward a certain political party in their classes.

The results from the qualitative data help to explain some of the results from the quantitative analysis as well. The only relationships that were significant for students' perceived shared political identity with an instructor were emotional valence and enjoyment. The correlations between these variables were positive, meaning that as students perceived having more of a shared political identity with their instructor, they viewed the classroom more positively and had more classroom enjoyment. These findings support previous research about political identity and social identity theory. Greene (1999; 2004) through a series of studies found that people tend to view members of their political party more favorably. The current study further confirmed that students also tend to have emotions that are more positive for teachers who share their political identity, demonstrating in-group favoritism toward instructors. Further, Greene (2004) found that not having a congruent political identity with someone did not necessarily lower people's opinions of the other person. The findings from the current study also demonstrated that students did not experience more negative emotions based on a lack of shared political identity with their instructor. Therefore, similar to what Greene (2004) found, students did not negatively view instructors with differing viewpoints in the current data. Another reason why more variables might not have been related is because if teachers are not discussing politics openly in class, then students are not influenced greatly by how teachers talk about politics.

Along with enlightening current research on how politics are discussed in the classroom, we also found further support for emotional response theory. Specifically, one approach-avoidance behavior was tested based on ERT. The results of hypothesis one revealed emotional support, emotional valence, and emotion work predicted 11.2% of the variance in willingness to communicate in class. Therefore, willingness to talk in class can be considered an outcome of student emotional responses. When introducing ERT, Mottet and colleagues (2006) posited that students' emotional responses would lead to certain approach-avoidance

behaviors. The current study demonstrates how emotional responses predicted two approach-avoidance behaviors, willingness to talk in class. Therefore, the results supported ERT and added one additional approach-avoidance behavior in the classroom, willing to talk in class.

Overall, these findings add to both ERT and SIT. The findings involving shared political identity in the classroom demonstrate how group favoritism and group categorizations play out in the classroom. Mainly, students who perceive their instructors to have a similar political identity as them experience more classroom enjoyment, or in-group favoritism toward their teachers. Additionally, understanding how emotional valence, emotional support, and emotion work furthers our understanding of the relationship between student emotional responses and approach-avoidance behaviors.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of the current study was that data was only collected at one university. If several universities across the country had been used, more insight may be provided on how politics in different regions of the country influence the classroom. Future studies should explore if politics are discussed differently in classrooms in various regions of the United States. Further, another limitation of the study was that the sample was mostly white students. A more diverse sample could have given key insights to how different ethnicities view politics. In addition, the qualitative results also had some limitations, mainly that the answers were short, typically only one to two sentences. In addition, another limitation was that while a number of majors were reported, the most commonly report major was communication. Students in various majors could have different views on politics, causing them to have different perceptions of professor political views. Further, instructors in different disciplines may approach politics in various ways, meaning that some professors maybe more willing to talk about politics than other. Future research should explore if political views vary amongst majors as well as disciplines. Last, the study did not consider how international students might view politics in the United States classroom. Future studies should explore how international students and teachers assess politics in the American classroom.

Future researchers should continue examining how teachers' communication about politics influences the classroom. For ex-

ample, scholars could explore if students consider a teacher discussing politics in the classroom as a teacher misbehavior. Further, more research should be conducted across different class types and levels to see if instructors talk more about politics in particular classes. Additionally, researchers should examine politics from the instructor's point of view, particularly to see how they view discussing politics with their students.

In addition to more research on politics, more studies should also be conducted on emotional response theory. Specifically, more approach-avoidance behaviors should be investigated, such as willingness to talk with instructors outside of class and student self-disclosure with instructors. Further, more research on ERT should be conducted from the teacher's point of view. For example, researchers could explore if student communication behaviors elicit certain responses within in teachers, which lead to emotional responses that result in certain approach-avoidance behaviors with students.

Conclusion

Through the current study, we explored the relationship between students' perceptions of teacher political views and emotional responses in the classroom as well as how students perceived their instructors talking about politics in the classroom. At a time when political tensions are high in the U.S. (McConnell et al., 2017), understanding how these tensions influence the college classroom is paramount. Overall, the results from the current study reveal that instructors rarely or do not talk about politics in the classroom. These results contradict ideas that college teachers are actively working to indoctrinate students into particular political frameworks (Horowitz, 2009). Since education is often cited as one of the dividing factors in politics, demonstrating that college instructors are not actively working to change students' politics preferences is important (Crouere, 2016). More research needs to be conducted to understand how teachers talk about politics in differing disciplines and regions within the U.S. Further, the study found support for both ERT and SIT in the classroom, demonstrating that students' perceptions of their shared political identity with their instructor does impact their classroom enjoyment. Overall, these findings add to our understanding of how politics influence students' experiences in higher education.

References

- Aron, A., Aron, E. N., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63*, 596-612. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.63.4.596
- Bahls, S. C. (2017, February 28). An invitation. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/02/28/higher-education-should-acknowledge-many-americans-believe-colleges-indoctrinate>
- Barbalet, J. (2006). Emotions in politics: From the ballot to suicide terrorism. In S. Clarke, P. Hoggett & S. Thompson (Eds.), *Emotion, Politics and Society* (pp.31-55). London: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1057/9780230627895_3
- Brady, J. E., Curzan, A., Graff, G., Ohmann, R. M., Oppenheimer Jr, M., Shapiro, M., ... & Zorn, J. (2010). Forum. *PMLA*, *125*, 213-219. doi:10.1111/j.0092-5853.2005.00130.x
- Brown, G. (2008). Selective listening. *System*, *36*, 10-21. doi:10.1016/j.system.2007.11.002
- Crouere, J. (2016, December 10). Liberal indoctrination trumps education as U.S. colleges. *Townhall*. Retrieved from <https://townhall.com/columnists/jeffcrouere/2016/12/10/liberal-indoctrination-trumps-education-at-us-colleges-n2257882>
- Edwards-Levy, A. (2016, September 3). Nearly half of Americans have gotten into a fight about the election. *HuffPost*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/nearly-half-americans-fight-election_us_57cb226ae4b0e60d31df66a2
- Greene, S. (1999). Understanding party identification: A social identity approach. *Political Psychology*, *20*, 393-403. doi:10.1111/0162-895X.00150
- Greene, S. (2004). Social identity theory and party identification. *Social Science Quarterly*, *85*, 136-153. doi:10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.08501010.x
- Hafen, S. (2009). Patriots in the classroom: Performing positionalities post 9/11. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, *6*, 61-83. doi:10.1080/14791420802632111
- Hess, D., & Gatti, L. (2010). Putting politics where it belongs: In the classroom. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2010*, No. 152, 19-26. doi:10.1002/he.408
- Horowitz, D. (2009). *Indoctrination U.: The left's war against academic freedom*. London: Encounter Books.

- Immordino-Yang, M. H., & Damasio, A. (2007). We feel, therefore we learn: The relevance of affective and social neuroscience to education. *Mind, Brain, and Education, 1*, 3-10.
doi:10.1111/j.1751-228X.2007.00004.x
- Linville, D. L. (2011). The relationship between student identity development and the perception of political bias in the college classroom. *College Teaching, 59*, 49-55.
doi:10.1080/87567555.2010.511312
- Linville, D. L., & Havice, P. A. (2011). Political bias on campus: Understanding the student experience. *Journal of College Student Development, 52*, 487-496. doi:10.1353/csd.2011.0056
- Mariani, M. D., & Hewitt, G. J. (2008). Indoctrination U.? Faculty ideology and changes in student political orientation. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 41*, 773-783.
doi:10.1017/S1049096508081031
- McConnell, C., Margalit, Y., Malhotra, N., & Levendusky, M. (2017, May 19). Research: Political polarization is changing how Americans work and shop. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2017/05/research-political-polarization-is-changing-how-americans-work-and-shop>
- Mehrabian, A. (1981). *Silent messages: Implicit communication of emotions and attitudes*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Menzel, K. E., & Carrell, L. J. (1999). The impact of gender and immediacy on willingness to talk and perceived learning. *Communication Education, 48*, 31-40.
doi:10.1080/03634529909379150
- Meyer, D. K., & Turner, J. C. (2006). Re-conceptualizing emotion and motivation to learn in classroom contexts. *Educational Psychology Review, 18*, 377-390.
doi:10.1007/s10648-006-9032-1
- Mottet, T. P., & Beebe, S. A. (2002). Relationships between teacher nonverbal immediacy, student emotional response, and perceived student learning. *Communication Research Reports, 19*, 77-88.
doi:10.1080/08824090209384834
- Mottet, T. P., Frymier, A. B., & Beebe, S. A. (2006). Theorizing about instructional communication. In T. P. Mottet, V. P. Richmond, & J. C. McCroskey (Eds.), *Handbook of instructional communication* (pp. 255-282). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Myers, S. A., Martin, M. M., & Mottet, T. P. (2002). Students' motives for communicating with their instructors: Con-

- sidering instructor socio-communicative style, student socio-communicative orientation, and student gender. *Communication Education*, 51, 121-133. doi:10.1080/03634520216511
- Owen, W. F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 274-287. doi:10.1080/00335638409383697
- Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Frenzel, A. C., Barchfield, P., & Perry, R. P. (2011). Measuring emotions in students' learning and performance: The Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ). *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36, 36-48. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2010.10.002
- Pew Research Center. (2016). *Partisanship and political animosity in 2016*. Retrieved from <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/06/06-22-16-Partisanship-and-animosity-release.pdf>
- Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (1989). Willingness to communicate and dysfunctional communication processes. In C. V. Roberts & K. W. Watson (Eds.), *Interpersonal communication processes* (pp. 292-318). New Orleans, LA: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.
- Sidelinger, R. J. (2010). College student involvement: An examination of student characteristics and perceived instructor communication behaviors in the classroom. *Communication Studies*, 61, 87-103. doi:10.1080/10510970903400311
- Smith, E. R. (1993). Social identity and social emotions: Toward new conceptualizations of prejudice. In D. M. Mackie & D. L. Hamilton (Eds.), *Affect, cognition, and stereotyping* (pp. 297-316). New York: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7-24). Chicago: Nelson Hall.
- Titworth, S., McKenna, T. P., Mazer, J. P., & Quinlan, M. M. (2013). The bright side of emotion in the classroom: Do teachers' behaviors predict students' enjoyment, hope, and pride? *Communication Education*, 62, 191-209. doi:10.1080/03634523.2013.763997
- Titworth, B. S., Quinlan, M. M., & Mazer, J. P. (2010). Emotion in teaching and learning: Development and validation of the Classroom Emotions Scale. *Communication Education*, 59, 431-452. doi:10.1080/03634521003746156

- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*, 837-851.
- Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Appendix A

Table 1 How Instructors Talk about Politics (N = 244)

