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The Joke of Joseph Haydn’s String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2

Nicole Baker

In 1781, Joseph Haydn’s *String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2* was composed and performed for the first time. Haydn, also known as “the father of the symphony,” composed this quartet in four movements, and by the end, listeners noticed a very uncommon and somewhat unsettling occurrence in the fourth movement. Haydn played with the eight-measure motive from the refrain in this rondo form using grand pauses among a large variety of techniques to deceive listeners, creating the clever nickname, “The Joke.”

The overall form of the Fourth Movement is rondo. A typical rondo form alternates between the refrain, which is the main motive that listeners will recognize from the beginning of the piece, and couplets, which are completely new ideas from the refrain. It is typically eight measures and a rather catchy theme. The first couplet, which occurs from measures 8 through 28, in “The Joke” is in the key of B-flat Major. This is very typical for rondo form to move to the dominant major. Couplet two, which ranges from measures 36 to 71, is in the parallel minor key of E-flat minor, another common move for rondo form at the time. The re-transition from couplet two in measures 68 through 70 ending in a five chord first inversion in E-flat Major. These three

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measures are placed there to bring the audiences ears back to the home key.

The refrain, which always occurs in the home key of E-flat Major, comes back into play a total of four times during the movement, not including the coda beginning in measure 152. Something different about this rondo form is that each time the refrain returns, it is the exact same eight measure phrase, making it even more distinguishable to the listener’s ears and even more comical when Haydn muddles with the form in the coda beginning in measure 152.

The eight-measure motive of the refrain is used in a run-of-the-mill manner for a rondo style. The Roman numeral analysis of the eight-measure phrase is very typical for a parallel period structure with a tonic to pre-dominant, dominant to tonic concluding in a Perfect Authentic Cadence in the original key of E-flat Major, although one thing that is not as common about it is that it has a very sparse amount of accompaniment.

Part of the joke of this piece is the use of musical articulations in the eight-measure motive. Haydn switches back and forth between legato and slurs at the beginning of each phrase then a sudden three-note staccato passage moving up for the first one then down the second, completing a musical arch. The use of the staccato moments throughout the eight-measure motive creates a light, bouncy feel in the melody, and the little amount of accompaniment makes it more apparent. Most of the
staccato moments happen when the rest of the quartet has a rest. For example, measure 6 contains only a quarter note of accompaniment, while the melody has a six stepwise note passage over resting beats.

The true comedic characters begin in measure 152, with the repeat of the main motive, although with a few twists. The deception that Haydn uses is in measures 155, 159, 163, and 167. Haydn included four grand pauses in-between sections of the main eight-measure motive.

Each grand pause lasts one measure with the exception of the three measure grand pause in 167-169. This confuses the audience on when to clap, then, when the real ending occurs, they do not know if it is just another grand pause. Another twist that Haydn includes as the joke is
that, before all the grand pauses (with the exception of measure 158), Haydn has a root position tonic chord. In measure 158, Haydn has a five chord in second inversion, which does not result in a typical half cadence. This is the single chord used right before the grand pause in which the audience directly knows that the piece is not over. The last little hoax that Haydn includes is in the very last three measures. While this is a part of the eight-measure motive that is included in each refrain throughout the whole movement, it is not the conclusion of the motive; it is only the first two measures of it. Technically the piece ends in a Perfect Authentic Cadence because it ends in a root position one chord, but ending in the middle of the phrase creates a very uneasy, unfinished feel for the listener.

Haydn, being the clever composer that he is, brought forth his humor and wit to this string quartet. He very cleverly used his musical imagination to create a light hearted, unsettling ending that had audiences bewildered and somewhat confused. Thank you.

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Bibliography


Pre- and Post-Exposure Chemoprophylaxis and Its Impact on HIV

Cameron Calloway

Abstract

Every year, millions of people around the world are infected with HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus. HIV is the pathogenic agent responsible for AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. HIV represents an enormous threat to global public health, and current research is aimed at providing methods for treating HIV infected patients while simultaneously preventing its transmission. Two such therapeutic efforts include: pre-exposure chemoprophylaxis and post-exposure chemoprophylaxis. Pre-exposure chemoprophylaxis involves the regular administering of antiviral medications prior to HIV exposure. Post-exposure chemoprophylaxis involves the administration of antiviral medications immediately following suspected cases of HIV exposure. With millions of people living with HIV, treatment of this potentially devastating condition has the ability to offer a longer, healthier life for those affected.

Introduction

HIV is the pathogenic agent responsible for causing AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. HIV is a retrovirus capable of integrating its genetic material into that of the host cells’ DNA. As the replication process of HIV occurs in CD4 T lymphocytes—a class of immune cells responsible for fighting infections—the proliferation of the virus results in the progressive weakening of the immune system. As the immune system dwindles, the patient becomes increasingly vulnerable to acquiring opportunistic infections including tuberculosis, pneumonia, and meningitis. When the numbers of CD4 T lymphocytes drop to dangerously low levels and opportunistic infections begin to take hold, the resulting condition is referred to as AIDS (World Health Organization). According to the World Health Organization, the average amount of time that passes following an infection with the virus to the onset of symptoms associated with AIDS is five to eight years (World Health Organization). This time window is not indefinite and can be much longer or shorter depending upon a number of different factors.
including age of acquisition, genetics, and other various health factors (World Health Organization).

Every year, millions of people around the world are infected with HIV. The vast majority of these infections (approximately 95%) are estimated to occur in middle to low income countries with limited access to quality healthcare (World Health Organization). Furthermore, infections are not solely limited to adults. Out of the estimated 40 million people across the globe living with HIV in 2006, 2.3 million of them were children (World Health Organization). In accordance with the rise of HIV and its enormous threat to global public health, research aimed to provide methods for treating HIV infected patients while simultaneously preventing its transmission have been initiated. Two such therapeutic efforts include: pre-exposure chemoprophylaxis and post-exposure chemoprophylaxis.

Pre-exposure Chemoprophylaxis

Pre-exposure chemoprophylaxis involves the regular administering of antiviral medications prior to encounters in which there is a potential risk for HIV exposure. In 2010, a study published by The New England Journal of Medicine communicated the results of an experiment involving pre-exposure chemoprophylaxis for HIV prevention. Following the success achieved in laboratory mice and nonhuman primates, researchers sought to evaluate the safety and efficacy of an antiretroviral medication in preventing the acquisition of HIV in human subjects (Grant, et al. 2010).

The study involved the initial screening of 4905 people (of which was eventually reduced to 2499 subjects) from various locations including parts of South America and the United States, South Africa, and Thailand (Grant, et al. 2010). All subjects were born male (although some identified as female at the time of the study), aged 18 or older, exhibited HIV-seronegative status, and had shown evidence of being high risk for contracting HIV (Table 1). The researchers randomly divided the subjects into two separate groups administering two antiretroviral drugs, emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (FTC-TDF), to the experimental group while the other received a placebo.

Subjects were instructed to follow-up every four weeks for the first half of the study when they received refills of their medications, risk-reduction counseling, HIV tests, and were screened and treated for sexually transmitted diseases. Subjects were never informed of the
medication they received. After the first five or six months, subjects were assessed at twelve-week intervals for the remainder of the study which eventually totaled 3324 person-years of reporting (Grant, et al. 2010).

Overall, HIV seroconversion was reported in 110 subjects. Ten subjects were found to be positive with the virus at the time of enrollment (two in the FTC-TDF group compared to eight in the placebo group) while the remaining 100 acquired the virus throughout the duration of the study. Of the 100 emergent infections, 36 affected members from the FTC-TDF group and the remaining 64 belonged to the placebo group.

From the resulting data set alone, one can immediately observe the discrepancy between the numbers of infections from those receiving the antiretroviral medication versus those on placebo (Figure 1). Upon further investigation, the researchers tested the levels of the antiretroviral drugs present in the subjects’ blood cells and plasma. Of the 34 HIV positive subjects tested, three exhibited detectable levels of one of the drugs while two exhibited detectable levels of the other (Figure 2). However, the levels of medications observed in these individuals was below the median value of the 22 seronegative control subjects of whom they were compared with which suggests a link between the limited bioavailability of the drug (which is quite possibly a result of not taking it) and the subjects’ susceptibility to contracting the virus.

In general, the administering of the FTC-TDF antiretroviral medication once daily, in addition to preventative services, resulted in a 44% increase in added protection against contracting HIV (Grant, et al. 2010). Although 44% seems significant, the researchers hypothesized the medication would provide a higher percentage of protection. In terms of determining the base amount of medication needed to provide protection, the scientists have expressed the need for a larger pool of participants in order to provide a more accurate assessment.

**Post-Exposure Prophylaxis**

Post-exposure chemoprophylaxis involves the administration of oral, antiviral medications immediately following an encounter in which there is a potential risk for HIV exposure. Studying said process represents a challenge as the medications are required to be ingested within 48 to 72 hours—following a high risk encounter—before a strict 28 day regime ensues (Schechter et al. 2004).
In order to provide a foundational assessment for the efficacy of post-exposure chemoprophylaxis, a study published in 2004, followed 200 subjects and reported their behaviors in conjunction with their pill usage and propensity to contract HIV (Table 2). All participants were male, HIV seronegative, and determined to be at high-risk for contracting the virus. At the time of enrollment, the subjects were provided with a four-day supply of two antiretroviral medications, zidovudine and lamivudine, to be administered alternatingly for 28 days following suspected HIV exposure. The median follow-up time period was 24.2 months (or 4585 person months overall).

Of the 200 enrolled participants, 68 subjects began post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) as a result of a high-risk encounter at least once. In contrast, 86 subjects did not report beginning PEP, despite citing at least one high-risk encounter, mentioning a few reasons including: sexual activity with a steady partner, exposure was not believed to be high-risk, and concern for side effects (Schechter et al. 2004).

At the conclusion of the study trials, 11 subjects acquired new HIV infections. Ten of them did not initiate PEP despite reporting at least one high-risk encounter while one contracted the virus despite completing the PEP regimen. Despite the fact that the subject was initially seronegative for HIV when PEP began, the ribose nucleic acid (RNA) derived from the virus on the final day of the regimen exhibited a mutation suggests a resistance to one of the antiretroviral drugs, lamivudine (Schechter et al. 2004).

Despite the acquired data asserting the efficacy of the PEP treatment, the study was originally organized as a pilot project. As such, the researchers did not draw firm conclusions from their results as a number of factors remained absent (including the establishment of a control group). Nevertheless, the study offers promising data related to individuals who face high-risk encounters with the virus.

**Conclusion**

With millions of people living with HIV, the treatment of this potentially devastating condition has the ability to offer a longer, healthier life for those affected by this illness. From the affected men and women living with their unaffected partners to the affected mothers and mothers-to-be, HIV poses a significant threat to global public health. However, the advances in treatment utilizing pre- and post-exposure chemoprophylaxis indicate that a potential cure may be just beyond the horizon.
Table 1: Demographics of enrolled participants in Pre-exposure chemoprophylaxis study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>FTC-TDF (N=1251)</th>
<th>Placebo (N=1248)</th>
<th>P Value</th>
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<td>18–24 yr</td>
<td>591 (47)</td>
<td>662 (51)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25–29 yr</td>
<td>274 (22)</td>
<td>241 (19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>30–39 yr</td>
<td>249 (20)</td>
<td>228 (18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>≥40 yr</td>
<td>137 (11)</td>
<td>121 (10)</td>
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<td>453 (36)</td>
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<td>539 (43)</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>No. of alcoholic drinks (on days when subject drank in past month) — no. (%)</strong></td>
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<td>206 (16)</td>
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<td>1–4 per day</td>
<td>348 (28)</td>
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<td>≥5 per day</td>
<td>666 (53)</td>
<td>687 (55)</td>
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<td>Cape Town, South Africa</td>
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<td>43 (3)</td>
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<td><strong>Sexual risk factors at screening</strong></td>
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<td>No. of partners in past 12 wk</td>
<td>18±35</td>
<td>18±43</td>
<td>0.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unprotected receptive anal intercourse in past 12 wk — no. (%)</td>
<td>732 (59)</td>
<td>753 (60)</td>
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<td>Unprotected anal intercourse with partner with positive or unknown HIV status in past 6 mo — no. (%)</td>
<td>992 (79)</td>
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<td>510 (41)</td>
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<td>164/1240 (13)</td>
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<td>Serum herpes simplex virus type 2 — no./total no. (%)</td>
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<td>Susceptible</td>
<td>827 (66)</td>
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<td>6 (-1)</td>
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<tr>
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Figure 1: Estimates of the time passed from the beginning of the study to the time of infection among the two groups (placebo and FTC-TDF).
Figure 2: Levels of components of the antiretroviral drug FTC-TDF in blood cells (boxes A and B) and plasma (boxes C and D). Subjects receiving the placebo did not exhibit traces of the antiretroviral drug. Table 2: Demographics of enrolled participants in Post-exposure chemoprophylaxis study.

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<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>PEP, n (%) (n = 60)</th>
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<th>Total (n = 200)</th>
<th>P Value</th>
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<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>34 (50)</td>
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<td>480</td>
<td>465</td>
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<td>48 (71)</td>
<td>84 (64)</td>
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<td>23 (34)</td>
<td>34 (26)</td>
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<td>Insertive anal sex last 6 mo</td>
<td>46 (68)</td>
<td>93 (70)</td>
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<td>59 (30)</td>
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<td>34 (26)</td>
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Works Cited


Diverging From the Apocalypse: What Are We Afraid of?

Rileigh Darby-McClure

Recently, a violent surge of post-apocalyptic dystopian literature has infiltrated our culture. Originating from classics such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), the quantity of dystopian novels published in this century has exponentially increased at a rate only surpassed by inflation, taxes and climate change. The relatively sudden wild popularity of this genre raises two essential questions: 1) What does the content of these books say about our culture? and 2) What does the fact that we as a society are so interested in these books say about how we relate to the content?

*Divergent*, written by Veronica Roth (2011), is a novel that was quickly adapted into film, and has grossed over $280 million worldwide.1 It is post-apocalyptic, dystopian, and has caught the interest of many people. As such, it serves as an adequate medium through which the answers to our questions can be pursued. The novel is set in Chicago, where the city is separated into five distinct factions with corresponding values: Dauntless (bravery), Erudite (intellectualism), Candor (honesty), Amity (peace), and Abnegation (selflessness). As a rite of passage, all sixteen-year-olds take an aptitude test after which they can either remain in their original faction or choose another, away from their family. Tris, the main character and Abnegation constituent, chooses Dauntless after her test results come back alarmingly inconclusive – divergent. If the stress of completing a dangerous and competitive initiation and concealing her divergent status were not enough, the Erudite leaders hatch a diabolical plan to mind-control the Dauntless into attacking the Abnegation. Tris has to utilize all three of her values (selflessness, bravery and intellectualism) to reunite her family and free the Dauntless from mind control.2

Although significant emphasis is placed on faction identity, the underlying theme throughout the book is divergence, or “a deviation from a course or a standard.”3 A better illustration of this concept, to adequately convey the disparity between Tris and other members of society, is to consider the mathematical definition of divergence, where an infinite sequence does not have a limit.4 The rest of her society is confined to their “chosen” roles, while Tris is special, unique—
divergent. This fact being the major theme of the book demands our attention.

Interpreting this theme relies on the fact that all of us are divergent in one way or another. Maybe one of us has a debilitating fear of heights or letters and words scramble themselves on a page when we try to read them. Maybe another one of us can empathize with both sides of an argument or is talented at understanding others’ emotions. If anything, the unique combinations of all of our traits cause each individual trajectory to diverge from every other. In the novel, Tris clearly understands that she cannot share her divergent status with anyone. It is too dangerous, and throughout the story, the danger is reiterated. This reflects our fear and frustration of conforming to society. Perhaps we are drawn to Tris because by the end of her character’s maturation, she accepts that part of her being and uses it to save her family. By vicariously living through Tris’ successes, we are giving ourselves permission to be divergent and reject the constrictions of society. This interpretation comments on the fact that as a culture we are growing extremely intolerant of restrictions placed on individuals.

