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Introduction, by Dr. Anne Greenfield, Faculty Advisor to Omnino

With volume 4, Omnino continues to produce an impressive array of undergraduate research from VSU. As always, the research papers contained in this volume have been rigorously refereed by VSU faculty members and edited by VSU students.

I would like to thank all of the students who submitted their work to Omnino this year, the faculty referees who so generously gave of their time to review our submissions, the faculty mentors who guided their students through the drafts and revisions necessary for publication, and the Omnino student editors for their astute and diligent work. I am also very grateful to VSU for the funding that makes Omnino's publication possible.

We welcome submissions to future volumes of Omnino from undergraduates in any field of study at VSU. Please refer to our submission guidelines at <http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/arts-sciences/english/student-resources/student-publications/omnino/submit.php> for details.



The Effects of Noise on Concentration and Mood in a Learning Environment

By Kaylan Hand

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Jeremy Tost, Department of Psychology and Counseling

Article Abstract:

Negative noises in the classroom can potentially disrupt focus and lower mood. This study examined the effects of noise on participants' focus and mood. The objective of the current research was to examine the effect that negative noises have on focus and mood. Participants completed a questionnaire addressing their study habits and their moods before being exposed to one of two conditions: smacking gum or silence. The participants then read an article on transcendental meditation. After reading the article and being exposed to one of the conditions, smacking gum or silence, participants filled out the remaining parts of the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained the same questions on mood and focus from the pre-test, along with questions about the article the participants read. The participants, sixteen males and sixteen females, were placed in the first condition, which was the noise condition. Similarly, sixteen males and sixteen females were placed in the second condition, which was the silent condition. There was a significant main effect of time of test (pre versus post) on both mood and focus; however, there was no significant difference found comparing noise versus silent conditions on either focus or mood. There was no significance found for condition on focus and mood.

Albert Einstein once said: "I never teach my pupils, I only provide the conditions in which they can learn." Einstein knew that learning was accomplished not just through what he taught his students but also through the conditions in which the students learned. The condition in which learning takes place plays a role in educating generations. There are positive and negative noises and both play into these conditions and can disrupt the ability to learn, thereby limiting a person's full potential. Teachers and students need to work together to enhance the learning capability for all.

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“There is increasing evidence that poor classroom acoustics can create a negative learning environment for many students” (Dockrell & Shield, 2006, p.1). This statement emphasizes the impact that noise in the classroom can have on students and learning. There are several different types of noises that affect people in everyday life that people may not pay attention to, but under certain situations, can drive certain people into frenzy. In the learning environment, noises can play a large role in someone’s concentration. Whether it is just listening to a lecture or taking an exam, noises can cause someone to lose concentration. A few examples of in-class sound distractions are the sound of someone typing on an iPad when the keys are not on silent, another student talking to the professor after an exam while the exam is still in progress, someone eating chips resulting in the crunch and crinkle of the bag every few minutes, or the sound of a person next to you chewing gum with his or her mouth open. All these noises in the classroom could affect concentration, mood, and even grades. The current study is examining the effect of noise on concentration levels and mood.

Previous research across several articles showed significant findings that classroom noise distractions have negative impacts on learning. Noisy conditions can have direct negative effects on language and reading development along with indirect problems such as distracting or annoying a person (Woolner & Hall, 2010). There have been associations between noisy environments and reading problems along with cognitive deficits and language processing (Woolner & Hall, 2010). Many issues can arise in the learning environment from noises. Even though much of the past research on noise in the classroom has focused on living in the city or next to an airport, what can be called large-scale noises, it is reasonable to believe that even miniscule noises inside the classroom can have an impact on cognitive performance. Imagine an individual in a classroom and one of the previously mentioned noise distractions was occurring while he or she was reading an article or book. How many times

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would the individual need to reread a passage because he or she was not able to comprehend what was read or he or she could not concentrate because of the noise?

Not only can noise play a negative role in cognitive performance but also in morale. It has been shown that in certain noise conditions people begin to have lowered motivation and less persistence in task performance (Hygge, 2003). With more chronic exposure to noises, a person may begin to have learned helplessness, such as in the study whose research claimed that some of the consequences of noise exposure result at least in part from learned helplessness (Hatfield, et al., 2002). Learned helplessness is another large issue with noise in the classroom. The concept behind learned helplessness in this experiment is the idea that an individual who may hear a certain noise during an exam and cannot overcome that noise will give up on the exam just to get out of the situation. Similarly, if the noise begins at the beginning of an exam he or she will immediately give up due to the situation and repetitive encounters. Students may begin to have learned helplessness if they feel they cannot overcome the noise or get away from it. Many issues have been cited about how noise can influence the learning environment and most reviews have been negative. To think that because of noise a child, teen, or adult may begin to experience learned helplessness in a place a person is meant to feel safe and able to learn is interesting. Should anyone have to feel like they cannot learn because of a noise when the sole purpose of the education system is to learn?

Noises can influence mood as well, not just our cognitive abilities. Past research has shown that participants who were already in a negative mood disliked certain noises more than people who were in a neutral mood (Vastfjall, 2002). Gum smacking, the clicking of a pen repeatedly, and sniffing can put someone in a negative mood and influence a person in a negative way whether they are already in a negative mood or a neutral mood. A person's mood may not seem like much

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of a problem, but when it results in learned helplessness, a person's mood seems to have a greater impact. If someone is in a negative mood and the noise appears when he or she has something that is very important due that day then his or her mood becomes even more negative and they may just give up on that task completely. It is also assumed that individuals may use their mood as information to interpret situations (Vastfjall, 2002). Individuals may even misinterpret a situation because of their mood which was changed because of the noise that was annoying them. Misinterpreting a situation can cause them to act out aggressively or be rude to certain people in their lives which could cause negative problems for them.

A past study has shown that performance on verbal reasoning and abstract reasoning in silence was better than with music, and music was better than office noise (Dobbs, Furnham, & McClelland, 2011). This study supports this idea because even music, which to some can improve cognitive functions, can impact performance. Overall it is best to study, read, or do any other activity that causes concentration in silence to perform to a person's optimal level for some people. For others, it may be more beneficial for them to listen to music to perform at their optimal level. In many classroom settings though, complete silence cannot be obtained; however, if students and professors were to work together, some silence may be obtained to increase learning.

The following conditions were chosen based on remarks from fellow peers that were overheard about their aggravation after a test when there was noise made by other students. The smacking gum noise was used because it was the most convenient of noises to portray. Other options were sniffing nose, an individual eating chips, or someone texting with the keys not being silenced. The following predictions were made based on the researcher's personal experiences and observing and speaking to fellow peers about noises and their moods afterwards.

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I predict that there will be a main effect of noise type such that participants in the gum smacking condition will have lower mood levels than participants in the silent condition. I also predict there will be a main effect of time such that participants in the post-test condition will have lower focus levels than participants in the pre-test condition. I predict that there will be an interaction such that post mood scores in the gum smacking condition will be lower than the post mood scores of the silent condition.

Method

Research Design:

This experiment was based on a 2x2 mixed model design with the independent variables being the time (pre versus post) of the participants, which is within subjects, and the type of noise (silence versus gum smacking) they were exposed to, which is between subjects. The dependent variables were their focus levels and mood levels, which were based on a self-report questionnaire.

Participants:

The participants were the researcher's family members, coworkers, and students from Valdosta State University found at Odum Library and the Psychology Building. There were sixteen males and sixteen females placed in condition one, the smacking gum condition. There were also sixteen males and sixteen females in condition two, the silent condition. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 73 with a mean age of 28 and a standard deviation of 11.64. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions by placing thirty-two number ones and thirty-two number twos in a plastic bag and having the participant draw out a number then discard that number once it had been pulled so the researcher could have an even number of participants for each condition. The participants who pulled a number one were

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placed in the control group, whereas the participants who pulled a number two were placed in the experimental group.

Material:

The material used for this experiment included: an audio file on a cellphone of an individual smacking gum and a visual aid of a person smacking gum (only for condition two), a Transcendental Meditation article about The Beatles, a pre and post questionnaire, a consent form, debriefing form, and a pen or pencil. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of demographic information such as participants' sex, age, GPA, major, and year of school. Part two of the questionnaire consisted of a Likert-type scale and response type questions. The scales for the questionnaire ranged from one to ten (bad to good). Ten on the scale was either "Wonderful," "Very Much," or "Always," depending on the question. One on the scale represented "Horrible," "Not at all," or "Never," whereas five represented "Okay" or "Some." The article on Transcendental Meditation was found online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/10114132/Transcendental-Meditation-may-boost-student-grades.html>.

Procedure:

The researcher took the participant(s) into a quiet area and handed out the informed consent form and then the first part of the questionnaire to both groups. The participants had one minute to fill out the full front part of the questionnaire, which included the demographic and pre-test portions, and they were asked to not flip over the form until told to do so. The participants were given only one minute so that the individual would not linger too long on the questions, answering quickly and unconsciously. The researcher then passed out an article about transcendental meditation. The participants had as long as necessary to read the full article. The participants were given an unlimited time so that no one felt rushed and everyone had enough time to

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read the article. In the first condition, the researcher played an audio file of a person smacking gum while showing a picture of a target smacking gum briefly while the participants read the article. Once the participants finished reading the article, they were told to flip over their questionnaires and complete the post-test portion while the audio file continued to play. In the second condition the participants got the same questionnaire and the same article, but there was no audio file or picture. The participants had one minute to fill out the post-test portion of the questionnaire. The researcher tried to make the room as silent as possible for the participants by cutting off cellphones, music, and taking the participants to a secluded location.

Once the participants read the article and finished the questionnaire on the back of the form, the researcher collected the data and the participants left. Cronbach's alpha was run to test the inner reliability of focus (Cronbach's alpha = .711) and on mood ($\alpha = .798$).

Results:

A 2x2 (time x condition) mixed model factorial ANOVA was conducted examining the effects of time (pre versus post) and condition (smacking gum versus silence) on mood and focus. Participants were placed into either a smacking gum condition ($n = 34$) or a silent condition ($n = 34$). The study was done to measure the differences of focus and mood through pre- and post-condition assessments.

There was a significant main effect for time on mood: $F(1, 62) = 8.70, p = .004, \eta^2 = .123$. Pre-condition mood ($M = 7.11, SD = 1.83$) was slightly higher than post-condition mood ($M = 6.42, SD = 2.20$). There was no significant main effect for condition: $F(1, 62) = 2.35, p = .130, \eta^2 = .037$. Participants in the smacking gum condition ($M = 6.44, SD = 1.84$) had a lower mood than participants in the silent condition ($M = 7.11, SD = 2.10$), though the difference was not significant. The study had a significant interaction between time (pre versus post) and

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condition on mood: $F(1, 62) = 11.42, p = .001, \eta^2 = .156$ (see Figure 1 and Table 1). Pre-condition smacking gum mood ($M = 7.15, SD = 1.70$) was higher than post-condition gum smacking mood ($M = 5.72, SD = 1.97$). Likewise, pre-condition silent mood ($M = 7.06, SD = 1.98$) had lower moods than post-condition silent ($M = 7.16, SD = 2.22$); however, the difference was not significant, but could possibly be due to outside factors, such as previous engagements before the experiment took place.

There was a significant main effect for time on focus, $F(1, 62) = 10.36, p = .002, \eta^2 = .143$. Prior to condition exposure, participants' focus ($M = 7.28, SD = 1.83$) was higher than participants' post condition focus ($M = 6.56, SD = 2.17$). The study was trending towards a significant main effect for condition $F(1, 62) = 3.77, p = .057, \eta^2 = .057$. Participants in the smacking gum condition ($M = 6.52, SD = 1.89$) had a slightly higher focus level than participants in the silent condition ($M = 7.35, SD = 1.96$); however, the difference was not significant. There was a significant interaction between focus and condition, $F(1, 62) = 14.58, p < .001, \eta^2 = .190$, which means that nineteen percent of the significance was due to the researcher's manipulation (see Figure 2 and Table 2). Pre-condition smacking gum focus ($M = 7.27, SD = 1.68$) was higher than post-condition smacking gum focus ($M = 5.76, SD = 2.11$). Also, pre-condition silent focus ($M = 7.29, SD = 2.00$) was slightly lower than post-condition silent focus ($M = 7.42, SD = 1.91$).

An independent t-test was also run between sex and test assessment of pre-focus levels. There was a significant difference found comparing males ($M = 6.91, SD = 2.16$) and females ($M = 7.66, SD = 1.36$), $t(62) = -1.66, p = .003$, and their levels of focus before their condition.

It was also found that there was a weak positive correlation between sex and studying in silence, $r(62) = .23, p = .072$, but the results were not statistically significant.

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Discussion:

The results from the current research did support the prediction that the participants who were in the noise condition would have less focus than the participants in the silent condition. The prediction was based on the idea that noise can affect thought process which can disrupt focus or concentration.

