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About TRIO Programs
TRIO refers to six programs funded by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. The original TRIO Programs are Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services. The name TRIO was retained even though more programs were added. The additional programs are Educational Opportunity Centers, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and a training program for TRIO staff. In general, TRIO programs are focused on providing educational opportunities to first-generation college students who come from low-income families and students with disabilities.

About Ronald E. McNair
Ronald Ervin McNair was born on October 21, 1950, in Lake City, South Carolina. He attended North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, where he graduated magna cum laude in 1971 with a Bachelor of Science degree in physics. He continued his education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning his PhD in 1976 and went on to become a recognized expert in the field of laser technology with the Hughes Laboratory.

In 1978, McNair realized his dream of becoming an astronaut; selected from a pool of ten thousand applicants for the space shuttle program, McNair became the second African American to fly in space. After his death aboard the space shuttle Challenger in 1986, Congress approved funding for the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, which is dedicated to the support and promotion of the high standards of achievement exemplified by McNair. Those who knew McNair characterized him as fearless, determined, and accustomed to applying all available resources to any problem he faced.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program at the State University of New York, College at Brockport
Designed for first-generation and low-income students as well as students from groups underrepresented at the doctoral level, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program at SUNY Brockport encourages talented students to pursue a doctoral degree. The program promotes graduate studies by providing participants with seminars and workshops germane to the pursuit of graduate education, a mentored summer research experience, and opportunities to present this research at professional conferences.

The Ronald E. McNair Summer Research Journal is a publication of the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. The McNair Program is a grant funded by the United States Department of Education and is administered by the Research Foundation of SUNY College at Brockport.

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Dear Readers:

I am pleased to introduce you to the ninth volume of the Ronald E. McNair Summer Research Journal. This journal is a compilation of the work our scholars do each summer as they learn to conduct research in their chosen field. Under the guidance of dedicated faculty mentors, McNair scholars design and implement projects that teach them the fundamentals of creating and using knowledge and provides them with their first taste of the graduate and professional world they are preparing to enter. The Summer Research Program takes our students beyond the average undergraduate experience, setting them apart from their peers, as it elevates their education to a level not usually available to students pursuing a bachelor’s degree. I am sincerely grateful to the 40 faculty mentors who invest so much of themselves in moving our students forward. The expertise and encouragement they provide is critical to the success of our McNair scholars, not only during their undergraduate years, but most importantly when they enter the competitive world of graduate school. The fact that 179 of our McNair alumni have successfully earned master’s degrees, 14 JD’s, three MD’s, and 24 doctoral degrees is a tribute to the quality of the work our mentors expect and elicit from their students. Those involved in nurturing our future professionals in this manner deserve to be highly commended. I look forward to seeing our scholars enter the ranks of academia and continue the process of personally investing in future generations, passing on what they have received through the dedication of our mentors, program staff, and campus community.

Thanks:

Once again our Associate Director, Ms. Herma Volpe-van Dijk, and her husband, Mr. Matthew Volpe, have contributed countless hours to create this wonderful showcase for our students’ work. We are very thankful as they continue to enhance our program with their expertise and tender loving care. Matt Volpe has served our program as a volunteer art director and enthusiastically shared his artistic talents with us during his free time. Thank you, Matt and Herma, for your commitment to our students and for setting a wonderful example of selflessness by promoting the efforts of low-income, first-generation students in such a beautiful package.

Acknowledgments:

The McNair staff would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. John Clark, Dr. Timothy Flanagan, Dr. Susan Stites-Doe and Dr. Jenny Lloyd who have assisted in strengthening our program this past year. Administered by the Office of Academic Affairs, the McNair Program benefits from a university-wide commitment to achieving our program goals. The U.S. Department of Education, other TRIO programs, the Research Foundation, and the entire institution collectively lend their efforts to the program’s success.

Barbara J. Thompson
Project Director:
Ronald E. McNair
Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program
This research project investigates female representation in romances, children’s picture books, and high school novels by referring to the information obtained through studies that have been conducted within the time period of forty years, as well as the information obtained by the researcher during her student teaching observation in the past three years in the middle and high school classrooms. This paper also exposes a strong correlation between the changes in the female position in literature and changes in women’s status in society, reinforcing the idea that literature and society closely resemble and shape one another.

Female representation in romances changed in accordance with the changes in social status of women. Women were represented as working outside of the house and as more economically independent, but they were not represented as self-sufficient or gender role conscious. Their lives continued to center around men and winning love from them by learning to gain men’s attention and their affection.

Findings of this project indicate changes in female representation in children’s picture books mostly in terms of quantity such as number of female characters present in the readings, while the overall improvement of female positions in terms of quality and variety of roles performed by females has not changed significantly compared to the findings of the past studies. Females continue to be limited to traditional roles, while male characters are more adventurous and perform a variety of roles, except for housework and care for children, which are traditionally seen as female roles. This change resembles the social distribution of power and roles between genders.

The comparison of the ratio between the female authors and female characters to male authors and male characters in the novels assigned for high school readings in the last forty years still shows males in drastic lead. While changes in female representation in children’s picture books are more considerable, female representation in most frequently assigned high school novels is still traditional and unchanged and predominantly shows women in a negative light. The examined studies and the author’s personal experience show that ten traditional novels have been most frequently assigned in high school reading requirements. These novels are interpreted by using a traditional approach over decades confirming that gender bias in society and high school novels persists.