To a point, this can be beneficial. When citizens become intolerant of restrictions placed on individuals, more people support progress. They support, for example, removing restrictions on who can vote and marry. In moderation, this ideology can be good for a society that desires equality and human rights, but in an excessive interest in all things going against normality can go against this very progress. Take, for example, the music connoisseur who hears a song and with disgust protests, claiming it is “too mainstream.” Does this person actually dislike the song or just the fact that it is liked already by a significant number of people? This generation, known as millennials (born from 1980 to 2000) seems to have a need to be unique. Concerning Divergent, we see this when we learn of Tris’ aptitude test results. We should be horrified and nervous, as was her proctor. Instead, the reveal of the results is dramatic. We feel excited and intrigued for the mere fact that the protagonist of our story is unique, rather than immediately concerned for Tris’ safety. This shows that our primary concern is being special even to the point of losing moral direction. Members of this culture and especially this generation seem to be afraid of losing individuality and this fact could have some negative future implications.

For one, expectations have changed. It used to be that growing up and finding a steady job to support one’s family was respectable. Now, it is not enough. Everyone is encouraged to not only find that job, but taught that he/she has the potential to become the absolute best in
his/her field. According to *Generation Me*, by Dr. Jean Twenge, “in 2012, 58% of high school students expected to go to graduate or professional school—nearly twice as many as in 1976. Yet the number who actually earn graduate degrees has remained unchanged at about 9%.” This is not to say that graduate and other professional degrees are not worth achieving; rather, they contribute to fields that are relevant and necessary. However this does comment on the average person’s increased desire to promote themselves through life. The pressure to have a successful career compounds with the pressure to purchase the perfect house, have the perfect number of kids, and paint the fence the perfect shade of white. The American dream we are taught to have is similar to that of our ancestors, but with one marked difference: more. Having a vehicle used to be an achievement part of the dream; now, that box is not checked until everyone in the household has her/his own car. Owning a house that put a roof over the entire family used to be the milestone; now, not only does each member of the family need her/his own room, each room needs to be decorated in a perfect, innovative, unique way. How dare company be invited over without each visible wall being covered with a perfect Made in China embellishment? This change in expectation has bled into arguably every area of our lives. We are taught that to be successful we need to wear good-looking clothes, buy a sharp haircut every month and have the latest and greatest electronics. We are even reassured that this pathological materialism is good, because it supports our consumer economy.

Although we are reassured every day that this state of mind is appropriate by either seeing other successful people walking around with their materials or seeing even more successful people with even more materials on our 65-inch television screens, this perpetuation does not come without consequences. Because we are so busy holding down two jobs to pay for that new Ford vehicle, we have less time than ever to focus on things that actually matter, such as being in nature, spending time with friends and family, and exercising. Just spending some time in a forest can reduce stress, improve mood, and improve our sleep, while exercising is a well-known recommendation for increasing levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter implicated in depression. Imagine what benefits doing all three of these activities on a regular basis could have for a person’s or a culture’s mental health. Imagine the converse effect of rarely doing such activities. The result is that between “twenty and thirty percent of children have a major depressive episode” before they become adults, and “suicide is the third leading cause of death in
adolescents and young adults." The idea that more stuff will make us happier is actually what is preventing us from finding happiness.

In an interesting paradox, we seem to accept unquestionably the age-old adage that money can’t buy us love. In fact, recent research shows that it can buy us happiness. More recent research has been showing that having money does make people happier, but one study aimed to determine the reason. They found that it wasn’t necessarily having money that makes us happier, but what we do with it. The researchers gave money to different groups of people. Some received a lot (relatively) some received a little; some were told to keep the money, some were told to give away the money. The people with the biggest increase in happiness over the course of the study were those that gave away their money even when it was because they were instructed to do so. The amount was not relevant to the increase; even giving away a small amount increased happiness. If time is money, then it could follow that giving time to others, whether it be just listening to a friend or taking on a volunteer project, would also bring happiness. Ironically, if we were not so preoccupied working to maintain our unnecessarily extravagant lifestyles, we would have the time to spend our money on “experiential” purchases. These include vacations or travelling, and are one of the only self-directed type purchases that are likely to make us happier. The unwaveringly materialistic ways of our culture prevent us from having either the means or the time to achieve happiness.

As mentioned, the mechanisms of our culture contribute to the debilitation of recent generations and between climate change, overpopulation and poverty, our ancestors’ rapid industrialization has left us with an inarguably unstable world. One can only help others after helping him/herself, which has become next to impossible in this vicious cycle. Breaking the cycle can only come with a re-prioritization of values. We must decide what is important to us. An interesting “minimalist” movement has caught the attention of many people. Two members of this movement are Joshua Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus. On their blog, they note that by age thirty they had “achieved everything that was supposed to make [them] happy: great six-figure jobs, nice cars, big houses with more bedrooms than inhabitants, pointless masses of toys, scads of superfluous stuff,” but that they were still unhappy. They were working up to eighty hours a week for a corporation and felt extremely unfulfilled, so they started on an experiment. Minimalism is not about giving up everything you own, but rather a different way of thinking. It is about valuing people, experiences, and time over possessions. The experiment they started on involved twenty-one days of
reconfiguring their lives by donating/getting rid of items, digitizing papers, and moving houses. With over four million readers, their blog and the movement they are a part of is gaining momentum. By paring excess items and commitments, these minimalists find freedom in controlling time. By controlling their time, Joshua and Ryan, as well as other minimalists are bypassing even the idea of society’s restrictions on individuals. The things that make minimalists fulfilled are not things at all; they have no need to fear losing their individualism when no way exists to strip these people of their identity.

Members of this culture do not just fear not being able to be unique; we also fear being controlled by others. In Divergent, the other major theme in the book is control. In the second half of the book, the Erudite, known for intellectualism, attempt to attack the Abnegation faction by controlling the Dauntless with a tracker serum. That this is a major part of the book speaks to our aversion to being controlled, and furthermore, the fact that for us, a resolute ending involves the Dauntless breaking free from the mind-control mechanism speaks to our emphasis on autonomy. The fact that we have antipathy for others’ influence on us is not inherently bad, but the consequences can be unfortunate.

Children do not like being controlled by their parents, adolescents do not like being controlled by teachers, and even parents and teachers do not like being controlled by their bosses. The fact that we are adverse to this action is such an apparent part of our culture that oftentimes we think ourselves to be above it. It is exactly the fact that we think we can thwart influence that makes us more likely to be influenced. We would be remiss to think that every decision we make is ours and ours alone. Everything we experience goes into our schema, a framework for relating to the world, and it is not a stretch to say that the vast majority of the information we process comes through media. Only seven media giants control 95% of the media we view every day.11 The worst problem concerning this phenomenon, however, is not the fact that people are influenced without their knowing; it is that this fear of being controlled leads people to pre-emptively attempt to control other people.

The Erudite leaders in Divergent are not evil just because they have more knowledge than the other factions, they are evil because they use that knowledge to try to control others. In our society, those that do this are the legislators attacking the education system of the state. Oklahoma in particular is a leader in cuts to public education.12 It is well known that the schools are struggling and the education system in general lags far behind that of other states. Those who can afford it understandably send their children to private schools. In this cycle, those
who have money and knowledge are in a position to maintain their power. Those who do not are deprived of an education. Without an education, these people are not in a position to elect leaders that can employ policies that better living situations for all. Clearly, the most conservative states tend to be the least progressive in terms of human rights, but it is interesting that they also tend to be the least educated.

We think we have democracy. We think we have a say in what happens in this country, but that is as much of a choice as Tris had when she was choosing between two factions. No matter what faction she chose to live with, she and the others would still be required to adhere to the community’s regulations in general. It is false for her to choose one or the other when she is both and neither. Neither party in our political system has all the answers, but they both have some good ideas. We must learn to see past the false dilemmas that social order hands us if we are to make any progress as a society.

In *Divergent*, the faction that was destroyed by the Erudite leader’s mind control games was the selfless: Abnegation. Perhaps the apocalypse in this dystopian novel was not the fact that the world as the characters knew it had to resort to five factions to survive. Perhaps the apocalypse in *Divergent* is when the powerful destroy the selfless and it takes courage to resist the attack. In our society, the powerful are destroying the poorest in our domain. Incidentally, the poorest among us also tend to be the most selfless, donating a significantly higher portion of their income than their more affluent counterparts. Dr. Paul Piff, a researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, notes, “When you study the psychology of having less, you find that people on the lower ends of the economic ladder are a little more sensitive to the needs of other people, they are a little more empathetic and compassionate.” It will take courage on our part to form a resistance.

When reading *Divergent*, it is natural for the reader to identify with the protagonist, Tris. But we must consider the idea that we are not Tris. We are the Erudite. We are the citizens that value our own individualism above all else and are so afraid of being controlled that we have pursued the study of knowledge to combat that control. It will take courage to break the cycle, let go of our uniqueness and be extremely wary of our inadvertent tendency to juggernaut those with fewer opportunities. When we become dauntless and dispel those fears, we become empathetic and more aware of the crises of this time-period. Only then can we sacrifice our luxuries and work as one to diverge from our impending apocalypse.
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Predicting Postmodernism in Lawrence Sterne’s

*Tristram Shandy*

Colin Ferguson

Since the time that postmodernism was delineated as a style of literature, many older works have been retroactively admitted into the proto-postmodern canon. Don Quixote, to name one such example, exhibits many characteristics of this literary movement, such as the unreliable narrator, the picaresque nature of the tale, the absurd goals of the protagonist, and the general aimlessness of the narrative. One hundred and fifty years after Cervantes’s great work, we see the arrival of the next great predecessor of postmodernism: *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. In this second book, we see Sterne employing such techniques as time fragmentation, metafiction, and irony. His general disregard for the literary values of the Enlightenment period would influence a new breed of author to be more playful and layered in their writing.

In this paper, I’d like to trace *Tristram Shandy*’s influence on the postmodern novels on the twentieth century. Of course, there is no absolute criteria for determining what qualifies as postmodern, but we are largely able to transpose the ideas of today onto works of the past. Aspects of writing that are generally accepted as characteristic of postmodern literature, such as some that I’ve mentioned above, were present in Sterne’s book even though they weren’t recognized as belonging to any particular literary movement at the time. It is never until after the fact that the tenets of a movement can be identified.

One of the most prominent characteristics of Sterne’s work is the way in which the narrator fragments the passing of time. For the first volume or two of the narrative, Shandy is telling us about events that occurred to his family before his birth (Sterne 1-103). His memories serve no use here, as he is largely exploring a fictitious account of his own family history. While many writers may speak in the past tense in order to provide a general account of what led up to the story in question, Sterne takes his ambitions further. Not only is he describing, generally, what type of things occurred to his father and uncle, but he actually fills in their precise dialogue, as if he knows what they said before he was born. And not only that, but he also imagines himself privy to the inner thoughts of various citizens in town as well (16)!
If Sterne’s tale were all told in the far past tense, though, we would have a much easier work to discuss, but this is not the case. Tristram transitions into telling us about his early childhood, his adult travels, and more, all punctuated by addresses to the audience in the present tense. The way he jumps back and forth from past, to present, to far past, to present, reminds us much more accurately of the way our living brains work than most novels we read. Tristram is simply letting his memory take him through his life in whatever order it sees fit. Who is the author to impose order and structure on such a good story?

The time fragmentation employed by Sterne reminds me of a similar technique used by Kurt Vonnegut in his novel *Timequake*. The book depicts the events of a Timequake, that is, a rift in spacetime whereby everyone on Earth is forced to repeat the past ten years of their life exactly as they occurred (Vonnegut xv). People are made to relive every traumatic or pleasant experience with no ability to act any differently than they did the first time. Their consciousnesses are awake in their robotic bodies, but completely helpless to affect any change in their lives. This calls time into question in the novel, because something can both be occurring in the present and simultaneously have occurred in the past. Time, in this sense, is just an invention imposed by the author to help the story make sense. No pages of text inherently contain the motion of time in their content. It is the human being that imposes the order of chronological time to things that we read. Shandy is merely trying to expose the illusion of necessary chronology for what it really is – an illusion.

Another way in which Sterne reminds me of the late Kurt Vonnegut is in the way he employs metafiction. Like the time fragmentation, metafiction is a method of calling attention to the very act of writing, or of reading, or just simply inserting unexpected information in the hopes of jolting the reader out of their hypnosis-like reading experience. For Vonnegut and Sterne, metafiction most often comes in the form of breaking the fourth wall. This is when the author or narrator addresses the audience directly. Vonnegut did this frequently, and Shandy does the same thing, by addressing the fictitious woman to whom he is supposedly reciting his tale. He frequently says “give me just a moment longer,” or “I’ll get to it,” or “there’s a purpose to this.” (Sterne 47) He seems to be trying to convince himself of his own intentions more than he is trying to convince us. In Sterne we see a somewhat regretful or apologetic author, endlessly concerned with how he is going to be received by his readers, even if he comes off as irreverent and dissident.
What is the effect when we hear Shandy address his fictitious audience? Does it have an affirming or dissuading effect on us? Typically, fourth wall breaks are effective because they address us as readers, not other, unnamed characters. The breaking of the fourth wall does not seem so much like a fourth wall break because Shandy is still within the story, talking to someone inside the book. We could simply think of the story as being one told by Shandy to a woman, and the content of the story is largely imagined by us, like it would be for the woman. It actually is a great metaphor for the inventive, creative process of fleshing out what we read. Everyone is involved in the process of creation when they read a book – what is really occurring is no more than a shared linguistic experience between two parties.

As far as the form of *Tristram Shandy* goes, it is not nearly as experimental as some of its followers are. For the most part, the book stays true to the classical structure of a novel. It has a beginning, and readers are presumably expected to start from the beginning and read to the end. Since then, we have seen the arrival of non-linear books, choose-your-own-adventure type stories where readers flip back and forth between varying content. We have seen books with colored text like *House of Leaves*, a book that also contains images and colored text. Many books now are even including images throughout, even books for adults. So what influence did Sterne’s book have on this experimentation?

One of the least normative aspects of Sterne’s book is the length of the chapters. We find, in this work, many chapters of five or ten pages in length, but we also see chapters that are barely a paragraph long (Sterne 76)! Sterne is obviously dismissing the literary conventions that call for symmetry and balance in novels. What matters to him is simply the effectiveness of the chapter. If something only needs to be said in a few words, why drag it out? Likewise, why mitigate a wordier passage simply in the name of symmetry? Sterne understood these paradoxes, and worked to embrace them. His writing is primarily about content over form, much like many contemporary postmodernists.

For example, when speaking of content over form, one cannot exclude from discussion the book by Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*. The book is divided into two parts, each by a different narrator. The first part of the book is composed of only two paragraphs, one of them nearly one hundred pages long (Beckett, 3-101). Rather than break information up by paragraph, Beckett let the narration wind endlessly onwards in the form of run-on sentences. The result is highly effective. The rabid, paranoid tale finds its niche in the speaking style of the narrator, who
sounds like he would speak in run-on sentences anyway. This
technique is the inversion of Sterne’s short chapters, but the fundamental principle is the same: Give each aspect of the tale the room that it needs, no more, no less.

As Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh explain in their reader on modern literary theory, postmodernism is often characterized by irony. (289) This is one area where Sterne really finds himself at home. *Tristram Shandy* is often called a satire, seen as mocking the views of traditional Enlightenment values. This is another of the tenets of postmodernism, a rejection of those values, so this idea is right up Sterne’s alley (Ming Dong, 81). He lambasts and caricatures such people as philosophers (through the discourses of his father) and doctors (during the story of his birth). To Sterne, classical learning is something that was agreed upon by old men long ago, and did not allow criticism or evolution of its ideals. This notion, of course, was completely unacceptable to Sterne, and he rallied against it. Through witty humor and slapstick conflict, Sterne pokes fun at the nuclear family, the keeping of servants, the xenophobia of small towns, civil bureaucracy, religion, medicine and history. He never explicitly identifies his opponents, but his readers could surely have sniffed out the correlations they sensed.

In keeping with its ironic tendencies, Sterne also seems to place undue importance on the least notable of events. Things that would seem to necessitate much more description, like his days learning from the Tristapaedia, get very little attention, while legal documents and midwives’ tales seem to get dragged out forever. Again, what Sterne is trying to show us here is that importance is created by the audience, and brought to the story. There is no such thing as inherent importance. It seems unlikely to us that Tristram would be very interested in the legal documents he recites, but he continues to do so, so we are forced to revise our opinions. We expect him to be interested in adventure, in excitement, in romance, but he seems indifferent to all of these things. He would much rather tell us all about his uncle’s war reenactments. So what do we do in this instance? Do we get frustrated? Put the book down? Or do we power through the boring parts to get to the real purpose of the book – purposelessness?

