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Terrorism and College Students: A Generation's Response to September 11, 2001

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Terrorism and College Students: A Generation's Response to September 11, 2001

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Education

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Chapter One: Introduction

The terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001 marked a significant cultural turning point for Americans. The destruction of the World Trade

Towers, the damage to the Pentagon and the loss of thousands of civilian lives brought an end to the optimism and feelings of security and invulnerability that marked the decade of the 1990's. As Americans coped with feelings of helplessness, fear, and uncertainty about their future, the United States entered into military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the economy faltered, and the travel industry suffered. The historical events, aptly named "9/11," directly and indirectly caused a shift in the priorities and attitudes of many Americans. American military reservists were called up to active duty. Increased security measures throughout the United States made travel difficult for everyone. Subsequent political elections were characterized by heated debates over the role of the United States in addressing global conflict. Different subpopulations within the United States, from Arabs to New Yorkers, each experienced a unique and profound change in their lives. Students who were enrolled in college at the time of the attacks were also uniquely affected.

Historically speaking, the college campus has served as a focal point for social change. During the late 1940's and early 1950's, the GI Bill opened the door to higher education for many who were previously unable to attend college. The rapid increase in college enrollment preceded a shift in the American workforce from the industrial blue-collar generations of the early 20th century, to the more educated, professional workforce of the mid-20th century.

During the 1960's, the college campus was a venue for protest and dialogue during the birth of the civil rights movement. One of the earliest non-violent protests involved college students from the Negro Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, North Carolina, who staged a sit-in at a lunch counter that refused service to

blacks. This sit-in signaled a symbolic shift in public attitudes towards race relations and resulted in significant policy improvements such as affirmative action.

At the time of the Vietnam War, the college campus was again a site for demonstrations, as evidenced by the violent war protests at Kent State University in Ohio. These protests contributed to the eventual end of the war and effectively influenced American foreign policy and domestic politics into the next decade.

Similarly, the reaction among college students to September 11 will be an indicator for societal change. Today's college students represent tomorrow's political, educational, and business leaders. They will drive the economy and shape our views towards foreign policy. Hence, the climate and attitudes among today's college students and their reactions to September 11, 2001, may shed some light on the future of the American workforce, the American family, and the political landscape.

Background

Shortly before 9:00 am, eastern standard time, on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Across America, most college students awoke to televised scenes repeated over and over again of the Twin Towers falling to the ground. Within hours, images of a portion of the damaged Pentagon and a dark crater from another hijacked and crashed plane in western Pennsylvania were portrayed across the cable news networks. Students from New York City and Washington, DC frantically called home. They huddled together in dormitory lounges, glued to the news coverage. Many colleges and universities cancelled classes. The reaction on college campuses around the country mirrored that of the general

population. College communities reacted with a mix of disbelief, horror, fear, and sadness.

Colleges are unique institutions in our society. They bring together an array of people from different backgrounds. They serve as a place for dialogue and intellectual inquiry. They reflect the values and traditions of our larger society. So, the immediate response to the 9/11 tragedy was predictable.

Most students, even those not directly affected by the events of 9/11, experienced a sense of grief, sadness, and uncertainty about the future. Matt Gosney, a political science major at Hobart and William Smith Colleges commented, “You wake up in the morning, and you don’t know what’s going to happen. Four planes were hijacked by men with box cutters... How can you not be scared (Brownstein & Hoover, 2001)?” Becky Olsen, of Northampton County Area Community College in Pennsylvania, read to her peers in a speech following 9/11, “Dear God. So many of us are frightened right now, so many grieving deep losses...” Staff at the University Counseling Center at Northampton, reported a 273% increase in walk-in traffic during the year after September 11 (Brownstein & Hoover, 2001). At the University of Michigan, there was a 100% increase in visits to the campus counseling center the week following September 11, 2001. Students reported feelings of anxiety about their personal safety and intense feelings of homesickness (Herpert & Wingert, 2001). The response among students on college campuses mirrored that of the general population. A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that four out of ten adults had at least one of five substantial stress symptoms following the attacks, and nine of ten reported at least low

levels of stress (Schuster & Stein, 2001). Clearly, the terrorist attacks on September 11 had an immediate effect on the psyche of most Americans, including college students.

In reaction to the traumatic events of September 11, college students engaged in a variety of activities. There were numerous campus rallies and vigils. Over 1,000 students at the University of Virginia crammed into a hall for a September 13 “teach in”. Over 3,000 students attended a September 14 memorial service at Tennessee State University (Hamilton, 2001). It was important for students to feel the sense of community at their institutions following the dreadful events of 9/11. They bonded together to grieve and to try to make sense of the terrorist attacks.

Another immediate reaction on college campuses, mirroring what was going on in communities throughout the United States, was a strong sense of patriotism. Flags appeared in the windows of students living in dormitories, and many students voiced support for the military, not an ordinary occurrence on college campuses during the past half-century. At the University of North Carolina, naval ROTC member Jessica Ryu commented on a physical-fitness run across a campus bridge, “People stopped on the bridge and started clapping. Before, we were yelled at for being in the way” (Herpert & Wingert, 2001).

Similar to what was occurring throughout the United States, the reaction towards the Muslim communities on college campuses was mixed. Faculty responded in an effort to educate and promote awareness about the religious and political factors that lead up to September 11. “Universities – and cultural studies scholars especially – can also help promote a dialogue with Islam... have a role to play in pressing the country to think more deeply about religious and cultural differences and foreign policy” (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2003). Kathryn Kueny, Professor of Religious Studies at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, reported “my enrollment numbers probably doubled in a lot of my classes... I’ve done a great deal of speaking engagements. Here, most people don’t have regular contact with Muslims. They just want some general information. I feel like I can play a role, directing them to sources, talking about their concerns and their prejudices” (“One Year Later”, 2002). In addition, many of the speeches from campus student and administrative leaders decried hate crimes and voiced support for the Muslim students, faculty, and staff on their campuses.

However, there were many anti-Muslim acts across the country, and many Muslim students continued to express fear following 9/11. Areej El-Jawahri, a first year student at the University of Michigan began receiving threatening emails after September 11 (Herpert & Wingert, 2001). Mashe’l Al-Dabbous, a graduate student at the University of Buffalo also expressed feelings of fear and intolerance. “I couldn’t sleep for a couple weeks. I was terrified. One of my friends took off her hijab because she thought it was too dangerous” (“One Year Later,” 2002). In some respects, the fear and hatred experienced by Arab or Muslim members of campus communities were difficult to comprehend. In recent times, people affiliated with college campuses tended to view themselves as liberal and open-minded. Hence, the new fear brought on by 9/11 seemed to generate a reaction that was not typical of the higher education community. But, as with many of the immediate reactions of 9/11 (grief, patriotism, increased need for community) the anti-Muslim reaction also seemed to wane in the following months.

The long-term impact of September 11, 2001 on college students is still an issue of some debate. Studies have analyzed major and career choices of the college student

post-9/11. There has been an examination of student involvement in study abroad programs. Some researchers have looked into levels of community service among college students after September 11. However, a comprehensive study on the overall impact of September 11 on the college student has not been conducted.

The Problem Statement

According to the 2002 United States Census, approximately 48.3% of the current population of 18-24 year-olds is enrolled at an institution of higher education in the United States. These students are gaining an education that will help them as they enter the workforce. They are developing leadership qualities and shaping their values. They are forming opinions about politics, international affairs, and social change. September 11, 2001 has undoubtedly influenced this generation of college students. There is an obvious need to examine the effects of this historical event on college students.

Research Questions

The focus of this study is to explore the impact of September 11, 2001 on college students by conducting a series of interviews with undergraduate students who were enrolled in college on September 11, 2001. The following questions will guide this study.

1. What were the direct effects of September 11, 2001 on college students?
2. What are the distal, or long term effects of September 11, 2001 on college students?
3. What implications do these findings have for faculty and staff in higher education?

Scope of the Study

This study is based on 50 interviews with undergraduate students who were enrolled in college on September 11, 2001. These interviews were conducted between March 2004 and December 2004. Demographic information was collected for those interviewed. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and included questions about the respondent's views and attitudes prior to September 11, 2001, immediately following the terrorist attacks, and two to three years following the attacks. The primary focus areas for the interviews were political views, patriotism, career aspirations, and views on race/social community issues. The interviewees consisted of undergraduate students enrolled at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Limitations of the Study

There are some obvious limitations to this study. It should be noted that since this is a qualitative study, the focus is on gathering general information about reactions among college students following September 11, 2001. Students are self-reporting. It is difficult to ascertain whether the respondent's perceptions about their attitudes are accurate, since no interviews were conducted prior to September 11, 2001 or immediately following September 11, 2001.

While interviewees were from all regions of the United States and some international locations, all were attending Washington University at the time of the interview, or had been attending Washington University on September 11, 2001 (some of those interviewed had graduated prior to the interview). None of those interviewed suffered a direct personal loss as a result of the September 11 attacks.

Some suggest that September 11, 2001 had little or no effect on college students. While there was an immediate response, some feel that there was no lasting effect. This study will dispute the claim that 9/11 had no lasting effect on college students.

Finally, it was difficult to control for other outside variables that have influenced a respondent's attitudes and values. There may have been additional significant events that occurred in an individual's life in the days and months immediately following September 11, 2001 influencing their personal views. Another consideration is that all 50 of the interviews were conducted in the months surrounding the 2004 presidential election – an election in which the United States role in a post-9/11 global community was hotly contested. Consequently, it may be difficult to identify and account for the influence of these other factors.

Significance of the Study

Very little research has been conducted on the impact of September 11, 2001 on college students. This study will begin to shed some light on how the tragic events of 9/11 have changed the lives of today's college students. The shift in college student attitudes and perceptions following 9/11 will have a direct consequence on our future political leaders, our economic outlook, and on American society. This study will identify some of these trends and serve as a starting point for further research.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction

September 11, 2001 marked a turning point for many generations of Americans. In our society, we often define our young people by the era during which they came of age; from the Baby Boomers to Generation “X”; the Cold War to the Reagan years. The college campus can be a focal point for generational change, since it is home to young people entering adulthood. In a shift from the generation of college students who came before them, the “Millennial Generation” will have different personal and career goals, unique political viewpoints, and a new world view. This generation will be uniquely influenced by September 11, 2001, in a manner that is distinct from other generations of Americans. The goal of this chapter is to: 1) synthesize information about the psychological impact of terrorism, 2) examine theories concerning the moral and personal development of college students, 3) describe the various theories on generational change and 4) explore several studies about the impact of September 11, 2001 on various populations, including college students.

To begin, I review several important studies examining the psychological impacts of terror on the human psyche. I explain a theory referred to as Terror Management Theory (TMT).

Next, I describe an important theory of moral development hypothesized by Lawrence Kohlberg. His theory examines how human beings differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. This theory is important in looking at college student feelings about revenge and consequences following September 11.

Following that discussion, I look at how the college experience has been shown to influence students. College is an important transitional phase in the life of many Americans; students experience newfound independence as they progress from youth to adulthood. During this transition, important life values and attitudes are formed; hence the effects of 9/11 on this age group could have significant implications for their future.

I examine some theories of generational change. Numerous authors have proposed theories about how generations cycle through time. These theories investigate how internal and external events differentially influence various generations, and they may also help explain the changes in college student attitudes following September 11, 2001.

Next, I review the literature concerning shifts in attitudes about patriotism, politics and religion following September 11, 2001. These data were compiled relatively soon after 9/11 and they serve to provide an understanding of the short-term effects of 9/11 on the general public and on college students. The synthesis of this information offers the framework for a qualitative study on the impact of 9/11 on college students.

Finally, I examine the merits of qualitative research as the ideal tool for exploring the influence of September 11, 2001 on college students. This serves to introduce Chapter 3, which describes the research methods for this study.

Research on Psychological Reactions to September 11, 2001

In the year following September 11, 2001, many researchers examined the impact of the tragedy on the psychological well-being of Americans. What follows is a summary of several studies of the psychological reactions to September 11 within the general American public and college students.

In a *New England Journal of Medicine* study, a random sample of approximately 560 adults was surveyed from September 14 through September 16, 2001. Almost half of those surveyed experienced at least one of the following reactions:

- Feeling very upset when reminded of what happened;
- Repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or dreams about what happened;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Trouble falling, or staying asleep;
- Feeling irritable or having angry outbursts (Schuster & Stein, 2001).

There were several other key findings from this study on the immediate impact of September 11. Women were affected more than men. Non-whites were affected more than whites. Those with prior mental or emotional health problems were more likely to experience psychological effects than those without previous problems. The further away from the World Trade Center respondents lived, the less they were affected. There was a stronger reaction among those in urban areas than those in rural areas. The more hours of television adults watched after September 11, the more the tragedy affected those adults surveyed (Schuster & Stein, 2001).

This study also examined coping mechanisms among adults in response to September 11. The most prevalent sources of support in dealing with the national tragedy were religion and seeking the company of close friends and family for comfort. “They checked on the safety of those they cared about, talked about their thoughts and feelings, and participated in activities such as vigils, which can provide a sense of community” (Schuster & Stein, 2001). Adults also made contributions to charity as a means of coping with the tragedy.

In the book *In the Wake of 9/11: the Psychology of Terror* (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg, 2003), the authors use their “Terror Management Theory” to

explore the national response to 9/11. This theory “posits that the uniquely human awareness of death and our efforts to cope with this awareness provide the psychological impetus for a wide variety of superficially disparate human activities” (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, p. 10). Essentially, they claim that while most living things, including humans, are constantly striving for survival, humans are in the unique position of recognizing that death is inevitable. When these two core concepts (the fight to survive and the inevitability of death) collide psychologically, people react in a distinct manner. Humans manage their terror by constantly justifying both that the world around them will not suddenly end in their death and that their lives have meaning and purpose. Perhaps the context of Terror Management Theory is best understood by looking at it in the context of America’s reaction to the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Immediately following September 11, Americans generally had one of three reactions that helped them cope directly with the horrific tragedy they witnessed either firsthand or on television (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg, 2003). The first reaction was disbelief. There was a feeling that this type of violence could never actually happen on American soil. The second reaction was characterized by distraction. Americans tried to engage in activities that would take their minds off of the tragedy. They consumed more alcohol, gambled, rented more videos, and went shopping more often. Some Americans exhibited signs of the third predicted reaction, by withdrawing from the larger community and taking steps to protect themselves from future attacks. These people avoided large crowds and purchased items that they felt would offer them some level of protection, such as latex gloves, gas masks, and bottled water. In the days and weeks following September 11, 2001, these three reactions were common.

Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg also categorized the reactions of Americans that were not in direct response to the terrorist attacks. They termed these indirect or “distal reactions” to 9/11. There were four general types of distal reactions. First, people sought to better understand what led up to the attacks. Why did something like this happen? What could lead a group of individuals to bear so much hatred towards the United States? People looked primarily towards religion to help them understand this hatred. Bible sales increased, and religious service attendance increased.

Second, Americans demonstrated great feelings of patriotism. They purchased flags and displayed them on their homes, their cars, and their clothing. President Bush’s approval ratings soared to an all-time high. There were significant signs of support for the women and men of the United States military.

A third reaction was one of censorship. Anyone who questioned the military conflict in Afghanistan or criticized the President’s foreign policy decisions was labeled as unpatriotic. Perhaps one of the most salient examples of this was the response to the comments of Bill Maher, host of the popular television program, *Politically Incorrect*. On September 17, 2001, he said on his show, “we have been the cowards, lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away. That’s cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building – say what you want about that, it’s not cowardly.” The network broadcasting his program put him under intense pressure to recant his comments. Several sponsors of his show withdrew their support. A few local networks actually refused to air his program. Prior to the attacks, Maher had made numerous controversial statements on his program, and they had been considered entertainment. Following the attacks, his

comments were considered unpatriotic, and he was censored. This was a clear example of the lack of tolerance in the American public in response to September 11.

Finally, according to Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg, there was an increase in bigotry. Law enforcement agencies drew criticism for new practices of racial profiling (Nguyen, 2005). There were numerous hate crimes committed against people of Arab descent. Furthermore, there were many reports of vandalism against mosques throughout the United States. This bigotry was an indirect response to the fear many Americans experienced following the terrorist attacks.

Other researchers have examined the psychological effects of September 11, specifically on college students. One study published in the February 2004 issue of *Behaviour Research and Therapy* looked at data collected from questionnaires given to undergraduates at three public universities throughout the United States, the University of Albany, North Dakota State University, and Augusta State University (Blanchard, 2004). Among these college students, there were several reactions that paralleled those found among the general population of American adults. These studies looked at two psychological phenomenon, acute stress disorder (ASD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Acute stress disorder occurs in the first few days or weeks following a traumatic incident. Symptoms include feelings of numbness and detachment, as well as “derealization”, which is the sense that the world is unreal or that one is detached from or not a part of their environment. Additional symptoms can include sleeplessness, irritability, poor concentration, and body restlessness. Post-traumatic stress disorder includes many of the same symptoms. However, in cases of PTSD, these symptoms persist over a longer period of time. In addition to the reactions described under ASD,

people suffering from PTSD also have recurring and intrusive distressing recollections of the event and persistently avoid things or events associated with the trauma (Williams & Poijula, 2002).

With respect to the 9/11 study conducted by Blanchard, there were two notable findings. First, those college students who were closest to the terrorist attack (at the University of Albany) showed the highest levels of acute stress disorder. Those students also displayed a higher level of post-traumatic stress disorder than those attending school further away. Second, college women were twice as likely as college men to experience post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the September 11 tragedy as college men. The more television college students watched, the higher the levels of stress they experienced in the weeks following September 11, 2001.

Piiparinen and Smith conducted another study on the reaction of college students to September 11, 2001 (Piiparinen & Smith, 2003). Five months prior to the attacks, they had administered a survey to approximately 300 college students in the Chicago metropolitan area that measured levels of stress and coping. They re-administered the same survey five weeks after the attacks. Their data suggested that college students showed symptoms of attention-deficit in the time period immediately following September 11 (Piiparinen & Smith, 2003).

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 had a definite impact on the psychological state of the American public. Although there were various responses to the attacks, many Americans exhibited an initial reaction of fear and disbelief that then led to a phase of patriotism, intolerance, and need for understanding. College students were not immune to the attacks. They experienced the same symptoms as other adults. However,

since college is considered a formative life stage, their reaction may have more significant consequences over the course of their lifetimes.

Theories of Moral Reasoning

While there are numerous theories of moral development, Lawrence Kohlberg's six-stage theory is a widely accepted model. Kohlberg, expanding upon Jean Piaget's earlier two-stage model, describes a continuum along which human beings develop moral reasoning from birth through old age. The six stages are divided into three overarching levels, each containing two stages as follows. In order to best describe the stages, I will borrow the following hypothetical situation from Kohlberg.

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$ 1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug-for his wife. Should the husband have done that? (Crain, 1985, p. 120)

One's reaction to the morality of Heinz's theft falls into one of six stages. Stage one is in the first level (Preconventional) and is labeled "Obedience and Punishment Orientation." Stage one occurs when a young person defines "good" and "bad" based upon the physical consequences. The individual bases moral reasoning on a strict set of rules handed down by authorities. For example, in stage one, the young person might feel that stealing the drug is wrong in all situations, including the one listed above, simply because stealing is against the law.

In stage two, referred to as “Individualism and Exchange,” the individual recognizes that everything in the world is relative, leaving the individual to pursue his or her own interests. Using the example provided above, Heinz might be able to justify stealing the drug because the druggist was unwilling to give him a fair deal. Once the druggist refused the compromise offered by Heinz, Heinz was free to make the appropriate judgment.

The next level is called the “Conventional” level and contains stage three, “Good Interpersonal Relationships.” In stage three, morality is viewed as more than simple exchanges. Individuals in this stage believe that people should behave in “good” ways and live up to positive expectations of the community. Heinz is justified to steal the drug because his intentions are good. He is stealing the drug because he loves his wife. Most early teenagers are considered to be in stage three.

Stage four, “Maintaining the Social Order” is also included in the Conventional Level. In this stage, the individual looks beyond what is “good” and what is “bad” when making a decision, and looks instead towards the decision that will maintain the larger society. They think outside of themselves and look towards the greater community. Instead of condoning the theft of the drugs because Heinz loves his wife, the individual would oppose stealing because it goes against the smoothly functioning society. If everyone were allowed to break the rules based on personal feelings, then chaos would reign.

The final overall level is the “Postconventional Level.” Stage five, “Social Contract and Individual Rights” is included here. At this point in the developmental continuum, the individual can begin to question the foundations of his or her society.

Two core beliefs are established. First, there are certain basic individual rights, such as life and liberty. Second, there should be democratic procedures in place to be able to change existing laws. Using the example above, Heinz would be justified in stealing the drugs to save his wife because life is more important than property. There may be laws against stealing, but saving a life is the most important value.

Finally, there is stage six, “Universal Principles.” These universal principles allow us to achieve justice. The principles of justice require that each individual try to look at situations through others’ eyes, respecting the dignity of everyone. In the dilemma described above, the druggist would be the one to resolve this situation, because he would look at the situation through the eyes of the wife who will die without his medicine. The druggist will realize that her life is more important than his financial gain, and he will work out a compromise solution to this situation.

Kohlberg’s stages of moral development are useful in looking at the responses of college students to September 11, 2001. College students are generally considered capable of higher-level moral reasoning. Their responses to the tragic attacks in New York and Washington indicate a broader understanding of the complex issues surrounding the event. While the general American population has called for revenge and retaliation following the attacks (a classic stage three or stage four response), it is apparent that college students view the response from a more principled perspective and question the morality of taking the lives of Afghans and Iraqis in response to the attacks.

While moral development theory can be applied to the education and growth of college students, college affects students in other developmental areas. The following section will describe in greater detail the influence that college has on students.

The Impact of College on Students

During the period from 1985 through 1989, Alexander Astin, a professor of Higher Education at the University of California, Los Angeles, examined the impact of the college experience on a cohort of students throughout the United States. He published the results of his study in his book, *What Matters in College?* This study looked at students who were enrolled in four-year colleges. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) administered a survey when students entered their various institutions as first year students. Approximately 16,000 students were surveyed. Following their graduation, those same students completed another questionnaire. Nearly 150 variables were assessed, ranging from political attitudes to views on religion. Astin divided his results into several distinct types of personal changes. In summarizing his work, I only examine those variables most relevant to the research proposed on the influence of September 11 on college students. Those traits include changes to personality, attitudes/values/beliefs, academic/cognitive development, and career development.

Astin separated personality traits of college students into six distinct categories: scholarship, social activism, hedonism, status striving, artistic inclination and leadership. Of these six traits, the one that showed the most significant change during the four years of college was the level of social activism. Students' involvement in clubs, service activities, and classes related to social change all influence this change in personality.

Astin looked at several core values when trying to assess changes in college student values, attitudes, and beliefs. The CIRP asked numerous opinion questions related to politics, abortion, health care, women's issues, and the role of the college

education. Again, his study found some notable patterns. The largest positive changes over the four years of college were in the areas of feminism, environmentalism, and promoting racial understanding. Materialistic values showed the greatest decline.

An obvious area in which the college experience influences students is in the academic area. Students are exposed to new concepts and ideas and are taught to think critically. Astin describes several areas of cognitive development, and the factors that positively affect that development. For example, the ability to develop strong critical thinking abilities is strongly influenced by a humanities orientation (versus a professional track), having close faculty mentoring, studying regularly, performing class presentations, and taking interdisciplinary courses. Improved cultural awareness is positively affected by having a diverse faculty, leaving home to attend college, studying abroad and taking history courses. So, there are several institutional factors that influence a student's cognitive development.

