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Relationality and High Self-Esteem: From Individualist and Collectivist Lenses

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Self-esteem seems to be a widely accepted concept important for success and happiness, and often regarded as a universal construct. This study explored what the characteristics associated with high self-esteem might "look like" when examined through individualist or collectivist lenses, and their potential impact on relationships. The hypothesis was that collectivists would perceive these characteristics as less desirable. Participants were from Utah, Texas, and Mexico City, 343 total - 171 females and 172 males; 147 claimed Anglo and 196 Hispanic ethnicity. Self-esteem instruments were utilized to create profiles representing high self-esteem and low self-esteem. Participants examined one profile and rated that person on a 22-item adjective scale. Two 3-WAY MANOVAs were performed (Culture/Profile/Adjective and Ethnicity/Profile/Adjective). Results support the hypothesis: Individualism and Collectivism are important variables leading to differences in perception of the characteristics of high self-esteem.

Consider the following statements: "I am a person of great worth and people feel good around me. I believe that I have many good qualities and I can do things as well as anyone else. I do take pride in my scholarly work; indeed I like it when teachers call on me. I am easy to like and people have a lot of fun when they are around me. I always do the right thing, and this is one of the characteristics that has helped increased my popularity with people my own age. People follow my ideas because I am dependable. I can take care of myself, not to mention that I always know what to say to people. Overall, I am satisfied with myself!"

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What image might be formed in one's mind of a person who uttered such statements? Assertive? Arrogant? Obnoxious? Conceited? Considerate? Trustworthy? Humble? Does the person have high self-esteem? If so, what does that mean? Would people holding different paradigms form different impressions and/or images of the individual in question? Different world views, or paradigms, may lead to different conclusions regarding the same concepts. This seems true even though certain concepts are regarded as universal, which often assumes that most people understand them in a similar manner. Of course, this phenomenon may be the result of one-sided or ethnocentric ideologies possibly leading to hasty generalizations. Ignoring important cultural differences may allow for conflicting patterns of mutual understanding.

The main hypothesis here is that people with different worldviews (i.e., cultural differences) would perceive some of the characteristics often associated with high self-esteem in a significantly different manner. Specifically, collectivism places value on group harmony, while individualism seems to focus on individual achievements. Because the notion of self-esteem seems to be derived from individualist ideologies, collectivists may have marked differences in their perception of the construct.

The relevant literature quickly reveals a vast number of articles referring to self-esteem, perhaps due to the idea that it is perceived to have significant implications for life satisfaction and overall well-being (Guindon, 2002; Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997; Mruk, 1995). While several projects have investigated cross-cultural validation of the construct, it appears that little attention has been devoted to a close examination of the conventional characteristics associated with high self-esteem, as they are viewed by people from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, certain terms are loosely defined and/or operationalized, such as "self-esteem" and "life satisfaction." Nevertheless, it has been suggested that in individualist societies, self-esteem is a stronger predictor of life satisfaction than in collectivist societies (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis & Suh, 2002).

Quick Notes on Individualism and Collectivism

A serious study regarding cultural differences promptly highlights the dimensions of collectivism and individualism. By definition, people with individualist tendencies focus on themselves and are definitely concerned with individual goals and accomplishments. In contrast, those with collectivist attributes tend to emphasize harmonious relationships and group achievements (Chung & Mallery, 1999). Collectivists tend toward interdependency and behave in a more communal fashion. Indeed, "a defining character of people in collectivist cultures is their notable concern with relationships" (Triandis & Suh, 2002, p. 139). Individualists' self-focus seems to relegate interrelationships within groups to the "back seat" (Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002; Triandis, 2001). For collectivists, attempting to "one-up" others is often viewed in a negative fashion.

Kwan and her colleagues (1997) suggested that collectivists are more concerned with fostering harmony and satisfaction within relationships than with promoting the satisfaction of any individual constituent, particularly when the latter comes at the expense of others. The emphasis on independence and self-assertion in rugged individualism may have an impact on relationships that collectivists may view as superficial and/or utilitarian (Tafarodi & Walters, 1999). For collectivists, rugged individualism may lead to potential difficulties, which include dishonesty, manipulation, and devaluation of human relationships (Smith, 2002). Collectivist cultures seem more sensitive to the importance of relationships and tend to dialogue more about differences that might lead to discord among them. Collectivism does not encourage "blind conformity," but rather striving to maintain harmonious communities that work together through their differences. Conversely, Watson and Morris (2002), while underscoring the Western individualist emphasis on the self, warned that it could undermine authentic relationships and a healthy sense of community.

Although entire societies (even countries) have been categorized as either individualist or collectivist (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Triandis, 2001; Triandis & Suh, 2002), extreme caution should be exercised when tempted to make blanket generalizations (Turiel, 2004). The categorization of an entire community as "collectivist" or "individualist" should not be interpreted as implying that there exists complete homogeneity: "Cultures are not monoliths; people are not stamped out like coins by the power machine of social convention. They are constrained by social norms, but norms are plural and people are devious" (Turiel, 2004, p. 96). Not all people who are part of a given cultural context do align themselves with it (Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Vandello & Cohen, 1999). Also, it has been suggested that while many U.S. minorities, such as Hispanics and Asians, are assumed to be collectivist, cultures are not purely one or the other: "Human beings cannot be classified by a basically static feature...the defining attributes of cultures are best thought of as fluctuating...which may or may not be manifest in a particular individual or context" (Singelis, Triandis, Dharm, & Gelfand, 1995, p. 243).

While being cognizant of and carefully considering these issues, collectivism and individualism have been employed here as useful dimensions to draw a meaningful "dividing line" between cultural views (Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2005; Singelis et al., 1995).

Some Theoretical Considerations on the Self

It might seem intuitive to attempt to investigate the notion of "self" in isolation, often independent of its context. This approach, however, may limit our understanding. For instance, Markus and Kitayama (1991) asserted, "In America, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, while in Japan the nail that stands-out gets pounded down" (p. 224). Evidently, people with different cultures view things through different lenses. Tafarodi and Walters (1999) indicated as follows: "The self in collectivist cultures has been characterized as enmeshed, ensembled, interdependent, and contextualized, emphasizing its socially contingent nature. The self in individualist cultures, in contrast, has been described as self-contained, isolated, independent, and clearly bounded" (p. 797).

Macmurray (1999), addressing psychology's 'egocentric' notion of the self, argued as follows:

> Descartes had been dedicated to the proposition that the self not only thinks of itself as essentially characterized through its reflective or cognitive activity, but also understands itself, as a result, to be essentially isolated from the world about which it reflects. (p. xi)

According to Macmurray (1999), if one adopts such a premise regarding the self, relations with others inevitably become problematic. In a similar vein, Gadamer (2002) asserted, "If a thing is...significant in itself rather than...significant in relation to something else, it dissociates itself from everything that could determine its meaning" (p. 90). In this light, relationships can be conceived as being fundamental for understanding humanity. It could also be argued that the context within which the self exists is just as important as the self. The self is always meaningfully situated in a context. Markus and Kitayama (2003) posed the question, "What can be more important than the recognition that one is situated in a meaningful social sphere, given a place, role, and thus

significance and meaning?" (p. 279). Similarly, others have asserted that "we understand the whole in terms of the parts, yet those parts have the meaning they have *only* in light of the whole" (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999, p. 205, italics added). For Martin Heidegger, attempting to understand humanity included understanding its history and situatedness, and avoided intellectual abstractions that attempted to define people in terms of properties or attributes that divided them from the world (Stump & Fieser, 2003). Similarly, Slife (2004) suggested, "The appeal of abstractions, such as theories, principles, and beliefs, is that they are thought to avoid ties to particular experiences and thus ostensibly be applicable to many or all experiences" (p. 164).

It is true that the world is composed of individuals, thus justifying an attempt to understand individuals in isolation, and then expand. This approach may be likened to the idea that individuals' bodies are also composed individual parts (i.e., cells, organs, and systems), which possess different properties and attributes. Yet, these differences may provide for a complimentary, and even harmonious, relationship within a whole, making it problematic to consider them in a reductionist way. Essentially, one part could not be thoroughly understood without considering its relationship with the other parts. The proverbial debate about which organ is more important provides an interesting illustration. Is it the heart, or the brain? This inquiry may be discarded as self-defeating when one considers that the absence of either organ renders the whole debate void. Slife (2004) provided another illustration by pointing out that in a stick figure, the circle represents the head, but by removing the legs it would no longer represent a person, it would now represent the symbol for a woman, losing its "headness." Certainly, one could arbitrarily, and a priori, define the head as such (even in isolation), however it wouldn't have the same meaning as it does when considered as part of the body. In this regard, Richardson and his colleagues (1999) asserted, "In the human sciences, where we must start out from an understanding of what things actually mean to people, an abstraction conceals large parts of what is experienced and therefore gives us a one-sided and bleached-out picture of what we want to understand" (p. 222). Macmurray (1999) added as follows:

If, however, the error lies in our con-
ception of our own nature, it must af-
fect all our action, for we shall miscon-
ceive our own reality by appearing to
ourselves to be what we are not, or not
to be what we are. (p. 149)

In his *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle ob-
served that humans are social beings, and as
such desire to connect, to belong, and to be in
relationships with others (McKeon, 1992, p.
11696). Hardly anyone can conceive of a per-
son who longs to exist in complete isolation.
In fact, it seems that one of the cruelest forms
of punishment is to place someone in solitary
confinement. Kirkpatrick (1999), in his intro-
duction to Macmurray's "*Persons in Relation*,"
stated, "Individuals are made for relationships
and any individually chosen values that negate
or undermine personal relationships are out of
touch with the inner reality of the self and with
objective reality as such." (p. xviii).

High Self-Esteem

For some, rugged individualism, and no-
tions ostensibly derived from it, such as that
of self-esteem, may result in friction in rela-
tionships (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996).
Abraham Tesser (1988), for instance, reported
that "efforts to maintain high self-esteem pre-
dict a variety of outcomes, including friction
among brothers and sisters, friends, spouses,
and others in close relationships" (p. 63; see
also Tesser & Moore, 1990). Apparently, people
with the biggest egos tend to respond more ag-
gressively toward others when their self-esteem
is threatened, and many with high self-esteem
are much more likely to be obnoxious, rude,
and interrupt others (Baumeister et al., 1996;
Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Thus, one may
inquire what it really means to have high self-
esteem. Crocker and Park (2004) proposed that
"those who pursue high self-esteem, perhaps by
seeking to become beautiful, rich, or popular,
may lose sight of what really makes for quality
life" (p. 407). Nevertheless, it may be that the
pursuit for high self-esteem is an integral part
of the "American way of life" (Guindon, 2002;
Hewitt, 1998, p. 3). In this sense, the famous
maxim "If men define a situation as real, it is
real in its consequences" proves to carry a very
significant degree of accuracy (Thomas, 1923,
p. 571). Incidentally, very few have devoted

enough attention to defining self-esteem (Chiu,
1988; Guindon, 2002). In fact, Baumeister et al.
(2003) suggested that no specific requirements
for defining self-esteem exist:

Self-esteem does not carry any definition-
al requirement for accuracy whatsoever. Thus,
high self-esteem may refer to an accurate, justi-
fied, balanced appreciation of one's worth as a
person and one's successes and competencies,
but it can also refer to an inflated, arrogant,
grandiose, unwarranted sense of conceit supe-
riority over others. (p. 2)

Similarly, Kernis (2003) suggested that high
self-esteem merely reflects feelings of superior-
ity or entitlement in some cases, and a reflec-
tion of a sense of being at peace with oneself
in others. In addition, Blascovich and Toma-
ka (1991) pointed out that the notion of self-es-
teem is often used interchangeably with other
concepts such as self-confidence, self-respect,
self-acceptance, and self-efficacy, and/or "any-
thing that would be compatible with the dic-
tionary definition of 'esteem' ascribed to the
self" (p. 115). While these terms may be relat-
ed (if only by a prefix), they may actually be dif-
ferent constructs.

Although various instruments have been
devised to attempt to formally measure self-es-
teem, after careful examination, Blascovich and
Tomaka (1991) found that these had uneven
quality making it very difficult to compare their
results (see also Baumeister et al., 2003). Re-
sponses to these instruments range from Likert-
type scales (e.g., "strongly agree" to "strongly
disagree") to forced answers (e.g., "Yes - No" or
"like me - unlike me"), perhaps creating signifi-
cant limitations in responding and/or contribut-
ing to socially desirable answering (Blascovich
& Tomaka, 1991). According to Kernis (2003),
people whose answers result in a score reflect-
ing low self-esteem tend to actually be neutral
in their responses, because they may be con-
fused or not sure about their feelings. Also, an-
swers seem to be tied to notions of life-satis-
faction, which may differ widely from person
to person or community to community. Ques-
tion items are often very general (e.g., "On the
whole, I am satisfied with myself," or "I feel
that I have a number of good qualities"), per-
haps being the reason why most people score
above the average range (which raises impor-
tant red flags; Guindon, 2002). Moreover, ap-
parently a significant number of studies on

self-esteem are conducted with the participation of children or young adolescents, who may or may not have the insight to provide a definitive answer, because they may be still in the life-long process of identity formation (Corey & Corey, 2002).

Practicality and Universality
of High Self-Esteem

It was once thought that better understanding, and enhancing, self-esteem would help solve a myriad of social problems, including preventing youngsters from engaging in potentially harmful or unacceptable activities (Baumeister et al., 2003; Chung & Mallery, 2000; Guindon, 2002). Apparently, that goal has not been achieved. Moreover, Baumeister et al. (2003) suggested that having high self-esteem does not prevent individuals from smoking, drinking, taking drugs, or engaging in early sex, even though in the U.S. people's self-esteem is unrealistically high (Hewitt, 1998). Interestingly, bullies, teen gang leaders, extreme ethnocentrists, and terrorists seem to have higher than average self-esteem (Dawes, 1998), which motivates a close examination of high self-esteem, and its potential impact on relationality:

> With the exception of the link to [individual] happiness, most of the effects are weak to modest. Self-esteem is thus not a major predictor or cause of almost anything…. There appear to be relatively few personal costs to high self-esteem. If anything, the costs of high self-esteem…are borne by other people…. Thus, a tentative formula to integrate the diverse findings is that self-esteem confers some benefits on the self, including feeling quite good, while its costs accrue to others. (p. 37)

A silver lining identified by Kernis (2003) suggests that a great deal of the relevant literature points to what he referred to as "fragile high self-esteem," which results in maladaptive practices when people's egos are threatened, such as reacting violently and putting others down to maintain their feelings of self-worth (see also Baumeister et al., 2003). An alternative view characterizes high self-esteem as having feelings of self-worth that are well anchored, referred to as genuine or secure high self-esteem (Kernis, 2003). This type allows

individuals to accept and value themselves regardless of imperfections, flaws, and/or shortcomings, and self-worth does not derive from feeling superior or by outdoing others. Genuine high self-esteem does not require constant validation or attempts to enhance it, and it is not even the focus of attention.

Although the notion of self-esteem seems to be generally rooted in North American culture (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999), Sedikides, Gaertner, & Taguchi (2003) countered by asserting that attempts to enhance self-esteem are observed in all cultures:

> Members of individualist societies validate their independent selves by pursuing their own wants and desires on the road to personal fulfillment, actualization, and happiness. In contrast, members of collectivist societies validate their interdependent selves by striving to meet the expectations of significant others en route to relational and group balance, rapport, and amity. (p. 61)

Perhaps unintentionally, these authors actually support the idea of important cultural differences. Similarly, Diener and Diener (1995) while offering evidence to claim cross-cultural validation of the construct of self-esteem, also predicted that there would be greater value of self-esteem in individualist cultures, which actually is another indication of important cultural differences.

In one of their landmark cross-cultural studies, Markus and Kitayama (2003) indicated that one of their goals was to describe at least a couple of ways of life that they were familiar with, and that seemed qualitatively different:

> Our point was simply to suggest that if there was at least one other mode of being, then the one that we knew well in European American contexts was not "the" human way to be, but instead a way of being that emerges primarily in middle-class European-American contexts, and one that bears the stamp of Western individualism with its particular normative models of human nature and how to be a self. That is, a particular model of self and agency has been mistakenly identified as a basic or universal model." (p. 282)

It is important to acknowledging the validity and potential viability of other cultural epistemologies. However, there seems to be a tendency to accept only those propositions that are familiar, often at face value, which often give the illusion of universality.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that collectivist people would perceive the profile of a person with high self-esteem in a less desirable fashion than individualist people, given that the characteristics often associated with high self-esteem may be perceived as potentially disruptive of group harmony.

Method

Participants

Participants recruited were from Brigham Young University (34 female, 28 male); Utah Valley University (53 female, 38 male); University of Texas at Brownsville (59 female, 33 male); and The National Autonomous University of Mexico, in Mexico City (25 female, 73 male), for a total of 343; 171 female and 172 male. Of all participants, 196 reported Hispanic as their ethnicity and 147 reported Anglo.

Instruments

Employing two self-esteem instruments (i.e., Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory), four profiles were created. Two represented individuals with high self-esteem and two represented individuals with low self-esteem (two for each instrument, respectively). A brief 32-item version of Singelis and Triandis' measure of subjective individualism and collectivism was administered to respondents to attempt to overcome the assumption that Anglos are individualists and Hispanics are collectivists (Triandis, 1995).

A 22-item adjective scale was created, which included words obtained from research on word meanings and likableness ratings of personality-trait words (i.e., rude, obnoxious, courteous, polite, humble, modest, conceited, arrogant, vain, shallow, honest, & trustworthy) that are assumed to connote desirable or undesirable attributes (Anderson, 1968; Bochner &

Van Zyl, 1985; Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Rodale, 1956; and Schonbach, 1972). This scale was employed by participants to rate the person whose self-esteem profile they reviewed.

Translations

All the instruments, consent forms, and instructions were translated into Spanish, and back-translated into English by two translators, who were confident that they had equivalent meaning in both languages.

Procedures

Participants signed and turned in the consent form. They then filled out the IND/COL scale, after which they received one already completed self-esteem profile. They were then instructed to carefully examine this profile and create a vivid image in their mind's eye of the character of the person who ostensibly filled out the instrument. They were then instructed to rate that person along the 22-item adjective scale, which was laid out in a seven point scale from "describes the person well" to "does not describe the person at all."

Results

Data were analyzed utilizing a 3-Way MANOVA [Form (Rosenberg/Coopersmith) X Culture (Individualism/Collectivism) X Profile (High/Low self-esteem) as the independent variables and the 22-adjective rating scale as the dependent variables. The two comparison groups were established by median split from the results of the brief 32-item SInd/Col. Individual 3-way ANOVAS for each adjective dimension were performed (Form X Culture X Profile) to explore whether the high self-esteem and low self-esteem profiles were perceived differently, and whether culture was a predictor of potential differences in perception.

An identical analysis was also performed, with the exception that the participant's reported ethnicity was used as one of the independent variables instead of culture (Ind/Col), to explore potential differences based on ethnicity (i.e., Anglo or Hispanic). Table 1 shows the results of the univariate and multivariate statistics from the MANOVA. Multivariate significance is shown by the Wilke's Lambda index, which

Table 1

This table shows the F values, Alpha Levels, of Univariate Statistics from the MANOVA performed on respondent's evaluations of the High or Low Self-esteem profiles based on respondent's culture (Individualism/Collectivism) and Multivariate Lambda and alpha levels. The independent variable was the individual's relative individualist or collectivist tendency, and the dependent variable was their description of the profile using the adjective list.

	Dependent Variables														
	Courteous		**Rude**		**Intelligent**		**Modest**		**Meek**		**Assertive**		**Shallow**		**Obnoxious**	
Independent Variables	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha
Ind/Col*Hi/Lo	2.65	n.s.	6.54	0.0110	2.25	n.s.	6.75	0.0098	3.60	n.s.	0.96	n.s.	10.67	0.0012	30.65	<.0001
	Humble		**Arrogant**		**Sincere**		**Polite**		**Vain**		**Considerate**		**Conceited**		**Friendly**	
Independent Variables	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha
Ind/Col*Hi/Lo	8.55	0.0037	11.38	0.0008	0.05	n.s.	3.33	n.s.	18.70	<.0001	5.89	0.0158	15.80	<.0001	4.21	0.0409
	Selfish		**Warm**		**Mature**		**Soc Comptnt**		**Honest**		**Trustworthy**		**Wilk's Lambda**			
Independent Variables	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	value		Alpha	
Ind/Col*Hi/Lo	14.95	0.0001	2.16	n.s.	3.51	n.s.	0.25	n.s.	1.13	n.s.	4.17	0.0418	0.87770699		0.0058	

controls for alpha inflation. As was hypothesized, the participant's Culture (Ind/Col) was an important predictor in terms of differences in perception, as interpreted by their ratings of the protocol representing high self-esteem. The interaction between Culture (Ind/Col) and Profile (Hi/Lo) was significant on 12 of the adjective dimensions.