Theme	Examples	Number
Rarely or Do Not Discuss Politics	“She does the smart thing and doesn't talk about politics in the classroom.” “He does not talk about politics, strictly the material of the class.”	181 (74.18%)
Open and Unbiased	“Political opinions do not often come up in class, but she is open-minded and fair when they do come up, and does not show bias towards any opinion.” “He is open minded to all party affiliations and rarely discusses his own ideas. He wants the classroom to be a comfortable environment for all viewpoints, even those that some would disagree with.”	30 (12.30%)
Relevant to Class or Students	“Very rarely do we go in depth about politics but in the class, (Culture in Communications) we discuss different political systems in different cultures and how they possibly relate to us.” “Most of the topics we discuss in class can be related to or have some type of affiliation to political topics, so often we discuss how they topics are related to the political topics. We also often talk about current political events.”	18 (7.38%)
Through Comedy	“He rarely talks politics, but he'll poke fun at some stuff that occurs.” “If politics come up she dances around it and uses comedy.”	4 (1.62%)
Indirectly or Before Class	“There are never any specifics brought up, just subtle comments made here and there.”	4 (1.62%)

Instructor Political Beliefs

Appendix B

Table 2

Correlations Between Emotional Support, Emotional Valence, Emotion Work, Willingness to Communicate in Class (WTC), and Shared Political Identity with Instructor (Shared Political ID)

	1	2	3	4
1. Emotional Support				
2. Emotional Valence	.57**			
3. Emotion Work	-.26**	-.42**		
4. WTC	.28**	.16*	.11	
5. Shared Political ID	.10	.18**	.03	.19**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Appendix C

Table 3

Correlations Between Anger, Enjoyment, Anxiety, Emotional Support, Emotional Valence, Emotion Work, and Shared Political Identity with Instructor (Shared Political ID)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Anger						
2. Enjoyment	-.47**					
3. Anxiety	.60**	-.41**				
4. Emotional Support	-.34**	.41**	-.34**			
5. Emotional Valence	-.50**	.50**	-.38**	.57**		
6. Emotion Work	.49**	-.19**	.44**	-.26**	-.42**	
7. Shared Political ID	-.06	.24**	.06	.10	.18**	.03

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

**When a Television Series Misses the Mark:
Identity Politics, Whiteness and Televisual Representations in
*Off the Map***

Alese Devin
Michaela D.E. Meyer
Christopher Newport University

This essay explores the ill-fated television series Off the Map. Through the use of an ideological critique, we argue that this installment of Shondaland failed due to its possessive investment in whiteness. Through a lack of cultural sensitivity in televisual representation of its main characters, the setting of the series, and televisual melodrama, Off the Map failed to obtain enough of an audience to sustain it for a second season. Our analysis reveals that studying popular texts that fail can often teach us something those that succeed cannot.

Keywords : *Off the Map*, Shondaland, Shonda Rhimes, whiteness, television representation, ideology

After the wild success of *Grey's Anatomy*, it came as a massive surprise when *Off the Map*, another medical drama by Shonda Rhimes, failed on ABC after its release in 2011. The series followed a group of young, attractive doctors working at a free clinic located deep in the South American jungle. Despite the widely held belief that anything Shonda Rhimes touches turns to television gold, *Off the Map* was canceled after only one season of thirteen episodes. Audience reception was mixed. Some critics like Highfill (2013) were laudatory saying, "I honestly couldn't think of anything else a good show might have needed. So I tuned in, and pretty soon thereafter, I was hooked." However, far more found the show lacking. One viewer wrote on Metacritic, "A better title for this show should be *Not Another Hospital Drama*. The lines are repetitive, the story is predictable and the geographical descriptions inaccurate" ("*Off the Map*," n.d.). Stanley (2011) argued that the show was an incredibly shallow misrepresentation of humanitarian medicine, going so far as to rename the series "Doctors Without Shirts," a clever wordplay on the well-known "Doctors Without Borders" organization. Yet another reviewer commented, "*Off the Map* is dreadfully painful in its efforts to be dramatic and earnest," illustrating how *Off the Map* fell short of many people's expectations of a typical Shondaland production ("*OFF THE MAP*", n.d.). Given the almost universally negative views of *Off the Map*, cancellation of the show was

not entirely a surprise.

Given the general success of Shonda Rhimes' creative work through her own vision as a television auteur and through her production company Shondaland, *Off the Map*'s failure stands out as an interesting case-study in television history. Analyzing failed television shows can be extremely beneficial to media studies because knowing what does not work at a particular cultural moment can reveal ideological preferences and affiliations with popular culture. A television show can fail for multiple reasons: the show had bad ratings in combination with expensive licensing fees, lack of streaming potential, expensive production, or the network simply did not care for it (VanDerWerff, 2017). Shonda Rhimes and her production company Shondaland are known for their use of colorblind casting, intersectionality, heterotopias, degeneration and regeneration, and resistance to stereotyping (Griffin & Meyer, 2018). Given these aspects of Rhimes' signature style, *Off the Map* appeared to align with several of these themes. However, upon closer examination, it is our contention that *Off the Map* failed because of its lack of adherence to intersectional identity politics at a time when successful television narratives were honing their representations of characters of color as well as storylines related to identity politics.

The purpose of our study is to explore why *Off the Map* failed as a television series. To do so, we employ an ideological criticism of the thirteen episodes of the series and illustrate how the show centered whiteness as its dominant narrative framework. In doing so, it alienated audiences in the early 2010s who were used to Rhimes' inclusivity and more carefully drawn narratives exploring intersectionality. This particular cultural moment offered a clear mismatch between the representation being sold and cultural expectations for televisual representation. By examining how whiteness operated in this particular series, and how audiences rejected this representation, we argue that *Off the Map*'s failure can be seen as a positive step toward more inclusive televisual representations.

Literature Review

The Visual Style of Shonda Rhimes and Shondaland

Scholars have argued that Shonda Rhimes' success is due to her ability to establish herself as a television auteur with distinct characteristics of her work. One of these components is her use

of colorblind casting in her shows. Joseph (2016) describes colorblind casting, in the simplest of terms, as the use of actors of color in television. Warner (2015) argues that Rhimes' "innovative blindcasting could, if properly deployed, change the visual representation of minorities on the small screen..." (p. 636). However, most scholars argue blindcasting simply functions to reproduce racism. Joseph (2016) notes that "In Rhimes' narration of her scripting and casting processes she performed impartiality and an attitude un-swayed by race. Race was ancillary to her read of the world: she "didn't care"" (p. 307). Instead of making a political statement about diversity, Rhimes provided "stories about people of color or opportunities for actors of color" as something that just "suddenly happened" (p. 307). Petermon (2018) expands on this stating that "the problem with colorblind television is that it reinforces the idea that race is no longer an important societal issue" (p. 116). Warner (2015), although stating colorblind casting could change the visual representation of characters of color, claims that Rhimes' use of colorblind casting is deployed to comfort white people by creating visual images and stories that allow white individuals to ignore conversations about cultural difference. Despite the differing scholarly opinions on the use of colorblind casting, it has become one of the many trademarks of Shondaland productions (Meyer & Griffin, 2018).

Along with her use of colorblind casting, Rhimes is acknowledged as an individual who employs intersectionality in her television work. Gopaldas (2013) describes intersectionality as "the interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class, and gender in fostering life experiences" (p. 90). Both Abdi and Calafell (2018) and Young and Pham (2018) analyze characters in *Grey's Anatomy* from an intersectional lens in order to illustrate how Rhimes' representations are both progressive and paradoxical simultaneously. Abdi and Calafell (2018) examine Callie Torres and her positionality as a Latina, upper class, Catholic, bisexual woman who is always in relationships with white individuals. Ultimately, they argue that Callie's representation functions in service to white normativity. Similarly, Young and Pham (2018) examine Cristina Yang's character as a Korean-American, Jewish woman within the series. They find that Yang tends to embody Asian stereotypes such as the Dragon Lady and the model minority, while at the same time illustrate how her representation is contained in ways that mark her as an "honorary white" character. Thus, in both instances, the use of colorblind casting produces representations that function in service to whiteness, while also offering space to explore characters of color on the

small screen.

Whiteness on Television

Beyond Shondaland, numerous scholars have examined various television texts for their representation of whiteness. Whiteness can be seen as a central ideological aspect of many fictional televisual representations (Nielson & Turner, 2014). In reality television, whiteness often frames how competitions are enacted. Dubrofsky (2006) discusses reality television's relationship to whiteness by examining *The Bachelor*. She finds "women of color...work only to frame the narrative about white people forming a romantic union" (p. 40). Thus, inferential racism or racist representations are normalized within the narrative (Dubrofsky, 2006). The women of color on *The Bachelor* rarely got time on air and when they did, it was to recenter whiteness (Dubrofsky, 2006). Examining a text that is more voyeuristic than competition based, Rennels (2015) argues that the series *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* conscripts an idealized version of whiteness that "combines surveillance with spectacle to create a cautionary tale that re-centers ideal whiteness and reinforces neoliberal ideals: be wealthy, rational, personally responsible, and in control, or else" (p. 284). Rennels' work illustrates how reality television narratives function not only to promote whiteness, but a particular idealized version of whiteness - one that connects directly to upper-middle class values and ideologies.

Fictional scripted television series have also been strongly critiqued for their continued investment in whiteness. Chidester (2008) demonstrates that the absence of discussion of race in *Friends* leads to establishing whiteness as central in America. *Friends* distinctly lacks characters of color in the series, a particularly odd fictional representation of modern day New York City. Through the absence of a racial other, Chidester (2008) says the series "maintain[s] its core sense of purity against racial outsiders by denying any significant contacts between whiteness and the racialized Other" (p. 162). Chidester observed that, even when an African American was introduced into the show, her race was never mentioned, but rather other aspects of her identity, like her height, were mentioned instead. This failure to recognize or discuss race is not limited to *Friends*; it is a common practice among many shows. Meyer (2009) examines the television series *One Tree Hill* for its representation of Anna, a young bisexual Latina character. Anna's narrative is troublesome because it tends to recenter whiteness as the defining feature of teen development.

Ultimately, Anna's presence in the series "provides legitimacy to the white world of One Tree Hill—white teens are progressive and accepting of sexual difference, and that "real" homophobia is perpetuated by ethnic "others" who are perhaps not as "enlightened" as their white counterparts" (p. 248). Thus, when television narratives function to center whiteness as the dominant ideological framework for a variety of cultural discourses, it minimizes the progressive potential of intersectional identity politics in television representations.