There was support for the prediction of change in mood between noise and silence. The prediction was based on the researcher's idea that the noise condition would create an annoyance, which would alter the participant's mood, whereas the silent condition would allow people the ability to focus, which would keep their mood the same or raise it.

There were several shortcomings to the current research. One of the shortcomings of the experiment was that haphazard sampling and purposive sampling were used, resulting in a problem due to the research not having a completely random assignment. In other words, the research could not be generalized to the population unless more participants were obtained. Participants included the researcher's coworkers, friends, and family, of some random selection at Valdosta State University. Other shortcomings that occurred in the current research were that the location of participant testing was not kept the same throughout the research due to the need for participants and limited resources. The location of where the research took place could have influenced the focus levels of participants or the presence of others especially if the participants were at work. Another shortcoming of the current research is that it was not conducted in a lab setting, so there could never have been a completely silent condition. Outside noises such as children, Pro Audio music, and other people could not be controlled due to certain environments and situations beyond researcher control. The results could have also been due to the content of the article that was read. The article that was read was inspiring in the fact that the article was about meditation and how it can boost students' grades as well as treat psychological problems and

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high blood pressure, which could have increased moods across both noise and silent conditions. Some of the participants even stated, “I feel happier and enlightened after reading the article. It makes me want to go meditate.”

Future research may want to account for outside noise, sampling shortage, and maintaining a single location such as a lab to achieve more accurate results. Future research may want to gather a larger sample so that the findings could be generalized to the population and have greater statistical power. A lab setting would be preferable so that outside noises could be controlled and the location would stay the same across all variables. A neutral article would be best to make sure that the mood increase or decrease was due to the manipulation rather than the article that the participants read.

Further research should be conducted on noise in the classroom to benefit students in the future. Students would benefit in the area of grades and would be able to learn better in the classroom. Also finding out which noises benefit students and which ones negatively impact students could help students in classes. For example, it would be helpful to find out if whispering is more distracting than texting, or eating in the classroom is more distracting than sniffing. Timing participants to see how long it takes them to read the article would also be beneficial to compare to the other condition so there could be further support for the manipulation.

Classroom distractions are becoming more known and more increased as time passes, resulting in more research being performed. The classroom is meant to be a learning environment, so all students should be accommodated. There are some beneficial noises. Classical music playing can help cognitive abilities as stated by the Mozart Effect, and some data supports this theory but more recent data may refute it (Mjoen, n.d). However, some negative noises can also influence students. A few of the participants that were placed in the gum smacking condition of the research stated that “hearing the gum smacking

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was very distracting. I had to reread paragraphs over and over before I comprehended the article.” Statements like this were made about simply hearing a recording of gum smacking. Other noise distractions on a greater frequency could play a larger role in impairing learning. Students need a place where they can learn fully and not have to worry about being distracted by noises. Students’ grades are reflective of what they have learned in school, which influences their opportunities for admission in higher education. If that one noise is hindering them from getting into a university, it’s not fair that one student should suffer because another student was making too much noise. Classrooms need to benefit and not harm students’ learning. If that means that music is beneficial then educators should play music for students. If distracting noises harm certain students then those distractions need to be taken out of the classroom as much as possible so that everyone can learn to their full potential. Granted, some students work better in noisy areas and are able to concentrate through the noise but the education system needs to accommodate for the students who cannot. More research needs to be done on this topic so that learning can occur whether it is research finding ways to help students counteract the noise or finding ways to minimize noises until a majority of students are able to work to their full potential in the learning environment.

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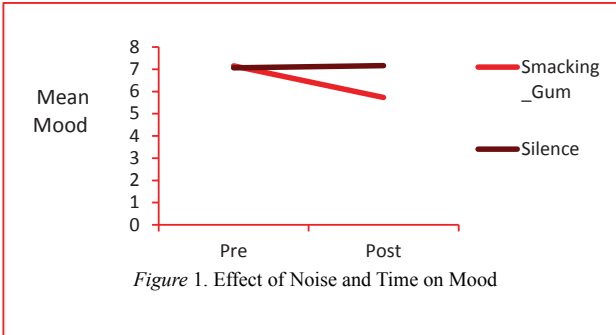


Table 1

Mean Mood by Noise and Time of Test

Time of Test	Noise			
	Smacking Gum ($n = 33$)		Silence ($n = 31$)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pre	7.15	1.70	7.06	1.98
Post	5.73	1.97	7.16	2.22

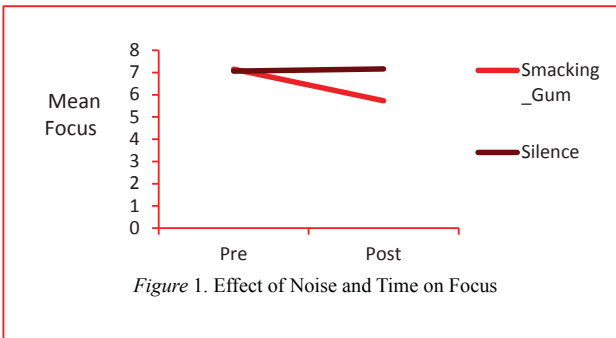


Table 2

Mean Focus by Noise and Time of Test

Time of Test	Noise			
	Smacking Gum ($n = 33$)		Silence ($n = 31$)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pre	7.27	1.68	7.30	2.00
Post	5.76	2.10	7.42	1.91

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Appendix

Part 1: Demographics Information

Sex: _____ Age: _____ Major: _____ GPA: _____

Year of school (circle one): Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate

Part 2: Pre-Test

1. How often do you study with music on? (please circle a numerical value)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Never Sometimes Always

2. How often do you study in silence?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Never Sometimes Always

3. How often do you study with the television on?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Never Sometimes Always

4. How many hours do you study a day in a normal semester (excluding finals week)? _____

5. How many days a week do you study? _____

6. What would you rate your current mood?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Horrible Okay Wonderful

7. How focused are you at any given time?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Never Sometimes Always

8. How focused are you at this moment?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Not at all Some Very much

Omnino

China: A New Superpower?

By Chase Kelly

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Carol Glen, Department of Political
Science

Article Abstract:

China has claimed its well-deserved position among the very top global political actors. Many people wonder if China will become the next superpower. If so, what impact would China's transition have on the international system? In this study, I discuss how China has experienced unimaginable growth in the past three decades, and I examine the problems facing China in its superpower endeavors. Along with this discussion, China and the United States are compared in terms of wealth, innovation, and military capability over the past decade. This study looks at the international public opinion toward both nations, with emphasis on their superpower status. The study concludes with a description of changes that the international system could face if China were to challenge the U.S.'s hegemonic rule. Within this discussion, the two competing perspectives are explored, as well as the implications with regards to hegemonic stability theory.

Introduction

An ancient Chinese proverb says, “If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people” (Hu 5). Whether you believe that the People’s Republic of China is “reshap[ing] the world” (Hu 3), an “economic miracle” (Yao 384), or just “reclaiming its place at the center of the world” (Smil 621), there is no denying the fact that China has grown to enormous proportions, both economically and politically, over the past three decades. This “economic miracle” began in 1979 when Deng Xiaoping introduced drastic economic reforms and societal changes. Xiaoping’s reforms allowed for a “transformation to a mixed economy and the shift of developmental strategy from closed-door to openness” (Yao 384). The result was a huge boost in economic and population

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growth that has led China on a path toward becoming a potential superpower. However, there are problems, such as a huge population, “persistence of poverty, environmental pollution and over-dependency on non-renewable resources” that may detour China from its path to becoming a superpower (Yao 387). Its government is aware of these constraints and has already implemented corrective policies in order to succeed as a global superpower. China is projected to overtake America by 2037 as the world’s largest economy and possibly another superpower (Yao 387)¹. China’s rise could potentially revolutionize the American way of thinking, alter international relations, and create a bi-polar system.

This study aims to analyze the current domestic status of China and its potential to rival the unipolar system of the United States. To this end, I evaluate the obstacles the Chinese nation currently faces in its potential rise to superpower status. For the purposes of this study, I limit my analysis of China to four key issues: extensive population, levels of poverty, massive amounts of pollution, and dependency on fossil fuels. These four issues were specifically chosen due to their potential in hindering China’s ambitions of playing a bigger role as a global power center, as well as their prominence in current policy making. I examine the possibility of China overtaking the U.S. by comparing the two nations in three ways: wealth, innovation, and military capability. Although there is tremendous difficulty in defining how much power a nation contains, these three aspects appear to be the most significantly related to evaluating the strength of a nation. For this reason, the comparison section of this study will focus on these three factors. Finally, I look at the international public opinion toward both nations with regards

1. This projection is based upon both the assumption that countries will follow their current growth patterns for the next thirty years as they have in the previous thirty years and that GDP is measured in nominal dollars instead of PPP dollars.

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to their superpower status.

China's Rise to Prominence:

In 1983 the World Bank published its first report on Socialist China, “which predicted that [the Chinese] economy would grow at an annual rate of about 4% or 5%” (Hu 2). However, in reality the Chinese economy grew 9.7% from 1983 to 2000 (Hu 2). Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for China “measured in PPP dollars was \$10.5 trillion [in 2006] compared with \$12.9 trillion for the US,” and when measuring GDP in nominal dollars, “China was the fourth largest economy” (Yao 385). In contrast, “the GDP of 29 countries of Western Europe has been dropping steadily, from 25% in 1975 to 20% in 2001” as a portion of the world's total, suggesting that China has become an economic power at a time when many economies saw a steady decline (Hu 6). In 1978, China was ranked at number 23 in world trade. By 2006 China had climbed to the third largest trading nation in imports and exports, accumulating “a total trade volume of \$1.8 trillion” (Yao 385-86). This economy has grown to grand proportions at an unexpected rate. The estimation of China's total trade is expected to reach \$8-9 trillion by 2020, making it highly unlikely for any nation to compete (Hu 9).

In addition to the economic growth, the nation contains a massive populous. The total population of China accounts for 20.66% of the world's people and the labor force accounts for 25.40% of the world's total (Hu 5). The fact that China's labor force has grown to “ten times or dozens of times bigger than the United States” comes as no surprise to the international community (Hu 3). Some political scientists contend that the growth seems persistent; it has been estimated that China's employed population will become around 820 million by the year 2020 (Hu 5). Because of such an enormous labor force, many of these minimum wage or “blue-collar” jobs are becoming increasingly scarce and harder to obtain. As this happens, more Chinese individuals are seeking out better positions through

higher education. In 1978, the nation had “only 598 universities, recruiting 0.4 million students” (Hu 5). In order to account for the tremendous growth, China increased to “1,800 universities recruiting over 5 million students” by 2006 (Hu 5). Not only is China’s labor force growing, but also the nation’s people are becoming more educated and competing for higher-level positions.

Problems:

China’s virtue in growth may become one of its vices in the future, because the most concerning problem facing China is the massive population. In reaction to this populous, China has been forced to implement policies in order to control the country’s birthrate. This fostered the development of a “twisted demographic foundation,” due to the nation’s people continuing their “traditionally excessive preference for sons aggravated by the state’s interference” (Smil 624). This has created the most unnatural sex ratio in the world from birth, which will “condemn tens of millions of males to spouseless lives” (Smil 624). The one-child policy will overtime cause a significant decrease in the population due to the control on birthrates. This will lead to a “rapid aging of the country’s population” and “by 2050, China will have proportionately more people over the age of 60 (about 31 percent)” (Smil 624). China may have the biggest population at present, but its unstable gender ratio will ultimately cause the birthrate to drop and the population to decrease.

China’s massive poverty rates create another problem in China’s pursuit of superpower status. Because of the rapid aging of the population, the “proportion of persons of working age within the total population will fall [from its current 68 percent] to 53 percent” (Smil 624). This major decrease in the labor force will result in a void of jobs with no one to fill them, which could cause many companies to consolidate or close. On the other end of the spectrum, many individuals who are affiliated with this aging population have no pension plans, which will leave “tens

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of millions of adults from single-child families responsible for two parents and four grandparents” (Smil 624). Adding to this poverty problem, the Chinese economic reforms are “responsible for one of the world’s fastest increases in income inequality” and have “created a massive urban underclass of destitute migrants and unemployed city workers” (Smil 624). Considering the economic implications of the issues presented, poverty could become a major domestic issue for China.