Another important focus of the college experience is career development. Most people associate attending college with preparing for a career. Astin looked at numerous career paths and tried to describe the factors in college that might lead one to choose that career. Not surprisingly, the major one chooses in college correlates directly with career path. However, another predictor of career choice is the career of the student's father or mother. Having regular contact with a faculty member in the field of the student's career also positively affects career choice.

Other studies have also been done on the impact of college on students. Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini wrote one of the more notable texts in 1991, entitled *How College Affects Students*, summarizing a significant amount of literature describing

the influence of college on students. While this text describes a wide range of changes one experiences in college, I address only the section on changes to attitudes and values.

It is clear from the research that attending a college and university influences the attitudes and values of college students. First, attending college seems to indicate a positive change towards altruism, humanitarianism, and civic responsibility. This change appears to happen consistently across the board for students at all types of institutions. Greater levels of change in these three areas occur for students who live on campus, students who major in one of the social sciences, and students who have significant outside-the-classroom interactions with faculty.

Second, people who attend college change their political values. The research points to a change in political attitudes and values towards more liberal political views, greater interest in social and political issues, and greater interest and involvement in the political process. There is a greater shift towards political liberalism at highly selective four-year colleges and women's colleges. Two factors primarily contribute to this. Students who enroll at highly selective four-year and women's colleges tend to be more politically liberal than their peers enrolling elsewhere. The faculty at highly selective four-year colleges tend to be more liberal. Students who live in on-campus residence halls show increased changes to more liberal political values.

Finally, student attitudes towards religion change in college. Between their first year and their senior year, students seem to become less fundamentalist or orthodox in their religious beliefs. Students become more skeptical about the existence and influence of a Supreme Being. Not surprisingly, the trend towards more secular beliefs was more pronounced at institutions with no religious affiliation than at Catholic or Protestant

colleges and universities. And the attitudes towards religion of men in college become more secular than the religious attitudes of women.

Studies on the effects of college on students are of great importance to the proposed September 11 study. In order to best understand how September 11, 2001 changed college students, one must also appreciate the influence of other factors in the college environment. The college experience clearly changes the way students view the world around them. The question that must now be answered is how did September 11, 2001 change college students beyond the changes that might be expected absent such a tragedy? To help address this question, it becomes important to examine how generations change over time.

Theories of Generational Change

Numerous authors have attempted to categorize Americans into different generations. In 1991, William Strauss and Neil Howe published a book called *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* in which they proposed a theory for generational change in America. This theory will be discussed briefly in this section. They added to their theory in a follow-up to their first book, in the 1997 publishing of *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy*. Their theory was particularly poignant in light of the events of September 11. Strauss and Howe predicted that “sometime around the year 2005, perhaps a few years before or after, America will enter the Fourth Turning... a spark will ignite a new mood... it will catalyze a Crisis. In retrospect, the spark might seem as ominous as a financial crash, as ordinary as a national election, or as trivial as a Tea Party. It could be a rapid succession of small events in

which the ominous, the ordinary, and the trivial are co-mingled.” (Strauss & Howe, 1997, p. 272)

Essentially, Strauss and Howe claim that in our society today, there exist several generations of individuals. Each of these generations has its own unique values and viewpoints. Strauss and Howe divide each generation into four life phases: youth (age 0-21), rising adulthood (age 22-43), midlife (age 44-65), and elderhood (age 66-87).

Each generation lasts approximately 20 years and is part of a larger cycle of generations that repeats over time. The four cycles of generations are civic, adaptive, idealist, and reactive. These generations alternate as dominant and recessive. A dominant generation is a generation entering rising adulthood and elderhood during a social moment. A recessive generation is a generation entering youth and midlife during a social moment.

Strauss and Howe define a social moment as follows: a brief era (typically about a decade) when people perceive that historic events are radically altering their social environment. There are two types of social moments. The first is the “secular crisis,” when society focuses on reordering the outer world of institutions and public behavior. The second is the “spiritual awakening” when society focuses on changing the inner world of values and private behavior. An example of a social moment is the time between the election of Franklin Roosevelt and the end of World War II. During this period, the state of the U.S. economy, the United States political place in the world, and the state of technology all went through a radical change. This would be an example of a secular crisis.

Strauss and Howe describe the four cycles by the following definitions (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 74).

1. A dominant, outer-fixated CIVIC GENERATION grows up as increasingly protected youths after a spiritual awakening; comes of age overcoming a secular crisis; unites into a heroic and achieving cadre of rising adults; sustains that image while building institutions as powerful midlifers; and emerges as busy elders attached by the next spiritual awakening.
2. A recessive, ADAPTIVE GENERATION grows up as overprotected and suffocated youths during a secular crisis; matures into risk-averse, conformist rising adults; produces indecisive midlife arbitrator-leaders during a spiritual awakening; and maintains influence (but less respect) as sensitive elders.
3. A dominant, inner-fixated IDEALIST GENERATION grows up as increasingly indulged youths after a secular crisis; comes of age inspiring a spiritual awakening; fragments into narcissistic rising adults; cultivates principle as moralistic midlifers; and emerges as visionary elders guiding the next secular crisis.
4. A recessive REACTIVE GENERATION grows up as underprotected and criticized youths during a spiritual awakening; matures into risk-taking, alienated rising adults; mellows into pragmatic midlife leaders during a secular crisis; and maintains respect (but less influence) as reclusive elders. (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 74)

These generations occur in the same order time after time. Occasionally, a generation is skipped, but the sequence remains the same. Strauss and Howe discuss these generations dating back to 1584, but for the purposes of this paper, we will examine only the living generations.

Currently, there are four generations in existence. First, there is the “G.I. Generation” consisting of people born between 1901 and 1924. The G.I. Generation falls under the category of a civic generation. The events that have shaped this generation are World War I, World War II, and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Members of this generation include Walt Disney, Katharine Hepburn, Walter Cronkite, and John F.

Kennedy. Strauss and Howe describe this generation as confident, rational problem-solvers. This is a generation that has numerous big accomplishments, whether it is the invasion of Normandy during World War II, the construction of the Interstate Highway System, or the launching of the Apollo rockets. There are some interesting facts about the G.I. generation. From 1930 to 1990, the G.I. generation has been the only generation to support every winning presidential candidate. All of the presidents from John F. Kennedy to George H. Bush, were from the G.I. generation. During the G.I. generation, home ownership increased, and the standard of living in the United States improved dramatically.

Sequentially, the next living generation in the United States is the “Silent Generation” which contains people born from 1925 to 1942. The Silent Generation is an adaptive generation. The events that helped to define this generation are the tail end of the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, the assassination of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., Watergate, and McCarthyism. Key figures of this generation include Andy Warhol, Sandra Day O’Connor, Clint Eastwood, Geraldine Ferraro, and Ted Koppel. The Silent Generation is characterized as harmonious and inwardly focused. They tend to take their cues from others and often look towards the “can do” G.I. generation for their role models. Some key facts about this generation are as follows. Generally speaking, this generation has gone from a rather impoverished childhood to an affluent adult lifestyle. They have been the earliest marrying and earliest-babying generation in American history. The Silent Generation produced many of the key figures in the Civil Rights movement (Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and

Cesar Chavez). The Silent Generation can be credited with the 1960's increase in the "helping professions" of medicine, teaching, ministry, and government.

Following the Silent Generation came the "Boom Generation," or the "Baby Boomers" as often referred to in American history. The Boomers fall under the category of idealist, and again, are one of the dominant generations. They were born between 1943 and 1960. Significant events that have helped to shape this generation are the rise of the television era, the discovery of the polio vaccine, the protests of the Vietnam War, the landing of men on the moon, and the Reagan era. Sample members of this generation include Oliver North, Oprah Winfrey, Donald Trump, Bill Gates, and Spike Lee. Clearly, this was a generation of protest and societal upheaval. The Boomers have enjoyed relatively prosperous economic times. There are several important facts that help define the Boomer generation. The mothers who raised the Boomer generation did not work outside the home. Less than two percent of Boomer children attended institutional child-care. The "sexual revolution" occurred during the Boomer generation. Most notably, from the 1950's to the 1970's the number of women having pre-marital sexual relations rose from 41% to 81%. During the 1980's, the Boomer generation left the mainline "established" churches for New Age and evangelical sects. The characteristics of the remaining phase of the Boomer generation, the elderhood, are yet to be determined.

Finally, Strauss and Howe describe the youngest existing generation (at least they were the youngest in 1991): the "Thirteenth Generation." The Thirteenth Generation is more commonly referred to as Generation "X." Strauss and Howe label it the 13th generation for two reasons: the poor reputation the generation has among its members

and the fact that it is the 13th generation to live in the United States since its formation as a country in 1776. This generation falls into the category of “reactive.” Members of Generation “X” were born between 1961 and 1981. There have been a variety of important events that have helped to shape this generation. These events include: the Iranian hostage crisis, widespread use of birth control pills, the explosion of the space shuttle “Challenger,” and the fall of the Berlin Wall. As this is the youngest of the four living American generations, many of its key figures (particularly its political figures) still have yet to rise to popularity. However, key figures thus far include Barack Obama, Roger Clemens, and Tracy Chapman. There are a few important facts about the “13ers.” This generation has experienced parental divorce at a much higher rate than any previous generation. Fear of violence was a reality in the lives of 13er adolescents. In 1988, 2,000 minors were murdered in the United States, twice the number from 1965. Finally, during the early portion of this generation, the number of 18-24 year olds owning their own homes decreased dramatically.

The Strauss and Howe theory of generational change offers an interesting tool for looking towards the generation that will come of age following September 11. It remains to be seen whether September 11 will come to be viewed as part of a “social moment.” But, if this theory on the cycle of generational change is correct, the next generation to come will likely be a “civic” generation, characterized by “a heroic lifestyle of secular achievement and reward.” (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 74) Strauss and Howe do go on to label the next generation as the “Millennial Generation” containing those individuals born from 1982 to 2002. It is this generation that will most likely experience the most significant impact of September 11.

Strauss and Howe published several extensions of their landmark text *Generations*. In 2003, they published a text specifically for college administrators entitled *Millennials Go to College* (Howe & Strauss, 2003). In this text, the authors suggested seven key traits of students enrolling in college at the beginning of the twenty-first century. These traits are outline below:

1. Special: From the precious-baby movies of the mid-80's to the media glare surrounding the high school Class of 2000, now in college, older generations have inculcated in Millennials the sense that they are, collectively, vital to the nation and to their parents' sense of purpose.
2. Sheltered: From the surge in child-safety rules and devices to the post-Columbine lockdown of public schools, Millennials are the focus of the most sweeping youth-protection movement in American history.
3. Confident: With high levels of trust and optimism – and a newly felt connection to parents and the future – Millennial teens are beginning to equate good news for themselves with good news for their country.
4. Team-oriented: From Barney and soccer to school uniforms and group learning, Millennials are developing strong team instincts and tight peer bonds.
5. Conventional: Taking pride in improving their behavior and quite comfortable with their parents' values, Millennials provide a modern twist to the traditional belief that social rules and standards can make life easier.
6. Pressured: Pushed to study hard, avoid personal risks, and take full advantage of the collective opportunities adults are offering them, Millennials feel a “trophy kid” pressure to excel.
7. Achieving: With accountability and higher school standards rising to the very top of America's political agenda, Millennials are on track to becoming the smartest, best-educated generation in U.S. history (Howe & Strauss, 2003, p. 54).

These core traits offer practitioners valuable insight to the needs of the current generation of college students.

Strauss and Howe are not the only contemporary authors who explore theories on generational change. Dr. Ted Goertzel, a sociologist at Rutgers University, also speaks of generational cycles and the impact of significant current events on a generation in his 2002 paper, “The World Trade Center Bombing as a Fourth Generational Turning Point.” He uses the term *zeitgeist*, a German word meaning “spirit of the age” to describe the current cultural values in a society. He explains that a significant societal event, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, can signify a shift in the *zeitgeist*. In this paper, there are two particularly useful political cycles (political viewpoints and foreign involvement) that I will look at in terms of today’s college student. These are the shifts between left and right in terms of political involvement, and the shifts in the level of U.S. involvement abroad.

Goertzel divides political viewpoints into two categories, liberal and conservative. In his definition, liberals seek to use government to advance public purposes while conservatives seek to pursue private interests. In looking back over American history, there appears to be a shift between the liberal left and the conservative right every 13 – 17 years. Most recently, the period from 1961 – 1978 can be viewed as liberal, 1978-1993 is conservative, and 1993 to the present is liberal. Goertzel predicts that the period from 2010 – 2026 will be a conservative period in American history.

When examining the level of foreign involvement of the United States, Goertzel labels two perspectives, introversion versus extroversion. These periods last approximately 20 years. During extroverted periods of history, the United States has seemed willing to exert diplomatic, economic, or military power over other nations. For example, the Vietnam War occurred during a time of extroversion. In contrast, during

introverted periods, the United States has been unwilling to become widely involved in foreign affairs, perhaps as a result of difficult domestic problems. As an example, the Great Depression in the United States occurred during a time of introversion. Goertzel predicts that the United States will be in a roughly 20 year period of extroversion from 1991 through 2011. This is relevant here as we look at today's college students and how they perceive their role in the global society.

September 11 and College Students

Impact on Political Views

Politics have often played a role in the lives of college students. The Civil Rights movement in the 1950's and 1960's found great support on college and university campuses. During the Vietnam era, protests and sit-ins on campus were common. In the 1980's, students criticized the investment choices of their University leaders by protesting against investment in South Africa during Apartheid. It makes sense to look at political trends on college campuses to gauge whether there is a significant shift in attitudes or values.

One of the more useful tools to assess college student attitudes is the CIRP Freshman survey. CIRP is the Cooperative Institutional Research Program run from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles. The CIRP freshman interest survey is administered annually at over 1000 colleges and universities. The survey results contain helpful information about student attitudes over time. In this section, I examine data collected about political attitudes of entering college students (website reference: <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/>).

College students have typically taken on more liberal values, particularly when it comes to social issues. They tend to be anti-military, pro-choice, and anti-capital punishment. The CIRP freshman interest survey reflected this trend in its fall 2001 survey, completed by students just prior to the events of September 11, 2001. For example, the 2001 survey revealed that 57.9 % of freshmen believed that same sex couples should have the right of legal marital status. The 2001 survey indicated a record high number of students, 32.2 %, advocated for the abolition of the death penalty. Prior to 9/11, there was a clear indication of a liberal mindset for college students.

Additionally, when it came to political involvement, the CIRP survey of 2001 also showed that students were very interested in politics. This probably was in partial reaction to the controversial presidential election of 2000. But, “the percentage of students reporting that they frequently discussed politics rose sharply from a record low 16.4 % in 2000 to 20.9 % in 2001.” So, college students prior to September 11 were politically active and tended to take on more liberal political values. How did September 11 affect their political viewpoints?

Many argue that September 11 has caused college students to take on more conservative political values. For example, a 2003 study by the Harvard University Institute of Politics found that more than 60 % of college undergraduates approved of Republican President George Bush (Neufeld, 2003). College faculty have observed this shift in their classroom discussions. Jill Wood, a Women’s Studies professor at Penn State commented that, “I definitely think students are reflecting a more conservative political climate. I’ve noticed it particularly in classroom discussions and readings on political issues” (Neufeld, 2003).

In evaluating the college student reaction to U.S. military involvement in the Middle East and in Vietnam during the 1960's and 1970's, many students held a strong anti-war sentiment. With regard to the U.S. military action since September 11, in both Afghanistan and Iraq, college students clearly seem to lend more support. Most notably, the CIRP freshman interest study the year following 9/11 showed that a record number of students supported military spending. When asked if there should be an increase in Federal military spending, 45 % agreed somewhat or strongly. This figure is double that of 1993, the year following the first Gulf War. The CIRP survey also indicated a shift away from liberal political values. "Following five consecutive years in which students gravitated towards more liberal political labels, 2002 signals a modest shift back towards moderate and conservative political orientations" (website reference: <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/>). Only 27.8 % of entering college students identified as "liberal" down from 29.9 % the previous year, and the number identifying as "conservative" rose from 19.1 % to 20.0 %.

The trend of supporting the military correlates with the increase in the variety of pro-patriotic, and pro-military organizations on college and university campuses in the United States. At Columbia University, a student group called "Students United for America" began advocating for the return of the ROTC program to campus. The Yale College Students for Democracy advocated the same (Friedman, 2003).

Another interesting trend in student political views in response to September 11 is that while students may be identifying more with the Republican party and voicing their support for the military overseas, their social viewpoints remain rather liberal. Again, the data from the 2002 CIRP survey are useful here. In looking at views concerning gay

rights, 59.3 % of first year students agreed that same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status, up from 57.9 %. Only 24.8 % of those surveyed felt that there should be laws prohibiting homosexual relationships, down significantly from 50.4 % in 1987. An additional liberal trend involves the view on legalizing marijuana. In the most recent CIRP survey, 39.7 % of incoming freshmen felt that marijuana should be legalized, up from 36.5 % the previous year.

In summary, it does appear that the events of September 11 had an effect on the political views of college students. While there seems to be a separation between social views (which remain liberal) and views on foreign policy and politics (which seem to be shifting to the conservative side), there is an observable impact from September 11 which is worthy of further study.

Religion

To conclude this literature review, I briefly examine the impact of September 11 on the spirituality of college students. Leading up to the terrorist attacks, the trend among undergraduates in higher education seemed to be a decrease in participation in organized religion. In the CIRP freshman survey conducted just prior to September 11, an all-time high number of students reported having no religious preference (15.8 %). This was up from 14.9 % the previous year and 6.6 % in 1966. There was a corresponding decline in the number of students who reported praying or meditating at least once per week (from 67.7 % in 2000 to 65.7 % in 2001).

One might assume that following the terrorist attacks students would gravitate towards religion as a means of coping. At this point, the response seems to be somewhat mixed. We turn to another study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute

at UCLA for data on spirituality among college students. In the spring of 2003, HERI conducted a follow-up to a 2000 study called "Spirituality in Higher Education."

Freshman were surveyed when they entered the University in 2000 and then again in the spring of their junior year. The number who reported "frequently" attending religious services declined dramatically, from 52.1 % to 29.4 %. In contrast, however, those who claimed that it was an "essential" or "very important" goal to integrate spirituality into their lives rose from 51.0 % to 57.7 %. Those who claimed that it was an "essential" or "very important" goal to help others who are in difficulty rose from 60.2 % to 74.0 %. Consequently, these data indicate that the events of September 11 may have impacted the religious values of college students. This is an area worthy of further study.

Conceptual Framework

The most appropriate research perspective for this qualitative study is interpretivism. In order to best understand the intricacies of college student attitudes and beliefs following September 11, 2001, a broad understanding of the changes they experienced must be achieved. To do this, a subjective approach must be taken which seeks to understand the meaning behind the changes in college student attitudes. For example, why would college students feel less bigotry than their non-college student peers after the attacks? A simple survey would not effectively glean this information. The qualitative interview approach will allow the researcher to acquire this deeper meaning behind the changes in college students. The goal of this study is to understand and describe the subtle changes in the college student population following September 11, 2001.

Chapter Three: Research Method

Introduction

September 11, 2001 had a clear impact on the psyche of most Americans. Feelings of optimism and invulnerability that had been so prevalent in the 1980's and 1990's were replaced by fear and uncertainty, with the realization that America was susceptible to direct attacks on its soil. The events that unfolded in America following the attacks - the individual preparation for chemical attacks, the increased gun sales, and the decline in the airline industry - all indicated that the confidence about America's good standing in the world was badly shaken. But there were other, more positive outcomes as well. Communities rallied together against hate crimes towards Muslims. An outpouring of patriotism, the likes of which had not been seen since the end of World War II, signified America's resolve to get through the national crisis. Yet even today, the effects of September 11, 2001 are not yet fully realized.

One place that bears particular notice following 9/11 is the college campus. There is no other institution in our society where such a large number of young people come of age. Values are shaped, career decisions are made, and views about politics and religion are transformed. How did September 11, 2001 affect the generation of young people who were enrolled in college at the time of the attacks? In what specific ways were they influenced? The answers to these important questions will let us glimpse at the future of America's leaders as well as allow us to predict the American cultural foundations into the mid-twenty-first century. This study will help to define the values and attitudes of this important generation of future American leaders.

Survey Instrument

While there have been numerous studies that examined the impact of 9/11 on distinct segments of the population in the United States (adolescents, residents of New York City, Arab Americans, etc.), little has been published concerning the specific impact of the events of September 11, 2001 on college students. To best define and understand the consequences of September 11, 2001 on the college population, a qualitative study is most appropriate. There are numerous, complex variables that may determine how an individual was affected by September 11. These include such factors as the student's hometown, gender, and ethnic background. There are also a multitude of possible consequences of September 11. A college student might seek out religion to help with the grieving process or may reject their religion altogether. A student might seek greater understanding of the world they live in and choose an academic major to achieve that end. September 11, 2001 could have a significant impact on their political views. A qualitative study serves as the most useful form of inquiry, as this will allow us to explore the complex interactions between the individual variables and the post-9/11 consequences. Taking into account the previously discussed theories of generational change, this study will work to identify shifts in college student attitudes and values.

In order to best assess the impact of 9/11 on college students, individual interviews were conducted with students who were enrolled in college at the time of the attacks. Clearly, the most desirable method of research for a post-9/11 study would be to conduct interviews before, during, and after the events of September 11, 2001. However, given the time frame for this study, that was not possible. Therefore, the survey instrument reflected this lack of data in the timeline and tried to address the problem through its

format. The questions asked to each student were divided into four sections. A full list of interview questions is included in appendix one.

The first portion of the interview addressed various demographic and personal attributes of the respondent. Questions in this area inquired about the religious background of the individual, their academic major, their class level at the time of the attacks, and whether they had previously experienced personal tragedy.

The second section of the interview focused specifically on the actual tragedy of September 11, 2001 and the impact the events had on the respondent in the hours and days that followed. There was an exploration of the student's emotional reaction and their methods of coping. In addition, the questions asked about the impact on a student's academic, religious, and political choices.

In the third section, the interviewer asked the student to reflect on their feelings a full six months after the attack. Questions from section two were again repeated to see if there were changes in the respondent's attitudes towards academics, religion, and politics. There were questions about the students' feelings or perceptions regarding the global events that were occurring in the aftermath of September 11.

Finally, the interview concluded with a group of questions focusing on the student's present day feelings about September 11. Many of the previous questions about religion and politics were reiterated, and the student was asked to reflect on how the events of September 11, 2001 affected them overall.

In February 2004, the Institutional Review Board at the University of Missouri, St. Louis approved the survey instrument for this study. A preliminary set of twenty interviews was conducted from March 2004 through May 2004 to test the survey

questions and determine possible future directions for this research study. Thirty additional interviews were conducted between September and December 2004 with minor changes to the interview questions. Two questions were added to the demographic section: one to determine the primary source where the respondent received news and one asking about the socioeconomic background of the respondent. In addition, a question was added about the respondent's feelings concerning the war in Iraq.

Method

While the previous section described the survey questions, this section will address the specific method by which interviews were conducted, the population that was utilized, and the means by which the interview data was examined.