Hand in hand with the idea that Sterne is satirizing philosophy and law is the concept of intertextuality in *Tristram Shandy*. Not content to tell the entire story himself, Tristram brings in many other documents, either directly or indirectly. Many long passages come in the way of reciting other existent documents. The concept of intertextuality describes when a text is interacting with some other text in some way. In
Sterne’s work, this happens when Tristram recites in full various legal or philosophical doctrines. The philosophy is primarily quoted through the speeches of his father, while the legal writing comes during the midwife’s tale.

By juxtaposing various types of writing, Sterne is playing off of our opinions and ideas about the works he is quoting. In making Tristram’s father seem obtuse and lofty, he undermines the position of the philosophy that he holds. Likewise, by making the legal document sound impenetrable and useless, he strikes a secret jab at all lawyers and legislators. Many books since Tristram Shandy have incorporated intertextuality into their pages. The most notable that I can think of, mentioned above, is Mark Z. Danielewski’s House of Leaves. The book is entirely intertextual, with three texts comprising the whole of the book. There are three narrators who are all reading each others’ writings and commenting on what they read by adding footnotes or other insertions. The book constantly refers to outside texts, both real and imaginary, as supplementary information to the story. It allows the reader more of a choice in what they pursue in a book. It also forces readers to reconsider what the book is. Books are not simply static objects that contain information, but rather they are environments in which to experience any of a number of different reactions or emotional responses.

Another aspect of this book that predicts many postmodern works of the twentieth century is the way that it uses multiple perspectives to show multiple interpretations of the same events. As we begin to get to know the characters, we see how their responses to similar events would vary based on their personality. Granted, all of the perspectives are colored by Tristram’s own retelling of their experiences, but just as their perspectives are linked to his, so are his memories characterized by those other characters. For example, in order to talk about the events leading up to his birth, Tristram would have to speak through someone else’s mouth. There is no way he can remember what was occurring in his house before he was even alive to observe such things. What we get, then, is a mixture of fantasy, hearsay and inference, all put together by the personalities of the characters involved.

Tristram’s father, for example, seems much more jaded and pessimistic than the other characters. He is always acting realistically, and warning others of potential dangers or disappointments. His uncle, on the other hand, is idealistic, optimistic, and tragically simple minded. To see the two of them react variously to different events provides Tristram Shandy with much of its humor. Tristram’s father will give some detailed account of a philosophical idea, only to hear Tristram’s
uncle respond in the form of a whistle, meaning he did not understand a word.

Many contemporary novels utilize this fragmentation of narrative. The varying perspectives allow us to get more of a holistic understanding of the characters and their situations. As I mentioned, *House of Leaves* features three narrators. Karen Tei Yamashita’s novel *Tropic of Orange* features nearly a dozen narrators, each given their own chapters. (Yamashita) Because of this, we see a story emerge slowly out of the perspectives of all of the characters. We are given an impersonal, non-privileged view of the plot when we are taken out of the exclusivity of one character’s consciousness.

Much like the multiplicity of perspectives in the book, *Tristram Shandy* also gives us a multiplicity of genres within its pages. Critics of literature call this technique “pastiche.” It is the blending of multiple genres of writing, seemingly ones that would not work well together. In Sterne’s book, we see a perfect combination of history, memoir, comedy, tragedy, and adventure all blended into one seamless ball. Why do we insist upon authors choosing their genre? Did not genres first arise by being accumulations of stereotypes or forms of writing? It is not as if genres have existed in the stars to be absolutely referred to and obeyed. Much like postmodernism was not characterized until after the fact, genres are also inductive inventions by the author. Why should we expect such a witty personality, one with as many varying interests as Sterne, to settle upon any one genre or another when it comes to writing a book? For example, in addition to writing fiction, Sterne was involved in local politics and also worked as a clergyman. The world is increasingly becoming more blended, and genre boundaries are becoming less binding.

Jonathan Safran Foer’s book *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* functions in much the same way. Its own pastiche is made from drama, comedy and documentary styles of writing. There is an unbelievably serious undertone to the whole book, but it contains so many laugh-out-loud moments and knee-slapping humor than one cannot always keep a straight face while reading it. All of this is punctuated by extremely realistic accounts of the World Trade Center attacks of 2001 (Foer). In a world where tragedy exists side by side with beauty, why settle on just one or the other instead of trying to create a unique blend of the two?

*Tristram Shandy* is not merely a watered-down version of today’s postmodern literature, though. It does actually contain some very cutting-edge and experimental techniques within its pages,
techniques that a majority of contemporary authors would never dare to use. For example, one of the pages in *Shandy*, per instructions from the narrator, is colored completely in a marbled pattern. Ink covers every square inch of the page (Sterne, 152). This stunt almost strikes us as an act of performance art. It seems absurd, pointless and silly, but yet somehow sticks with us much more strongly than do many other scenes from the book. It is a stunt and a gimmick. But that does not make it any less genius. How was Sterne so forward-thinking that he was already attempting to play with the form of the novel itself? What would he do in today’s society, where many things are read on illuminated screens, and ink is no longer strictly necessary? He was playing off of the limitations of the format, cheekily inventing a self-referential loop in literature. He turned what would normally be a page of prose into a piece of visual art.

Since then, others have further toyed with the idea of non-classical text arrangement. In *House of Leaves*, there are pages with no more than one word on them, centered (Danielewski, 195). There are also pages with vertical and mirrored text (142). *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* lays text on top of other text, until the result becomes unreadable (Foer, 281). It also contains dozens of photographs. Marshall McLuhan definitely saw what was coming when he wrote *The Media is the Massage: And Inventory of Effects* (McLuhan). We have moved on from what the written word used to be, and are en route to some other, more fulfilling, symbolic language.

The final aspect of *Shandy* that I would like to discuss, like the chronological square that I am, is the ending of the book. A multi-volume work, the story seems to end right in the middle. There is no climax to speak of, and no real resolution to any of the story’s problems. One can speculate on what this means: perhaps Sterne could not think of a suitable ending to the book, maybe the anticlimactic ending was intentional, or maybe he just never got around to writing any more of it. I would like to run with the hypothesis, though, that the ending is intentional.

Stories more accurately depict life when they do not wrap up cleanly at the end. After the experience of reading any book, we as readers are forced back into our daily lives. Life does not begin and end between the covers of a book. Perhaps Sterne was trying to relate an idea to us – the idea that no story is ever over. Or if it does end, the ending to any story is always necessarily arbitrary. James Joyce’s masterpiece *Finnegans Wake* has no ending either. It is a circular novel, in the sense that the last sentence is unpunctuated, and the first sentence
is never begun or capitalized (Joyce 3, 628). It is possible to read continuously from the ending of the book straight through to the beginning, and over and over again endlessly. Maybe Tristram’s life is supposed to be an archetype for all of us dealing with the modern condition. Tristram is navigating endless setbacks and distractions, much like we are in technological society. The book is timeless, as evidenced by its frequent emulation by contemporary authors. Lisa Reed, in her article “(Re)Composing Childhood: Representing the Rhythm of Self in Postmodern Memoir” talks about the importance of reflecting on childhood in order to say something about one’s own current situation (Reed 17). I think that this explains the emphasis on family and childhood in the book.

In closing, I would like to reflect a little more on the meaning of postmodernism. Ideals and movements are never necessarily bound to the years they are associated with. Movements are eternal, in that they never actually begin or end. Countless writers are now employing the tactics used hundreds of years ago by Lawrence Sterne. Whether or not we want to count Sterne himself as a proto-postmodernist is ultimately beside the point. What we have uncovered in our investigations is infinitely more valuable – for we have learned how to learn from others, and see pieces of ourselves in both history and in the future.


Interpreting *Mockingjay*

Sylvia Hayes

In the Hunger Games trilogy, Suzanne Collins writes a powerful story that has been celebrated for its creativity, its enthralling plot, and its underlying messages. The novels can be read as a gripping story paralleling reality television, as a representation of the depths and power of human emotion, or as a statement about war in the modern world. The finale to the series, *Mockingjay*, embodies the diversity of interpretation. Throughout my reading experiences of *Mockingjay*, I have understood the novel as an enthralling story; a representation of severe loss and depression; a message about the devastation of war and the power of the media; and as a warning against unjustified actions, questionable regime exchanges, and tainted motives in war. Due to the variability and depth of symbolism present in *Mockingjay*, the book presents a valuable reading investment, particularly for the enlightenment of young adults.

When *Mockingjay* first came out, I read the novel with the voracity of a reader in need of resolution to a desperately intense series. Suzanne Collins intrigued me with *The Hunger Games* and gripped my attention with *Catching Fire*. I raced to finish *Mockingjay*, skipping words and turning pages to reach the resolution. Upon finishing the book, however, I found that *Mockingjay* seemed little like its predecessors. The conflict confused me and the end left me sad and unresolved. I disliked the story for its grief and depression, but I felt intrigued to understand Katniss’ struggles more.

I read *Mockingjay* again. Throughout this reading, I hung on to Katniss and her emotions. I felt grief as she lost her star-crossed lover, Peeta, to the Capitol, anguish at her sister Prim’s death, and fury against President Snow as the emotions surged through Katniss’ consciousness. I began to interpret the book in a different way. Maybe the book represented more than the continuation of a gripping dystopian plot. I focused in on Katniss, and realized that the book could be intended as a representation of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. After all, Suzanne Collins saw the effects of war on her father firsthand, as he suffered from PTSD after his active duty experiences in Vietnam. In fact, she recalls her father crying out in his dreams from nightmares of the war (Dominus), which could be the inspiration for the terrible nightmares that Katniss experiences throughout the Hunger Games series.
In *Mockingjay*, Katniss often secludes herself and fails to participate in normal daily activities. Traumatized by the events of the preceding novels, Katniss lives with debilitating grief and guilt about the deaths for which she feels directly or indirectly responsible. She also feels intensely responsible for the capture of Peeta, her lover, by the Capitol and for the start of the war against the Capitol.

Katniss would not be alone in adolescent PTSD and depression. A recent study examined the effects of war on children and adolescents in Lebanon in terms of the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder (MDD), separation anxiety disorder (SAD), and overanxious disorder (OD) after war exposure. Of the students in the study, most that had a family member beaten, financial problems, a fear of being beaten, or witnessing of any war event had at least one of the above disorders. A year later, half of the students who witnessed a war event and three-quarters of the students who saw a close person injured still showed symptoms of one of the above disorders. The biggest indicator of PTSD and depression was witnessing a war event (Karam). Based on these results, Katniss’ emotions in Mockingjay accurately represent the effects of war on an adolescent. Katniss clearly has PTSD, re-experiencing the events that played out in both arenas, having nightmares every night about her experiences, and avoiding anything that reminds her of the Hunger Games. She also has severe depression, losing interest in life and scarcely functioning. Throughout my second reading of *Mockingjay*, I latched onto the emotional experience of Katniss, gaining a better understanding of emotions and traumatic disorders.

The third time that I read *Mockingjay*, I realized that Suzanne Collins had something more in mind than a girl with an arrow and severe depression when she wrote the novel. Always intended to be a trilogy, the first two books provided a solid basis for the reader to despise the Capitol and identify with Katniss, the series’ heroine. The brutality and systematic cruelty presented in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* fueled the reader’s hatred of the Capitol and the economic system of Panem. Carefully, Collins set the stage for a brutal war and overthrow of the current system. In an interview with the *School Library Journal*, Collins stated she “hopes *Mockingjay* speaks to the audience, that it makes them think and feel the things that [she] intended” (Margolis). Collins has elaborated that she wants to teach young people about the realities of war. She believes that in hiding the truth from young people, “we think we’re sheltering them, but what we’re doing is putting them at a disadvantage”
(Dominus). If war presents the central theme of *Mockingjay*, then Collins intends to portray certain messages about war to the reader. These concepts include war’s devastation and the role of media propaganda. Collins uses the symbolism and perspective of Katniss to show us these fundamental principles.

Collins uses Katniss in a symbolic way so that her experiences portray powerful themes. In interviews, Collins explains that Katniss functions in a similar manner to the mockingjay in the novels. Both represent creations that the Capitol never intended to exist. The mockingjay evolved from the Capitol’s carelessness in leaving their weapon, the talking jabberjays, in the wild after the rebels starting feeding the jabberjays false information. The jabberjays mated with wild mockingbirds, creating the unintended mockingjays. The birds continued to mock the Capitol with their prominence and their echoing songs. In fact, the birds became a symbol for rebellion against the Capitol because they developed without the Capitol’s intent or consent. Similarly, Katniss grew up in District 12, a place so poor that the Capitol let security measures slide because they did not think that they would ever need to worry about District 12. They believed it to be a place of people too poor and too hungry to rise up. Katniss arrived in the arena with survival skills, developed in the poorly restricted woods outside of District 12. Her strength and abilities represented something that should never have been created under the Capitol’s regime. Even worse for the Capitol, Katniss’ unique upbringing led to her independent thought that threatened the Capitol and its power (Margolis). In the development of Katniss, Collins created a character that represented life outside of the Capitol’s intentions. Katniss also represents the power of desperation. She hunted for food to provide for her family since childhood and perfectly symbolizes the risks and efforts that the truly desperate are willing to take. By creating Katniss, a hugely symbolic character, Collins put herself in a position to make powerful and symbolic statements about war.

Many readers reject the end of *Mockingjay* and find it horribly dark and depressing. The accurate portrayal of the devastation caused by war depresses them, especially through the painful lens of Katniss’ loss. Suzanne Collins carefully crafted this aspect of *Mockingjay* to make it apparent to the reader that the effects of war cannot be ignored. The death of Katniss’ precious sister Prim in a cruel firebombing, perfectly demonstrates the destructive potential of war. Even more so, the firebomb intentionally bombs children and then bombs again to kill the emergency medical personnel that come to the rescue. This weapon
preys on the sympathy of humans sending help after an attack. Such a weapon represents an indefensible level of cruelty. In the novel, Katniss remembers Gale trying to justify the creation of the bomb. “*Beetee and I have been following the same rule book President Snow used when he hijacked Peeta*” (Collins 357), referring to a method of torture that the Capitol used to distort Peeta’s memories and exploit his fears with a psychoactive substance. In his exclamation, Gale attempts to defend the progression that happens in war. One side makes cruel weaponry and the other side makes more extreme weapons to retaliate. The level of cruelty escalates gradually to the point where weapons are intended for obvious evil, such as the killing of innocent children in *Mockingjay*. The book, despite being marketed to children, does not sugarcoat war. When Collin’s own advisor questioned her choice of how to end the trilogy, Suzanne Collins explained, “This is not a fairytale; it’s a war, and in war, there are tragic losses that must be mourned” (Dominus). Certainly the losses of Prim, Finnick, and other key characters remind the reader of this universal truth.

The devastation of the war in *Mockingjay* extends beyond its pages in the reader’s mind, leading to real life events that draw heavily from the principles presented in the book series. Stephen Carter, a professor of law at Yale, explains this phenomenon during an interview on NPR. “Audiences look for comparisons between the fictitious world of Panem and the real world… things have not only leapt into the public imagination, but they are regular features of political argument” (Finding Ferguson and Other News Headlines In 'Mockingjay'). The prominence of the *Hunger Games* story in today’s world has allowed it to reach this level of significance. People are identifying with the devastation of the story’s war and the power exerted over the citizens of Panem, and they use the story’s symbols to present their feelings of resentment and oppression.

Ironically, the mass media that has spread the *Hunger Games* series around the world finds itself under attack in the subtleties of *Mockingjay*. Critics have noted that, in *Mockingjay*, one finds “indictment of the media… the camera is the enemy” (Dominus). Perhaps this perception of media stems from the role of media in today’s wars. Many have noted that mediatization has changed the quality of war. In the Vietnam War, the media helped turn the tide against military action and dramatically progressed the growing antiwar sentiment in the country. The media both reflected and advanced the growing antiwar sentiments. In the most recent wars, however, the government seems to have learned a valuable lesson about the power of
media. The media has been celebrated as a “Fourth Branch” of
military, and the State attempts to guide and control the media to keep
citizens in support of wars chosen by the government (Horten). The role
of media in modern war can be understood by the following statement,
“The best description of the current situation is ‘mediatization,’ where
political institutions increasingly are dependent on and shaped by mass
media but nevertheless remain in control of political processes and
functions” (Mazzoleni). The understanding of the media as a reflection
of political decisions resounds in Mockingjay. Rebel leader, Coin
cleverly uses propos and media coverage to provide information to the
districts and the Capitol about her war efforts, her intentions, and the
evils of the Capitol.

