



The Department of Psychology and Psi Chi Newsletter

THE LOOKING GLASS

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We're back!

This is just a quick note to let you all know that we are here. We are back to serve you, to keep you posted, and to listen. So, let's talk. We will be posting "The Staff" page later. You may contact any one of us. We are happy to be back and we are ready to assist you. If you have any comments, suggestions, or an article, please contact me.

~ Carl Conklin, Editor

~ CarlGConklin@aol.com

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Looking for Inter-Group Differences by David J. Weiss
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When middle-aged psychologists like me were in school, the “subject” was a simple organism. We randomly assigned people to experimental groups and didn’t worry about what they brought with them to the study. The notion was named by Shanteau (1999) as the “GNAHM” – the Generalized Normal Adult Human Mind.” Any normal person could be assigned to any experimental condition. We were studying general principles of behavior, seeking regularities that describe the species. Even social psychologists preferred to construct groups within a study rather than use pre-existing classifications.

Sometime during the 80’s, things changed. The very term “subject” came to be considered offensive; APA has banned it. Currently we call them “participants”, emphasizing the voluntary, collaborative spirit that is supposed to characterize the folks who grace our studies. Many psychologists began to elicit personal information from their participants, and to include summarized age and race statistics in journal articles.

In my view, the modern tendency to provide information has its upsides and downsides. Knowing the specifics of samples has the potential to help us understand why results didn’t replicate from one laboratory to another. On the other hand, the same kind of specific information may lead readers to discount a result if the sample seems somehow unusual. Generally, researchers are going to use whatever volunteers they can easily get their hands on. It may be all too easy to ignore subtle but crucial discrepancies in procedure when an easy explanation for inconsistent results in terms of differences between samples is available. In the bad old days, when intro psych students were just plain “subjects”, readers presumed that samples were homogeneous across the country, largely because we didn’t know any better.

Regardless of my old-fashioned perspective, the tide of history is moving toward examining personal characteristics of participants. In my graduate seminars, students propose experiments. The most commonly proposed hypotheses involve race or ethnicity. “Do people of my group have more orgasms than those of some other groups?” is the modal question among students in Psy 542. I try to dissuade the proposers, hinting that variation within groups is likely to be sizable, but my efforts are usually in vain.

If we gracefully accept the trend, then we are obliged to seek out effective ways to explore how group membership predicts behavior. The haphazard approach, using regression methods to tease out links from data collected with convenience samples, suffers from the disadvantage that such samples seldom generate enough power to overcome the differences among people whose labels are the same. An alternative strategy is to design studies that incorporate demographic variables as experimental factors.

The most direct approach is to have group membership be one of several variables in a standard (i.e., fully crossed) factorial design. For example, for her thesis research, C. Linda Egu enlisted Latino and White teachers in a study of judgments of child abuse. A sizable number of Latino and White teachers was recruited from graduate Education classes. Egu wanted to include Black teachers as well, but they proved too hard to find. Each teacher was randomly assigned to a design cell formed by combining the manipulated factors, which in this study were degree of abuse, race of the child, and whether the response was recognizing, as opposed to reporting, the abuse. Each teacher made only one judgment, as we were concerned both about contextual effects and the participant’s guessing that race was an element in the study.

Some other useful designs are not as well known (but – commercial message - they are discussed in my Psy 515 course). The nested group design is called for when each participant within each of several groups is scheduled to make more than one response. Christine Rundall used this design in a study of medication compliance among patients with various diseases (Rundall & Weiss, 1998). We anticipated that patients with more threatening diseases and flagrant symptoms were more

likely to be compliant regardless of medication side effects, whereas patients with less traumatic diseases or with mild symptoms would allow the same irritating side effects to disrupt their pill-taking.

The compliance study illustrates one of the interesting limitations of classifying people according to specific criteria. Diseases tend to be age-linked and to some extent, gender-linked. In Rundall's diligently recruited sample, patients with Coronary Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, a severe condition with dramatic symptoms, were all elderly. Those with Inactive Tuberculosis, an asymptomatic disease, were generally young. Consequently, age was confounded with disease severity, not because of carelessness by the researcher, but because the confounding exists in the population. Confounding means that effects we ascribe to disease characteristics may in fact be attributable to age. No statistical magic can undo confounding when it is inherent in the population.