Each interview was approximately forty-five minutes in length. All interviews were conducted in a private office and they were electronically recorded for purposes of transcription. While every effort was made to remain consistent with the set of questions asked, there were occasions when additional questions were added to explore a particular point further. This is commonly referred to as a "semi-structured interview" and was the best means of accumulating some general findings regarding student reaction.

Sampling and Population

In a qualitative, interview-based study obtaining a truly random sample can be challenging. In this study, all 50 interviews were conducted with individuals who were students at Washington University at the time of the interview. In addition, all 50 individuals were enrolled in college on September 11, 2001. All but two of those individuals were enrolled at Washington University (one was at the College of DuPage and the other was a student at St. Louis University).

Washington University is a private, mid-sized research university located in St. Louis, Missouri. Undergraduates at Washington University come from all 50 states and many foreign countries. Most undergraduates are enrolled in the liberal arts curriculum of the College of Arts and Sciences, but there are several other undergraduate colleges: Engineering, Business, Art, and Architecture.

Every effort was made to interview a wide range of students from various geographic regions and from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. I was employed as a student affairs professional at Washington University at the time of all of the interviews, so the method of sampling was primarily “convenience sampling.” I identified students I knew through my daily interactions, and additionally used the method of “snowball sampling” to identify other interview candidates.

Basic demographic information such as hometown, age at the time of the attacks, race, gender, and religious preference was collected. For reporting purposes, students’ hometowns have been categorized into several regions. The United States was divided into four regions: Northeast, South, Midwest, and West Coast. Additionally, two international students were interviewed. Geographic information about the sample is included Table 1.

Table 1: *Sample Demographics - Hometown*

Region	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Northeast U.S.	12	24%
Midwest U.S.	26	52%
Southern U.S.	6	12%
West Coast U.S.	4	8%
International	2	4%

It should be no surprise, given the Midwestern location of the University, that over 50% of the respondents call the Midwest home. However, other regions are clearly represented in the sample.

The interviewees were also asked about their age at the time of the attacks. The average age on September 11, 2001 of those interviewed was 18.72. The youngest was 18 and the oldest was 24.

The race of the individuals interviewed is listed in Table 2.

Table 2: *Sample Demographics - Race*

Race	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
African-American	7	14%
Arab-American	2	4%
Asian-American	4	8%
Hispanic	4	8%
Indian	1	2%
White	32	64%

While data was collected on the race of the respondents, the interviewees will be classified as either white or non-white in the results section. This is due to the difficulty in generalizing the extremely small samples in other racial subgroups to the general population. Further research would need to be conducted to explore responses in specific racial subgroups.

The sample contained 26 men (52%) and 24 women (48%).

Those interviewed were asked to talk about their choice of major. Majors were divided into three categories. Seven members of the sample (14%) were business majors. These were individuals majoring in Accounting, Finance, or another business area. Thirteen students (26%) were science majors, mostly consisting of Chemistry, Biology, or Engineering majors. The remaining thirty students (60%) were classified as

humanities majors. Examples of humanities majors include Political Science, History, Psychology, and English.

A question was asked in the demographic portion of the interview regarding which religion the interviewee most closely affiliates with. Often, interviewees would respond to this question by saying they did not consider themselves to be religious. The specific data for religion is included in Table 3.

Table 3: *Sample Demographics - Religion*

	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Baptist	3	6%
Catholic	8	16%
Christian	10	20%
Hindu	2	4%
Jewish	11	22%
Lutheran	1	2%
Muslim	5	10%
Presbyterian	3	6%
No religious affiliation	7	14%

Of those interviewed, 13 (26%) had spent time studying outside of the United States either before or after September 11. One of those 13 was actually studying abroad in London at the time of the attacks.

Each interviewee was asked whether they had an immediate family member who had served or was presently serving in the United State military. There were 7 individuals (14%) who reported that they did have a family member who served or was serving in the U.S. armed forces.

Each interviewee was also asked whether they had an immediate family member who had served or was presently serving as a police officer or firefighter. There were 3 individuals (6%) who reported that they did have a family member who served or was serving in this capacity.

During the second phase of the interview process (the final 30 interviews), each respondent was asked to self-report his or her socio-economic status. Please note that for the following tables, the sample decreases from 50 to 30 since these characteristics were only asked about during the last 30 interviews. The breakdown for socioeconomic status is included in Table 4.

Table 4: *Sample Demographics - Socioeconomic Status*

	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Lower Class	3	10%
Middle Class	19	63%
Upper Class	8	27%

Also during the second phase of interviews, respondents were asked to characterize where they hear their news. Each respondent was asked to list the top three places where they gather their news. This data were collected in order to determine whether the respondent's opinions of the post 9/11 environment differed based on their news source. This data is difficult to analyze, as it requires the researcher to classify the various news sources. There are numerous ways to analyze news, but Table 5 seeks to show how I classified where students received their news. As a reminder, this information was collected only from the final 30 interviews.

Table 5: *News Source (N=30)*

	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Internet news	18	60%
Print media news	18	60%

Television news	13	43%
Radio news	5	17%
Word of mouth news	9	30%
International news	5	17%

Method of Data Coding

Following the completion of the interviews, all of the interview data were transcribed into text format. A software package called NUD*IST Version 6.0 was used to code and analyze the interview responses. I then examined these data for trends, patterns, and themes.

In order to best analyze the significant amount of text that was collected, the responses were divided into two areas: short term (direct) effects and long term (distal) effects. These two are inter-related and will be discussed further in the analysis portion of this paper. Under each section, the data were coded using the following coding scheme. Direct effects were divided into two categories: emotional responses and coping mechanisms. Distal effects were similarly divided into two categories: worldview and lifestyle choices. Tables 6 and 7 present the codes used with the data.

Table 6: *Direct Effects*

Code	Definition
<i>Emotional Response</i>	
Anger	Wanted retaliation, did not want retaliation, or was neutral after the

	attacks
Depression	Feelings of depression or sadness immediately following the attacks
Disbelief	Expressed feelings of shock and disbelief about the attacks
Fear	Feelings of fear after the attacks or no fear after the attacks
<i>Coping Mechanisms</i>	
Academic effect (negative or neutral)	9/11 influenced or did not influence the ability of the student to study in the days immediately following the attacks
Action	Responded to the attacks by investing in the community (attending a vigil, joining a student group, etc.)
News	Sought out more current event information following the attacks
Religion	Changed religious habits or did not change religious habits after the attacks
Support	Received support from family or received support from friends to help cope with the attacks

Table 7: *Distal Effects*

Code	Definition
<i>Worldview</i>	
Acceptance of others	Was accepting of people different from them after the attacks or showed signs of bigotry
Defining moment	Described 9/11 as a defining moment in their lives
Division of beliefs	Felt that 9/11 caused student body to polarize into two categories – those in support of U.S. response and those who did not support the response
Global awareness	Awareness of global political issues was raised
Oppression	Felt personally oppressed following the attacks
Patriotism	Was patriotic, patriotic but questioning the U.S. response, or was not patriotic
Politics	Political views changed or did not change
<i>Lifestyle Choices</i>	
Career	Had an effect or did not have an effect on career or academic choice
Civic engagement	Became more involved in the community in the months and years following 9/11

September 11 marks the key transition point in the coming of age of this young generation of Americans, and serves to transform the “Millennial Generation” into the “September 11 Generation.” Predictably, this significant historical event had a profound effect on the political, social, and religious values of a population of Americans. The two

chapters which follow (chapters 4 and 5) will divide the reactions of students interviewed into two categories. Chapter 4 will look at the direct, or short-term responses to September 11, 2001 and Chapter 5 will explore the distal, or long-term responses the terrorist attacks. Chapter 6 will then offer some analysis of the data collected.

Chapter Four: Direct Results

Introduction

In the days and weeks that followed the devastating attacks of September 11, 2001, students at Washington University reacted in a variety of predictable ways. The feelings of anger, depression, disbelief, and fear described by Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg (2003) were present among those interviewed. Terror Management Theory, describing the human behavioral responses to acts of violence, predicted these feelings. However, students also related a wide range of responses that were not directly predicted by TMT, such as taking action, shifting their academic focus, and using family and friends for support.

In this chapter, the direct, or short-term reactions of college students to September 11, 2001 are presented. The direct responses are divided into two categories: emotional responses and coping mechanisms. The emotional responses addressed retaliation, fear, depression, class participation/attendance, and disbelief. These specific emotions were those most frequently described by students recalling their reactions to the terrorist attacks. Coping mechanisms are actions or behaviors that students engaged in during the days and weeks following September 11, 2001. The most commonly occurring coping mechanisms were taking action, watching the news, seeking out religion, and using friends or family for support. These direct responses to the September 11 attacks were selected because of their prevalence in the responses (or lack thereof) and for any striking correlations with respect to demographic populations and responses.

Emotional Responses

Need for Retaliation

When asked how they felt about the attacks of September 11, 2001, students often talked about the concept of retaliation. Their responses ranged from students who desired an immediate military response for the attacks, students who clearly were opposed to any type of retaliation, and students whose response was neutral. Figure 1 outlines the responses in each category. It should be noted that the classifications exceed 100%; some students interviewed made statements throughout the interview that fell into multiple categories.

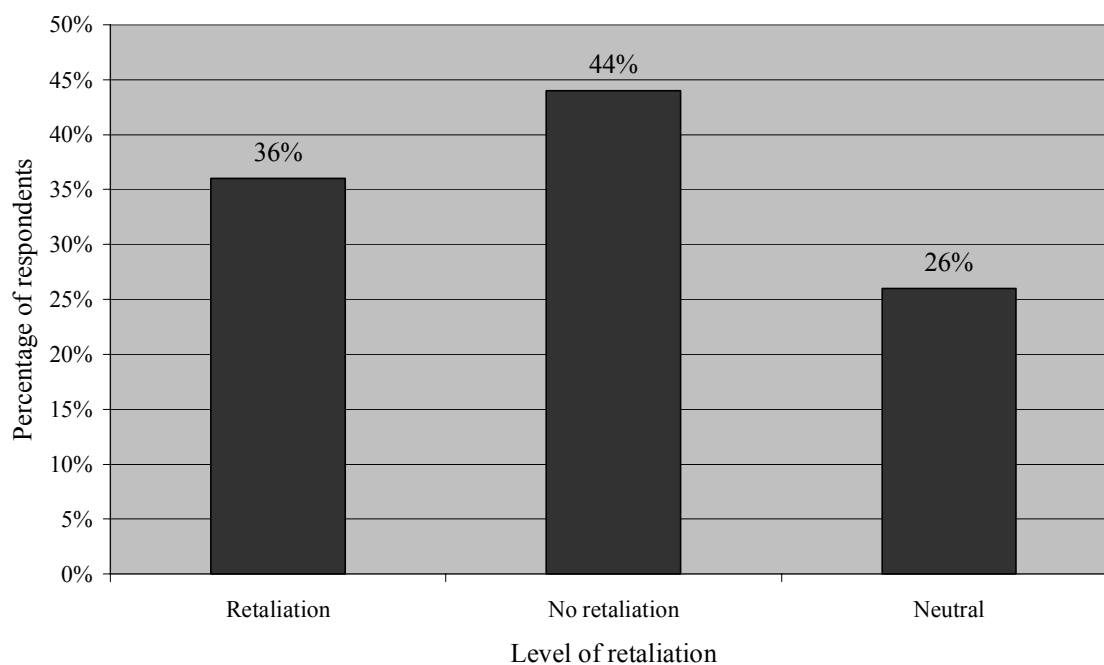


Figure 1, Direct effects – retaliation

A student seeking “retaliation” after the 9/11 terrorist attacks wanted revenge or felt that the United States should take immediate military action. One student commented,

Of course you want them to find the people that are responsible and take action against them... whether it be punishing them in any way, whether it be through government, through war... I mean any means possible in order to find the people that were responsible for this, and somehow make them pay for it.

Another student also talked about wanting revenge and offered some specific suggestions for military action.

Um... if I recall correctly I thought that we should send out a heavy search team... I feel like we have the right intelligence that we'd be able to do that. I thought we'd be able to find. . . I don't remember if at that time, we knew right away it was Bin Laden or not. . . but whoever they thought it was, I figured we'd have them within a month. . . and just, pretty much gotten rid of the whole faction. . . So what would you do if you were George Bush? Send out an elite team? Right. . . just figure it out and just take it down. . .

One student was so upset about the attacks that it caused his views on the death penalty to shift.

I was very angry... I mean I was very angry the rest of the day... before that day I was trying to figure out how I thought about the death penalty... I don't feel this way anymore, but on that day I was like, I'm all for the death penalty...

A student from Texas described her emotions after watching news coverage of the Middle East immediately after September 11.

I was very angry at the people that did it... and I was also very angry watching the clips of people in the Middle East cheering that it had happened... that just infuriated me... and I was very vocal about that... to all my friends and family members... the fact that people could be rejoicing over innocent people being killed... I mean it's not like these people deserved to be killed – they were completely innocent... watching people in the Middle East just cheering in the streets that America had been attacked – really upset me – really made me angry towards those people...

To summarize, 36% of those interviewed described a need for retaliation, similar to the comments outlined above. Gender was related to the “pro-retaliation” response.

Seventy-eight percent of those who wanted retaliation following the attacks were men, compared to only 22% women. Using Kohlberg's model as a guide, students who seek

retaliation for the attacks could be classified in stages one or two. The United States was justified in attacking others since we were attacked.

Forty-four percent of those interviewed clearly did not want the United States to retaliate following September 11. This group constituted the largest response, in terms of level of retaliation. A response of “no retaliation” did not indicate that the student had no feelings of anger, but that the student strongly questioned the notion of retaliation. While the student might have felt anger towards the perpetrators of the attacks, they rejected the idea of an immediate military response. For example, a Muslim student from Pennsylvania described his distrust of a military response.

I remember really hoping that we wouldn't go to war so quickly. . . I really was opposed to the idea, just going to this already war torn country, after an elusive target, and I just wasn't happy with how quickly things were progressing and how much talk of war and how much hate was really being spread, and that goes into the patriotism thing. . .

A young woman from Washington, D.C. also was concerned about a military response.

I personally wasn't wanting to seek revenge over there... I wanted to control what was going on here, like people were dying and suffering and families were being torn apart and I really wanted to focus on the pain that was going on here instead of like let's go over and be bullies elsewhere – let's focus on the country – everyone had flags up, and you know, just the way the country came together, I wanted to kind of stay like that, you know? So, I didn't think at that time I was mad for us to like go after them...

Another student found himself going against the feelings of his family when questioning the violent United States response to the attacks.

You know, war begets war. . . you know, that didn't seem like the right solution to me. I definitely noticed, people wanted an easy fix. . . you know, everybody in the country. . . even my parents who wouldn't normally be pro-war were all of a sudden saying they were doing a horrible thing, they need to be punished. . . because people seemed like they wanted to have easy answers. . . they wanted somebody to pay for what happened. . . even though it didn't seem all that simple. . . but, I just didn't like the way that President Bush was making it that simple at that point in time. . .

Applying Kohlberg's theory of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981), students who advocate a non-retaliatory response for the attacks fall into stage five. Stage five explains that all humans basic rights to life and liberty. This would suggest that students recognize that people in the Middle East have rights to life and liberty, and attacking them in response to 9/11 is a violation of these basic rights.

As a final note, gender played a role in the non-retaliatory responses here as well – although not as distinct as in the pro-retaliation response. Of those who expressed feelings of opposition to military response, 59% were women.

Approximately one quarter (26%) of the sample made comments expressing a neutral response. These were students who appeared confused or unsure as to what course of action they thought the United States should take.

I would prefer that the United States take some type of action, but at the same time I knew that action would mean killing innocent people. I wasn't sure what the right thing to do was.

For these students, they felt torn by conflicting emotions. It was difficult to classify this group into one of Kohlberg's stages.

Fear

A core concept of Terror Management Theory is that individuals become more fearful about their lives following a terrorist attack. In this study, many of those interviewed were very remotely connected to the events of September 11, 2001. The nearest attack occurred over 1,000 miles away, and many of those interviewed had no connection to the physical locations of the attacks. It was not surprising to see such a high percentage of respondents who expressed little fear in the days and weeks following the tragedy. The fear might have been higher for students on the East Coast. Figure 2

summarizes the responses. Note that these percentages do not add up to 100%. This is because the data were coded to reflect respondents who made no comments about their level of fear and those who made comments suggesting that they felt both more fearful and little fear.

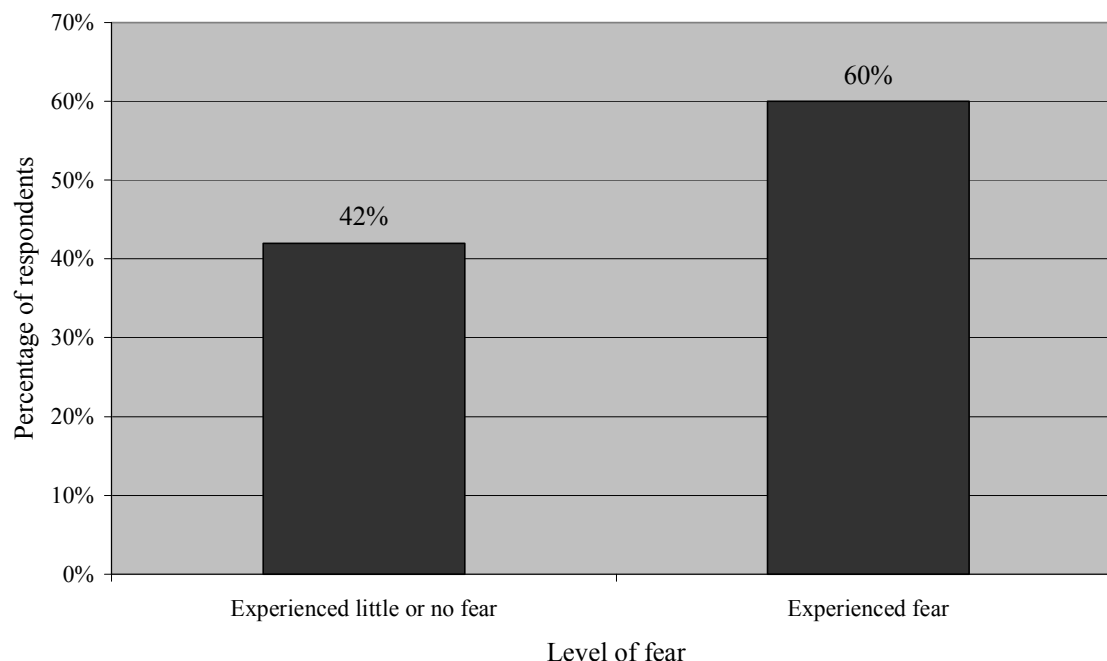


Figure 2, Direct effects – fear

Very few students interviewed discussed any fears of impending death from further attacks; most comments reflected a general uneasiness. A young woman from Alabama commented:

I think I felt less safe in that I was thinking more about. . . there was always this stuff on the media - this thing is coming up - they could attack. It could be this city or it could be this city and stuff. . . our proximity to Scott AFB. I think also it was like if something does happen, there may be more attacks and Scott could've been a central location. Just going through the day and thinking in general, what if they fly into this or into that. And that concept had never been in my mind at all.

Many of those who expressed feelings of fear talked about being afraid to fly. This was a significant factor for many of the students at Washington University whose only means of getting home was flying.

That spring of spring break, I flew to San Diego from St. Louis and that also was a little scary, more from the fact that, apparently the reason the terrorists took over those specific planes was because they had enough fuel because they were planning on flying across the country – so that was also a little nerve-wracking... I was like, we're flying across the country, ok... so, yeah I pretty much remained afraid. I flew because I didn't really have a choice, but I've remained scared of flying...

It also was apparent that people from the geographic regions most directly affected by the attacks (New York and Washington) indicated higher levels of fear following the attacks. Of the 50 students interviewed, nine (18%) considered home the New York or Washington, D.C. metropolitan areas. Their feelings of fearfulness are indicated in Figure 3.

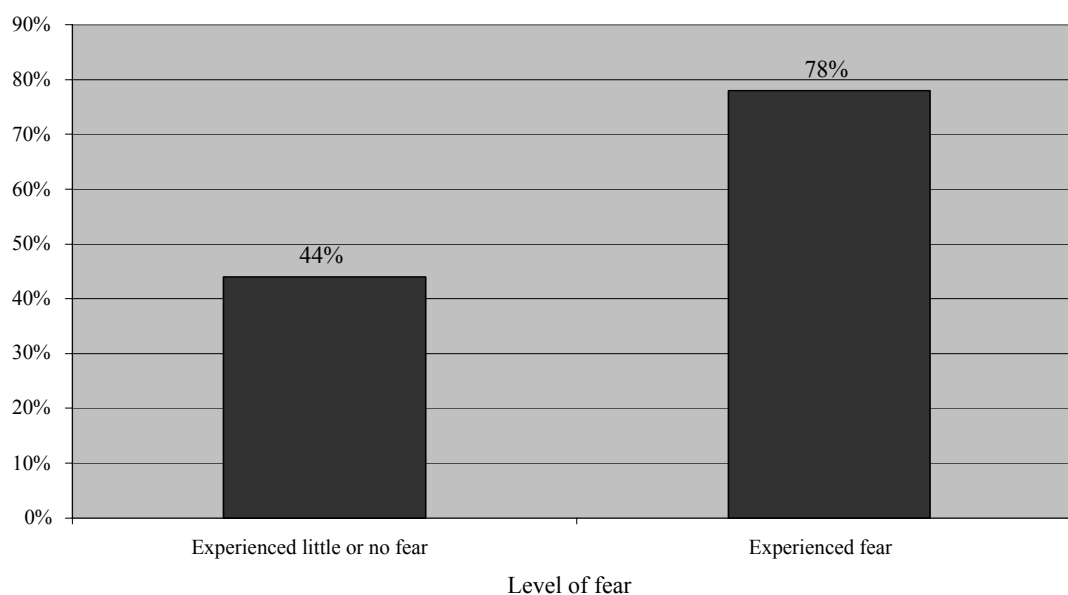


Figure 3, Direct effects - fear for NY/DC subpopulation

As indicated by this chart, there were a significantly higher percentage of those interviewed from the affected areas of New York and Washington who made comments expressing fear. A young woman from the District of Columbia was quoted as saying:

I was terrified... I just... when I couldn't get a hold of my family I was convinced that other things had gone wrong – maybe it wasn't just the thing at the Pentagon. That something else had happened that they weren't even covering yet... I was so scared... and when I finally got a hold of my mom, she was frantic and freaking out because my brother went to school a block from the capitol.

While the majority of those interviewed did express some feelings of fear in the days and months after the attacks, slightly less than half of those interviewed made comments that they were not fearful. They rejected the notions of imminent attacks on airplanes and possible chemical warfare.

People wouldn't go see movies in the theater, people wouldn't go to the mall. News reports and other things. . . I thought it was ridiculous, the way people were interpreting, especially in my home town, a town of less than 10,000 people, people were afraid to go to Walmart.

Much of this lack of fear may have been because all of those interviewed were living in the Midwestern United States during the months after the attacks.

I felt the same way about St. Louis... I felt safe... I felt my family was safe, I just... it didn't... I think that a lot of it was that once I came to terms with the fact that there had been a lot of death, I realized I set myself up to keep going.