This project also criticizes educators and major educational institutions for lacking pedagogical methods adequate for stimulating the equality of genders and for their low input in constructing the positive representation of women by introducing newer approaches in literary analysis. The paper argues that construction of positive images of women should not be done through banishing traditional work from the literary canon, but through revisiting these traditional novels and interpreting them in accordance and interests of today’s readers.
Background:
Hip-hop music emerged in the 1970’s as a countercultural strategy to deter inner city youth from the influence of violence and gangs; it was a form of social expression. The dominant images in early hip-hop music videos were reflective of black urban culture with an emphasis on black empowerment. Current hip-hop music videos differ substantially from those of the past. Today, the dominant images and symbols in these videos are less about empowerment and social justice and more about materialism and the exploitation of Black women. The purpose of this research is to recognize and investigate how contemporary hip-hop music videos simultaneously reflect and reproduce race, gender, and class oppression of Black American women.

Methods:
A qualitative investigation was conducted with nine Black American women between the ages of 18-24 attending the University of Missouri. The face-to-face interviews were to assess how they felt and what they thought about the images that appear in contemporary hip-hop music videos. Questions focused on topics such as: meanings imbedded in the images and their relationship to stereotypes of Black women, rationales for the use of particular images, attributions of accountability, and the consequences of these video images for the lives of Black women. The interview transcripts were analyzed for common themes in responses to the questions.

Preliminary Findings:
Several themes emerged from the data. A few of them are: “Images of Black women in music videos differ from everyday Black women” and “Women in music videos are ‘other’ Black women.” The respondents felt that the men (both black and white) they interact within their everyday lives expect them to act, dance, and dress like women in music videos. Many of the respondents attribute the use of these images to the notion that “sex sells” and do not see these images as the exploitation of Black women.
In today’s society, outsourcing has become a highly debated topic in the United States. Outsourcing is the contracting out of services and activities to a third party. In actuality, outsourcing is really a broader term for the real issue, which is offshoring. Offshoring is more extensive than outsourcing because offshoring is when businesses move American operations to countries overseas. India, the Philippines, and China are just a few examples of countries to which offshoring takes place. This process has caused hundreds of thousands of American jobs to be lost, which has left many people questioning why offshoring is happening and what will happen in the future.

The process of offshoring has actually been going on for decades. As early as the 1950’s, manufacturing jobs have been offshored in several industries including textiles, electronics, and automobiles. In the last several years outsourcing, and specifically offshoring, have come back into the spotlight as a topic of debate related to unemployment rates, the ethics of offshoring, and its positive and negative effects on the United States.

The purpose of this project is to analyze the effects of offshoring on the job market and the economy. Through literature review and collating information this paper was produced. First, the parts of outsourcing that have the most influence on the job market and the economy were brought to light. The research consisted of articles, television specials devoted to the topic, and forums held by experts in the field. By examining several sources and taking advantage of statistics and examples, the information provided helped to form a solid foundation to base the results and output of the project.

Originally, this project was started to find out what types of jobs would be available in the future if offshoring continued. The answer to that question was in the results, but more importantly what offshoring truly means for mainly America, but also for other countries came to light. Regardless of the debate over the positive or negative effects of offshoring, it is going to continue. Offshoring is already so entrenched in our culture, since it is not a new concept, that it is clear now that many view offshoring as an expansion opportunity to lower costs and increase productivity, even if it is at the expense of domestic jobs. There is no way to completely stop the United States from offshoring; the process is necessary to remain competitive globally. However, depending on how much attention the issue receives, America may see some new attempts to limit the amount and fashion in which offshoring occurs. Luckily, in the United States there are a great number of jobs in service industries, which cannot be transferred overseas. As time goes on, the job market will require more education of the work force to accommodate the service related jobs.

In order to avoid negative economic consequences, Americans should continue to educate themselves and join one of the suggested fields of employment that have expected growth potential, such as information technology.
In my career as a Licensed Funeral Director, I have gained knowledge on how the survivor of a deceased loved one experiences grief following the initial shock of learning of that person’s death. Grief is a normal process which sometimes intensifies immediately following the interment of the deceased or perhaps a week or so later.

Grief is the emotional experience the survivor undergoes as they attempt to continue to lead a healthy life following the death of a loved one. Due to our unique characteristics, the relationships we form are also unique. Keeping this in mind, the loss felt by one survivor will differ from the loss felt by another survivor. Because of the detachment, the survivor will sometimes feel a void that is difficult to fill, increasing the need for assistance by a trained professional.

Grief counseling is not remedy administered to the survivor; grief counseling is the support provided by a trained professional to the survivor as they make the adjustment to continue their life without their loved one. Aftercare is a form of assistance provided by a trained funeral director who chooses to continue in the care provided for the survivors after the funeral. During the first six to twelve months following death, aftercare services may include telephone calls, support group sessions, mail correspondence, one-on-one counseling, and memorial or candle light vigils. This research will support the claim that funeral directors trained in grief counseling will have a positive effect on survivors who utilize these services.

Using a survey of funeral directors from the Western New York area, along with interviews conducted with survivors who have experienced the journey through the grief process, the purpose of this research is to prove that the survivor who seeks aftercare services will experience a healthier journey versus that of the survivor who does not seek any assistance at all. The survey comprises of funeral directors selected from the yellow page directories of the cities of Buffalo and Rochester, New York. The survey questionnaire elicits Likert Scale (1 to 5 point), yes or no, and a few short answer responses. The research also consists of personal interviews with several local funeral directors who are recognized as aftercare specialists in the communities they serve, as well as some survivors who have experienced the journey through the grief process. Some of the survivors will have sought grief counseling; others will not have. To remain in congruence with the research, the selected participants for these interviews are also from the Buffalo and Rochester areas.

