The Trump Status: An Analysis of First-Semester Freshmen Attitudes Towards Difference

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Abstract

This research examined first-semester Tarleton State University freshmen student attitudes towards differences relating to gender, age, race, and socio-economic statuses. An open-ended survey of 253 incoming freshmen students was evaluated for their attitudes among the four indicated dimensions on various status positions, particularly to determine the trumping statuses and their attitudes toward diversity. Results indicated where the focus of diversity education should be, as well as providing a baseline for follow-up assessment in these students’ senior year that may help determine effects of embedded diversity education throughout university curricula.

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine first time, beginning freshmen students’ attitudes towards status differences by demographic characteristics in the fall semester of 2006 at a Texas regional state university. At this university, now nationally known as having multi-cultural issues, incoming freshmen come from a variety of backgrounds; yet, as a student body they are mostly a homogeneous group of young, white, middle-class students. This exploratory and descriptive research describes demographic differences among the population of these students derived from sample data, while simultaneously assessing their attitudes towards differences in status positions - i.e., a variety of other people. These data provide a baseline for further research, when these same students are seniors; however, the baseline findings contribute to current educational understanding of this generation of students and their prejudicial attitudes as they exit high school and enter college. The results have implications for diversity education at both levels of education.

Variables of Study

The two areas of interest in this research include the independent variables of student demographic characteristics and the dependent variables of student attitudes. The demographics include four different variables: gender, age, race, and social class, which were operationalized in a survey instrument constructed by the two leading researchers. The dependent variables evaluated students’ attitudes toward different groups of status positions, which were categorized in five basic dimensions. The gender dimension incorporated the attributes of boys, girls, men, and women. Attributes on the age dimension included attitudes towards babies, young children, adolescents, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged adults, older adults, and very old adults. Ethnicity was measured by four prominent groupings that were found among this population - i.e., African-Americans, Hispanics, Caucasians, and Middle-Easterners. The fourth dimension, social class, was operationalized as lower-class (actually presented to the students as poor people), middle-class,
and upper-class (presented as rich people). The last and fifth dimension of statuses comprised intelligence, including the statuses of smart and stupid people.

**Population of Study**

This university is a regional, comprehensive university located in a small sized town of about 17,000 persons and this site constituted the population studied, because it is the only delivery site for freshman courses. This university serves students, not only from Texas, but from 35 states and 20 different countries, and the administration has made diversity understanding a foremost goal in recent years. First semester freshmen number 1,716--constituting 26% of the campus student body.

The sample for this research was drawn from a variety of freshman level classes across the campus. Classes selected were selected based on the likelihood of higher numbers of enrolled first semester freshmen. These courses included discipline specific orientation classes expressly intended for first time freshmen, as well as core requirements and electives, such as English Composition, Fundamentals of Speech, Introduction to Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, Introduction to Criminal Justice, and Foundations of Engineering. The researchers believe these courses represent a cross-section of class offerings, thus providing a comprehensive sample, representative of the population.

**Significance of Research**

The results of this research are significant in a variety of ways. First, diversity education is an important goal at this university and others, as well. Moreover, across the country, high schools and universities are striving to produce good citizens who appreciate all peoples; therefore, courses are designed with “embedded” materials to enhance appreciation for diversity. This research will produce a “baseline” of student attitudes about difference upon entrance to the university, thus indicating where further emphasis on diversity education is necessary. Additionally, this study will be replicated with a panel cohort in these same students’ senior year to determine what, if any, changes in attitudes have occurred over the students’ education.

**Review of Related Literature**

**Student Attitudes.**

Respect for diversity has long been considered in curricula and teaching in higher education. Vassar College President, Henry Noble MacCracken (1945:76), suggested that, “We cannot attain the full values of the democratic way of life without intelligent and sensitive cooperation among the diverse groups which compose the American population.” This type of ideology led to the establishment of cultural education in universities. Moreover, we see an increased affirmation of commitment to diversity education in university mission statements, academic programs, and admissions policies (Umbach and Milam, 2002). Results concerning the implementation of diversity education have indicated that when students are encouraged to discover their commonalities, they can more easily bridge their differences (Smyth, 2005). Whatever view students hold of culturally diverse populations, they find themselves in increased contact with people who are culturally different (Ford and Moore, 2004). Thus, our university students should learn not only academics, but social awareness, as well as appreciation for diversity.
Gender

Whether defined as male or female, the smallest unit of societal membership is the individual. In all general categories, individual members of groups identify primarily with themselves or similar others (Ford and Moore, 2004). College students are no different; however, as they progress through their education, they become more egalitarian in their attitudes towards opposite genders in respect to both occupational roles and distribution of responsibilities within marriage and family relations. Research shows this transpires through involvement with peers, professors, and activities. While this may be true, attitudinal studies on college students and gender reveal that students may express socially desirable attitudes, but exhibit quite different behavior (McHale, 1994).