Method

This study uses an ideological critique to analyze *Off the Map*. Narrative has been recognized as "a way of ordering and presenting a view of the world through a description of situations involving character, actions, and setting" (Foss, 2009, p. 400). The purpose of analyzing narratives through an ideological lens is to identify the "set of ideas, assumptions, beliefs, values, or interpretations of the world by which a group operates" (Foss, 2009, p. 291). Our study includes all thirteen episodes of the first and only season of *Off the Map*, which were viewed via streaming technology on abc.go.com. Detailed notes were taken on each episode and viewed through Foss' method of ideological criticism. This method consists of three main identifications: identification of the nature of ideology, identification of interests included, and identification of strategies in support of the ideology (Foss, 2009). Identifying the nature of the ideology deals with examining how an ideology is present in a media text, how it makes the audience feel and think, what arguments are being made, and what general values are being described as good (Foss, 2009). Identification of the interests included focuses on whose interests are being represented in the artifact and whose voices are being heard (Foss, 2009). Lastly, identification of strategies in support of the ideology looks at the parts of the media source that promote the ideology as dominant in relation to other perspectives (Foss, 2009). Once we completed these steps, we organized our findings thematically for our analysis.

Show Synopsis

Many readers may be unfamiliar with *Off the Map*, particularly given its lack of success. Thus, a brief synopsis of the show prior to our analysis is warranted to help orient readers to the text. *Off the Map* was a medical drama produced by Shondaland, created by Jenna Bans, who previously worked on *Grey's Anatomy*. The

series ran on ABC from January 12, 2011, to April 6, 2011, and was cancelled shortly thereafter on May 13, 2011. The series was set in an understocked, rural clinic in a remote South American jungle. In many ways, given the timing of the series, it is likely that ABC wanted to capitalize on both the popularity of *Grey's Anatomy* and the ending of its other scripted juggernaut, *Lost*, in 2010.

The series followed the lives of several doctors. The initial focus was on three new doctors, Dr. Tommy Fuller, Dr. Lily Brenner, and Dr. Mina Minard, who were introduced as arriving at the clinic in order to escape their past in America. Tommy was shown to be a promiscuous and light-hearted character, earning the nickname "Plastics." The series framed him as having "barely made his way through medical school," and his decision to relocate to the clinic as part of a falling out with his family. Lily Brenner lost her fiancé in a cycling accident after she asked him to go out to buy her some cereal. Represented as an extreme control freak, her arrival at the clinic was marked as an attempt to escape her grief over her fiancé's death. Mina Minard joined the clinic because she was fired from residency after misdiagnosing a young boy earlier in her career that led to his death. Apparently, her father was a doctor of high stature who was able to erase the event from her records, but Mina left the country to escape her past.

We are also introduced to several doctors who have been in the jungle for some time: Dr. Ben Keeton, Dr. Otis Cole, Dr. Zee Alvarez, and Dr. Ryan Clark. Ben Keeton was described as "one of the world's greatest humanitarians," who funded his free clinic work by keeping his wife Abby alive on life support. Although Abby's EEG scans showed no changes, Ben was allowed to access her trust fund as a means of supporting the clinic financially so long as she was kept alive. Otis Cole was an African-American man described as having a bark "just as bad as his bite." Cole was once addicted to morphine and heroin and consumes candy to stay sober. Zee Alvarez was the only South American native depicted in the clinic, spoke fluent Spanish, and was often positioned as a "mother hen" character. Ryan Clark was the child of missionaries and grew up all over the world. She was bitten by an assassin bug when she was eight years old which went untreated causing her to develop Chagas disease. Twenty years later, the disease had caused irreversible heart damage, prompting her heart failure. Alvarez and Cole develop a romantic relationship throughout the series, as do Keeton and

Devin & Meyer

Clark.

The final main recurring character was Charlie, a teenage boy who was abandoned by his parents at the age of nine. Charlie helped out by doing odd jobs for the clinic in addition to assisting wherever needed and translating for the new doctors. He supposedly lived in a hostel, but was represented as house-sitting various condos and had a bed in the clinic as well. Charlie and the doctors encountered patients each episode, giving the series a “patient of the week” feel while also framing these experiences as “off the map.”

Analysis

Off the Map overwhelmingly depicts a possessive investment in whiteness through its televisual representation. The title of the first episode is “Saved by the Great White Hope” (Bans, Zisk, & Rhimes, 2011). This title at first glance might not elicit any emotions, however, it is a historic reference to white superiority. “The Great White Hope” is a cultural reference to heavyweight boxing. African American boxer Jack Johnson became the world heavyweight champion in 1908, and the cultural terminology “great white hope” was adopted in the boxing community to signify the white boxer who would eventually reclaim the heavyweight title. In 1910, white boxer James Jeffries announced that he was going to reclaim the heavyweight championship for the white race (Ridley, 2010). Jeffries agreed to fight Johnson after the famous American writer, Jack London, called for a “great white hope” to help win back the heavyweight title for white people (Ridley, 2010). Johnson ended up beating Jeffries so badly in the first fifteen rounds that he quit before he completely lost in a knockout (Ridley, 2010).

By referencing the “Great White Hope” in its title episode, *Off the Map* begins by framing its narrative as one that will emphasize white superiority. As the episode unfolds, this representation emerges as the three white doctors entering the clinic expect that their skills and intelligence will benefit the people of the South American jungle. When Dr. Alvarez meets Dr. Brenner for the first time, she remarks, “Ahh, goodie, another American saved by the great white hope” (Bans, Zisk, & Rhimes, 2011). Beyond the cultural reference to white superiority, this phrase uttered by Dr. Alvarez, the only South American native, marks Dr. Brenner’s choice to work in the clinic as entangled with a white savior complex. The white savior complex refers to white people that seek

emotional experiences validating their white privilege (Aronson, 2017). The white doctors go to the jungle for their "big emotional experience" helping the "poor South American clinic" which validates their privilege as white individuals. The doctors are all fleeing their troubles in America, coming to the jungle as a means of "finding themselves." This positionality is exploitative in that the jungle and its people then function as a backdrop for fulfilling the emotional needs of the white doctors, when in actuality, the doctors should be in service to the locale and its people.

This ideological positioning unfolds as even more egregious when we learn that none of the white doctors speak Spanish even though it would be the primary language of their new environment. Even simple words and phrases in Spanish are not understood by the American doctors. In the first episode, we are introduced to Charlie who responds to Dr. Fuller's question about his age by saying, "trece, if you don't know what that means you will need my help" (Bans, Zisk, & Rhimes, 2011). Charlie knows that Dr. Fuller does not know the language and yet he does not seem surprised by this. Rather, it is framed as typical for white people from the United States journeying to South America. Like many self-absorbed Americans from the United States, the doctors expect their patients will speak English. In fact, as the series unfolds, early patients seem to be primarily white tourists or travelers who do speak English. Only later in the series when the doctors have picked up some rudimentary Spanish are they introduced more frequently to patients who cannot speak English. Even in these cases, native patients often attempt to speak English to the doctors, while the reverse of the doctors addressing the patients in Spanish occurs rarely. Just like Charlie, the patients do not seem surprised that the white doctors from the United States do not know their language. When the doctors are depicted as trying to learn Spanish, the representation serves to only emphasize their inability to do so. Dr. Minard attempts to use a dictionary to communicate with native patients, but it does not work successfully for her most of the time. Thus, the native Spanish speakers are expected to cater to the needs of the white doctors from the United States by speaking English. The only character that seems bothered by this is Dr. Alvarez who expresses to Dr. Cole that she "does not know why [she] wastes her time training these useless Americanos who don't even bother to learn Spanish" (Bans, Zisk, & Rhimes, 2011). The inability of the doctors to speak, or even learn, basic Spanish functions to uphold the ideology of whiteness. The patients are coming to the white doctors from the United States because they are trying to regain their

Devin & Meyer

health. However, they are met with an inability to communicate properly and inadequate resources to help them communicate. This works to further the white savior complex because the white doctors must “translate” how to intervene with patients who are seen as unable to communicate, positioning them as the intellectual superior in these interactions.

The lack of cultural sensitivity in the series extends beyond the issue of language. While medical dramas depicting U.S. American cities are often specific to the locale, (e.g., *Grey’s Anatomy* takes place in Seattle, its sister series *Private Practice* takes place in Los Angeles), the first episode of *Off the Map* opens with an aerial shot of a dense jungle with a caption that reads “Somewhere in South America.” This lack of specificity about the setting continues throughout the series and viewers are given only small clues as to where this clinic supposedly exists. Eventually, viewers are told the clinic is located in a city named “La Ciudad de las Estrellas,” but this is a fictional city located somewhere in South America. In essence, viewers do not even know which country within South America the show is supposed to be occurring in. This is further confused by episode four titled “On the Mean Streets of San Miguel” (Boylan, Stoltz & Rhimes, 2011). In the episode, the doctors go to San Miguel to obtain medication to treat a patient with a staff infection. San Miguel is in the middle of Mexico, north even of Mexico City, which is over 2,000 miles away from South America. The question for media scholars then is why did the writers make a conscious decision to frame this story through an entirely fictional setting? Ideologically, the utilization of a fictional city allows the writers to avoid the responsibility of adhering to a real city’s culture and values regarding medicine. It also could serve to justify the utilization of a primarily white cast and a U.S. film location in Hawaii (“Off the Map,” 2011). By failing to explicitly mark the location of the clinic, the overwhelmingly Caucasian cast seems less out of place because it is, after all, just fiction. If the show had specified a South American location like Rio de Janeiro, it would have needed to attend more closely to viewer expectations for cultural and visual specificity. They would have, at the very least, needed to explain why doctors were sent over 2,000 miles away to a city to pick up some medication. Thus, the setting (or the lack thereof in this case) functions to re-center U.S. American whiteness as the dominant ideology while blatantly illustrating a lack of concern for basic geography.

Beyond problems with the physical setting, the doctors are de-

picted throughout the series as trivializing and marginalizing not only their current physical location, but also the cultural beliefs and values of the native population. In the first five minutes of episode one, we see many examples of the white doctors' lack of understanding of their new environment. Dr. Fuller is given an assignment to go across the mountain to treat a family that has been plagued with tuberculosis. Dr. Fuller refers to the walk that he has to take to get to the opposite side of the jungle as a punishment. He then proceeds to complain further to Charlie about how white people created streets for themselves and then tells Charlie that it "is called civilization, you should try it" (Bans, Zisk, & Rhimes, 2011). Like the lack of language skills, this scene depicts the sense of dominance that white people feel. Dr. Fuller made the treatment of his patients about *him* by referring to it as a punishment. In addition, he refers to the jungle as a lack of civilization. This use of the word "civilization," or lack thereof, positions the environment of the jungle as inferior to the "civilized" (white) environment that he knows.