Another problem is China’s vast environmental pollution resulting from the dependency on fossil fuels. China acquires “70% of its electricity from coal powered stations” (Johns-Putra 2). China “more than doubled its burning of coal since 1980,” releasing particulate matter and smog into the atmosphere, which adds to the smog created by traffic and huge refineries (Smil 624-25). The nation is the “second largest CO₂ discharger in the world and the No. 1 discharger of organic sewage” (Hu 12). In January of 2013, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing recorded pollution levels that were “beyond index,” the highest of which was a 755 on the air quality index (Watt). The Environmental Protection Agency considers anything above 300 to be “a health warning of emergency conditions” (Watt). This reading of 755 corresponds to a PM_{2.5} density of 886 micrograms per cubic meter, which when compared to the 25 micrograms per cubic meter that the World Health Organization considers to be “a safe daily level,” shows how extreme the pollution is (Watt). In addition to air pollution, China only has “7 percent of the world’s freshwater resources,” but sadly “90 percent of water resources in urban areas are polluted” (Smil 625). With “toxic rivers, a notoriously dangerous coal mining industry, and rising

2. Watt defines PM_{2.5} as particulate matter within the air that is less than 2.5 micrometers in size. These pieces of particulate matter can penetrate far into the lungs of those exposed to the pollution, so the measurement of the density of these particles is considered an accurate representation of the danger posed to those who breathe it.

health problems from terrible air pollution,” it is anticipated that the Chinese community will protest such horrible conditions and pursue a healthier environment (Johns-Putra 2). “The state of the environment is a crucial problem for any nation claiming to be a superpower” and China must enforce additional regulations to reduce air pollution and promote a cleaner nation (Johns-Putra 2). The environmental pollution and the health of people are two very crucial aspects that will be decisive in China’s aspirations to become a superpower.

The final major problem China is facing is their over-dependency on non-renewable resources. China “consumes more than one-third of the world’s outputs of coal, steel and cement” (Yao 387). To add to this, “the amount of resources in China is far lower than the world’s average, especially in terms of arable land, water resources, petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, and non-ferrous metals” (Hu 9). Due to the lack of natural resources, the nation is rapidly decreasing the world’s supply of coal, water resources, and non-ferrous metals because they must import large quantities to support their economy. China is an industrial mecca, but its massive intake of resources cannot be maintained for long periods of time. “China’s past pattern of industrial growth is unlikely to be sustainable in the future,” which could lead to a substantial change in the industrial makeup. (Yao 387). It will be difficult for China, or any country, to maintain such a massive amount of resource use, due to the increasing scarcity of natural resources and international initiatives to reduce their use globally.

“Since the late 1990s, China has become aggressive in a global quest for raw materials” (Smil 622). In Africa, China is “acquiring land at the fastest rate” for the purpose of land-leasing, or land-grabbing, in nations such as Mali, Ethiopia, and Sudan (Bunting). Land-leasing is the renting of farm lands to outsource food production and then exporting the products “to feed the rich world” (Bunting). Land-grabbing could lead to conflict due to the loss of valuable water and crops for local

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people. According to Hu, “in the 21st century, no country, not even the United States, can rule the world” (2). With resources becoming increasingly scarce, it is hard to determine what will happen in the future.

China certainly has the ability to become one of the world’s leading nations, but will have drastic problems and challenges to surmount if it wants to acquire superpower status. With a current annual GDP growth of nearly 8 percent, and a total trade expected to be 8 to 9 trillion dollars, China certainly has enough credentials to become a powerful nation. However, as populous as China has become, with 20 percent of the world’s population, the country can easily crumble into an economic meltdown. Sustaining the new economy will be tough for China as they experience a steady decline in birthrate and labor force. All the while, China needs to make vast changes to combat the huge inequality and enormous poverty levels within the nation.

Comparison:

After analyzing the problems that are currently facing China’s ascendancy to becoming the next superpower, the plausibility of China actually becoming a superpower must be examined. The prospect that one superpower may collapse in relation to the rise of another is the object of much debate, especially because the nation facing this potential decline is the U.S. To better understand China’s potential to rival the U.S., the two must be directly compared. While the relationship is still unclear, one thing is certain: “the most significant bilateral international relationship over the course of the next several decades is likely to be that between the United States and the PRC [People’s Republic of China]” (Friedberg 8).

As early as 1996, TIME magazine reported that “China will be at the top rung of American foreign-policy changes” in the near future (Prager 1). In 1996, The U.S. and China did “\$50 billion worth of business with each other” (Prager 1). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, these numbers have

drastically increased to \$287 billion in imports and \$53 billion in exports during 2006. Even more recently, they have increased to almost \$440 billion in imports and \$122 billion in exports for 2013. Therefore, the amount of business between the two countries is well established. With many believing that China is slowly catching up to the hegemonic rule of the U.S., two main questions arise: how likely is this to happen and how should the U.S. respond?

The possibility of a shift in polarity has gained significant attention among scholars of international affairs. The debate over the rise of China has led to the development of two competing perspectives on the issue. The “declinist” perspective is more dominant and focuses on two main points: the rise of China being inversely related to the decline of the U.S., and the fact that much of this is due to globalization (Beckley 41)³. Declinists place the blame on globalization because national economies are becoming significantly more interdependent, which results in the spread of technology to developing nations, as well as the burdens of hegemony that the U.S. currently faces (Beckley 42). Much of this declinist theory stems from the long-cycle theory and the notion that history repeats itself (Beckley 44). Declinists look toward the future of the U.S. with the belief that it will follow in the footsteps of the Roman or British Empires. In other words, they believe that that the U.S. will eventually fall from hegemony at the hands of a challenger, a role many attribute to China. If this declinist ideology is correct, then the U.S. should respond by containing China’s growth by adopting a “neomercantilist international economic policy” and the U.S.

3. For further reading on the declinist perspective, see Arvind Subramanian, “The Inevitable Superpower: Why China’s Rise is a Sure Thing,” *Foreign Affairs*, 90.5 (September/October 2011), pp. 66–78; Gideon Rachman, “American Decline: This Time It’s for Real,” *Foreign Policy*, 184 (January/February 2011), pp. 59–65; and Christopher Layne, “The Waning of U.S. Hegemony—Myth or Reality? A Review Essay,” *International Security*, 34.1 (Summer 2009), pp. 147–72.

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should withdraw from current alliances in East Asia (Beckley 42).

The contrasting perspective rejects these two main assumptions.⁴ This ideology sees globalization as a positive feature for the U.S.: they credit it, as well as hegemonic rule, with creating the U.S.'s durable power (Beckley 42). America's powerful position allows it to exploit comparative advantages from the international economy, and thus manipulate them to its advantage (Beckley 42). The origins of this theory came from the notion that history has no influence over contemporary politics since the system has never been so nationally integrated and no two instances are ever completely identical (Beckley 45). If this perspective is correct, then the response should be to contain China's growth by maintaining liberal economic policies internationally, while maintaining a strong presence in Asian countries (Beckley 42).

To determine what the American response should be, the most important step is to establish which of the competing perspectives is closer to reality. This hinges on power. Is the U.S. in decline as China becomes more powerful? There is great difficulty in measuring a nation's power because political scientists lack a clear way to measure power. Additionally, there is difficulty in comparing U.S.-Chinese power because, as Michael Beckley puts it, "many studies are static" (Beckley 43). They present "single-year snapshots of US and Chinese power" rather than taking into account the past and future to predict if the U.S. is declining relative to China (Beckley 43). It is for these reasons that I use Beckley's study of the two nations to understand what the response should be, and, more importantly, whether the current

4. For further reading on the alternative perspective, see: Salvatore Babones, "The Middle Kingdom: The hype and Reality of China's Rise," *Foreign Affairs*, 90.5 (September/October 2011), pp. 79-88; and Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

state of affairs supports the declinist perspective. In his study, Beckley bases his comparison of U.S.-Chinese power relations on three key factors: wealth, innovation, and military capability.

When comparing the two nations based on wealth, the declinist perspective has a very pessimistic view. This is largely due to the aforementioned significant rise in GDP of China relative to the U.S. (Beckley 58). Declinists believe this follows the historic precedence of the long-cycle theory, which will eventually lead China to end the hegemonic rule of the U.S. However, as Beckley points out, the United Kingdom “ruled a quarter of the globe for more than a century, but was never the largest economy in the world” (Beckley 58). Therefore, even if China is catching up in terms of GDP, it does not always translate into national power.

To have a clearer picture of the two nations, the two countries need to be compared in terms of their wealth. Looking at things such as surplus wealth among the populous, “the average Chinese citizen is more than \$17,000 poorer relative to the average American than he was in 1991” (Beckley 59). Additionally, examining the workforce of both nations, the one-child policy of China has further detrimental economic implications as they “confront the most severe aging process in human history” (Beckley 61). Predictions show that within the next twenty years, around 300 million Chinese individuals will be pensioners, which will cause the ratio of workers-to-retirees to drop from its current 8-to-1 ratio to a 2-to-1 ratio by the year 2040 (Beckley 61). By contrast, the working population of the U.S. is expected to grow “by 17 percent over the next forty years” (Beckley 61).

On the subject of innovation, the declinist perspective has an equally pessimistic view: “Declinists claim that the United States produces too few scientists and engineers” while China employs enough of these to compete with developed nations like the U.S. (Beckley 63). It is imperative to note that while China’s numbers appear to be at a level sufficient to compete with the

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U.S., the numbers are inflated as “half of China’s ‘engineers’ are auto mechanics or graduates of two-year vocational programs” (Beckley 64). Although this is true, it will not hinder increases in Chinese research and development (R&D) because the country has passed legislation to address it. The Chinese government passed a law which stated that “R&D expenditures will constitute 2.5 percent of GDP” by the year 2020 and the law will place it “among the top five countries in terms of scientific article output” (Beckley 64). Similar to the one-child policy, this initiative to move forward might instead set them back. The rush to increase the number of scientists in China has caused significant reductions in the quality of education, and the push to increase R&D has led to a “Wild West climate” where the top researchers “are tempted to fake results or copy the works of others,” due to the pressure placed upon them (Beckley 56).

In the U.S., the story is very different. The U.S. has held the lead in recent years by increasing R&D spending and the U.S. “still accounts for 50 percent of the world’s most highly cited articles” (Beckley 64). In higher education, the U.S. is far from a Wild West climate because it is home to between “thirty-three and fifty four” of the top 100 universities (Beckley 67). When compared to China’s “two to zero” universities of the same caliber, the results speak for themselves (Beckley 67). Chinese students, like all students, want to acquire the best education possible, which leads many to attend American universities. In fact, the average number of Chinese students enrolled in American universities has increased by 9 percent between 1996 and 2011 and 20 percent between 2007 and 2011 (Beckley 66). The declinist argument applied here shows that Chinese students acquire their degrees and then return home, which compromises the American technological advantage. On the contrary, 90 percent of Chinese students “who received a science or engineering Ph.D. from an American University between 1987 and 2007 joined the American workforce” (Beckley 66). In light of the expensive nature of U.S. secondary education, those who

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joined the American workforce “were typically China’s best and brightest” (Beckley 66).

But how do the two nations compare when it comes to R&D output? Over the past twenty years, the total R&D spending by Chinese firms “as a percentage of sales revenue has remained at levels seven times below the average for American firms” (Beckley 70). The number of Chinese “enterprises engaged in scientific or technological activity declined from 59 percent to 37 percent” and the amount of Chinese “firms with an R&D department declined from 60 percent to 24 percent” between 1995 and 2008 (Beckley 70). The U.S., on the other hand, remains on the forefront of new technological developments. In nanotechnology, the U.S. “has more centers than the next three nations combined,” all the while accounting for “43 percent of the world’s nanotechnology patent applications” (Beckley 70). In biotechnology, the U.S. holds “41.5 percent of patent applications” as compared with “China’s 1.6 percent” (Beckley 70). In renewable energy, the U.S. holds “20 to 25 percent of all patent applications” as compared with China’s “1 to 4 percent,” which includes new developments in “air pollution, water pollution, and waste management technologies” (Beckley 70). The final key factor, military capability, is central to the declinist perspective. This perspective views hegemony as one of the main causes for U.S. decline; the U.S. must spend significantly more on military resources because they must be spread globally. While China’s military budget has doubled in three different increments (1989-1994, 1994-1999, and 2005-2009), the figure has still declined compared to U.S. spending (Beckley 73). The actual defense budget, while excluding the funding for Iraq and Afghanistan, “exceeds half a trillion dollars,” which is “eight times greater than China’s and rising” (Beckley 73). In addition, one seldom mentioned aspect also underestimates the advantage of the U.S., which Beckley calls the “bank for the buck” element (Beckley 74). The economic superiority that the U.S. has over China allows each dollar of American investment in its military

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to exceed the capabilities of each dollar China puts toward its military (Beckley 74). In this way, American military investment allows it a significant advantage over the same investment that China could make. Similarly, the U.S.'s share in the convention arms market rose to 68 percent in 2008, while China's fell to below 1.5 percent (Beckley 75).