As can be noted on Table 1, there were significant main effects for Ind/Col*Hi/Lo, suggesting statistically significant differences in the manner of perceiving and evaluating profiles representing High Self-Esteem based on the culture (individualism v. collectivism) of the person rating the profile. Of note, low self-esteem profiles did not exhibit statistically significant differences in ratings, rather they seemed to remain neutral. These are not shown in the graphs.

Interestingly, during informal conversations with participants, it became apparent that the profile form used may have had an effect in terms of the participants' ability to create a definite opinion or image of the person profiled. More specifically, some participants who reviewed profiles with the Rosenberg form reported having a hard time creating an image in their mind's eye of that person. They expressed that the form was much too general and that it did not provide enough information.

Significant univariate interactions between Ind/Col and HI/Lo as independent variables and the adjective dimensions as dependent variables show the clearest interaction and/or difference in rating depending on the participant's culture. Following are graphs showing all of the adjective ratings at once, separated by culture (Figure 1.). The following page shows a couple of examples of individual graphs, which provide a more compelling visual representation of the trends in rating based on participant's culture (Figure 2). The rest of the significant individual interaction graphs may be reviewed in Appendix I. The adjective ratings that yielded statistical significance include Rude, Modest, Shallow, Obnoxious, Humble, Arrogant, Vain, Considerate, Conceited, Friendly, Selfish, and Trustworthy.

As seen in Figure 2, the significant difference in rating of profiles portraying individuals with high self-esteem based on culture (individualism v. collectivism) is marked by the direction in which the bars move. For instance, in relation to the adjective "obnoxious," collectivists rated individuals with high self-esteem as more obnoxious as indicated by the line representing them moving upward, while the line representing individualists' ratings moves in the opposite direction. The opposite trend is observed for the adjective 'humble' in which collectivist participants rated the individual with high self-esteem profiled as much less humble in comparison to the ratings given by their individualist counterparts.

Figure 1

Univariate Effect/ Interactions between Adjective Dimensions (DVs) and Culture Ind/Col and High Self-Esteem (IVs). Based on Type III Least Square Means.
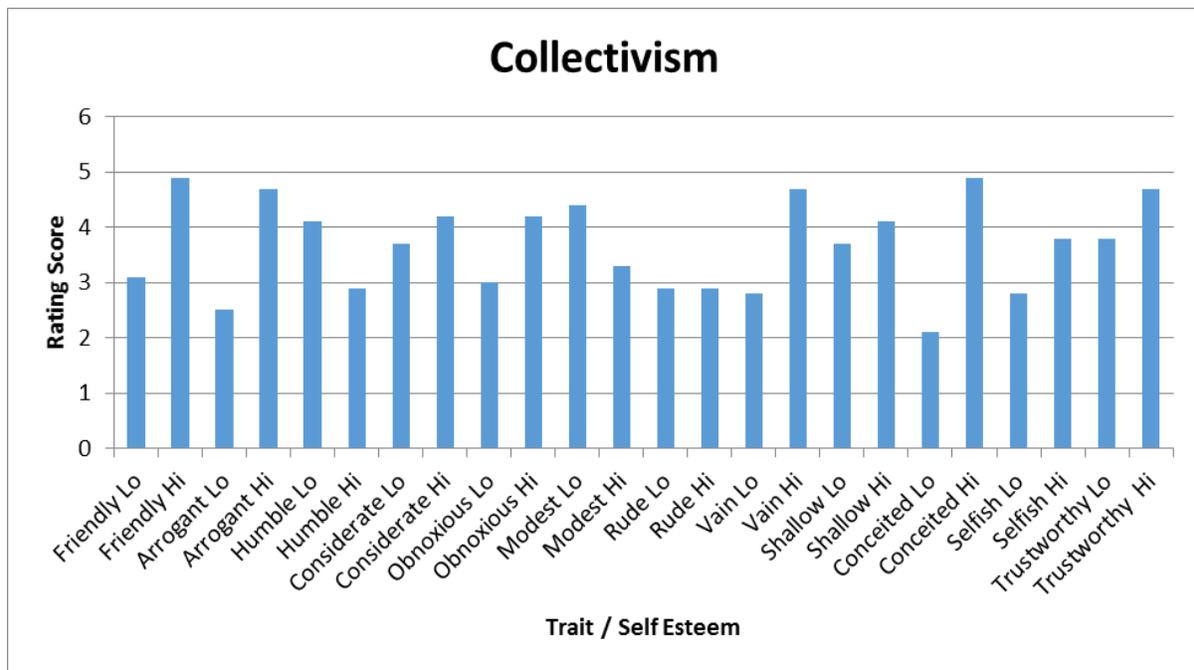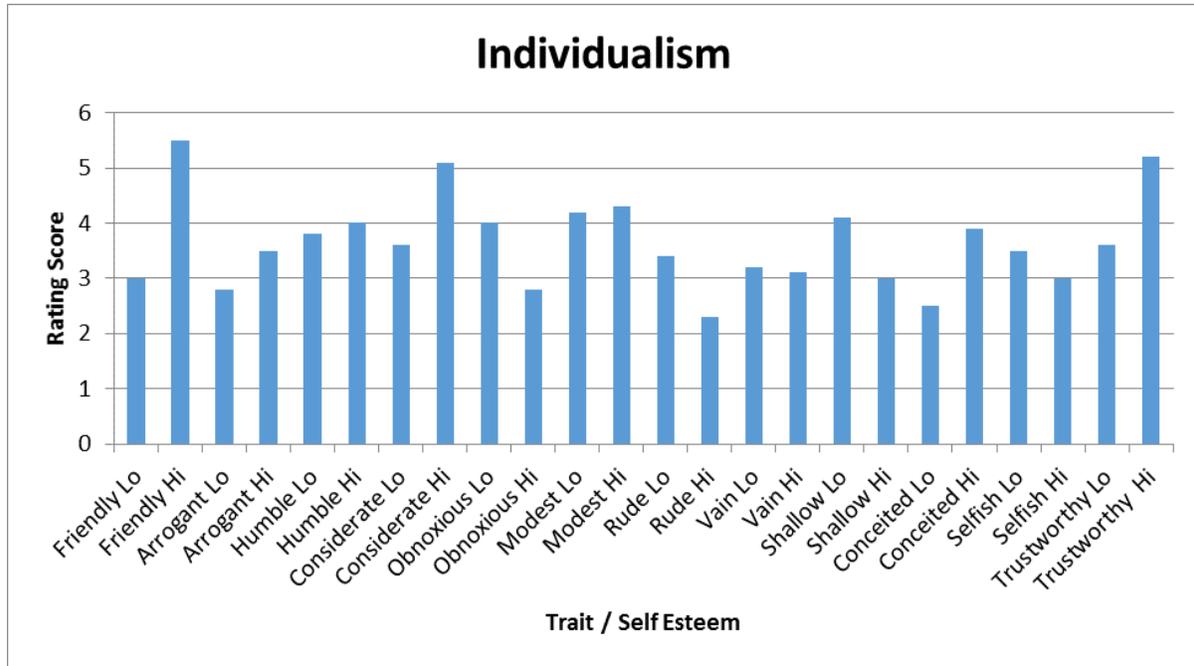
Figure 2

Univariate Effect/ Interactions between Adjective Dimensions (DVs) and Culture Ind/Col and High Self-Esteem (IVs). Based on Type III Least Square Means (individual graphs).
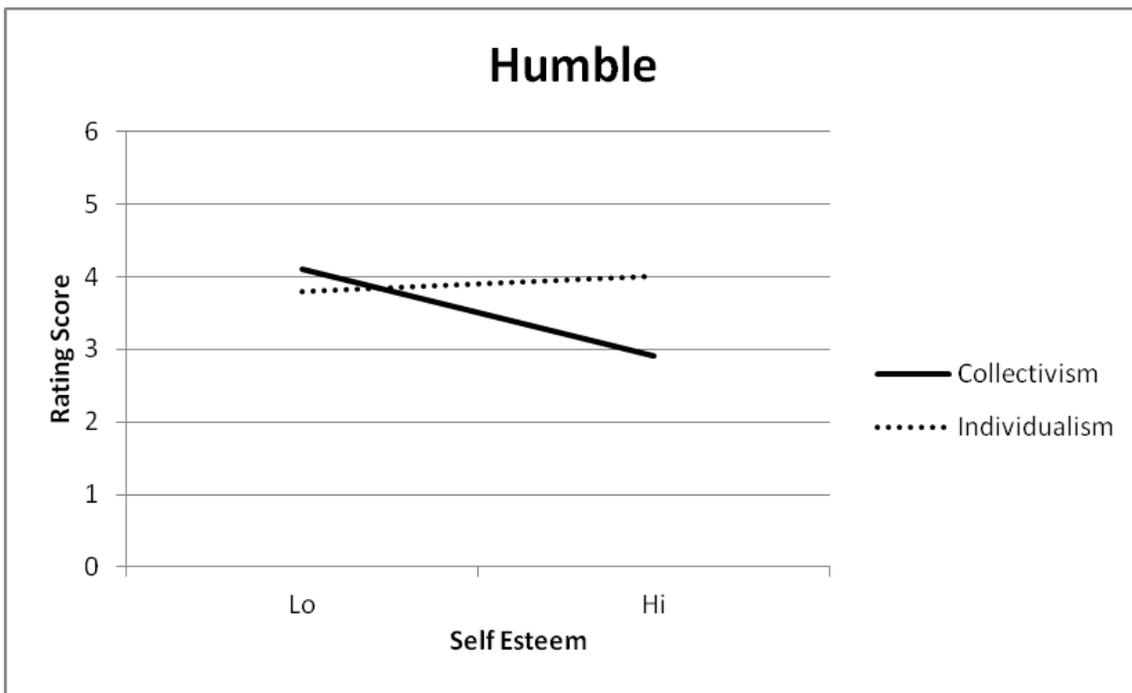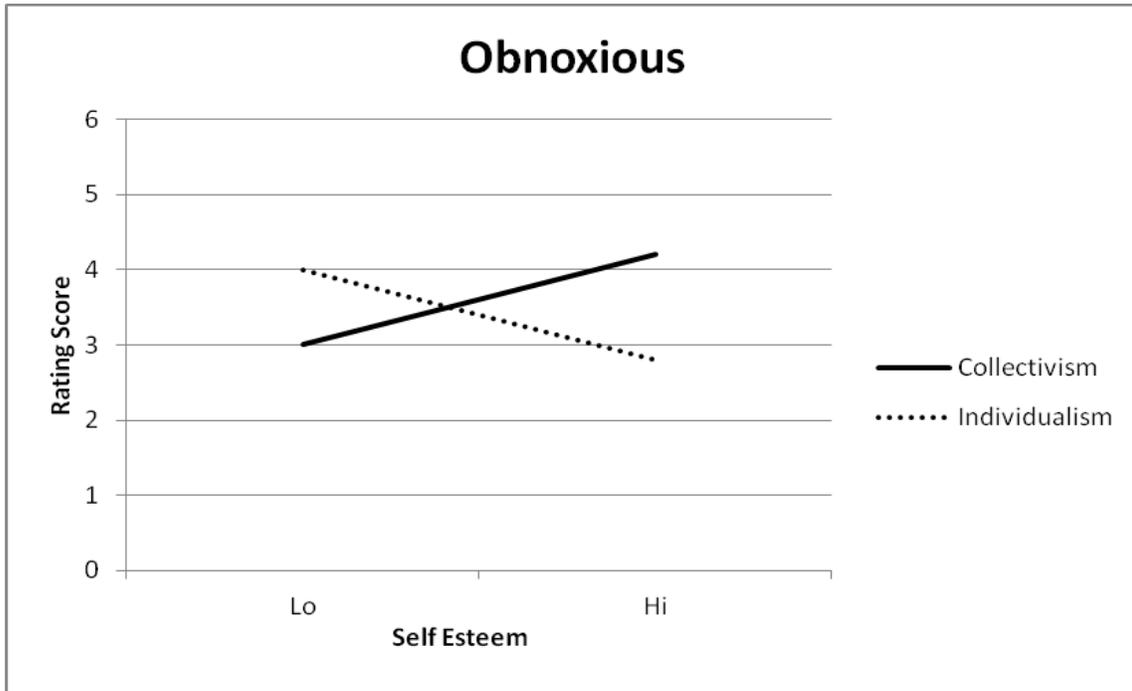
Table 2

This table shows the F values, Alpha Levels, of Univariate Statistics from the MANOVA performed on respondent's evaluations of the High or Low Self-esteem profiles based on respondent's ethnicity (Anglo v. Hispanic) and Multivariate Lambda and alpha levels. The independent variable was the individual's ethnicity, and the dependent variable was their description of the profile using the adjective list.

Dependent Variables

Independent Variables	Courteous		Rude		Intelligent		Modest		Meek		Assertive		Shallow		Obnoxious	
	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha
Ethn*Hi/Lo	1.44	n.s.	6.94	0.0088	4.38	0.0372	6.79	0.0096	9.51	0.0022	16.48	<.0001	6.28	0.0127	17.93	<.0001

Independent Variables	Humble		Arrogant		Sincere		Polite		Vain		Considerate		Conceited		Friendly	
	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha
Ethn*Hi/Lo	5.33	0.0215	24.59	<.0001	0.34	n.s.	0.87	n.s.	29.67	<.0001	6.94	0.0088	4.57	0.0333	0.29	n.s.

Independent Variables	Selfish		Warm		Mature		Soc Comptnt		Honest		Trustworthy		Wilk's Lambda	
	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	F value	Alpha	value	Alpha
Ethn*Hi/Lo	3.58	n.s.	0.25	n.s.	4.21	0.0408	0.01	n.s.	0.02	n.s.	6.85	0.0093	0.78505386	<.0001

As noted earlier, a 3-Way MANOVA was also performed utilizing Ethnicity (Anglo or Hispanic), in place of Culture (Ind/Col). Individual 3-Way ANOVAS were also performed in this instance using the 22-adjective dimensions as the dependent variables, and Ethnicity (i.e. Anglo or Hispanic), Form (Rosenberg or Coopersmith), and Profile (i.e. Hi/Lo self-esteem) as independent variables. Table 2 shows the general univariate and multivariate results obtained from this analysis. The multivariate results are also represented by the index Wilke's Lambda in this table. The results of this analysis also revealed significance in terms of predicting differences in rating of the profiles. Interaction effects were significant in the multivariate analyses for Ethnicity (Anglo/Hispanic) and Profile (i.e. Hi/Lo), and for the three-way interaction between ethnicity, profile, and form. Individual univariate effects were also significant for the interaction, but in this case the adjectives showing significance decreased in number. The adjectives that showed significant interactions between Ethnicity and Profile were Rude, Modest, Shallow, Obnoxious, Humble, Arrogant, and Vain (see Table 2).

It is important to note, even pressing to underscore, the important, yet surprising, finding resulting from this last analysis. That is, the main effects and interactions showing statistical significance suggest a seemingly opposite trend as compared to those observed in the first analysis. To be clear, in this case Hispanics rated the high self-esteem profiles more positively or with more desirable tones in relation to their Anglo counterparts. This trend of observed ratings is surprising because based on the relevant literature on individualism and collectivism (e.g. Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995), Hispanics are often assumed to be more collectivist in nature, and as noted in the previous analysis collectivists rated high self-esteem profiles in a less desirable manner. Interestingly, Hispanic participants' scores on the SInd/Col scale showed a trend that described them as more individualist, while at the same time, relatively more Anglo participants obtained scores describing them with more collectivist tendencies. A Chi Square of the data involving participants ethnicity and cultural tendency -Ind/Col- as independent variables was conducted which yielded a value of 8.234 (Pearson Chi-Square) and Alpha of 0.0004. Of the 343 participants, there were 196 Hispanics and 147 Anglos. The split in the Hispanic population indicated that of the 196, 119 exhibited individualist tendencies and 77 exhibited collectivist tendencies, as indicated by results from the Sind/col. Of the 147 Anglo participants, 53 exhibited individualist tendencies and 94 exhibited collectivist tendencies. Graphs showing all adjective ratings are shown on Figure 3. Individual graphs showing significant effects are presented in figure 4. (See Appendix II for the rest of the significant graphs).

Figure 3

Univariate Effect/ Interactions between Adjective Dimensions (DVs) and Ethnicity and High Self-Esteem (IVs). Based on Type III Least Square Means.
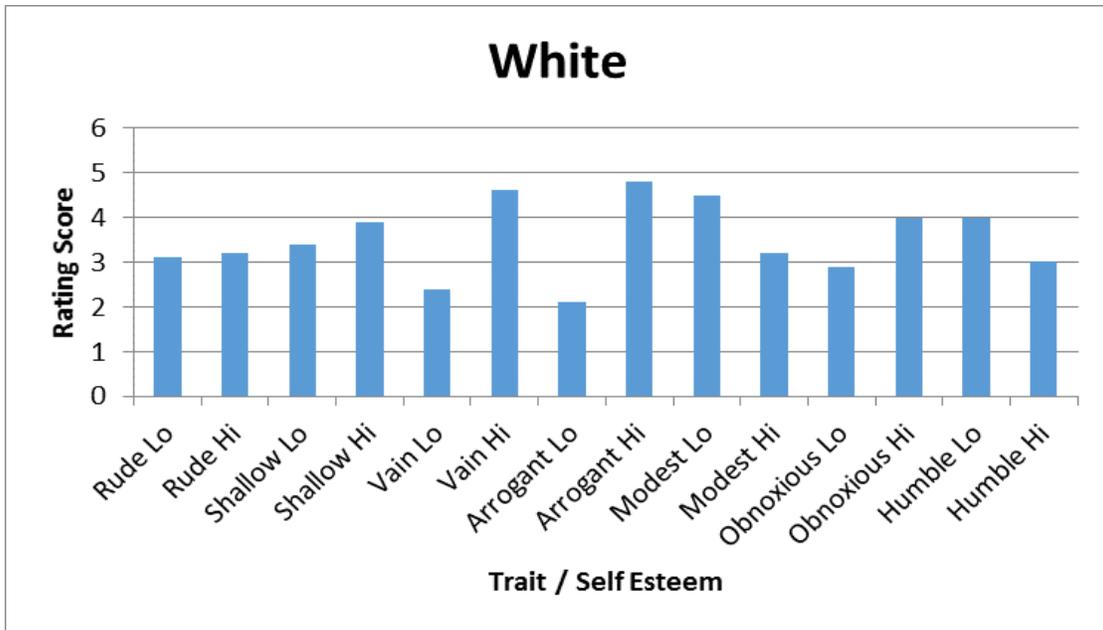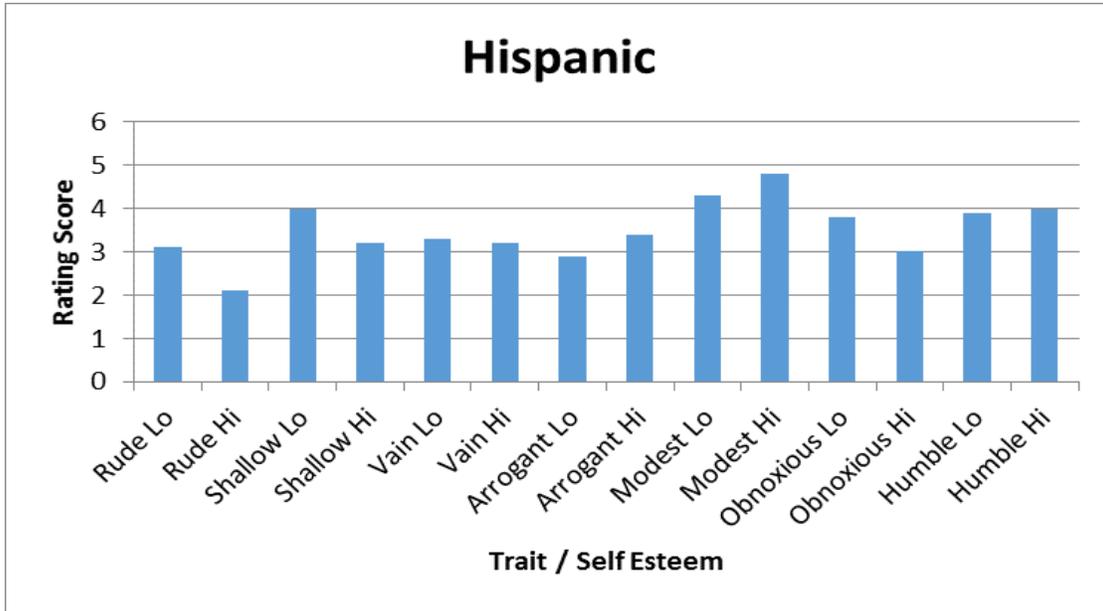
Figure 4