Gender again seemed to affect the fear response to September 11, 2001. Only 46% of men interviewed felt more fearful directly after the attacks, compared to 54% of men who did not experience feelings of fear. In stark contrast, 75% of the women interviewed expressed feelings of fear, and only 29% made comments indicating that they were not fearful. Men generally reported that they were less fearful after the attacks than women.

Depression

Students interviewed also shared feelings of depression following the attacks. Corresponding with the increased rise in visits to counseling centers at other universities (Herpert & Wingert, 2001), Washington University students also grieved in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. These data are consistent with the research on post-traumatic stress disorder following a significant crisis (Blanchard, 2004). Nearly half of those interviewed (48%) expressed comments reflecting their sadness and feelings of depression.

I found myself grieving and being moved by the personal stories. The newspaper stories that make me cry every time are the ones where you hear about the last conversations between the people on the plane and their wives.

Students who suffered a previous personal loss seemed to express greater feelings of depression. This is consistent with the findings of Schuster and Stein (2001) that individuals with previous emotional problems were more affected by September 11. One student who had lost her father in a car accident prior to the terrorist attacks described her feelings.

And also, just, like I said, because of the recent loss of my Dad, an immense sense of grief. Really feeling for all those people who just lost a loved one, or even just had a loved one missing.

Another student, one who was in high school in Littleton, Colorado at the time of the Columbine school shootings, described her reaction to September 11.

Nobody was really saying anything – they were just watching the TV. And so I watched it with them and realized then that it was very real. So, I kind of asked a few questions to see what was going on. And then, it brought up a lot of memories of Columbine. I didn't like being in a public place to have a breakdown. So I returned to my room.

Race seems to have a small effect on depression following the attacks. This may be significant when combined with data describing the levels of patriotism for whites versus non-whites in Chapter Six. The data are reflected in Figure 4.

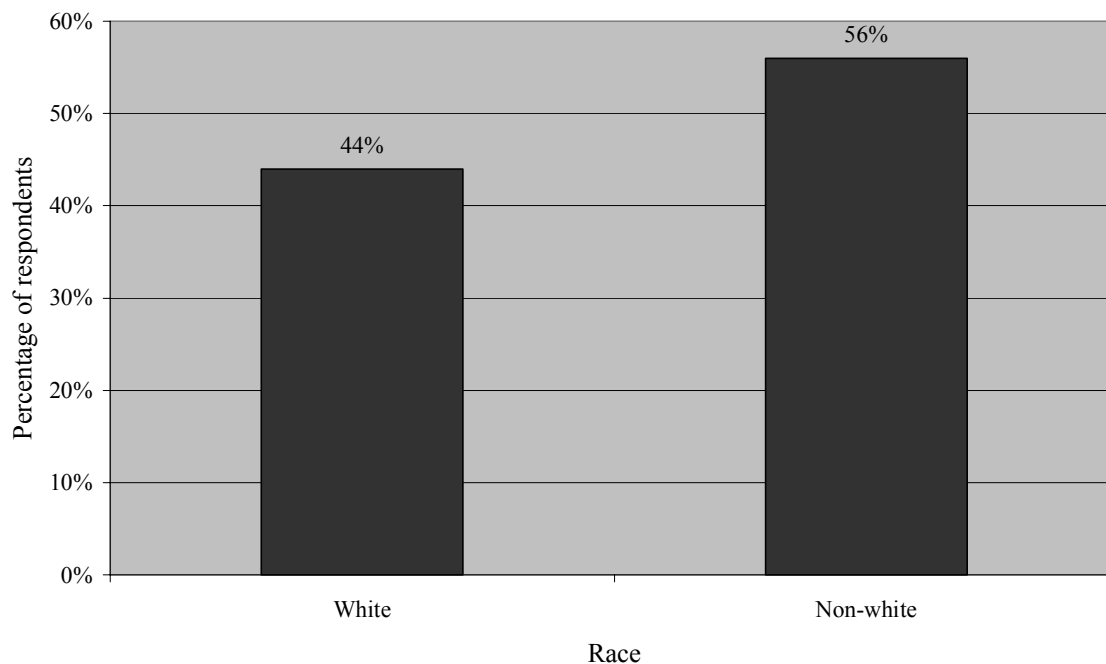


Figure 4, Direct effects - depression by race

Also, a higher percentage of women (58%) reported depression than men (38%). This corresponds directly with the *New England Journal of Medicine* study conducted by Schuster & Stein (Schuster & Stein, 2001) reporting that women, more so than men, were affected by the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Effect on Academics

Each student was asked on several occasions during the interview how the events of September 11, 2001 had influenced their class attendance, their general performance,

or their study time. The academic performance for students can be viewed as an emotional response.

Only half of the students interviewed (52%) even discussed the effects of September 11, 2001 on their academic performance. Of that subset, there was an even split between those who felt that the attacks affected their academics and those who felt that it did not (26% in each category).

For those who did describe an effect on academics, it was often characterized as a difficulty in attending class or focusing on assignments.

I know that my classes and most everybody's classes were cancelled that day, so that gave me a lot of time to hang out. . . I think that that night and the following day, we didn't really do any work, and in classes, the discussion was centered around the events. Academics were definitely not a top priority.

A student who became more involved in the Muslim Student Association in response to September 11 reported a negative effect on his academic performance.

Actually the worst semester grade-wise for me at Wash U, by far is that semester. . . I absolutely stopped going to class and you know, just trying to plan events and do things and I mean, we did four five or six times what we ever would've done in any other semester. . . it was a huge commitment and really, really consumed me for a while. . .

Similar trends in academic performance appear for populations of different racial backgrounds and for students from the NY/DC areas, when compared to the overall population. Gender appears to be the only area where these data vary. Figure 5 summarizes this variability.

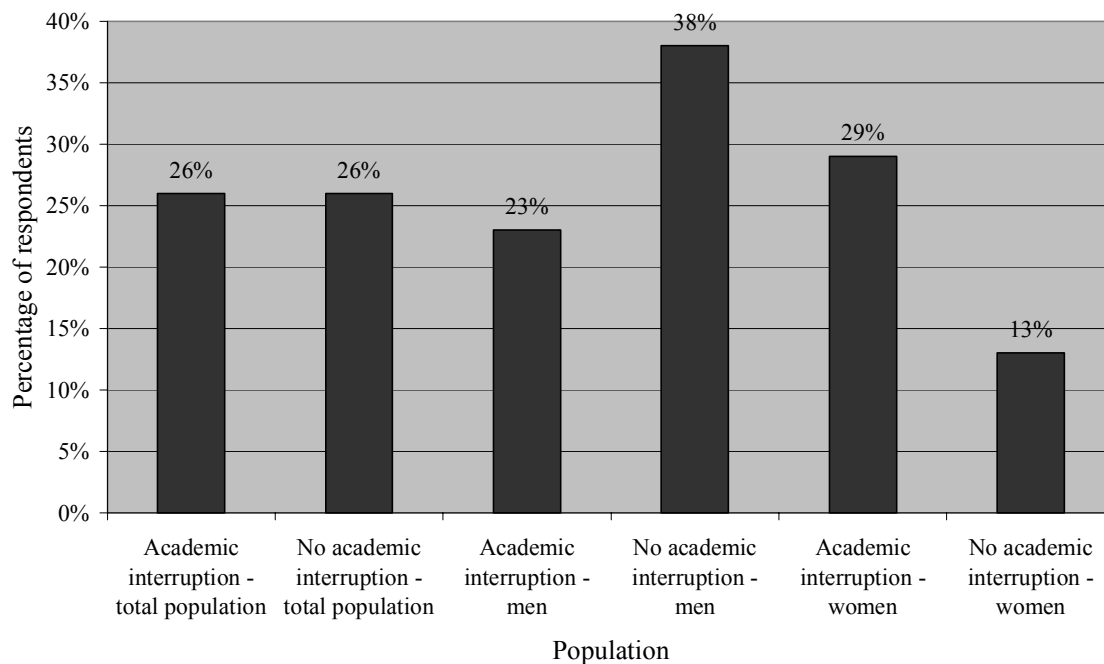


Figure 5, Direct effects - interruption of academic activities by gender

Men appeared to be less affected academically than women. Of the men interviewed, 38% reported that there was no effect on, or interruption of their academic performance whereas only 13% of the women interviewed made comments which indicated that September 11 had no effect on their academic performance. Conversely, a smaller percentage of men (23%) than women (29%) described an effect on their academic performance. These data loosely correlated with findings from the *New England Journal of Medicine* that women were affected by 9/11 more than men (Schuster & Stein, 2001).

Disbelief

A final, rather obvious response to the terrorist attacks was one of disbelief. Students who were enrolled in college on September 11, 2001 had not experienced a

major domestic trauma during their lifetimes. They had experienced the end of the Cold War, the first Gulf war, and the Challenger space shuttle tragedy to name some of the major crises. While these were significant historical events, they were crises from which they could easily distance themselves. The feelings of shock about the attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon was not surprising. This was consistent with the findings concerning acute stress disorder in the Blanchard research (2004). In this study, nearly three out of every four students interviewed (74%) referred to the shock they felt seeing the events unfold on September 11.

I was really stunned - first I saw it - it was on the news - I knew it was happening. But it still sort of seemed unreal that something like that could happen in New York City to a skyscraper.

Well, I was pretty shocked, as I've said before. . . I was a little confused as to why it was happening because it wasn't really clear. . . people were speculating on the news. . . and my friends were all speculating. . . I was confused, shocked. . .

They were showing these clips and I was trying to figure out what was going on, and they were saying that the buildings had already collapsed... and I was like wait, you mean they're not standing? I didn't understand how they collapsed... they kept showing clips... they never showed the absence of the towers... wait, you mean they've already collapsed, or you think they are going to collapse?

These comments reflect the variety of emotions that were expressed in all the interviews conducted and mirrored the emotions occurring across the United States following September 11, 2001. College students responded to the crisis in an emotionally predictable manner. They expressed feelings of shock, depression and fear. But, there were some unique responses. Often the responses were influenced by a students' gender, race, or geographical hometown. There was a significant population that rejected the notion of retaliation. Possible explanations and consequences for these responses will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

In addition to the immediate or direct emotional responses, the students, like the general public, exhibited a number of coping mechanisms. Unlike the “emotional responses” described above, coping mechanisms are tangible behaviors that students engaged in as a response to the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Coping Mechanisms

Taking Action

Some students reacted by investing in their communities and becoming more involved. Many of those who took action after September 11, 2001 attended one or more commemorative vigils. Some offered emails or letters to friends in affected areas. The majority of students (58%) discussed some type of action they took in their personal lives. For some, this action was minor, as described below.

I did go to the vigil that night... I did go... I didn't have a candle, I didn't really participate... I went, I didn't stay long... I pretty much kept to myself... cause I didn't... I didn't want to talk about and that's all anybody wanted to talk about...

Some students engaged in more activities related to service in the weeks following September 11, 2001.

I did more community service and I guess I just wanted to... I was like at that point... at that point a lot of this has to do with the fact that there are so many things going wrong in the world, so I want to try to do as much good as I can... so I started to go to Campus Y and see about getting involved and things...

For some of these students, this increased activism in the days and weeks after September 11, 2005 would lead to more long-term involvement in service. This long-term effect is referred to as “civic engagement” and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five. But for most students, the concept of “action” was less dramatic. Many talked about attending vigils, writing emails of support to friends and family in affected

areas, or donating blood. These short-term coping mechanisms were more typical and constituted the most frequent response.

Different demographic groups exhibited varying levels of “action”, as demonstrated in Figure 6.

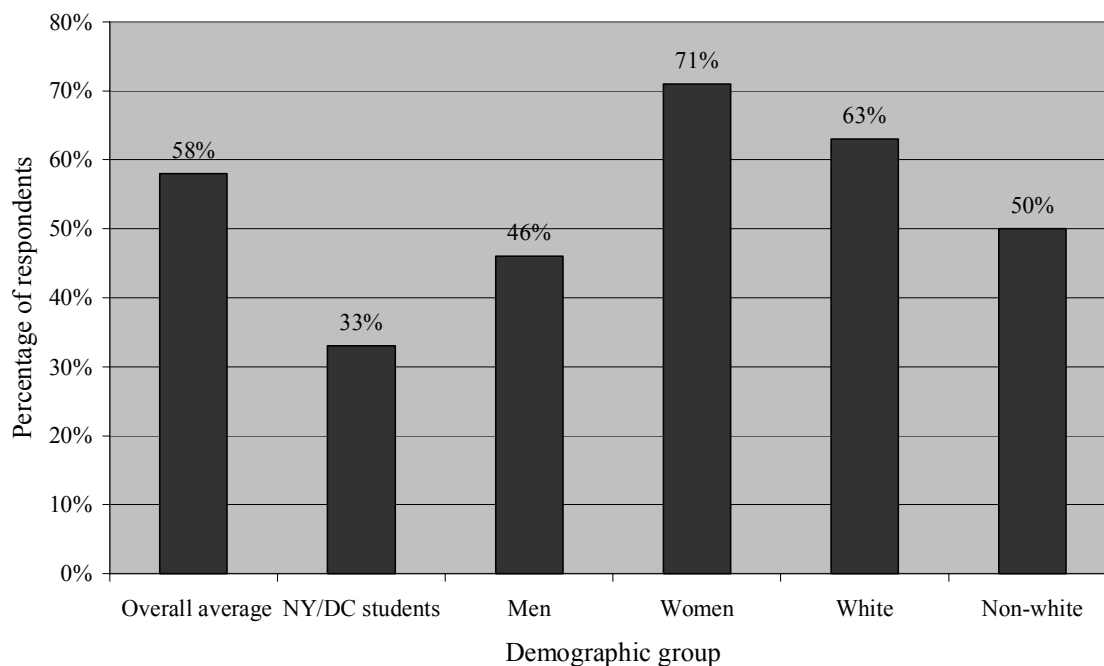


Figure 6, Direct effects - taking action after 9/11

Students from New York and Washington took less action than the overall population, women were more likely than men to act, and whites were slightly more likely than non-whites to act in response to September 11.

News

It is worth noting that more than half of the respondents (52%) talked about watching the news more in the days and weeks following September 11, 2001. This was not a specific focus of the interview questions, but because of the large number of

respondents who talked about watching the news as a way of coping with the tragedy, it is included here. Although students discussed watching more news as a direct reaction to September 11, 2001, Terror Management Theory does describe a need for understanding as one of the distal effects.

Many students talked about watching television more than usual.

I definitely watched TV more than I ever watched TV in my life... the TV was on all the time... even if I was going to class, the TV was on and I was watching...

I mean normally you watch CNN now, there's an hour and a half cycle... it gets boring after an hour and a half... there was new news every five minutes for a week long, so I probably watched, in the week after it happened, probably hours of CNN... it was just on... if we were in our suite, if I was awake, it was on... that's the one thing I remember... just wanting to get more information... more people brought their laptop, so they could be listening to CNN and checking out what's happening online...

While television was the most frequently referenced form of news media, students also discussed gathering information from the Internet and print media.

As shown in Figure 7, there was minor variability in sub-groups who watched more news following September 11, 2001.

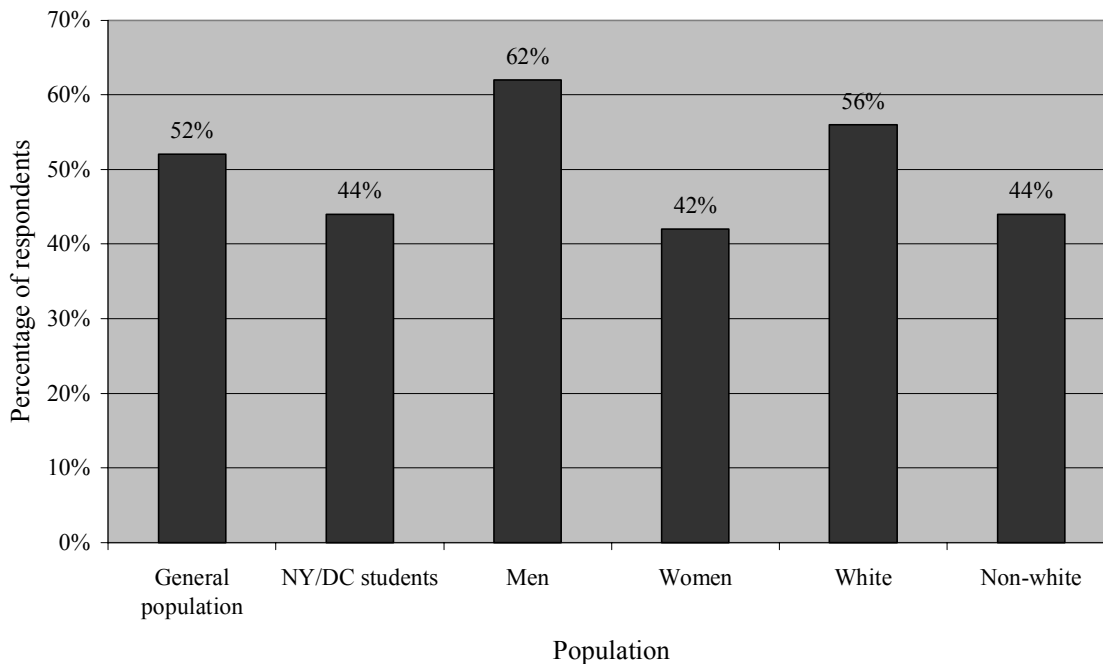


Figure 7, Direct effects - watched more news

Surprisingly, students from affected areas tended to watch news less (or at least did not report that they watched more news) than those from the general population. Men watched the news at a much greater level than women, and whites watched more than non-whites.

Religion

Terror Management Theory talks about individuals using religion as a coping mechanism following a terrorist attack (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). Similarly, the interviewed for this study also discussed religion as a coping mechanism after the attacks. In fact, forty-four percent of those interviewed changed their religious habits after the attacks. For those who talked about changing their religious habits,

individuals mostly discussed becoming more involved in their faith by an increase in attending services, prayer or religious scripture reading.

I remember I was going to church a lot more. . . I was making an effort to go every Sunday and to bring my friends. . . my close friends from my freshman year we all went to church together. . . and we made a concerted effort to make sure we got active again in the church community. . .

One student I interviewed actually discussed converting from his original Christian faith to Islam in the months following September 11.

I think it definitely strengthened my faith... I don't consider my religious change, my becoming a Muslim a drastic change, but it was definitely a strengthening process, especially since I was like... I just... I came to this religion when everyone was blaming Muslims for this... it definitely reinforces for me... strengthens your relationship with God and everything like that...

A few described an increase in their levels of cynicism related to their faith.

When September 11 came along, that was pretty much the last straw... anything that's done in the name of religion that leads to thousands of people being killed, I can't be a part of.. I didn't want to be Hindu...

The most notable difference among subpopulations in terms of religion as a coping mechanism was seen in the area of race. Figure 8 shows the differences between whites versus non-whites using religion as a coping mechanism.

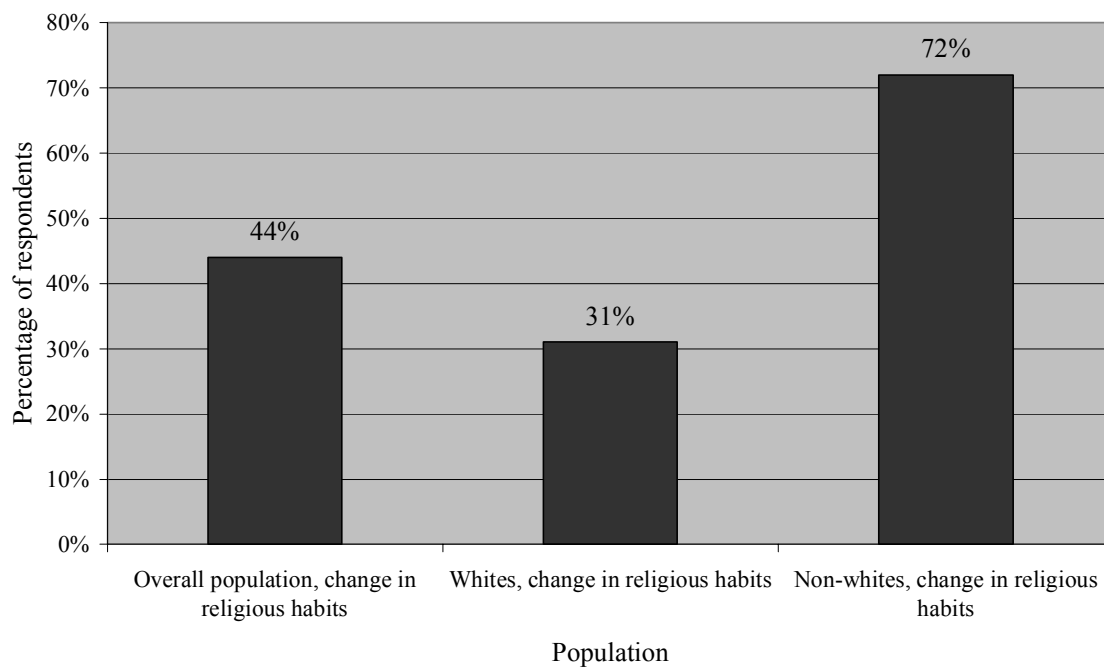


Figure 8, Direct effects – change in religious habits by race

While a little less than a third of whites talked about changing their religious habits, nearly three out of four non-whites did discuss changing their religious practices. This significant difference in the change in religious habits may be linked to the increased feelings of oppression among non-whites that will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Support

The final direct, or short-term, effect that will be discussed in this chapter is one in which individuals sought out support to cope with the tragedy. All students interviewed were asked from whom they received support in the days following September 11, 2001. While a few students described not needing any support to help cope with the 9/11 tragedy, many talked about receiving support from family, friends, or both. Figure 9 details this data.

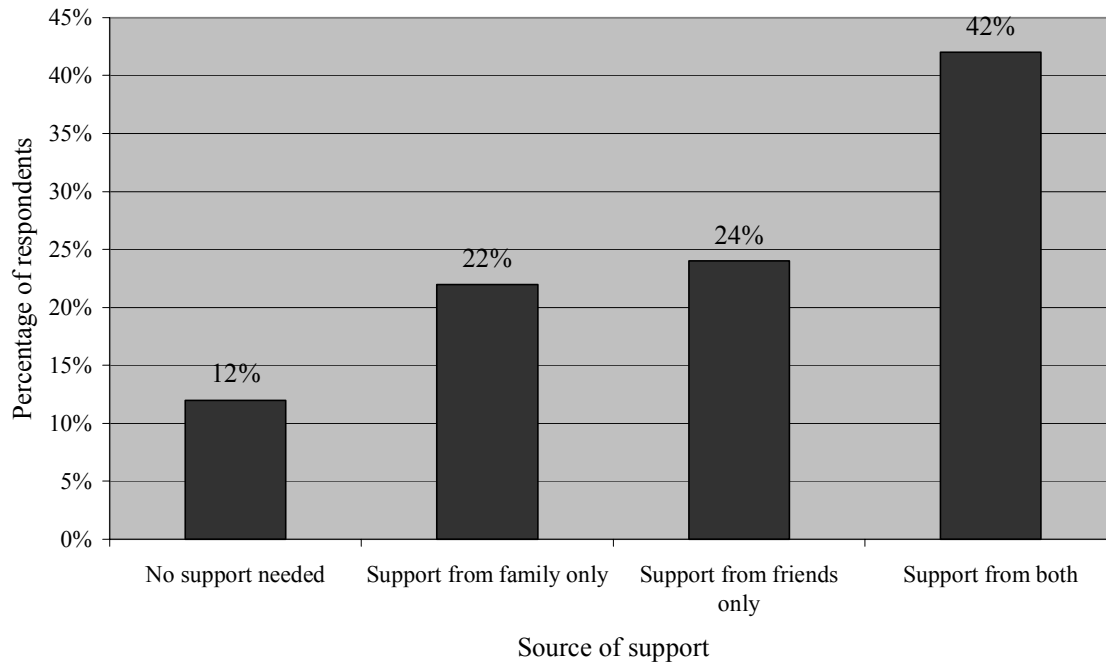


Figure 9, Direct effects – support

Slightly less than one quarter of those interviewed talked about receiving support

exclusively from their families. Two thirds of those interviewed (64%) mentioned their families as a source of support.