Beckley said it best when comparing the two nations: "China is rising, but it is not catching up" (44). There is no doubt that China has grown significantly within recent years, but the comparison simply does not support the declinist perspective. The U.S. is not in a decline that is relative to the rise of China; the data in Beckley's study clearly supports the alternative perspective. With such things as the one-child policy and the shortcomings of the "Wild West" research environment, China's problems outweigh its potential to become a superpower in the coming years. This is not to say that the U.S. is not facing potential problems as well, but that the U.S. is in a better position to cope with its respective challenges. Therefore, the best response from the U.S. would be to work toward a stronger economic and diplomatic relationship with China. In the future, China could become a rival to the unipolar position of the U.S., but it is not in that position yet. As China begins to cope with the aforementioned challenges, it seems unlikely that it will reach a position to disrupt the polarity.

When the idea of a rival superpower is mentioned, many people immediately begin to make connections with the Cold War. The apprehension some individuals have toward China's growth could be attributed to ideas created in the era of competition with the former Soviet Union, as the declinist perspective seems to have strong origins in the Cold War era. These origins are seen in aspects of the long-cycle theory coupled with the weariness of potential decline. In the aftermath of the rivalry with the former Soviet Union, the U.S. realized that their position as the superpower was not guaranteed. This realization has grown into a worry about the day when the U.S.

may no longer be a superpower, bringing China's potential to be a superpower to the forefront.

International Impact:

Another question remains in relation to China's rise to power: What do other nations think about China and the U.S.? Do they anticipate that the U.S. will remain the sole superpower? Or does the global community believe that China will surpass the U.S.? The Pew Research Center, as a part of their Global Attitudes Project, recently released a study to answer that question. Their study lasted from March 2 to May 1, 2013, during which they asked 37,653 respondents in 39 countries several questions that compared the public opinion of the U.S. with that of China. For the purposes of this study, I will highlight three main questions within the study that pertain to the topic at hand: favorability, economic power, and the question of China replacing the U.S.

On the topic of favorability among the global community, the U.S. still holds a stronger favorable opinion than does China. Within the study, "a median of 63% express a favorable opinion of the U.S., compared with 50% for China" (Pew 1). While relatively few view either nation as an enemy, most nations view the U.S. as "more willing than China to consider other countries' interests" (Pew 1). However, the study shows that favorability does change significantly based on the region (see fig. 1) (Pew 2). The U.S. holds strong favorability in Europe as "more than six-in-ten [people] in Italy, Poland, France, and Spain have a favorable opinion of the U.S.," with Greece being the only nation in the European Union where the majority has a more favorable outlook toward China (Pew 2). The U.S.'s favorability remains significantly negative in regions of the Muslim world, such as Pakistan 11%, Jordan 14%, Egypt 16%, and Palestinian territories 16% (Pew 2). China's favorability retains a higher figure in these same regions: Pakistan 81%, Jordan 40%, Egypt 45%, and Palestinian territories 47%. (Pew 2) However, the U.S. receives high favorability from Muslim nations like Senegal,

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Indonesia, and Malaysia (Pew 2). In the Asia/Pacific region, “the U.S. receives particularly favorable reviews in the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan” with Japan giving China the lowest rating of only 5% positive (Pew 2-3). In Australia, “a majority 58% has a favorable opinion of China” (Pew 3). Overall, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa have positive views of both nations, with the U.S. receiving “slightly higher ratings than China” (Pew 3).

MEDIAN FAVORABILITY OF U.S. AND CHINA BY REGION

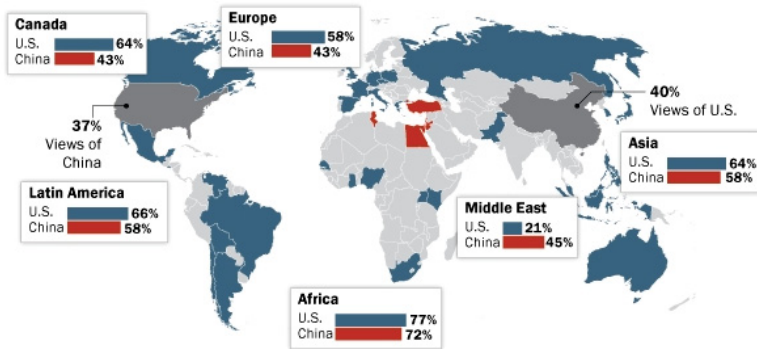
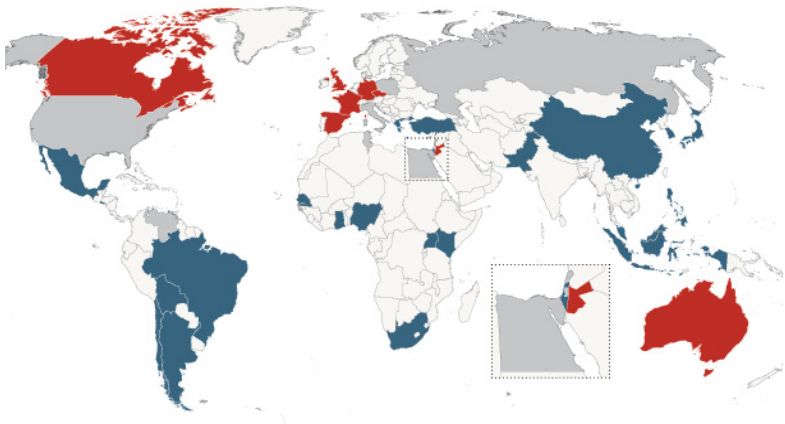


Fig. 1. Source: “Median Favorability of U.S. and China by Region” from Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project; United States and China: The Image of the Globe’s Two Superpowers; www.pewglobal.org, 18 July, 2013. Web. 19 Aug. 2013.

On the second topic of public opinion, economic power, “the U.S. is still viewed as the dominant economy by most,” but “people are increasingly more likely to say China” (Pew 34). In 22 of the 39 countries surveyed, majorities believe that the U.S. is the more dominant economy, while eight countries contend that China’s economy is dominant, and the remaining nine have a divided opinion (Pew 34). Here, the results vary based on region as well (see fig. 2). In both North America and Europe, majorities agree that China is the strongest economy (Pew 34). Greece remains the only country where “at least half say the U.S.” and the American public is divided heavily with 44% saying China and 39% saying the U.S. (Pew 34-35). Opinions are divided in the Middle East as well. In both Turkey and Israel, the majorities believe the U.S. is dominant, while Jordanians are more likely

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to say China (Pew 35). Among other countries in the Middle East, opinion is heavily divided. In Latin America, “pluralities of majorities in most countries say the U.S.” with Venezuela being the only nation where opinion is divided equally: “38% say the U.S. and 32% name China” (Pew 35). In Africa, almost each country chose the U.S. as more dominant by at least half or more (Pew 35). In the Asia/Pacific region, the public sides with the U.S.: “broad majorities” in Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea say the U.S., while China’s results say 46% U.S. and 30% China (Pew 35). Australia is the only nation to side with China with 61% in favor of China and only 28% for the U.S. (Pew 35). According to a different Pew Research study done in 2008 with 20 nations, “the median percentage naming the U.S. as the world’s leading economic power has declined from 47% to 41%” (Pew 35). Additionally, the median that put China in the top spot rose from “20% to 34%” (Pew 35).



Mixed countries are nations in which there is not a statistically significant majority or plurality naming either the U.S. or China as the top economic power.

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Fig. 2. Source: “World’s Leading Economic Power: United States or China?” from Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project; World’s Leading Economic Power; www.pewglobal.org, 18 July. 2013. Web. 19 Aug. 2013.

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However, a third question still carries the most weight: will China replace the U.S. as the leading superpower? According to Pew's research, "many publics believe China will eventually replace the U.S. as the world's leading superpower, if it has not already done so" (see table 1) (Pew 36). Only six of the 39 countries surveyed believe that China will never surpass the U.S., while in 23 of the 39 nations, majorities contend that China has "already replaced or will eventually replace the U.S. as the top superpower" (Pew 36, 5). Regionally, Europeans believe that China has already or eventually will overtake the leading superpower position from the U.S. (Pew 36). In the Asia/Pacific region, "at least half of Australians, Chinese, South Koreans, and Pakistanis" believe China has taken that position, while majorities in Japan and the Philippines contend that the U.S. will "retain its status" (Pew 36). In Latin America, "five of the seven countries surveyed" believe China has or will replace the U.S. (Pew 36-37). In Africa, the results are split: majorities in Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria side with China, while Uganda sides with the U.S., and Ghana and Senegal remain heavily divided (Pew 37). In the Middle East, the split is similar. "Half or more in Egypt and Lebanon" believe the U.S. will retain its position, while Palestinians and Tunisians say China is rising; Jordanians and Israelis remain heavily divided (Pew 37). With regard to the competing nations, "two-thirds of Chinese believe their country already has or someday will supplant the U.S, while Americans are divided: 47% believe China will or already has and 47% say this will never happen" (Pew 5).

Conclusion:

China has displayed to the international community that it belongs in the company of the world's leading nations. However, it has some difficult problems to face on its way to becoming a superpower. Sustaining their economy appears to be the most difficult of these, as they experience decreasing amounts of fossil fuels, a steady decline in birthrate, and an aging labor

force. Additionally, poverty rates and inequality will become an increasingly prominent issue for China. If China copes with all challenges effectively, the nation has the potential to become a superpower. If they can face the challenges, their investment in “people”—as the proverb puts it—will be worth the return.

The relationship between the U.S. and China has developed into one of the most debated in international affairs. With the U.S. remaining atop the current unipolar system, the potential of China to challenge that position has some interesting international implications. According to the hegemonic stability theory, a single hegemon provides stability by acting as a pseudo-central government to the international system, which includes deterring aggression among nations and providing a hard currency that acts as a world standard. In this way, China’s possible challenge to the system could influence all aspects of international affairs, including world trade and diplomatic relations. More prominently, the stability that comes with a single hegemon would no longer apply. The lack of stability combined with the power transition theory, which says the largest conflicts result from a rising power threatening to surpass a hegemon, shows that the bipolar international system is the most dangerous. If China is able to challenge the position of the U.S., the reaction would foster a significant change in the international system. However, this transition would come with the possibility of a large conflict. In this regard, the relationship between the U.S. and China is one of the most important in the coming years.

As mentioned in Beckley’s case study, U.S.-China competition has given rise to two competing perspectives. Of these two perspectives, international public opinion overwhelmingly supports the declinist way of thinking, which says China will or already has surpassed the U.S. as the world’s leading superpower. However, as Beckley describes, this could be largely attributed to incomprehensive studies that only offer a small window for comparison. Evidence from Beckley’s study

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	Will eventually replace U.S.	Has already replaced U.S.	Total has or will replace U.S.	Will never replace U.S.
	%	%	%	%
Canada	52	15	67	26
U.S.	36	11	47	47
Spain	55	16	71	26
France	48	22	70	31
Britain	55	11	66	26
Germany	50	16	66	29
Greece	40	17	57	31
Poland	33	22	55	27
Czech Rep.	39	15	54	39
Russia	35	15	50	31
Italy	31	17	48	41
Palest. ter.	35	21	56	31
Jordan	28	18	46	46
Tunisia	35	10	45	31
Israel	35	9	44	42
Lebanon	25	17	42	50
Egypt	18	19	37	56
Turkey	23	13	36	40
Australia	52	15	67	25
China	58	8	66	13
S. Korea	45	11	56	44
Pakistan	42	9	51	15
Indonesia	29	10	39	41
Malaysia	22	8	30	36
Japan	15	9	24	72
Philippines	13	9	22	74
Venezuela	32	20	52	28
Chile	34	17	51	27
Mexico	28	22	50	31
Argentina	36	14	50	33
Bolivia	33	13	46	29
Brazil	28	10	38	45
El Salvador	29	8	37	49
S. Africa	25	21	46	28
Kenya	34	13	47	38
Senegal	31	8	39	35
Nigeria	25	13	38	29
Ghana	25	13	38	36
Uganda	17	8	25	43
MEDIAN	33	13	47	33

Statistically significant pluralities and majorities are in bold.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q30.

Table 1. Source: Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's, Pew Research Center, Jul. 2013. Web. p. 35.

does not support the declinist perspective because the U.S. has retained its advantage in wealth, innovation, and military capability in comparison to China. Although China has grown exponentially, the results do not show it rivaling the hegemonic rule of the U.S. anytime soon. Therefore, the international system will likely retain its stability because the U.S. will remain the unipolar power center. Much of this worry in regards to the decline of the U.S. could be attributed to the security dilemma: while China builds up their nation, the U.S. worries that the purpose is to threaten them. Although the declinist perspective is dominant, and has been shown to have international implications in the Pew study, the evidence simply does not show that the U.S. is in decline relative to China. Additionally, the U.S. appears to be maintaining its advantage in wealth, innovation, and military capability, which are key factors in defining power for Beckley. Therefore, the U.S. will most likely remain

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the sole hegemon unless there is an unexpected change in the international system.