Univariate effect/ interactions between adjective dimensions (DVs) and Ethnicity and High self-esteem (IVs). Based on Type III Least Square Means. (Individual graphs)
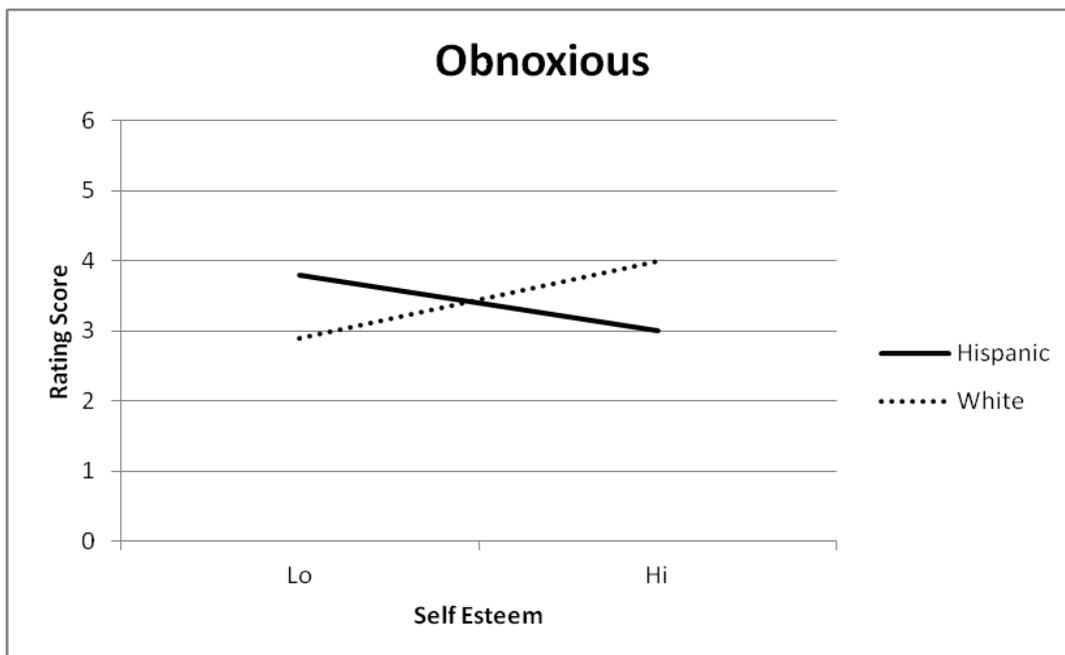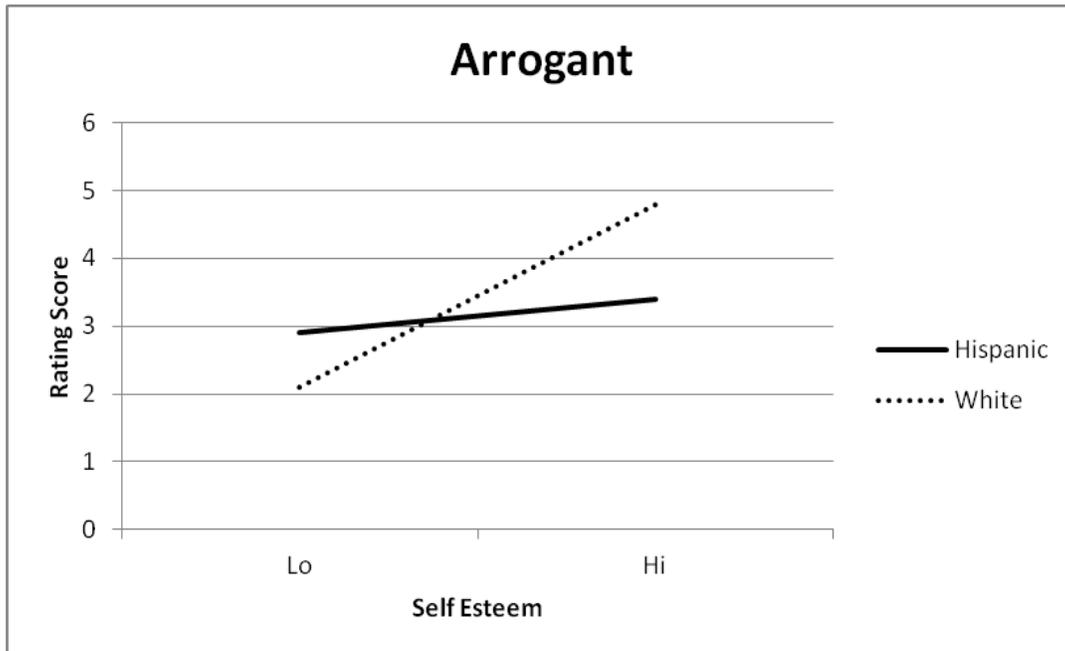
Discussion

In light of research performed on personality-trait words, which suggests that some of them carry desirable connotations and others undesirable ones, strong support can be drawn in favor of the hypothesis that people with relatively more collectivist tendencies perceived the characteristics normally associated with high self-esteem with less desirable undertones in relation to those possessing relatively more individualist tendencies, as indicated by their ratings. These differences become evident as profiles representing an individual with high self-esteem are rated by collectivists as arrogant, rude, shallow, obnoxious, vain, conceited, and selfish, while these same profiles are rated in a more positive manner (e.g., assertive, humble, friendly) by their individualist counterparts.

It seems important to reiterate the unexpected finding that showed a significant number of people claiming Hispanic ethnicity who obtained scores placing them in the individualist camp, while at the same time, a significant number of Anglos obtained scores placing them in the collectivist camp. These findings are significant given their inconsistency with the relevant literature on individualism and collectivism (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). This seems in alignment, however, with conclusions reached by Vandello and Cohen (1999), who suggested that one cannot make assumptions about people's cultural tendencies based on geographical location alone. Therefore, it seems extremely important to exercise extreme caution when tempted to make blanket generalizations. If nothing else, this study underscores the notion that people are resistant to categorizations. While categorization helps to reduce the complexity of the physical world by identifying and grouping things with common attributes, such practice may have unintended effects when applied to humans, by possibly leaving out defining aspects essential for our understanding of others, or by imputing traits or characteristics that are stereotypical at best.

It behooves us to thoroughly examine theories and/or constructs, such as that of self-esteem, in order to identify their usefulness and/or potential universality. From the perspective of this study, the notion of self-esteem, or the characteristics often associated with it, do not have the same meaning for all people.

Clearly, this is an issue intimately related to particular ontological and epistemological understandings. In this case, the notion of self-esteem, and that of rugged individualism, may have important implications in relation to how people understand and relate to one another, particularly against the backdrop of an increasingly global society. It has been suggested that American society's trend is to become increasingly individualist (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, & Swidler, 2008; Tocqueville, 2009), which may have serious implications for (or against) relationships and a healthy sense of community. Bellah and his colleagues (2008) suggested that rugged individualism does not serve well in any society (p. xiv). Also, Alexis de Tocqueville (2009) suggested that "egoism may stem from individualism, which dries up the seeds of every virtue and leads a man to think only of himself" (p. 109). In this sense, rugged individualism may be considered, as Bellah and his colleagues (2008) suggested, the "Achilles Heel of the American Experiment" (p. ix) - or of any other sensible society for that matter. This phenomenon may also be the main factor driving what Putnam (2000) described in his work "Bowling Alone." According to Kirkpatrick (in Macmurray, 1999), for a long time philosophical and psychological endeavors have shifted in the direction of egocentrism and isolation of the self. Happily, there seems to be a new impetus to turn around and cultivate a sense of community:

The rising interest in community is a reflection of the felt need to turn away from the alienation of the self, inherent in self-centered thinking and toward some form of mutuality and companionship with others, including, for many, the whole environmental, global context in which persons live. (Macmurray, 1999, p. xii)

As a side note, it seems evident that self-esteem, while considered something ostensibly about the self, seems heavily affected by others' appraisals (thus, not so much about the self). The notion of the self (for lack of a more familiar term) might be more of a relational phenomenon than it is often realized. Apparently people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors have a more meaningful impact on others than they are credited.

Instead of a kin focus on the self, investing more time and resources on better understanding and enhancing relationships, and devising strategies to enhance positive, genuine ones may be a more worthwhile endeavor.

Limitations and Future Research

While individualism and collectivism seem important cultural variables, and are seemingly influential in relationships, it is advised to explore variables beyond these that may be important factors as well. Further studies may investigate possible interactions between self-esteem, self-efficacy, and resilience for instance. Also, because data derived from self-reports and seemingly arbitrary ratings may pose important limitations, a qualitative project may illuminate this issue further. Nevertheless, the above discussion seems pertinent and relevant.

For what we really need is to care for one another, and we are only caring for ourselves. We have achieved society, but not community. We have become associates, but not friends. (Macmurray, 1999, p. 150).

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Appendix I

Univariate Effect/ Interactions between Adjective Dimensions (DVs) and Culture Ind/Col and High Self-Esteem (IVs). Based on Type III Least Square Means (individual graphs).
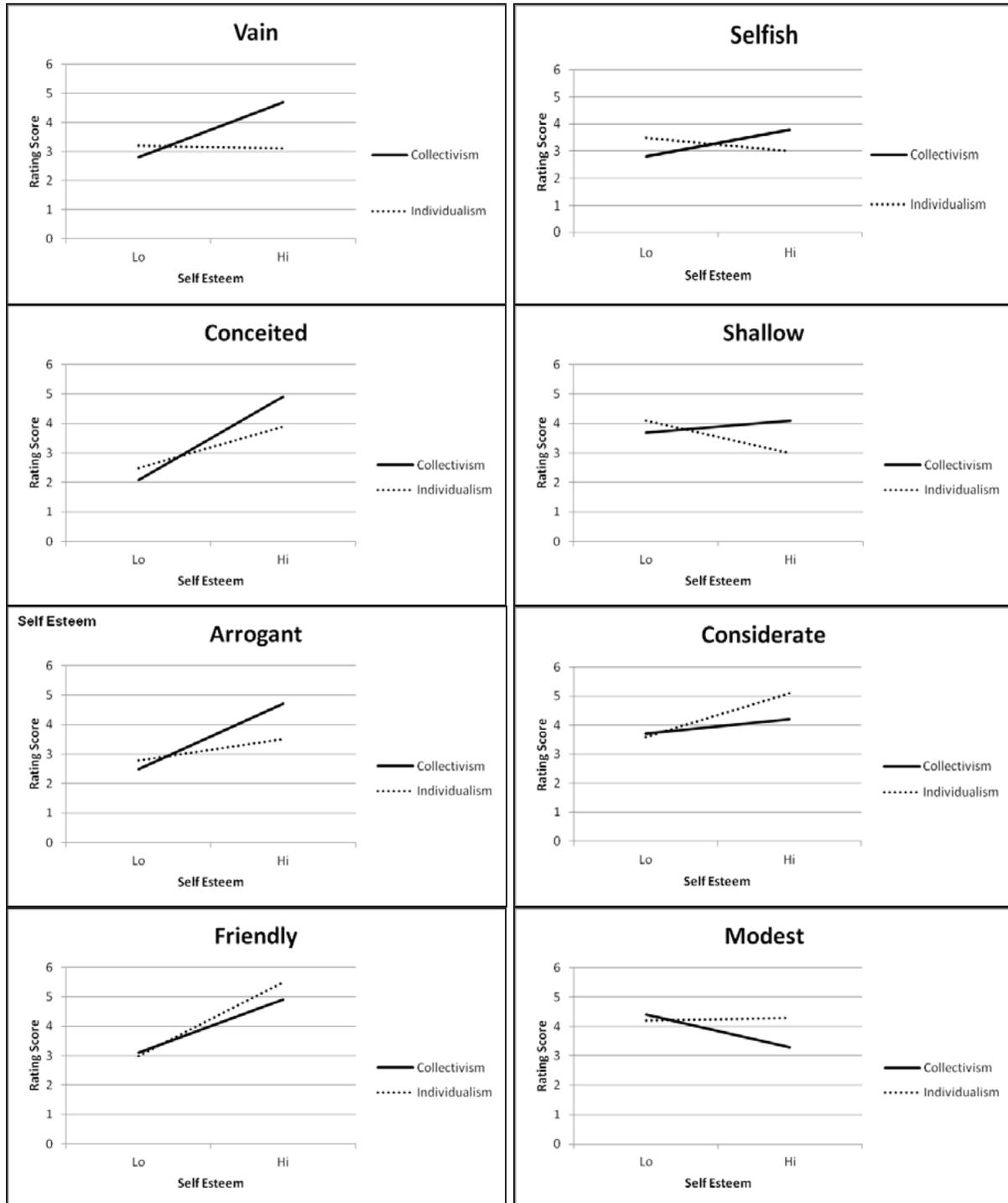
Appendix I (continued)
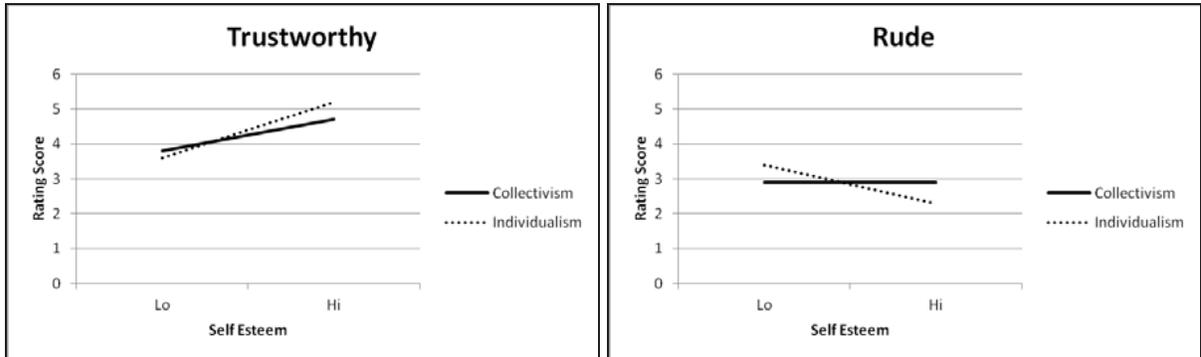
Appendix II

Univariate Effect/ Interactions between Adjective Dimensions (DVs) and Ethnicity and High Self-Esteem (IVs). Based on Type III Least Square Means. (Individual graphs)
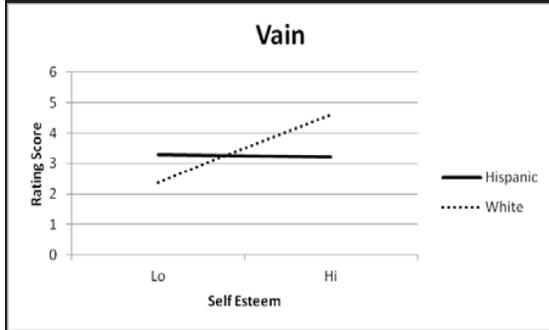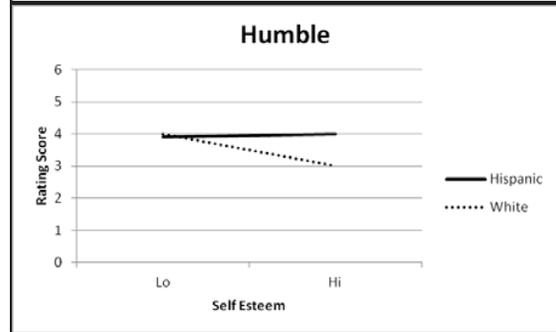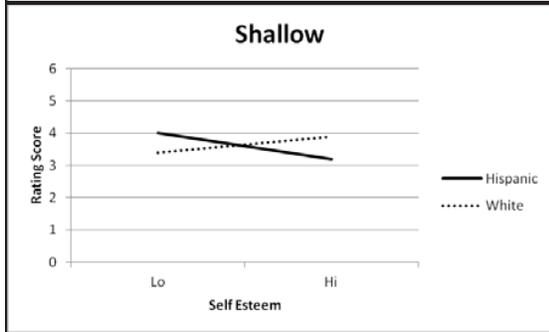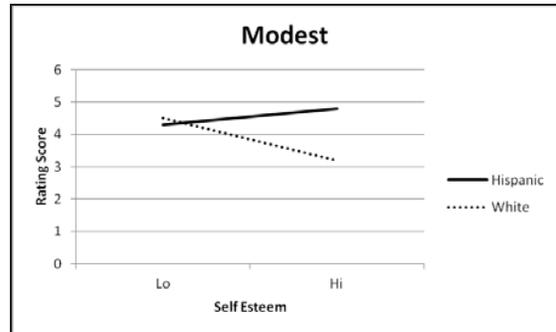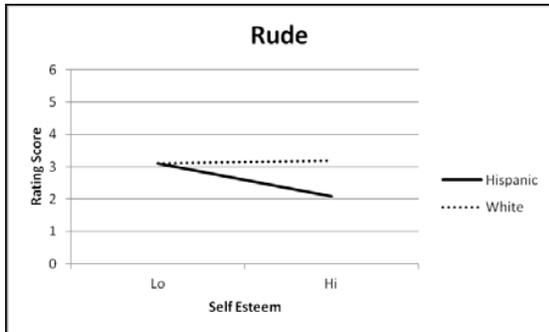
Differences in Depressive and PTSD Symptom Severity between Survivors of Military Sexual or Combat Trauma: Results within a Vietnam Era Veteran Sample

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This study examined if military sexual trauma (MST)-related posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and combat-related PTSD are different in their psychiatric presentation in Vietnam era veterans. Data were utilized from two previously conducted randomized clinical trials. Thirty-eight Vietnam era veterans who experienced either a combat (n = 17) or military sexual trauma (MST; n = 21) were identified. Results indicated that survivors of both trauma types reported high depressive and PTSD symptom severity. Results of analysis of covariance did not indicate a significant difference in depressive symptomatology between groups. However, a significant difference in terms of PTSD symptom severity was found, with survivors of MST experiencing significantly greater PTSD symptomatology than survivors of combat trauma. The need for continued PTSD treatment for Vietnam era veteran survivors of trauma, as well as potential future research directions are discussed.

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Veterans of the Vietnam era account for the largest portion of patients with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) seeking mental health treatment at Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMCs; Hermes, Hoff, & Rosenheck, 2014). Since 1997, this number has annually increased by nearly 10% (Hermes et al., 2014; Hermes, Rosenheck, Desai, & Fontana, 2012). Among these individuals, combat and sexual traumas are among the most commonly reported traumatic experiences related to military service (Fontana & Rosenheck, 1998a; King, King, Foy, Keane, & Fairbank, 1999; Richardson, Frueh, & Acierno, 2010; Surís & Lind, 2008; Weiss et al., 1992). As such, it is imperative for VAMCs to continue to utilize research and evidence-based techniques in addressing the specific clinical needs of this growing patient population (Karlin et al., 2010). In particular, research specifically examining psychiatric symptomatology treated by psychotherapy is crucial.

The extant research has previously delineated the negative physical health, mental health, and socioeconomic consequences associated with Vietnam era veterans living with PTSD (Schnurr, Spiro, & Paris, 2000; Surís, Holliday, Weitlauf, North, & the Veteran Safety Initiative Writing Collaborative, 2013a; Surís & Lind, 2008). Furthermore, PTSD within this population has been tied to significant costs of care for the Veterans Health Administration in terms of health care utilization and service connected disability (Hermes et al., 2014; Surís, Lind, Kashner, Borman, & Petty, 2004). As such, significant research has been conducted to disseminate efficacious, evidence-based treatments for PTSD within this population (Karlin et al., 2010).