One example of this portrayal can be found when the rebels use a
media broadcast to divert the Capitol’s attention while they sent out a
mission to rescue Peeta and other victors from the Capitol. In the
broadcast, Katniss shares stories about Peeta and sends a message to
President Snow and the people of Panem. “‘If we declare our freedom,
the Capitol collapses. President Snow, thanks to you, I’m officially
declaring mine today’” (Collins 169). Her statement, as the Mockingjay,
resounds throughout the Districts to direct support towards the rebel
effort and towards freedom from the Capitol. Finnick, another famous
victor in the novels, uses the broadcast to expose secrets about President
Snow and other Capitol leaders. His treacherous stories about Snow’s
political ascension by killing off potential threats help to create negative public sentiment against President Snow,
even within the Capitol itself. This use of the media greatly influenced
public opinion about the war, and Coin carefully utilized it to further the
rebellion’s agenda.

The Capitol also used the media effectively. Early
in Mockingjay, the Capitol aired footage of Peeta supporting the Capitol
and warning against the dangers of war. This attempt to keep public
sentiment in favor of the Capitol was accompanied by an attempt to sway
Katniss away from accepting her role as the face of the rebellion. The
Capitol had Peeta challenge Katniss by asking, “do you really trust the
people you’re working with? Do you really know what’s going on?”
(Collins 116). The Capitol’s media programming made Katniss challenge
her role in the rebellion and reject the position of Mockingjay for a time
because of her doubts about the rebel leaders and fear of the ways that
the Capitol might hurt Peeta. Media played a crucial role
throughout Mockingjay in shaping the war and public sentiment.
Perhaps the portrayal of the media in *Mockingjay* can be partially attributed to the source of the novel’s ideas. Collins reportedly thought up the world of *The Hunger Games* “while channel surfing, when images of reality TV and the Iraq war melded in her head” (Jordan). Certainly, the media played an important role in furthering the United States government’s agenda throughout the war in Iraq. The growing trend of “informational warfare” has led to each government’s attempt to “dominate the communications efforts and to utilize the media to one’s own advantage” (Horten). Certainly, the Pentagon’s decision to embed reporters with coalition troops during the Iraq war reflects this intention. Coin uses Katniss and her team in the *Mockingjay* to perform the same action. She wants the unit to represent the war favorably to the country from the battlefield. Suzanne Collins carefully constructed the media’s influence in *Mockingjay* to demonstrate the power of media in modern war, but also to demonstrate its susceptibility to the influence of governmental powers.

After reading *Mockingjay* for the third time, I felt that I had gained a grasp on the media and devastation of war aspects of the book. One problem remained. I could not understand why Katniss chose to kill President Coin, the leader of the rebellion that she participated in, instead of President Snow, the obvious villain and leader of the Capital. I read the book again. I felt desperate to understand what Collins wanted to express about war and I sensed that my interpretation lacked something. My fourth reading of *Mockingjay* brought me a huge realization. The book does not intend to present a good vs. evil war with clear answers, as I had previously thought. Instead, Suzanne Collins provides a more accurate representation of war, one with a questionable regime change, tainted motives, and the corruption associated with power. Collins wants to bring just war to the reader’s attention. She claims, “The center of all this is the question of what makes a necessary war—at what point is it justifiable or unavoidable?” (Margolis). In *Mockingjay*, she writes several scenes that force the reader to consider that question.

The true intent of *Mockingjay* becomes clear at a few key points in the novel, largely after the death of Prim. Ironically, Katniss is first exposed to the ambiguity of the war by President Snow himself. When Katniss wanders into his quarters of the mansion, he quickly raises doubts about which side dropped the bomb on her sister, Prim. He presents the case that Coin may have issued the release of the parachute bombs herself in order to finish off the war and rally support, since citizens assumed the weapons were dropped by the Capitol because they dropped from a Capitol hovercraft. Snow suggests that Coin always
intended to let the Capitol and districts destroy each other with few losses to District 13, then, after the fighting, she planned to step in as the leader. His words present a compelling argument against Coin, and he finishes with the statement “I was watching you, Mockingjay. And you were watching me. I’m afraid we have both been played for fools” (Collins 357). In this scenario, Katniss inadvertently worked as Coin’s pawn. She rallied the people to support the rebellion as the Mockingjay and targeted President Snow as the enemy in the public eye. Coin knew the importance of Katniss’ support from the start. Once Katniss had time to reflect on her role in the war, she recalled something that her bodyguard and supporter, Boggs, had told her when she admitted that she had not thought about whom Snow’s successor would be. Boggs warned her, “If your immediate answer isn’t Coin, then you’re a threat. You’re the face of the rebellion. You may have more influence than any single person” (Collins 361). After her conversation with Snow, Katniss gradually realizes that she has, to a great extent, been played by Coin.

The final straw for Katniss comes when the remaining live victors are gathered to vote on whether or not to hold one last Hunger Games, solely for the most influential Capitol children. During the scene, Katniss wonders, “Was it like this then? Seventy-five years or so ago? Did a group of people sit around and cast their votes on initiating the Hunger Games?... Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change now” (Collins 370). This realization represents a turning point for Katniss. For the first time she becomes fully aware of the similarities between the recently established regime under Coin and the Capitol’s regime under Snow. Both leaders display a willingness to sacrifice innocent children in order to maintain the support of their constituents. When there is extreme suffering, victims demand retribution, and neither leader would sacrifice the support of their people, even in the face of another Hunger Games. Coin uses the same reasoning that the Capitol once used. She believes that “in the interest of maintaining a sustainable population” (Collins 368) she will sacrifice only a small number of children for the wrongs of an entire society. After this point in the novel, Katniss makes a crucial decision that signals to the reader the message that Suzanne Collins wants to portray about war. Instead of shooting President Snow with her only arrow, she kills President Coin instead. In this act, Katniss rejects the rebellion, tainted by Coin’s ulterior motives, which led to replacing the old regime with a new, similarly corrupt power. Katniss always intended to fight for the betterment of society, for equality, and for freedom. She could not support the unjust outcome of the war.
When Collins asks the question about war, “at what point is it justifiable or unavoidable?” (Margolis), she adds her position to a historical argument about the qualities of just war. Throughout the history of just war doctrine, two important aspects have been identified. War must have just reasons for being waged (jus ad bellum) and governments must act justly during war (jus in bello). In Mockingjay, the horrific actions of the Capitol certainly constitute a reason for war to be justly waged. The book cleverly presents, however, that modern war is often waged in unjust ways. The bombs that prey on human sympathies and kill Prim, the suggestion of instituting another Hunger Games to punish Capitol children, and the use of cruel tortures like electrically shocking prisoners in water and altering their memories using psychoactive substances provide examples of extreme and regrettable actions that occur in the climate of war throughout Mockingjay. Collins presents the dark side of war in a way that the reader can be receptive to, which holds utmost importance when considering her young audience. In this way, Collins adds her perspective to a long history of just war doctrine.

Few young adults in America understand the cruelties that currently happen in wars abroad. For example, President Obama, elected on a platform of change and peace, has not followed through on the promises he made during his Nobel Peace prize acceptance speech. He advocated, “I believe the United States must remain a standard bearer in the conduct of war. That is what makes us different from those whom we fight. That is the source of our strength” (Reeves, Joshua, and Matthew S. May). Still, halfway into Obama’s second term, he has not closed the horrific Guantanamo Bay, there is evidence that the United States continues to torture individuals suspected of terrorism, and the United States still fails to protect foreign civilians from violence as prescribed in the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. President Obama promised to do all of these things, but has ultimately fallen short.

Collins, however, did not create the war messages for the Hunger Games series during the recent Obama administration. She formulated the series during the Iraq war, and many people have drawn parallels to the administration of President George W. Bush. Bush initiated wars, including the war with Iraq, for reasons that may not have justified going to war. He believed that the potential threat of the Iraqi state possessing weapons of mass destruction justified war. Bush’s presidency has also been plagued by allegations of torture, due to his advocating for “enhanced interrogation techniques” (Keating). The
diversity of political situations applicable to *Mockingjay* show that Suzanne Collins has succeeded in creating a model for war that transcends any specific political situation. People look at the story as a representation of war in their own cultures and they resonate in protest. For example, protesters in both Thailand and Ukraine have been seen flashing a symbol of rebellion from the Hunger Games trilogy, the three-fingered salute, to protest their own political climates. As the series has grown in popularity, it has become a worldwide symbol for unjustified military actions and the necessity of morality in war.

*Mockingjay* accurately demonstrates the ability of literature to lend itself to multiple interpretations, crossing barriers between different social and cultural spheres. The book itself can be understood solely as a gripping story or in the contexts of emotional trauma, the mediatization of society, the war climate in the United States, and other realms. Ultimately, the various interpretations add more value to the book than its intended interpretation by Suzanne Collins could possibly account for. Different understandings overlap and compete with each other so that truth resounds across “a multiplicity of interpretive frameworks” (Atkinson, Becky, and Roland Mitchell). The power of the different frameworks for interpretations lies in their ability to both dissent and work together to form meaning. Furthermore, people with cultural differences can be reconciled to the text through their unique perspectives. When readers develop the ability to identify their worldview through the interpretation of literature, it enables them to understand other worldviews in a non-confrontational way. Even a single reader, like myself, can gain a broader understanding of the world by rereading the same book in light of different contexts. Suzanne Collins writes a powerful story in *Mockingjay*, and the themes of the story can extend themselves through readers’ responses to lead to greater cultural understandings and a broader worldview, creating the true power of literature.
Works Cited


Dystopia Representing the Present: *Handmaid’s Tale*

Erin Langer

Margaret Atwood’s novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, is a pivotal novel in the advent of women’s literature. Her novel is also instrumental in the construction of dystopian literature, in this case a novel about a hypothetical future in which both women and men are oppressed by a mysterious totalitarian regime after a civil war that endangered the lives of all citizens and drastically reduced the population. As a result of this depleted population, there is a high premium placed on female and male fertility, reducing sex and love to acts of civil necessity and completely eliminating any sexual outlet that is considered unrelated to procreation. On the surface, this novel seems only dystopian in its relation to the subjugation and oppression of women, but with closer analysis, it becomes dystopian also in its treatment of men. Because, though women are treated as slaves, men are also used as puppets for their reproductive abilities and objectified for the sperm they contribute to society. By eliminating its citizens’ access to a healthy sexual outlet and forbidding relationships that could potentially inhibit the progress of Gilead (i.e. relationships between men and women that are not sexual in nature or women’s friendships), the society becomes culturally repressed and resembles that of a militaristic society that is strictly focused on conformity and control. In this way, Atwood adequately establishes a dystopian society whose foundation is built upon fear and control, not only of women but men as well, who are just as helpless in their role as sperm donors as their female counterparts in their role as human incubators.

Further analysis of this novel will present different forms of societal manipulation and oppression for both the women and men, demonstrating that if women lose their agency and control of their own bodies, they will no longer be individuals, but a compilation of objects to be manipulated by both men and society. This issue was prevalent in Atwood’s time as women fought for what little power they could maintain by grappling with controversial issues like abortion and birth control, issues women are still struggling with today. Therefore, the dystopian society that Atwood presents in her novel is not just a hypothetical, far-flung world, but a representation of a future that looms if women truly lose their will to fight.
Atwood wrote the novel in 1986, a time that was radically evolving as far as the rights’ of women were concerned. Though that sounds inspiring and Atwood’s novel should have definitely incited the improvement of women’s reproductive rights, little has changed and the conditions have not vastly improved since the time of Atwood’s writing for women’s rights. Hannah Heinsekehr, a female blogger, writes about how the more things change, the more they stays the same for the plight of the modern day woman: “Over the course of the past year [2012], debates raged about contraception, Planned Parenthood and all sorts of other reproductive topics. In short, women’s wombs were front and center as conversation pieces nationwide” (Heinsekehr). She has a valid point because for as long as anyone can remember, the most controversial issue that permeates both politics and social discourse is women’s rights. Whether it is regarding abortion, parental rights, or birth control, it seems like a woman’s womb is not necessarily hers to own or to control, but society’s to dictate. In the article, “Millennial Mothers: Reproduction, Race, and Ethnicity in Feminist Dystopian Fiction,” Dorrian Cirrone discusses commonalities in the genre of feminist dystopian fiction: “In all the novels I discuss, we find women either encouraged, forced, or fooled into complying with reproductive and mothering practices that ensure a desirable population within a particular nation or community” (Cirrone 3). According to this genre, the worst fears that feminism faces on a regular basis is that of a woman’s rights being surrendered or taken by a man or a ruling government, and woman’s rights are so often personified with their bodies and seen as synonymous to reproductive rights. In the novel, abortion is not only a sin; it is considered a waste that is punishable by death. Offred sees men hanging as examples, doctors by the looks of it and she speaks about the abortions they aided: “A drawing of a human fetus. They were doctors, then, in the time before, when such things were legal. Angel makers…These men, we’ve been told, are like war criminals” (Atwood 33). Not only are women in this time being persecuted for even considering abortion, but men who helped commit abortion are retroactively punished for the help they provided to women who sought their medical services. In this way, the dystopia that Atwood creates is not only dangerous for women, but for their male allies as well.

Despite the fact that men of this society are granted the pinnacle of the hierarchy (underneath the ambiguous governmental force), they do not have as much clout as one would believe. They are granted a role of power over women and are allowed to possess them and use them for whatever they require, but men are also strictly monitored for treason and
treacherous behavior: “They’ve been turned up now by informants; ex-nurses perhaps, or a pair of them, since evidence from a single woman is no longer admissible; or another doctor, hoping to save his own skin; or at random in some desperate bid for safety” (Atwood 33). It is not only the women who are watched, but men as well. In addition to this betrayal of privacy, it is not just the government watching them, but other citizens. They are all at risk of turning on each other, which is why no one rebels or acts freely – they do not know who is watching. As has been stated before, the men’s only true merit (the one thing they bring to the table, as it were) is their sperm. Offred once states that she feels she is a vessel, just a walking uterus, but men must feel the same. Consider the Ceremony, the rigorous, impersonal nature of it: “This is not recreation, even for the Commander. This is serious business. The Commander, too, is doing his duty” (95). All signs of sex have been eliminated from this society. There is no masturbation, sex, or pornography. Men have no outlet except this one time a month, for business purposes, to relieve their sexual frustrations. Because of this, men are also being used for only their bodies. Imagine the frustration that can cause: the idea that men are the supreme beings in this world, but they are being observed with just as much scrutiny and being used for their reproductive abilities just like women. At the beginning of this regime, Offred’s husband Luke states: “You know I’ll always take care of you” (179) when Offred tells him he will get all the money. She believes he is patronizing to her new role beneath him, but a reader can postulate that they are both equally subverted. Though the male appears at the head of this society, he is just as powerless as the female. He cannot do a thing to change his own circumstances, increase his pleasure, or even stake a claim in what position or role in society he wishes to hold. In this way, both man and woman are incapable of wielding power, and the power that man wields is superficial at best.

Despite this misconception of power, Sonia Chadha, in her article “Women as metaphor in Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale,” demonizes the position of men and their role in the subversive patriarchy of Gilead: “Man is considered as an individual human being…the idea behind this oppressive structure is that of power. And ‘power’—physical, mental, intellectual, political, as well as spiritual—lies exclusively in the hands of man” (Chadha 29). Though men are the ones at the head of this political regime, the men who are featured in this novel (the Commander especially) are mere figureheads with the illusion of power in their time. It is Chadha’s supposition that men are the perpetrators of all of the trauma and suffering that the characters
experience in this novel, but the men in this novel are mere instruments in the reproductive process and thus are just as powerless as women. Atwood would also disparage Chadha for her assumptions about the singularity of victims of this regime because Offred is very perceptive about the Commander’s troubles with power that she witnesses during the Ceremony: “We’re all watching him. It’s the one thing we can really do, and it is not for nothing; if he were to falter, fail, or die, what would become of us…Still, it must be hell, to be a man, like that. It must be just fine. It must be hell. It must be very silent” (Atwood 88). Even Offred cannot determine her feelings towards the Commander because she cannot gauge completely how much of a victim and how much of an aggressor he is. She is astute enough to notice that the man has just enough of a burden that is bestowed on his shoulders as the woman does of producing a child. The difference being that the blame is placed solely on her infertility than on his potential sterility. By noting that the pressure cannot be entirely fair to the man, Atwood demonstrates that no one is completely safe in this regime. Since no one in this society is valued as an individual. Consider that Offred is offered macabre advice from her Aunt Lydia that she is not completely necessary as a whole: “Remember, for our purposes, your feet and your hands are not essential” (Atwood 91). Certainly if women are objectified so as to the point that their bodies as a whole are not necessary, no one’s position in society is completely secure.