Many survivors will experience the grief process without the need for assistance of a trained professional. This study shall serve as a tool to enlighten those who find it difficult to move forward in their journey or the continuance of their life without the physical presence of their loved one.
African American Men And Cultural Identity: How Do Media Shape Society’s Perceptions?

The cultural identity of the modern African American man is formed by the tension between the traditions of the extraordinarily resilient African American family and the perpetuation of a fictional image portrayed through the mass media.

This paper will show how this tension between traditional familial culture and its portrayal in the media shapes both society’s perception of African American men and how these men see themselves in modern society.

Television showcases this system of racism perpetuated through the media. Specifically negative stereotypes are assigned to people of color causing mainstream America to associate African American men in particular with criminality and violence.

Scholar Andrew Billingsley wrote in 1992 that the African American family is an intimate association of persons of African descent who are related to one another by either blood, marriage, formal adoption, informal adoption, or by appropriation, sustained by a common residence in America.

This paper will show that African culture is deeply rooted in a patriarchal society, which practices polygamy and places the man as the head of the household. Women were equally important in that society as the child bearers, but hold subordinate status to men in the class hierarchy. Tradition held that it was every man’s duty to marry, provide food and shelter for his family and continue his lineage through offspring. Male children were especially highly valued and it was thought to be a blessing from God if the firstborn child were a son. These traditions are an intricately woven tapestry of interconnections between people, earth, heavens, ancestral spirits and the gods, creating a unique harmony and balance.

However, with the invasion of Western influences in Africa, the traditional family would now become the African American family, augmented and forever changed. The terror of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade deconstructed the traditional African family structure and supplanted it with a complete reversal of roles between men and women.

The African man, once fierce and predestined to carry on the customs of his forefathers, in a cruel turn of events became the white man’s property, enslaved, emasculated and oppressed. Therefore, the African women became the surrogate heads of households because African men were not allowed to be that which their identity dictated, the true head of the household.

The project will show that the ideology behind slavery as one deeply rooted in institutionalized racism, classism, imperialism and sexism permeates the consciousness of future generations to this day.

It will also show that although the institution of slavery was burned to the ground, and despite the ratification of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution of the United States, the abolishment of Jim Crow legislation and the subsequent victories of the Civil Rights movement, institutionalized racism remains covert in society and manifests itself in the modern media’s fictionalized portrayals of African American males while shaping their cultural identities.
This research presents a chronological study of the armed conflict that has taken place in Colombia during the past six decades. The violence experienced everyday in Colombia has contributed to a misguided reputation of the country and its people; therefore, this research focuses on the analysis of the social, political and economic factors that have contributed to the current situation in this Latin American country.

I was born in Colombia in 1979. On December 30, 1993, a car bomb exploded in front of our home, taking the lives of my grandmother and grandfather and leaving the rest of the family in complete disbelief. In 1999, I was able to immigrate to the United States in search of better opportunities. As a McNair scholar, I was offered the opportunity to conduct an independent research project. I decided to choose this topic for my research because the violent situation in my native country has touched my family in such a personal way.

My research presents a historic account of the Colombian conflict dating back to the assassination in 1946 of Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, an important political leader.

The study also explores the connections between the Cuban Revolution and the ideology that later on would transpire in the creation of revolutionary movements known around the world such as the FARC “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia” and ELN “National Army of Liberation.”

The research also looks at the history and ideology of these revolutionary groups and the negative impact caused by their involvement with drug lords of the country. The study also explores the impact of the FARC and the ELN on the economy, politics and social justice in Colombia.

It is my goal to present a clear and neutral perspective on the conflict in Colombia, thus demystifying the current state of affairs. I also hope to create a voice for the Colombian people so that their firm demand for social justice may be heard.
With the constant growing and expanding of technology, businesses and globalization as a whole, people from different cultures are coming in more contact with each other than ever before. This is why it is very important that we learn and understand what is acceptable and what is not acceptable within a particular culture.

To find out about some important differences between Italian and American culture with regard to verbal and nonverbal communication, the first part of this research project consisted of a literature review. However, I found very little recent literature that related particularly to Italian culture. Most of the literature was at least fifteen years old. There was also very limited literature available on Italian non-verbal communication such as gestures. The second part of my research project will therefore consist of a visit to Siena, Italy, to observe specifically the type of verbal and nonverbal communication that is common to that area of the country.

In particular, I will focus on the value of time as it relates to nonverbal communication. For instance, in the literature I researched, I found that many Italians tend to have meals that last up to three hours every night. It seems that mealtime is thus highly regarded in this culture. I will therefore conduct interviews with the local Sienese to find out how long their pranza (lunch time) and cena (dinner time) usually last, and why these long meal times are so important. I will also research what constitutes appropriate discussion topics during dinner, who is usually at the table, and how table manners are different. Some additional questions are: Where do they eat? How many courses do they eat? Do they watch TV or read the newspaper while eating? I will also use informal observations to further underscore my project.