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Drowning Capitalism: The Aquatic Redemption of the Rabbitte Family in Roddy Doyle's *The Van*

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Article Abstract:

Roddy Doyle's *The Barrytown Trilogy* reveals the dehumanizing nature of capitalism and its effects on individual communities. Doyle offers no direct solution to the dehumanization of individuals. However, his use of water functions symbolically as an answer to this dehumanization: water serves as redemption from economical contamination. This epiphany illustrates that individuals can regain their sense of self only when capitalism is abandoned.

Inspired by the struggles of lower-class Irishmen, Roddy Doyle's *The Barrytown Trilogy* features three distinct accounts of the Rabbitte family's exploits as they transition from the middle class in *The Commitments* to the lower class in *The Snapper*, only to end up fighting among themselves because of their degraded social standing in the Barrytown community of *The Van*. Through these journeys, the protagonist, Jimmy Rabbitte Sr., learns the true dysfunction, disconnection, and dehumanization arising within him, his family, and his community, while suffering from the outside tension caused by Ireland's changing capitalist society. In a struggle to provide for their families, Jimmy Sr. and his friend, Brendan "Bimbo" Reeves, become capitalists through their Fish-n-Chips business, but are overwhelmed by capitalist ideology and begin to commodify their relationships with each other and their community. Throughout the trilogy, especially in *The Van*, water becomes a powerful symbol as the family's unaccountable refusal to provide the business van with water highlights the economic contamination from which its members suffer in their pursuit

of wealth. The closing scene in which the van is abandoned to the sea highlights the cleansing and renewal that comes when capitalism is abandoned.

Much of Doyle's inspiration for his novels derives from the political and social issues of Ireland, which he conveys through setting, atmosphere, and tone in *The Barrytown Trilogy*. Ireland's growing sense of displacement by British rule colors the characters as well as their motives. In 1987, Ireland struggled with its freedom from English imperialism. Ireland and its citizens fought to develop their own sense of identity due to social disarray, which began when Ireland suffered from the Remembrance Day Bombings in Enniskillen where three Irish Republican Army soldiers bombed a war memorial during a ceremony honoring British soldiers (Johnson). The bombings threw Ireland into chaos, devastation, and depression. In Doyle's novels, Jimmy Sr. Jr. creates a band to revive the soul of the Barrytown community and, hopefully, all of Ireland. Mary McGlynn explains, "In choosing [American] soul music and repudiating Irishness, Jimmy Sr. redefines the construction of identity as something based not on ethnic ties, but on economic ones" (237-38). Therefore, Jimmy Sr.'s original goal of bringing soul music to Ireland becomes overshadowed and influenced by capitalism. He desires to regain his Irish sense of individualism; however, he is unable to do so because of British and American influences.

Seminal critics such as Keith Booker and Ake Persson examine how capitalism causes displacement, dysfunction, and isolation for individuals in this community. Booker explains, "The major action of *The Van* involves the efforts of Jimmy Sr., and his friend Bimbo to start up their own fast food business, hoping to compete directly with existing fish-and-chips shops, but also hoping to outstrip American fast-food chains such as McDonalds" (33). However, from the beginning, Jimmy and Bimbo's plan is doomed to fail. It is impossible for such a small operation to take down such large food chains. In addition, it

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is important to note that Dublin's lower-class, represented by Jimmy and Bimbo, are attempting to compete with a very successful American food chain. This situation represents the American ideology of rugged individualism, which is the cornerstone of the American Dream: people are convinced they can create business ventures and prosper (Tyson 60). Persson agrees, "Ultimately, then, this force becomes an attempt to win back urban and economic space lost to the official and dominant political and economic power" (61). Therefore, Jimmy and Bimbo become consumed with the notion of making money while trying to regain lost territory to American food chains. By becoming consumed by the ideology of American competition, Jimmy and Bimbo allow their business to become a commodity. In other words, their business stops being valued for its use. The two friends are obsessed with the American ideology of competition, caring only about how much money they can make, instead of using the business to provide for their family (Tyson 62). Competition ultimately drives the two friends apart.

In the beginning, Jimmy Sr. is unemployed. Soon afterwards, Bimbo, his closest friend, loses his job because of his age. With nothing to do, the two men hang around Hikers, a local bar, go to the library, and babysit Jimmy Sr.'s granddaughter, Gina. One night, Bimbo and Jimmy get drunk at Hikers and try to go to a Fish-in-Chips van only to find it has vanished, "Then, they remembered that the van hadn't been there in a long time; months in fact. They only missed it now when they wanted it. 'That van was a little gold mine,' he [Bimbo] said" (Doyle 433). Here, Bimbo begins a journey that steers the two of them to their downfall. As a consumer, Bimbo desires the service of the van, but only desires it when the van is not present. Therefore, Bimbo begins to seek a means of production with his friend Bertie:

—Yeh wouldn't have a chipper van to sell, I
suppose, said Bimbo
—would yeh, Bertie?

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—No, said Bertie, like Bimbo'd just asked him if he'd any bananas.

Jimmy Sr. and Paddy stared at Bimbo.

—Just a thought, said Bimbo.

And he left it at that. (445)

Ironically, Bimbo does not leave the van business alone. Soon after, Bimbo buys a van with the plans of establishing his own business in order to provide for his family. The first aspect of the van Jimmy Sr. asks about is the sink in the van:

—What's the sink for? Jimmy Sr. wanted to know.

—For washin' stuff o' course, said Bimbo.

—But there's no fuckin' water, said Jimmy Sr.

—Yeh'd have to have a sink, said Bimbo.

—But there's no fuckin' water, Jimmy Sr. said again.

—Well, it's there for somethin', said Bimbo

—We'll figure it ou'. (476)

Jimmy Sr.'s thoughts about this problem are not as focused as they should be with the business; "The thing that got on Jimmy Sr.'s wick, a sink with no water; it was about as useful as an arse with no hole. He let it go though. They'd other things to do today" (481). Logically they would need water to run a safe, clean food business, But Jimmy ignores this significant problem by stating that he and Bimbo have other things to do that day. What could be more important than fixing the van so that it can have water? Here, Jimmy and Bimbo's lack of concern for the water reveals the extent to which they have dehumanized their future customers. As potential businessmen, Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo should be concerned with the safety for their impending customers. "It was filthy. He'd [Jimmy] never seen anything like it [the van]. They walked around it. It was horrible to think that

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people had once eaten chips and stuff out of this thing; it was a fuckin' scandal" (449-50). Here, the two of them are beginning to fall prey to American capitalist ideologies by acting like ruthless businessmen and by cutting corners to maximize profit. However, they should be concerned with getting the van to work at its maximum potential to avoid problems in the future.

The traditional solution to the filth of the van would be to have the vehicle professionally cleaned and inspected before attempting to conduct any type of business. Bertie, the seller of the van, tells Bimbo and Jimmy, "It needs a wash an' its armpits shaved, but so wha'? Don't we all?" (452). Furthermore, Bertie describes how to clean the van, "A few minutes with a hose an' maybe, just maybe, a few hours with a paint scraper an' it'll be perfect. The Rolls-Royce o' chipper vans" (455). However, Maggie, Bimbo's wife, is not convinced that this van will amount to anything. Instead, she confronts Bimbo about the condition of the van:

—Have yeh looked inside it? Maggie asked Bimbo.

—Oh I have, yeah, said Bimbo—No, it's grand. It's all there, all the equipment.

It's a bit, eh—

—What abou' the engine? Said Maggie.

Bertie got there before Bimbo.

—What engine would tha' be, signora? (455)

The van has no means of producing fresh clean water nor does it have an engine in order to go anywhere to provide its business to customers. Despite these two significant problems, Bimbo and Jimmy are not concerned at all. Instead, the two focus on getting the van clean; "They got paint scrapers, five of them, from Barney's Hardware and attacked the van with them, and they started to get somewhere" (464). Instead of fixing the van's more pressing problems, Bimbo and Jimmy focus on its outward

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appearance. Dehumanized by the notion of making money, the two ignore their future customer's health and only do repairs that will increase sales. They believe that if the outside and presentation looks good then it does not matter the means or condition of how a product is created.

As the business improves, it is implied that Jimmy and Bimbo are making a good amount of money:

—Look at me shoes, said Sharon.

—Buy a new pair.

—Wha' with?

—This, said Bimbo.

He held up a handful of notes, then put them back in the box. He showed them the rest of the cash in the box. He had to squash it down to keep it from falling out; not just green notes either, brown ones as well, even a couple of blueys.
(503)

Bimbo and Jimmy's business does very well on its first night. However, it is important to note than Sharon is concerned with how messed up her shoes became because of the unsafe grease from the fryers and hotplates. Ironically, Bimbo and Jimmy's response to Sharon's problem is for her to buy a new pair with their profits instead of being concerned with the food inventory, fixing the water, or getting an engine for the van. Maggie becomes more involved in the business after the first successful night and the two men begin to operate the business more like an American business: "It was great having the few bob in the pocket again. They didn't just count the night's takings and divide it into two. They were more organized than that; it was a business. There was stock to be bought, the engine to save for. Maggie kept the books" (507). Despite the success and organization, the van still has no water. Instead of paying to fix the problem with their earnings, Jimmy and Bimbo's solution to

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the van's lack of water is to send Sharon to go bother somebody else for their water supply:

—We need more water, love, he told her. Sharon was lost.

—Pop over the road an' she'll fill them for yeh. Bimbo told her—Rita Fleming; Miss Fleming. D'yeh know which house she's in?

—Yeah.

She didn't do anything yet though. She thought she'd been told to go over to the Flemings with two milk bottles and ask Missis Fleming to fill them for her, but she wasn't sure. (494)

The manipulation of Mrs. Flemmings is an allegory that reflects on the dehumanization of Jimmy and Bimbo. The two of them are not bothered at all at troubling somebody else. Missis Fleming, representing a revived Barrytown citizen, is now being bothered by two men who refuse to spend money on fixing their business. They would rather spend money on new clothes:

He bought himself a new shirt—Veronica'd been giving him grief about the smell of his clothes – a nice one with stripes running down it. He handed most of the money over to Veronica.

—You're not to waste it all on food now, d'yeh hear, he said.

—You're to buy somethin' for yourself.

—Yes, master, said Veronica. (508)

Before purchasing the van, Jimmy's family was struggling to survive. Therefore, it is ironic that Jimmy instructs Veronica, his wife, to use the money to buy items of commodification such as clothes or jewelry instead of necessities or practical items like food. These luxuries are commodified, because they are

appreciated for their exchange value (their value in currency or trade) and their sign-exchange value (their contribution of social status), rather than their use value (their ability to do something) (Tyson 62). Eventually, Bimbo and Jimmy save up enough of their money for an engine, but they only do so because Maggie helps with keeping the books: “They got in. Bimbo put in the key. The van had a new engine” (515). One significant problem with the van has been fixed. Jimmy and Bimbo no longer needed to push the van up and down roads; however, the van still needs a water supply. The two men can afford an engine, so why not fix the water problem? The answer is simple: Bimbo and Jimmy have become overwhelmed with their avarice. Now, they feel they must continue to make more money to support commodities such as clothes, shoes, jewelry, and Christmas presents for their families. They transform themselves into commodities and value themselves by the commodities with which they surround themselves.

Consistently, water begins to appear more and more as Jimmy and Bimbo’s van becomes more successful. Getting tired of running to obtain water, Sharon eventually quits working for her dad. Here, Jimmy represents a businessman. Since he cannot get Sharon to work, he simply hires another person within his family to replace her. Without even realizing it, Jimmy and Bimbo have become capitalists. They are no longer satisfied with just providing enough for their families. After Sharon quits, Jimmy hires his son Darren:

Darren was back, with three full milk bottles.

—What kept yeh? Said Bimbo.

—I had to negotiate.

Missis Fleming had cut off their water supply before, when Jimmy Sr. rang the bell during Coronation Street and then knocked on the front-window when she hadn’t answered fast enough for him. They’d had to buy her a box of Terry

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Moonlight chocolates and get Maggie to deliver them, before she'd given them the right of way again. (561-62)

There are several aspects wrong with this situation. First, Jimmy Sr. knocks on Missis Fleming's front window when she does not answer him fast enough. He is lucky that she is letting him use her water. In addition, he has the audacity to rush her. In reality, Jimmy and Bimbo could just fix the water in the van, and the problem would be solved. However, at this point, both are too far gone and drowning in American ideologies. The second troubling issue is that they have to bribe Missis Flemings with a box of chocolate for water. According to Lois Tyson, "I commodify human beings when I structure my relation with them to promote my own advancement financially or socially" (62). Jimmy has commodified his relationship with Missis Fleming, which he bases on her water supply, resulting in his dehumanization. Once again, Bimbo and Jimmy have the means to fix their water problem, which they prove by buying an engine for the van (515). Here, they reveal how capitalism distorts people's perceptions of priorities versus luxury commodities with their refusal to fix the water problem.