Another design of potential utility is the fractional factorial, so named because the number of treatment combinations used in the study is smaller, usually much smaller, than the number called for by normal factorial crossing. This design is used when the researcher wishes to explore the impact of a large number of controllable factors simultaneously. For example, one might be using focus groups to examine the attractiveness of a (perhaps hypothetical) political candidate, with the idea that characteristics of voters as well as those of candidates affect voting preference. Possible contributing elements might be gender, race, and political affiliation of the voter and of the candidate, as well as the candidate's stances on various current issues. Aspects of the candidate can be manipulated by the researcher, but characteristics of the voter cannot. This in itself is not necessarily a problem, as we can try to recruit participants having the desired characteristics. The problem is that a normal, fully crossed design with many factors generates an impractically large number of design cells. The solution usually adopted is to omit factors that the researcher hopes are not crucial. A more desirable solution is to adopt a design that maintains the ability to see whether a factor contributes (a main effect), albeit at the cost of sacrificing information about some of the interactions among the factors. That solution is the fractional factorial design (also discussed in Psy 515 – what a coincidence!)

The key for researchers who want to study inter-group differences is whether people who have the desired characteristics can be recruited. Especially as studies progress beyond simple comparisons, e.g., one ethnicity vs. another, to include more factors, finding people who have the requisite combined traits can be a challenge. Even after we identify the people we want, we must convince them to offer their services to our project. Cash is a possible incentive, but (a) we seldom have enough, and (b) we may want participants who are intrinsically motivated to share their views rather than to do as little as they have to in order to get paid.

The art of recruiting is seldom discussed in texts. In my Psy 504 course (another shameless commercial!), we spend a fair amount of time thinking about this issue. A useful, and true, selling argument is that unless people of the desired types participate in research, the picture that scientists paint from the data they collect will be incomplete. The people we need for our studies will not always be conveniently available on campus. Knowledge of the community can be very important. It is often helpful if the recruiter matches the potential recruit in the most prominent demographic characteristics.

References

Rundall, C. S., & Weiss, D. J. (1998). Patients' anticipated compliance: A functional measurement analysis. *Psychology, Health, & Medicine*, *3*, 261-274.

Shanteau, J. (1999). Decision making by experts: The GNAHM effect. In J. Shanteau, B. Mellers, & D. Schum (Eds.), *Decision research from Bayesian approaches to normative systems: Reflections on the contributions of Ward Edwards*. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

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Daily Well-Being: When Losses Lead to Gains by Anthony Ong
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Introspection reveals that the world in which we are immersed exhibits both invariant characteristics and continuous change. In order for an organism to successfully survive and flourish in such a world the predictable regularities of the environment must be recognized while simultaneously the ever-changing characteristics of new conditions must be perceived and adaptations to these perceived changes must be made. If well being (i.e., successful adaptation) is to be attained, the organism must at some level be able to monitor changes in its internal state and the relationship of the state to the environment. This notwithstanding, many of our everyday expressions, such as “It’s always darkest before the dawn,” ironically foster our giving up. The implicit message is to forfeit our experience of the moment and wait for what is bad to pass.

But evaluation is a state of mind; it can be positive or negative. That doesn’t mean that consequences are not real. It means that the consequences for any action depend on the view we take of them. Actions and events don’t come with evaluations; we impose them on our experiences and in so doing, create our experience of the event. Some believe that bad things are intolerable. Some believe that bad things happen but if we just hold on, they will pass. That later is better than the former perhaps, but, at least for me, it’s not enough.

As a graduate student at USC, I’ve spent my entire academic career pursuing the elusive answers to one question: “What makes people happy?” In talking with eminent scientists in the field of positive psychology as well as lay persons on the street, I’ve noticed that even the saying “Every cloud has a silver lining” doesn’t quite lead us to where we want to be. The implication here is that the bad thing will not only pass, but will result in something good. The optimist is said to be the one who when surrounded by manure knows there must be a pony around somewhere. Again this is not what I’m suggesting. Instead, consider that the very thing that is evaluated as negative is also positive. It is not that there may be five negative things and five positive—which surely is better than just seeing the negative, as the pessimist might, but that the 10 things are both negative and positive—depending on the context we impose on them.