Despite this, gaps in the literature remain. In particular, research strongly suggests that type of trauma (e.g., combat-or sexual-related) may be indicative of differences in psychiatric presentation and symptomatology (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Ehring & Quack, 2010; Kelley, Weathers, McDevitt-Murphy, Eakin, & Flood, 2009; Yasan, Saka, Ozkan, & Ertem, 2009). However, to date, only a limited number of studies have empirically tested this idea within veteran and military populations. Yaeger, Himmelfarb, Cammack, & Mintz (2006) found that female veteran survivors of military-related trauma had high rates of PTSD;

however, those who experienced MST were more likely to meet criteria for PTSD than those who had experienced other types of traumas. Additionally, Kang, Dalager, Mahan, and Ishii (2005) found that although both MST and combat-related trauma were predictive of PTSD, effect sizes of the predictive strength of MST were greater. However, to our knowledge no study has examined if symptom severity differences are present within veteran or military populations based on type of trauma. Furthermore, neither of the aforementioned studies assessed symptom presentation specifically within the Vietnam era population.

The purpose of the study was to examine if trauma type within the Vietnam era population resulted in differences in psychiatric symptomatology. In particular, PTSD symptom severity was assessed. Additionally, because of the common comorbidity between PTSD and depression (Campbell et al., 2007), depressive symptomatology was measured. The research question proposed was: Do Vietnam era veterans with MST-related PTSD have significantly greater depressive and PTSD symptomatology compared to Vietnam era veterans with combat-related PTSD?

Method

Participants

The present study utilized data from two previously conducted randomized clinical trials (RCT; Surís, Link-Malcolm, Chard, Ahn, North, 2013; Surís, Mullen, Holliday, & North, under review). Both RCTs recruited participants via posted advertisements, recruitment letters, and clinician referral. Additionally, participants received monetary compensation for their participation. Moreover, both RCTs were approved by the local VAMC Institutional Review Board, and all participants gave their written consent before taking part in the study. Participants were divided into groups for subsequent data analysis based on reported trauma: combat or MST. Twenty-one veterans, 16 female and 5 male, reported experiencing a sexual trauma. The average age for this group was 55.90 (SD = 5.40) years old, and 11 (52.40%) identified as White, non-Hispanic; 7 (33.30%) identified as Black, non-Hispanic; 1 (4.80%) identified as White, Hispanic; 1 (4.80%) identified

as Pacific Islander; and 1 (4.80%) identified as "Other." Seventeen veterans, 16 male, reported a combat-related trauma. The average age for this group was 62.07 (SD = 5.18) years old, and 10 (58.80%) identified as White, non-Hispanic; 6 (35.30%) identified as Black, non-Hispanic; and 1 (5.90%) identified as "Other."

Measures

Common measures were utilized in both RCTs which allowed for cross-study comparison. In particular, the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS; Blake et al., 1995) and PTSD Checklist-Military Version (PCL-M; Weathers, Litz, Herman, Huska, & Keane, 1993) were administered to assess PTSD symptom severity, and the Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology- Self-Report (QIDS-SR; Rush et al., 2003) was administered to assess depressive symptomatology. Additionally, a demographic questionnaire was administered to assess sociodemographic variables (e.g., age, highest level of education, gender, ethnicity, service era, service branch).

The CAPS, long considered a "gold-standard" measure of PTSD (Blake et al., 1995), is a 30-item semi-structured interview. It is used to assess the frequency and intensity of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000) PTSD symptoms. A total score for the CAPS is generated based on summing frequency and intensity scores for the 17 DSM-IV-TR PTSD symptoms. The CAPS has strong inter-rater reliability (κ = .95-1.00) and strong concurrent validity to other measures of PTSD including the PCL-M (r = .93) and Mississippi Scale for Combat-related PTSD (r = .70, r = .81), and is commonly utilized in clinical and research settings (Blake et al., 1995; Hinton et al., 2006; Keane, Caddell, & Taylor, 1988; Weathers, Keane, & Davidson, 2003).

The PCL-M is a 17-item, self-report measure that is commonly utilized to assess a patient's PTSD symptom severity (Weathers et al., 1993). The PCL-M assesses a patient's perceived intensity of each of the 17 DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2000) PTSD symptoms. A total score for the PCL-M is generated by summing each of the 17 items. The PCL-M is a quick assessment tool with strong test-retest reliability (r = .96) and concurrent validity to measures of PTSD

including the Mississippi Scale for Combat PTSD (r = .93) and the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (r = .93; Blanchard, Jones-Alexander, Buckley, & Forneris, 1996; Keane et al., 1988; Keen, Kutter, Niles, & Krinsley, 2008; Wilkins, Lang, & Norman, 2011).

The QIDS-SR is a 16-item self-report measure, used to assess depressive symptomatology (Rush et al., 2003). The QIDS-SR assesses frequency of depressive symptom endorsement, and generates a total score of depressive symptom severity. The QIDS-SR has strong concurrent validity to the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (r = .76), as well as strong internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .69-.89; Cameron et al., 2013; Hamilton, 1960; Reilly, MacGillivray, Reid, & Cameron, 2014; Rush et al., 2003).

Procedure

The first set of data was gathered from an RCT assessing the efficacy of an evidence-based psychotherapy (i.e., cognitive processing therapy) in the treatment of veterans with PTSD-related MST (Surís et al., 2013b). One-hundred and sixty-one participants were voluntarily enrolled in this study. Inclusion criteria were: 1) veteran diagnosed with MST-related PTSD, 2) MST occurring at least 3 months prior to enrollment, 3) the MST was identified by the veteran as the most severe lifetime trauma, 4) the veteran had more than one clear memory of the trauma, and 5) stable psychotropic medication regimen for at least 6 months. Exclusion criteria were: 1) active substance dependence within the last 3 months, 2) current psychosis, 3) current unstable bipolar disorder, 4) current cognitive impairment, 5) current treatment with an evidence based treatment for their PTSD, 6) involvement in a violent relationship, or 7) prominent suicidal or homicidal features.

The second set of data was gathered from an RCT assessing the efficacy of a novel pharmacotherapy (i.e., dexamethasone) for military-related PTSD (Surís et al., under review). Eighty-six participants were voluntarily enrolled in this study. Inclusion criteria were: 1) veteran diagnosed with military-related PTSD, 2) the veteran had more than one clear memory of the trauma, and 3) stable psychotropic medication regimen for at least 6 months. Exclusion criteria were: 1) active substance dependence within the last 3 months, 2) current psychosis,

3) current unstable bipolar disorder, 4) current cognitive impairment, 5) current treatment with an evidence based treatment for their PTSD, 6) contraindication to study medication, and 7) prominent suicidal or homicidal features. Data from both aforementioned RCTs was screened in order to ensure participant's Vietnam era service. In order to be included in analyses for the present study, a participant must have self-identified as serving during the Vietnam era, met guidelines for Vietnam era service (e.g., serving between 1964-1975), as per Kukla et al. (1990), and not have participated in multiple service eras (e.g., Korean War, Gulf War). Using these guidelines, data from 20 participants were utilized from the psychotherapy RCT. This sample was comprised of 16 female and 4 male veterans who experienced a sexual trauma. Additionally, data from 18 participants were entered from the pharmacotherapy RCT. This sample was comprised of 17 males with a history of combat-related trauma and 1 female veteran who experienced a sexual trauma.

Although we utilized data from two distinct RCTs, both studies had similar inclusion (e.g., military-related PTSD diagnosis and stable psychotropic medication regimen) and exclusion (e.g., active substance dependence, psychosis, unstable bipolar disorder, or suicidal/homicidal features) criteria. Moreover, data for the present study was only analyzed at baseline, and as such pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy would have no impact on administered measures.

Results

Sociodemographic Differences

Before addressing the research question, we examined the sociodemographic characteristics of the two groups to determine if statistical differences existed and, if present, control for them in subsequent inferential analyses. Sociodemographic characteristics were compared via 2 independent sample t-tests for continuous measures (e.g., age and education) and 2 chi-square analyses for qualitative measures (e.g., ethnicity and service branch). An independent samples t-test did not indicate significant differences between Vietnam era veterans based on trauma type for years of education ($p > .05$; see Table 1). Additionally, chi-square analyses

did not indicate significant differences for our sample based on trauma type for ethnicity or service branch ($p > .05$). However, an independent samples t-test did indicate significant differences between trauma type for age, with survivors of MST being significantly younger ($M = 55.90$, SD = 5.41) than survivors of combat trauma ($M = 63.78$, $SD = 3.78$), $t(36) = -5.07$, $p = .0009$, $d = 1.69$.

Because the combat trauma group was comprised entirely of males, statistical analyses based on gender were also conducted to determine the homogeneity of the sample, as well as to identify if sociodemographic differences were present based on gender. An independent samples t-test did not indicate significant differences based on gender for years of education ($p > .05$; see Table 2). Moreover, chi-square analyses did not indicate significant differences for our sample based on gender for ethnicity or service branch ($p > .05$). Despite this, significant differences remained present with age, with an independent samples t-test finding that males ($M = 62.07$, $SD = 5.18$) were older than females ($M = 56.13$, $SD = 5.73$), $t(36) = -3.36$, $p = .002$, $d = 1.09$.

Inferential Analyses of Depression and PTSD

Due to the noted significant differences based on age and gender, inferential analyses controlled for these variables. Three 2 x 1 ANCOVAs were conducted, with age classified as a covariate and gender as an additional factor (see Table 3). This allowed for our statistical analyses to control for age as a confounding variable as well as detect if gender was a significant factor in participant's reported depression and/or PTSD symptom severity.

CAPS. ANCOVA results indicated that age was not a significant covariate ($p > .05$). Similarly, gender was found to be a non-significant factor ($p > .05$). Therefore, neither age nor gender were found to significantly affect participant's PTSD symptom severity. However, trauma type was found to be a significant factor, F(1, 34) = 4.34, $p = .045$, partial η2 = .11, with survivors of MST ($M = 83.57$, $SD = 12.62$) having significantly greater CAPS scores than survivors of combat trauma ($M = 62.53$, $SD = 13.53$). Moreover, the interaction between gender and trauma type was not significant

($p > .05$). Despite the noted significant differences, both trauma groups had scores much higher than 45, which is indicative of a PTSD diagnosis (Weathers, Ruscio, & Keane, 1999).

PCL-M. ANCOVA results indicated that age was not a significant covariate ($p > .05$). Gender was also found not to be a significant factor ($p > .05$). Despite this, trauma type was found to be a significant factor, $F(1, 33) = 5.36$, $p = .027$, partial $\eta2 = .14$, with survivors of MST ($M = 65.25$, $SD = 12.26$) having significantly greater PCL-M scores than survivors of combat trauma ($M = 52.47$, $SD = 12.28$). However, the interaction between gender and trauma type was not significant ($p > .05$). Similar to CAPS scores, results indicated that type of trauma and not gender or age resulted in significantly different PCL-M scores. Moreover, scores for both trauma groups were substantially higher than standard cut offs for PCL-M positive screens of a positive PTSD diagnosis (e.g., 30-38; Blieses et al., 2008; Dobie et al., 2002).

QIDS-SR. ANCOVA results indicated that age was not a significant covariate ($p > .05$). Additionally, gender was not a significant factor ($p > .05$). Furthermore, trauma type was also not a significant factor, $F(1,34) = .54$, $p = .466$, partial $\eta2 = .02$, with survivors of MST ($M = 16.62$, $SD = 4.69$) having statistically similar QIDS-SR scores to survivors of combat trauma ($M = 12.82$, $SD = 4.42$). Moreover, the interaction between trauma type and gender was non-significant ($p > .05$). It is important to note that participant's QIDS-SR scores in both conditions were higher than cut off scores indicative of a positive screen for depression on the QIDS-SR (i.e., 11; Cusin, Yang, Yeung, & Fava, 2012; Rush et al., 2003).

Discussion

Overall, our findings are consistent with previous literature that military-related traumas (e.g., combat-related and sexual-related traumas) are associated with high symptomalogic ratings of PTSD (Creamer, Wade, Fletcher, & Forbes, 2011). However, our results further this understanding by indicating that sexual-related traumas in Vietnam era veterans may result in more severe PTSD symptom severity. We assert that specific factors present in MST may result in heightened PTSD. In particular, past researchers have suggested that the interpersonal

nature of MST, instances of continued interaction among survivor and perpetrator (e.g., working with perpetrator, perpetrator is commanding officer), and stigma associated with reporting and seeking treatment may exacerbate a survivor's PTSD (Burgess, Slattery, & Herlihy, 2013; Kimerling, Gima, Smith, Street, & Frayne, 2007; Morris, Smith, Farooqui, & Surís, 2013; Sadler, Booth, Cook, Torner, & Doebbeling, 2001; Turchik et al., 2013; Turchik, Bucossi, Kimerling, 2014; Wolfe et al., 1998). Moreover, survivors of MST often report higher instances of social alienation and isolation from their families and friends, further exacerbating their PTSD symptomatology (Fontana & Rosenheck, 1998b; Mattocks, Haskell, Krebs, Justice, & Yano, 2012; Wolfe et al., 1998). Thus, continued screening within this population for inter-personal-related traumas remains necessary at VAMCs in order to best identify and treat MST (Kimerling, Street, Gima, & Smith, 2008).

Our results are novel due to the lack of extant research examining the role of trauma type in subsequent depressive symptomatology. Although previous studies have examined the relationship between trauma-type and PTSD (Kang et al., 2005; Yaeger et al., 2006), no studies to date have examined this relationship in depression. Our results suggest that sexual- and combat-related traumas result in heightened depressive presentation. Further, there is no significant difference in terms of traumatic experience and subsequent depressive symptomatology. Our results are especially remarkable due to the apparent non-significance of gender as a factor. Researchers have long suggested that across culture and age, depression tends to be more prevalent and severe in females than males (Angst et al., 2002; Kuehner, 2003; Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000). However, this was not upheld in our analyses. Therefore, our findings indicate that military-related trauma universally impacts depressive symptomatology across gender within Vietnam era veterans.

Limitations and Future Research

Our present study was not without limitations. First, prior trauma history was not assessed within our sample. A substantial body of research indicates that a history of multiple traumatic experiences is indicative of greater PTSD symptom severity, as well as higher likelihood of subsequent revictimization (Follette,

Polusny, Bechtle, & Naugle, 1996; Nishith, Mechanic, & Resick, 2000; Surís et al., 2013a). As such, it is impossible to assert that significantly greater PTSD symptom severity was due to MST and not cumulative previous traumatic experiences. Additionally, our sample was comprised mainly of White and Black, non-Hispanic individuals. Because of this, we cannot infer that our findings are applicable to other racial/ethnic populations (e.g., Asian, Hispanic). Therefore, future research should expand upon our findings by recruiting a more diverse sample.

We believe that our findings provide a novel basis upon which future research can build. In particular, future research should determine specific components inherent in MST (and absent in combat trauma) that exacerbate PTSD symptom severity. By determining these specific factors, a more comprehensive picture of a veteran's PTSD can be constructed, and thus therapeutically treated. Furthermore, due to the severe symptom presentation of PTSD and depression within this population, we assert that future RCTs are necessary to determine if current EBTs for military-related PTSD are efficacious in attenuating both PTSD and depression symptom severity.

Our study continues to demonstrate the severe psychiatric symptomatology being experienced within Vietnam era survivors of military-related trauma. Moreover, as this population continues to increase in size (Hermes et al., 2014; Hermes et al., 2012), it is crucial for future research to determine mechanisms exclusive to MST within this population that can be targeted and treated.

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Table 1

Sociodemographic Information of Total Sample and Based on Trauma Type

Variable	MST ($n = 21$)		Combat-trauma ($n = 17$)		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
Years of education	13.81	1.94	13.76	1.56	.77
Age	55.90	5.41	63.76	3.78	4.95***
	n	%	n	%	χ^2
Ethnicity					1.72
White, non-Hispanic	11	52.40	10	58.80	
Black, non-Hispanic	7	33.30	6	35.30	
White, Hispanic	1	4.80	0	0.00	
Pacific Islander	1	4.80	0	0.00	
Other	1	4.80	1	5.90	
Service Branch					6.83
Air Force	7	33.30	2	11.80	
Army	9	42.90	11	64.70	
Marines	2	9.50	3	17.60	
Navy	3	14.30	0	0.00	
Other	0	0.00	1	5.90	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Sociodemographic Information Based on Gender

Variable	Female ($n = 17$)		Male ($n = 21$)		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
Years of education	14.24	1.64	13.43	1.81	1.43
Age	56.13	5.73	62.07	5.18	3.36**
	n	%	n	%	χ^2
Ethnicity					1.72
White, non-Hispanic	11	52.40	10	58.80	
Black, non-Hispanic	7	33.30	6	35.30	
White, Hispanic	1	4.80	0	0.00	
Pacific Islander	1	4.80	0	0.00	
Other	1	4.80	1	5.90	
Service Branch					6.83
Air Force	7	33.30	2	11.80	
Army	9	42.90	11	64.70	
Marines	2	9.50	3	17.60	
Navy	3	14.30	0	0.00	
Other	0	0.00	1	5.90	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Comparison of Psychiatric Presentation Based on Trauma Type

Variable	MST ($n = 21$)		Combat-trauma ($n = 17$)		
	M	SD	M	SD	F
CAPS	83.57	12.62	62.53	13.53	4.34*
PCL-M	65.25	12.26	52.47	12.28	5.36*
QIDS-SR	16.62	4.69	12.82	4.42	.54

* $p < .05$

Note. CAPS = Clinician Administered PTSD Scale; PCL-M = PTSD Checklist-Military Version; QIDS-SR = Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology- Self Report.

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY: FATHERS' EXPERIENCES MASSAGING THEIR INFANTS

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Five first time fathers learned to massage their infants. We aimed to determine what, if any, perceived benefits accrued for fathers who massaged their infants. For three weeks fathers provided infant massage to their infants every night before bedtime and recorded their activities in diaries. Fathers' experiences were captured through structured interviews and video recordings. Data was analyzed in Atlas.ti and process coding. The results demonstrated evidence that supported attachment theory constructs: awareness, emotional expression, engagement cues, motivation, relationship, and sensitivity. Fathers reported four major benefits to themselves and their infants: relieving infant stress (soothing), relieving mother stress (caregiving), confidence, and contribution. Furthermore, fathers expressed a desire for further access and opportunity for interaction with their infants. Previous articles on infant massage and fathering did not provide a theoretical framework to view the results. This article confirmed attachment theory as an appropriate lens and as a reference for future studies.

In the past, infants' mothers or other women caregivers have provided most of the infant caregiving (Bailey, 1994; Hossain, Field, Pickens, Malphurs, & Del Valle, 1997). Yet, most fathers (91%) have been involved with the mothers at the time of the babies' births (Gottman, Gottman, & Shapiro, 2010). Fathers who had "close physical contact" interacted more with their infants (Parke & Swain, 1977).

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In addition, fathers who saw infant care giving activities demonstrated mirrored these behaviors with their own infants (Parke, Hymel, Power, & Tinsely, 1980; Harrison, Magille-Evans, Benzies, Gierl, & Kimak, 1996). Fathers who were present and active in the lives of their children provided support contributing to the emotional development of their children by being emotionally and physically available and engaged (Parke, 1996).

Opportunities are missed when fathers are not included in the research articles on parenting and infant caregiving. Nearly 82% of non-married fathers are involved with the mothers at the time of the babies' births (McLanahan, Garfinkel, Reichman, Teitler, Carlson, & Audigier, 2002), however, less than 50% are involved by the time they enter pre-school (Furstenburg & Harris, 1993).

Currently 91% of married fathers are present at the birth, an increase of 90% since the early 1960's (Gottman, Gottman, & Shapiro, 2010).

Father involvement with the mother at the time of the infant's birth provides a window of opportunity to support the relationship of fathers with their infants. In addition, parental [fathering] competence contributes to increased outcomes of child well-being and can increase the well-being of fathers and infants (Coren, 2005). Infant massage increased parental competency, frequency, and quality of caregiving activities by fathers with their infants (Cullen, Field, Escalona, & Hartshorn, 2000; Scholz & Samuels, 1992).