I expect to find a loving, compassionate people who value their time with their family, people that sit down to the dinner table together each night and spend quality time with their loved ones. I anticipate that this will be a more collective society rather than an individualistic society.

My goal is to provide new research data that confirms and/or refutes the existing, outdated information and undermines existing stereotypes. My sincere hope is that this project will benefit future relations and enhance Americans’ appreciation of the Italian culture.
This research tries to uncover the obstacles that plague many African American females in contemporary corporate America. This research also asks some difficult questions such as: “Why do African American females often find themselves without a mentor in their workplace?” and “Do culture and background have a significant impact on their ability to succeed in the corporate world?” It also attempts to uncover opportunities and support networks that can be utilized to help identify advancement opportunities. While it identifies these resources, it also questions why not more resources are in place. Finally, this research investigates resources that may have the potential to be helpful in securing more chances for advancement.

This research also addresses the issue of why many African American women feel as though they are held to a higher standard than any other minority group. Is there a consensus among African American women that there is a hollow commitment to the advancement of women and minorities in most companies?

The hypothesis going into this research is that although successful professional women come from widely diverse family backgrounds, educational experiences, and community values, they share a common assumption upon entering the workforce: “I have a chance.” Along the way, however, they discover that people question their authority, challenge their intelligence, and discount their ideas. African American women also feel that in order to be accepted, they are expected to assimilate, a condition that is often impossible for them to fulfill. This attitude or culture in corporate America may create a foundation for the barriers to continue to exist, which then creates an environment in which advancement above mid-level management is more difficult to achieve for African American women.

This research is significant because even though African American women represent an important and growing source of talent, they currently represent only 1.1% of corporate officers in Fortune 500 companies. This research will uncover ways that we can use to change those statistics for the better. Although 75% of Fortune 500 companies have formed diversity programs, there is still a need for corporations to implement special programs that encourage mentoring for minorities and African American women in particular, as well as address the disparity of African American women with respect to top-level management.

Research will be conducted through telephone interviews and will include an extensive literature review. Subjects will include some 20 women of African American descent who hold positions in management at both for-profit and not-for-profit agencies.

The interviews will be used to inspire an informative conversation about the obstacles and advancement opportunities these women have encountered as they ascend professionally. The questions are open ended to encourage a sharing of experiences. The responses will be audiotaped.
Purpose.
Many colleges and universities have difficulty increasing traditional age, underrepresented minority students, particularly African Americans. The majority of colleges and universities have tried many methods of obtaining a more diverse population, but few have worked well. This study is important because it uses a readily available data source to segment based on ethnic background. Using simple analytical methods and basic marketing principles will help SUNY Brockport’s admissions office examine what students are actually looking for in a college.

Method.
This study reviewed the answers from the 2003 SUNY Brockport Freshmen Survey. The population demographics were incoming freshmen, age 17 to 20. The study analyzed the segments of freshmen based on how they responded, using a cross-tabulation method. This method presents and relates data with two or more variables. It is used to analyze and discover relationships in the data. When using cross tabs, marketers pair two questions to understand marketing relationships and find effective marketing actions (Marketing 7th ed. / Roger A. Kerin McGraw-Hill). Using this method the study broke down the freshmen class into African American and non-African American. The study reviewed those questions that gave a more in-depth look at the freshmen, and what influenced them to attend SUNY Brockport. This study is exploratory because there were only 39 African Americans out of 940 non-African Americans, a relatively small population.

Results.
The study showed that African American freshmen who come to SUNY Brockport have a high self-image of their leadership ability and an extremely strong drive to achieve. The students also rated themselves as having a very high intellectual and social self-confidence level. When choosing a college, they paid avid attention to the quality of jobs the college’s graduates get, the academic and social reputation, and the amount of financial assistance. Students wanted to gain general education and appreciation of ideas, become more cultured, and be better prepared for graduate and professional schools. The study also discovered that these students were more attracted to a website that provided helpful information than from an actual campus tour.

Conclusions.
Some changes in the methods of recruiting African American students can be made such as a better prospective student’s website which emphasizes the academic and social aspects of the university. African American freshmen at SUNY Brockport appear to be very driven, and have a high propensity to achieve. They also have high expectations from themselves and their college. One way to target these students is to showcase current African American students in leadership positions and highlight the supportive, educational environment.

This version of the freshmen survey will allow an admissions manager to do this type of study without specific marketing research training. The methodology used in this study can be implemented at any school.
The minority population in the United States is growing at a high rate when compared to the overall population. For this reason it is imperative that marketers develop web-based messages that attract minority groups as well as the majority group.

It is the webmaster’s job to present a website that contains design elements that are going to attract and appeal to the website’s target market segment. With a vast number of elements to choose from such as security, F.A.Q., navigation, interaction, accessibility, content, design, formatting, and feedback etc, the process of deciding which elements to incorporate, and how to integrate each element can be very tough. It is this process which this research examines. The initial goal of this research is to determine which key elements of a website may be modified to communicate better with a specific market segment, in particular, what website elements work best with African Americans.

This study looks at middle class males and females of the age group 21-40. This segment makes up a huge percent of the World Wide Web users in the U.S. This research is not intended to solely reaffirm the obvious means by which advertisers target through the use of visually appealing imagery, such as the use of African American images and figures to target African Americans. This research also explores the other elements and ultimately determines if the differences in culture, society, and race affect specific elements of a website.