Two years ago, a friend and I were on our way to see a movie. When she realized we were running late, she took a short cut to the theatre through a parking lot. She then apologized when she was overwhelmed by the smell of pooh-pooh! It was then that I realized that a “disability” I had always had actually was an advantage. All of the people I’ve been close with appear to have a far more developed sense of smell than I. On that excursion through the parking lot, I realized that the number of “Ugh, did you smell that?” to the number of “Ah, did you smell that?” was about 20 to 1. If it’s smelling a rose on Valentine’s Day, I lose; if it’s smelling rotten eggs the day after Easter Sunday, I win. Is it good or bad not to be sensitive to odors? It depends. A glue fails to adhere. Is that good or bad? It’s bad if we want something to stick forever but good if we want a post-it note.

It is fine to want tomorrow to be good and to expect that it will be. When this is what we mean by hope, there is no problem. All too often, however, people offer words of hope when we are feeling bad to help us accept those feelings. In my view, we should not passively give up the moment. Such giving up follows from the belief that events themselves are good or bad, rather than that our views make them so.

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Racism and the White Ally by Daniel Sallberg
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This essay was written as an assignment for a Multicultural Psychology class, Daniel Sallbergⁱ

Tatum's (1994)ⁱⁱ article, "Teaching White Students about Racism: The Search for White Allies and the Restoration of Hope," addresses the topic of awakening White college students to the realities of racism, and the psychological difficulties many White college students may encounter as they progress through the stages of White identity development in an environment that acknowledges ongoing individual, institutional, and cultural racism. Tatum provides comments from her students to illustrate potential psychological processes encountered in the various stages, utilizing Helms' (1992)ⁱⁱⁱ six-stage model of White racial identity development. Helms model consists of six stages: Contact; Disintegration; Reintegration; Pseudo-Independent; Immersion/Emersion; and Autonomy.^{iv} The model is divided into two major phases. The first phase involves the abandonment of racism, and is typified by denial and resistance to the recognition of racism. The second phase involves creating a positive definition of Whiteness, which, according to Tatum, appears to be exemplified by an active commitment to eliminating or dismantling both White privilege and institutional racism. The transition from the first to the second phase is marked by feelings of guilt, confusion regarding one's personal efficacy in eliminating racism, and realizing the necessity to interact with a support group composed of individuals who are engaged in antiracist activities. The second phase culminates with the individual reaching the Autonomy Stage in which one becomes increasingly aware of how various forms of oppression are related to racism, and then acts to eliminate them as well. The White person who acts to eliminate racism and other forms of oppression is known as "the White Ally." The role of the White Ally is to speak up against systems of oppression and to challenge other Whites to do the same (Tatum, 1994).

Speaking up against systems of oppression may be difficult unless there are clear agreements and an understanding of what form said oppressions may take, particularly when oppressions are claimed to take place at the institutional level. Tatum (1994) speaks of creating the possibility of empowered people of color and their White allies working together as partners in the establishment of a more just society. In order for those who are allied in their collective efforts to end racism and oppression to succeed, it may be necessary to come to some kind of agreement as to what the mechanisms of establishing a just society are, and a clear definition of what a just society would look like.

Individuals interested in addressing racism and other forms of oppression at the institutional level may choose to engage in political activity. One of the problems inherent in politics, including political democracies, is that there are elements of coercion involved in enforcing political laws. Political minorities often feel coerced by legislative measures with which they do not agree, regardless of how fervently the political majority believes in the justness of the legislation. Dismantling White privilege through political measures may appear to be oppressive in its own right.

One alternative to taking political measures could involve exercising personal choice at many levels of social interaction, particularly by choosing the individuals or groups with which one does business. This may require some degree of personal sacrifice and extensive research on the part of the White ally. The White ally may choose to do business with only people of color and only those people of color who refuse to do business with any institution or organization that sanctions racist policies or exploitation of Third World countries inhabited by persons of color, regardless of whether the policies are directed at Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, or Whites. Retirement investments would have to be analyzed in order to discern whether the management of funds is connected to institutions sanctioning racism or other forms of oppression.

It may also be necessary to reevaluate acquaintances, friendships, and family relationships. White allies may discover that they are unable to change the racist attitudes and activities of their

current social group through verbal persuasion alone. Depending on the person's level of commitment to dismantling White privilege and racism at the individual, institutional, and cultural levels, the White ally may find it necessary to disassociate oneself from all individuals and groups who continue to engage in attitudes and activities identified with racism. This would undoubtedly require courage, especially if one's standard of living depends on these old friendships and family relationships.

Taking action such as described in the two previous paragraphs may be too extreme for many budding White allies, especially if they are young college students concerned with learning the skills necessary for survival in a world that seems to be demanding an ever increasing specialization of abilities. The university is a good environment to begin the practice of antiracist activities. College professors can act as role models and help organize support groups for not only consciousness-raising for the purpose of examining one's own racism, but also to provide information about how to counter subtle forms of potential racism promulgated by various forms of media based on current scientific speculation.