In the end, the business consumes Jimmy and Bimbo, and the two friends end up fighting over greed and selfishness. Jimmy describes their falling out:

It was like a film about a marriage breaking up. But Bimbo was edgy now, expecting a snotty remark, and that stopped Jimmy Sr. They both were afraid to speak. So they didn't. Jimmy Sr. felt sad at first, then annoyed, and then fury built up and his neck stiffened and he wanted to let a huge long roar out of him. He wanted to get Bimbo's head and dunk it into the bubbling fat and hold it there. And he supposed Bimbo felt the

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same. And that made it worse because it was Bimbo's fault in the first place. (615)

Even now, Jimmy refuses to admit that he is just as much at fault as Bimbo for their broken friendship. In reality, Jimmy Sr. has been a bully to Bimbo to the point of violence, "He saw half of Bimbo's face behind the door. He threw everything against it and it smacked Bimbo's face, and all the violence went out of him. He'd hurt Bimbo" (597). Because of his consuming jealousy, Jimmy ends up hurting Bimbo over the business that they started together. Jimmy becomes jealous of the business relationship between Bimbo and Maggie. Because Bimbo and Maggie are married, they have a right to discuss business practices in bed. "Bimbo and Maggie were the ones in charge; Jimmy Sr. couldn't help thinking that sometimes. But sometimes he felt that they'd their minds made up, they'd the days tactics all worked out, before he rang their bell. He felt a bit left out; he couldn't help it" (554). Jimmy Sr.'s jealousy is misguided in light of the fact that Bimbo and Maggie are the ones who paid for the van. Jimmy Sr. does not contribute any money to the purchase of the van; therefore, he has no right to complain. Jimmy Sr. feels he is entitled to the business plans instead of realizing that he is just a worker like Sharon. This situation causes Jimmy to become jealous and lose control of his temper with Bimbo. Being awakened from his greed by the broken friendship, Bimbo realizes the dangers of capitalism and the dehumanization of Jimmy and himself that the Fish-n-Chips business has caused. Bimbo deals with the van in the only way he knows:

He headed for the water. It was hard to see where it started. There were no waves, no white ones. Jimmy Sr. heard it. They were in it now. He saw it, lit up in front of him and out the side window. He found Bimbo behind the van, pushing it, trying to get it further into the water, getting

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nowhere. He could see the top of the van's wheels; the water only reached the bottom of the burger sign. When the tide came in though, it would disappear then. (632)

Here, Bimbo rejects the commodification of his business by pushing his van into the ocean; thus, he drowns the ideologies of capitalism and revives his sense of humanity through the redemption of water in exchange for his previous simplistic lifestyle with Jimmy. This situation is a very significant shift for Bimbo as he awakens from the American capitalism that nearly cost him his friendship. Jimmy Sr.'s instantaneous response to Bimbo's awakening and revival is, "You'll be able to get it when the tide goes out again" (633). Despite all of Bimbo's efforts, Jimmy Sr. is not changed by the symbolic drowning of the van and the capitalist ideologies associated with it. Instead, Jimmy Sr. only sees the loss of future profit and reminds Bimbo that he can still recover the business in the morning. Jimmy's cold and calculated remark about retrieving the van when the tide goes out reveals the true devastating dehumanization caused by capitalism.

Throughout these novels, Jimmy Sr.'s family, friends, and community experience a variety of changes from 1989 to 1991. Jimmy Sr. grows from an unemployed, low-class, Barrytown citizen to an American capitalist businessman who forgets his own sense of identity in the sea of American ideologies. Unfortunately, Jimmy Sr. does not leave the sea of American capitalism. Instead, he drowns in the ocean with the van while his friend Bimbo revives and converts his perception to the previous simplistic lifestyle. Despite Jimmy's lack of immediate change, he does sense that something is wrong. Within the concluding words of the novel, Jimmy seeks comfort in his family's embrace, "Veronica woke up while he was getting his clothes off. She smelt the sea in the room. It was getting bright outside. He sat on the bed beside her.—Give us a hug, Veronica, will

yeh.—I need a hug” (633). Instead of turning to the comfort of his commodities from the business, Jimmy Sr. seeks solace in his wife’s embrace. Here, there is a chance for Jimmy Sr.’s redemption from capitalism as he turns to his family instead of finding comfort in the material possessions the van brought to them. With a churning sea of emotions, Jimmy Sr. has the potential to experience the aquatic redemption that Bimbo and his family experienced if only he would drown capitalism and the dehumanized ideologies that represent it.

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From the White Mind to the Colorblind Eye: Peeling Whiteness from Toni Morrison's Characters in *Tar Baby*, *Song of Solomon*, and *The Bluest Eye*

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Article Abstract:

This critical essay reviews three of Toni Morrison's novels and their main characters, Pecola, Milkman, and Jadine, who have no sense of self. They have no sense of belonging because of their inherent Western ideology of beauty. Because of the characters' blackness, they are confined to the shadows and ideas of whiteness. As depicted in Morrison's novels, societal whiteness is seen as true or pure. It is a standard, up to which none of the characters can live. Therefore throughout the novels, the characters have to be peeled from this notion and deemed colorblind to the idea of race and beauty. Only through this peeling will the characters be transformed from popular belief. In the end, Morrison is successful in moving her characters from the white mind to the colorblind eye. However, one of the colorblind eyes creates a delusion and an obstacle for the character.

Peeling away a condescending stereotype painted on by an entire nation may be difficult, but once done it will unmask the strength and originality in a person's basic and inherent features. Some of the African American characters found in Toni Morrison's novels have no clear idea of their ancestral past. Because of this lack of history, a given character may have no real sense of truth about himself/herself or his/her ancestors. Thus, the character may not know how to love. Truth and love are interchangeable words when it comes to understanding the self and "only by accepting and understanding the past can African Americans achieve a psychological wholeness in the present and strengthen as a race in the future" (Cormier-Hamilton 111). Author Toni Morrison frequently writes about specific race-related topics such as whiteness: "she challenges America's complacent belief in its benevolent

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self-image through representation of children who experience race, class, and gender oppression” (Werrlein 53). The African American characters in her novels often have setbacks when they focus too much on the idea of whiteness, accepting the master narrative that elevates whiteness in American culture. In three of her more famous novels, *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Tar Baby*, Morrison moves her characters, Pecola Breedlove, Milkman Dead, and Jadine Childs from the stereotypical notion of American whiteness to the “colorless self.” The colorless self is an exploration to find the self apart from whiteness and darkness. It signifies new beginning, which can have a positive or negative outcome for a given character. Under ideal circumstances, achieving a colorless self can lead to a future of taking risks and change; more negatively, a colorless self can mean that a character is peeled away from reality and stuck in alternate, illusory mindsets.

Popular Western ideology holds that outward beauty is an indication of inner virtue. People are judged by others based on their social background: “Historically, in American writing, white male writers have used literacy to separate the written voices of white people from the written voices of black people” (Middleton 303). The master narrative of how one should speak and behave is always present within the African American identity. These master narratives are the main “products of white society—films, cosmetics, etc.—[which] are ‘soaked up’ into black minds and black bodies with negatively transformative effects” (De Lancey 26). In order to avoid the destructiveness of the master narrative and to gain sense of the profound natures in these characters, readers must have the ability to penetrate from the self into the imagination and emotions of another, interpret how characters feel, and understand the influence of whiteness and the master narrative which dictates what is proper and intelligent. This master narrative is the “script” on how many writers construct their works.

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Morrison peels away this “script” or master narrative from her writing in order to transform her characters’ viewpoints and the overall American viewpoint on black culture. She gives her characters culturally accurate representations of dialect and tone based on their environment. Pecola Breedlove has a poor dialect; she also seems to believe what everyone else tells her and does not rely on herself for insight. Jadine Childs, on the other hand, has a very proper yet sassy dialect and tone; she talks down to Son, and she is able to have long conversations with the white, upper-class doctor, Valerian. While Milkman’s dialect is not explored as much, his outlook on people and money is accurate to his attitude and setbacks in life. The dialect of each character gives readers insight into the esteem and personalities of Jadine Childs and Pecola Breedlove: “[Dialect] enables the gathering and ordering [of] text[s] into momentary narrative wholes ... where changes in the pattern ... modify the established meanings, and open up spaces for new possible meanings” (Gyetvai 11). For example, when studying Pecola Breedlove’s dialect, readers can understand that her low esteem began with her environment:

All of our [the community’s] waste which we dumped on her [Pecola] and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. (205)

Also, all three texts are set in predominately black communities. Morrison sets her novels in these communities to focus on the minority culture and the “other” narrative. However, the subdued presence of the white community still exists. This presence has no balance or flow. It creates competition and sets unrealistic goals for African Americans; it causes the community to turn against itself: “Morrison’s texts give testament to the power

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of the effects of this indirect racism by showing that even synecdochical intrusions of the white world are so ‘crippling’ as to actually induce madness in the black characters of the invaded sphere” (De Lancey 26).

Pecola Breedlove, Milkman Dead, and Jadine Childs had to create a sense of belonging to something in order to form an idea of blackness and to counter whiteness and society. Each character had to find something or someone with which to identify: “the lost African Americans’ eudemonia can derive from their returning to their ancestral culture, their returning to nature and their recognizing of their selves, in other words, their owning of a sense of belonging” (Wu 41). Finding a sense of belonging is essential to every human being, Black or White. A sense of belonging is essential even before being defined by whiteness or blackness. The black figure has “a consistent emphasis on the need to resist forces stemming from society which may serve to destroy [the] ‘continuity of the black cultural heritage’” (Cormier-Hamilton 111). Along with the master narrative, a sense of belonging is the reason why Morrison’s characters struggle with a true concept of beauty.

If an African American character moves from the white mind to the black mind, this still does not strengthen or balance the individual. It is important to move from the idea of whiteness but not to the idea of blackness. Fortunately, in the end of Morrison’s novels, the characters are not defined as “finally black;” they are defined as individuals. Blackness just opposes whiteness and nothing is really accomplished or learned. To go beyond blackness, Morrison brands her characters colorblind. In order for each character to become colorblind, they undergo a three step process to become *peeled*. First, the characters embrace whatever is oppressing them, whether it is society or their own mentality. Next is the rejection stage. Here, characters realize there is an issue and they look beyond their own mind states and begin to reject or embrace the thing that truly hinders them. Finally, when these two interchangeable

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stages of embrace or rejection are complete, the characters may get lost or go down the wrong path. But once they come out, they are peeled from whatever setback or idea held them back in the first place. However, with Pecola Breedlove, this peel did not have a positive outcome. She is peeled from the setbacks of her community and society, but not from her own mind because in the end, she believes that she has successfully obtained blue eyes.

As Morrison illustrates, one's appearance does not signify one's inner worth. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola Breedlove embraces the idea that she is an ugly child: "Mrs. Breedlove, Sammy Breedlove, and Pecola Breedlove—wore their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them" (Morrison 38). Pecola wants to have blue eyes like the other girls who are adored by her elders, and she rejects the idea that it is impossible for her to have blue eyes. She continues to believe that having blue eyes will fix all of her problems. Pecola has no concept of love because of the dysfunctional family from which she comes. In the end, she believes that blue eyes will allow her to see the world differently: "Oh yes. My eyes. My blue eyes. Let me look again. *See how pretty they are*" (201). She becomes blind to color and actually believes she has blue eyes. Her peel away from the culturally imposed aspects is the belief in her unique, blue eyes. She does not let culture or biology hold her back from obtaining the eyes. Unfortunately, her peel separated her from reality. Pecola's peel is tragic; she will forever be stuck in the mindset of having blue eyes, which is ironic because blue eyes are not typical with black skin; it does not look natural, and it would indeed give her an abnormal look.

The myth of Dick and Jane is predominate in *The Bluest Eye*. It provides a superficial reality for the African Americans: "[Dick and Jane] contributes to a national ideology of innocence" (Werrlein 56). In *The Bluest Eye*, the only sense of happiness that the novel offers is at the beginning of each chapter when it vaguely lists the activities of Dick and Jane's happy-go-lucky

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life:

Here is the house it is green and white it has a
door it is very pretty
here is the family mother and father Dick and Jane
live in a green and white house they are
every happy see Jane she has
a dress she wants to play who will play with Jane...
(Morrison 4)

According to the excerpt, Dick and Jane seem to live a simple life. They have no guilt because whiteness and the master narrative have never hindered them. Yet, the oppression of the black community is not an innocent, national idea. The guilt of this oppression cannot be ignored, and a nation's ignorance is no excuse for allowing an entire culture to believe that their heritage is not beautiful: "by associating white suburban families with prosperity, morality, and patriotism, Americans painted black urban working-class families as un-American" (Werrlein 57-58). This idea is what in fact oppresses the culture. With the horrid impression that urban working-class families are un-American, how can the children of these families respect their parents and themselves enough to move up on the totem pole? They cannot; they must live with this idea, and survive—often through putting others down around them.