The most troubling representations of ideologies of whiteness occur when local characters take center stage in roles other than patients. In episode two, we are introduced to a character referred to as the local "medicine man." In order for doctors to perform procedures on their native patients, they need the permission of the medicine man to do so. In episode two, Dr. Fuller wants to treat a young girl with a scar on her face. The girl brings the medicine man to the clinic to get his approval prior to undergoing the procedure. When the medicine man explains the cultural belief that the scar is a portal to demons, Dr. Fuller dismisses his commentary as, "scaring people with your crazy ass theories" (Bans, Berg, Tinker, & Rhimes, 2011). Dr. Fuller's argument with the local medicine man jeopardizes the relationship of the clinic with the local community and presents problems that can arise when volunteers go to assist an impoverished community. In episode seven, Dr. Brenner meets a man named Mateo and begins a relationship with him. She soon discovers, however, that his employment is as a cocaine farmer. She reacts negatively to the revelation saying, "The herbal tea business...everything makes perfect sense right now, why you lied, why the police came after you, your family grows cocaine" (Bans, Llanas, Ornelas, & Rhimes, 2011). Even after Mateo explains the sociocultural and economic reasons why his family grows cocaine, Dr. Brenner stands as both judge and jury behind her whiteness, demonizing Mateo's choices.

Devin & Meyer

Beyond traditional means of representation, the show's narrative format also functions in support of whiteness. Throughout the series, the narrative often weaves the history and past of the main characters into the actual dialogue of present events. We learn about Dr. Fuller's past when he tries to convince a father to get tuberculosis treatment for his children. He uses his own story of losing his family due to pride as a means of trying to convince the father to obtain the treatment. Likewise, we learn about Dr. Minard's past when Dr. Cole jokes that she is taking patient diagnosis too seriously. Dr. Minard is bothered by this and reveals that she mistakenly diagnosed a young boy who later died. Dr. Brenner's past gets revealed in episode two where she explains that she lost her fiancé in an accident. The implementation of the characters' pasts interwoven into the jungle narrative can be looked at as both strategic and as a hindrance to the storylines. They include the past of the doctors while never leaving the current setting, which is a way to keep the flow of the show moving without interruption. However, this also serves to take focus away from the patients and the situations that they are in, serving to center the problems white people are facing as the main focus of the narrative. This further exemplifies the notion that the problems of white people are more important than those of people of color. With the setting of *Off the Map* being a South American jungle, the main interests should be those of the South Americans, however, the interests of white individuals are represented as the most important.

**Off the Mark:
Television Failure, Identity Politics, and Popular Culture**

Through our ideological critique, we have illustrated how the portrayal of whiteness in *Off the Map* was most likely a large contributor to the show's lack of success. With its white-centric content, *Off the Map* functions to systematically erase important issues of identity politics related to its setting in South America. Not only does the show frequently represent the needs of white individuals as more important than those of the local people of color, it also depicts the dominance that white people often feel towards people of color. White privilege seeps through the storylines and engulfs the narrative in whiteness. What separated *Off the Map* from other medical dramas was the setting in the South American jungle. However, failure to embrace the culture of the jungle led to its downfall. The white doctors fail to learn Spanish, wander around in an unspecific geographical setting, and center their own narrative pain as the most important aspect of the story.

These characters basically use the jungle and its people to “find themselves,” making quite clear that once their own narrative issues are resolved, they intend to return to their former lives in North America.

Obviously, *Off the Map* is not alone in its televisual investment in whiteness. Media scholars and critics have argued for years that white individuals are over-represented in television content (King, 2014), and that the presence of people of color in television narratives often functions in service to whiteness (Williams, 2000). Whiteness in television shows often appears when stories are manipulated to maintain white privilege and white viewpoints (Grimm, 2008). *Off the Map* fits directly into this framework. In fact, Rhimes herself has been sharply critiqued for her use of colorblind casting that serves to frame whiteness in service to post-racism through an explicit failure to speak openly about race within her narratives (Cramer, 2016; Warner, 2015). Given the fictional setting of the series, there were several potential opportunities for the show to engage in thoughtful cultural discussions about race and culture, yet, the series opted not to significantly address any of these potential storylines. Perhaps had the series succeeded, these storylines would have been developed more fully as time went on, but given the show’s quick demise, we simply cannot know what might have been in store for the series.

What we find unique about *Off the Map* is that typically, a lack of characters of color and the possessive investment in whiteness are economically framed by media industries as necessary in order for a television series to be successful. Yet, in this case, *Off the Map* failed horrifically. We posit that there are tangible cultural reasons why this occurred. First, by the time the show was released in 2011, Shonda Rhimes and her production company Shondaland had a well-established auteur style that included the use of prominent characters of color within her narratives. *Off the Map*’s mostly white cast made the show a stark departure from this televisual format. This is particularly relevant given the cultural moment occurring in U.S. America during 2011 - the nation had elected its first African-American president, who was well into his first term at the time the show aired (Orbe, 2011). Culturally, Obama’s election offered a distinct moment for the United States identity politics: “through a rhetorical sleight-of-hand, a longstanding racial hierarchy was inverted (if only symbolically): whiteness emerged in public discourse as a political liability and blackness as a privileged site” (Mendible, 2012). Thus, launching a series that centered whiteness at a time when blackness was

Devin & Meyer

being centered more prominently in public discourse was likely an inversion of fictional television narratives often mirroring sociocultural and political realities occurring in the time period they are created (Petermon, 2018). *Off the Map*'s creation during this particular cultural moment ultimately illustrated how launching a television series that centered whiteness as superior to racialized otherness during a time when audiences were open to identity politics on the small screen was a grievous judgement of error.

Our focus in this essay has been ideological in nature, but we would be remiss not to mention other industry factors that potentially contributed to the show's lack of success. Broadcast television is notoriously competitive, particularly given the amount of advertising capital that needs to be secured in order to launch a new television series (Lotz, 2007). Advertising then becomes a central aspect of a television show's success with the general public, and in the case of *Off the Map*, the distinct lack of advertising for the series potentially contributed to its ultimate demise (Kimball, 2011). ABC seemed to assume that launching a series similar to *Grey's Anatomy* with Rhimes' name attached as a mid-season replacement would be sufficient enough for the show to gain traction with audiences. Also, at the time the series launched, broadcast television was experiencing an oversaturation of scripted medical dramas. During the span of the 2010-2011 season, *Off the Map* was one of 18 such series competing for audience attention (Wikipedia, n.d.). Despite medical dramas serving as a foundational genre for television programming, the oversaturation of narratives that depict doctors in less than professional circumstances within controversial settings could contribute to audiences rejecting the premise of the narrative itself leading to cancellation (Al Aboud, 2012).

It is our contention that the failures of popular culture can teach us just as much as those texts that succeed. Media scholars often utilize appeals to popularity to establish the significance of their chosen artifacts of study. While there is certainly much to be learned from popular televisual texts in terms of cultural tastes and preferences of audiences, there is also much to be learned from that which audiences reject. In the case of *Off the Map*, the narrative not only appeared incongruent with audience expectations of Shonda Rhimes' work but also premiered in a cultural moment where whiteness was being challenged and critiqued culturally. In that context, following the self-absorbed, white doctors in *Off the Map* was a far more painful than enjoyable viewing experience. Through our ideological critique, we illustrated

that when whiteness is depicted as superior, especially within a production company that prides itself on intersectionality and diversity, a televisual representation can miss the mark.

References

- Abdi, S., & Calafell, B. M. (2018). Emb(race)ing visibility: Callie Torres's (im)perfect operation of bisexuality on *Grey's Anatomy*. In R. A. Griffin & M. D. E. Meyer (Eds.), *Adventures in Shondaland: Identity politics and the power of representation* (pp.120-137). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Al About, K. (2012). Medical dramas - the pros and the cons. *Dermatology Practical & Conceptual*, 2(1), 75-77.
- Aronson, B. A. (2017). The white savior industrial complex: A cultural studies analysis of a teacher educator, savior film, and future teachers. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*, 6(3).
- Bans, J., & Berg, G. (Writers), Tinker, M. (Director), & Rhimes, S. (Producer). (2011, January 19). Smile. Don't kill anyone [Television series episode]. In *Off the Map*. O'ahu, Hawaii: ABC Studios.
- Bans, J., & Llanas, G. (Writers), Ornelas, E. (Director), & Rhimes, S. (Producer). (2011, March 2). It's a leaf [Television series episode]. In *Off the Map*. O'ahu, Hawaii: ABC Studios.
- Bans, J. (Producer). (2011, January 12). *Off the Map* [Television series]. O'ahu, Hawaii: ABC Studios.
- Bans, J. (Writer), Zisk, R. (Director), & Rhimes, S. (Producer). (2011, January 12). Saved by the great white hope [Television series episode]. In *Off the Map*. O'ahu, Hawaii: ABC Studios.
- Boylan, C. (Writer), Stoltz, E. (Director), & Rhimes, S. (Producer). (2011, February 2). On the mean streets of San Miguel [Television series episode]. In *Off the Map*. O'ahu, Hawaii: ABC Studios.
- Chidester, P. (2008). May the circle stay unbroken: *Friends*, the presence of absence, and the rhetorical reinforcement of whiteness. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25(2), 157-174.
- Cramer, L. M. (2016). The whitening of *Grey's Anatomy*. *Communication Studies*, 67, 474-487.
- Dubrofsky, R. E. (2006). *The Bachelor*: Whiteness in Harem. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23(1), 39-56.
- Gopaldas, A. (2013). Intersectionality 101. *Journal of Public*

Devin & Meyer

- Policy & Marketing*, 32, 90-94.
- Griffin, R. A., & Meyer, M. D. E. (2018). *Adventures in Shondaland: Identity politics and the power of representation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Foss, S. K. (2009). *Rhetorical criticism: Exploration and practice*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Grimm, J. (2008). Patrolling whiteness: Framing the Minuteman project on the evening news. *Conference Papers -- International Communication Association*, 1–29.
- Highfill, S. (2013, October 14). I'm still not over... 'Off the Map' getting canceled. Retrieved March 20, 2019, from <https://ew.com/article/2013/10/14/im-still-not-over-off-the-map/>
- Joseph, R. L. (2016). Strategically ambiguous Shonda Rhimes: Respectability politics of a black woman showrunner. *Souls*, 18(2-4), 302-320.
- Kimball, T. (2011, May 13). Off the Map: ABC drama cancelled, no season two. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from <https://tvseriesfinale.com/tv-show/off-the-map-cancelled-season-two-19926/>
- King, C. R. (2014). Watching TV with white supremacists: A more complex view of the colorblind screen. In S. Nilsen & S. E. Turner (Eds.), *The colorblind screen: Television in post-racial America* (pp. 219-236). New York: New York University Press.
- Lotz, A. D. (2007). How to spend \$9.3 billion in three days: Examining the upfront buying process in the production of US television culture. *Media, Culture & Society*, 29, 549-567.
- Mendible, M. (2012). The politics of race and class in the age of Obama. *Revue de recherche en civilisation américaine* [En ligne], 3.
- Meyer, M. D. E. (2009). "I'm just trying to find my way like most kids": Bisexuality, adolescence and the drama of *One Tree Hill*. *Sexuality & Culture*, 13(4), 237-251.
- Meyer, M. D. E., & Griffin, R. A. (2018). Riding Shondaland's rollercoasters: Critical cultural television studies in the 21st century. In R. A. Griffin & M. D. E. Meyer (Eds.), *Adventures in Shondaland: Identity politics and the power of representation* (pp. 1-19). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers's University Press.
- Nilsen, S., & Turner, S. E. (Eds.). (2014). *The colorblind screen: Television in post-racial America*. New York: New York University Press.
- Off the Map*. (2011, January 12). Retrieved March 20, 2019, from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1587694/>