The centrality of touch to positive developmental outcomes is illuminated by attachment theory. Accordingly, attachment theory provides support for researching infant massage. Attachment theory evolved during the 1940s when a developmental psychoanalyst, John Bowlby, wrote a provocative theory article indicating family research would provide better outcomes when it explored children's problems by examining the parenting of the child and the origination of parents' skills (Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby (1969/1982) examined the relationship of the child to the mother by the absence or interruption in the mother and child bonding process. Bowlby concluded that if infants were to become well adjusted children and adults, they must have a secure relationship with the caregiver.

John Bowlby referred to "attachment" as a process occurring over time whereas "bonding" was an initial connection on which a relationship developed (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Although Bowlby was referring to an emotional attachment, Winkler (2000) postulated that the bonding process begins through basic biological introductions of chemical responses between the infant and the caregiver through the five senses: smell, sight, sound, taste, and touch. As fathers are afforded the opportunity to massage their infants, the senses of smell, sight, sound and touch occur because fathers hold their infants, gaze into their infant's eyes, and ask their infant's permission to stroke their infant's body during massage.

Two current articles reporting results on fathers massaging their infants suggest massage is an effective way to provide fathers an opportunity

for more positive interactions with their infants (Cullen et al., 2000, p. 46). Scholz and Samuels (1992) aimed to determine if fathers were more prepared in their role for fathering and if they would increase their interactions with their infants after they massaged their infants. These authors concluded that fathers spent more time taking care of their infants after they had massaged their infants.

These two aforementioned articles (Cullen et al., 2000; Scholz & Samuels, 1992) had a few limitations. There was no theoretical framework in which to justify and discuss the research questions and results. Furthermore, the articles did not provide a protocol of the class taught to the fathers. In addition, these fathers were recruited from a "father's class," and there was no discussion in the articles as to whether or not these designs would allow results to be generalized to real life situations (Isaac & Michael, 1997). In this article, attachment theory provides a framework to view the perceived benefits of father's massaging their infants and to provide in detail the information not noted in the two prior studies.

Promoting early interventions [infant massage] when an infant is first born and when the parents [fathers] are first setting up their caregiving routine directly influences the family system (Belsky, 1981). Infant massage increases parental competency, frequency, and quality of caregiving activities by fathers and mothers with their infants (Cullen et al., 2000; Ferber, Feldman, Kohelet, Kuint, Dollberg, Arbel, & Weller, 2005; Onozawa, Glover, Adams, Modi, & Kumar, 2001; Pardew, 1996; Scholz & Samuels, 1992). Infants who were massaged increased initiation and interactions toward the fathers, thereby reinforcing the fathers' continued interaction with their infants (Cullen et al., 2000; Scholz & Samuels, 1992).

We aimed to expand the knowledge base regarding fathers who massaged their infants by exploring the experiences, attitudes, and perspectives of such fathers. We asked fathers, "What, if any, emotional and physical benefits do you perceive from massaging your infant?"

Method

Five first time fathers were taught to massage their babies by a certified infant massage instructor (CIMI) and according to a prescribed protocol.

The five fathers in this case study are the unit of analysis as, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), "being studied as a phenomenon occurring in a bounded context, is the unit of analysis" (p. 24-25). The recruitment process was extensive and encompassed numerous private and public agencies throughout the local area. The data from the fathers was collected in a demographic survey, structured interviews, self-report diaries, video recordings and observations. The demographic survey collected information about the fathers such as age, marital status, race, education level, and annual income. Data from the demographic survey provided descriptive analysis.

In the structured interviews fathers were asked to describe their perceptions and perspectives of the infant's temperament, their daily routines and interactions with their infants, their experiences in massaging their infants, what benefits they perceived, if any, of massaging their infants, how massage was beneficial to themselves, what they enjoyed most or least, what was important to them about massaging their infants, whether or not they intended to continue massaging after the study ended, and what their reactions were and what they learned about themselves when they reviewed both of the videos. Responses from the first interviews were compared with the second interviews to note any changes in their responses. Fathers were asked to report in the activity diary how long the infant was massaged, what time of day the infant was massaged, and what body parts were massaged. Fathers made these reports once a week for three weeks.

Data Collection

Data collection took three stages. In stage 1, the infant massage demonstration was presented, and then the father was videotaped massaging his infant. Afterwards, the father was interviewed. In stage 2, fathers massaged their infants daily on their own and recorded these activities in the activity diary once a week for three weeks. At the end of three weeks, stage 3, the diaries were collected and fathers were videotaped again. Fathers then reviewed both videotapes and their responses were collected in a final interview.

Sample

The fathers were screened to determine if they were first time fathers, whether or not the infant was under six months of age, and whether they were living with the mother at the time of the birth and during this study. The fathers who participated were all educated with at least some college. Two of the fathers were new college students, three were college graduates, two were full time employed professionals, and one had returned for a graduate degree. Only two of the fathers reported an income above $25,000, and the other three reported an income below $25,000. Two of the fathers were African American and the other three were White. Each differed in age, education, and socioeconomic status. One African American father was past the age of 30, employed full time with an income of $60,000 +, and had a college education, whereas the other African American father was below age 25, a new college student and had an income below $25,000. One of the White fathers was past the age of 30, in graduate school, and had an income below $25,000. The other father, past the age of 25, was fully employed, and had a college degree and an income of more than $25,000. The younger father was under the age of 25 and was a new college student with an annual income under $25,000 (see Table 1).

Procedural Analysis

The data gathered from the structured interviews, the response interviews, and the author's responses to the videos were uploaded as primary document files into ATLAS.ti. The document files were uploaded as described in the book, "Qualitative Data Analysis with ATLAS.ti" (Friese, 2012). ATLAS.ti is a visual analysis tool developed to handle large amounts of qualitative (text, graphics, audio and video) data. This tool supports researchers in developing primary elements in their data and interpreting the meaning of the data into useful "knowledge" (Muhr & Friese, 2004). ATLAS.ti works well with qualitative data, which eludes traditional quantitative analysis. ATLAS.ti is not limited to content or subject matter from any discipline (Muhr & Friese).

Table 1

Demographic Data

Participants	1	2	3	4	5
Age	35	22	36	27	22
Marital Status	Married	Living w Partner	Married	Married	Living w Partner
Race	White	Black	Black	White	White
Level of Education	Graduate	College	College	College	College
Annual Income	$0-$25,000	$0-$25,000	$60,000+	$25,001-$60,000	$0-$25,000
Infant Sex	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male

Qualitative Model of Analysis

The NCT (noticing things, collecting things and thinking about things) model of analysis was used to review the data. NCT is a method originally published by John Seidel (1998) which delineates one model of the processes of qualitative data analysis. This model was further developed by Suzanne Friese who adapted it to computer assisted analysis procedures (Friese, 2012). These same processes (NCT) are described by Creswell (1998) and are regarded as being common as basic elements of qualitative research data analysis (Friese, 2012).

Just as quantitative analysis techniques are selected according to the type of research question and the experimental design, NCT was selected based on the research question of this design. The data was analyzed in both a linear and circular process, mostly circular movement back and forth between noticing, collecting and thinking. These codes were developed both inductively and deductively. Some were descriptive, and some were conceptual. The importance was based on how compelling they were to the author (Friese, 2012).

The segments were coded and compared to each other for similarities and differences to determine a "good fit" for each code. When a code

did not fit the segment a new code was generated. NCT analysis is fluid and dynamic. The data coding was circular from the beginning of the analysis and continued throughout the coding process: recoding, comparing and contrasting the data segments, then noticing patterns and relations of data segments and determining what the theoretical coding implied. The data was analyzed in three iterations. In the first iteration data was reviewed by a surface content analysis, initial coding and process coding. The second iteration described pattern variables, In Vivo and pattern coding. Finally, the third iteration resulted in theoretical coding based on the constructs of attachment theory.

Internal Validity

The qualitative design of this work was rigorous based on accepted standards and practices accepted by professional researchers in the field of social sciences. Credibility (internal validity), transferability (reliability), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity) were met through qualitative strategies. To address crediblity and transferability, methodological strategies were used throughout the research process.

Table 2

Matrix of Findings and Sources of Data Triangulation

Major Findings		Source of Data		
		I	O	D
Finding 1.	Awareness: Fathers reported awareness of enjoyment in contributing to their infants' well-being.	X		X
Finding 2.	Emotions: Fathers identified emotions in both themselves and their infants after massaging their infants.	X		X
Finding 3.	Engagement: Fathers demonstrated engagement cues with their infants during the massages that were videotaped.		X	
Finding 4.	Motivation: Fathers reported motivation to massage and spend time with their infants to relieve the mothers' care giving stress.	X		X
Finding 5.	Opportunity: Fathers valued having the opportunity to spend time with their infants.	X		X
Finding 6.	Relationship: Fathers express approval and acceptance of their infants after massaging them.	X		X
Finding 7.	Sensitivity: Fathers demonstrated sensitivity to their infants' emotional and physical need by responding to their infants' cues.	X	X	X
Finding 8.	Benefits: Fathers reported benefits of relieving the infants' stress.	X		X
Finding 9.	Confidence: Fathers reported increased confidence in their skills and abilities to interact with their infants.	X	X	X

Key: I = Interview; O=Observation; D=Document

These strategies were triangulation, member checking, and transparency (Patton, 2002). Detailed descriptions, purposive sampling, analytic memo writing, code-recode strategies, triangulation of the data, and reflexivity enhanced the dependability and confirmability in the research process (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). A rigorous design and formalized data analysis process provided a credible research platform for future father and infant studies, both qualitative and quantitative.

Results

Results of the data analysis are classified into two overarching themes: attachment theory constructs and benefits. The results demonstrated evidence that supported attachment theory constructs: awareness, emotional expression, engagement cues, motivation, relationship, and sensitivity. Fathers reported four major benefits to themselves and to the infants: relieving infant stress (soothing), relieving mother stress (caregiving), confidence, and contribution. Furthermore, fathers expressed a desire for further access and opportunity for interaction with their infants. Table 2 shows the major findings based on attachment constructs and identifies the data source from which they were identified. Findings 2, 3, and 7 were coded by observations of both of the five minute recordings. The remaining findings were self reported in the data by the fathers.

Attachment Constructs

Fathers reported awareness of *enjoyment* in contributing to their infants' well-being. They made interpretations of what they believed their infants were communicating to them and descriptions of what they felt about their infants' responses. Fathers identified *emotions* in both themselves and their infants after massaging their infants. Fathers described their own emotions when responding to the questions about their infant and their experience of massaging their infant.

Fathers also demonstrated *engagement* cues during the two massages that were videotaped. In the final video, four of the five fathers and infants held eye contact frequently and for long periods of time, and sometimes there were uninterrupted gazes. The fathers also initiated conversations throughout the final massage. Fathers reported they were *motivated* to continue massaging their infants after the study was completed because they enjoyed contributing to the care of their infant and giving the mother some relief.

Fathers valued having the *opportunity* to spend time with their infants. Fathers reported that finding an opportunity [accessibility] to spend time with their infants was challenging. They reported that providing infant massages gave them accessibility to the infant and they enjoyed the opportunity for one-on-time.

In this way, *relationships* between fathers and their infants were developed. Fathers expressed approval and acceptance of their infants.

Finally, fathers demonstrated *sensitivity* to their infants' emotional and physical needs by responding to their infants' cues. Fathers reported they heard their infants communicating through the sounds of their voices and their body movements and determined when to massage and when to stop massaging, and even what body part the infant most enjoyed having massaged.

Benefits

Fathers described in detail the benefits of massaging their infants both for themselves and for the infants. The benefits fathers reported were grouped into four categories: relieving infants' stress (soothing the infant), relieving mother stress (caregiving activities), confidence in caregiving, and contributing to caregiving.

Fathers described massaging their infants as calming them down and indicated the infants were relaxing while being massaged. Fathers expressed that they liked being able to soothe and comfort their infant when the infant was crying. According to Robson and Moss (1979), being able to soothe their infants contributes toward feelings of effectiveness as a parent.

Fathers reported feeling increased confidence in their skills and abilities to interact with their infant. Fathers stated they were making a contribution to their infants by massaging them. Fathers noted their responses to their infants were different after watching the before and after video recordings. They stated they had developed competence and confidence in massaging their infants (see Table 3).

Fathers expressed their desire to spend more time with their infants, relieve the mothers' caregiving activities, and contribute to the parenting process. Fathers identified the challenge of finding opportunities to be with their infants yet, when the opportunity was provided to enroll and participate in this study, they rose to the occasion and reported the many benefits of having massaged their infants. Fathers saw massage as an opportunity to play, bond, and spend time with their infant on a regular basis, and indicated a motivation to continue the practice after the research ended.

Table 3

Benefits Reported By Fathers

Fathers' Perceived Benefits	Fathers' Perceived Infant Benefit
Bonding	Belief (contribution to infants' development)
Competency	Bonding
Contribution	Calming
De-Stressing	Communication (verbal and non-verbal body language)
Enjoyment	Enjoyment Relaxing
Opportunity for One-on-One Time	Play
Relationship	Sensitivity
	Sleep

Furthermore, fathers reported they believed infant massage would contribute to their infants' development and helped them sleep better.

In summary, observations of the videos revealed notable differences between both the fathers' and the infants' responses from the beginning of the three weeks to the end of the three weeks. Fathers initiated the massage quicker the second time with assurances, responsiveness, and communication, both verbal and non-verbal, with the infant. By the end of the three weeks, the infants responded to the fathers' initiation by mirroring the fathers' emotional behaviors.

In conclusion, the reported data demonstrated evidence of the following attachment constructs: awareness, emotional expression, engagement cues, motivation, relationship, and sensitivity. Additionally, expressions of parental confidence and competence were benefits for fathers who massaged their infants. Attachment theory is an appropriate theoretical framework to study the father-child dyad.

Discussion

An article reporting results of a longitudinal study conducted by Grossman, Grossman, Fremmer-Bombik, Kindler, Scheuerer-Englisch, and Zimmerman (2002) on fathers who played with their children concluded that attachment theory might not be the appropriate lens in which to view the father-infant dyad. The first author concurred with this conclusion prior to the results of this study because during the last 100 years, the articles on attachment research focused solely on mothers and their infants beginning with Harlow's research with monkeys (Harlow, 1959). No fathers had been included in any of the studies that explored and refined attachment theory. It did not seem plausible that father bonding would occur under any of the same circumstances as it had with mothers. It was this first author's bias that future studies would need to be done using grounded theory to develop and refine a new theory exploring fathers' interactions with their infants. However, the results reported in this article did not support my assumptions.

Attachment theory is the identified framework to view the results reported in this article, attachment theory constructs were used during theoretical analysis, and attachment theory was implicated in the theoretical findings. Conceptually, attachment is described as "the mother's [caregiver's] ability to attune her interactions to the needs, signals, and communications of the child" (Vereijken, Rikson-Walraven, &

Table 4

Attachment Concepts And Assumptions

Concepts	Assumptions
1. Awareness	Attachment
2. Emotive	Attachment
3. Engagement	Bonding
4. Motivation	Attachment
5. Opportunity	Attachment
6. Relationship	Attachment
7. Sensitivity	Attachment
8. Learning/Insight	Attachment

Kondo-Ikemura, 1997, p. 41). Specifying the definition of attachment in even more detail, attachment is defined as a parent/caregiver's "sensitivity" and "an awareness of the child's verbal and non-verbal cues, who recognize and accurately interpret their children's needs and wants" (Wallace, Roberts, & Lodder, 1998, p. 900). In other words, fathers who became "sensitive" to the infant's needs were able to develop the skills to read the infant's body language and emotional expression and to become responsive to these non-verbal cues. The engagement behavior of infant and care-giver involves specific behaviors for each partner. For the fathers in this study, behaviors demonstrated sensitivity to infant cues, responsiveness to infant distress, and perhaps fostering of social, emotional, and cognitive growth in the infant.

Fathers who massaged their infants perceived benefits of massaging the infants both for themselves and for their infants. The benefits they reported for the infants were that they slept better, were calmed, and enjoyed being massaged. The benefits fathers reported for themselves were that they enjoyed calming their infants down, enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with their infants, became more skilled in interacting with their infant, felt more confident and competent massaging their

infants, and allowed them the opportunity to provide the mother with some time off from her caregiving. The attachment concepts highlighted in Table 4 are supported by the assumption that fathers who massaged their infants benefited greatly from the experience and demonstrated attachment (engagement and bonding) behaviors with their infants.

Fathers demonstrated an awareness and understanding of the significance of the time they spent with their infants and identified their interactions as attachment and bonding (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Winkler, 2000). Clulow's article (2010) states that attachment and bonding require opportunities to develop stable relationships with a significant caregiver (Clulow, 2010). Fathers expressed a need for an opportunity to spend time with their infants and, when provided this opportunity, expressed enjoyment and motivation to continue massaging their infants after the study ended, supporting prior research articles that indicated fathers expressed more enjoyment after massaging their infants (Cullen et al., 2000). As prior research articles indicated, fathers who enjoy fathering are more likely to stay involved with their children throughout their lives (Harper, 1980; Harrison et al., 1996).

Fathers demonstrated engagement cues, eye contact, and verbal exchanges (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Schneider-McClure, 1989) with their infants, as well as sensitivity in their responses to their infants' communication during the massages by adjusting time spent massaging, technique and allowing the infant to determine which body part they desired to have massaged sensitivity (Vereijken et al, 1997; Wallace, Roberts, & Lodder, 1998). Fathers interpreted their infant's body language and vocal expressions as the infants enjoying their touch and being soothed by their massages. Research articles published by Harlow in 1959 reported that baby monkeys were soothed by a cloth mother when she was near (Harlow, 1959). Fathers can provide this same effect on their infants and this shows the importance of a father's contribution in the life of his infant. This sensitivity is defined in attachment theory as the ability to accurately interpret the infant's needs and wants by reading the infant's verbal and non-verbal cues (Wallace et. al., 1998, p. 900). According to Worobey, Laub, and Scholmoeller (1983), being able to soothe the infant promotes attachment and provides a technique for fathers to cope with a crying infant.

Finally, when reviewing their own videotapes, fathers expressed how proud they were of their infants and said that they could see they were more confident in the final video and had a sense of competency in handling their infant (Scholz & Samuels, 1992; Cullen et al., 2000). Fathering competency contributes to increased outcomes of child well-being (Coren, 2005), and infant massage might support sustained father involvement (Cheng, Volk, & Marini, 2011). The results in this article confirmed the appropriate fit of attachment theory as a lens to view fathers' experiences massaging their infants and documented the behaviors demonstrating the attachment and bonding processes.

Limitations and Future Research

There were a few limitations to the study. The sample size was small with five fathers, and it is notable that a larger sample size, with a wider range of characteristics, would increase the credibility in generalizing results to other populations of fathers. This sample size was not heterogeneous. However, there was a 100% completion rate and 0% attrition rate, and a small sample size provided saturation of the data. It is common for qualitative researchers to use small, purposive samples to capture unique details and noteworthy meanings (Berg, 2007).

Additionally, it was imperative to provide precise definitions of the codes as they were developed for clarity in the data and to support the development [power] of the coding process (Friese, 2012). This data collection occurred during a three week window. Further exploration is warranted to confirm these findings in a larger sample size which examines the experiences of fathers over the long term.

This study supports attachment theory as a framework to study the father and infant dyad, provides a credible platform for future research to explore how fathers impact child outcomes and the importance of fathers having access to their infants early in their lives, and demonstrates that fathers are motivated to impact the relationship with their infants and the relationship with the mother. Previous articles on infant massage studies failed to provide a theoretical platform in which to view the lens or the impact of infant massage on the infant or the caregiver. This is the first known infant massage article to present a theoretical platform on which to analyze the data and confirm attachment theory as an appropriate lens to examine fathers massaging their infants. In addition, this was the first known infant massage article to provide operational definitions of the attachment constructs and describe in explicit detail the infant massage protocol, thus suggesting a reference for future studies.