This research will consist of a literature review examining the techniques used in targeting African Americans, as well as examining the elements that webmasters incorporate into websites. Through further review, these elements are narrowed down to the most effective elements of a quality website. Finally, through qualitative assessment of specific websites, these elements are narrowed to the four key elements that can be modified to adjust to target market segments.

The four key elements that have been determined to exhibit the highest probability of being modified to adjust to the target market are navigation, accessibility, design, and content. The next step in the research project is to examine these elements and establish a hypothesis on how each one is adapted to uniquely appeal to African Americans.

The final part of this research is to test its theory concerning the modification of these key elements. This test will be performed using representatives from the target market segment and a control group. They will be shown websites that contain virtually identical information. The only noticeable difference between the sites will be the design elements deliberately modified to specifically attract the intended target market segment. The respondents are asked to inform the researcher on measures of communication effectiveness. This test will support or reject my hypothesis and lead to useful guidelines for webmasters.

What are the design elements that better communicate with African American market segments?

Jermaine Stukes
Mentor: John T. Gardner, PhD
Business Administration and Economics
The problem that I will investigate is whether there are class and race differences in attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment as a means of disciplining children. This is an important issue because corporal punishment is a very controversial topic, with many debates over whether it harms children or not. While the present research does not enter into these debates, I would like instead to determine which sociological factors might be associated with attitudes towards corporal punishment. Therefore, the research to be presented is not going to provide any answers about the desirability or non-desirability of corporal punishment but it will enable these debates to proceed in a more informed manner.

The research techniques used to accomplish this goal will be various descriptive statistical procedures (such as crosstabulation) and a method called the multivariate regression analysis. This technique entails the use of multiple variables to predict an outcome. The data set that I will be analyzing is the General Social Survey, which is a Social Indicator Research project funded by the federal government. First fielded in 1972, the GSS is an in-person interview that usually gathers information from anywhere from 1,300 to 3,000 people every other year who together form a representative sample of the US population. The questions that I have decided to analyze from the GSS include the respondents’ race, highest degree obtained, the annual household income earned, and whether or not he or she agrees with the use of spanking as a means of disciplining children. I have used multiple waves of data coming from 1993, 1998 and 2002.

This is a worthwhile project because it will add reliable information to an intense public debate that has been going on for many years. While it will not provide many answers that may clear up the debate, it will be invaluable to other researchers as they try to find answers to why corporal punishment occurs and in what homes it is more likely to occur in, should it turn out that there is a correlation between attitudes towards corporal punishment and socio-Economic status or race. Should such an association be documented, then further research can be undertaken to find out whether corporal punishment actually occurs in these households more often than other households, and what the source of these attitudes may be. Overall this will be adding more empirically based information to the public debate over whether or not corporal punishment is harmful.

Preliminary results indicate that there is a statistically significant association between attitudes towards spanking on the one hand, and race and educational degree on the other hand. Specifically, Black respondents are more likely than white respondents to favor the use of spanking, and people with lower levels of education are more likely to favor it than their higher educated counterparts. By contrast, household income exhibits only a weak association with attitudes towards spanking.
Abstract
Men who have sex with men (MSMs) comprise 50.16% of the population living with HIV and AIDS. Two areas of interest in the study of HIV risk behaviors have been the effects of age and treatment optimism on risk behavior among MSMs. The present study examines survey data from 1996 and 2004 and studies level of risk behaviors as it relates to survey year and age cohort. Number of unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) partners increased from 1996 to 2004 only for men who were 36-41 in 1996. In a post hoc analysis, younger gay men did report a higher rate of inconsistently or never using condoms in 2004. Discussion of safer sex decreased from 1996 to 2004. HIV testing decreased from 1996 to 2004, especially among younger and older age groups. Conversely, sex with a nonprimary partner decreased from 1996-2004. HIV prevention efforts should focus on education about the risks and limits of protease inhibitors and target people under 50. Future research should investigate treatment optimism and other factors that may have affected risk behaviors.

Introduction
As of 2002 there had been 886,575 documented cases of AIDS in the United States. In that same time period, there had been 501,669 known deaths from AIDS (Center for Disease Control (CDC), 2003a). In 1995, improved medications yielded a 50% decrease in the HIV/AIDS mortality rate and a similar decrease in the progression to AIDS diagnoses among HIV positive people (CDC, 2003b). Nevertheless, HIV incidence and AIDS diagnosis and mortality remain significant. Recently, HIV/AIDS research and discussion has shifted from men who have sex with men (MSM) to women and minorities. While these groups are worthy of attention, MSMs still comprise 50.16% of the population living with HIV and AIDS, based on 30 areas with confidential name-based testing. Additionally, 47.46% of all known cases of AIDS have been MSMs and 24.82% of all deaths from AIDS have been MSMs (CDC, 2003a). Therefore, the need for prevention and treatment research that is relevant to MSMs continues.

Several studies have examined the variables that influence HIV risk-taking behavior. One variable that has been examined is age. Some speculate that younger gay men may be more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) than older gay men, therefore putting themselves and possibly their partners at risk for HIV infection.

Hospers and Kok reviewed literature examining variables that are related to sexual risk-taking behavior. They reported that several studies have found a negative correlation between age and sexual risk taking among gay men. Many researchers in the 1980s and early 1990s had found that younger men use condoms less regularly and engage in more unprotected anal intercourse than older men (Hospers & Kok, 1995).