Zuckerman (1990)^v provides a definition of racism:

Racism is the assumption that psychocultural traits and capacities are determined by biological race and that races differ decisively from one another which is usually coupled with a belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race and its right to domination over others (from Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged {1981} p. 1870).

Suppose the word race is taken out of the definition and replaced with the word individual. We are then left with the assumption that individual capacities and traits are determined by biology, which may or may not lead one to believe in an inherent superiority (or inferiority) of one individual compared to another for either a single trait or a number of traits. If the traits or capacities are those that, when combined in any number, may lead to increased adaptability and survival, then we are entering the arena of neo-Darwinian natural selection - one of the basic premises for the ideologies of sociobiology and genetic determinism.

Genetic determinism may be taught in many universities under course titles such as Evolutionary Psychology. The role of genes is emphasized in understanding human behavior, and the role of cultural environment is de-emphasized. If environment plays a minimal role, and if genes are the most important factor in determining the outcome of human endeavors, then one logical conclusion may be that the current state of social affairs - including White privilege - is due to inherent and unchangeable differences, not only in individuals but in groups of individuals.

Fortunately there are other college courses that provide students with alternative information such as Zuckerman's (1990) article, "Some Dubious Premises," in which he eloquently states how much of the genetic deterministic reconstruction of evolutionary history is speculative, unverifiable, and post hoc. Yet, young college students may not be capable of articulately countering the ideologies espoused by authority figures in the form of professors who have the power to pass or fail the student. The potential White ally college student may be in need of role models in the form of other professors who are willing to speak out against racism. It may be necessary for courses of study designed to bring about the establishment of a more just society to emphasize material that articulately refutes the dubious premises of sociobiologist ideology.

Footnotes

- i The author “identifies” as Metis Los Angeleno.
- ii Tatum, B.D. (1994). Teaching white students about racism: The search for white allies and the restoration of hope. Teacher’s College Record, 95 (4), 462-476.
- iii Helms, J.E. (1992). A Race is a Nice Thing to Have: A guide to Being a White Person of Understanding the White Persons in Your life. Topeka: Content Communications.
- iv Please see Tatum’s article for a complete description of the six stages.
- v Zuckerman, M. (1990). Some dubious premises in research and theory on racial differences. American Psychologist, 45, 1297-1303.

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Psychology Peer Advisement by Pablo Lizarraga
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The Psychology Department Advisement Center is a student run academic advisement center that assists undergraduate students majoring in Psychology realize their academic goals by providing both psychology program and career information assistance. We also help with administrative procedures, and information about other campus services. Students can fill out their Psychology contracts, course substitution forms, graduation applications, and various other academic forms that may become necessary during one's academic career. Our hours are (usually) 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday. We are located in KH C3062 (across from the old elevators on the 3rd floor). Our phone number is (323) 343-2268. Students can also reach us at: plizarr@calstatela.edu.

The Peer Advisement Center is also a place where students can earn credits toward their degree by working as Peer Advisors. Students who are interested can register under one of the sections of Psy. 395 depending on how many units they want to earn. Students can earn up to four units per quarter by working 12 hours a week throughout the quarter. The Peer Advisors are also Psychology undergraduate students that help students like themselves toward completing their Bachelors degree. Thus, the Peer Advisors have usually experienced some of the problems or come across questions that are presented by students seeking advisement. Students can get advice on completing their General Education Classes, Psychology Major requirements, and basic academic procedures like applying for graduation. Essentially, the Peer Advisement center is a student friendly place where students can get academic forms, information, and advice that pertains to their academic career. If you have any questions or need information about the Peer Advisement Center feel free to contact us.

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ⁱ The author "identifies" as Metis Los Angeleno.

ⁱⁱ Tatum, B.D. (1994). Teaching white students about racism: The search for white allies and the restoration of hope. Teacher's College Record, 95 (4), 462-476.

ⁱⁱⁱ Helms, J.E. (1992). A Race is a Nice Thing to Have: A guide to Being a White Person of Understanding the White Persons in Your life. Topeka: Content Communications.

^{iv} Please see Tatum's article for a complete description of the six stages.

^v Zuckerman, M. (1990). Some dubious premises in research and theory on racial differences. American Psychologist, 45, 1297-1303.