Nothing about Gilead is completely secure though. Rebellions are quashed before they are borne because the system as a whole is unstable. Were one revolt to begin, the transition generation that Atwood describes would gain momentum. The transition generation being the generation that existed at the time of the regime’s genesis and now has to adjust and assimilate into the new society. Seeing as she cannot work for a living, own property, or maintain funds, she is forced into this life of subservience. And since she came from an empowered generation of women, this abrupt change is all the more dramatic to her – even to the point of being considered emotional and economic trauma. Due to the fact that Offred is of the generation that was not raised with this regime, she undergoes countless tests of obedience and she is conditioned to act and think a certain way.

Joseph Porfert discusses this transitional generation and the challenges they are faced with in his article “Hell on Earth: The Feminist Dystopia of The Handmaid’s Tale,” discussing this abrupt adjustment: “As part of the transitional generation, they are stuck in a conflict between the comfortable memories of their past lives and the forced
beliefs of their present situation” (Porfert 8). Her rights are denied her and she is employed as a handmaid, which is the equivalent of a sexual servant, but due to her place in between two different governments, Offred has the unbearable torture of remembering what it was like for her to be free and in control of her own means. She is abused (in the aforementioned ways) by her society, the wife of the household, the aunts running the camps, and even the Commander. In the commander’s case, that expectation is to be a virile man who reproduces for the good of his society: “[Sex] is not recreation, even for the Commander. This is serious business. The Commander, too, is doing his duty” (Atwood 95). His obligation is to reproduce for Gilead and the only way to accomplish that goal is to use Offred in the only capacity her society views her worthy of: a vessel.

This society is even harder to escape because it is policed by fellow citizens. The paranoia and institutionalized fear of authority and others is what completely prevents a rebellion. Since they are all unable to communicate without fear of retribution or being sold out, they cannot convene and mount a defense against their dictating government. Offred describes the overwhelming feeling of confusion at the beginning of the Republic of Gilead’s reign: “People stayed at home at night, watching television, looking for some direction” (174). As she goes on to describe the eventual loss of women’s rights, Offred and the women around her are in a sort of daze and even feel as if they had some hand in their new position: “We looked at one another’s faces and saw dismay, and a certain shame, as if we’d been caught doing something we shouldn’t” (Atwood 177). The fact that the women who have just recently been subverted have nothing to say to each other is astounding. By all rights, they should be outraged and confused and on the verge of rebelling, but there is this nagging sensation, this whisper of a thought that leads them to think they are at fault. Because of this, they do not fight back: “When we [neighbors] met…we were careful to exchange nothing more than the ordinary greetings. Nobody wanted to be reported, for disloyalty” (Atwood 180). This would be the beginning of a long reign of fear and submission.

As a result of this fear, women cannot trust each other and thus are not inclined to help one another. It becomes about sole, individual survival. This situation is most likely to breed resentment, but instead of resenting the governing figures, the women are indoctrinated to turn against each other. Offred is constantly afraid of other women watching her and they then become their own worst enemy. While Serena Joy and Offred are jealous of each other, the system is continually perpetrated
and rebellion is avoided simply because the women of this society view each other as rivals. The only time they are united is at the Salvaging: “Both hands on it, the rope hairy, sticky with tar in the hot sun, then placed my hand on my heart to show my unity with the Salvagers and my consent, and my complicity in the death of this woman” (Atwood 276). The only time women are united, handmaids and wives alike, is when they symbolically hang another woman for an infraction against the government. No matter the crime, though crimes are no longer divulged, this condemned woman is made the symbol of every slight against the ruling powers of Gilead. It is so easy for Offred to turn against Serena Joy and view her as her oppressor, despite that Serena Joy is equally as oppressed and significantly less valued. Erica Joan Dymond points out in her article, “Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale,” that the handmaid’s role is somewhat glorified in comparison to that of the wife’s and that Atwood has sub-textual slights against the role of the wife:

Though the “cosmetic factor” triggers this comparison, similarities reside deeper than skin” both the Nazi mistress and Serena Joy live amid an apocalyptic setting; both seem detached from the enveloping destruction; both have genocidal lovers; and both own pearls. Perhaps all-too-consciously, Offred’s meshing of these two women emphasizes her agonizing awareness that she is nothing more than the possession of a genuinely deplorable woman – an object. (Dymond 182)

Dymond is apt to point out what feminism has been battling for ages, the indoctrinated habit of women blaming other women, turning on other women, and perpetuating the cycles of abuse that women endure because they know no other way. If women continue this way, as Dymond and Profert illustrate, feminism is waging a losing war because the abuse cannot be systematically fought if women themselves are the abusers as well as the abused.

Atwood establishes this dystopian society as a far-fetched future, something that seems implausible, but she does this to lure her reader into a false sense of security. Under the guise of dystopian fiction, Atwood allows herself a perfect channel through which to discuss feminist discourse. By choosing such a setting, she opens up the discussion about women’s rights in a futuristic society, but also in her modern time. W.J. Keith in his article “Apocalyptic Imaginations: Notes on Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale and Findley's Not Wanted on the Voyage” discusses how apocalyptic fiction is an ideal setting to discuss
controversial social issues and why Atwood chooses to do so through her manipulation of the satirical genre: “The past (our now) was terrible; the present (our future) is terrible in a different way. The very suggestion that Gilead represents a possible evolution from the North America of the 1980s must now be acknowledged as a crushing indictment of our own times” (Keith 125). Therefore, Atwood is no longer just critiquing the larger issue of women’s rights, but many more issues that expose duplicity and hypocrisy on a larger social scale. To Keith, Atwood’s novel is an implication of times to come, not just a warning of how things might be. Inevitably, if this path that Atwood carves out of governmental control and supreme influence is followed, the citizens will not be able to trust its own governing body, let alone anyone else that surrounds them. In the article, Keith goes onto say that Atwood calls the legitimacy of this future into question even outside the realm of fiction in a slightly tongue-in-cheek way: “The title itself emphasizes the fictive quality of the book -- it is specifically presented as a tale… the final chapter presented as a scholarly addendum entitled "Historical Notes on The Handmaid's Tale" may be recognized as inevitable. In a literal sense, all is story” (Keith 126). Keith suggests that Atwood makes the eerie similarity of these women’s plights with the plight of the modern woman more comfortable to the reader by filling the novel with subtle reminders that all is fiction, all is merely a story. Even though this outlet is a personal narrative (that can be called into question, according to Keith), it still does not undermine the significance of the questions it arises and the discussion it provokes on a serious, socially aware level.

Thus, the aim of a successful dystopian novel should not be to predict the future accurately, but to make certain points about the present through an implausible future. In the article “Politics of The Handmaid’s Tale,” Gorman Beauchamp discusses whether or not Atwood successfully meets this standard:

We may safely conclude that Atwood has no desire to prove an oracle; assuming, however, that her purpose is more than merely to entertain, the minatory force of her tale will depend on the effectiveness of her extrapolation from real and present dangers in today’s society. Trueness to the future is thus not the crucial criterion of a dystopian vision, but trueness to the present, paradoxically, is. (Beauchamp 13)

To Beauchamp, the true test of Atwood’s effectiveness is not what Atwood creates in the world of Gilead, but what the world of Gilead
exposes about the truth Atwood views in her contemporary society. Beauchamp believes that Atwood’s novel possesses far too many flaws to be successful in this endeavor, but there is a significant gap in her own perception of the novel. The crowning downfall of the novel that Beauchamp observes is the lack of righteous zealots in this society – how no one in fact believes in the zealous religious regime: “Put baldly, with the exception of the Aunts, who rank low in the revolutionary hierarchy, no one in Gilead seems to be a true believer in its revolution: it is a fanatical regime without the fanatics” (Beauchamp 20). Beauchamp is right in that no character in the novel is a true believer in the regime, but there is valid reason for that which Atwood presents sufficiently. Consider that everyone in Gilead is under surveillance from both its government and its fellow citizens. Not to mention the fact that this is a new, aggressive government that has implemented itself in a position of power by taking advantage of a socially vulnerable nation and utilizing violence and fear to position themselves in power. No one, even those who teach like the aunts, believes in this regime because it is too new and they are too afraid to endorse it fully. Women exist in fear and therefore cannot invest themselves in a faith based upon dread: “He asks, are you happy’…Ofglen says nothing. There is a silence. But sometimes it’s as dangerous not to speak. ‘Yes, we are very happy,’ I murmur. I have to say something. What else can I say” (Atwood 29).

Elisabeth Hansot, in her article "Selves, Survival, And Resistance in The Handmaid's Tale," discusses the primary plight of the dystopian genre which is to make the extremity to which over-zealous governments deal with conflict and how an author has to find the right balance between horrific and realistic: “Dystopias are noted for the obsessiveness, if not the finesse, with which their elites attempt to eliminate dissent. The sheer exigencies of survival might be thought to preclude resistance” (Hansot 56). Hansot discusses in her article that if survival appears to be so outside of a character’s grasp that they will never fight for it, then survival’s importance is nullified because of its lack of attainability. So, according to Hansot, the dilemma that writers of dystopian fiction grapple with is writing a terrifying but not completely infallible enemy. Else the protagonist will not feel courageous or able enough to fight for the will to survive, reducing the meaning of surviving (and thriving) in the world. The concluding line of the novel (before the
Historical Notes) exemplifies Hansot’s idea of the glimmering light of hope in an eternally dark world: “And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light” (Atwood 295). Atwood leaves Offred’s true fate untold, from her perspective anyway, but this last line inspires the reader to believe that escaping was not as impossible as Atwood made it seem throughout the novel and because of her manipulation of narrative and language. In the article “Post-modernism and Feminist Science Fiction,” Robin Roberts discusses the advent of feminist science fiction in the 1980s and the common tropes that are often explored therein: “Many works of feminist science fiction in the 1980s focus on language and reveal a post-structuralism sensibility to the power and contradiction inherent in communication. Most significantly, they criticize the use of language for creating hierarchy and domination” (Roberts 138). Atwood demonstrates this concept through the creation of the female and male class system, the hierarchy being ingrained in both the language and socioeconomic system. The contradiction that Roberts discusses is realized in the novel because power is utilized by the totalitarian government with a minimal lack of direct communication to the public – at least that is how Offred perceives it.

Atwood’s creation of Gilead was not a forecast for feminist’s doomed future, but a way of warning feminists what could happen if they were to succumb to the patriarchal ruling of the time. The dystopian setting is a perfect platform for this because it is a natural blend of what could happen and what Atwood believed was already happening. This totalitarian environment is not only victimizing and oppressing women, but also the men controlling them. When Gilead represses the sexual nature of both women and men and makes sex and childbearing a business transaction instead of intimate or personal, the society becomes static and emotionless. These tensions and resentments rise, especially with persecution being threatened at every opportunity. By placing these events (women being controlled by a patriarchal regime, losing their independence, being denied control of their own bodies, and men being used as faceless sperm suppliers) in a harsh and futuristic society, Atwood was able to engage with an audience and with those that would have already discussed these issues time and time again. When placed in a fresh (albeit fictitious) setting, feminists and their supporters and their opposition are able to see the issues at hand in an objective light – by observing what the totalitarian government of Offred’s time did wrong and hopefully shedding light on the extent of the dehumanizing and objectifying nature utilized when discussing women and women’s rights. The conclusion of the novel projects the feeling of uncertainty that
Atwood has regarding the future of women in contemporary society, “Any questions” (Atwood 311). Instead of neatly tying up Offred’s ending in a prosaic way, the ending is open to interpretation and ambiguous intentionally. Instead of writing a scornful polemic that would have been discredited and undermined immediately, Atwood created a thoughtful piece of dystopian fiction that at least allowed for potential discourse for decades to come – because these arguments are still being had today, and the battles that feminists and all women wage for the right to control their own bodies are not being settled anytime soon.
Works Cited


Islamic Feminism: A Study

Rebecca LaVictoire

The hijab has long been a controversial symbol around the world; to some it represents the oppression and subordination of women in predominantly Muslim areas, and in other cases, it is a symbol of cultural identity and solidarity. Similarly, Islamic feminism and its significance is equally controversial. The status of women in Muslim societies is inferior, as demonstrated by a gap in literacy rates, a sex ratio that favors men, a lack of participation in government, and general disempowerment (Fish 2002). Chronic gender inequality in the region, particularly the absence of women from the workforce, has limited development economically as well as socially (Moghadam 2008). These statistics indicate the necessity and lack of homegrown social movements in this region that have effectively pushed for gender equality. Of the contemporary secular feminist movements that do exist, many are frequently accused of westernization and importing ideas from Western culture (Weir 2013). Works by Middle Eastern feminist scholars in the 1990s, such as Lila Abu-Lighod and Laila Ahmed, rightly wrote to remove the Euro-centrist idea of liberal Universalist feminism as the feminism and advocated multi-faceted feminisms (Al-Mahdi 2010). Hence, the potential effectiveness of Islamic feminism, a feminism that would be rooted in Islamic culture and heritage and could potentially unite women in the Middle East in a common movement. However, there are many feminisms of the Middle East and North Africa and it is important the cultural relativism does not water down the standards of a women’s movement until it no longer focuses on the needs and injustices of women of a particular culture and time. The debate continues on the merits and weaknesses of Islamic feminism and its potential benefits for Muslim women. This is the topic addressed in this paper: what are the strengths and issues of Islamic feminism, and how is Islamic feminism defined? Could Islamic feminism lead to the agency and mobilization of women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and ultimately to a promotion of the status of women?

Introduction

Contemporary feminisms in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a predominantly Muslim region, are a complex product and necessitate contextualization. Gender-based mobilization in the MENA region is not an unheard of or new concept. Across MENA, state-based
women’s organizations, women’s rights non-governmental organizations, and much smaller independent women’s organizations exist and primarily act through policy-oriented research, meetings, some education, and public advocacy (Gheytanchi and Moghadam 2014). Even before Qasim Amin’s *The Liberation of Women* in 1899, feminist ideas had some traction in the region (Baden 1992). However, feminism gained prominence in Egypt in the twentieth century in relation to modernism and state-building ideologies. Women, particularly of elite classes, organized around Huda Sha’rawi in the 1920’s to form the Egyptian Feminist Union. The Egyptian Feminist Union advocated independence from Britain, but favored Western ideals and culture (Cleveland 2013). Their demonstration of removing the hijab in 1923 reveals the secular nature of the organization. This movement was able to make small gains that primarily affected upper and upper-middle class women (Baden 1992).

Up until the 1970s, scholars frequently saw religion as a hindrance to modernization. However due to disillusionment with colonialism, nationalism, and Pan-Arabism especially after the War of 1967, Muslims began a search for identity. The Islamist movement gained a significant amount of traction in the public sphere. It is a popular movement away from secularization and towards the Islamization of the state, and is important for understanding the current feminisms in the MENA region. Political Islamist groups generally advocate a distance from Western ideas and a return to Muslim cultural heritage. Currently almost every country in the region has some Islamist movement or political party with a significant amount of followers. After the Arab Uprisings in 2010 and 2011, many Islamist groups increased power or influence in democratic elections, as in Egypt and Tunisia. These groups share a base ideology, but vary from country to country and from radical to conservative. It is important to note that these groups do not all promote a return to a literal values and traditions of the time of the Quran, and instead are often innovative and well contextualized within their particular time and place (Baden 1992). The advent of political Islam naturally has affected women’s movements, particularly by enabling a questioning of the “modernity vs. tradition dichotomy” and the previously common belief that religion is a hindrance to progress.