The findings of Crepaz, Marks, Mansergh, Murphy, Miller, and Appleby (2000) contrasted with Hospers and Kok’s (1995) findings. They found no significant difference in amounts of UAI between men under 25 and men over 25.
for men without primary partners. Only among gay men with primary partners, did younger gay men (i.e., under 25) engage in more UAI than older men (Crepaz et al., 2000). Because these people have primary partners with whom they are engaging in UAI, the level of risk involved is potentially reduced, and therefore, presumably not as critical to the incidence of HIV infection. Because of the inconsistencies in findings, the present study seeks to evaluate the role of age as a determinant of sexual risk taking behavior among MSMs.

Another review found that unprotected anal sex among MSMs increased from 37% in 1993 to 50% in 1996 (Wolitski, Valdiserri, Denning, & Levine, 2001). Some researchers attribute this increase to HIV treatment optimism caused by the advent of replace protease inhibitors with highly active anti-retroviral therapy (HAART). These researchers believe that positive images of HIV positive people and minimization of negative aspects of HIV and HAART in pharmaceutical advertisements may lead to increased risk behaviors. It has also been speculated that testing of vaccine candidates, availability of post-exposure therapy, and viral load monitoring may influence people’s perception of risks and consequences of HIV infection. Furthermore, decreased visibility and gaps in prevention services may decrease the salience of HIV infection, minimizing risk and consequences of HIV infection (Wolitski et al., 2001).

Kalichman, Nachimson, Cherry, and Williams (1998) found that 23% of men who engaged in UAI experienced treatment optimism, endorsing the statement that it is safe to have UAI with someone with an undetectable viral load. Only 5% of people not engaging in UAI endorsed the statement. The sample as a whole perceived risk to be lower when the individual has an undetectable viral load (Kalichman et al., 1998). This data suggests that treatment optimism would lead to increased UAI. This increase may lead to a resurgence of HIV infection. Interestingly, the study also found no relationship between age and HIV risk behaviors (Kalichman et al., 1998).

A more recent, international study on HIV optimism found no relationship between HIV optimism and age. Furthermore, they found that most respondents have realistic views of the benefits and drawbacks of HIV treatments, rather than optimism. However, there was an association between optimism and UAI. Those who engaged in UAI had higher mean optimism scores (International Collaboration on HIV Optimism, 2003). Essentially, the study found that those with HIV optimism were the minority, but that the optimistic people were more likely to engage in UAI.

The present study seeks to examine the relationship of age and HIV optimism with sexual risk taking. The study looks at six age cohorts, over the course of eight years. The study compares the cohorts before and after HAART became widespread in order to determine if age, HIV optimism, or an interaction is a determining factor of sexual risk taking.

**Method**

**Sample**

Across nine years, a total of 1025 MSMs participated in the study. The present study only used the data from 1996 and 2004, and there were 120 and 123 surveys returned from MSMs, respectively. Because each year represented independent samples of the same population, and the goal was to make statistical comparisons from year to year, it was important to establish that the annual samples were similar enough to justify an assumption of having sampled from the same population of MSMs. Statistical comparisons of demographic variables yielded only one significant differences. The total sample was comprised of 91% Caucasians, 2.9% African Americans, 2.9% Hispanics, 0.8% Asians, 0.8% Native Americans, and 1.2% other ethnicity ($X^2 (5) = 6.55, p = .256$). The average age of respondents was 38.38 (SD = 11.194), and included subjects from 18 to 70 years of age ($t (244) = 1.77, p = .079$). The average annual income was $37,925 (SD = 28,724, $t (227) = 1.81, p = .071$). The average number of years of education was significantly different, but only by less than one year ($M_{96} = 16.24$, $SD = 2.80$; $M_{04} = 15.37$, $SD = 2.50$; $t (232) = 2.52, p = .013$). Although the samples were similar, and therefore comparable, the higher education levels may limit the external validity, or generalizeability of these samples.
In addition, although the ethnicity reflects the demographics of the Buffalo, NY area, this data does not include enough ethnic minorities to make statistical inferences. However, age and income were distributed well.

**Instrument**

Questions were printed on a legal size paper, which was folded in fourths with a self-addressed, business reply postage paid panel on the outside. The survey included items adapted from other studies measuring demographics, sexual behavior, HIV antibody testing and status (Scheidt & Windle, 1995), and attitudes toward HIV severity and susceptibility (Kalichman et al., 1998). Sexual behavior, age, and year were analyzed for the present study.

Age Cohorts: Respondents were divided into six age cohorts, so that in 2004, all respondents had moved up one age group, but were still in the same cohort. In 1996 18-24 year olds were in cohort 1, and people in cohort 1 in 2004 were 26 to 33. People in cohort 2 were 26 to 33 in 1996 and 34 to 41 in 2004. People in cohort 3 were 34 to 41 in 1996 and 42 to 49 in 2004. People in cohort 4 were 42 to 49 in 1996 and 50 to 57 in 2004. People in cohort 5 were 50 to 57 in 1996 and 58 to 65 in 2004. People in cohort 6 were 58 to 65 in 1996 and 66 to 73 in 2004. There was no significant difference in the distribution across cohorts between 1996 and 2004 ($X^2 = 7.066, df = 5, p = .216$). See Table 1.