- Off the Map*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2019, from <https://www.metacritic.com/tv/off-the-map/user-reviews>
- OFF THE MAP: SEASON 1. (n.d.). Retrieved April 22, 2019, from https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/off_the_map/s01
- Orbe, M. P. (2011). *Communication realities in a "post-racial" society: What the U.S. public really thinks about Barack Obama*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Petermon, J. (2018). Race (lost and found) in Shondaland: The rise of multiculturalism in primetime network television. In R. A. Griffin & M. D. E. Meyer (Eds.), *Adventures in Shondaland: Identity politics and the power of representation* (pp. 101-119). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Rennels, T. R. (2015). *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*: A cautionary tale starring white working-class people. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 12, 271-288.
- Ridley, J. (2010, July 02). A true champion vs. the 'Great White Hope'. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128245468>
- Stanley, A. (2011, January 11). Doctors operating abroad, with lots of body language. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/12/arts/television/12map.html>
- VanDerWerff, T. (2017, May 16). Did your favorite TV show get canceled? Here are 7 reasons it might have. Retrieved March 20, 2019, from <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/5/16/15633120/why-tv-shows-get-canceled-ratings-arent-everything>
- Warner, K. J. (2015). The racial logic of *Grey's Anatomy*. *Television & New Media*, 16(7), 631-647.
- Wikipedia (n.d.). List of medical drama television programs. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_medical_drama_television_programs
- Williams, G. (2000). "Don't try to adjust your television - I'm black!": Ruminations on the recurrent controversy over the whiteness of TV. *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice*, 4, 99-136.
- Young, S. L., & Pham, V. (2018). The problematics of postracial colorblindness: Exploring Cristina Yang's Asianness in *Grey's Anatomy*. In R. A. Griffin & M. D. E. Meyer (Eds.), *Adventures in Shondaland: Identity politics and the power of representation* (pp.138-155). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

**“Even with the Professors it’s Expected”:
An Analysis of College Students’ Discussion of
Campus Drinking Culture***

Mary E. King
Angela G. La Valley
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

Underage and dangerous drinking on college campuses is a prevalent concern for universities and individuals. We conducted four focus groups with a total of 20 undergraduate students and asked them questions about their college drinking and alcohol experiences. Specifically, our study highlights the narratives and unique experiences of undergraduates in a public university. This research sought to identify themes related to student perceptions of drinking on campus. A content analysis of the focus group transcripts identified nine themes related to students’ experience and discussion of alcohol. Our findings are consistent with previous research that suggests the culture of drinking on college campuses is influenced by multiple sources and affects various individuals and communities. We make recommendations that future research should aim to establish programming to benefit students and foster faculty education.

Keywords : Alcohol consumption, college students, underage drinking, focus group

Although recent research findings from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014) indicate a slight decline in dangerous drinking over recent years, dangerous drinking on college campuses remains an ongoing and increasing concern for many parents, administrators, faculty, students, and community members. Dangerous drinking is defined as drinking to excess or putting oneself in dangerous situations, which may result in undesirable outcomes including negative emotional, cognitive, or behavioral events (Baer, Stacy, & Larimer, 1991; Lederman, Stewart, Goodhart, & Laitman, 2003). Research indicates that students do not identify with the term “binge drinking” (typically defined as 4 drinks for women and 5 drinks for men in about a 2 hours period, NIAAA, 2016), but that dangerous drinking is void of value judgement and more outcome-focused (Lederman et al., 2003). Drinking behaviors for college students are often influenced by a variety of sources including parents (Whitney & Froiland, 2015), peers (Borsari & Carey,

**This research was supported by a grant from a state level liquor control board.*

2001), social media (Griffiths & Casswell, 2010), and alcohol marketing (Roberson, McKinney, Walker, & Coleman, 2018). Outcomes of dangerous drinking for college students may include sexual assault, physical injury, or legal ramifications (Hingson, Heeren, Winter, & Wechsler, 2002; Mellins et al., 2017). Ripple effects of dangerous drinking on college campuses can be felt far beyond the individual, however. Faculty, administrators, local and university police, and towns and cities surrounding the college campus can also be affected (Brower & Carroll, 2007; Esteban & Schafer, 2005). Given the significance and implications of drinking among college students, the current study seeks to examine the student perspective on alcohol use.

The Culture of Drinking on College Campuses

Colleges and universities across the nation have a long history of addressing the culture of college drinking on their campuses (NIAAA, 2002). Alcohol consumption contributes to approximately 1,800 young adult deaths (ages 18-24 years old), including motor-vehicle accidents, almost 700,000 assaults by a person who had been drinking, and 97,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape each year (Hingson, et al., 2005; Hingson, et al., 2009). Moreover, approximately 58% of full-time college students ages 18-22 report drinking alcohol in the past month compared with 48.2% of others the same age, 37.9% versus 32.6% report binge drinking, and 12.5% compared to just 8.5% report heavy alcohol use (SAMHSA, 2015). Previous research has demonstrated various contributing factors to dangerous drinking behaviors on college campuses including normative perceptions and misperceptions students have about social climates at their universities (Lewis et al., 2011), peer influences on students' drinking behavior (Yanovitzky, Stewart, & Lederman, 2006), college drinking rituals and drinking games (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2008; Tan, 2012; Zamboanga et al., 2014), and other societal influences including media portrayals, family members, and laws (see Lederman & Stewart, 2005). In the following sections we examine previous research on the influences of drinking and the culture of drinking on college campuses as well as outcomes and broader implications.

Perceptions and Misperceptions of Drinking on College Campuses

Perceptions of others' behavior impacts how individuals act and think about their own lives. Perceptions of drinking on college campuses can contribute to individual decision-making behaviors

around alcohol use which may lead college students to suffer the consequences of overindulging in alcohol. In a recent study of social norms, students were influenced by two types of norms: descriptive and injunctive (Hustad, Pearson, Neighbors, & Borsari, 2014), both of which influenced student perceptions of others' drinking. *Descriptive norms* were defined as perceptions of others' behaviors, for example drinking habits such as "everyone drinks on the weekends." *Injunctive norms* were defined as perceptions of whether behaviors are typically approved or disapproved of, indicating acceptability of behaviors, in this case of drinking habits (Hustad et al., 2014). With injunctive norms, individuals may feel social pressure to drink in excess as they may fear being judged for being less intoxicated than others in a social setting. Importantly, this concern is driven by an individual's perceptions of what others are doing and to what extent they are drinking (descriptive norms), which, oftentimes are exaggerations of actual behaviors (Baer et al., 1991). The perception that excessive drinking in college is a ritual or rite of passage (Hustad et al., 2014; Tan, 2012), coupled with the (incorrect) perception that this is the norm, influences students to drink more to maintain a desired status among peers (Utpala-Kumar & Deane, 2012). This phenomenon of "pluralistic ignorance" (Miller & McFarland, 1991; Toch & Klofas, 1984) is derived from social norms theory (Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986) and is commonly referred to as *misperceptions*.

Misperceptions of college drinking on campus impact how students drink. Studies of college students show that overestimating how much others drink directly relates to their own increased drinking, potentially resulting in those individuals becoming "heavy episodic drinkers" (Utpala-Kumar & Deane, 2012). Heavy episodic drinkers believe their drinking behavior is normal when compared to their friends, groups they are involved in, and the student body as a whole (Baer et al., 1991). When this misperception occurs, individuals place themselves in danger of experiencing potentially devastating emotional, physical, and cognitive outcomes. Inaccurate beliefs of normative drinking habits can be a major factor in promoting heavy drinking among students (Baer et al., 1991) and may misguide individual behaviors when it comes to drinking in college.

Influences of Dangerous Drinking on Campus

There is a sizable amount of research that has examined the social and behavioral factors that influence students' drinking be-

haviors. These influences can play a major role in the climate of dangerous drinking across campuses. Greek organizations are one such example of a social influence on college campuses. Although collegiate Greek organizations maintain a purpose of developing student leadership, engaging in community service, and enhancing life-skills, the prevailing stereotype is essentially social, and typically associated with alcohol use (DeSimone, 2007). In fact, previous research found that students who engage in Greek life were three times more likely to consume alcohol compared to students who did not participate in Greek life (Lo & Globetti, 1995) and that, among other subgroups, Greek-affiliated students were more likely to overestimate their peers' approval of driving after drinking (Kenney, LaBrie, & Lac, 2013). Other highly interdependent groups of students, for example student-athletes, are also at a higher risk for experiencing alcohol-related problems (Turrisi, Mallet, Mastroleo, & Larimer, 2006). Additional research highlights "wet environments," off-campus housing for example, or other locations where drinking occurs inexpensively and effortlessly, as an additional source of influence contributing to excessive drinking (Weitzman, Nelson, & Wechsler, 2002).

Another important contributing source of influence is interpersonal relationships, including family, close friends, and peers. Family members are influential sources of information for adolescents and college students, especially regarding how the topic of alcohol is addressed and managed. For example, one study that examined the connections between parenting style and alcohol use found that students of parents with a permissive parenting style drank more beer, which was associated with more alcohol-related problems (Whitney & Froiland, 2015). Perceptions of peer drinking behavior (Roberson et al., 2018), especially perceptions of close friends' drinking behaviors (Yanovitzky et al., 2006) are also highly influential predictors of students' alcohol use. Moreover, risky behaviors such as prepartying (drinking in a residence before drinking in public; Pedersen & LaBrie, 2008), and engaging in drinking games (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2008; Zamboanga, et al., 2014) are also significant influences on college students' alcohol consumption.

Impacts and Outcomes of Alcohol Consumption on Campus

Alcohol consumption during college can have both individual and communal outcomes. For individuals, these outcomes can manifest almost immediately or sometimes occur later in life. For

example, previous research found a positive association between college students' alcohol consumption and behaviors and emotions such as impulsivity, sensation seeking, hopelessness, and anxiety sensitivity (Hustad et al., 2014). In turn, hopelessness and anxiety sensitivity can lead to various alcohol-related problems. Blacking out (i.e., periodic memory loss associated with binge drinking; Wombacher, Matig, Sheff, & Scott, 2019), injury, assault, unsafe sex, sexual abuse, and death are among the other potentially devastating outcomes of dangerous drinking on college campuses (Esteban & Schafer, 2005).

The implications of dangerous drinking on college campuses span well beyond individual harm. College students may engage in drunken driving, vandalism, property damage, or have regular encounters with law enforcement, often because of decisions made while under the influence (Esteban & Schafer, 2005). In fact, noise complaints made by local residents ranks as the most common concern related to college drinking responded to by law enforcement (Brower & Carroll, 2007).