**Islamic Feminism Defined and Contextualized**

Islamic feminism refers to the reinterpretation of Islamic texts through a feminist lens, which believes that the Quran dictated fundamental equality, and employs *ijtihad* and *tafsir*, as well as modern
tools from a diverse array of analytical subjects, like anthropology, sociology, and linguistics (Al-Sharmani 2014, Moghadam 2008, ahmadi). Here I use Margot Badran’s definition, “a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm,” (Badran, cited in Ahmadi 2006). It is a continuous rethinking of Islam and its sacred texts, and the effects of those texts upon society and the legal rights of women. Islamic feminists do not question the divinity of the Quran but instead question the context out of which interpretation that has been assumed divine arises. They believe that the Sharia was codified as such due to the prevalence of patriarchy at the time, not because the Quran determined it. For instance, scholar Omana Abou-Bakr unpacks Islamic text instead of considering the Quran, the Hadith, and various fundamental works of exegesis as a single entity that is indivisible and immutable (Al-Sharmani 2014). Abou-Bakr methodologically studies the verses of the Quran and the historical interpretations, and attempts to understand the process that formed the patriarchal understanding of particular passages of the Quran. She ultimately shows the gap between the Quranic presentation of, for instance, qiwamah (the husband’s role in relation to the wife, pertaining in particular to guardianship, protection, and authority) and the historical exegesis and production of the concept (Al-Sharmani 2014). Not only does this allow for new interpretations of religious doctrine previously believed immutable, it presents a framework for feminist interpretation of Islamic texts, without violating the sanctity of the Quran. As Haideh Moghissi (2011) so eloquently puts it,

“They are Muslim women who, while embracing Islamic ideology as liberating, are genuinely trying to promote women's rights within the confines of Islamic Sharia by proposing a more moderate and more female-centered interpretation of the Koran.”

Islamic feminism has multiple trajectories across multiple countries. Morocco, Egypt, and Iran are examples of the variety of the contexts that have given rise to Islamic feminism, and the different methods by which gender equality is pursued within an Islamic framework. Contemporary Egyptian feminism is by no means a resolved issue, and is currently awash in a debate over the essential tenets of gender-based mobilization in the country. Rabab Al-Mahdi analyzes the causes of the swift failure of a women’s movement in Egypt in 2005, called Women for Democracy (2010). She asks why there is a lack of a broadly supported women’s movement in Egypt, even in times of
frequent protest that women are a significant part of, and despite a recent ‘feminization of the public sphere’ due to new information and communication technologies (Moghadam and Sadiqi, 2006, cited in Gheytanchi and Moghadam, 2014). Al-Mahdi addresses the assumption that political Islam impedes a push for gender equality, and ultimately concludes that this is not the case. Instead she finds that a lack of dialogue among the variety of feminisms, and an attempt to homogenize Egyptian women as opposed to recognizing and appealing to their diversity, and finally the inability of secular feminist to recognize their “volatile” position as “post-colonial subjects,” and therefore engage Islamists, led to a vague and uninspiring goal for the movement, one that did not appeal to the vast majority of Egyptians (Rabab 2010). Rabab appeals to feminists in Egypt to not see differences as dichotomies or opposition.

Sadiqi traces the historical roots and accomplishments of feminisms in Morocco (2006). She characterizes liberal Moroccan feminists of the 1970s as liberal in that they chose to present their arguments for emancipation in terms of liberalizing society and did not focus on religious texts. However, they did not ever denounce Islam as a religion. Instead liberal feminist scholars recognized the role of women in the evolving discourse of Islamization in Morocco, as well as the use of Islam to legitimize patriarchy. This was done through the establishment of distinct spheres in which either sex rightfully exists: men to the public and women to the private (Sadiqi 2006). Moroccan feminists critiqued this dichotomy and politicized the private sphere, and by focusing on language rights, enabled the gradual movement of women’s issues into the public sphere. In the mid-1990’s a socialist government and the implementation of quotas to ensure women in the legislative body accelerated reform of Family Law in Morocco. Contemporary feminists in Morocco are unique in that “one cannot really speak of Islamist and liberal feminists as distinct categories,” (Sadiqi 2006). Sadiqi provides the example of liberal feminists wearing the veil and Islamist feminists promoting liberal ideas. This is due primarily to liberal Moroccan feminists never questioning Islam as an essential part of Moroccan society, and Islamists never perceiving liberal feminists as a threat to Islam. The lack of conflict between the two indicates a possible mode of operation for feminists in other countries within the region who are attempting to reconcile these groups, where this peace is far from the norm, and discourse is extremely heated. So far, the feminisms in Morocco have achieved the most success of any country in MENA, with the reform of family law in 2004 (Moghadam 2008). Family law in
Morocco is a codification of the patriarchal limitations to women in the public sphere, and its reform is essential to the advancement of gender equality in Morocco and the region.

In Iran, many believed that women would have completely disappeared from public life after the Islamic Revolution of 1979; however, this has not occurred, nor has the role of women in public life diminished significantly. There are an increasing number of women’s organizations and institutions, as well as journals being published in Iran. Notably is the journal Zanan, which openly declares itself feminist and has become an essential source for understanding Iranian Islamic feminism. What makes Iranian Islamic feminism unique from Moroccan or Egyptian is its Shiite discourse, and the inclusion of ideology from Dr. Abdul Karim Sorouch (Ahmadi 2006). Sorouch is by no means an advocate of gender equality, but his main thesis has had a profound effect on the development of feminist thought in Iran, particularly the writers of Zanan. Sorouch contends that there are essentials (zati) in Islam and accidentals (arazi). The former cannot be changed, whereas the latter are products of the time and place of Mohammed (Ahmadi 2006). The implications of this are that “the Shari‘a does not put forward immutable answers to predicaments of each historical moment,” and therefore such laws can become subjects of debate and discussion (Ahmadi 2006). This now gives Iranian Islamic feminists room to radically reinterpret the Qur’an.

Another unique aspect of Iranian feminism is the close tie established with Western feminism. Where most Islamic feminist movements distance themselves from Western feminism to avoid accusations of imported ideology or colonialism, Zanan, among others, has emphasized similarities and differences between the two types of feminism. This has had a significant impact in helping to overcome Western phobia and “reactionary gender conservatism,” (Ahmadi 2006). This inclusionary principle could aid in eliminating false dichotomies between east and west, modernism and tradition, and Muslim and feminist. In a similar vein, Iranian Islamic feminists frequently espouse postmodern positions, including a rejection of an essential nature of women, and a multitude of perspectives, roles, truths and realities. This allows for their inclusion of and cooperation with multiple forms of feminism, and for a questioning and reinterpretation of language used, for instance in the constitution of the Islamic Republic (Ahmadi 2006). Ahmadi draws the conclusion that much of the openness of Iranian Islamic feminists to Western feminism is due to the lack of a history of colonialism in the country, so there is less of a negative reaction (2006).
However, it is important to note that Ahmadi’s article was written before the Green Movement after which most opposition groups were pushed underground and journals like Zanan were closed (although it was relaunched in 2014!).

Critiques of Islamic Feminism

There are valid critiques to Islamic feminism. Haideh Moghissi is one of the most active and resonant activists questioning the movement. Her first issue is the use of the all-encompassing phrase “Muslim women” that is frequently employed to describe who will benefit from Islamic feminism. Muslim women are not homogenous and vary in worldview, religious practice, and belief in the applicability of Sharia law. Her second and more significant criticism is that Islamic feminism is too often touted as a sort of last hope for women in MENA, and in reaction to a rejection of Western feminism, is seen as the only authentic representation of feminism in MENA (Moghissi 2011). Moghissi believes this is a defeatist view of what is possible for women in the region, and that it rejects the possibility of a grassroots secular feminist movement in the region, instead labeling in secular feminism as ‘western.’ Finally, Moghissi advocates a “serious dialogue” between feminists of all types in the region about the limitations and possibilities of every movement (2011).

Conclusion

Islamic feminism is a diverse, complicated, and relatively new transformative ideology for addressing gender-based injustice in predominantly Muslim societies. Due to the discursive nature of Islam, Islamic feminists have been able to reinterpret Islamic traditions in a new egalitarian way, which they believe is at the heart of the Quran. There are critiques of the movement, and in countries like Egypt, it has been difficult to reconcile secular and Islamic feminisms. The case of Egypt, Morocco, and Iran all provide important evidence for understanding the contexts and variations of Islamic feminism in the region, but also the necessity of open dialogue between various feminisms, including secular ones. This discourse is essential for any success in reformation of a legal system based in patriarchy, and eventually a social shift towards gender equality, as seen in Morocco.

However, my hopes for Islamic feminism are high, despite criticism. The studies of Iran, Morocco, and Egypt have common threads for success that I believe can be imitated in other countries within the region. In particular, the importance of active discourse among all types
of feminists, and the importance of continuous and relevant ijtihad. Moghissi’s critiques do not address the methodology or basis of Islamic feminism, and do not do the movement any deadly blows. Instead Moghissi is advocating a stronger, more collaborative effort among female activists to discuss and debate various feminisms. I believe with the continuing rise of political Islam and the accessibility of information and communication technologies, this necessary discourse will become easier and more accessible as well, eventually leading to the broadly based movement for gender justice that so many scholars have been waiting for in MENA.


Factors Impacting Political Party Affiliation

Eleanor Nason

INTRODUCTION

Our nation relies on politics to make decisions. Policy makers decide everything from education standards to acceptable forms of leisure to the means by which we can protect ourselves. These policy makers are elected by the people. With the amount of power these policy makers hold, it is important to understand why they are chosen. In the state of Oklahoma, there are over two million registered voters in one of three categories: Democrat, Independent, or Republican. These party affiliations are tremendously important as they impact who gets put into power.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is naïve to assume that all people align themselves with particular parties because of well-reasoned arguments with no bias whatsoever. Conventional wisdom suggests that culture, education, and income are the most influential biases to political party affiliation. These biases will be investigated below.

Culture

Many would assume that as one ages, he or she would identify more with the conservative Republican Party. Cutler (1969), however, found through cohort analysis this assumption to be incorrect. In fact, there was no linear relationship found between age and Republican Party affiliation through this analysis. In contrast, Fisher (2008) found that young Americans are systematically more liberal than the general population and increasingly so.

A large cultural impact is due to race. A common assumption regarding race is that minorities tend to be left leaning in their political support. Taylor (2011) found that the two most highly-polarized racial groups in the 2008 Presidential election were Black Americans and White Americans. In every election since 1968, Republican candidates have experienced robust support among White votes, far more so than
Democratic candidates. Additionally, the four Democratic candidates who have won the Presidential election since 1968 owe their victory to the near-unanimous support from African-American voters.

Another intriguing concept when studying culture in regards to political party affiliation is the regional impacts. Specifically this is shown in Southeast Oklahoma, home to a Democratic stronghold referred to as Little Dixie. Although the term rarely describes a precise geographical boundary, the counties included in this variable for the purpose of this research are those listed in the Oklahoma Historical Society’s Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture. These counties include Bryan, Carter, Choctaw, Coal, Cotton, Garvin, Haskell, Hughes, Jefferson, Johnston, Latimer, Le Flore, Love, McCurtain, Marshall, Murray, Pittsburg, Pontotoc, Pushmataha, Seminole, and Stephens.

These counties are consistently robust Democratic supporters. The median of Democratic registrations as a percentage of total registrations by county is 55.14% statewide. This number drops to 46.76% when Little Dixie counties are excluded. The median of Democrat registrations for Little Dixie counties is 73.39%. This is likely due to the culture of the region dating back to the 1830s that took shape as the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes settled in the district. These tribes allied strongly with the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Additionally, these counties have a significantly lower median income than the rest of the state. The average median income in Little Dixie counties is $35,099.86, which is nearly four thousand dollars lower than the statewide average of $39,024.87. When the Little Dixie counties are excluded from the calculation, the statewide average becomes $40,496.75.

This suggests that the many facets of culture have a clear and substantial impact on political party affiliation, and should be further studied. This research will focus on the racial and regional aspects of cultural influences on political party affiliation.

**Education**

Another influencer of party affiliation is education. This influence begins with the professor. While not contesting the claim that professors, on the whole, are incredibly liberal, Gross and Simmons (2007), found a strong centralist population. Additionally, the more liberal faculty members are found liberal arts colleges rather than at elite institutions. This political socialization continues from the professor to the coursework. While a link between education and civic behavior has been clearly established
by previous studies, Allgood, Bosshardt, van der Klaaw, and Watts (2012) found that particular areas of education have a distinguishable impact on civic behavior. Specifically in the area of economics, their study showed that while business majors are less likely than general majors to partake in voting in the 2000 presidential election, this is not true of economics majors. In fact, business majors are closer to general majors in their attitudes regarding civic behavior than economics majors. The Center for American Progress (2009) states that, “compared to college-educated elites, non-college-educated Americans are more populist and progressive than elite in some attitudes about the role of government and fighting inequality and much more conservative on cultural and national security areas.” These findings emphasize the need to evaluate education, as it clearly impacts political actions.

**Income**

Income has also been shown to have a significant impact on party affiliation. Gelman, Kenworthy, and Su (2010) found that Americans with higher income are 15 percentage points more likely to vote Republican than low-income Americans. Through the evaluation of personality traits, Morton, Tyran, and Wengström (2011) found that higher levels of emotional stability led to higher incomes, which, in turn, influenced these individuals into more rightwing preferences. Additionally, they found that “increasing intelligence increases rightist preferences” (38). Weiner and Eckland (1979) found that political socialization is becoming less fragmented by class due to the increase in higher education and more so due to professional and bureaucratic interests.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

The above research has culminated to the following research question: How do culture, education, and income affect political party affiliation in Oklahoma?

**DATA**

Data used in this analysis was drawn from the November 2012 Food Atlas, the Oklahoma State Election Board, and the Census Bureau. The data set consists of the number of registered voters for each political
party, median income (Med_Inc), percent of the population age 18 or older with a college degree (Per_Edu), percentage of the population that is male (Per_Male), percentage of the population represented by each of the following ethnicities: White (Per_White), Black (Per_Black), Hispanic (Per_His), and American Indian or Alaska Native (Per_NAA), and Little Dixie (LD) counties.

**TABLE 1. SUMMARY STATISTICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Republican</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>35.27%</td>
<td>0.1566</td>
<td>0.11619</td>
<td>0.69861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>$39,025.00</td>
<td>6411.6000</td>
<td>$28,914.00</td>
<td>$57,018.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Education</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>10.39%</td>
<td>0.0296</td>
<td>5.99%</td>
<td>19.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Males</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>50.15%</td>
<td>0.0199</td>
<td>47.94%</td>
<td>58.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>73.13%</td>
<td>9.5140</td>
<td>42.14%</td>
<td>91.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.39%</td>
<td>3.5666</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>16.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Native</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>10.15%</td>
<td>7.8920</td>
<td>73.27%</td>
<td>42.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American or Alaskan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Hispanic</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>7.68%</td>
<td>6.8637</td>
<td>1.93%</td>
<td>41.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Dixie</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0.27273</td>
<td>0.4483</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The minimum and maximum values of Percent Republican, Median Income, and Percent Education as shown in Table 1 are explored more in the table below.