Sexual Behavior in the Most Recent Episode: This set of questions included the choice of partner, a checklist of sexual behaviors, representing the sexual repertoire, a checklist of substances (e.g., alcohol), and two questions regarding discussion of HIV status and prevention. For this study, the choice of partner and sexual repertoire checklist were analyzed. For choice of partner, respondents indicated sex with either “your primary or regular partner,” which was coded as primary partner, or one of three other options coded as nonprimary partner: “an occasional but not regular sexual partner,” “someone you knew, but had never had sex with,” “someone you did not know and had never had sex with” (Scheidt & Windle, 1995). The sexual repertoire checklist requested that respondents indicate, “Which of the following did you do at that time? (Check all that apply)” and included anal sex with protection (e.g., condom) and anal sex without protection. These items were developed in consultation with existing research, HIV educators, and members of the gay and lesbian communities to insure content validity.

There was also a question that asked if the respondent had discussed ways of preventing HIV transmission with their partner before their last sexual encounter. The respondent had a choice of indicating that they or their partner had brought it up, they didn’t remember, or it had not been discussed. This question was adapted from Scheidt and Windle (1995).

Sexual Behavior in the Last Year: Adapted from Scheidt and Windle (1995), three questions asked respondents to indicate the number of sexual partners, anal or vaginal sex partners, and unprotected anal or vaginal sex partners during the previous year. These questions were used to divide respondents into four categories to look at consistency of condom use. The categories were “No Anal,” “Inconsistent Condom Use,” “Always Use Condoms,” and “Never Use Condoms.”

HIV Testing and Status. Also adapted from Scheidt and Windle (1995), three questions asked respondents to indicate how many times they had been tested for HIV, how many months it had been since their last test, and what the result had been of the most recent test (i.e., positive, negative, I don’t know, I didn’t get my results). These responses were used to categorize people two ways. The first way was: people who had been tested within the last year and people who had not. The second way was: people who had been tested in the past three years and people who had not.

**Procedure**

Surveys were distributed during June of each year from 1996 to 2004. Surveys were distributed in two ways, as an insert in a magazine published by a community based HIV/AIDS service organization and by volunteers and staff at Gay Pride events. In 1996 4000 surveys were distributed in a gay feature magazine, to a mailing list, and as free pick to ups in stores, restaurants and bars. Another 500 were distributed at Gay Pride events. In 1996, 174 total
surveys were returned for a response rate of 3.87%. In 2004, 849 surveys were distributed at gay pride events with a nominal incentive, with 260 returned, yielding a 30.6% response rate. Analysis of other years indicated that few surveys distributed in magazines were returned. Presuming that most of the 196 returned surveys were distributed at gay pride events, the response rate would be 34.8%, similar to the 2004 response rate.

Results

Number of Unprotected Anal Sex Partners: Due to a few extreme outliers, a log transformation was performed on responses indicating how many UAI partners each respondent had reported during the past year in order to correct the skew. No significant effect of year (F = 1.055, df = 1, p = .306) or age cohort (F = .176, df = 5, p = .971) on number of unprotected sex partners was found. However, there was an interaction between year and age cohort (F = 2.675, df = 5, p = .023). The interaction was such that there was no change in the variable from 1996 to 2004 except for age cohort 3 (who were 34 to 41 in 1996 and 42 to 49 in 2004). They increased number of UAI partners from a mean of 0.26 to 2.32. See Table 2.

For the categorical variables, a chi square analysis was done to determine whether or not there were main effects of age cohort or survey year on the dependent variables.

Unprotected Anal Sex In The Last Sexual Episode: There was no significant change in reported UAI in the last episode from 1996 to 2004 (X2 = 0.036, df = 1, p = .880). There was also no significant difference for reported UAI in the last episode across age cohorts (X2 = 0.737, df = 5, p = .981). Overall, the reported UAI was 18.6% (n = 34).

Discussing HIV Transmission Prevention Before The Last Sexual Episode: In 1996, 57.7% (n = 45) reported having discussed prevention of HIV transmission with their partner before the last episode, but in 2004, 33.0% (n = 34) reported having discussed prevention, a significant decrease (X2 = 10.99, df = 1, p = .001). However, there was no main effect for age cohort on discussion of prevention (X2 = 8.157, df = 5, p = .148).

Consistency of Safer Sex: There was no significant difference between survey years for consistency of safer sex (X2 = 7.189, df = 3, p = .066) and no significant difference for age cohort (X2 = 18.391, df = 15, p = .243). Over all, “never condom use” was reported by 26.5% (n = 54); “inconsistent condom use” was reported by 13.7% (n = 28); “always condom use” was reported by 29.9% (n = 61); “no anal sex” was reported by 29.9% (n = 61). However, a post hoc analysis revealed an interaction between age cohort and survey year.

Specifically, in 1996 there was no relationship between age cohort and consistency of safe sex (X2 = 16.38, df = 18, p = .017). In 2004, “never condom use” was reported more frequently by 18 to 49 year olds and 66 to 73 year olds (range 34.8% to 50.0%). “Inconsistent condom use” was reported less frequently among 50 to 57 year olds (7.1%) and 66 to 73 year olds (0.0%) and more frequently among 18 to 24 year olds (20.7%) and 25 to 33 year olds (35.1%). “Always condom use” was reported less frequently among 42 to 49 year olds (11.9%), 50 to 57 year olds (12.5%) and 58 to 65 year olds (12.5%) and most frequently among 66 to 73 year olds (25.0%). “No anal sex” was reported most frequently by 50 to 57 year olds (56.3%) and 58 to 65 year olds (62.5%) and less frequently by 18 to 25 year olds (17.2%) and 25 to 33 year olds (10.8%). In sum, age seems to have had an effect only in 2004, with younger MSMs reporting more risk behavior.