In sum, universities, surrounding communities, and students all must cope with the outcomes of college students under the influence of alcohol. This can be difficult and stressful for students and those around them, therefore understanding student experiences and perceptions related to college drinking could provide valuable insight for improving interventions and initiatives encouraging responsible alcohol use on college campuses. Thus, we propose the research question that guides this study:

RQ: How do college students discuss drinking and alcohol use on the college campus with their peers?

Method

Participants in this study were 20 undergraduate students enrolled in a northeastern mid-sized university. Individuals self-selected to participate in the research study and received a nominal amount of course extra credit for attending one of four focus groups. Students self-identified as non-drinkers, light drinkers, or heavy drinkers. All participants were 18-24 years old. When recruiting for the focus groups we included the criterion that students must report being between the ages of 18-24, but no demographic information was collected prior to the discussion. This was done in an effort to increase all students' comfort with speaking truthfully about their experiences, regardless of whether they were older or younger than the legal drinking age. On the

day of their scheduled focus group, participants came to a communication research lab equipped with video and voice recording technology and engaged in student-run discussion. Each focus group session lasted between 20 minutes and 60 minutes and was guided by a semi-structured set of questions, which provided the participants with the opportunity to speak freely about their experiences and perceptions. Participants responded to open-ended questions about their experiences on campus, their experiences with drinking and alcohol and their perceptions of alcohol use in college before their arrival and since beginning their college career. Audio recordings of the focus groups were transcribed, which resulted in 38 single-spaced pages of data.

To identify themes related to students' perceptions of factors influencing the culture of drinking at college, a content analysis was conducted (Neuendorf, 2002). The authors and a team of trained undergraduate research assistants independently reviewed the focus group data using open coding to initially identify the dominant themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through the open coding process, we created lists of tentative themes. We then used axial coding, a process of searching for overarching topics or categories, to determine a final list of themes reflected in the data. This process resulted in a nine-category coding scheme that reflects the participants' experiences and perceptions of the culture of college drinking. The issues identified and reflected in these categories are: (a) local community, (b)(mis)perceptions about drinking/not drinking, (c) promoting responsible behavior, (d) outcomes of drinking, (e) social climate, (f) university community, (g) interpersonal influences, (h) defining dangerous drinking, and (i) other.

Next, the focus group transcripts were unitized so that the coding scheme could be applied (Krippendorff, 2004). For the purposes of this study, each independent "thought unit" (typically identified as each discrete sentence) presented during the focus group discussion was identified as the appropriate unit of analysis because participants sometimes gave lengthy responses in which more than one idea was present. Through this process 786 thought units were identified. We then trained three individuals, who were blind to the study's research question, to code the data using the nine-category scheme. After an initial pass in coding the data, the authors met with the coders to address questions, discuss inconsistencies, and review the coding scheme. The three coders examined the data for a second time to determine their final codes for each unit. Krippendorff's α was calculated for the

final coding pass to determine inter-coder reliability. For this study, Krippendorff's $\alpha = .82$. Given the number of decision items in this coding set, we consider this level of intercoder reliability to be fairly substantial. For the purpose of providing clear discussion of the results, we chose to focus on those thought units on which all three coders agreed in their categorization ($n = 636$, 80.9%).

Results

The results of the content analysis are presented below. For each theme we identify the prevalence of that theme within the focus groups' discussion and articulate what each theme refers to or includes. We also provide selected examples from the students in the focus groups that emphasize the tenor of the theme and its significance to the student experience.

Local Community

The first theme that emerged from the data was issues relating to how the Local Community was connected to the issue of college student drinking. This theme included the largest number of thematic units at 21.9% ($n = 139$). Responses in this category included references to the surrounding town, features of the community, local community members, and town/state police. In referencing the local community, the focus group participants noted a complex relationship between the local community and the college drinking experience. On one hand, participants seemed to feel that the lack of alternative activities in the local community contributed to the amount of drinking that occurred. For example,

Everywhere you go you have to drive to, there's barely even a mall. I went to a mall 45 minutes from here. There's not much to do around here even on campus and in town you only have bars, frats, and sororities. You have a movie theatre, but who wants to pay \$10.50 to see a movie? My friends go to school in cities and they go skating or see historical places in the cities. They do drink too, but there are other options..." (Participant 14).

Students also felt that community members were aware of and acknowledged the drinking that happens. "I feel like the townies, I guess, know that we party," said Participant 1. Participant 2 added, "Well, we drink with them! Yeah, at the bar!" Despite this acknowledgment, the students also noted that local towns-

people, for the most part, seemed to dislike the college students. Participant 11 said, “Everyone in my building hates college kids. They like them cause [sic] they bring business to the town, but that’s it...Everyone I know hates college kids.” Participant 14 noted the feeling that the locals were “kissing the ground” during winter and summer breaks when most of the students are gone. Participant 2 said, “I mean I know they don’t like us. I think that’s kind of obvious...” Yet some observed that this animosity was not necessarily without reason. For instance, Participant 1 noted, “I think the [...] community hates us. Because especially on block party [the annual unauthorized student-celebrated drinking day], people have no respect for the community.” Participant 2 added, “It’s just like we’re annoying. When you’re drunk, you’re loud and you’re wandering around their neighborhoods.”

Participants also had mixed feelings about local law enforcement. Several participants expressed frustration at what they perceived as police targeting college students. Participant 2 noted, “I think that the police almost put too much emphasis on the drinking rather than crime.” Another said, “For cops, block party is like their field day because that’s when they make their money and give all these citations” (Participant 11). Other participants countered with more neutral or positive views. Participant 3 commented, “I feel like people get so drunk to the point where they [cops] need to keep people off the streets. Then again, you don’t need them to want to hurt every single college student on the street.” Participant 1 also stated, “Well, I’ve heard of cops instead of handing you an underage, they’ll be like ‘where do you live, I’ll drive you back.’” Participant 13 added that the cops are needed to deal with the larger safety issues associated with drinking in a college community: “...but for block party, if you think about it, there’s 15,000 kids [sic] walking around drunk as hell – you need cops. Things are going to happen.”

(Mis)perceptions about Drinking/Not Drinking

Comments related to (Mis)perceptions about Drinking/Not Drinking ($n = 89$, 14.0%) included references to perceptions of drinking on campus versus reality. Some students seemed to believe there is less drinking on campus than perceived, whereas other participants felt that the perceptions of drinking might actually be accurate. Participant 2 stated, “I think people think college students, think they drink from the moment they’re allowed to until the second they pass out...but I think often movies give us an image that college students are there for the partying and

stuff.” Participant 4 agreed: “There actually are, like I’ve met people that literally don’t drink. It’s just not for them. It’s like, yeah, most people do...but I actually met people who just don’t go out at all.”

Other participants felt that the perceptions or stereotypes of college drinking are, in fact, accurate. Participant 3 said, “but, like, think about it – how many people do you know out of five who drink almost all the time? I could probably name 2 out of 5 people who drink during the week...the perceptions aren’t necessarily wrong.” Participant 1 added, “if you don’t go out you get serious FOMO [fear of missing out]...I didn’t expect it to be like that. I thought if you wanted to stay in you could just stay in, but like you get all hyped up.” Participant 17 also noted that these perceptions of college drinking are fairly typical: “It’s normal, it’s expected. If you’re one of those people who go to the foam parties [sober events on campus], you’re kind of looked at like you’re not experiencing college life.”

Promoting Responsible Behavior

Participant responses for Promoting Responsible Behavior ($n = 81$, 12.7%) included participants’ thoughts on what constituted responsible drinking behavior, reasons why current messages about dangerous drinking are ineffective, and suggestions for how messages might be more effective. Although comments did include some fairly “typical” advice for responsible drinking behavior, i.e. “eat a lot of food, drink water, don’t lay [sic] on your back” (Participant 11), participants also noted the importance of watching out for friends and being with others. Participant 3 said, “Always stay with a friend, never be alone.” Participant 5 stated, “When you go out with a group of friends you expect that you’re going to watch out for each other and make sure that nothing bad happens for the good of the group.” Participant 1 added, “Yeah, you make sure you take care of your friend, like you walk them home.” Participant 2 also noted the importance of having friends “because some of my worst experiences, I was drunk and walking by myself and that was the worst, I shouldn’t have done that.”

Generally, the participants did not seem to find typical alcohol education programming on campus to be effective. For example,

...I think a lot of times when alcohol education is being enforced, they often use consequences as a way to show you how bad it is. And I think it doesn’t really affect

someone until it actually happens to them or someone they love or someone they're close to...I think people need to see consequences...which is unfortunate but that's usually what happens and how they learn (Participant 2).

Participant 3 said, "They can show you these statistics and videos but at the end of the day you're gonna do what you want to do. You're going to do what your friends are doing." Participant 5 added, "...unfortunately you're at the point where you have to learn from it, but it would be great if there was a way to prevent it from happening."

The focus group participants did have some suggestions for messages that might work. Participant 17 noted, "I feel like we can't promote 'don't drink.' We have to say, 'this is acceptable, it's clearly going to happen, here's how to do it right.'" Participant 1 commented on the timing of messages: "I think after people get an underage, it's already too late. So I just feel if there was just more of a public awareness on campus or something...because I really think it's already too late after they got their underage." Having older students with experience related to alcohol was described as a more promising approach. For example, "During my freshman orientation, there was this girl there and she was telling us about her experience with underages and I think that really sent a message to people just because she had been through it and she knew the consequences" (Participant 1). Participant 2 added, "yeah...like if you have a student do it. Not a professor or a police officer or anyone like that, but have an upperclassmen or grad student go in." The participants also indicated that the messages conveyed through such interventions should focus on how to drink safely, not forbidding drinking.

Outcomes of Drinking

Outcomes of Drinking focused largely on personal consequences related to drinking ($n = 78, 12.3\%$). Some participants noted positive aftereffects of drinking. Participant 2 said, "I think people are more confident." Participant 1 added, "Yeah, you're able to say more things like you wouldn't say that sober. You feel like you have more opportunities so you just spit it out." However, most of the observations of outcomes appeared to be more negative, involving conflict or sexual behavior. Participant 1 noted, "I feel like everyone gets way more aggressive when they drink and it just gets really crazy and rowdy." Participant 1 also admitted,

“I had sex with someone once who I would probably would never have sex with like if I would not have been drinking that night.” Participant 4 said, “I feel like you can’t go through a normal Thursday, Friday, or Saturday without seeing a fight or hearing of one.” Other participants simply saw people use drinking as a way of excusing bad behavior. Participant 2 said, “I think some people almost assume you can use it as an excuse, like ‘oh I was really drunk, sorry that’s why I said it’...people often think they can say things and blame it on alcohol later.” Participant 1 added, “Nobody thinks we’re gonna get in trouble for it until it actually does happen.”