**TABLE 2. NOTEWORTHY DATA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Percent Republican</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th>Percent Education</th>
<th>Percent Males</th>
<th>Percent White</th>
<th>Percent Black</th>
<th>Percent Native American or Alaskan</th>
<th>Percent Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pushmataha</td>
<td>11.62%</td>
<td>$30,070</td>
<td>8.47%</td>
<td>49.44%</td>
<td>73.89%</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
<td>17.43%</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>69.86%</td>
<td>$44,736</td>
<td>10.84%</td>
<td>49.12%</td>
<td>88.07%</td>
<td>0.43%</td>
<td>1.73%</td>
<td>7.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmon</td>
<td>12.74%</td>
<td>$28,914</td>
<td>8.01%</td>
<td>48.02%</td>
<td>62.94%</td>
<td>6.74%</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
<td>25.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>58.24%</td>
<td>$57,018</td>
<td>13.94%</td>
<td>49.62%</td>
<td>79.73%</td>
<td>2.44%</td>
<td>4.54%</td>
<td>6.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adair</td>
<td>31.48%</td>
<td>$30,190</td>
<td>5.99%</td>
<td>50.03%</td>
<td>42.14%</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
<td>42.01%</td>
<td>5.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payne</td>
<td>47.46%</td>
<td>$36,874</td>
<td>19.77%</td>
<td>50.66%</td>
<td>79.71%</td>
<td>3.56%</td>
<td>4.52%</td>
<td>3.87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown above, the data tells a captivating story. Pushmataha, the county with the lowest percentage of Republican registrations, has a Median Income and Percent Education value below the mean, and is also a Little Dixie county. Payne County, which contains Stillwater, home of Oklahoma State University, has the highest Percent Education and a higher-than-average percentage of Republican registrations, however the Median Income is below the mean.
ANALYSIS

Model

\[ \text{Percent Republican} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{(Med Inc)} + \beta_2 \text{(Per Edu)} + \beta_3 \text{(Per Males)} + \beta_4 \text{(Per White)} + \beta_5 \text{(Per Black)} + \beta_6 \text{(Per NAA)} + \beta_7 \text{(Per His)} + \beta_8 \text{(LD)} + \epsilon_i \]

TABLE 3. REGRESSION RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Statistical Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.32386</td>
<td>0.816406</td>
<td>0.1095</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>9.71647E-06</td>
<td>200252</td>
<td>0.00000746</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Education</td>
<td>1.39869</td>
<td>0.387352</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Males</td>
<td>0.290372</td>
<td>0.526414</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White</td>
<td>0.0114787</td>
<td>0.00820689</td>
<td>0.1665</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black</td>
<td>0.00516142</td>
<td>0.0101021</td>
<td>0.6111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Native</td>
<td>0.0100259</td>
<td>0.0103631</td>
<td>0.3367</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American or Alaskan</td>
<td>0.0104172</td>
<td>0.00800594</td>
<td>0.1976</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.118093</td>
<td>0.0249452</td>
<td>0.0000116</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation

Median Income is highly statistically significant, as indicated by the triple-asterisk above and the low P-Value. There is a positive correlation between median income and the percent of Republican registrations; quantitatively, a $1000 increase in median income results in a .0097 percentage point increase in Republican registrations.
Percent Education is also highly statistically significant. A one percentage point increase in the number of citizens above the age of 18 with a college degree results in a 1.3987 percentage point increase in the number of Republican registrations.

None of the racial variables were statistically significant, however, this may be because the impact was absorbed by another variable. This could also be because there is simply not a wide-enough range of racial groups in Oklahoma; the percentage of the statewide population that is white ranges from 42% to 92%. The Percent White variable is statistically significant at the 16% level, which is noteworthy but not enough so as to be able to draw any compelling conclusions.

Little Dixie counties have a highly statistically significant negative correlation with Republican registrations, with a coefficient of -0.1181.

Normalcy of Residuals

FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDUALS

The first step in testing for normalcy of residuals is a visual analysis. As shown in the Figure 1 above, the residuals appear to be normally distributed. For further analysis, a Jarque-Bera (JB) test is conducted using the equation below where \( n \) is equal to the number of observations, \( S \) refers to the skewness and \( K \) represents kurtosis.
This results in a test statistic value of .0396. Based on the assumption that the Jarque-Bera test statistic follows the chi-square distribution, using two degrees of freedom and evaluated at the 95% confidence level, the critical value is found to be 5.99146. Because the test statistic is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis that the residuals are distributed normally fails to be rejected.

**Heteroskedasticity**

Heteroskedasticity—the presence of a non-constant variance across variables—indicates an inefficient model. This inefficiency communicates that the variance is not being minimized. A standard check for heteroskedasticity is the White’s General Heteroskedasticity Test. This test is calculated by running an auxiliary regression based on the variables, the squares of the variables, and their cross products.

The null hypothesis of the White’s Test is that the data is homoskedastic. The test statistic is calculated as:

\[ n \times R^2 \sim \chi^2_{k-1} \]

For this data, the test statistic is found to be:

\[ 77 \times .680526 \sim \chi^2_{43} \]

This is equal to 52.401. Because this value is less than the critical value of chi-squared of 57, the null hypothesis fails to be rejected.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this research suggests that there may be some accuracy to the conventional wisdom within the state of Oklahoma. There is indeed a statistically significant positive impact of Median Income on Republican registrations. The impact of education defies initial perceptions, however, in that it leads to a more right-leaning individual rather than assumed opposite effect. Whereas race was not found to be statistically significant in its impact on Republican Party affiliation, the cultural impact of Little Dixie counties was shown to be highly significant.
Future Analysis

This research was limited to the 77 counties in Oklahoma. For future analysis, it may be beneficial to modify the geographic parameters. If this data were separated not by county lines but by a different parameter, such as occupation, a new and perhaps different story would be told. There is a great possibility for drastically different results if this research was adapted to a spatial model. Additionally, studying a region with a different culture, such as a more urban state, could provide new and intriguing results.


Delirium in the Intensive Care Unit

Sonia E. Weiss

Assessment and Analysis

Prevention, recognition, and early treatment of delirium in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) can speed recovery and reduce complications in high acuity patients. Evidence-based practice standards regarding delirium have been developed to assure patient safety in the ICU setting. Prevention and recognition of delirium requires continuous nursing assessment and reduction in risk factors. Astute nursing practice begins with nurse education regarding assessment tools, diagnosis, and interventions. ICU delirium has far-reaching effects on the client, client’s family, healthcare personnel, and hospital. Attention to this problem can reduce the expensive and lasting effects for everyone involved.

Delirium is a mental status change that “develops over a short period of time and is characterized by fluctuating disturbances of consciousness and changes in cognition, especially attention” (Adis Medical Writers, 2013, p. 40). There are three subtypes of delirium, including hyperactive, hypoactive, and mixed delirium. Hyperactive delirium is rare and is characterized by restlessness and agitation. Hallucinations and delusion may be associated with hyperactive delirium. Although it is rare, it is the most easily diagnosed due to the manifestations and therefore has a better prognosis. Hypoactive delirium, on the other end of the spectrum, is characterized by lethargy and withdrawal. Patients may appear apathetic with flat affect and decreased responsiveness. The signs and symptoms are often attributed to depression and therefore this type may go undiagnosed. The manifestations of mixed delirium fluctuate from one extreme to the other and mixed delirium is the most common subtype (Olson, 2012).

Individuals who are admitted to the ICU are at an increased risk to develop delirium due to predisposing factors and precipitating factors. The most significant predisposing risk factors include preexisting dementia, hypertension, and alcoholism (AACN, 2012). Impaired vision and hearing are also frequently cited risk factors (Adis Medical Writers, 2013; Olson, 2012). Precipitating factors include severity of illness, sepsis, certain medications, immobility, altered sleep-wake cycles, metabolic disturbances, and environmental factors such as ambient noise (Adis Medical Writers, 2013). Alterations in sodium, calcium, blood urea nitrogen, and hydration status may also precipitate delirium (Olson,
2012). The complex pathophysiology of those admitted to the ICU and the frequent and intense nature of care in the ICU environment increase delirium risk. Understanding risk factors allows for prompt recognition of delirium.

An estimated 80% of patients in the ICU suffer from delirium and there is a high rate of under-recognition and diagnosis (AACN, 2012). Delirium puts stress on the patient, family, and healthcare system. An annual estimate of $4 to $16 billion is associated with hospital cost related to delirium in ICUs in the United States (AACN, 2012). Several adverse events associated with delirium include self-extubation, patient harm, prolonged hospitalization, increased cost, cognitive decline, and death (Egerod, 2013). Delirium usually lasts about three days in patients in the ICU (Adis Medical Writers, 2013). One to five days of delirium is associated with long-term cognitive impairment even a full year after discharge from the ICU. This long-term impairment affects the quality of life of individuals who survive a critical illness (Olson, 2012). Furthermore, post-traumatic stress disorder can occur in patients after discharge from the ICU related to delirium and experiences in the ICU (Egerod, 2013). These serious consequences necessitate the early recognition and prevention of delirium in the ICU.

Planning and Literature Review

Literature regarding delirium in the ICU focuses on screening, pharmacological interventions, and non-pharmacological interventions. Nurses must be able to apply screening tools correctly in order to accurately detect delirium. Furthermore, nurses must have the knowledge to implement effective interventions based on the research.

Screening tools. The two most reliable screening tools for delirium in the ICU are the Confusion Assessment Method for the Intensive Care Unit (CAM-ICU) and the Intensive Care Delirium Screening Checklist (ICDSC) (Barr et al., 2014). The Richmond Agitation-Sedation Scale (RASS) is a measure of sedation and is used in conjunction with the CAM-ICU (Vasilevskis et al., 2011). These tools can assist nurses in detecting delirium that may otherwise have gone unnoticed and routine screening is recommended (Vasilevskis et al., 2011).

A CAM-ICU assessment results in three possible outcomes: positive for delirium, negative for delirium, and unable to assess (UTA) (Swan, 2014). The CAM-ICU only takes about 1-2 minutes and is performed at the bedside (Shaughnessy, 2012). The RASS score ranges from -5 (unarousable) to 4 (combative). A RASS score of 0 indicates that a patient is alert and calm (Swan, 2014).
In one study, researchers looked at 510 ICU patients over a three-year period and their corresponding CAM-ICU scores to determine how reliable bedside measurements of delirium were. They found that the CAM-ICU and RASS are reliable and useful in making clinical decisions (Vasilevskis et al., 2011). In addition, they determined that reliability did not falter with severity of illness or for patients who were mechanically ventilated. These findings support the use of the CAM-ICU in the critical care setting (Vasilevskis et al., 2011). In a second study researchers audited 108 patient charts and looked at their delirium score and treatment plan. They determined that quality of care and recognition of delirium were both improved when use of the CAM-ICU was employed (Shaughnessy, 2012).

One problem that researchers noted with implementation of the CAM-ICU was related to inappropriate UTA ratings. Researchers conducted a quasi-experimental study in a surgical ICU to determine if an educational campaign could decrease these inappropriate delirium ratings. The only time a rating of UTA should be used is if a patient is comatose, meaning they have a RASS score of -5 or -4 (unarousable to deeply sedated). CAM-ICU ratings of positive or negative for a comatose patient and CAM-ICU ratings of UTA for a non-comatose patient are inappropriate ratings. The RASS score can further assist health care providers in determining which subtype of delirium is present in the case of a positive CAM-ICU score. A positive CAM-ICU rating and a RASS score of -3 to 0 indicate hypoactive delirium. A positive CAM-ICU rating and a RASS score of 1 to 4 indicate hyperactive delirium. Mixed delirium results from a positive CAM-ICU and varying RASS scores. The educational campaign included a pharmacist and ICU nurse educators who reviewed the concepts of the CAM-ICU assessment with nurses at an in-service and later at the bedside. After this program, patients were 41% less likely to receive inappropriate CAM-ICU UTA ratings and more CAM-ICU ratings were documented for each patient. CAM-ICU UTA ratings decreased by 37% for patients who where receiving mechanical ventilation (Swan, 2014). This research indicates that while the CAM-ICU and RASS are both reliable in detecting delirium in ICU patients, nurse education regarding appropriate assessment is imperative. Furthermore, educational campaigns effectively reduce UTA ratings and enhance continual assessment of delirium using the CAM-ICU (Swan, 2014).

The ICDSC uses a numerical score out of eight to determine if delirium is present. The ICDSC requires assessment of several neurological functions and each symptom that is present increases a
patient’s score by one point. A score equal to or greater than four suggests delirium on the ICDSC scale (Olson, 2012). Gesin et al. (2012) conducted a research study to determine nurses’ knowledge regarding delirium and correct evaluation. The study included three phases. In the first phase, no delirium screening tool and no education was presented to the nurses. In the second phase, nurses were required to use the ICDSC and minimal education was included. In the third phase, nurses were required to use the ICDSC and multifaceted education was included. The multifaceted education program included a pharmacist-led lecture, web-based module, and nurse-led bedside training. Over the phases of the study, the number of nurses who thought delirium was difficult to assess in ICU patients decreased and the number of nurses who agreed that the ICDSC made delirium easier to identify increased (Gesin et al., 2012). Similarly, to the CAM-ICU, the ICDSC is reliable but requires nurses to be trained in its use.

After delirium is determined to be present, nurses are encouraged to use the THINK mnemonic in order to establish why a patient is delirious. THINK stands for Toxic situations and medications, Hypoxemia, Infection or Immobilization, Non-pharmacological interventions neglected, and K+ (potassium) or other electrolyte problems (AACN, 2012). If a cause is determined then appropriate treatment can be sought to rectify the delirium.

**Pharmacological interventions.** There is disagreement in the literature regarding the appropriate use of pharmacological interventions to prevent and reduce delirium in patients in the ICU and more investigation is necessary to determine best treatment. There is a consensus that several drugs increase the likelihood of a patient developing delirium and these include benzodiazepines, sedatives, anticholinergics, and GABA agonists (Adis Medical Writers, 2013; AACN, 2012; Olson, 2012). Benzodiazepines should be avoided unless benzodiazepine or alcohol withdrawal is suspected (Barr et al., 2014). Dexmedetomidine has been reported to significantly reduce delirium duration when compared to those treated with benzodiazepines and is a suitable alternative when sedation is necessary (AACN, 2012; Adis Medical Writers, 2013).

Haloperidol remains the first choice treatment for patients exhibiting delirium in the ICU (Adis Medical Writers, 2013; Olson, 2012). However, the AACN (2012) reports that there has been no drug approved by the FDA to treat delirium. Furthermore, haloperidol may carry a high mortality risk for older patients (AACN, 2012). There is
little evidence to support the use of antipsychotics to treat delirium but they are the traditionally recommended medication. Those receiving haloperidol or any atypical antipsychotics should be monitored for side effects including QT prolongation (AACN, 2012). Antipsychotics should be avoided in those with an increased risk of Torsades de pointes (Barr et al., 2014).

Nurses need to be aware of the medications that can increase the risk of delirium. While haloperidol remains the most commonly used pharmacological treatment, more research is necessary to determine its safety and to find other alternatives. Due to the uncertainty of pharmacological intervention, it is best to prevent delirium from occurring.

**Non-pharmacological interventions.** Several non-pharmacological interventions are available for nurses to utilize in practice. The literature suggests simple practices to reduce the occurrence of delirium such as providing cognitively stimulating activities, reorienting patients continuously, providing an environment conducive to sleep, removing catheters and immobilizing devices when able, providing glasses and hearing aids as needed, correcting dehydration, and managing pain (Olson, 2012). More specific interventions include implementing the ABCDE bundle, increasing nurse staffing in the ICU, providing nature-based sounds to reduce agitation and anxiety, and implementing patient diary programs in the ICU.

The Awakening and Breathing Coordination, Delirium Monitoring and Management, and Early Mobility (ABCDE) bundle is a multifaceted approach to provide evidence based care for patients in the ICU. It involves a spontaneous awakening trial (SAT) and a spontaneous breathing trial (SBT). Patients report fewer symptoms of PTSD after discharge from the ICU when their sedation was interrupted daily with a SAT. Delirium is assessed using either the CAM-ICU or the ICDSC depending on hospital protocol. Early mobility includes active ROM in bed, sitting at the edge of bed, during bathing, and repositioning. Each portion of the ABCDE bundle reduces the risk of a patient developing delirium and should be implemented daily. The ABDCE bundle incorporates interdisciplinary care by including nurses, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, and physicians (Balas et al., 2012).

There is evidence that very few health care providers are using SATs, SBTs, and early mobility on a regular basis (Balas et al., 2012). Decreasing the amount of sedation used and caring for patients who are intubated and alert requires more nursing care. Keeping patients less
sedated increases the need for staff but also allows for an easier assessment of delirium. While increasing staff in the ICU is costly, less sedation may lead to a quicker recovery and earlier discharge which may increase savings in the end (Egerod, 2013). Increased staffing in the ICU allows for the use of less sedation, which may lead to increased use of the ABCDE bundle and patients recovering more quickly.