Primary Partner: In 1996 64.7% (n = 75) of people reported that their most recent partner was a nonprimary partner and in 2004, that number had significantly decreased to 41.2% (n = 42)(X2 = 12.032, df = 1, p = .001). However, this variable did not differ across age cohorts (X2 = 4.274, df = 5, p = .511).

HIV Testing In The Last Year: Respondents were divided into two groups: People who had been tested in the last year and people that had not been tested in the last year. There was no main effect for survey year (X2 = 2.694, df = 1, p = .101) or for age cohort (X2 = 2.441, df = 5, p = .785). However, in a post hoc analysis there was a significant decrease in HIV testing rates from 1996 to 2004 for age cohort two (X2 = 12.36, df = 1, p < .001) and five (X2 = 6.00, df = 1, p = .014). Within age cohort two,
in 1996 54.5% (n = 30) had been tested in the last year but in 2004, only 22.4% (n = 13) had been tested within the past year. For age cohort five, 66.7% (n=10) reported having been tested in the past year and in 2004, that statistic decreased to 18.2% (n = 2).

HIV Testing in The Last Three Years: Respondents were divided into two different groups: Those who had been tested within three years, and those who had not. There was a significant effect for year ($X^2 = 11.488, df = 1, p = .000$). In 1996, 75% (n = 87) of people reported having been tested within the past three years, and in 2004 only 53.3% (n = 57) of people reported being tested within the past three years. There was no main effect for age cohort ($X^2 = 2.439, df = 5, p = .786$).

In sum, the trend was that all of the respondents had increased risk behaviors from 1996 to 2004. In 2004 the groups with the highest amount of risk behavior were cohorts zero, one, and three (ages 18-33 and 50-57). There were elevated risk behaviors among cohorts two (34-41) and five (58-65) and, although cohort five was safer than average on more variables than cohort two was.

Discussion
Treatment Optimism: Changes from 1996-2004 represented maturation, but also experience with treatment improvements. Maturation would lead to a decrease in expected risk behavior with knowledge, as well as decreased partnering and impulsivity. In the present study, there was an increase in risk behaviors among all age cohorts from 1996-2004. There was an increase in partnering, but a decrease in discussion of prevention, and a decrease in HIV testing from 1996 to 2004 for all age cohorts. There was also less consistent use of condoms from 1996 to 2004. These results support the treatment optimism hypothesis (Wolitski et al., 2001) because the largest variable that has changed in HIV is treatment availability.

Age Cohort: MSMs younger than 49 had less consistent condom use in 2004 than in 1996. Interestingly, the condom use variable was the only clear indication that younger MSMs partake in more risk behaviors. This contrasts with Hoperes and Kok’s (1995) report and common belief that younger MSMs engage in more risk behaviors. The results for age were inconsistent across dependent variables. It appears that age was not as salient in this study as other studies have reported.

There was only a difference for age in 2004. There are different explanations for this. It is possibly a result of treatment optimism, but that wouldn’t lead to an age difference. Another, more likely explanation for 18 to 33 year olds’ decrease in safe behaviors is that they aren’t old enough to have seen very many friends become ill and die from AIDS. For older MSMs, having witnessed people die from AIDS may be a more salient reason to practice safer behaviors. However, the finding that people 18 to 33 engage in more risk is not consistent and doesn’t explain why people up to 49 engage in more risk.

Limitations: The main problem with the present study is the sample. The sample size was very small, which increased the likelihood of a type II error. There was also a limited amount of ethnic minorities and the sample was highly educated, which limits the generalizability of the results.

Another possible issue was that people in relationships were not separated from those not in relationships. People in relationships tended to report that they did not use condoms and did not discuss prevention. These variables probably shouldn’t be considered risk behaviors within the context of a long-term monogamous relationship. However, the amount of people that this applies to is small and did not have a large effect on the findings, but it is still a factor.

Implications: The results imply that HIV prevention efforts should target their efforts at people under 50 years of age. The focus of efforts should be to educate about the limits and disadvantages of protease inhibitors. The benefits and success rates of condoms should also be presented to people in order to encourage condom use. These interventions should not be targeted only at young adults (18 to 24) because the findings of the present study indicate that risk is not highest among young adults. Because of increases in risk among 30 and 40 year olds, prevention of relapse to unsafe sex among these cohorts needs to be a focus of prevention efforts.
The focus of future research should be on examining treatment optimism and other societal factors that contribute to risk behavior. The International Collaboration on HIV Optimism (2003) found that those with HIV optimism are in the minority. If this is the case, then other factors at play need to be investigated. It is important to determine what is contributing to increasing risk behaviors and that should be the priority of future research.

**Conclusion**

The present study found that there was an increase in risk behaviors from 1996 to 2004 and that in 2004, people under 50 engaged in the most risk behaviors. HIV prevention efforts should be targeted at giving people a realistic view of protease inhibitors and target interventions toward people under 50. Future research should investigate other factors that have lead to the increase in risk behaviors.

**References**


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### Table 1

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### Table 2

Analysis of Number of Unprotected Anal Sex Partners in the Last Year, Across 1996 and 2004 and Age Cohort

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<td>0.33 (0.42)</td>
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<td>0.16 (0.28)</td>
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