Social Climate

Responses relating to Social Climate included references to cliques, Greek culture, or commonplace behaviors typically associated with drinking by college students ($n = 77$, 12.1%). Several participants noted how Greek life affects behaviors and expectations regarding drinking. Participant 1 noted, “I didn’t know it was a big Greek school, you have mixers on Thursday.” Participant 13 also commented on the Thursday mixers:

I’m in Greek life. On Thursdays we have our mixer and somehow go to class on Friday. Friday is the same thing and then you go out again. Saturday is you just stay in bed all day and you go out on Saturday night. And then Sunday you try not to be too hung-over to do your homework and just do it all over again on Thursdays.

Participant 14 agreed, “Fridays and Saturdays are just the same routine. You go out, you wake up, and I feel like Sunday is the designated day to do the homework.”

In reference to the typical routine surrounding alcohol, several participants referred to the idea of “pregaming” (drinking at home prior to going out drinking). Participant 5 commented, “Maybe you would start getting ready around six o’clock, show-er, um pregame around nine or so. Some people usually pregame as that’s what they drink and they don’t drink anymore after and other people will pregame really hard and continue throughout the night, but it depends.” Participant 2 added, “But like last year, we pregame and would go out, whereas this year...we just stay at the place we go to [rather than going to a frat party].” Other participants noted that the routine varied depending on the events of the week or in general. Participant 1 said, “Yeah, if I

have tests, I'll be like you know what I'm not doing anything this weekend, I'm just going to get fucked up." Participant 12 also noted, "it's based on the setting too. Since I work so much, once or twice a month my work friends and I will blow 100 bucks at the bar on a Monday or Tuesday and I'll just be blacked out to where people have to carry me out of the bar because you need to let it out once in a while."

University Community

Items pertaining to the University Community accounted for 7.6% of the units analyzed ($n = 48$). University community responses included references to professors, university police, university administrators, campus buildings or the university as a whole. One issue in particular that participants referenced was negative perceptions of campus police in connection to alcohol issues. Participant 1 noted:

I think the university police are really bad. They only give kids like an underage but instead of just telling them like "hey get there safe" or something like that. They're automatically writing people up and I think they have like a quota to meet or something. Yeah it just always seems they're like bullying.

In addition, Participant 2 said:

...I live in [campus owned] apartments and there have recently been crimes there so they're [campus police] like staking out there but they stand like right in front of the apartments like when people go home, I'm like three feet away from my apartment and there's a cop right there and it feels like they're out to get you.

Participants seemed to feel that campus police were especially "out to get" students who might be drinking.

In contrast participants also felt that the university community contributed to the culture of drinking by, in some ways, facilitating student drinking. Participant 1 commented that the university does not do a good job of recognizing that college students drink, noting that "they're not so strict per se but they're just people saying 'no drinking.' You know how your mom says not to do something...you're going to do it anyway." For participants, students drinking on the weekend seemed not only expected, but

perhaps even encouraged. “I feel like campus makes it that way too, because they extend the library until midnight on Sunday,” said Participant 11. Participant 1 noted, “I mean the bookstore sells shot glasses [laugh].”

Students also reported confusion and awkwardness associated with interactions with professors related to drinking. For example, Participant 17 said their professor questioned why they “underachieved” by not going to a notoriously heavy drinking school, saying, “My teacher actually asked me, why we didn’t go for the gold...when it comes to drinking...He said ‘If you’re going to do it, do it big enough’ and I was like, ‘Really? A 55-year-old man telling me to drink?’ Even with the professors it’s expected.” Others reiterated this sentiment saying, “Professors talk about drinking on the weekends like they expect it and encourage it,” (Participant 10) and, “Every time I’m at the bar a professor is there,” (Participant 12). Participants also noted the uncomfortableness of encountering professors in drinking situations, saying, “It’s so awkward seeing professors at the bar its like ‘hey, what’s going on?’ and you’re like ‘hi I did the extra credit I swear’,” (Participant 11). Participant 1 added, “Yeah cause like my professor said, she went to [a State College], and the police knew like okay this is what the kids do...let them have their fun.” In this way, students’ observations indicated a tension between the university community setting up expectations of drinking, yet at the same time feeling like they would be punished by university police for engaging in drinking.

Interpersonal Influences

Units coded as Interpersonal Influence ($n = 30, 4.7\%$) included references to friends, roommates, or lovers. Some participants noted the potential for alcohol to have a negative impact on relationships. Participant 9 noted, “Well, my boyfriend gets ‘hammered’ and it’s like ‘well I have to get hammered to deal with you.’ It’s a vicious cycle.” Participant 2 said, “one of my friends is in a relationship of like three years and if one of them gets really drunk the other one gets really mad because they have to take care of one another.” Participant 2 also noted that relational partners can influence drinking behavior:

Well, I had a friend and she’s all about peer pressure. Like she’ll swear her middle name is peer pressure. I personally, I don’t drink a lot and when I’m with her she will just be like “have another shot, just have another

shot” and I’ll turn around and a shot will just be there.

Defining Dangerous Drinking

Defining Dangerous Drinking encompassed participants’ comments about the behaviors that constitute dangerous drinking behavior ($n = 27, 4.2\%$). Most of the participants defined dangerous drinking as largely being linked to a person being “out of control.” Participant 5 said dangerous drinking happens when a person is “to the point where you’re literally passed out.” Dangerous drinking was also linked to an inability to remember: “if you don’t remember what you’re doing” (Participant 4), “if you don’t remember how much you drink” (Participant 3), “if someone has to tell you what you did last night” (Participant 1). Participant 17 explicitly mentioned control: “We all get away with it all the time, but drinking dangerously would be anything where you’re out of control...Anything where you couldn’t stop yourself from getting in a terrible situation even if you wanted to.” Participant 9 also linked dangerous drinking to addiction:

I think at any point when you start drinking, whether it be college or high school, once you get in touch with whether or not you have an addictive personality I think that’s when it becomes dangerous because either way whether you want it to or not. Addiction is a dangerous disease and once you open access to that port, it’s dangerous.

Other

“Other” responses were those that did not fit in any other category ($n = 67, 10.5\%$). Although the number of responses coded into this category is somewhat larger than desirable, this seems to be an artifact of the focus group methodology. The “Other” response category was largely comprised of comments of agreement with other participants. In addition, participants’ questions for each other or the focus group facilitators made up a significant portion of the responses in this category.

Discussion

This study examined the culture of drinking on a college campus in central Pennsylvania. We asked students to participate in focus groups to discuss their experiences and perceptions of college drinking. Our results suggest important implications for enhancing the culture of safe drinking experiences on the college cam-

pus. Participants' responses seemed to coalesce around four key themes: a) influences on drinking in college, b) (mis)perceptions around college drinking, c) dangerous drinking versus promotion of responsible drinking, and d) outcomes of college drinking. We review the implications of our findings here and note strengths and limitations of our study as well as directions for future research.

Implications

Influences on drinking in college. The results of our content analysis indicate that the social climate of the institution and close, personal relationships are primary influences on drinking behaviors. This is both of concern and a promising point of reflection. Although students are heavily encouraged to engage in dangerous drinking because of close relationships (for example, a significant romantic other, a roommate, or a best friend), students also potentially are in a position to influence *their* friends and relational partners to engage in *positive* behaviors when it comes to responsible alcohol consumption. A contribution to the broader literature on drinking was the reference to "FOMO," or "Fear of Missing Out." Students made multiple mentions of feeling obligated to attend drinking events or to engage in social drinking activities because they did not want to feel a sense of remorse for not being social enough to be present when such activities occurred. In other words, students felt compelled to attend drinking functions, and to drink, for fear of missing out on something story-worthy happening when they were not present.

In addition to the social and personal influences, students talked about broader community influences on drinking behavior. Examples of this emerged within the "Local Community" discussion, as students pointed out a lack of affordable activities. In many small "college towns," students might find themselves lacking transportation or alternative means of entertainment with an end result in increased drinking. The participants also observed that the local, and even university, community seemed to set up expectations for students to engage in drinking, even dangerous drinking. For example, several participants noted that they would sometimes drink out at a bar with a member of the local community, or even their professors. In addition, participants pointed to discussions with professors that seemed to indicate that professors not only expected drinking of college students, but were sometimes even perceived as encouraging such behavior. This finding is in line with other scholarly work that notes

that professors can negatively influence students' alcohol use (Schlesselman, Nobre, & English, 2011), despite identifying student alcohol use as problematic (Perkins, Haines, & Rice, 2005). This suggests that, although student alcohol consumption is frequently identified as an ongoing problem, faculty members may be ill-equipped to engage in constructive conversations and behaviors surrounding alcohol use with their students, and perhaps conversation surrounding drinking should have less of a normative focus.

(Mis)perceptions around college drinking. Students identified a mixed interpretation of alcohol perceptions as accurate or not accurate compared to their prior perceptions before entering college. This suggests that although students may have perceptions about drinking at college prior to their arrival on campus, the reality is that students do not always engage in the behaviors previously suggested to them by others or by the media. As the general perception of an over-blown college drinking atmosphere (as seen in many movie depictions of college) is not necessarily the reality or norm on college campuses, hearing participants mention meeting or speaking with other students on campus who did not drink at all may help combat the somewhat misinformed notion that “everyone at college drinks.”

Dangerous drinking versus promotion of responsible drinking. In their discussions, students seemed to draw contrasts between what constitutes dangerous drinking and responsible drinking behaviors. For students, dangerous drinking behavior largely seems to be about a loss of control. When students mentioned losing control, they talked about passing out, not remembering where they were or what they had done, or being unable to prevent themselves from getting into bad situations. Very few students related dangerous drinking directly to health-related outcomes (physical or mental), but rather the conversation centered primarily on a loss of behavioral control. In contrast, characterizations of responsible drinking behavior implied showing more control over drinking situations. Participants mentioned common behavioral techniques for moderating the effects of alcohol (i.e. alternating alcohol with water and making sure to eat before drinking). Many participants also discussed the importance of being able to watch out for others, including their friends. Although no one directly mentioned being “in control,” having enough awareness to stay in a group or watch out for one's friends implies a certain level of control that contrasts with the characterization of dangerous drinking.

Participants also had very specific ideas for how campus communities might encourage more responsible behaviors and attempt to curb dangerous drinking. Key to these ideas were the timing and source of information on drinking behavior. A number of participants noted that it is “too late” to talk to students about drinking once they are of legal drinking age or they have gotten into trouble. Participants instead suggested that conversations and messages about drinking, and responsible drinking in particular, should happen earlier in college during freshman year or orientation. A few participants did note videos shown during orientations but did not find them particularly effective or appealing. More participants noted the need for peer communication, indicating that students would find messages more believable or impactful if they came from other students. Having juniors or seniors tell stories about their experiences in workshops or courses for freshman were suggested as a best practice for interventions related to alcohol use. Participants noted a real need for specific suggestions on what to do or not to do when it comes to drinking and felt that information on “how to be socially conscious” drinkers would be best heard from fellow students. Notably, previous research highlights peer-to-peer campaigns as especially effective in changing the misperceptions of drinking and alcohol use on campus (i.e., Lederman & Stewart, 2005), and it appears this practice is still identified by students as an effective intervention technique. At the time of this study, there were no peer-to-peer techniques employed by the university.