I was in active contact with my parents, and they just reassured me that everybody in my family was fine and that there were no problems and that I should just keep living my life and just realizing that it was ok, everything was going to be all right, we'd be able to work through it. . . and being able to move on was something that I had to cope with.

The biggest change was my contact with my family. Like, I think freshman year, I talked to them a lot because it was my first time - I guess I didn't talk to them that much. Then sophomore year, I began talking to them a lot more on a regular basis... And so, my mom was just. . . I think she was a lot more concerned about what was going on, so she was calling on a much more regular basis, and we were talking more, not necessarily about what happened, but checking on each other a lot more. I knew a lot more about what was going on there, like trivial things.

Most of the students who were interviewed for this study were living away from home at the time of the attacks. Even those from St. Louis were living in the residence halls.

Thus, support from family was received primarily via telephone or e-mail contact.

About one-quarter also discussed using only their friends at school for support. About two thirds (66%) of those interviewed described contact with friends in helping them cope with the tragedy. Since most students interviewed were living away from home, the direct contact they had for support was from friends.

I think my friends, especially that night, were really supportive and understanding in that I wanted to be able to process it with my family but I couldn't. They were there for me and were like 'I know we're not your family but we're here for you.' That was really helpful.

I did try to be there as much as I could for my friends who were having difficulty... who again weren't directly affected but I can still imagine how if you're from New York, even if you don't know anyone, it can still be a very difficult thing to deal with... just talking to a lot of them... just being around people... I just didn't want to be alone for any extended period of time...

Not surprisingly, many of those interviewed (42%) talked about using both friends and family as a source of support following the attacks.

Consistent with the Blanchard study (2004), students from the affected areas talked about receiving the highest levels of support. All of those interviewed (100%) from the New York and the District of Columbia metropolitan areas talked about needing their family for support following the attacks. Given the distance they were living from home and their need for connectedness with their home communities, this was not surprising. A woman whose family lived in the District of Columbia made this point very clearly.

My parents were just... they like to protect me and not tell me things that were going on. We had to make it clear from the very beginning that when things were going down in D.C., I had to know... even though they didn't want to tell me

when the alerts had gone up, for my own sanity, I needed to know the truth... so knowing... having us all on the same field was really helpful...

Other than the students who were from affected areas, the levels of support needed from family and friends among subpopulations were very consistent with the overall sample.

Interactions Between Emotional Responses and Coping Mechanisms

There was one interesting pattern between the emotional responses and the coping mechanisms. Students who expressed feelings of depression were more likely to use religion as a coping mechanism (58%) as compared to those who did not express feelings of depression (31%). Also, students who felt more fearful talked more about using religion as a coping mechanism when compared to students who experienced little or no fear. Figure 10 illustrates this pattern.

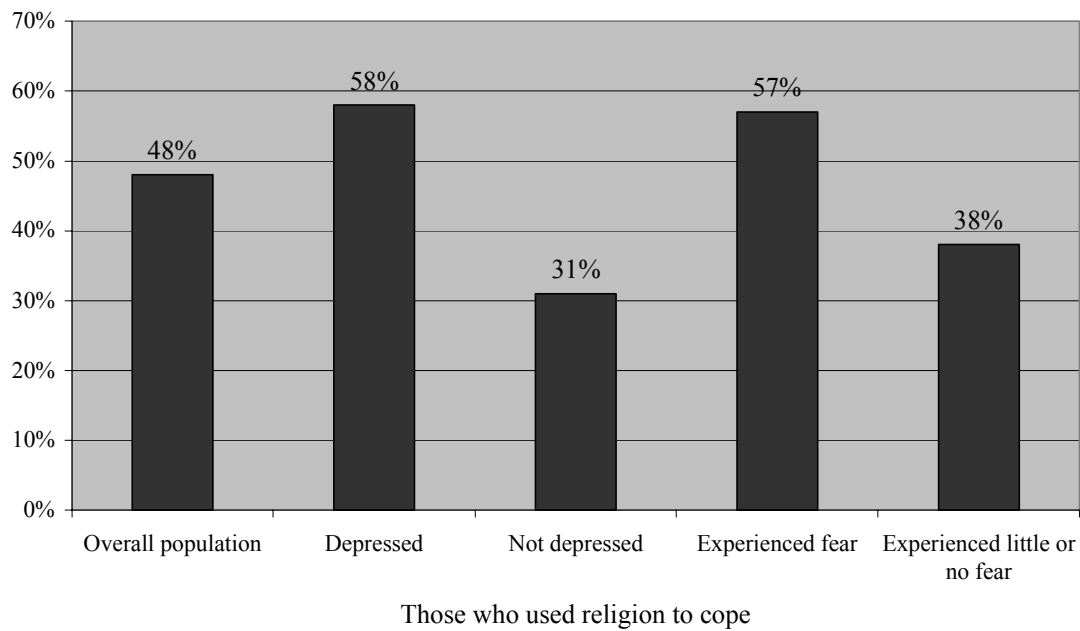


Figure 10, Direct effects - interaction between depression/fear and using religion to cope

There does not appear to be any correlation between depression and watching more news, or between experiencing fearfulness and news watching. Virtually the same percentages of people who felt depressed watched more news (50%) as the overall population who watched more news (52%). Approximately the same percentage of those students who were more fearful watched more news (53%).

Summary

Consistent with the short-term, or direct reactions postulated by Terror Management Theory, college students reacted with feelings of shock and disbelief. This was partially due to the immensity of the tragedy that occurred on that day, but this disbelief was also likely influenced by the fact that college students had not experienced a

major national crisis in their young lives. Other parallels between TMT and the responses from college students were the desire for more information about the cause of the attacks and the use of religion as a coping mechanism.

However, TMT failed to predict the “activist” response of college students. Rather than withdrawing from their community, more than half of the students interviewed (58%) talked about taking action and becoming more involved in their community. While the response in the days and weeks following 9/11 of those students interviewed may not be major (for example, nobody talked about organizing a protest or enlisting in the military), there was still evidence of more action than withdrawal. This action is important; it may be an indicator of a shift from Strauss and Howe’s recessive, reactive generation to a dominant, civic generation. Chapter 5 will examine the long-term or distal reactions to September 11, 2001 and will further examine the civic-mindedness of this new generation.

Chapter Five: Distal Results

Introduction

This chapter will examine the distal, or long-term, effects of September 11, 2001 on college students. Students were asked to reflect on their feelings and opinions six months after the attacks as well as their impressions at the time of the interviews, which took place approximately three years after September 11, 2001. Themes from their responses are presented here.

The distal responses are grouped into two distinct categories: worldview and lifestyle choices. A person's values and attitudes help shape their worldview. The specific worldview characteristics that appear most frequently in the interviews are an individual's acceptance of others, feelings of oppression, global awareness, levels of patriotism, and political views. Worldview refers to how the individual perceives the outside world. Lifestyle choices are decisions students have made about the future that may have been influenced by the events of 9/11. The two most commonly occurring lifestyle choices discussed here are choice of career/major and civic engagement.

The previous chapter reviewed the direct effects of September 11 on college students. Many students were more fearful immediately after the attacks and either skipped class, spent more time with friends or attended vigils to cope with the tragedy. But, as the dust settled on the events of that horrific day, how did students change? What were the lasting influences of 9/11? The first portion of this chapter will review the long-term changes in the worldview of college students following the attacks. Worldview and lifestyle choices are closely related as distal responses to September 11.

Worldview

An Individual's Acceptance of Others

Throughout the interviews, respondents were asked to discuss their views on other people. How did they feel about Muslims? What were their attitudes towards the war in Iraq? What did they want the United States to do in response to terrorism? Answers to these questions often revealed how students felt about people who were different from them. Two polar opposite classifications were created to categorize these feelings towards others: acceptance and bigotry. Bigotry is a distal response predicted and described by terror management theory (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003).

The vast majority of students interviewed (82%) fell into the category of acceptance. A very small number (6%) made comments indicating feelings of bigotry. Another six percent made inconsistent comments of both acceptance and bigotry. Also, six percent did not make any comments that could be construed as either category. Figure 11 describes these data.

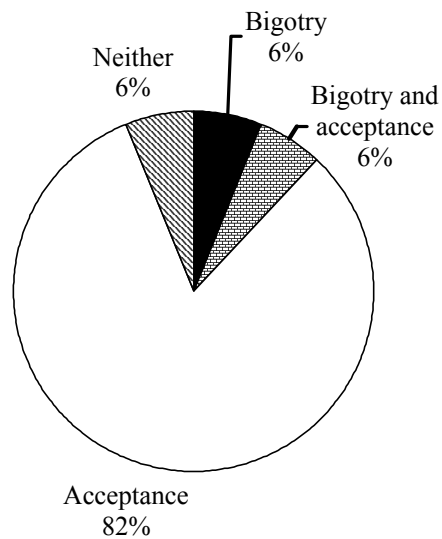


Figure 11, Distal effects - acceptance of others

Comments in the area of acceptance reflected that the individual showed some compassion to those who may be singled out during the time following the terrorist attacks. Most notably, comments of acceptance were directed towards Muslim students.

There was definitely a certain level of sympathy there, just because I could immediately tell that this was going to be a source of conflict for these people who had nothing to do with the bombing. And you know, even people who were born and raised in America were going to have to take some flack for something that they had just such a small, non-representative portion of involvement in. . . there were definitely feelings of sympathy.

I mean I remember going home a while after that... I remember going home and standing at a taxi line after getting back to the airport in New York City... and there was this taxi line and there was... the cab drivers always get out and pop the trunk... and there was this guy with a turban on or whatever... and the guy ahead of me was like, its ok I'll take the next one... I was like, oh my god... yeah, and so I just got in and started talking with him because he was really nice and I don't know... I made a really conscious effort to, um... to... I mean I don't think I've ever really been, I don't know, racially a hater in any way towards anyone, and so

I wasn't after 9/11 either, but I think I made a more conscious effort after 9/11... I don't know how many people he's had treat him badly...

There was also a strong reaction to bigotry in the campus community. At Washington University, the online student directory had to be temporarily suspended after several Muslim students received hate mail. Throughout the course of the interviews, many students reflected on this event.

I think I was infuriated by the ignorance on this campus... I mean when I heard things that people were sending hate mails to Muslim students on this campus, I found that to be utterly ridiculous... that's the one point where I think I actually got angry that people would just say that because people believe in a certain religion, and other people that might have like instigated the action also believed in that religion doesn't mean that they believe in exactly the same tenets of that religion...

And when I heard that there were acts of discrimination and harassment on our campus, I was shocked, angered. . . you know I was like that's no way for a community to behave in a time like this. I don't really think I understood the full brunt of what happened on campus, until I heard guest speakers talk about it. That made me even more angry.

This overall more accepting attitude was predicted by Astin's CIRP data on college students (1993). College students tend to take on more liberal values during college. However, there was a small minority of students who expressed comments of bigotry. The comments, while few and far between, were predicted by terror management theory. For example, two students expressed frustration that American Muslims were not apologizing enough for the attacks.

I still haven't heard any Muslim authorities in the U.S. condemn the attack. And, I don't think they're responsible, and I'm almost certain they didn't condone it either, but it was strange to hear all sorts of Christians and even some Jewish leaders condemn the attacks as immoral. But I never heard Muslim authorities condemn the attacks. I don't know that much about Islam, but that was one thing that sort of lingered with me.

It's interesting but if that would have been done by Jewish people, the Jewish community in America would have been outraged and there would have been

very, very, very vocal protests... and I know that I've commented a lot with other people for the lack of a... from the Muslim community – that's not condoning it by not saying anything, but still there wasn't... so that might have been my only criticism...

Some students felt more suspicious about people who appeared to be of Middle Eastern descent.

I was probably more cautious... but I don't... I know I didn't have any negative feeling of like, all Muslims are bad or whatever... I was probably more suspicious... more on alert... I probably did some racial profiling... not in that this person's bad, but mainly in terms of I guess I should keep an eye on people...

I remember one time there was a very, very, very suspicious man getting on one of the planes I was on and he was holding this package... and that was at the time when they would definitely search your carry-ons before you'd get on the plane... so I went up to one of the security guards and I said would you please make sure you search him because he's scaring me... and what was he carrying... because he looks suspicious, and he was like, oh yes, definitely... so they did... you know, of course I was very nervous, ah, considering I flew a lot...

However, the vast majority of students expressed feelings of sympathy or sadness towards Muslims and anyone else being discriminated against in the post-9/11 environment.

Within subpopulations there was some variability. Figure 15 reflects some of these differences within subpopulations. Note that this figure reflects all comments of bigotry, instead of separating out bigotry only versus bigotry and acceptance as shown in Figure 12.

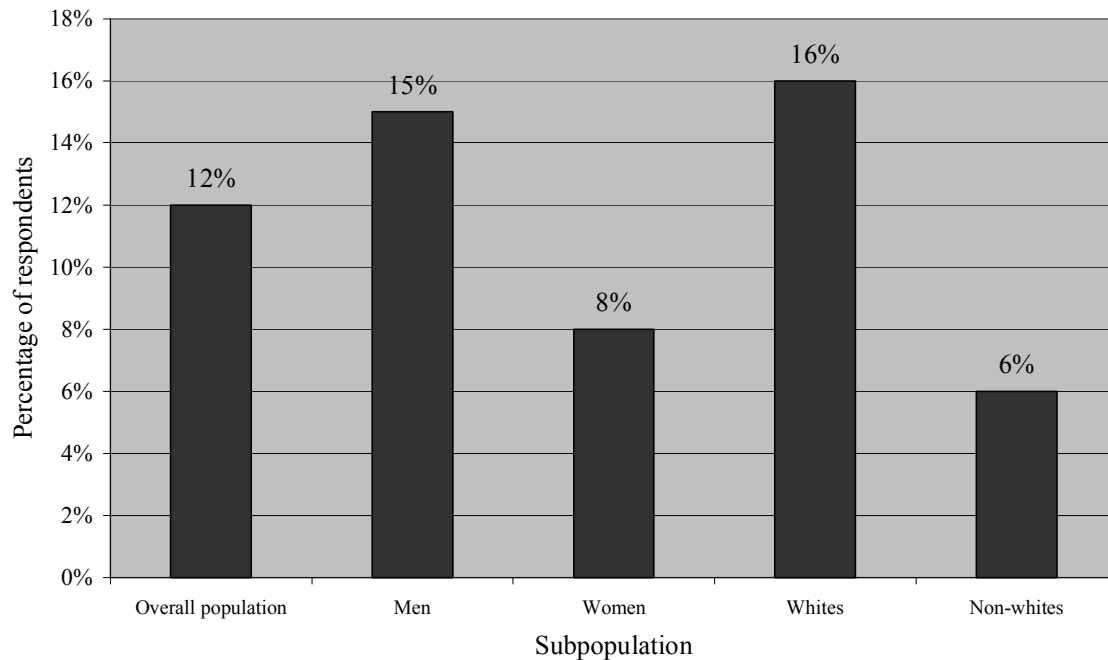


Figure 12, Distal effects – bigotry

Levels of bigotry were higher among men (15%) and whites (16%) than among women (8%) and non-whites (6%). This trend is not surprising in that non-whites and women have been historically the targets of oppression. This trend is discussed in the following section.

Feelings of Oppression

A corollary of the concept of acceptance or bigotry is the idea of oppression. Although it was not specifically asked about in the interviews, some of those interviewed (16%) commented that they felt targeted in the post-9/11 environment. They felt targeted simply because of the events of September 11, 2001, distinct from other factors of racism or discrimination that often occur in society. All five of the Muslim students interviewed (100%) felt targeted after 9/11.

One day I was walking on campus, I was walking to class and I overhear this conversation of this kid saying. . . ‘We should just. . . ‘ you know when they started saying Al Qaeda was probably tied to Iraq. . . ‘Why don't we just go to Iraq and blow everyone up and kill them all!’ You know? And to me that was just like, God, at a top ten or top twenty institution in this country and these are the types of things people have to say on campus?

A significant percentage of non-white students (39%) also commented that they felt oppressed in the post-9/11 environment.

A lot of people thought I was Muslim... my mom... my mom would get really upset and start talking in Spanish when she heard people talking about her... the way we look... people like that I don't know looking at me... when I would go out to dinner... when I went home – I remember feeling that way like at the airport... and I remember my mom telling me when she'd walk to go food shopping and stuff like that... she'd get really upset about it... it may have been more my mom's fears reflected on me... I definitely thought someone was judging me if they thought I was Muslim...

A non-Muslim international student discussed a difficult experience she had coming through customs at an American airport.

I handed in my Indian passport... and it says I've come from Saudi Arabia on my ticket and immediately the woman at the desk was like, what are you doing, you're not supposed to be in this line... so I gave her my documents... and she was like, and you don't even have all of your documents out... you foreign people come to this country and mess things up and cause so many tragedies, why don't you go back to where you came from... or you can go back to the end of the line for the time being or something like that... I didn't know what to do, what to feel... because I obviously didn't want to argue with her... you're trying to control wanting to cry and you can't really...

Not surprisingly, very few white students (one out of thirty-two) talked about experiencing oppression related to 9/11. The white student who discussed feeling oppressed was also Muslim. As one might expect, the concept of oppression appears to be something experienced exclusively by non-white students.

Global awareness

Another pattern that emerged in the data was the concept of global awareness. There was not a specific question asking about levels of knowledge of current events outside of the United States. However, so many respondents (48%) mentioned becoming more globally aware as a consequence of 9/11, it has been characterized as one of the most prevalent long-term themes. Students talked about knowing more about religions in other countries, understanding United States foreign policy, and seeking information about the history of other regions in the world.

Paralleling Ted Goertzel's (2004) concept of the United States being in a period of "extroversion" (more involved in foreign affairs) at the turn of the century, many of those interviewed, commented that they felt more aware of events going on in the world following September 11, 2001.

I think one thing I can say. . . how 9/11 has affected almost all college students - I think it made every single one of them more aware of foreign affairs in general, because even though I wasn't personally affected at all and didn't change my routine, didn't change anything - but it did change my awareness of other countries outside of America - I think that's true of everyone no matter how much they knew or didn't know beforehand. . .

I think it was a defining moment, I think because it sort of forced me to like, look at everything outside my bubble and really realize that there are things going on . . . and actually take notice of what's going on. . . and become aware of the situation. . . both in the country and also around the world. I don't think I've ever been forced to do that before.

Interestingly, the students who reported an increased sense of global awareness were predominantly those with humanities majors, as opposed to science or business majors. Figure 13 illustrates the disparity.

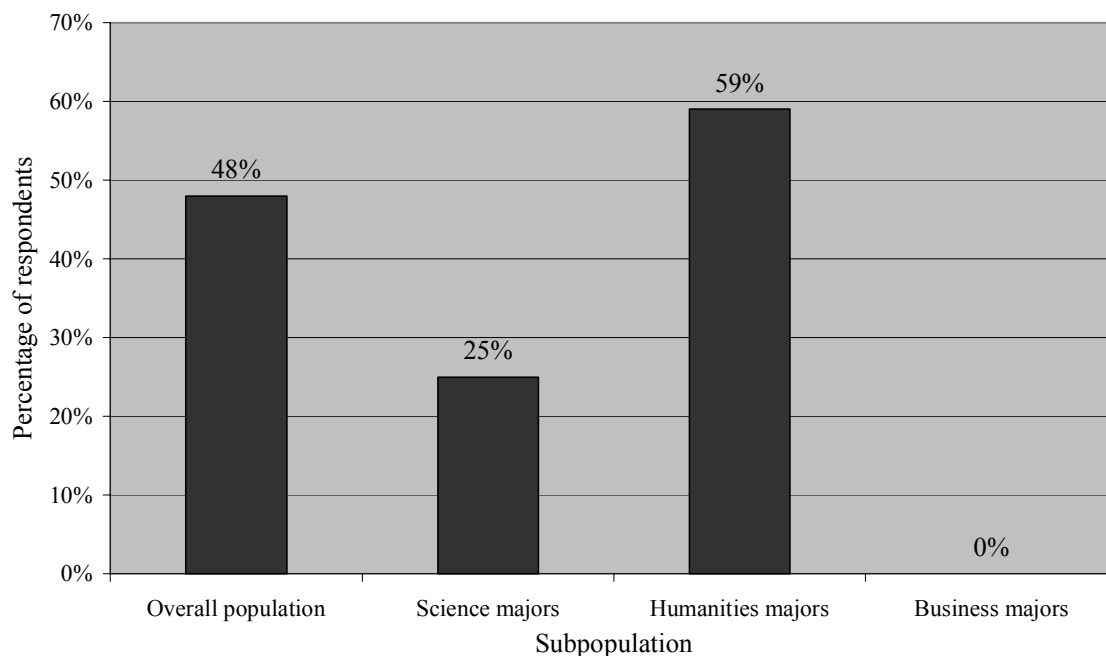


Figure 13, Distal effects - global awareness by major

Students majoring in the humanities made significantly more comments about becoming more globally aware than students in other majors. For other subpopulations (men vs. women and white vs. non-white) the percentage of students talking about global awareness was almost identical to that of the overall population. There was little or no correlation between global awareness and either gender or race.

Levels of Patriotism

The concept of patriotism was discussed throughout the interviews and is included in the distal results section because terror management theory describes patriotism as a distal response. Every student interviewed discussed patriotism because direct questions about feelings of patriotism were asked in the interview. Coded comments that were tied to patriotism included feelings (or lack thereof) of pride in one's

country, opinions about the United States response to global terrorism, and support of the government.

Rather than divide the response into only two categories of “patriotic” or “not patriotic,” a third, middle category was added based on the high number of responses in between these extremes. For the purposes of this discussion, the third category is called skeptical patriotism. Also, it should be noted that two international students were interviewed and asked about patriotism. Their comments were included here and will be discussed briefly at the end of this section.

Figure 14 shows the percentage of respondents falling into each of the three categories of patriotism. As was the case with previously discussed data, because student responses could fall into more than one category, the overall percentage is greater than 100%.