In *Song of Solomon*, Milkman Dead must find a sense of belonging by exploring his past to become unpeeled: "If one wants to own a sense of belonging, he needs to comprehend one's true self, return to their pure traditional culture and the simple natural life ..." (Wu 39). In the beginning of the novel, Milkman rejects society and believes everyone is going the wrong way except him: "Looks like everybody's going in the wrong direction but you don't it" (Morrison 106). Symbolically, Milkman has no connection to what is really going on around him. The text rarely mentions that he believes that finding his

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heritage is important for growth. On his venture to discover gold, he finds people who knew of his ancestral past. However, Milkman initially embraces the notion that the American dream of money equates to happiness:

Failing to obtain the gold in Danville, he goes to Shalimar in Virginia to trace Pilate's journey so as to find the gold. In fact, as he moves forward to Shalimar, he continues his quest for a sense of belonging. (Wu 42)

He soon begins to realize that he has nothing to show for his life and must search for some type of identity. Money runs out, but family lasts forever. He realized that he belonged to nothing when “[he] stood before his mirror and glanced, in the low light of the wall lamp, at his reflection. He was, as usual, unimpressed with what he saw” (Morrison, *Song of Solomon* 69). However, through his long and eventful journey for an American dream of wealth, he finally is peeled. He is in an ambiguous space between what is real and what he believes is real. His sense of reality is shaped by a series of paradigms he believes in, including growing up as an African American with money, his father's power over him, and the fact that he feels like he is the only one going the right way; however, Milkman finally overcomes some of these obstacles with the discovery of people who know his lineage. Ultimately, he becomes colorblind to the idea of race and oppression. He makes a leap for his newfound happiness and for freedom: “Without wiping away the tears, taking a deep breath, or even bending his knees—he leaped” (337). He is from then on released from all the thoughts and people who held him back because of what they believed him to be and perceived him as. He is positively peeled: “the experience of returning to nature purifies him and gives him an unfamiliar peace and a profound change in perspective” (Wu 44).

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Jadine Childs' journey is not as direct as Milkman's journey. In *Tar Baby*, Jadine Childs embraces white society with her involvement in the model world and her engagement to a white, European man. She is unsure whether she will marry based on love or race: "I [Jadine] guess that the person I want to marry is him, but I wonder if the person he wants to marry is me or a black girl" (Morrison, *Tar Baby* 48). She has little respect for her family and has been given money from Valerian to support her schooling. She does not like to identify with traditional black motifs and stereotypes: "she was uncomfortable with the way Margaret stirred her into blackening up or universalizing out, always alluding to or ferreting out what she believed was racial characteristics" (64). At first sight of Son, she does not want to be around him and is disgusted by his presence:

His hair looked overpowering—physically overpowering, like bundles of long whips or lashes that could grab her and beat her to jelly. And would. Wild, aggressive, vicious hair that needed to be put in jail. Uncivilized, reform-school hair. Mau Mau, Attica, chain-gang hair. (113)

She rejects the dirt he drags into her room and his good-for-nothing attitude. Throughout the novel, she is being peeled away from her initial perceptions of Son and the perceptions she has of black culture. She learns to embrace her roots when she falls in love with Son and is then colorblind to his race; however, in the end, she goes back to Europe: "Picasso is better than an Itumba mask" (74). The mixing of her two worlds can never be undone; therefore, she sees all, black and white. She is not completely colorblind, but her ability to mix both cultures and learn to go beyond her comfort zones gives her a neutral peel. Throughout the entire novel, the reader expects Son to teach Jadine something about being black. It is thus unexpected when

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Jadine opens Son's mind not only about what it means to be black but what it mean to be a man and above that, a human.

To detach blackness from the Southern concept of "Negro" is exactly what Morrison does in her novels. The black characters are always in a liminal space between black and white, navigating the ways in which they should act. They also occupy a liminal space between being like white American society (while accepting white as beautiful) and detaching from all they know in order to embark on a journey for blackness. They are confused as to whether they should be black and act white, or whether they should be white and think black. In these stories, the black self is confined to the shadows of others. Jadine is in the shadows of her education and modeling. Milkman is in the shadows of his father and his father's money. Pecola is in the shadows of her community; she is the dark shadow which everyone puts down to make themselves feel better.

Something also significant yet overlooked is Morison's use of color in her characters descriptions and the relevance of how the reader, author, and character identify themselves: "one finds an experimentation involving the rearrangement of the traditional textual structure meant to create a new consciousness in the reader" (Rao 9). Jadine is described as a light-skinned African American who could pass for white: "A rosy-cheeked girl" (Morrison, *Tar Baby* 16). Everyone praises her for her "light-skin" advantage: "[Jadine is] in every magazine in Paris ... Prettiest thing I ever saw. Made those white girls disappear" (Morrison, *Tar Baby* 40). Pecola is described as dark and ugly. Characters feel empathy for her because of her black, charcoal skin; yet, that sympathy never allows them to help her, only to point and be glad that it is not them. "Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health." (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 205).

Black writers must construct a way to bring their works to a sense of an ending, accomplishment, or transformation (Bryant 97). Having a sense of an ending for many characters in

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Morrison's work is important because, for most of the characters, they cannot trace their ancestors' lineage before slavery, so an ending gives them a sense of belonging: "The participation of the reader in the experience of the novel is what makes Morrison's work her own" (Rao 9). Once the work comes to an end, something significant and worthwhile has been accomplished. The character is forever changed, and since s/he is merely a character, s/he will remain in that state forever. However, their journey can teach readers a lot about being *colorblind*.

Overall, all three characters were revived from their white minds to colorless selves: "The ultimate secret in context may be our seemingly helplessness in the grip of fears generated by judging ourselves and others by appearance" (Bump 154). Each character was able to peel away their societal whiteness in order to further themselves. Although some characters like Pecola moved deleteriously far out, Milkman Dead is ultimately represented positively, and Jadine Childs is represented neutrally. As Morrison shows, African Americans do not want to oppress themselves but find a cosmic balance. To harmonize the thought process of all African Americans is the goal: "the drive to survive and endure is a distinguishing characteristic of the African American cultural and literary traditions" (De Lancey 40).

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Omnino

Motivation and Commitment Factors of Volunteers in Environmental Non-Profit Organizations and Implications for the Future

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Article Abstract:

This paper explores environmental non-profit institutions on an organizational and individual level, through the examination of the many characteristics and motivations of the volunteer base that serves as the life force of most, if not all, non-profit organizations (NPOs). After distinguishing between volunteers and paid workers in the non-profit sector, I explore the motivations of both groups. I then transition into environmental NPOs specifically, investigating the relationships between their executives and the volunteers, which is crucial to understanding why volunteers choose to remain within a certain organization. I also discuss volunteer retention in organizations that create social communities among their volunteers. I explain how my personal experience as the intern at a local environmental NPO supports the claims I make throughout my article. In conclusion, I examine the broader aspects of environmental volunteer motivations and how they directly and indirectly correlate to one's self-fulfillment. My research also demonstrates how for-profit organizations are becoming more environmentally virtuous, giving an optimistic view of the future of the public and private sectors.

In the non-profit sector, there are many motivating factors for individuals to donate their time to a particular organization. Most, if not all, non-profit organizations rely solely on time from volunteers in order to remain a relevant force in today's society. Thus, understanding why people give their time is crucial to managers of non-profit organizations and to the general public as well. Certain types of people are also more likely to volunteer than others, especially for environmental organizations. Further, exploring why an individual chooses to continue volunteering is vital to the retention of these individuals and the ensuing

sustainability of non-profit organizations. The surveyed literature supports the idea that generally, people initially volunteer because of altruistic reasons like helping the environment, but the reasons they continue to volunteer are more for personal gain such as social interactions or career goals.

To determine these motivations with precision, one must differentiate between volunteerism and paid work in the non-profit sector. The basic distinction is this: volunteering for a non-profit organization is unpaid, while being employed by a non-profit organization involves monetary compensation. In *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, W. W. Powell and S. Steinberg (2006) state that “volunteer work is most likely the result of a sequential decision-making process, and is chosen only after primary decisions about paid labor force participation have been made” (p. 166) because people, of course, need money to live. Therefore, volunteer work comes only after the financial obligations of an individual have been sufficiently met. Volunteering does not provide an individual with tangible income, and therefore an individual cannot make a living simply by volunteering. However, working for a non-profit could be someone’s only means of income, depending on how much this person is paid by the organization. For the purposes of this article, only volunteer work will be explored, as it is distinguishable from paid work in the non-profit sector.

Because volunteer work does not involve income, there are reasons other than financial gain that motivate people to volunteer their time. Because non-profit organizations rely heavily on a volunteer workforce, these organizations would crumble if people no longer volunteered for some type of philanthropy. Therefore, understanding the motivations of people who volunteer is extremely important and creates an essential advantage for the management of non-profit organizations in being able to recruit and retain these volunteers, thereby maintaining a healthy, thriving group working toward a common goal. Focusing specifically on the past histories of volunteers

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(i.e., how one was raised or what activities one participated in as a child) should generate insight into why one person may be more likely to volunteer than another person. Although relatively little literature exists that specifically links a person's past to his or her motivation to volunteer, the circumstances surrounding the type of individual that volunteers (educated vs. non-educated, old vs. young) provide a possible link to this person's past. Therefore these circumstances present a foundation to be expanded upon.

The principal study in this field, conducted by B. Bruyere and S. Rappe (2007), was designed to assess the various motivations of volunteers for non-profit environmental organizations, specifically in the conservation and natural resource areas. The researchers' goal was to demonstrate to managers of non-profits that they "need to consider these motivations, developing programs in order to provide volunteers with an experience that meets their motivations. By developing programs with [this] in mind, managers will [be more] able to recruit and retain volunteers" (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007, p. 503). Directors of non-profits need to design programs to better suit the motivations of their volunteers so volunteers will feel more apt and willing to help.

The study by Bruyere and Rappe (2007) uses a functional approach, "a motivation perspective that investigates the personal and social processes that initiate, direct, and sustain action" (p. 505). A total of 1,214 surveys were distributed to five different Colorado conservation or land management organizations. Surveys were either mailed back or completed on-site. There were 401 completed surveys collected. The seven reported motivations included the following, in order of importance as determined by the survey results: helping the environment, learning, social, values and esteem, project organization, career, and user. The "user" category encompasses people's desire to improve a geographical area that they use or enjoy, allowing them to benefit from those improvements. According to this study, the majority of participants were motivated to volunteer

because they wanted to help the environment, indicating that “managers should select projects that have an apparent positive impact on the environment and be prepared to explain that impact to volunteers” (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007 p. 514). All in all, this survey is highly significant because it was the first of its kind to test such a wide range of motivations of environmental volunteers using a Likert scale. Ultimately, Bruyere and Rappe’s (2007) analysis revealed that volunteers were motivated by a number of things from learning about the environment and potential career paths to social opportunities and helping the environment.

A recent trend in environmental volunteerism has been seen on college campuses nation-wide, suggesting that a person who has received more education is more likely to be environmentally active or to volunteer in some fashion. According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), “[a]mong persons age 25 and over, 42.2 percent of college graduates volunteered, compared with 17.3 percent of high school graduates and 8.8 percent of those with less than a high school diploma.” These statistics hint at a significant difference between a person who has been to college and one who has not. More specifically, this poses the question of how the mental states of these two groups of people differ, specifically their goals, motivations, and general awareness.

Studies have assessed correlations between different types of students and the types of environmental behaviors in which they may or may not participate. I. Greenspan, F. Handy, and T. Katz-Gerro (2012), three university professors from American and European institutions, performed a study to explore these correlations using a sample of 1,605 American college students. To measure participation in volunteering, students were asked, ““In the past two years, have you volunteered in any environmental organization?”” (p. 119) and given a yes or no option. The results yielded the following:

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more than one fifth of the students in the sample are engaged in some environmental activity in the public sphere . . . well over the U.S. national average, confirming findings that students are more active than the general population. (qtd. in Greenspan, Handy, and Katz-Gerro, 2012, p. 119)

However, Greenspan, Handy, and Katz-Gerro (2012) did not state why college students were more likely to be environmentally active. My own analysis of the survey results suggests that people who have some form of higher education are more likely to recognize the benefits of environmental volunteering once they actually start volunteering, giving them reason to remain. This study shows a definite tendency of college-age students to engage and remain interested in environmental volunteerism, which is especially important because of the current generation's emphasis on conservation and environmental regulations.

The amount of existing literature exploring how an individual's past affects his or her motivations to volunteer is considerably limited; however, the studies that show correlations between education and environmental involvement are numerous. Studies by Greenspan, Handy, and Katz-Gerro (2012) and Bruyere and Rappe (2007) both argue that if someone is academically involved, he or she is more likely to be environmentally involved, which in turn suggests a possible connection between education and how someone was raised. This directly applies to environmental volunteering in the following way: if someone was raised in a household that valued and encouraged education, that person is more likely to continue on to pursue secondary education. Similarly, if someone was raised in an environment that encouraged volunteering, those values would likely be instilled in that person, making him or her more likely to continue volunteering throughout his or her life.