Outcomes of college drinking. Here we explored the outcomes to the community and the individual repercussions of college drinking, as articulated by the students. The frequency and intensity of negative outcomes for community members were identified by the students as being caused by college students drinking in the community. Participants in the focus groups often noted they would hear other students say that community members were themselves at fault for choosing to live in a house that borders the university or that they would see fellow students demonstrating a lack of care for the local community/environment (“they do trash the town and don’t cleanup”). This negative attitude towards the local community, coupled with the frequency of negative references to university and local police presence is problematic given the importance of collaboration between college institutions, the communities in which they situate themselves, and campus and local law enforcement. Future research should continue to explore how students’ perception of their place in the broader community (or lack thereof) contributes to

dangerous or irresponsible drinking behavior or other negative interactions outside of campus. Universities should consider educating students about their role in the broader community and reference town/gown relations in these discussions. It is worth noting that participants did identify some positive outcomes of drinking. Student sentiments in this area largely relate to alcohol as a social lubricant. Participants noted that when they, or other students, drank alcohol, they were likely to feel more confident in their interactions with others, with a great ability to say things that they might not otherwise say or interact with people they might not otherwise interact with. Generally speaking, however, participants' observations on outcomes were more negative than positive.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

The results of this study provide important insight into issues relevant to the health and well-being of college students and understanding the impact the local community, faculty, and administrators may have, even inadvertently, on drinking behavior in college. First, our research reinvestigates previously identified areas that contribute to dangerous drinking in the college student population (e.g., Turrisi et al., 2006; Whitney & Froiland, 2015; Yanovitzky et al., 2006). In addition to this, our research suggests that statements made by faculty and administrators, even if meant in jest or as a way to try to connect with students, suggest a climate of acceptance and expectation for student drinking. By perpetuating the negative stereotype of college students as dangerous drinkers and recirculating this misperception of the norm, faculty and administrators are, likely unintentionally, perpetuating the acceptance of such behaviors. To combat this, we suggest that through faculty education they might consider speaking about college drinking in ways that encourage and recognize responsible behavior, and perhaps curbing interactions with students when in situations that involve students drinking.

Despite these strengths, there are also some limitations to this study. First, our sample size was relatively small and therefore perhaps not representative of the university student body as a whole. We did conduct four focus groups at various times and on various days, however future research would benefit from a larger sample of students representing various populations on campus. Moreover, collecting additional demographic information and segmenting over/under 21-year-old students would ensure equal representation and provide for a richer analysis and under-

standing. Second, our research only highlights the culture around college drinking at one university. Although we believe our findings may be applicable to and shed light on issues of dangerous drinking at other colleges and universities, it should be noted that each campus community develops its own culture. Future research would benefit from examining broader cultural trends, specifically with a nod toward social media and the stigma of drinking, being drunk, or abstaining from drinking in social contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study identified perceptions, misperceptions, influences on dangerous drinking, and outcomes of dangerous drinking on the college campus as reflected by college students' actual discussions about alcohol use. Our results reinforce previous research findings that the campus and larger community impact, and are impacted by, drinking. The perceived norms of college drinking are affected by misperceptions of students, faculty, and perhaps the police and the community. Future research should continue to explore these and other influences on college drinking. Future research should also examine the influences and outcomes of drinking on college campuses with the goal of establishing programs to benefit students and promote health and well-being for all individuals in the campus community.

References

- Baer, J. S., Stacy, A., & Larimer, M. (1991). Biases in the perception of drinking norms among college students. *Journal of Studies of Alcohol, 52*(6), 580-586. doi:10.15288/jsa.1991.52.580
- Borsari B., & Carey, K. B. (2001). Peer influences on college drinking: A review of the research. *Journal of Substance Abuse, 13*, 391-424. doi:10.1016/S0899-3289(01)00098-0
- Brower, A., & Carroll, L. (2007). Spatial and temporal aspects of alcohol-related crime in a college town. *Journal of American College Health, 55*(5), 267-275. doi:10.3200/JACH.55.5.267-276
- DeSimone, J. S. (2007). Fraternity membership and drinking behavior. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-7295.2008.00121.x
- Esteban, M. A., & Schafer, W. (2005). Confronting college student drinking: A campus case study. *Californian Journal*

- of Health Promotion*, 3(1), 1-55.
- Griffiths, R., & Casswell, S. (2010). Intoxicogenic digital spaces? Youth, social networking sites and alcohol marketing. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 29, 525-530. doi:10.1111/j.1465-3362.2010.00178.x
- Hingson, R., Heeren, T., Winter, M., & Wechsler, H. (2005). Magnitude of alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18–24: Changes from 1998 to 2001. *Annual Review of Public Health* 26, 259–279. doi:10.1146/annurev.publhealth.26.021304.144652
- Hingson, R., Zha, W., & Weitzman, E. (2009). Magnitude of and trends in alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18–24, 1998–2005. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 70, 12–20.
- Hustad, J. T. P., Pearson, M. T., Neighbors, C., & Borsari, B. (2014). The role of alcohol perceptions as mediators between personality and alcohol-related outcomes among incoming college-student drinkers. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 28(2), 336-347. doi:10.1037/a0033785
- Kenney, S. R., LaBrie, J. W., & Lac, A. (2013). Injunctive peer misperceptions and the mediation of self-approval on risk for driving after drinking among college students. *Journal of Health Communication*, 18, 459-477. DOI: 10.1080/10810730.2012.727963
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lederman, L. C., & Stewart, L. P. (2005). *Changing the culture of college drinking: A socially situated health communication campaign*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Lederman, L. C., Stewart, L. P., Goodhart, F. W., & Laitman, L. (2003). A case again “binge” as the term of choice: Convincing college students to personalize messages about dangerous drinking. *Journal of Health Communication*, 8, 79-91. doi:10.1080/10810730390152370
- Lewis, M. A., Litt, D. M., Blayney, J. A., Lostutter, T. W., Granato, H., Kilmer, J. R., & Lee, C. M. (2011). They drink how much and where? Normative perceptions by drinking contexts and their association to college students’ alcohol consumption. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 72(5), 844-853.
- Lo, C., & Globetti, G. (1995). The facilitating and enhancing roles Greek associations play in college drinking. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 30, 1311-1322.
- Mellins, C. A., Walsh, K., Sarvet, A. L., Wall, M., Gilbert, L., Santelli, J. S., ... Hirsch, J. S. (2017). Sexual assault inci-

- dents among college undergraduates: Prevalence and factors associated with risk. *PLoS ONE*, *12*(11), 1–23. doi:/10.1371/journal.pone.0186471
- Miller, D. T. & McFarland, C. (1991). When social comparison goes awry: The case of pluralistic ignorance. In Suls, J. & Wills, T. (Eds.) *Social Comparison: Contemporary Theory and Research*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2002). How to reduce high-risk college drinking: Use proven strategies, fill research gaps. Retrieved from www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/media/FINALPanel2.pdf
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2016). Drinking levels defined. Retrieved from <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/moderate-bingedrinking>
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pedersen, E. R., & LaBrie, J. W. (2008). Normative misperceptions of drinking among college students: A look at the specific contexts of prepartying and drinking games. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, *69*(3), 406–411. doi:/10.15288/jsad.2008.69.406
- Perkins, H. W., & Berkowitz, A. D. (1986). Perceiving the community norms of alcohol use among students: Some research implications for campus alcohol education programming. *International Journal of the Addictions*, *21*, 961–976. doi:/10.3109/10826088609077249
- Perkins, H. W., Haines, M. P., & Rice, R. (2005). Misperceiving the college drinking norm and related problems: A nationwide study of exposure to prevention information, perceived norms and student alcohol misuse. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, *66*, 470–478.
- Roberson, A. A., McKinney, C., Walker, C., & Coleman, A. (2018). Peer, social media, and alcohol marketing influences on college student drinking. *Journal of American College Health*, *66*(5), 369–379. doi:/10.1080/07448481.2018.1431903
- Schlesselman, L. S., Nobre, C., & English, C. D. (2011). Alcohol attitudes and behaviors among faculty at U.S. schools and colleges of pharmacy. *Pharmacy Practice*, *9*(4), 236–241.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2016). 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Table 6.84B—Tobacco Product and Alcohol Use in Past Month among Persons Aged 18 to 22, by College Enrollment Status: Percentages, 2014 and 2015. Available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015.htm#tab6-84b>
- Tan, A. L. (2012). Through the drinking glass: An analysis of the cultural meanings of college drinking. *Journal of Youth Studies, 15*(1), 119-142.
- Toch, H. & Klofas, J. (1984). Pluralistic ignorance, revisited. In G.M. Stephenson and J.H. Davis (Eds.), *Progress in Applied Social Psychology*, (Vol 2), New York: Wiley.
- Turrisi, R., Mallet, K. A., Mastroleo, N. R., & Larimer, M. E. (2006). Heavy drinking in college students: Who is at risk and what is being done about it? *Journal of General Psychology, 133*(4), 401-420. doi:/10.3200%2FGENP.133.4.401-420
- Utpala-Kumar, R., & Deane, F. P. (2012). Heavy episodic drinking among university students: Drinking status and perceived drinking normative comparisons. *Substance Use & Misuse, 47*, 278-285. doi:10.3109/10826084.2011.636134
- Weitzman, E., Nelson, T., & Wechsler, H. (2002). Taking up binge drinking in college: The influences of person, social group, and environment. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 32*, 26-35. doi:/10.1016/S1054-139X(02)00457-3
- Whitney, N., & Froiland, J. M. (2015). Parenting style, gender, beer drinking and drinking problems of college students. *International Journal of Psychology: A Biopsychosocial Approach, 16*, 93–109. doi:/10.7220/2345-024X.16.5
- Wombacher, K., Matig, J. J., Sheff, S. E., Scott, A. M. (2017). “It just kind of happens”: College students’ rationalization for blacking out. *Health Communication, 34*, 1-10. doi:10.1080/10410236.2017.1384351
- Yanovitzky, I., Stewart, L. P., & Lederman, L. C. (2006). Social distance, perceived drinking by peers, and alcohol use by college students. *Health Communication, 19*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1207/s15327027hc1901_1
- Zamboanga, B. L., Olthuis, J. V., Kenney, S. R., Correia, C. J., Van Tyne, K., Ham, L. S., & Borsari, B. (2014). Not just fun and games: A review of college drinking games re-

King & La Valley

search from 2004 to 2013. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 28(3), 682-695. doi:/10.1037/a0036639

ISSN 2372-6350