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Women Leaders Coping with Job Stress: A PilotStudy of a Mindful Approach

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The purpose of this autoethnographic study was to explore ways in which a female superintendent could incorporate meditation into daily life and implement a mindfulness-supported leadership approach to better assist the superintendent to handle stress and hence make schools a better place for student learning. Five female superintendents were interviewed and their experiences were juxtaposed next to the autoethnographer regarding how they experienced stress within their roles of the superintendency. By employing autoethnography to interpret the superintendent's own voice, along with the voices of the other female superintendents, the superintendent validated her own voice to more clearly see the harmful effects of stress in the role. Results demonstrated how stress could be ameliorated with the practice of meditation, manuscript, and mindfulness. Small changes were made by the superintendent that resulted in less self-denigrating behaviors and judgments and move towards a place of more acceptance of herself and others, embracing the joy of small things, and being present in the moment.

This study presents a glimpse of the autoethnography of the experiences of an experienced school superintendent, with the aim of painting a picture of some of the stressors and effects of stress on women superintendents. Mindfulness became the theoretical lens through which meaning and skills were gained to face the challenges of the ambiguous, complex, and stressful role of the superintendent. Through interviews it was concluded that other women superintendents and the ethnographer all have stressors in common. The difference was how proactively they managed stress.

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Although stress is a phenomenon experienced by both males and females, this article focused on how female executives experience stress and cope with it. Researchers (Gmelch, 2011; Hawk & Martin 2011; Wells, 2013b) indicated that most data-based studies have investigated sources of stress, but neglected to address specific ways to cope with job pressures that produce stress. The purpose of this study was to explore ways in which meditation could be incorporated into daily life and interpret ways in which mindfulness-supported leadership approaches could assist making schools a better place for coping with stress and in doing so enhance student learning. To develop an analytical framework, literature reviewed included causes and types of superintendent stress, effects of chronic stress on superintendents, and coping with stress using mindfulness as a relaxation technique.

The article gives voice to women leaders in high stress administrative positions and provides options to reduce stress.

Data were collected and analyzed over a period of 1 year using autoethnographic methodology (Ellis, 2004; Goodall, 2000). Mindfulness-based stress reduction exercises (Stahl & Goldstein, 2010) were learned and practiced during the year. Collected data included regular entries in a reflective journal where activities of the day, described feelings, and dreams about activities, decisions, and occurrences were recorded. Simultaneously, five other experienced women superintendents were interviewed, seeking specific feedback to triangulate and enrich description of events and interactions to see whether these other women had similar challenges, how they encountered stress, and how, or whether, they minimized the effects of stress on their daily lives.

Stress and the School Superintendent

Educational leaders today face heightened challenges with limited resources. They are under immense pressure to invoke major positive change associated with student learning around increased scrutiny of leadership based primarily on an evaluation of improving student academic performance (Hawk & Martin, 2011; Pascopella, 2008). Federal mandates for new teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluation systems plus implementation of the Common Core curriculum were just a few of the many additional requirements imposed in a very short time on district leaders (Hawk & Martin, 2011; Wells, 2013b). Those external pressures, along with the daily operations, while keeping strong, positive relationships with individual school board members, and dealing with conflicting community demands, continue to guarantee that a school superintendent's work is stressful (Banuelos, 2008; Colgan, 2003; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Pascopella, 2008; Sternberg, 2001). Pascopella (2008) also shared that today's superintendents are generally older (mean age 55) and more stressed out than in years past. In the 2006 American Association of School Administrators' survey, 60% of superintendents reported their stress as considerable or very great (Peckham, 2007). Seventy-nine percent of the superintendents agreed "very much" or "somewhat" that the superintendency is a high stress,

high visibility job that requires individuals to withstand a lot of heat in dealing with daily pressures (Reeves, 2010).

Discussions of superintendent stress spans almost forty years (Switzer, 1979). However, the job of the superintendent has changed from management to instructional leadership; from building open classrooms to limiting access to keeping students and staff safe from school shootings; and from superintendents rarely seen outside of the administration building to many of them now conducting weekly classroom walkthroughs with their administrators (Sternberg, 2001). Researchers reported an increase in stress levels of administrators (Banuelos, 2008; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Pascopella, 2008; Sternberg, 2001; Wells, 2013b). Ginsberg (2011) discussed the long-term effects of leading in a down economy. She shared that superintendents live in a "new normal" that includes living in a survival mode, disappointment with the territorial nature of some staff, the attitudes of some policy makers, loss of joy for the job, and concerns about stress with a real need to wear "a happy face." In the study, under a question about health, 70% used the term stress or described stress-related symptoms in responding to the question. Jerome Murphy (2011), the former dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, said that among his sample of school leaders attending a professional program on self-knowledge, 89% reported feeling overwhelmed and 84% neglected to take care of themselves in the midst of stress. Sternberg (2001) described increased demand by school chiefs to work with consultants who deal with stress management in the corporate setting to run sessions giving them advice about getting through the tough times. Researchers (Czaja & Harman, 1997; Hawk & Martin, 2011) pointed to stress as linked to increased turnover of superintendents.

Gardiner and Tiggeman (1999) found that the stress of women was higher than that of men in a predominantly or traditionally male work environment. Although Hawk and Martin (2011) found the difference in the stress of male and female administrators to be statistically not significant, they did note that women felt they could not express being stressed because it would be seen as a sign of weakness in a female administrator. The extent of stressors for both

male and female superintendents were similar, except differences in balancing work and family obligations (Gianakos, 2002; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Nelson & Burke, 2002). Coleman (2002) shared the stress of family responsibilities was likely one of the major factors affecting women's career experiences.

Superintendent Stress Definitions

Hawk and Martin (2011) defined stress using the work of Buhler (1993) and Brock and Grady (2002) as the body's non-specific response to stressors in the environment. Lyles (2005) reported stress as the mental and physical wear and tear people experience as they live their lives. Gmelch and Swent (1982) first discovered, working from McGrath's (1976) earlier work, four factors of administrative stress. They surveyed 1855 principals and superintendents, seeking to know more about the stressors affecting these administrators. The first source of stress focused on beliefs and attitudes about administrators' roles in schools and was aptly titled "role-based stress." Participating in school activities outside of the school day; dealing with daily phone calls and interruptions; participating in meetings and writing reports was the source of "task-based stress." Working on a levy campaign and negotiating with unions was a stressor unique to school administrators and was called "boundary-spanning stress." Dealing with angry parents, resolving issues with teachers or principals, or handling student discipline situations was the fourth source of stress entitled "conflict-mediating stress."

It does not matter what kind of stress, good or bad, or what stress factors are experienced—the body reacts initially in the same way. Benson (2011), of the Institute for Mind Body Medicine, described the body's response to stress in the Harvard Mental Health Letter:

> The hypothalamus causes the release of two hormones, adrenaline and nor-epinephrine, that produce changes in the body to prepare to deal with a fight-or-flight situation. In this state of arousal, metabolism and heartbeat increase, breathing becomes shallow, perspiration forms, and the flow of blood to organs and limbs decreases. While it may have been a boon for ancient hunters, it's not always great in modern societies, where stress-inducing threats are frequent, uncontrollable and often last much longer than a foot chase would. (p. 4)

Researchers agreed (Brock and Grady, 2002; Buhler, 1993; Hawk and Martin, 2011; Queen and Queen, 2004) that not all stress is bad. The body acts the same way during negative stress (distress) as it does during positive stress (eustress). For example, emergency medical technicians, during any particularly difficult life-and-death rescue, will show the subconscious signs of stress with their heart rate and perspiration increasing. Eustress helps the body to be in a fight or flight reaction allowing for quick response. Eustress symptoms are temporary. The key is coping with the negative stress, which can become a chronic condition.

Effects of Chronic Stress on Superintendents

As the number of women becoming superintendents is increasing, so also is the number of stress related diseases (Gmelch, 1995; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Nelson & Burke, 2002). Sternberg (2001) and Hinkley (2001) discussed some of the daily nuisances superintendents attribute to stress, including having trouble sleeping, eating poorly, and feeling depressed. McDonald and Gates' (2013) review of research suggest such experience was more than minor annoyance as ongoing elevated stress levels were found to contribute to physical illnesses or disease (e.g., cancer, hepatocarcinoma, headaches, ulcers, hypertension, worsening of pre-existing pains), psychological problems (e.g., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, depression, anger), and social breakdown (e.g., divorce, absenteeism, job-turnover; Carlson, 2009; Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007; Gmelch & Torelli, 1993; Leher & Woolfolk, 1993; Segerstrom & Miller 2004; Shinn, Rosario, Morch, & Chestnut, 1984). Those who study superintendents offer warnings about the negative impact on personal health and school operations and call for increased attention to be paid to ways of reducing stress and improving coping for school leaders (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

Carlson (2009) quoted Thomas Dolan, president and CEO of the American College of Healthcare Executives, saying researchers had ample evidence linking prolonged stress to a

host of negative physical and mental side effects. Banuelos (2008), Lawson (2008), Sternberg (2001), and Hinkley (2001) found that women superintendents internalized their superintendent experiences and reported negative impacts of lack of sleep and bad eating habits, with stress and depression being outward indicators of those impacts.

Hawk and Martin (2011) indicated that stress management education, that recognized that men and women respond to stress differently, was critical to helping administrators become more successful in dealing with stress.

Coping with Stress

Stress for school superintendents is probably unavoidable because the job deals with conflict and ambiguity (Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Kowalski, 2006). The literature offered some ideas with managing and coping with stress including exercise, talking with fellow superintendents, and professional development. However, employing the currently underused, promising practices of meditation and mindfulness in school settings to help school leaders could be a significant breakthrough in addressing these issues. Mindfulness practices are developed in other areas of business and health fields to reduce stress (Astin, 1997; Grossman et al., 2004; Hahn, 1991; Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 1997; McCraty, Atkinson, & Tomasino, 2003; Muyzenberg & Lama XIV, 2008; Sawyer-Cohen & Miller, 2009), but it has not been fully used in superintendent stress reduction.

Hawk and Martin (2011) defined managing or coping as the way people managed life conditions that were stressful. Effective coping behavior decreases levels of stress. Swent (1983) categorized activities to reduce stress for administrators into three major categories: (1) physiological activity, (2) cognitive and psychological activities, and (3) interpersonal and organizational management activities. Physiological activities listed had three components: physical exercise, relaxation techniques, and the use of drugs or alcohol. Physical exercise, or the use of large muscle activity (LMA) was widely recognized as one of the most effective coping techniques available (Carlson, 2009; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Sternberg, 2001; Swent, 1983). In Hawk and Martin's study of 531 school superintendents, relaxation techniques were one of the

least used coping strategy, even though the mean score of effectiveness demonstrated that relaxing was rated the second most effective strategy to use to cope with stress. Swent (1983) described cognitive and psychological activities as either trying to stay positive about the work, or seeking ways to flee from the work. Positive activities included having a sense of humor, consciously separating the work environment from the home environment, and solving problems with the help of God, prayer, and church activities. "Fleeing" activities included purposely attempting to separate themselves from work through vacations, being around non-school people, and spending time with their families. The ultimate flight mechanism listed by several administrators in Swent's (2001) study was to retire, resign, or leave the education profession for another activity. The third category of interpersonal and organizational management skills focused on professional development to be more effective on the job. Developing communications skills, time management, team management, and conflict resolution were included (Carlson, 2009; Swent, 2001).

Mindfulness as a Relaxation Technique

Mindfulness started as a meditation technique more than 2500 years ago. In its original Buddhist form, the practice of mindfulness refers to the technique of developing awareness of the body and mind in the present moment (Dhiman, 2009). Fiol and O'Connor (2003) believed mindfulness is an act of information processing grounded in distinction making, conceptualizing, and refinement of concepts. Bishop et al. (2004) shared, "Mindfulness begins by bringing awareness to current experience – observing and attending to the changing field of thoughts, feelings, and sensations form moment to moment – by regulating the focus of attention" (p. 232).

There are several definitions of mindfulness (Anglin, Pirson, & Langer, 2008; Block-Lerner, Adair, Plumb, Rhatigan, & Orsillo, 2007; Brody & Coutter, 2002; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Carson, Shih, & Langer, 2001; Christopher & Gilbert, 2010; Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007; Dhiman, 2009; Gates, 2005; Khisty, 2010; Langer, 1989; Langer & Moldueana, 2000; Leventhal & Rerup, 2006; Shaver, Lavy, Saron, & Mikulincer,

2007; Weick & Sutcliffe, 1999; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006; Valorinta, 2009). Descriptions of mindfulness focused more on internal processes of attention and attending (Jha, Krompinger, & Baine, 2007; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). Mindfulness was described as "non-superficial awareness. It sees things deeply, down below the levels of concepts and opinions...it manifests itself primarily as a constant and unwavering attention that never flags and turns away" (Gunaratana, 2002). Langer's (1992) definition of mindfulness encompassed the continuous creation of new categories; openness to new information; and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective. Langer (2005) further clarified mindfulness as a process that consisted of drawing novel distinctions, that is, noticing new things. In her 1989 book, Mindfulness, Langer stated:

> Even with the best definitions, the finest research designs, and the most careful answers to each question, mindfulness cannot be captured, cannot be analyzed once and for all. The experiments my colleagues and I have done, and the anecdotes from ordinary life in this book, only hint at the enormous potential of the mindful state. In trying to quantify it, or reduce it to a formula, we risk losing sight of the whole. (pp. 202-203)

Langer (1992) also defined the diametrical term mindlessness, describing it as "a state of mind characterized by an over reliance on categories and distinctions." She compared mindlessness to concepts like automatic processing, habit, and overlearning. She shared that individuals can mindlessly form a cognitive commitment to information and freeze the potential meaning. By understanding mindlessness, it helps one understand how information can be processed in a mindless manner or conversely a mindful manner.

Benefits of Mindfulness Practice

Our Western society is in the early stages of using mindfulness to reduce stress, to ease persistent pain, and to change behaviors (Astin, 1997; Davidson et al., 2003; Hahn, 1991; Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 1997; McCraty, Atkinson, & Tomasino, 2003; Muyzenberg & Lama XIV, 2008; Sawyer-Cohen & Miller, 2009). Davidson

(2011) shared that the 1960s was a behaviorism heyday and none of the research focused on the mind. Now that there are many researchers focusing on the intricacies of the mind, researchers and clinicians in recent decades suggested that the cultivation of mindfulness may be beneficial to Westerners uninterested in adopting Buddhist or other Eastern spiritual traditions (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004).

Mindfulness offers many benefits in addition to stress reduction. Christopher and Gilbert (2010) indicated that if people self-report that they have measures of mindfulness there is a positive relationship between mindfulness and wellbeing, and an inverse relationship between mindfulness and the depression symptoms. Also research into mindfulness in leadership is beginning to emerge (Carroll, 2004; Marques and Dhiman, 2006; Muyzenberg, 2008; Nakai and Schultz, 2000; Hoy, 2003; Wells, 2013b; Wells, 2013a). One mindfulness study pointed to a possible solution to the gender role conflict faced by female leaders (Kawakami, White, & Langer, 2000). When they were mindful, women leaders were perceived as being genuine, thus escaping the paradox of being subjected to incompatible expectations regarding leadership roles and the female gender role (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1992). Kawakami et al. (2000) examined the effect of leader mindfulness on perceptions of female leadership. As they predicted, men who viewed a speech given by either a mindful or mindless female leader rated the mindful leader higher on leadership.

Muyzenberg (2008) coauthored a book with the Dalai Lama and shared the benefits of mindfulness by chief executive officers who practiced mindfulness in life and leadership. They mentioned they made better decisions; had more self-confidence and no longer worried what other employees might think of them; were much better able to cope with stress; were more open minded; and were more easily able to deal with crises by realizing impermanence.

Langer (2000) advocated for more education professionals to explore and address reducing mindlessness in learning. Studies (Anglin, Pirson, & Langer, 2008; Carson, Shih, & Langer, 2001; Orr, 2002; Singh et al., 2010) indicated that when people mindfully notice new things, their attention improves and gender effects are diminished.

Mindful attention results in curiosity, greater liking of the task, and improved memory (Langer, 2000; Ying, 2009). Mindfulness also helps prevent automatic stereotype-activated behavior (Djikic, Langer, & Stapleton, 2008). Table 1 provides mindfulness attributes for a person wishing to develop mindfulness.

Cohen and Miller (2009) shared that for a professional in an organization, mindfulness training and practicing mindfulness positively influenced interpersonal outcomes and mental health outcomes, decreased stress, and increased self-compassion. The result was a significant decrease in perceived stress. Dhiman (2009) indicated the use of mindfulness in the workplace provides the possibilities for enhancing wellbeing through improved communications, efficient meetings, optimum performances, better decisions, and greater understanding. In 2011, Stahl and Goldstein reported over 250 Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs across the United States. Their rationale as to why this training is so successful is that the practice of moment to moment non-judgmental awareness brings focus to the present moment, and only in the present can a person make changes. As professionals open their awareness to what is imbalanced and come to recognize unconscious habitual tendencies, they begin to make new

choices to promote well-being. Brody and Coulter (2002) asserted that a mindfulness-based approach would prove beneficial in all areas of business and education.

Methods

Sample and Participant Selection

Autoethnographic methodology (Ellis, 2004; Goodall, 2000) was employed to gather and analyze data over a period of one year. Mindfulness-based stress reduction exercises were brought into the daily routine of the author. Collected data included regular entries in a reflective journal where activities of the day and feelings and dreams about activities, decisions, and occurrences were recorded. Elmore's (2010) framework was used to frame journal entries with an "I used to think…now I think" method of analyzing changes in how stressors were seen and reacted to in daily practice. Archival data and additional field notes were kept, and Brown and Ryan's (2003) mindfulness awareness scale (MAAS) was used at the beginning and end of the study to determine growth in individual mindfulness.

In addition, five other experienced women superintendents were interviewed. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) recommended five

Table 1

Mindfulness Attributes

Attribute
Drawing novel distinctions
Being present in the moment
Noticing new things
Being open to new information
Maintaining awareness of more than one perspective
Being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present
Being different from concentration – it is more all encompassing

richly researched cases as a minimum for multiple case study adequacy. The sampling was purposeful rather than random. Boundaries were set and parameters defined given proximity, time, and means. The women, given their geographical location and having like districts, were purposefully selected. A protocol that allowed for casual conversation (Ellis, 2009) was used, while at the same time seeking specific feedback to triangulate and enrich description of events and interactions. There were expectations to see whether they had similar challenges, how they encountered stress, and how, or whether, they minimized the effects of stress. All interviews were transcribed for analysis. Field notes on observations of conversations, activities, and settings (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 1995), archival materials (e.g., memoranda, minutes of meetings, and emails), as well as personal reflections were kept.

Developing Credibility by Reliable Coding Methods

By studying the aspects of human experience that outsiders would not normally be allowed to observe, credibility was developed by providing abundant details that included both facts and feelings. Field notes, supportive materials, and all of the word-for-word transcripts of interviews were analyzed. As Saldana (2009) suggested, coding major themes began early on in the process and those themes were used to inform research as further data was gathered. Using first cycle descriptive coding data chunks with codes were assigned. An example code was the word "stress." Later, In-Vivo coding of short phrases or words from participants' own language was used. One example of the coding was "started working longer hours to reduce stress." Finally, process coding using gerunds to denote observable action in the data was used. An example of this coding was "knowing when I am stressed." The early themes, using data collected through journaling, field notes, archival data, and interviews, revolved around the demands of the job, stress, and developing relationships with the administrative team and board. Eventually, all data was designated into categories and subcategories in second cycle coding. The subcategories included the demands of the job, how the author and other women superintendents were

coping with stress, and how mindfulness behaviors were developed and how those behaviors affected interactions with others. By coding the data from the five case studies at the same time as personal data was recorded, each source of data informed reflections by reinforcing uniform themes and reducing author bias through congruent codes that elaborated a defined set of assertions and provided consistency in the database. Coding and analyzing data changed the focus of how reflections were made in the approach to mindfulness. At the beginning of the study, the intention was to use mindfulness research to focus on how to have a high reliability organization. Although knowledge from research did affect the organization, what was more important was how often the words "stress" and "challenges of the job" came up. The ethnographer knew the literature on how mindfulness could affect one personally, and chose to focus continued work on mindfulness to reduce stress.