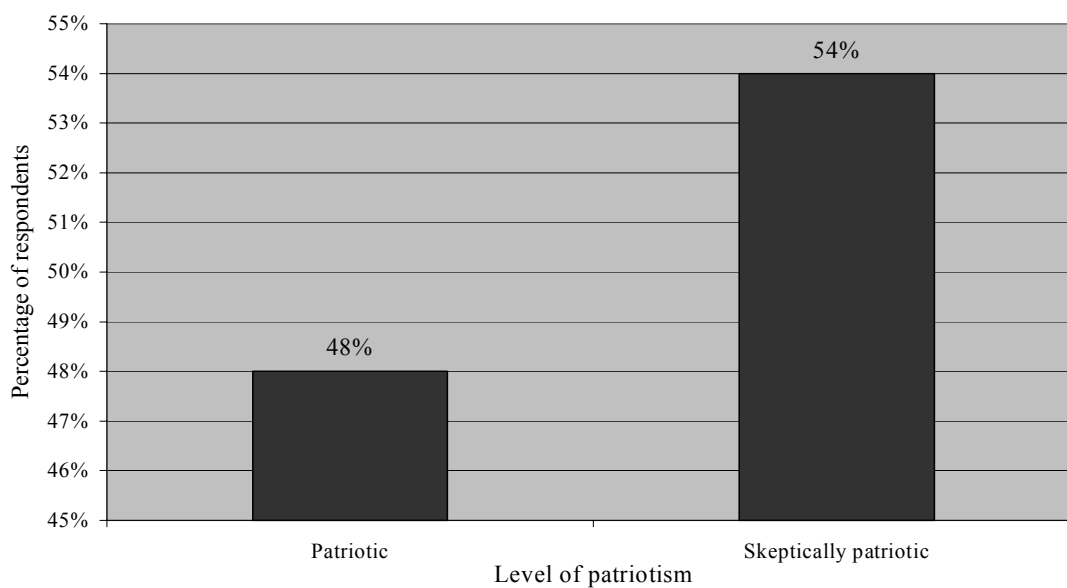


Figure 14, Distal effects – patriotism

Students who felt patriotic discussed their feelings of pride for the United States as well as the means by which they may have expressed their patriotism. They often displayed flags in their rooms or on their cars. Some of the comments below are indicative of a patriotic student.

This was the first time something hit home. . . this was my first real sense of patriotism. . . it was kind of like wow, someone attacked our soil. . . that was kind of scary, because I'm always the one against war, and against joining the military, and it was the first time I could see myself picking up arms if I had to defend my country.

I really got chills in defining my sense of patriotism... in hearing about that third plane – the one that crashed in Pennsylvania... I don't know if it's true, but they actually had a vote on the plane beforehand – are they actually going to attack the terrorists, or not? And I thought like – I mean yeah, actually voting in the time where there is an attack on democracy, right? You have Americans there who were voting to take over the terrorists... that to me is still pretty amazing...

Many students (38%) expressed feelings that were very unpatriotic. These students were extremely against the choices made by the United States government.

I was really turned off by all the jingoism - the Toby Keith and the “boot up your ass” - I don't remember if that had come out that early. I felt like there was a lot of that going on. Cheering for America as if it were a football team. It seemed like mindlessly without thinking about the situation. And then later on, support our troops, even if you don't believe what they are fighting for - I was kind of put off by that.

I think that there's a fine line between nationalistic pride and arrogance, and I think we've been crossing that line too many times to the point where I felt like this wasn't really being patriotic in any way and like... I thought it kind of absurd because I thought it was ridiculous that people would feel nationalistic pride because this happened... they should have felt it before it happened... so I was kind of, not offended, but I was kind of annoyed and frustrated with the concept of people like... the sales of American flags... increasing exponentially because of September 11 and things like that... phrases like “God Bless America” threw me off and things like that so I guess to sum up my answer, no I didn't feel any real sense of nationalistic pride...

A little over half of the respondents made skeptically patriotic comments. While they felt some level of support of the United States, they questioned some of the foreign policy decisions.

I just thought how everyone was like, “we have to come together in this time of crisis.” I was like ‘why couldn't we have come together before?’ I think the county has problems in general. I was one of those people who was like, “yeah we have problems but we're probably the best place to be.” It bothers me, people who will talk about the military, but the military is the one who's protecting them. I think partly from my Dad, I had always felt that this country has done something good for you, and I have him as the example to see that. So I was one of the people who was like, the country has problems but it's the best place to be.

I wanted us to defeat whatever enemies we had, but I don't want us to use this as an excuse to carpet bomb another country...

I was patriotic a bit at first, I guess... but then I started like... as the patriotism became more... I don't know – forced... it wasn't really about freedom in our country – it was more about hurting other people... then I really started being turned off by it...

Students expressed several different opinions on the topic of patriotism. Although terror management theory predicts patriotism as a major distal response to September 11, 2001, the responses from college students were fairly equally distributed from patriotic to not patriotic. Figure 15 shows the variability by subpopulations.

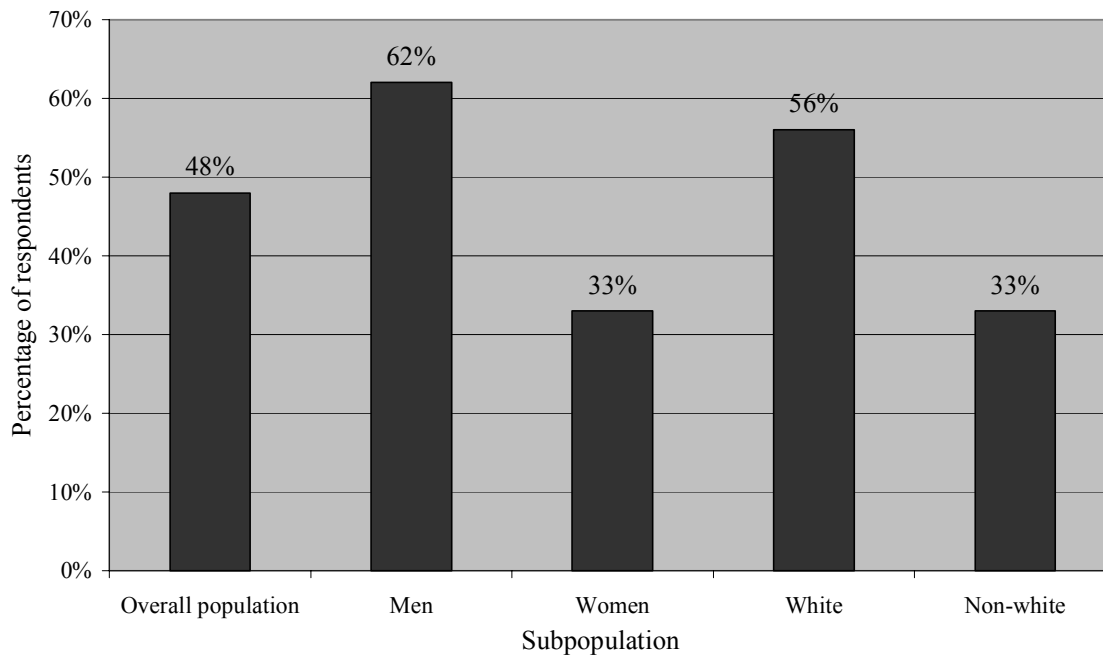


Figure 15, Distal effects - patriotism by gender and race

Men (62%) and whites (56%) were more patriotic than women (33%) and non-whites (33%). Specifically, white men (72%) were the most patriotic subpopulation. The data shown in Figure 16 on non-patriotic students suggest that an inverse association of the data is true.

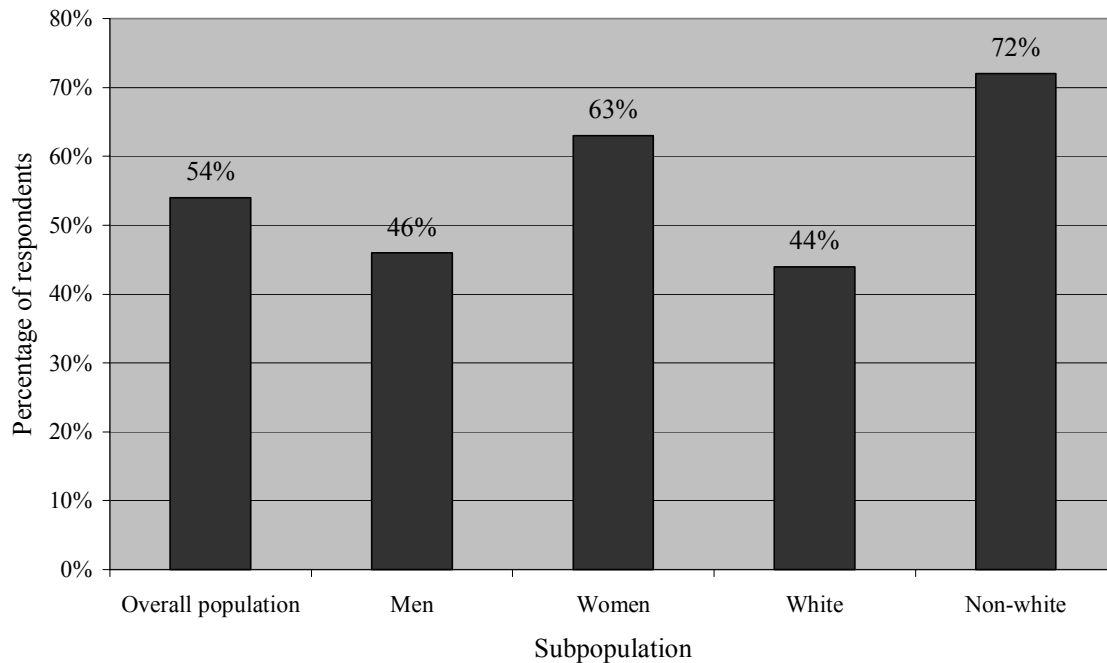


Figure 16, Distal effects - non-patriotism by gender and race

Women (63%) and non-whites (72%) demonstrated the highest levels of non-patriotism.

Since patriotism is defined as allegiance to one's country, patriotism as a response to September 11, 2001 is a uniquely American trait. But the two international students interviewed also commented about patriotism. A young woman from Saudi Arabia described her perceptions of the patriotism she observed.

I understood it but I felt very overwhelmed by it because I did not fit in with all the sense of patriotism... I'd been in this country for not even a month now and I definitely don't relate to... I started relating to Wash U, but I didn't relate to America... I was just like, oh my gosh... I better shut my mouth... I remember being really overwhelmed by it and not knowing... I don't know if annoyed was the right word, but after a certain point, I did get a little annoyed by it, because I did feel a little marginalized by it... and I was like whoa, I don't understand, I can't relate to this...

A male student from Venezuela shared similar cynical observations about patriotism in his interview.

The American patriotism as I perceived it after 9/11 was very false... to me it seemed... it was patriotism... I don't know, of real appreciation but only in response to a negative, and of course most of it was tied to the sentiments of jingoism... it wasn't patriotism for patriotism's sake... it was patriotism so we could go kick somebody's ass... all those terrible country songs, Jesus Christ!

Patriotism as a response to terrorism is a predictable outcome. The range of patriotic or non-patriotic responses will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

Political Views

Changes in students' political views were the final trend that appeared frequently as a distal response. Chapter two discussed an observed increase in conversations about politics among college students after 9/11 (data retrieved on December 12, 2003 from <http://gseis.ucla.edu/heri/>). We would expect some change in political views among college students interviewed for this study.

Responses in this section were divided between students whose political views did change (68%) and students whose views did not change (32%). This was another category where there was no overlap – students answered either that their views changed or that they didn't. Figure 17 illustrates these data.

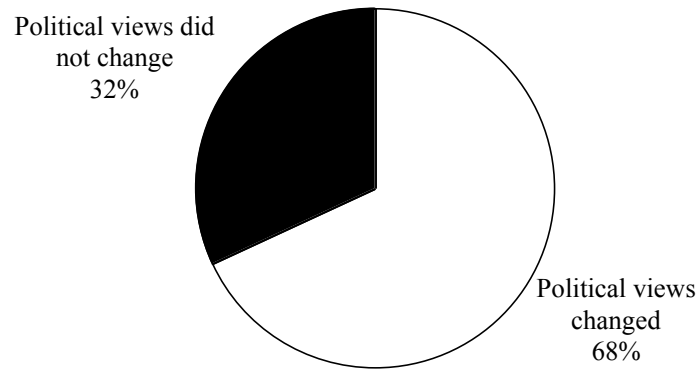


Figure 17, Distal effects - political views

Students were eager to talk about their political views in response to the 9/11 attacks. Many comments focused on their opinions about President Bush.

I had never been a Bush supporter, but when I saw him... I was like, yes, we need a leader right now and his speech was good – I was just very pro-country... very angry, I wanted a war right away and I wanted to get somebody... I wouldn't say I was pro-Bush but I would definitely say I was supportive of him... and I just wanted him to be the leader at the time and I didn't want to hear dissent at the time I just wanted everyone to be unified...

Some students were less supportive of the President.

I would vote for anybody but Bush. . . I think he's a fool, and I think he's on this crusade and I'm really hoping that it's not. . . that we don't see the backlash that we might. . . that we could possibly see from his foreign policy. I think he's been horrible when it comes to the Palestinian/Israeli issue. . .

For most students, their political affiliations did not change, but they felt that their awareness about political issues increased. They felt their existing political opinions were reinforced by the actions of the U.S. government after 9/11.

My views stayed the same and to a certain extent were even reinforced... I felt like we were attacked, not because we were attacking them, but because we have had many opportunities as to be the most powerful nation in the world as to make better decisions on how to help people... and we haven't really extended a hand to help people...

Three students talked about changing their political affiliations from the Republican party to the Democratic party. A young woman from New Orleans described her transition.

I think that as I came to Wash U I was conservative because of the conservative background that I came from. And I felt very ostracized, I guess here on campus. And I remember there were two people from my freshman floor out of 40-something who were going to support Bush in the election in 2000. And I went with them to hold signs and cheer and wave when the Bush motorcade came to campus. A year later, completely different, completely changed... I think the way its related to 9/11 is that as I learned about Latin American politics, a class that I took (I think I was taking it the semester of 9/11), on American politics and a couple other classes... I really learned how seedy the U.S. is in terms of foreign policy and foreign aid. And that a lot of this happened during Republican administrations, and then I really wasn't the strongest supporter of the way Bush went about handing the 'war on terrorism' and the war in Iraq.

For the 32% of students who said their views did not change, several talked about being politically moderate. The political climate of the post-9/11 environment did little to shift their views.

I tend to sit sort of middle in general on politics. . . in the middle on a lot of things. On campus I tend to be pushed more rightward because everybody else seems more leftward, so kind of a reactionary thing. . . but my overall beliefs and attitudes I feel were right around the same, right around the middle. . .

Within subpopulations, there was very little difference among political views when compared with the overall populations. For both gender and race, approximately two thirds of students talked about having their political views changed and one-third did not have any change. As shown in Figure 21, the only minor variability existed among students with different academic majors when evaluating the change in political views.

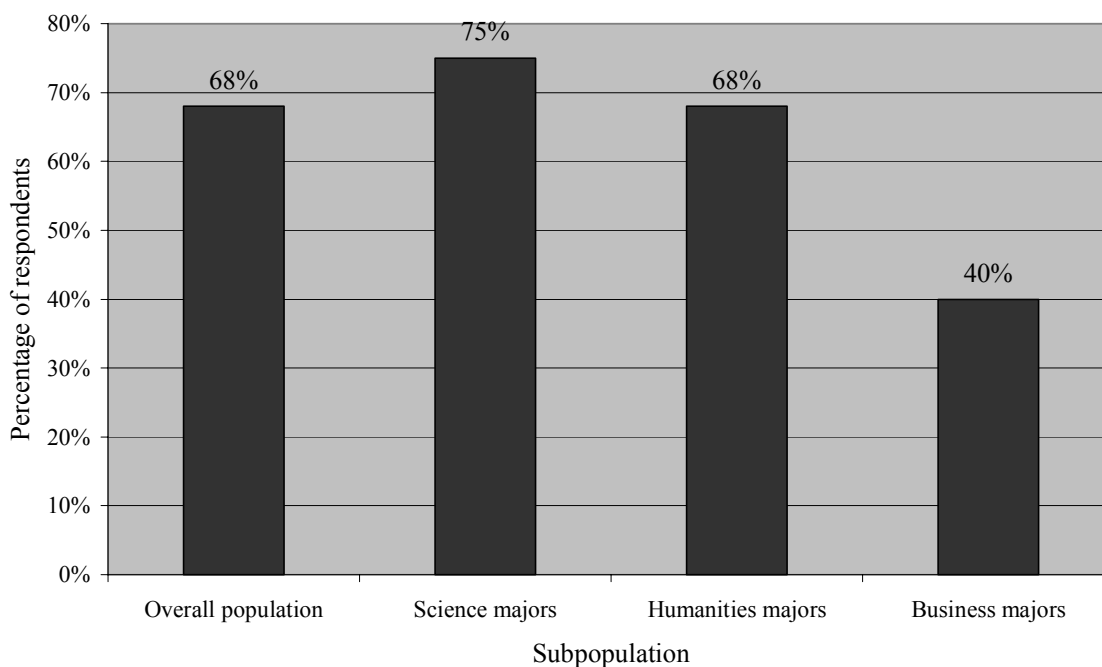


Figure 18, Direct effects - change in political views by major

Science majors (75%) had a slightly greater likelihood of having their political values changed than the overall population (68%). Business majors appeared to have a smaller chance of having their political values shift (40%) than the overall population. Note that the sample sizes for each of these is relatively small; there were six business majors and ten science majors.

Lifestyle Choices

The next section is the category of responses referred to as lifestyle choices. This section will examine some of the personal values and beliefs that influence career/major choice and civic engagement.

Career/major Choice

We know from Astin's work on college students that the choice of major is a significant factor in a student's eventual career (1993). Furthermore, a student often uses time spent in college to formulate career goals. Thus, it is important to understand the influence of September 11 with regard to their academic focus and development of professional goals. Students were asked at several points during the interview to reflect on the impact of September 11 on their choices of courses, major, and career. Figure 19 shows that 46% of the respondents reported an influence.

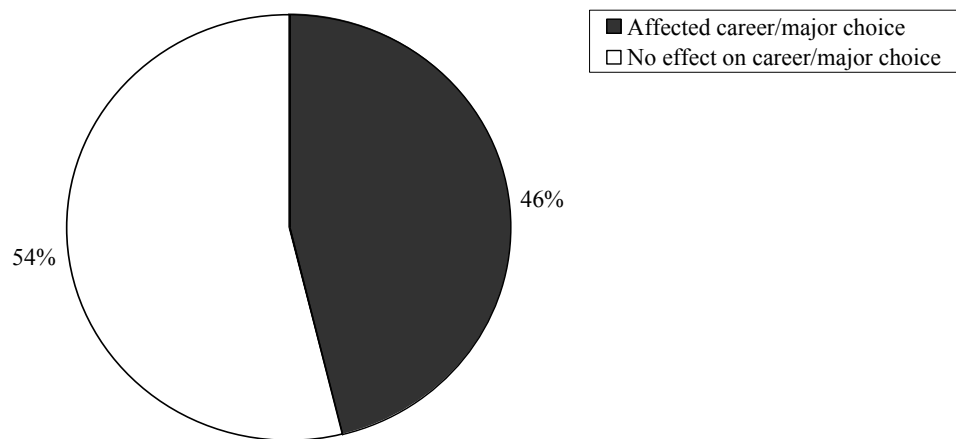


Figure 19, Distal effects - career choice

For some, the influence of 9/11 was minimal. Although, September 11 helped reinforce or validate their choice of major or career.

I've always been into social justice, community service, non-profits, specifically interfaith. . . it sort of solidified for me that there was even more of a need for me to do that.

I had an interest in political science and government before this happened and I think this kind of reaffirmed why I want to study government... and why I feel governments act the way that they do sometimes... and that's why I probably kept my political science major...

We know that many universities throughout the United States offered new courses related to 9/11 (Herpert & Wingert, 2001). So for some students, September 11 caused them to shift the types of courses they enrolled in.

I was definitely more interested in taking classes like "Islamic Politics" and "Women in Islam". . . definitely that much more motivated to take classes about other religions. . . Learn more about politics. The more I was disgusted about what was happening, the more motivated I was to get involved and get knowledgeable.

It really affected my academics. . . I really wanted to learn about foreign policy issues in the United States and it inspired me to take those classes. . .

Other students experienced a more peripheral effect on their careers or majors. In some cases, September 11 negatively influenced their decisions to study abroad, consider careers overseas, or relocate to New York or Washington, D.C. for a job, internship, or graduate program.

I was looking for a job after my sophomore year, and when I got an internship to work for NASCAR in New York, my mom was like, "oh my God, I can't deal with that. I can't believe you're going to go work in New York for the summer. And don't forget about 9/11." And every day, she would look for other internships for me as another opportunity. And so it was pretty bad. . .

I was thinking of studying abroad, and by then, of course, there were a lot of warnings saying you want to be careful... I think that did give me pause... I did kind of decide at that point that it was probably too dangerous to go the places I wanted to...

A chemistry major discussed how September 11 improved his chances of attending graduate school by making more grant money available. He clearly felt that September 11 had an influenced his career for this reason.

What's interesting is post 9/11, the Department of Defense was giving out these huge grants to scientists who have proposals related to anything that can be applied to security measures. . . so yeah, anybody who had anything to do with biochemical warfare stuff. . . the government immediately started channeling all this money. . . so you may not have been affected, but there may be some financial consequences for you as a result of 9/11. . .

There was also some variability in the effect on major or career choice based on demographic subgroups. Figure 20 illustrates this variability.

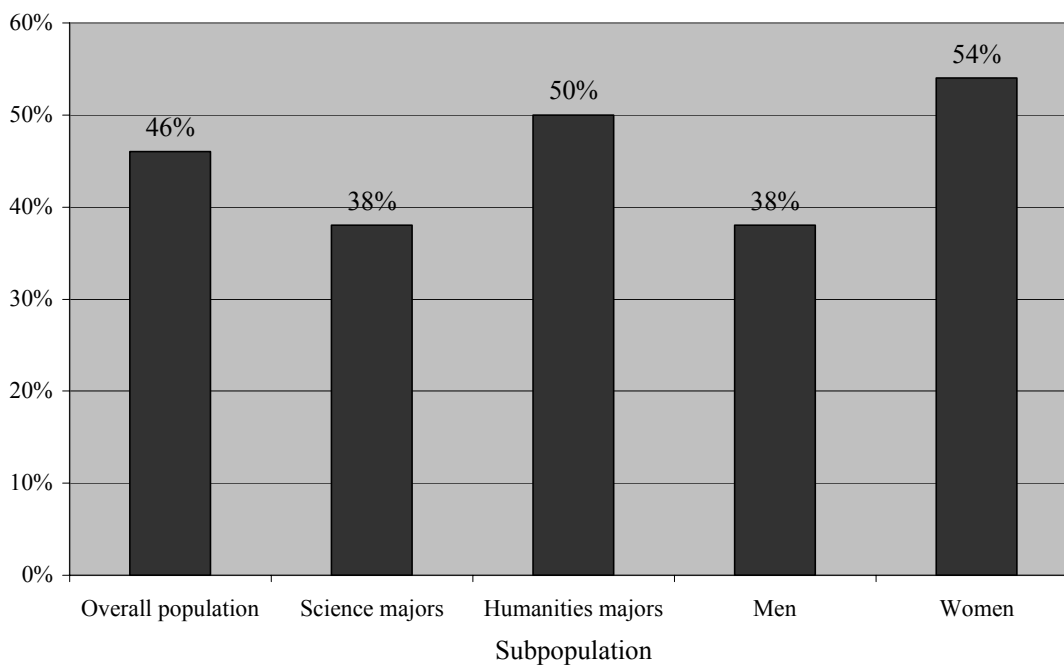


Figure 20, Distal effects - influence on major/career

Fifty percent of humanities majors had their career or major choice influenced, as compared to 38% of science majors. Women (54%) were more likely to have their major

or career choice affected by September 11 than men (38%). The difference for other subpopulations (race, geographic hometown, etc.) was negligible when compared to the overall population.