The fact that people who have received higher education are more likely to volunteer is extremely relevant and important. It reveals much about our secondary education system and also reveals the tendency for people who are motivated in one area (academic) to be motivated in other areas (environmental & economic). Well-educated people are more likely to comprehend why it is so important to give back to the environment because they tend to be more forward-thinking and future-oriented. People as a whole could be realizing that service learning comes in many different ways, one of which is volunteering.

What motivates an individual to begin volunteering does not necessarily act as a determinant in whether he or she continues volunteering (if the individual does decide to continue). The aforementioned analysis of what motivates volunteers to be environmentally active provides a heuristic foundation for the next question in this field of research: why do volunteers choose to remain with an organization? Two significant trends in the surveyed literature reflect the significance of employee-employer relationships and the organization as creator of a social community.

In all businesses and organizations, the employee-employer relationship is a crucial factor in determining whether an employee or volunteer remains working there. According to M. L. Vecina, F. Chacon, D. Marzana, and E. Marta (2013), there are three concepts essential for managers of non-profit organizations to recognize: the participating volunteer's organizational commitment, satisfaction, and intention to remain. These three concepts are interrelated. Organizational commitment, as noted in Vecina et al. (2013), is a person's "strong emotional identification with a concrete organization, manifested by a belief and acceptance of its goals and values, a willingness to make efforts for the organization, and a desire to continue as a member" (p. 292), which is contrasted with work engagement, "a positive, fulfilling, task-related state of mind characterized by 'vigor, dedication, and absorption'"

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(p. 293). The difference between these two concepts is that the former is determined by external factors while the latter is determined by internal factors. One can feel committed to an organization, and one can feel engaged to the actions performed by the organization; but these two ideas are not codependent. If a volunteer gains personal satisfaction from being in a non-profit organization, he or she will likely feel a sense of commitment and be more likely to remain.

In an attempt to determine whether the concepts of organizational commitment and work engagement produce a tangible and not solely theoretical distinction, Vecina et al. (2013) conducted a study involving active volunteers at 18 nonprofit organizations. The results revealed that work engagement and organizational commitment shared 55 percent variance and therefore were highly correlated (p. 296). The findings from this study led the authors to conclude the following:

[i]f nonprofit organizations wish their volunteers to remain, then there must be a focus on developing a feeling of commitment to organizations, but if they want volunteers to feel positively about themselves and about their lives, then [nonprofit organizations] need to make sure that [the volunteers] feel engaged in what they are doing. (Vecina, et al., 2013, p. 299)

In other words, the study argues that volunteers are happy when they are engaged in the actions they perform while serving the organization, not the fact that they are specifically committed to the organization.

Similarly, S. K. Jacobsen, J. S. Carlton, and M. C. Monroe (2012) stressed the importance of how the employer treated his or her employees or volunteers. Good relationships between these two levels of an organization can determine whether a certain project or even the organization itself is successful. One

way employers establish good rapport with their employees is by demonstrating their appreciation through recognition, which “can be as simple as a verbal ‘thank-you’ or pat on the back” (Jacobsen, et al., 2012, p. 64). In other words, “[v]olunteers need to feel that their work is significant” (Jacobsen, et al., 2012, p. 64), and often, the way they feel this significance is through verbal reinforcement. More than likely, the more appreciated a volunteer feels at an organization, the more probable it is that he or she will remain volunteering for that organization.

In addition to the actions of managerial personnel, another argument asserts that the other volunteers who make up an organization’s workforce also significantly influence an individual’s choice to remain. One’s peers, the people who one chooses (or does not choose) to be around, have a huge impact on one’s psyche and subsequent happiness. A. Delios (2010), in his article “How Can Organizations Be Competitive but Dare to Care?,” recognized the organization as a social community, a community within which one interacts and has relationships with other employees or volunteers: “An organization . . . can provide value beyond the nexus of contracts that constitute the explicit, legal relationship between the corporate entity and the individual” (p. 27). Through interactions with others in the organization as well as management, people gain crucial insight into themselves and others. An organization, as constituted by its employees, is essentially a reflection of the values, characteristics, and ideals of those employees. One could even go so far as to argue that since there could be no organization without its employees, those employees are the organization. Because of this, employees and volunteers choose to associate with organizations and people they identify with and enjoy being around.

The potential to impact the lives of others positively as a reason for volunteers to feel satisfied, thereby fitting into the “social category,” can be seen in other literature as well. Jacobsen, et al. (2012) argued that helping the environment

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directly translated to helping other people, which was a huge motivating factor in many people's minds. Volunteering provided opportunities for people to interact with friends or other people who share their values of improving the environment. Specifically, environmental volunteerism provided an opportunity to "engag[e] in [activities] that an individual thinks [are] viewed favorably by important others" (Jacobsen, et al., 2012, p. 54). This idea could be referred to as positive peer pressure, which makes the individual desire to conform in a positive way.

Thus far, this article has examined the immediately perceived benefits of environmental volunteerism. On the individual level, there is some debate as to whether more people volunteer for personal reasons or for reasons involving the "greater good," and of those people, which group is more likely to continue volunteering. L. M. McDougle, I. Greenspan, and F. Handy (2011) state the following:

[n]ot only does environmental volunteerism represent a non-activist form of pro-environmental behavior, but as a voluntary activity, it also represents a unique form of voluntary action wherein the tangible benefits of an individual's actions can, at times, take longer to realize than those associated with other forms of volunteerism. (p. 327)

For example, if someone is feeding the hungry, they are more likely to reap the "benefits" of seeing someone appreciate their volunteer work, whereas if someone is an environmental volunteer, the effects of their work are not always immediately seen. Usually, people who volunteer for reasons such as "helping the environment," which is described by Bruyere and Rappe (2007) to be "the idea that people volunteer because they want to do something that enhances the natural world" (p. 510), are more

forward-thinking and able to conceptualize the way the world may be in the future. For these people, according to Jacobsen, et al. (2012), “a strong motive for continued service [is] seeing the impacts of their actions” (p. 54). In other words, people who are more likely to continue volunteering can observe and recognize that their volunteer work is or will be making a difference. The people who volunteer for “personal reasons” are more often unable to see how their work is affecting a positive change. They realize that the organization they volunteer for is a place where they can have relationships with others in a social setting, and can feel appreciated, which is why they remain.

The study conducted by Jacobsen, et al. (2012) of the Department of Wildlife and Ecology and Conservation at the University of Florida surveyed 569 volunteers at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). This organization oversees the management of Florida’s fish and wildlife resources as well as four million acres of land designated for outdoor recreation, wildlife observation, and hunting. This was another study designed to test volunteer motivations as they relate to this particular organization. Participants were given seven possible motivations for volunteering that were taken directly from Bruyere and Rappe’s (2007) study (helping the environment, career, user, learning, social, project organization, and values & esteem), and were asked to rank each motivation on a Likert scale from 1, strongly unimportant, to 7, strongly important. Of the 569 volunteers at FWC, 335 responses were received, giving this web-based survey an approximately 59 percent response-rate. The study found that “[t]he FWC volunteers as a group are most motivated by the desire to help the environment” (Jacobson, et al., 2012, p. 62), which again shows the tendency for environmental volunteers to be motivated by reasons other than personal gain. Granted, personal gain may be an outcome of environmental volunteering, but it is more likely not to be the initial motivation of the volunteer, and more likely to be a reason the volunteer remains at an organization.

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Personal gain as a benefit of volunteering is perpetuated throughout the course of an individual's life, which also makes it more likely for a younger person to continue volunteering as he or she ages. In other words, many middle-aged and older adults who are volunteers later in life are more than likely to have volunteered when they were younger. As people age, they begin to contemplate their futures as well as the future of the planet; they want to leave the world in a better condition than that in which they found it (Pillemer, Fuller-Rowell, & Wells, 2010, p. 596). It seems that as one gets older and begins to have children and grandchildren, he or she starts to feel a greater connection to the environment and the earth. Perhaps they do not want to leave the earth in a broken, run-down state. In addition, K. Pillemer et al. (2010) suggest that environmental volunteerism in older adults correlates to positive mental health outcomes and reduced feelings of helplessness (p. 596). People could be witnessing and recognizing in others the positive effects of staying active with the environment, which gives them more incentive to do the same.

In contrast to the benefits an individual person experiences, the organization as a collective can also benefit from becoming more environmentally conscious. On an organizational level, there is considerable literature urging for-profit organizations and businesses to become more environmentally friendly and to be structured more like non-profit organizations. For example, Delios (2010) argued that corporations can initiate programs and mindsets that exhibit "caring" while still being competitive in the free market. In order for this to happen, for-profit organizations need to shift the direction of their focus from being solely profit-driven (p. 26). In the area of retention, if organizations, for-profit or non-profit, want their employees or volunteers to remain committed, their management needs to support "the creation of organizational environments that recognize, foster, and support humane values that empathize with and support employees" (Delios, 2010, p. 27). It seems that Delios places

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most of the responsibility to enact change on the employees and volunteers rather than on the management structure, in that the employees or volunteers must be the ones to speak up and show management what they would like to see changed.

E. Sadler-Smith (2013), in his article, “Toward Organizational Environmental Virtuousness,” also argued in favor of organizations becoming more environmentally friendly. However, Sadler-Smith presented a counterargument to Delios (2010) by taking a more economic approach to the issue. One of his main points states that managers as opposed to employees or volunteers are more responsible for showing concern for the environment. He asserted that the most effective change comes from the source (manager) and trickles down from there. The manager of a company must be organizationally and environmentally virtuous, which is defined as “a collective ethical disposition which habitually motivates, guides, and corrects moral behavior in organizations in positively deviant ways that contribute to sustaining the whole-Earth system’s integrity and stability” (p. 49). Company managers should shift their views to be more environmentally conscious because of the many threats to the environment that are being exacerbated by corporations who often have no regard for polluting or damaging the environment. People who are aware of non-environmental or “bad” business practices within the company or organization they are associated with may be less willing to stay, thus affecting volunteer and employee commitment.

In my own experience with Keep Lowndes/Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB), a local non-profit environmental organization, I have found much of the aforementioned motivations and commitment factors for volunteers to be true. My internship is unpaid, but instead I am gaining peace of mind, life skills, and self-fulfillment from the responsibility with which I have been entrusted. My duties as the KLVB intern include helping to organize a number of different litter clean-ups and recycling events around the city of Valdosta, GA and Lowndes County. I

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intern and volunteer for this organization primarily because I want to help the environment firsthand. My secondary motivations include gaining “real-world” job experience and meeting new people. Before I started my internship, it would physically pain me to see people throwing litter on the ground or to see someone on my college campus blatantly disregarding the recycling bins and throwing away plastic bottles. Now, when I witness things like this, I still feel this way, but I have relative peace of mind in that I am actively participating in making the city and county I live in a more sanitary and therefore more enjoyable place to live. It gives me personal satisfaction to know that I am helping our natural ecosystem to thrive.

As well as feeling like I am making a positive contribution to the environmental non-profit field as a whole, I feel appreciated every day in the office. The setting in which I work daily is an inviting and friendly workspace, which supports the trend in the literature reflecting a correlation between a positive workplace environment and a volunteer’s decision to remain. By showing continuous approval of the work I produce, my boss also contributes to my intention to remain with KLVB. Overall, I feel that I have had a positive impact on the environment just in my few short months at KLVB, and I hope to continue my association with this organization.

This article has investigated various motivating factors for environmental volunteers. These motivations include helping the environment, getting outside, being social, and advancing one’s career, among others. Multiple studies assessing these motivations were addressed and evaluated; however, these motivating factors are not necessarily reasons for people to continue volunteering and need to be perpetuated and nurtured as time goes on if employers want to retain the volunteer workforce non-profit organizations require. Executive directors of non-profits must keep the motivations of their volunteers in mind as they create new programs for implementation so they can better recruit and retain their volunteers. The practice of

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environmental volunteerism has also been influenced by the college-age generation, and the motivations of younger people are quite different than those of older people. The two main factors influencing a volunteer's decision to remain are the organization acting as the creator of a social community and the way the employer treats his or her volunteers. A positive work environment is essential to retaining volunteers, both on the part of the employer as well as the other volunteers who provide the life force of organizations in the non-profit sector. On an organizational level, there has been a recent push for public and private sector businesses to become more environmentally conscious, which can impact the workers' psyches and affect their reasons to remain with a certain organization. My own personal experience with a non-profit environmental organization serves as testament to the aforementioned studies and provides a firsthand account of the motivating factors behind one volunteer's commitment to an organization in the non-profit sector.

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