Developing Trustworthiness and Validity

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) suggest several methods to incorporate trustworthiness and validity into a qualitative study. One suggestion of examining researcher bias and discovering the researcher's value orientations was completed. It was recognized that as an auto-ethnographer with highly self-reflective and introspective work, there could be researcher bias and personal values needed to be recognized, especially when coding other case study samples of the women superintendents. Kincheloe and McLaren's stages were followed, including compiling the primary record through the collection of monological data, preliminary reconstructive analysis, dialogical data generation, discovering social systems relations, and using systems relations to explain findings. Pitfalls were recognized that Chang (2008) warned about, including over-emphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; exclusive reliance on memory; and negligence of ethical standard regarding others in self-narratives. For those reasons, extensive coding was completed, all interviews were recorded and transcribed, and direct quotes from journal and transcriptions were used. In addition, pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the women interviewed.

Openness and honesty with perspective and the possible impact as a participant and as an observer was taken into consideration.

Description of the Author as Autoethnographer

As a 55 year old White American woman with thirty plus years of experience in K-12 education, the author encountered her utmost challenges and successes when she was an experienced school superintendent. During the time of the study this article focuses upon, she led a Washington state school district with about 1,200 students, her second district as a superintendent. Under her leadership, at the previous district, the high school was listed as one of the top 150 high schools by U.S. News and World Report for three years in a row. The elementary school won a School of Distinction award for student achievement, and academic scores on state assessments steadily increased at all grade levels. She was able to have successful levy elections in a district with a history of levy failure and she had an excellent relationship with her school board. When she moved to a larger district, several challenges awaited her, including raising dismal graduation rates and student achievement scores; passing a first ever levy; developing board relationships with her new board, and in particular with one notoriously difficult board member; and dealing with several staff members with terminal illness.

> The author recounted a dream she had shortly after she arrived at her new district:
> I wake up sweating. I've had another vivid dream. The setting is in the gymnasium at the high school. I am in a board meeting with the board facing the bleachers right up close. I start the meeting and ask all to stand for the pledge of allegiance. Instead they burst out into song – I can't remember what the song was. I look down and my agenda has changed. The board chairman has scripted out an entirely new meeting agenda and expects me to follow it word for word. I have difficulty because some of the script font is printed backward and I have to decipher it as I talk, so it sounds like I can't read. Someone asks a question and it

isn't on the script. I respond to the person in the audience and she says you didn't even call me by the right name. I continue with this horrid meeting, where after I finish the pre-made script the board and the audience begin to critique my job by saying things like, "Yes, she didn't follow the script very well and we will have to talk to her in private." I just remember, as I woke up, being afraid of disappointing the board and the audience but feeling as though I had to wade through the dangerous script.

The Case Study Participants

The five women superintendents interviewed were from Western Washington and each woman led a school district with district size ranging from 375 to 14,000 students. Their ages ranged from mid-thirties to almost sixty, and were either white or Latino. Their experience as superintendents ranged from 1 year to over 20 years. All participants signed an IRB consent form and were interested in participating in the study.

Results

During the year, while keeping a daily journal and conducting interviews with the other women superintendents during the year, some disturbing trends were noted. The stress and difficulty of the position was real and impacted mental and physical health of the ethnographer and her peers. One woman, new to her district, shared a particularly ugly email from a constituent who wrote, "When is this interim superintendent going to put on her big girl panties and not rely on hiring more staff to support her? She doesn't need all these support staff. That is what we hired her to do."

> Another superintendent lamented:
> You know, how I've always dealt with stress is through working. I feel stressed. I feel overwhelmed when I don't feel prepared. And when I have so many things that need to happen, that's when I get really nervous. So, the only way I can get through that, is getting them done. So I have two little girls and a wonderful husband who is supportive. I try to be home with them

a little bit in the evenings. Sometimes I'm very tired, and I go to sleep and get up at 4:30 in the morning, and sometimes 3:30 because I can't sleep – because it (the work) it's not done. So it's been hard. (Superintendent 2)

A superintendent who moved to Washington from another state commented:

This is my first superintendent-to-superintendent transition, and I wanted to do this. Superintendents' work is very, very hard, and the political pressures are intense. Unless you have been through the system, you have never walked through those doors, and said "I'm a superintendent, and would you be interested in hiring me?" This is the work I do. There are less than three hundred of us across the State and the majority of the superintendents are men. (Superintendent 1)

Interviews and personal journaling indicated that stress was a negative factor of the job. Examples of responses related to the specific stress of the position included:

The available numbers and facts regarding the negative impact of stress on health and wellness for school leaders are not hypothetical: They are personal. When I became a superintendent in 2005, I could not have guessed the toll the position would take. After a few years, I was taking two different medications for blood pressure, which were not entirely effective. (Superintendent 3)

I find it funny, but I perceive myself as very strong. Then my thyroid gave out, with the condition of stress. I have hyper-thyroid, which is brought on by stress. It's a one-way thing and you can't fix it. Anyway, I suppose it's a blessing…but stress has impacted me since I became a superintendent. That is the bottom line. (Superintendent 2)

When I was in my previous district, my focus on work was all encompassing and I disregarded time for myself and my family–there were times when my husband had a nice dinner fixed and I was either too distracted or too busy to let him know I would be home late.

I would let the job overpower my personal life and I gave up precious time with family, my marriage, and fun activities I used to pursue. When I left my previous district, I had almost all of my vacation days still left on the books because I had neglected to take them. I want to take a vacation, especially when things are stressful. Last year I moved to a new, larger district in a different part of the state. It's about 9 hours away from my previous district. This left us with two homes and a new rental, moving boxes stuck in unused bedrooms, and me working two jobs as I transitioned from one district to another. I am stressed out. (Superintendent 2)

I never sit down for lunch, and that is the norm. I left at four one day and felt like I should put in for a sick day. I can do many tasks without being mindful of them. I do a lot of multi-tasking. I am sitting behind this computer and I am taking notes about our meeting – I can look at people and type. (Superintendent 5)

I had a really stressful board meeting last night. The board listed several things that they would like to see accomplished in a year. I cautioned them that not everything on the list could be done in 1 year. I feel like I've been run through the ringer and I feel that their expectations of me may be more than I can accomplish. (Superintendent 1)

The job is the job is the job – which is a hard job, a stressful job, and if you can figure out a way to make it easier to overcome the problems of stress I want to read your book – I want to know the answer. (Superintendent 4)

Before embarking on the physiological activity of practicing mindfulness, the author had no specific coping strategies to reduce stress. Intermittent exercise, using alcohol, and occasionally going to church did little to reduce chronic stress. Other superintendents interviewed talked about working harder to try to be prepared to dodge potential stressful issues; remarked how many days of vacation leave they were able to buy back because

they had no time to use the days, described the difficulty finding the time to exercise, and the importance of creating support networks. One superintendent stated:

> Hmmm, I am not very good about doing anything on a daily basis to reduce stress. I try to get away for part of the day during the weekend. Most weeks I live the job. I hike a little bit, watch dumb TV, I sleep…I sleep hard. I am really a hard worker. Most stresses for me are things that happened in the past that are now issues and my problems. They are the district's issues, so they are my issues. (Superintendent 5)

One superintendent shared that she works to take needed time off, exercises, and has frequent health check-ups. She talked about how she and her husband like to cook, sharing:

> We like to entertain. It is really a way for us to wind down. Both my husband and I love to cook for guests, and we often have the administrative team or the board over for dinner. It is my way to relax and have fun. I seem to gather energy by having people together to break bread. (Superintendent 4)

Her description of relieving stress was the exception. Other superintendents commented:

> There are days when I don't do something to help relieve the stresses I encounter daily in the job. I just go home, turn on the TV and sit. I am just so tired sometimes that is all I end up doing. (Superintendent 2)

Having supports, including understanding spouses was also a theme. One woman said:

> It is a hard job, no question about it. I am fortunate that my husband supports what I do. It is a tough position and support structures are important. I guess the one thing I underestimated would be that you have no one to commiserate with. You can't commiserate up and you can't commiserate down. I don't even talk to my husband about school matters. I just live with the stress. (Superintendent 1)

These other women superintendents all had stressors in common with each other and with the author. The difference was how these women superintendents and the author

managed those stressors. This autoethnography was important because it described how the author, as researcher and female superintendent, proactively sought out a way to make the job more gratifying and palpable – a part of her life but not taking over her life. In the course of this study, a way of incorporating a mindful lifestyle was uncovered. It resulted in reduced stress, increased efficiency, and courage to face difficult situations. It validated the need for incorporating the tools into daily life of a superintendent and reinforced the current literature encouraging the use of mindfulness to reduce stress. Subtle changes were noticed in daily journal entries as evidenced by the following excerpts: "This morning I actually noticed when I heard leaves blowing across the asphalt parking lot and it reminded me of fall." "Today was making the familiar strange. We are going over the Bridge of the Gods and I am looking at it with new eyes, even though I have driven over it many times since moving here." More detailed journal writing that further show growth in mindfulness attributes included:

> I think I am becoming more like a thermostat than a thermometer. By me changing temperatures all of the time it is way too stressful. I am trying to keep my emotional thermostat at a certain temperature and not let myself get too bummed out with the lows and vice versa not get too high when it all goes positive because I know the next day something will happen that will bring me down to earth.
>
> I took Thursday and Friday off to go to a friend's father's funeral. It was really nice to be with family and friends and I decided that once I got there I wasn't going to think about work at all. And I was able to do that. That's pretty amazing for me!
>
> I don't punish myself as much in my journaling anymore. I am trying to wake up each morning and thank my body for getting me from place to place. I feel like I am who I am and I can be okay with the good and happy parts and also with my shortcomings and sad parts.
>
> What an unbelievable day. Today was the last day of school and I planned

a time to thank staff for all the work they did over the year. The board and I planned a luncheon and a small ceremony to have each board member thank their adopted school building's staff members. We had a great luncheon and thanked all of the staff. I was surprised when the president of the teachers' union came forward and requested to speak. He then proceeded to tell the audience that he had worked at the district for over twenty years and worked for three other superintendents and I was the best superintendent he had worked for. He proceeded to say that I was transparent, open, honest, and there for the employees. He shared that when he talks to me he knows I am there for the staff and care about them. He then handed me a large gift certificate for a local retreat center and the entire audience rose to give me a standing ovation. While people were standing and clapping, the school board president leaned over and said I don't want to steal Brian's thunder but the board feels the same way. I had a difficult time keeping my composure.

The author had a good relationship all year with the unions of the four different bargaining groups. It had taken a lot longer in the previous district – four years to gain the total support of the teacher's union, for them to show appreciation, trust, and respect. She wondered whether the change might have been from the way she approached people due to her mindfulness studies. Her last journal sentence was, "Wow. Something has changed…I think it is me."

At the beginning of the study, when Brown and Ryan's (2003) mindfulness awareness scale (MAAS) was used, which asked, as a respondent, to use a 1-6 scale with one being almost always, two very frequently, three somewhat frequently, four somewhat infrequently, five very infrequently, and six almost never to determine use of mindful behaviors, most of the answers to the 15 questions were in the almost never category. After the year of study, practice using Stahl and Goldstein's (2010) mindfulness stress reduction workbook, and using individual meditation and mindfulness processes, the scores for the 15 questions were most often in the somewhat frequently to very frequently used categories.

Finally, capacity for more flexible thinking and actions was gained. Action was taken to address concerns without becoming mired in worries about consequences or despair over failed expectations. The ethnographer superintendent worked together with the staff, board, and community to close a school building in a short 6-month period. Because she didn't have preconceived ideas, she gave multiple options for the board and community to consider. She used an outside group to conduct a management review, and used their recommendations to springboard decision-making. Expression of diverse opinions was encouraged, and even though the final grade span configuration was different from what she initially wanted, she looked at the bigger picture and heard all voices to help the board make an informed decision, one that had been eluding the district for the previous 11 years as they struggled with too many buildings and declining enrollment.

The author noticed changes in her personal life as well. Her husband told her that he noticed when she dealt with people, she did not use knee-jerk reactions anymore, she was calmer, and did not let things overwhelm her or draw her into conflict. She resumed her passion for painting, using that art medium as a way of really noticing things around her and mindfully focusing on activities other than work. Langer (2005) observed, "In the perspective of every person lies a lens through which we may better understand ourselves" (p. 131). The author shared through metaphor her change of mindset through the practice of mindfulness:

My change in perspective reminded me of my latest visit to my optometrist. I had used the same optometrist for more than 30 years and was quite nervous when I had to work with someone new. I explained to my new optometrist how much I revered my other optometrist and that I was nervous. This new doctor guaranteed his work and even went so far as to say that if I was not completely satisfied I would not have to pay for the glasses. The first thing he did, after giving me a thorough eye exam was to tell me the glasses that were prescribed were not the correct

ones for my vision problems. I winced because I didn't have the trust built up with this doctor, and I was having a hard time hearing that my last optometrist could do something wrong. But I knew the gentleman had given me a guarantee, and I really felt that I didn't have any choice but to get the new prescription. It came as a total shock to me when, after the optometrist placed the new set of glasses on my nose and adjusted the ear pieces, I looked up and found I could see more clearly than I had in 10 years. How could I not have known that my vision was so compromised and all that time thinking I was seeing as well as I could? I was amazed.

And so it was with the journey with this study. I would never have guessed it would be so personal, so emotional, and so enlightening. I felt as if I put on a new pair of glasses and was seeing the world anew. I tried to think back on how the transformation had taken place, but couldn't quite pinpoint any particular moment, as I did with my glasses, when I could see more clearly. Looking back at the subtle changes, I noticed my journal entries less focused on the work at hand and more on the ways I found time for relaxing activities and meditation.

Discussion

Developing coping skills is one of the most challenging pieces of any job today. A school superintendent is a vision builder. It is critical that superintendents be focused on the right things and not be mired in day-to-day stressors. Many researchers (Davidson, 2003; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Hinkley, 2001; Sternberg, 2001; Swent, 2001; Wells, 2013b; Wells, 2013a) encourage individuals to close out the world for 15-20 minutes a day and use the mindful behaviors and actions such as yoga, meditation, or prayer. This study focused on using the mindfulness attributes in Table 1, making them a daily practice.

There were so many benefits, and mindfulness is not something mystical. The author made small changes in course direction to be more mindful. These changes affected her daily life, reduced her stress, and helped her develop ways to be a more effective leader. The results of this year-long study were powerful and long lasting. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner

(2011) stated that autoethnographic research is meant to be transformative and that a person does not merely analyze or study an object to gain greater understanding, but instead struggles to investigate how individuals and groups might be better able to change their situations. Chang (2008) noted three main benefits of using an autoethnographic approach. First, it enhances the cultural understanding of self. Second, it has the potential to transform self and others by stirring up self-reflection of listeners. Third, the self-transformation may bring about healing from the emotional scars of the past. Chang also stated that self-transformation may be manifested in a variety of ways in the education field. Some may become more self-reflective in their daily praxis, and some may adopt more culturally relevant strategies.

Through interviews with the other superintendents it was found they had an interest in research on mindfulness, but some of the women had challenges with mindfulness being rooted in Eastern philosophy and with the fact that mindfulness is not a quick fix that an administrator can easily do without learning and developing specific mindfulness strategies. However, some tips were shared with them that they could use in their everyday practice that could help them be more mindful. Table 2 provides strategies and tips that superintendents and other women executives can use to cultivate a more mindful lifestyle.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations included avoiding bias and having open-ended questions that may be subject to interpretation. The study also has limited generalizability, first because it was a self-study at a specific place with a specific group of participants within a particular timeframe, and secondly, because the study was limited to women superintendents in one geographic region of Washington. Generalizations beyond this cannot be made and may not be representative of other superintendents both in and outside of Washington State. Also, using a smaller sample size of five case studies and personal journaling research might have resulted in bias or inaccuracies.

What was hoped for, as Goodall (2000) shared, was to trust the process and believe that clues would be found to lead to a connection of the gap in literature with the creation of a storyline.

Table 2

Mindfulness Strategies and Tips

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1. Notice that you are present…smells, tastes, nature
2. Begin breathing exercises. Breathe in calm…breathe out smiles.
3. Make the familiar strange. Really look at familiar objects or activities as if it is the first time you have encountered them.
4. Take undivided time for you and the activity you are doing. (Opposite of multitasking)
5. Begin being mindful by dividing your day into chunks. Dedicate a small interval of time to simple mindful activities: eating, feeling the droplets of water on your body in the shower, smelling the soap, washing your hands, dressing.
6. Try to stay alert and aware throughout the day.
7. Be full of kindness toward yourself. Accept yourself as who you are. Make peace with your shortcomings.
8. Practice loving friendliness first to yourself, and then to others.
9. Notice when you are not mindful is being mindful.
10. Use mindfulness-based stress reduction strategies. (Stahl & Goldstein, 2010)

The hope was that others would learn something from the rich, detailed story of mindfulness practice as a woman superintendent. When mindfulness research and exercises with the other superintendents was discussed, there was interest in learning more. The currently underused, promising practices of mindfulness and meditation in school settings to help school leaders could be a significant breakthrough in addressing an effective way to cope with stress. Mindfulness has been developing in other areas, including business and medicine (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, Khisty, 2010, Poulin, Mackenzie, Soloway, & Karayolas, 2008), but it has not been fully used by superintendents for stress reduction. Future researchers can contribute to the field by focusing their future studies in settings that are both qualitative and quantitative, by developing or using existing mindfulness scales to predict, monitor, and understand administrator mindfulness and its use to reduce stress using a larger and broader sample size. This work would help results be more generalizable to the field of school leaders.

Since the 1990s, the study of mindfulness has spread from its initial use in the United States by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the area of medicine to many other fields. Mindfulness practices are now used by some education professionals (Hoy, 2003; Wells, 2013b; Wells, 2013a). School superintendents are, by the very nature of their position, the most likely individuals to help themselves, their staff, and students to embrace mindfulness education. There is a rationale for looking at this approach, there is burgeoning research on the benefits of mindfulness education, and there are many programs available that can be used by superintendents, their staff members, and their students to learn mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness is a way women superintendents can reduce the effects of stress, increase their emotional and physical health, and be mentally prepared for the remarkable opportunities and challenges of the position. This is an important study for people looking at the superintendency or working in any field of leadership where numerous stressors are present.

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Lived Experiences of University Commuter Students: A Phenomenological Study on Sense of Belonging

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A qualitative study was conducted using a hermeneutical phenomenological approach to explore lived experiences of commuter university students. Sense of belonging was utilized as a conceptual framework because this notion is viewed as a fundamental human need with links to student well-being. Eight students from two accredited degree-granting institutions of higher education in Canada were interviewed regarding experiences that help and hinder their sense of belonging. Three themes emerged as salient to the experience of the participants: (a) students experienced significant challenges commuting to and from campus, (b) internal and external challenges significantly impacted the student experience, and (c) the quality of spaces on campus impacted peer-to-peer interaction and sense of belonging. Higher education policy and practice implications aimed at enhancing the commuter student experience are discussed. For example, the creation of comfortable and convenient spaces on campus can enhance sense of belonging for commuter students. Moreover, new student orientation programs can foster student-faculty interaction and peer-to-peer connections.

Although estimations suggest that commuter students represent the majority of students in higher education (Hintz, 2011), they are a largely under studied, under served, and often

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undervalued student group (Jacoby & Garland, 2004). Historically, significant institutional resources have been invested in residential facilities and residential life staff, and yet, minimal investments have been made to serve the needs of the commuter student population. For example, Cox and Strange (2010) edited a book on effective student services in Canadian higher education, yet no chapters were dedicated to student success for commuter students. The willingness and ability of educational institutions to adequately understand and serve the needs of commuter students is a matter that warrants the attention of educational leaders.

Purpose of Study

The research question that guided our study is as follows: What are the shared lived experiences of undergraduate commuter students that help and hinder a sense of belonging within two degree granting institutions of higher education in Alberta, Canada? In response to this question, we employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach as our methodological design because we were most interested in documenting individual experiences and the meanings made through events and lived experiences of commuter students, particularly as they relate to a sense of belonging.

Commuter Student Research

Clark (2006) noted that compared to residential students, commuter students are at a higher risk of isolation within the campus community. Jacoby and Garland (2004) suggested commuter students are vulnerable because of a lack of sense of belonging or feeling appreciated by the institution. Empirical research suggested that students who do not nurture a sense of belonging by developing a number of lasting and significant interpersonal relationships are at risk emotionally, academically, and motivationally (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). However, few studies have explored the differences in sense of belonging between commuter and residential students.