Civic Engagement

Another important lifestyle choice is characterized as “civic engagement.” It is defined here as an ongoing pattern of service to one’s community that can be linked to the events of September 11, 2001. Civic engagement differs from the concept of “taking action” that was discussed in chapter four. Taking action was characterized as a more temporary and less time intensive response to 9/11. The examples given in the previous chapter included behaviors such as attending a vigil or sending cards to friends in affected areas. Whereas, increasing one’s civic engagement involves a more serious lifestyle change. Approximately one third of those interviewed (34%) attributed a rise in civic engagement to September 11.

In terms of whether my future would be shaped by 9/11, I think in terms of my job in Public Health, I’ve always wanted to serve underserved communities, but I think that definitely has increased more... especially communities that tend to be misunderstood – traditionally misunderstood... um, and that’s something just that’s not only in the United States but across the world, so I could see myself with my job, especially if it’s involved with international health, traveling to places I wouldn’t have thought to go – especially in the Middle East or Central and South Asia...

I really need to focus on my relationships with other people and when it all comes down to it... whose life have you changed? What have you been doing here? What’ve you been good for? Have you just been good for studying in your room and getting A’s or have you actually helped someone to grow and become a better person? It’s all how you affect other people and your interactions with them... and I think that was one of the main reasons that we got hit was because America’s interactions have not been the best...

I guess I think it’s made me more activist in general... ‘cause I guess I kind of... everything that happened after, the Patriot Act and things like that... it made me realize not to take what I had for granted... and I think all the things about, oh

they attacked us because they hate freedom... I think freedom and democracy are really good, but I don't like the way we're going out securing it... so it made me want to go about making the world more free...

Others described September 11, 2001 as an event that caused them to reinvest in their community in a way that significantly defined or re-defined their undergraduate experience. One young woman who was a sophomore at the time of the attacks described her experience.

I did get involved with Campus Week of Dialogue (on race). I later asked to be a part of the committee, I spoke at the Face Race rally. . . not necessarily focused on anything directly from 9/11. . . I honestly knew the importance of dialogue, and I understood the importance of where it fit into my experience with Each One Teach One and the St. Louis Public Schools, and the perception of the program here on campus, so I knew that dialogue was the way for people honestly to communicate and get ideas and thoughts out, and to be honest, so I think after 9/11 I made a vested interest to get involved with various activities that related to diversity and dialogue...

This woman, who graduated in 2004, coincidentally pursued her activist interests by enrolling in Teach For America, a program dedicated to providing quality education in under-resourced schools throughout the United States.

Similarly, a woman who was a sophomore at the time of the attacks discussed how powerful the experience was for her, leading to her involvement in some activism-focused extracurricular activities.

I put together one event that I think kind of started a course for me of. . . of more open dialogue on this campus. . . I put together a forum called "Patriotism, can it lead to hate?" And I brought in my father as a speaker, a few other professors and we had a forum about the topic. . . And, I remember just like trying to from then on. . . always trying to think about the other side of the story even more and trying to make sure that there are outlets on campus. . . and ways for groups like that. . . I think that was a good way for us to support the Muslim students. . . trying to show how dangerous and racist this so-called unity was becoming. . . and that kind of thing. . . so I think it was a sort of turning point for me. . . and I realized

that there's not that many people who think like me, so I need to reach out and organize events like that. . . and it was a part of hate awareness week.

Towards the end of her interview, this same student reflected upon how important September 11, 2001 was to shaping her interests in social justice.

I think the fuel and the passion that things like 9/11 gave me and my roles here at Wash U have given me so much... I want to make this country better and I will do anything that I can to fight against what I think is wrong about this country and what could be really good...

After this interview, this student graduated and went on to a career in the labor movement, serving as a community activist.

There was some variation between subpopulations in the area of civic engagement. As Figure 21 indicates, women were much more likely than men to comment about an increase in civic engagement.

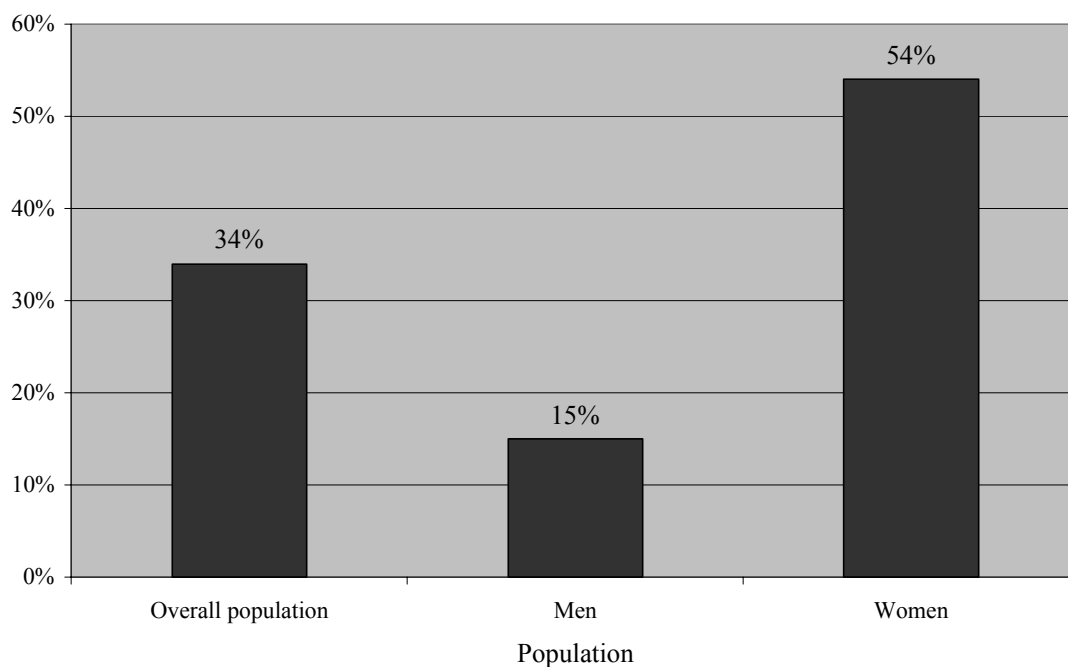


Figure 21, Direct effects - civic engagement by gender

Although the numbers of Muslim students interviewed was very low, four out of the five Muslim students became more engaged in their communities following September 11, 2001. A great deal of this community effort was related to education efforts.

The Muslim Student Association went crazy after September 11 in terms of like. . . we were getting contacted so much. . . its just unbelievable. . . please come speak here, please come teach here. . . even like high schools around the area. . . and so later on we ended up doing this thing called Islamic Speakers Bureau. . . so we brought them in, we taught everyone to speak so they could go and teach peace forums and dialogues and things later about Afghanistan and just so many things we ended up being involved in. . .

Less than half of those interviewed talked about September 11 influencing their lifestyle choices in the areas of career/major (46%) and civic engagement (34%). However, these numbers are important, as they represent a significant portion of the population.

Interactions Between Direct and Distal Results

The final portion of Chapter Five explores the associations between several themes, both within the distal results and between the direct results and the distal results. Figure 22 shows an interesting association within the distal reaction category of lifestyle choices.

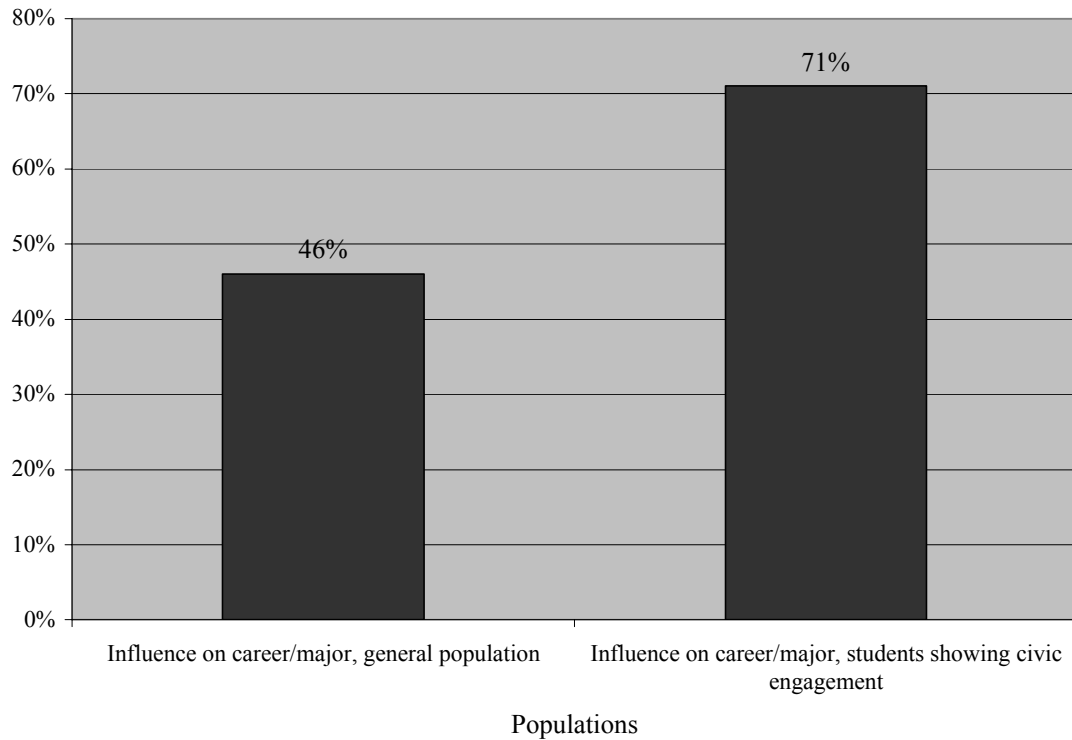


Figure 22, Interaction between civic engagement and career/major choice

In the general population, 46% of students interviewed talked about September 11, 2001 affecting their major or career choice. For students who reported that they became more engaged in their communities after September 11, this percentage was much higher, at 71%. There appears to be a relationship between these two variables; students who reported a September 11 effect on their career or major choice were also more likely to be engaged in civic duties.

A second area within the distal effects worth examining is the relationship between a lack of patriotism and feelings of acceptance versus bigotry. Isolating the population who described themselves as not patriotic (54% of the total population), one can observe an interesting trend in the acceptance versus bigotry data, as illustrated in Figure 23.

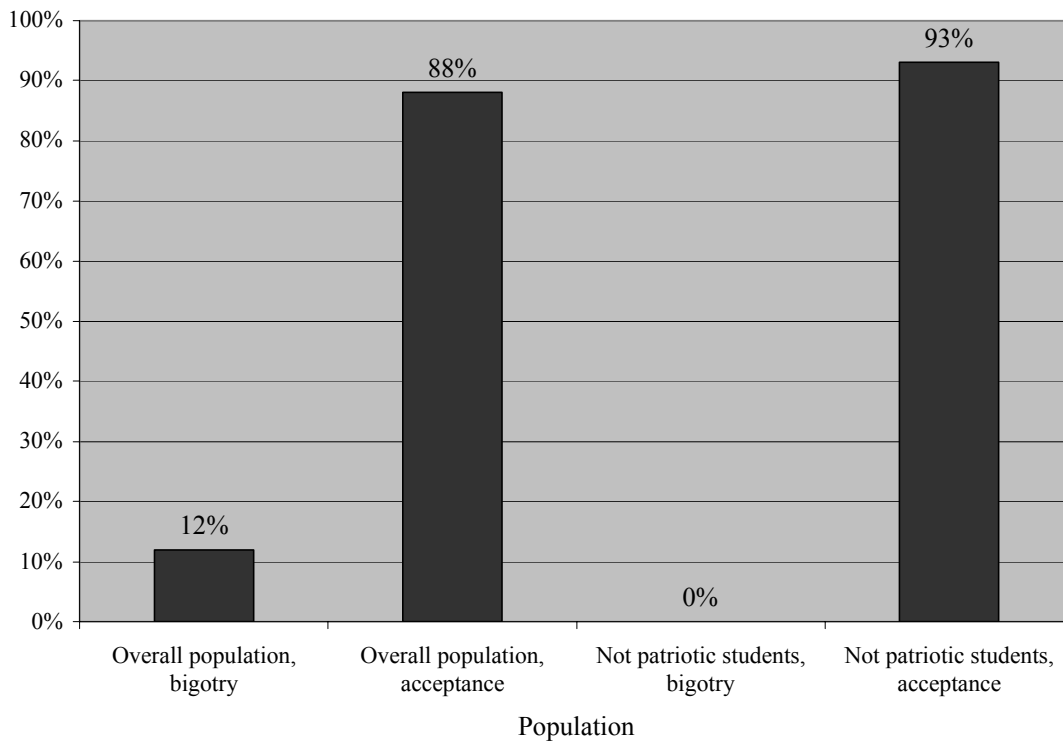


Figure 23, Relationship between not patriotic students and bigotry/acceptance

Of the students who indicated that they were not patriotic, slightly more (93%) were accepting of others than of the overall population (88%). Additionally, none of the students who claimed to be not patriotic expressed feelings of bigotry.

A final observed interaction is between the two categories of direct and distal reactions. Within the subgroup of people who watched more news, more people talk about feeling patriotic. This is explained further in Figure 24.

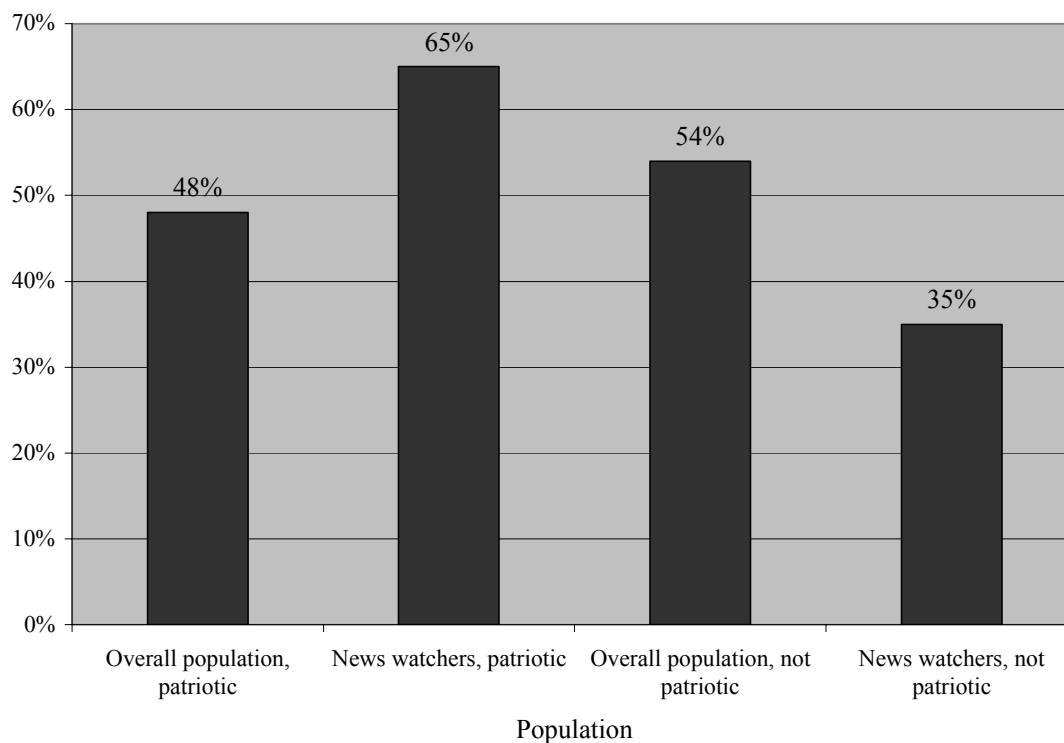


Figure 24, Relationship between news watchers and patriotism

Watching the news appears to be related to increased levels of patriotism.

Students who discussed watching the news more after September 11, had higher levels of patriotism (65%) than the overall population (48%). Conversely, there were fewer news watchers who were not patriotic (35%) than there were in the overall population (54%).

Summary

Terror management theory predicted several distal reactions to September 11. Only one of those was observed in the data: the need for understanding. The data suggest that the increase in global awareness and the high number of people whose political views changed were seeking more information as to the cause of the attacks on the United States. However, student responses did not coincide with the distal predictions of TMT; increased patriotism, censorship, and bigotry. In the months and years following

the September 11, college students reacted in a way that was not predicted by Terror Management Theory. Many rejected or questioned the patriotism that was so evident in the nation. Rather than single out individuals who were the same race or background as those who perpetrated the attacks, students embraced Muslims and talked about their open-minded attitude towards people from backgrounds different from their own.

Chapter Six will attempt to weave together themes from both the direct and distal responses to September 11 and offer some predictions and suggestions for those who work in higher education.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Implications

You are the class that began in September 2001 and as such you have been provoked perhaps more so than others to reflect on one of the gravest dangers facing our world today: terrorism. I believe for most of you, the dreadful memory of that ominous day will

never fade, when thousands of innocent people in your country were indiscriminately attacked by the agents of hatred and doom.

Hamid Karzai, May 22, 2005 Commencement
Address at Boston University

Introduction

For students enrolled in college on September 11, 2001, the tragic events of that day will always represent a significant part of their college experience. Students were affected in the same manner as the general population: feeling grief, shock, patriotism, fear, and a need to understand the reason for the attack. There were, however, some significant differences in this subpopulation of Americans that may predict a shift in future values in our society. This qualitative study seeks to understand the reactions of the college student subpopulation to 9/11. The study was based on interviews with fifty Washington University undergraduate students who were enrolled in college on September 11, 2001. The interviews occurred between March and December 2004. Two research questions guided this inquiry: (1) What were the direct effects of September 11, 2001 on college students? and (2) What were the distal effects of September 11, 2001 on college students? This study demonstrates that while Terror Management Theory predicts some of the responses of students interviewed, many responses are indicative of a shift in generational values towards a more civic-minded generation.

This final chapter is divided into several sections. To begin, there is a discussion of the overall findings of the study, highlighting student reactions that were similar to the general population, as well as the unique differences between the general population and college students in the post-9/11 environment. Following that section is a brief overview of the limitations of this study. The significance of the study is then addressed, followed by several important implications of this study. The final section includes a description of future research directions related to this study.

Overall Findings

Discussion of Direct Effects

In the days and weeks that followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Washington University students exhibited some fairly predictable responses. Consistent with the common reactions of people exhibiting post-traumatic stress disorder and acute stress disorder, students talked about their feelings of shock and disbelief after the attacks (Blanchard, 2004). In fact, nearly three fourths of those interviewed (74%) recalled the disbelief they felt following the attacks. Similarly, Terror Management Theory also predicts that one of the short-term reactions to a terrorist attacks is disbelief (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). The students in this study, born in the early 1980's, had not experienced an event of a similar magnitude during their lifetimes. They were alive during national disasters such as the Space Shuttle Challenger Explosion, the Oakland earthquake of 1989, and the Oklahoma City bombing. But, they had never experienced such a symbolic attack on the United States by an outside group. The shock they conveyed in their interviews was not surprising.

Fear. After the initial shock and disbelief, students reacted with a predictable sense of fear. Some talked about how anxious they were for friends and family living in New York and Washington, D.C.

I slept with my cell phone because I was convinced that my parents would call me to say goodbye, because something bad was going to happen – I was so scared of everything.

This was reported by a young woman from Washington. A higher percentage of students who were from affected areas (78%) felt more fearful after the attacks as compared with the entire population of students interviewed (44%).

Depression. In addition to fear, many students (48%) reported feelings of sadness or depression. A *New England Journal of Medicine* survey of 560 adults conducted immediately following September 11, 2001, predicted this result, indicating that approximately half of those surveyed had symptoms consistent with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, characterized by behaviors such as: getting upset when reminded of the event, difficulty in concentrating, and trouble falling asleep (Schuster & Stein, 2001). Additionally, one quarter of those interviewed in the Washington University study (26%) described a negative effect on their academic performance.

The *New England Journal of Medicine* study also showed that women reported being affected more than men and minorities more than whites. Students interviewed at Washington University mirrored these statistics in the category of depression. Men reported lower levels of depression (38%) than women (58%), as did whites (44%) compared to non-whites (56%). Additionally, women (29%) were slightly more likely than men (23%) to report that there was a negative effect on their academic performance. The impact of September 11, 2001 on women and non-whites will continue to be a theme in the discussion of data.

Seeking distraction. Terror Management Theory suggests that individuals will seek activities that offer a distraction from the shock and horror of the terrorist act (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). Washington University students also found ways to be distracted. A large number of students (44%) talked about changing their religious habits following September 11. Specifically, an increased involvement within their own religion was reported.

In the days and weeks that followed September 11, 2001, the television airways were swamped with coverage: speculation about the terrorist motives, human interest stories about families who had lost relatives, and predictions about a possible shift in U.S. military strategy. College students were not immune to this coverage. Over half of those interviewed (52%) talked about watching more news when asked how their schedules had changed in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. “I definitely watched more TV than any period in my life. It put things in perspective a lot,” recalled a student from St. Louis who was a sophomore at the time of the attacks.

Watching more news was a response indirectly predicted by Terror Management Theory. TMT suggests that individuals will actively try to understand the causes of terrorism in its wake. The media plays a central role in this search for understanding, so an increase in news watching was not surprising. There was some variability in subpopulations that watched more news. More men (62%) than women (42%) talked about watching more news. More whites (56%) than non-whites (44%) watched more news. This variability between whites and non-whites using news as a means of seeking understanding may also be explained by re-examining the sub-populations who used religion in an effort to find meaning in the attacks. One simple explanation is that various groups of people tend to utilize different strategies to seek understanding, whether it is through educational sources, the media, religion, or discussions with others, to name a few. In this study, more than twice as many non-whites (72%) than whites (31%) discussed changing their religious habits in the aftermath of September 11. As discussed above, whites were more likely to “watch news” as a means of gaining some understanding.

Responses not predicted by TMT. In the immediate wake of September 11, 2001, college students reported some responses that were not consistent with what was predicted by TMT. In the weeks and months after September 11, 2001, many Americans overtly demonstrated their patriotism. “God Bless America” became a fixture at sporting events. Patriotic flags, T-shirts, and bumper stickers with the “United We Stand” message were seen everywhere. Terror Management Theory explains that this is a way for Americans to reaffirm their faith in the American way of life. Along with this sense of patriotism, came both an outpouring of support for the United States military and an outcry for a military response. Although some students interviewed expressed the same sense of patriotism and support for a military response, there were also major doubts. This was particularly apparent when students were asked how they felt the United States should respond to the attacks.

Only about one third of those interviewed (36%), said that a military response was warranted by the United States. Almost half (44%) adamantly felt that a retaliatory response was unwarranted. Many viewed this patriotism as “jingoism.”