Implementing a nature-based sounds intervention for clients in the ICU is an inexpensive way to combat the anxiety and agitation intubated clients' experience. Researchers conducted a study with 60 patients who were randomly assigned to a control or experimental group. The experimental group received 90 minutes of nature-based sound using headphones and an MP3 player. Vital signs (including heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure), anxiety levels, and agitation levels were assessed at the 30th, 60th, and 90th minute of intervention and 30 minutes after the intervention. The Faces Anxiety Scale and the RASS were used to assess anxiety and agitation. The intervention group had lower systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, and anxiety and agitation levels when compared to the control group. Using complimentary therapies may result in less need for deep levels of sedation. Reducing anxiety, agitation, and the use of deep sedation may result in fewer patients who experience delirium (Saadatmand et al., 2013)

Delirium in the ICU may lead to the development of PTSD after discharge (Egerod, 2013). While delirium may not always be preventable, there may be non-pharmacological interventions that can be implemented during ICU admission to help a client cope with PTSD after discharge. One such intervention is the use of ICU patient diaries, which are becoming increasingly popular in Europe. Patients may have feelings and memories from the ICU but have difficulty putting their experiences into context. Patient diaries are written during the patient’s stay for the patient to read after discharge upon their choosing. Nurses are the primary authors but other staff and even relatives are encouraged to contribute. The diaries include key milestones for the patient such as intubation, extubation, personal events, description of the weather, and news. There are concerns regarding confidentiality, storage of the diary, and support for the client when reading the diary, as it could be an emotional trigger. The diaries must be reviewed and edited by staff before they are turned over to the patient to ensure quality and appropriateness. More research is needed to determine the effectiveness of diaries in helping patients cope with their experiences. There are many ethical and confidentiality issues regarding the use of diaries but
they may prove beneficial to the patient when processing feelings and memories regarding the critical illness the patient experienced (Phillips, 2011).

**Interventions**

There are many interventions nurses can implement to reduce the development of delirium in the ICU based on the literature. These interventions include implantation of the ABCDE bundle every day by nurses and respiratory therapists (Balas et al., 2012). The ABCDE bundle includes the use of the CAM-ICU or ICDSC screening tools, which should be used at least once per shift (AACN, 2012). The CAM-ICU or ICDSC should also be implemented by nurses on a PRN basis depending on client needs (Barr et al., 2014). The ABCDE bundle also includes early mobility, which is a cornerstone in preventing delirium (AACN, 2012; Balas et al., 2012). When a patient is delirious nurses should use the THINK mnemonic to determine a possible cause and necessary treatment (AACN, 2012; Balas et al., 2012).

Treatment for delirium include recognizing and treating pain appropriately, continuously reorienting patients to their surroundings, providing glasses and hearing aids if necessary, avoiding benzodiazepines unless withdrawal from alcohol or benzodiazepines is established, and avoiding antipsychotics if the patient has an increased risk for Torsades de pointes (Barr et al., 2014). To reduce patient confusion patients should always be addressed appropriately and informed about the procedure the nurse will conduct when the nurse enters the room. Identifying risk factors such as dementia may increase early recognition of delirium and both physician and nurse must conduct appropriate assessments regarding patient history. These interventions require collaboration between the nurse and physician caring for the patient.

Promoting a normal sleep-wake cycle in the ICU can reduce the risks of developing delirium (Barr et al., 2014). These interventions include turning lights on in the morning, turning lights off at night, keeping the patient awake and oriented during the day, decreasing nighttime stimuli, allowing noise during the day, and limiting noise during the night (Barr et al., 2014). All staff on the unit must be involved in implementing these interventions.

Nurses can provide nature-based sounds for patients who are displaying anxiety and agitation as determined by the patient’s Faces Anxiety Scale or RASS scores (Saadatmand et al., 2013). Collaboration among nurses and establishment of a patient diary program may reduce
long-term detrimental effects of delirium such as PTSD after discharge (Phillips, 2011). Implementation of several interventions will provide the greatest benefit for patients in the ICU.

**Evaluation**

There are several evaluation methods that can be used to determine if a decrease in delirium has occurred in an ICU. The nurses’ ability to accurately evaluate delirium using the CAM-ICU or ICDSC can be evaluated by the nurse educator observing the nurse’s assessment and by the nurse answering questions regarding appropriate assessment of delirium. Both the CAM-ICU and ICDSC are valid and reliable but appropriate nurse education is necessary (Gesin et al., 2012; Swan, 2014; Vasilevskis et al., 2011). Chart audits can be conducted to ensure CAM-ICU or ICDSC scores are completed and charted, the ABCDE bundle was implemented, appropriate medications were administered, and non-pharmacological interventions were employed when scores were indicative of delirium. Patients and their families can be asked to complete a satisfaction questionnaire to indicate any concerns they have. After discharge patients can be sent a questionnaire to determine if they have experienced any PTSD symptoms and how their experience in the ICU has affected them long-term.

Delirium in the ICU is a prevalent problem with significant detrimental effects. There is much research on the topic and evidence-based care should be incorporated into everyday nursing practice. Assessment, intervention, and intervention evaluation of this safety problem can reduce negative outcomes and promote healthy, optimal functioning in patients discharged from the ICU.
References


Post-Surgical Interventions and Health-Related Quality of Life Among Breast Cancer Patients

Brian R. Van Der Velde

Cancer of the breast is the most common global cancer in women. It causes approximately five hundred thousand deaths each year (Emilsson et al, 2012, p. 591). It is often demonstrated that being diagnosed with breast cancer produces feelings of anger, shock, distress, fear, and anguish. Along with those feelings come expressions of possible difficulty with adjustment and concerns about dealing with stress. When patients progress to treatment they often feel helpless, depressed, and isolated with a perceived loss of control. Studies have shown that nearly fifty percent of breast cancer survivors deal with depression and anxiety long after diagnosis. Sometimes the feelings last as long as five years after diagnosis (Emilsson et al, 2012, p. 591).

Stress is a distinct component of illness and dealing with that stress is of paramount importance. Patients should do all they can to utilize their inherent coping resources in order to more effectively handle stressors. Dealing with those stressors in turn causes less individual harm and speeds recovery from stressful events (Emilsson et al, 2012, p. 592). The purpose of this research study is to answer in patients with breast cancer, what is the effect of post-surgical interventions, in comparison to experiencing periods of recovery alone, on quality of life?

Support group participation improves health-related quality of life by reducing anxiety levels and decreasing symptoms of depression; adaption to illness is also improved as a result. Connecting, on a social level, with other individuals who currently share life circumstances is the main benefit derived from participation in support groups (Emilsson et al, 2012, p. 592).

Quality of life is affected by many factors. Among those factors are decisions on treatment and side effects, and they are the most relevant in the context of this paper.

In women with early stage breast cancer, the treatment option most commonly selected is one in which the aim is breast conservation (Vodermaier et al, 2011, p. 12). That is not to say, however, that there is not also a large population of women choosing mastectomy. Some patients do opt for the less conservative approach for a variety of reasons. According to the study by Vodermaier et al (2011) mastectomy is chosen based on the desire to avoid radiation therapy, decrease
associated local risk of recurrence, or just prophylactically to avoid any possible complication (p. 12).

More and more cancer patients request intricate involvement in their treatment options. This trend requires that patients therefore receive adequate knowledge regarding their choices (Vodermaier et al, 2011, p. 12). The decision aid intervention provides knowledge specific to the disease process, materials on pertinent treatment protocols, and most importantly, they are intended to be understood by non-medical professionals. They also act to initiate patient participation into their own treatment. Conflict associated with decision, irrespective of outcome, is decreased when decision aids are utilized (Vodermaier et al, 2011, p. 13).

Body image was shown to be affected by decision-making. Thus, greater decision similarity positively correlates with body image. Along with the effects seen on body image, decision aids portray positively with physical functioning (Vodermaier et al, 2011, p. 13). The Vodermaier et al study evaluated the effects of using a decision aid as an intervention in women with breast cancer on decisional conflict, as well as a gauge of health-related quality of life and psychosocial functioning (2011, p. 13).

**Method**

**Measures**

**Quality of life.** Two interventions measured their effects on quality of life (QOL): decision aid and group exercise and information support. With the use of a decision aid, quality of life was measured using the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy Scale (FACT). The scale evaluates four sub-categories. Physical QOL, social functioning, emotional QOL, and functional QOL are the four subscales. Scores that are higher represent a better QOL. For the subscales, internal consistency ranged between $\alpha=0.77$ and $\alpha=0.87$ (Vodermaier, 2011, p. 14).

The FACT scale was also utilized for group exercise and information support, however, the study used the breast cancer version FACT-B. The added subscale relates to breast cancer-specific items. Reliability for the FACT-B scale was $\alpha=0.94$. The Trial Outcome Index (TOI) was an additional instrument used. Justification for the inclusion of the second indicator was its demonstrated validity for use with exercise interventions. The reliability was also high at $\alpha=0.93$ (Sherman et al, 2010, p. 381).

**Social support.** Social support was evaluated based on the effects of two interventions: group exercise and information support and
social support interview. The Social Support Questionnaire 6 (SSQ-6) was the instrument used to measure the effect of group exercise and information support on social support. Availability and satisfaction was demonstrated in Cronbach’s alpha as 0.85 and 0.87 respectively, and were measures of the amount of people available to be relied on during the stress of illness and subsequent satisfaction with that support. Higher scores positively correlated with satisfaction and support (Sherman et al, 2010, p. 382).

The Medical Outcomes Study Social Support survey is a nineteen item questionnaire that utilizes a Likert scale, and was used to measure the effect of social support interviews on social support. The scale has been thoroughly validated and demonstrated exceptional internal consistency at $\alpha=0.97$ over the course of the interviews (Thompson et al, 2013, p. 888).

**Decisional conflict.** The Decisional Conflict Scale was used to measure decisional conflict. It is important to note that the DCS measures perception, and that the higher the total score is, is a reflection that there is greater experience of decisional conflict. Within the five subscales, however, higher scores suggest perceptions of deficient knowledge, feelings of doubt, perceptions of a lower degree of livelihood, and an uncertainty in indecision or an after treatment feeling of having made an incorrect decision. Internal consistency of total score and subscale score was demonstrated by a Cronbach’s alpha range of 0.73 to 0.94 (Vodermaier et al, 2011, p. 14).

**Anxiety and depression.** Anxiety and depression were measured across the use of three interventions: (1) decision aid, (2) peer support group, and (3) social support interview. In providing a decision aid the measurement was classified as anxiety and depressive symptoms and utilized the German version of the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS). The HADS uses a four-point Likert scale with sub-scale scores greater than eleven being clinically relevant, indicating symptoms that a psychological disorder relating to anxiety and depression exists. Subclinical symptoms scores range from eight to ten, with subscale reliability at $\alpha=0.80$ for scores greater than eleven and $\alpha=0.81$ for those between eight and ten (Vodermaier et al, 2011, p. 14).

In the evaluation into the efficacy of a peer support group, the intervention was measured using HADS. The HADS is further divided into a subscale for anxiety and a subscale for depression. An important characteristic of this scale is the timeline of one week prior and the
exclusion of questions that risk confusion with physical illness. The scale has been validated in the context of cancer patients (Emilsson et al, 2012, p. 594).

Whilst the previous two interventions measured anxiety and depression together, the effect of a social support interview on anxiety and depression assessed the two separately. Anxiety was weighed using the Beck Anxiety Inventory at baseline and reflected validity of \( \alpha = 0.86 \). Depression was evaluated using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale. A score greater than sixteen is clinically relevant and warrants referral for psychological evaluation. Scores showed a range of \( \alpha = 0.91 \) and \( \alpha = 0.92 \) over the course of the study interviews (Thompson et al, 2013, p. 888).

**Stress management and recovery.** The Coping Resources Inventory (CRI) was used to measure the coping resources participants had access to. As a measure of the intervention on providing a peer support group, the main focus was to ascertain underlying connection with ability to manage the stress associated with recovery and treatment. A four-point Likert scale is utilized by the CRI and is a positive correlation questionnaire; as scores go up, the greater amount of resources is predicted to be available for coping. Validity for the CRI is high at \( \alpha = 0.90 \) for total score and with a range of \( \alpha = 0.56 \) to \( \alpha = 0.87 \) for each of the five domains (Emilsson et al, 2012, p. 593).

**Results**

**Sample and Sample Size**

A total of five studies were used in this paper. Research articles were chosen according to the following four categories: (1) that an intervention was proposed, (2) that the effects of the intervention were evaluated across at least two different human domains, (3) that at least one intervention group and one control group were used, and (4) that both the intervention and control group were made up of women diagnosed with breast cancer. There was consideration about possible exclusion of one article due to the payment of $20 to study participants, but this was statistically accounted for and therefore deemed irrelevant.

The study by Thompson et al (2013) had a consecutive sample size of 1,011 participants and utilized a mixed-methods QUAN→qual, survey research design. Evaluation of whether social support could be used as a predictor in mediators within breast cancer psychosocial
treatment was the purpose of the study. The framework was methodological. The Vodermaier et al study (2011) used a quantitative, true experimental, repeated-measures research design. Sample consisted of 111 women with newly diagnosed breast cancer at an inpatient university treatment setting in Germany. The purpose of the study was to explore whether the use of decisional aids improves health-related quality of life in women newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

Sherman et al (2010) used a convenience sample of 129 English-speaking women diagnosed with primary breast cancer to complete their quantitative, 2X2 quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test study. The purpose of the study was to measure the effect of a group exercise/information support program delivered in the community setting for patients with breast cancer.

The research paper by Emilsson et al (2012) evaluates the effect of participation in a peer support group and the effects on coping resources. A total of 67 participants were conveniently sampled and assigned to the intervention or control group in a non-randomized fashion. This study employed a quantitative, case-control design with a methodological framework.

Effect of Interventions on Health-related Quality of Life

**Group exercise and information support.** The retention rate is important in evaluating the effectiveness of the exercise program and is thus viewed as the primary goal. The retention rate for the study group was 75% and the rate for the control was 91% (Sherman et al, 2010, p. 383). Excuses for absences ranged from work and family life imbalance, transport problems to illness. Satisfaction with the program was great as evidenced by scale scores.

**Decision aid.** The statistical effects regarding the use of decision aids were mainly corroborated with decisional conflict. As a result, 91% of stage one and two breast cancer patients chose to have breast-conserving therapy, whereas thirty percent opted for chemo (Vodermaier et al, 2011, p. 15). Within the study group, decisional conflict was decreased. Results appear to show that decision aids possibly improve body image outcome in the long-term by the reduction in the use of strategies that involve depressive coping (Vodermaier et al, 2011, p. 17). Since statistical significance was established, decision aid effects on
body image and depressive coping is said to be of relevance in the clinical setting.

**Peer support group.** The Emilsson et al (2012) study showed that participation in a peer support group does improve stress management and recovery, and coping resources, when attended in conjunction with treatment (p. 595). The increased availability of coping resources can be achieved with limited energy both financially and structurally (Emilsson et al, 2012, p. 597-598). Data also showed that differences were insignificant for both the intervention and control group regarding Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale scores. However, at only 67 participants, the sample size is too small to offer any generalizability.

**Social support interview.** Of most importance, the study by Thompson et al (2013) hypothesized that patients have greater social support at baseline than controls do and that support does not decrease over time for controls, but that it does decrease over time for patients (p. 887). In support of that hypothesis, intercept mean for the control group was less than that of the intervention group. The mean and variance of the slope for the control group was also insignificant. The study adequately demonstrated that social support declines over time in women with breast cancer, whilst it remains consistent in women without (Thompson et al, 2013, p. 889). Clinical relevance is displayed in the finding that African American and mastectomy patients showed a steeper decline in social support over time making the group particularly vulnerable (Thompson et al, 2013, p. 890-891).

**Discussion**

**Clinical Recommendation**

A total of four interventions were proposed throughout the length of this paper: group exercise and information support, peer support group, decision aid, and social support interview. All four of these interventions have aspects that demonstrate clinical significance. Most importantly, the nurse must assess the level of social support a patient has through the use of the social support interview. Doing so will aid in the development of an appropriate plan of care tailored to the individual.

Teaching is already widely established as an essential nursing practice. It should come as no surprise that the addition of offering
decision aids during teaching sessions actively engages patients with breast cancer in their own care. Nurses should therefore provide pamphlets, brochures, and cards with relevant data to these patients.

Community health nurses can also establish or advocate for the development of community peer support groups for breast cancer patients. Since studies have shown that attendance at such programs is beneficial and positively affects quality of life, it is fundamental to evidence based practice to have knowledge of such programs to share with breast cancer patients, and to assure, develop, or remodel such groups to this vulnerable population.

There are many ways in which nurses can help increase the quality of life among post-surgical breast cancer patients. Nurses have a responsibility to keep themselves informed on new evidence and new ways to provide that care.


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