In one empirical study that explored differential perceptions of social support between commuter students and residential students, Somera and Ellis (1996) administered identical surveys to students at a commuter campus in the southern United States and to students at a residential campus in a midwestern university in the United States. The students at the residential campus had higher scores for both social support and for social adjustment as compared to students at the commuter campus. Because the study made comparisons between two distinct institutions, caution needs to be exercised when interpreting results and it may have been more helpful to compare residential and commuter students attending the same college. Somalia and Ellis' (1996) findings are consistent with Jacoby and Garland's (2004) literature review which described commuters as students who struggle to integrate into campus social networks, primarily because of the complication of juggling multiple life roles. Consequently, as commuter students struggle to maintain social networks off-campus, their on-campus sense of belonging wanes and academic success is risked. A shortcoming of the Somera and Ellis (1996) study was that it did not account for the diversity within the commuter population.

Yet there has been some recent research that explored the diversity within the commuter student population. For example, Dugan, Garland, Jacoby and Gasiorski (2008) conducted a study using a causal comparative, cross-sectional research design exploring the differences for leadership efficacy between dependent commuters (living at home) and independent commuters (living alone). The findings indicated significant differences between two types of commuter students on the outcome of self-efficacy for leadership. As such, this research corroborates the findings of Marshall, Zhou, Gervan and Wiebe (2012) who suggested that commuter students should not be treated as a homogenous group.

Sense of Belonging

A sense of belonging is manifest through stable and strong relationships and is viewed as a fundamental human motivation and an antecedent to holistic well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When college students feel that they are full participants of campus community, they experience a greater sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012). Yet the factors that contribute to a sense of belonging are complex and multi-layered and can differentially impact students (Marshall, Zhou, Gervan, & Wiebe, 2012).

Some insightful research has recently emerged exploring sense of belonging among college students. In one salient study (Ostrove & Long, 2007), evidence emerged that supports the assertion on sense of belonging made by Baumeister and Leary (1995). In this correlational study with 324 participants, social status and sense of belonging was explored. Belonging was found to mediate the positive link between class background and academic adjustment. Ostrove and Long (2007) argued that student success programs for minority student groups should be implemented to help foster a sense of belonging for these students.

Others scholars such as Walton and Cohen (2007) agreed with Ostrove and Long's recommendation because their research findings suggested that a sense of belonging can mitigate academic setbacks among at-risk students. Walton and Cohen conducted a single-institution experiment with Black and White students attending a private college in which group stigmatization and belonging uncertainty were explored. Walton and Cohen hypothesized that members of historically underrepresented groups were more uncertain about their social bonds and more sensitive to feeling as though they belong in the college environment. Walton and Cohen conducted two experiments as part of the study and concluded that: (a) when students were led to believe they had few friends, Black students demonstrated a drop in their sense of belonging and White students were unaffected and (b) an experimental intervention aimed at reducing doubts about a sense of belonging enhanced the level of academic success of Black students, but not White students. Although Walton and Cohen's study has limited generalizability and focused predominately on race, its results underscore Jacoby and Garland's (2004) emphasis on the power of belonging as a factor in student success.

Student Interventions

Research on commuter students includes examples of higher education institutions that implement educational programs aimed at bolstering student belonging amongst commuter student populations (Hintz, 2011; Orlando, 2000). However, the literature is scant with evidence that explores the efficacy of these programs and how students experience these programs (Jacoby and Garland, 2004). As a leading voice in scholarly efforts regarding commuter needs and concerns, Jacoby and Garland (2004) stated clearly that although commuter students are likely not to become involved in the same ways as traditional-aged residential students, educators can account for the unique needs of commuter students and design and implement programs that encourage engagement, sense of belonging, and learning.

The Collegia Program established in 1996 at Seattle University (SU) is an example of a program designed to enhance the commuter student experience in college (Orlando, 2000). By using physical space on campus to create a "home away from home," Seattle University improved the commuter student experience. Other institutions, such as Arizona State University or Ohio University, have invested in off-campus peer educators to assist commuter students in their success and connection to the campus community (Hintz, 2011).

Method

For this research project we were guided by van Manen's (1997) hermeneutical phenomenological approach. It may be important to first offer a brief overview and operational definition of hermeneutic phenomenology. While phenomenology differs from other scientific approaches, including those in the fields of sociology, education, psychology, health care, and political science (Annells, 2006; Higginbottom, 2009; Laverty, 2003; Standing, 2009), this approach generally attempts to gain insightful descriptions without classification, experimentation, or taxonomizing (van Manen, 1997). One goal of phenomenology is to tell a "comprehensive story that is portrayed in vivid, alive, accurate and meaningful language" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 19). Stanage (1987) suggested that phenomenology and the scientific methodology are not opposed to each other or mutually exclusive in their approach, but nonetheless, represent different ways of conducting an investigation. Phenomenology, according to van Manen, "aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experience" (1997, p. 9), while Moustakas (1994) referred to bracketing, or epoche, as an essential starting point for transcendental phenomenology, and defined it as an "approach [that] engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated" (p. 22).

Because hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on making sense of lived experiences, this study was guided by the notion of exploring how students made sense of their experiences as commuter students. The study involved not just descriptions of the phenomenon as emphasized in transcendental phenomenology, but also the interpretation of the meaning of the phenomenon

Table 1

Demographic Information About the Eight Interviewees

Pseudonym (age)	Institution	Race	Program	Gender
Amber (19)	A	White	English	Female
Terri (19)	A	White	Psychology	Female
Betty (19)	A	White	Psychology	Female
Johnny (24)	B	White	Biology	Male
Amy (23)	B	White	Biology	Female
Ben (28)	B	White	Theology	Male
Tim (22)	B	White	Biology	Male
Rebecca (22)	B	White	Education	Female

as emphasized in hermeneutical phenomenology. In contrast, transcendental phenomenology or linguistic phenomenology would have focused research efforts on describing the experiences of the participants while completely bracketing out our experiences and knowledge. In summary, our research question and interests aligned well with van Manen's (1997) philosophical approach: "Phenomenology is, on one hand, description of the lived-through quality experiences, and on the other hand, description of meaning of the expressions of lived experience" (p. 25).

Site Selection

In phenomenological studies, it is acceptable to interview participants from multiple sites or single sites, depending on the shared experience being explored (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the iterative nature of the research process influenced our site selection. In alignment with Bogdan and Talyor (1975), who "recommended that researchers choose settings in which the subjects are strangers…" (p. 28), we interviewed students at institutions where we had no professional affiliations. We selected two small degree-granting institutions of higher education in Alberta, who are members

of the 26 post-secondary institutions within Campus Alberta.

A majority of the student participants lived within a 10 kilometer radius to their respective campuses. The institutions both offered a wide range of co- and extra-curricular services to students, including academic advising, learning services, counseling, orientation, cafeteria, clubs, and athletics. However, one institution had residence and commuter students, while the other only had commuter students. After institutional review board approvals, the institutions' administrators granted our team formal approval to conduct the research project and interview students at their respective campuses.

Participant Selection

As opposed to random assignment or selection which is preferred in quantitative methods of research (Creswell, 2013), phenomenological inquiry requires the deliberate selection of participants who have experienced the phenomenon being explored in the study (Richards & Morse, 2013). In-depth interviews were conducted with eight students (See Table 1). English was the first language for all the participants and they were eager and willing to participate in the research project. Several students expressed interest in the study, and through an

exploratory phone conversation, we confirmed that all eight students who expressed a desire to participate in the study met the requirements for the study. We set up interviews at various locations and times that were convenient for the participants.

As recommended by Moustakas (1997), data were collected primarily through conducting in-depth interviews in the spring of 2013 with each student. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. After preliminary data analysis and theme development, which took place early in the spring semester, we conducted member checking in late spring by inviting each participant to participate in follow up phone and skype interviews in order to confirm emerging themes. All names used in the present article are pseudonyms and have been added in order to enhance the readability of the article.

Results

Three major themes (The Round Trip, Stuff Happens, and Place Matters) emerged from our individual interviews with commuter students. In what follows, we expand upon each theme with participants' interpretations of different actions and interactions.

The Round Trip

In this meaning unit, respondents described their experiences with their round trip transit from home, to university, and back again, and how the cycle impacted their college experience, which in general was challenging. Most of the participants lived at home with their parents and commuted back and forth to the campus. Ben, a White male senior theology major, who was mature and thoughtful in the interview, seemed fortunate to have the luxury of driving his car to and from campus and avoided a transit system that he said was fraught with safety and comfort issues and with buses "packed out like a can of sardines." Most of the other participants were not as fortunate. Amber, a White, articulate English student with a bubbly personality, described the complexity of commuting:

> Well, I'm anal retentive about being late, I can't stand being late, so I will generally go and be at the bus stop a solid ten or fifteen minutes before the bus is even due to be there. I

take the 11 which is really all over the place. Sometimes it's ten minutes early sometimes it's ten minutes late, so I think I am fully adjusted, so I get on that bus, um, actually I don't know the exact time I get it but I'll get on that bus and I'll come down Salmon Blvd, Grand and I'll get off just before Prairie station. Potentially I could stay on the bus and it would bring me around and drop me off in front of the school, but I think I probably need the exercise so I get off on the other side of Grand and walk across.

Although Amber described the transit system as challenging, it did not seem to negatively impact her college experience or sense of belonging.

However, Terri, a full-time psychology student, had a different and more negative experience. Terri described the challenges of commuting with much frustration, and in general, her experiences with transportation were negative, although she did reference a time when she met another student on transit to the college. For example, she stated with a high degree of frustration that "my bus is really bad, and doesn't show up at least once a week." Terri expressed frustration at having to miss so many classes because it impacted her ability to do well on exams. The main transportation challenges for Terri were an unreliable transit system. For instance, when asked about what she would change at the college to enhance the student experience, her first response to the question was to improve the reliability of the transit system. Amy, a married 23 year-old White biology major, like Terri, also struggled with transportation and stated " Cuz at, at night the buses don't work [laughs], they do, but they aren't consistent after about 6 or 7'o'clock. So you, you always have to guess, or find another way home."

The transportation challenges for Betty, unlike for Terri and Amy, were not in the commute from home to the school, but from the train station to the campus. Betty described her experience of walking up the hill to the campus in from the train station in colorful language and noted, "Get rid of that hill. Okay we have to walk across that bridge and then walk up a hill because we're up on a hill. I don't really like that hill because I've seen people fall,

I've tripped on it and it's tiring" and "but it [the hill] can be slippery in certain patches so going down you kind of have to walk like a penguin and it takes a lot of time to walk up." Betty was clearly frustrated with the physical challenges of walking from the train station to campus, and yet these transportation challenges experienced by Betty seemed pale in comparison to some of the major life challenges faced many of the participants.

Stuff Happens

Reflecting on negative circumstances and inner turmoil was a common theme for many of the respondents. Responding candidly throughout the interview, Betty, a first-year White student, described some of her emotional life as being filled with anxiety, fear, judgment, and nervousness. For Betty, she needed to shift her perspective of college life in order to survive as a commuter student. In responding to the potential of addressing her inner turmoil, Betty noted: "I wish to seek counseling here, but I'm extremely afraid of being judged or seen… I'm really afraid" and "[I don't want] people looking at me if I go someplace. I don't want to be ridiculed." Betty further stated when reflecting on her classroom experiences: "[In] other classes I'm extremely nervous to talk and when I do talk I get all voice cracks and everything." Another student, Terri, seemed to share challenges on more external and focused on family dynamics as compared to Betty's internal yet unresolved ways, but both had to make an intentional shift.

Terri found financial pressures to be very challenging, in part because her parents were experiencing significant debt and were not able to assist her financially in ways that she had been expecting as evidenced through the statement: "Finances are kind of a big issue for me." Terri's decision to enroll in a psychology program seemed somewhat pragmatic because she stated: "I don't have money to waste on general studies." In addition, her decision to attend college was influenced by a scholarship she received from the university; however, she is only a first-year student and the potential for the financial pressures to build will likely grow over time.

Terri was experiencing significant stress because of her home situation. When asked about any outside influences that impact her college experience, she started to discuss her home life and I could tell she was getting emotional. I asked her if she was willing to tell me more about her home life and, reluctantly at first, she finally did by providing a long and detailed account of the challenges she has experienced primarily with her biological mom. This home conflict was still very present for Terri as evidenced by the statement: "But I am currently having some conflicts with her [biological mother] right now and that is a big distraction." My reaction to her story was one of sadness and disbelief as I thought to myself: Why should such a young women have to carry such a significant family burden? I wonder if this would be a lot easier for her is she was in a supportive and authentic caring residential community? And yet, she seemed to be relatively resilient and was making the best of a very dysfunctional family situation while attending college. Unlike Terri, Amber responded positively about her family situation stating: "[If] I wrote an A + paper my mom will probably make me my favorite dinner and you know, just have a general moment of celebration." Betty stated: "My family is really supportive of me being here." My reaction to the support that Amber and Betty were receiving at home was one of delight.

For Ben, the life stressors did not seem to revolve around financial, family, or inner turmoil, but rather, living conditions in his apartment. For example, he lived in an apartment building that was chaotic with the fire alarm sounding and the power going off on a regular basis. In addition, a van was set on fire inside the underground parking. However, Ben had a good sense of humor, and laughed when reminiscing about all the people in the apartment who abandoned the underground parking lot and parked on the grass around the apartment building. Although the participants expressed many difficult situations, they expressed appreciation for the many friends they have made while in college.

Place Matters

In this final theme cluster, respondents focused on how physical space was critical to their overall student experience, and in particular, their sense of peer, academic, and institutional belonging. There was one particular

location on each campus noted by all respondents as an important location for developing and nurturing strong social connections, and thus, a sense of belonging. "The Sanctuary" and "The Collegium" were both designated student commuter lounge spaces on campus.

The physical location of The Sanctuary was described in both positive and negative ways. Terri described it is as a place that "is freezing and I don't like that about it" but also "[it is] really bright first of all and that is part of the reason I like it." Betty noted: "It can get very loud" and Amber commented, "It's sort of this cool space where you can do whatever you want because there's nobody watching," but also said: "The windows are cold. It's actually kind of sparse." The Sanctuary has tables with movable chairs. Because the chairs are movable, additional seating can be added to the tables and this feature seemed to be attractive to Betty because she stated: "We sit at one table and bring chairs over." Although the physical characteristics of the space referred to by the respondents as The Sanctuary were critiqued for being too cold and too loud at times, when I asked the respondents about what they would change at the university to enhance the student experience, only one of them made reference to enhancing this space. Some of the deficient qualities of the physical space seemed to be overlooked because of the level of autonomy students had with the space, as supported by Amber's statement: "But it's sort of nice because we can superimpose our own personality onto it." In reference to what the students did while using The Sanctuary and how it impacted their experience, Betty said: "We [her friends] talk about the same things we like or situations in the classroom.... We're having so much fun and it's not like it's the library." Amber noted: "We usually hang out at one of the tables toward the back in the corner away from the windows.... We sort of feel freer to be loud or kind of noisy because everybody is focused on their own thing and we're not really interrupting anybody." Terri clearly found this space important to her sense of community as evidenced through this statement: "Um, I like The Sanctuary.... It makes me feel like I kind of have a sense of community because it is where everyone goes." She seems to love hanging out in The Sanctuary because this appeared to be a significant meeting place for her and many other students at the college.

The Collegium was unanimously praised by all respondents as being a special place that anchored their peer relationships. Amy stated that The Collegium has helped her feel welcome and described The Collegium as a "home away from home" and much more comfortable that chairs in a hallway. Rebecca, a single 22-year old education major who lives with her parents echoed the sentiments of Amy and described The Collegium in these terms: "This is my home. I'm so comfortable now." Rebecca also experienced a connection between peer and academic belonging when she stated: "Like if I didn't belong here [in The Collegium] then I might feel like I don't belong in my class and then start to feel like I'm pathetic and not really try." It is interesting to note that it was only the female respondents who referred to The Collegium using the term "home."

In contrast, Johnny, an intelligent and articulate 24-year old White male, and Tim, a thoughtful and earnest 22-year old White male, did not equate The Collegium to a "home," but rather, suggested that collegium communicated something powerful to them about the institution. In reference to how the administers valued commuters, Johnny stated: "That was the first time I saw, like, an intentional move to say, like, 'We want you as part of this community.'" Tim suggested that the establishment of The Collegium was an indicator that campus administrators were paying more attention to commuter needs. Moreover, some of the respondents referenced their appreciation for The Collegium because of their perceptions that the institution was, as Rebecca described it, "a resident-dominated community." For the respondents, the establishment of The Collegium seemed to not only meet relational and academic needs, but also to provide a sense of justice regarding how the institution was investing more equitably between residence and commuter students.

Discussion

All respondents experienced significant and unique challenges as commuter students. Some respondents faced emotional stress such as fear and anxiety. Some faced financial and family struggles, as well as transportation difficulties in getting to the campus. However, the

students found significant meaning, connection, and sense of belonging primarily through peer-to-peer connections, but also for some, through a connection to the institution itself and to academic success, often facilitated through a physical oasis on campus – The Sanctuary or The Collegium – a focal point of gathering and authentic community building and connection. It seemed as though commuter students yearned to have their lived college experiences understood by administration, faculty, and student government, especially in relationship to residence life. A sense of belonging seemed to be an anchor for many of our respondents in the face of challenging circumstances.

Jacoby and Garland (2004) have not only identified common commuter student needs, as already discussed, but also theoretical frameworks which educators can use to implement commuter student programing: (a) Maslow's hierarchy of needs, (b) mattering, (c) engagement, (d) andragogy, and (e) transition theory. However, Chickering (as cited in Jacoby & Garland, 2004) seems to offer a more comprehensive strategy that integrates the theories as posited by Jacoby and Garland by describing student transition in three phases: (a) moving into the institution, (b) moving through the institution, and (c) moving on. Jacoby and Garland use this model in making recommendations for enhancing commuter student success, and several of these recommendations emerge as salient to this study.

First, in the category of "moving in," Jacoby and Garland (2004) suggested that the campus environment is critical and that "commuter lounges with lockers, microwaves, eating areas, and computers go a long way to making students feel that they matter and that they have a 'place to be' on campus" (p. 73). Institutions can be creative in designing spaces that align with the ideals of a collegium (Orlando, 2000) and with the stated desire of one student participant when she stated the following:

> It would be nice to have an area with couches and everything and a calmer place to relax. I just want a place to go to relax, and put your feet up…calming, colors, couches, chairs, not a snack bar, but maybe water bottle fridge, microwave…maybe chess and checkers.

> Just something calming to relax to get rid of the anxiety of the day.

Second, and also in the broad category of "moving in," but in a specific recommendation made by Jacoby and Garland (2004) regarding new student orientation; concerted efforts could be made to ensure faculty are connecting with students more intentionally during the first-year student orientation. If students feel they are making a significant and meaningful connection to faculty in the early part of their transition, they are more likely to maintain and develop a positive interaction with faculty as they progress through their program. Jacoby and Garland suggested that orientation is a perfect time for students to "work with an advisor or mentor to carefully think through and articulate educational goals" (p. 71). Although not related to first-year orientation, but certainly related to student-faculty interaction, institutions are encouraged to ensure that all first-year courses are taught by professors who are willing and capable to create excellent learning environments for first-year students.

Finally, in the category of "moving through," Jacoby and Garland (2004) argued that programs for commuter students need to be designed with the unique needs of commuters in mind. For example, a range of social, cultural, therapeutic, or recreational programs, whether offered formally through institutional office of student services or through student government organizations, must account for the scheduling realities of the commuter student population and not just the residential student population. For example, social events that aim to enhance social connection should be scheduled for when commuter students are available. In addition, events should be communicated well in advance so commuter students can make the appropriate arrangements to attend the event.

Limitations and Future Research

This study explored the lived experiences of a number of students at two degree-granting institutions of higher education in Alberta, Canada. The students shared candidly and passionately about their experiences and how they experience, or do not experience, a sense of belonging. The literature, especially in Canada, is scant with research exploring the experiences of commuter students.

Although commuter students now represent the vast majority of students attending college (Stevens, 2000), the voices of this "quiet majority" (Wilson, 2003) need to be heard. It was clear that the physical space on campus mediated positive experiences and a sense of belonging. Educational leaders, faculty, and researchers would do well to listen to the voices of commuter students, because the insights gained through listening to the experiences of this important group of students might prompt educators to invest the energy and resources needed to enhance the well-being of commuter students.

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