Many students questioned the idea of more violence in response to the attacks. While almost all were upset that the United States had been attacked and wanted to support any efforts to prevent further attacks, students questioned military action as the correct response. Using Kohlberg’s (1981) stages of moral development, this questioning by students of the military response falls at least into stage four. Kohlberg’s stage four suggests a level of reasoning that takes into account the needs of the larger society when making decisions. For example, this level of moral development might lead one to reason that a strict retaliation against the attackers might lead to more drastic social

consequences for all involved: more loss of life of innocent peoples both abroad and within the United States, possible economic concerns related to oil markets, and the implications for the future role of the U.S. military abroad. The comments of a pre-med student from Pennsylvania summed up this attitude.

But for the most part I felt like it really had this anger associated with it that was this getting back for revenge - this “blood for blood” type attitude. Nowhere did I feel like people were standing back and saying, “our ideals as an American society is justice, and our ideals are to make sure everyone feels like they are free and to free the world.”

This higher level of thinking could also be classified into Kohlberg’s stage five in which decisions are made based on the premise that all human beings have rights associated with life and liberty.

This attitude of skepticism, while not predicted by TMT, is symbolic of the shift of this subpopulation of Americans towards a more civic generation, as predicted by Strauss and Howe (1991). Many of the students interviewed questioned the motives of the President and the United States government, not a typical reaction of the general public. Furthermore, another characteristic of a civic generation is their outward focus. This, too, is evident among the students interviewed. Strauss and Howe suggest that a civic generation is interested improving the lives of the greater society. So, while TMT might predict that students would become more withdrawn in the days and weeks following September 11 (the “duct tape, bottled water, and plastic sheeting” phenomenon), students interviewed for this study produced quite the opposite response. Over half of those interviewed (58%) “took action” after 9/11. This action included attending vigils, donating blood, and participating in “speak-outs” in support of Muslims.

An energetic woman from Kentucky who was only two weeks into her first year of college on September 11 said,

I'm the type of person [who] when there's tragedy, it's like, "what do we need to do to fix this? What do we do to make this better?" I'm not one to start breaking down crying. I was like, "let's call these people, make sure they're ok. Everyone, how are you feeling, what do we need to do, let's take care of this."

This energy, passion, and desire to not only understand what happened and why, but also to figure out a peaceful means of preventing future violence was extremely evident in the population of students interviewed. The attacks of September 11 brought an emotional response from this relatively sheltered generation of college students and their overall response was one of enthusiasm and a need for change.

One final comment in this section on the direct, or short-term responses to September 11, 2001, addresses the level of support students sought out and received. In the immediate period following September 11, 2001, one might predict that students would turn towards one of two places for support. First, since most students interviewed attended college more than 500 miles from their home, the natural assumption would be that they turned towards their classmates and friends at college for support. Second, in reviewing two key traits of this generation relating to their relationship with parents – the fact that they are “special” and “sheltered” (Howe & Strauss, 2003) – another assumption might be that they would seek out their family for support. In this study, the data indicate that both family and friends provided support to students immediately following September 11, 2001. Forty-two percent of those interviewed received support from both family and friends, 24% received support from just their friends, 22% received support from just family, and 12% said that they did not require any support after 9/11.

In reviewing the direct effects of September 11 on students interviewed for this study, there are several key findings. Students experienced similar feelings to those of the general population: disbelief, fear, and depression. They also coped with the tragedy by seeking out religion, which also occurred in the general population. Within the Washington University sample of college students, non-whites and women reported higher levels of fear and depression than whites and men. The subpopulation of non-whites also changed religious habits at a higher level than that of the general population. These were all predictable responses, according to TMT.

For the direct effects, the notable trends not predicted by Terror Management Theory were increased levels of activism (as opposed to the withdrawal predicted by TMT) and a strong attitude of non-retaliation for the attacks. In general, students enrolled in college during the attacks of September 11 were interested in helping the larger community and did not advocate violence as a means for resolving terrorist action. This non-retaliation theme appears to be in direct contrast with Astin's CIRP data from 2002 in which a relatively high number of students (45%) supported an increase in military spending. The population from Washington University appears to have lower levels of support for a military response, with only 36% advocating a military retaliation. Influences at Washington University that might account for this difference are the Midwest location physically removed from the terrorist attacks, a higher percentage of international students than many institutions, and a more liberal curriculum and faculty. These themes of action and non-retaliation will be mirrored in certain distal responses to 9/11 such as patriotism and civic engagement, discussed below.

Discussion of Distal Effects

During the interviews, students were asked many questions about how the events of September 11 changed them in the long term. Nearly three out of four students interviewed (72%) characterized 9/11 as a defining moment in their lives. A business major from New York described his feelings.

This is going to be something that's in a text-book. It's something that our kids will probably ask us about. I think that looking down the road, it's something that I will always remember. I don't think I'll ever forget the images of the towers falling down, and all the destruction and havoc and people running and crossing the bridge and hearing the stories.

For a generation of students who had never before experienced a national tragedy of this magnitude, September 11 shattered feelings of security and changed the way they viewed the world.

Seeking understanding. Similar to the direct effects, there were some predictable distal responses. As TMT predicts, many students (48%) reported an increase in global awareness. Terror Management Theory predicts that individuals will seek answers/reasons for acts of terrorism and students did the same. They tried to understand how U.S. economic interests in the Middle East contributed to the attack. Many described becoming more aware about how people in other countries viewed the United States. A transfer student from California reflected,

I became more aware of U.S. capitalism, or at least how capitalism in the U.S. affects other countries or how it's damaged other countries at our expense. That was pretty much the premise of Osama Bin Laden's attack.

A college campus provides an outstanding venue for dialogue and inquiry. Students took advantage of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to further educate themselves on the motivations behind the terrorist attacks. This is apparent in the analysis of global awareness responses. Students enrolled as humanities majors, a

curriculum that often focuses on educating students about history, oppression, and politics, had the highest levels of global awareness (59%), when compared with science (25%) and business (0%) majors.

Patriotism. Terror Management Theory also predicts a rise in patriotism. About half of the students interviewed (48%) felt patriotic. A young man from Chicago stated that,

I definitely considered myself a proud American. If we know who did this to us, we go and attack them. I would be proud to serve and I wouldn't hesitate about it because it's my duty, because I'm an American.

This is the first time most of these students had experienced an attack on the United States, so the patriotic response was expected.

Acceptance of others. Terror Management Theory predicts a rise in bigotry after the attacks. The rise in bigotry results from individuals wanting to define and categorize the people responsible for the attacks, consequently individuals associated with the terrorist act, Muslims in this case, were considered in a negative light. A small percentage (12%) of those interviewed expressed feelings of hatred towards Muslims.

However, in both the category of patriotism and bigotry, the responses of students more often contained anti-patriotic comments and comments indicating an accepting attitude towards others. Although these data are counter to what might be expected from TMT, these findings are consistent with some of the theories of generational change. The next section will examine these unique findings in the areas of patriotism, bigotry/acceptance, civic engagement/career decisions, and political attitudes.

Unique findings. While slightly less than half of those interviewed (48%) expressed feelings of patriotism, 38% felt non-patriotic and 54% fell into a category called "skeptical patriotism." In the previous section, it was reported that many students

responded to the attacks with a renewed enthusiasm for change in societal values so that future attacks might be prevented. This was very clear in the responses about patriotism.

Patriotism meant revenge. It meant getting back at people. It wasn't this sense of like, "oh, we as a community should come together and make the people affected by it feel better"

Women and non-whites felt particularly disenfranchised by the sudden increase in patriotism. Sixty-three percent of women and 72% of non-whites reported that they did not feel patriotic in the aftermath of 9/11. Much of the patriotic sentiment in the media and popular culture conveyed a message of "united we stand" and if "you're not with us, you're against us," implying a sense of assimilation and sameness. For groups outside the societal mainstream, specifically women and minorities, this type of patriotism was frustrating. An African-American woman from Delaware described this sentiment.

Yeah now these attacks have happened, we're all going to join together and unify and show everybody else what a great country we are. I didn't feel that at all as a black female. I know that there's still so many problems that existed and that by becoming patriotic all of a sudden – those problems didn't disappear.

Interestingly enough, levels of patriotism was associated with the amount of news watched. While 48% of the overall population felt patriotic after September 11, 65% of people who watched more news felt more patriotic. Given many of the messages consistent with national pride and support of one's country that appeared in the news, this statistic is not surprising. However, further research is probably warranted on the type of news source related to levels of patriotism. During the last 30 interviews, data were collected on where students received their news. However, it was difficult to classify this information, so an analysis of patriotism by news source is not included in this study.

In addition to "anti" or "skeptical" patriotism, students also reported high levels of acceptance of others as opposed to feelings of bigotry. While Terror Management

Theory did not predict this, the work of Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) suggests that college influences students to become more altruistic and humanitarian. Additionally, Strauss and Howe (2003) predict that the Millennial generation will possess a team-oriented focus. Being able to work collaboratively with others who are “different” is valued by this generation. This “team orientation” suggests that students interviewed might provide a more accepting attitude towards those who are different from them, in this case, Muslims.

I felt so sorry for them... I had a lot of empathy for them because it was not their fault, but now because of whoever did this horrible thing, now they are being pinpointed.

Eighty-eight percent of those interviewed talked about being accepting of others. This is a significant proportion of the overall population of students interviewed.

There does appear to be a minor association between a lack of patriotism and acceptance of others. Students who expressed feelings of “anti-patriotism” expressed more comments about being accepting of others (93%) than the general population (88%). This would reinforce the previous concept that overt patriotism or jingoism can encourage more feelings of bigotry and reduce feelings of acceptance.

While it is still too early to survey this group of individuals to observe the influence of September 11, 2001 on their careers (many of the students interviewed graduated in either 2004 or 2005), they did report an impact of September 11 on their levels of civic engagement, their major and their career choices. In the previous chapter, civic engagement was defined as “an ongoing pattern of service to one’s community that could be linked to the events of September 11, 2001.” Approximately one third of those interviewed (34%) attributed a rise in civic engagement to September 11. In addition, many students (46%) stated that September 11, 2001 had an effect on their choice of

major and/or their choice of career. We know from Astin's (1993) work on college students that there are several factors that influence one's career choice, such as the careers of the student's parents and regular contact with a faculty member. For students enrolled in college on September 11, 2001, the tragic events of that day had an influence as well. A young woman from Chicago talked about this.

I really was interested in political science. [September 11] confirmed for me that I wanted to be at the forefront of figuring out policy. I felt I had something to contribute. That just sort of progressed after 9/11 and I can't say what would have happened if 9/11 hadn't happened.

There is a very strong relationship between increased civic engagement and the influence of September 11 on a students' major/career choice. In the overall population, 46% of students reported that 9/11 had an influence on their major/career. Within the group of students who reported high levels of "civic engagement," the percentage describing an effect on major/career choice was 71%. This suggests an almost linear progression of events that caused students to change their major/career in response to September 11. Following the tragedy, many students invested in more service related activities in their community. This increase in service, in turn, contributed to their decisions about their major and career.

A final distal response to September 11 is a shift in political beliefs. Approximately two-thirds of students interviewed (68%) reported a change in their political beliefs that was related to September 11. For most students, this involved a reinforcement of existing beliefs. An African American male from Illinois recalled, "I guess it reinforced my belief in multi-cultural society and more of a separation of church and state and my belief on individual rights and how important they are." This was predicted by the CIRP data collected by Astin between 2000 and 2001. The percentage

of students reporting that they frequently discussed politics rose sharply from a record low 16.4 % in 2000 to 20.9 % in 2001 (website reference:

<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/>).

A student's major was related to a change in political attitudes. The sample of humanities majors was identical (68%) to the sample population, in terms of the percentage of students who reported a shift in political attitudes. Science majors were slightly more likely to report a change in political attitudes (75%) and business majors were significantly less likely to report a change in political attitudes (40%). Further analysis of the curriculum in these majors, and the student demographics in these majors would need to be conducted in order to discuss these differences. One might interpret the discrepancy in the percentage of business majors to an assumption that most business classes do not focus on politics.

The distal responses to September 11, 2001 reveal a student population that has been strongly affected by the tragedy of that day. It influenced their knowledge of the global community, their feelings of acceptance, their support of their country, and even their future career aspirations. These data suggest a new civic generation that is willing to serve their community, in contrast to the apathy of Generation X. This group of students is skeptical about the motives of their government and strives to accept people who are different from them. One might predict a future generation of leaders who are not willing to accept the status quo and who sees the value of others.

All students do not share this overall optimism, however. Many of those students interviewed, particularly minority students, expressed high levels of fear and oppression in the post-9/11 environment. Thirty nine percent of the non-white students talked about feeling oppressed by elements in the post-9/11 environment, often by practices of racial-

profiling established by the Patriot Act, a piece of Federal legislation passed in 2001 to aid authorities in their pursuit of terrorists. This group expressed higher levels of depression (56%) than white students (44%). So while this civic-minded optimism of this next generation is important, the realities of oppression for individuals on the margins of the “mainstream” must not be overlooked.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research, it is difficult to generalize the results of this study to the entire population of students who were enrolled at Washington University on September 11, 2001. It is even more difficult to generalize the findings from Washington University to the entire United States college student population. For example, most students at Washington University come from at least 500 miles outside of St. Louis. There would likely be different reactions for students enrolled at more local or regional campuses. The academic focus of Washington University, particularly for students in the College of Arts and Sciences, the college of the majority of students interviewed, is unique. Some of the coursework in the College of Arts and Sciences allows students to explore the complex issues surrounding September 11. A campus with a different academic focus, such as the Naval Academy, might produce students with different opinions of September 11.

The technique of snowball sampling was used to recruit students for interviews. The tables in Chapter 3 indicate that this was a relatively diverse sample of students. However, many of those interviewed were students known to the interviewer or recommended by other students interviewed. Hence, there is a possibility of some error within the sample.

The timing of the study also may raise some bias. All interviews were conducted from March 2004 through December 2004. The first interview was a full two and a half years after September 11, 2001. It is possible that the full account of the feeling and opinions of those interviewed, particularly with regard to the direct or early effects, was affected by the time that had passed.

It is also likely that the opinions and values of those interviewed were partially shaped by the media spin on September 11. There were vast amounts of news coverage in the aftermath of September 11. We know from the data that many individuals (52%) watched more news. All of the interviews were conducted between March 2004 and December 2004, during the height of the 2004 Presidential Election. This was an election in which foreign policy related to September 11 was a pivotal campaign issue. This increased coverage likely had some effect on the interviews.

It should be noted that the distal definition is potentially problematic. For some, it might imply a level of permanent change in the individual as a result of 9/11. For the purposes of this research, however, distal referred only to the effects of 9/11 on an individual in the period discussed in the interview, one to three years post-9/11. Further research would need to be conducted to assess the level of permanent change to an individual.

Finally, one major difficulty with a study on the values and attitudes of college students is trying to decipher the changes in their values related to an outside event such as September 11, as opposed to the overall influence of college. We know from Pascarella and Terenzini's (1991) work on college students that during the course of their college experience they tend to become more civic-minded and their political views change. Astin's (1993) work with college students indicates that college influences

students to become more liberal on social issues. These are all changes in student values that this study has attributed to 9/11. There is likely some additional influence from the overall college experience, distinct from the events of September 11.

Significance of the Study

Very little research has been conducted on college student reactions to September 11, 2001. This study indicated a departure from some of the predictions of Terror Management Theory that suggested high levels of patriotism and bigotry in the wake of 9/11; neither of which were widely expressed by the students interviewed. However, this study reinforces the predictions from several theories on generational change that the values and attitudes of the Millennial generation (students born from 1980 – 2000) will be different from the generation before them. They will be much more outwardly focused and civic-minded. Essentially, this study provides the groundwork for further research on this topic, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Implications for Practice

The civic-minded orientation of this new generation of students has several important implications for college administrators. First, colleges should prepare for students who possess a high interest in service-related activities. Programs, both within the curriculum and outside of it, should offer opportunities for students to serve both the campus and local communities. Examples of these might include after school tutoring programs, campus speak-outs, and internship opportunities at local non-profit agencies.

Second, the career preparation programs and career centers should provide ample focus on service and transitional programs such as the Peace Corps, Americorps, and Teach For America. Gone are the “dot com” days of walking out of college into the six-figure salary of an Internet start-up company. Students who are interested in social

change seek options that will provide them with personal fulfillment in the areas of service and the helping professions.

Third, college staff should pay particular attention to students on the margins of the post-9/11 environment. This study revealed the impact that September 11 had on women and non-white students. These populations will need strong support and guidance in a societal environment where the Patriot Act, immigration policy, and other legislation will disadvantage populations that exist in great numbers in higher education. In this study, 100% of Muslim students interviewed felt oppression in the post-9/11 environment. It will be important for campuses to provide a sense of open-mindedness and security for this group.

Finally, administrators should prepare for conflict. The anti-patriotic or skeptically patriotic response to September 11, 2001, signifies a new generation that is not satisfied with the status quo. Students will focus particular attention on activities and protests that challenge existing policies that they believe contribute to societal injustice. At Washington University, students staged a 19-day sit-in during April 2005 protesting the lack of a living wage for University service employees. This sit-in is an example of the type of protest college administrators should expect.

Future research directions

This study suggests several areas that are worthy of further study. To begin, there are several subpopulations that could be examined further. Several have been mentioned already in this paper; women, non-whites, Muslims, and students from New York and Washington, D.C. Women were more likely to have their academics and their career choices affected, to exhibit more civic engagement, and to be more accepting of others. Women were less likely to watch the news as a coping mechanism and were generally

less patriotic. What are the reasons for this? Further research on the effects of September 11, 2001 on women might reveal these reasons.

Muslims and non-white students had their own unique reactions to September 11. They were more likely to be depressed, seek out religion, and have feelings of oppression than the general population. They were less likely to take action following 9/11 or feel patriotic. We have assumed for this study that this is because the overall post-9/11 environment marginalized these subpopulations, but additional studies with these students could confirm this.

Different types of schools may produce different reactions. More research is needed at other types of institutions to clarify similarities and differences between various colleges and universities. For example, it would be interesting to conduct a study on the community college student response to September 11. Community college students often are more integrated into the community where their schools are located and often have different career goals than students at residential four-year colleges.

One parameter for this study was that the students interviewed were enrolled in college at the time of the September 11, 2001 attacks. Since this study is attempting to make predictions for the “Millennials” (individuals born between 1980 and 2000), it would be appropriate to conduct a follow-up study on students who are just entering college now to compare and contrast the differences.

And finally, this study uses September 11, 2001 as a “secular crisis” (Strauss & Howe, 1991) to predict a shift in values. There have been other national events since 2001 such as the 2004 presidential elections and the devastating Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005 that have influenced college student values and beliefs. Further research into the

parallels in responses between these events and September 11 might reveal important patterns in generational values and ideas.

Conclusion

September 11, 2001 is a day that will forever be etched in the minds of most Americans. Never in recent history had an enemy they knew so little about killed so many innocent people on American soil. The horror and shock of the tragedy influenced students who were enrolled in college, just as much as the general population. This study examined the response of 50 students to the September 11 attacks.

College is a time of transition in the lives of young people that shapes the values and attitudes of adulthood. The response to September 11, 2001 foreshadows a more civic-minded group of young leaders who will commit themselves to serving their fellow human beings. Strauss and Howe describe the last civic generation as the “G.I. Generation,” the same generation referred to by Tom Brokaw as “the Greatest Generation,” the group of men and women who fought World War II and then came home to rebuild the American infrastructure to what we see today. Will “Generation 9/11” possess the same strength and perseverance as “the Greatest Generation”? Is September 11 the “secular crisis” that signals a shift in the way this group views the world around them? This study reveals a group of young people committed to the ideas of service and activism who questioned the motives of the government and who were concerned about the well-being of their fellow students, likely the next “greatest generation.”

Generations come in cycles. Just as history produces generations, so too do generations produce history (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 35).

So too will “Generation 9/11” shape the future of American society. Time will tell if this generation will become the strong, civic-minded leadership that defines the 21st Century.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Background information

1. What is your name?
2. What college/university do you attend?
3. What is your hometown?
4. Have you studied abroad? When/where?
5. What is your major?
6. What career do you plan to pursue after college?
7. Did you have any friends or relatives affected by 9/11? If yes, how were they affected?
8. How old were you/what grade/class level were you at the time of the attack?
9. Had you experienced any personal tragedy prior to 9/11? (such as the death of an immediate family member)
10. Are you (or were you at the time of the attacks) a practicing Muslim? Do you consider yourself to be a religious person? If so, what religion do you most closely affiliate with?
11. Prior to 9/11, had you ever lived overseas?
12. Prior to 9/11, had you or any of your immediate family members ever served in the military, national guard, or reserves?
13. Prior to 9/11, had you or any of your immediate family members ever served as a police officer or firefighter?
14. Of the following three choices, how would you describe your socioeconomic status growing up? Lower class, middle class, upper class...
15. What are the top three places where you get your news?

Part 1: That fateful day

Directions: Remember back to September 11, 2001

1. Where were you when you heard about the terrorist attacks?
2. What were your initial reactions and feelings?
3. Did you change your schedule in the aftermath of 9/11? (skipping classes, watching news reports, attending vigils or memorials)
4. When you found out that Al-Qaeda was responsible, what action did you want the U.S. to take?
5. How did you feel about Muslims in general?
6. What are the 3 strongest memories that you have of 9/11/01 and the immediate aftermath?
7. Did you make any major changes such as new career plans, new academic plans (such as choice of major or decision to study abroad), changes in personal relationships, changes in your schedule, and so forth?
8. How did your family and friends help you cope with the tragedy of 9/11? In turn, how did you help your friends and family?
9. Did you feel a renewed sense of patriotism? If so, how did this patriotism affect you?
10. Did you change your political attitudes as a result of 9/11/01?
11. Did you change your religious habits as a result of 9/11/01 (attend church more or less)?

Part 2: 6 months after the attacks

Directions: Go back to March, 2002. The Interim government of Hamid Karzi has been in power for 3 months. Most Taliban or Al-Qaeda have either fled the country or to the Tora Bora caves. The U.S. launches an attack south of Zormat to rout the 500-1,000 remaining Al-Qaeda fighters and their families.

12. Did you think that the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda was winding down? If so, why?
13. Were there changes in your views on religion as a result of the war on terrorism? If so, what were they?
14. Did you make changes in your personal routine to increase your sense of safety in light of the possibility of more terrorist attacks on U.S. soil? In general, did you feel less safe?
15. Did you feel more patriotic? If so, describe.
16. Did you have any physical side effects of 9/11 – added stress, anxiety, fears about safety, nightmares? Did any family members have physical side effects? If yes, explain.
17. Did the post-9/11 environment influence your personal, professional and academic choices? If so, how?

Part 3: 2004

Directions: As we approach the third anniversary of 9/11, I'd like to explore with you the impact of that day.

18. What feelings do you have now when 9/11/01 is mentioned?

19. What connects do you feel there are between 9/11 and the War in Iraq?
20. Have your feelings about Muslims and Arabs changed? If so, how?
21. Do you have spontaneous thoughts about 9/11 or are your memories triggered by news accounts or others' comments? Describe?
22. How will you commemorate the anniversary of 9/11 this year?
23. What fears do you have of further terrorist attacks?
24. Do you think that the U.S. is in more danger from terrorists now? Why?
25. In what ways has 9/11/01 been a defining point in your life?
26. At this moment in time, how would you characterize your career goals? Your goals for family?
27. Do you have any other comments that might provide us insight into the influence of 9/11 on young people?