Views about women and men, including stereotypes about them, differ substantially. Women are often perceived as emotional and warm; men are more commonly viewed as persistent and assertive (Kite & Wagner, 2002). Moreover, females are viewed more positively than males by both genders, regardless of age (Laditka, Fischer, Laditka, and Segal, 2004). In opposition to these findings, Steinberg (1999) suggested that, in Western cultures, stereotypically masculine traits are more highly valued than feminine traits. In between these two extremes are other data that suggest college students prefer same-sex over other-sex role models, and that women are more likely than men to choose other-sex role models (Wohlford, Lochman, and Barry, 2004).

Age

Babies are “cute.” College students believe having a baby is fun and that babies are adorable (Zangana, 2005). Both males and females have enthusiasm for entering parenthood. Yet, females are more positive in their responses towards having a family. Most females want children within two to three years after finishing their college education, preferably starting with the first child no later than their late twenties (Chang, Kennedy, and Brown).

Butler (1969) states that Social Identity Theory is a useful conceptual framework from which to consider age attitudes and stereotypes held towards people in different age strata. Social Identity Theory further suggests that people are motivated to elevate their own group over others (Kite & Wagner, 2002). That is, we like those others who are similar in age to us, irrespective of our current age. Kite and Johnson’s (1988) meta-analysis of 43 research projects examined attitudes toward differing age groups and surmised that attitudes toward older people were more negative than those toward younger adults in about 75 percent of the studies.

Other studies shed additional light on age issues. For example, young persons (ages 18–34) have the highest levels of anxiety about their own aging (Speas & Obenshain, 1995). Moreover, student subjects report feelings of fear and anxiety towards older persons (Kanter, Agliata, and Tantleff, 2001), and they have pessimistic perceptions of the typical bodily changes associated with the aging process. While several researchers have examined college student’s attitudes toward the elderly, few studies have focused on gender differences. Results show that both genders have negative attitudes about characteristics associated with the biological maturation process, and females report that physiological age related changes are more important to their attitudes about aging. Additionally, Hawkins’ (1996) research of traditional college age students found that men rated females in all age categories more negatively than did women. With both genders perceiving aging as negative, and especially so as applied to women, Kite, Deaux, and Miele (1991) compared the effect of age and gender, and concluded that age stereotypes are even more pronounced than gender stereotypes.
In spite of negative stereotypes and ageism, present-day college students have been socialized in an era of political correctness with age discriminatory practices considered unacceptable, more favorable media portrayals of older adults, and the proliferation of aging courses in universities. Still, there is a clear reluctance to discard the youth-oriented emphasis in wider society (Kalavar, 2001), as the most frequently named positive traits among all the age groups are active, content, friendly, happy, healthy, and wise; and the most frequently named negative traits among all age groups are crabby and dead (Laditka, Fischer, Laditka, and Segal, 2004).

Race

Rokeach’s (1960) Belief Congruence Theory hypothesizes that the more similar a culture is to American dominant culture, the more favorable American students will be towards persons of that culture. In an era of racial equality and rapidly changing student demographics, research indicates that more frequent interactions with different peoples results in increased positive attitudes towards diversity (Umbach and Milam, 2002). Given these outcomes, it would appear that students are becoming more pluralistic in their attitudes and behaviors towards ethnic diversity.

Despite this touted pluralism, few whites report substantial interaction with people of color prior to attending college, whereas, black students report much higher rates of cross-racial interaction. However, three-fourths of students indicate plans to get to know students from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, women are more likely to have favorable racial attitudes (Tuch and Hughes, 2003) and are more likely to engage in multicultural activities (Umbach and Milam, 2002). Still, involvement with different others varies by race, with only one-third of whites planning to engage in culturally diverse activities, as opposed to almost all black students. Thus, students of color are more likely to engage in activities to bridge social difference (Umbach and Milam, 2002).

Other research belies this positive depiction of blossoming ethnic harmony. American students do not actively discriminate, but are in fact, prejudiced. They realize they ought not to appear racist; however, they still hold racist attitudes. Thus, discrimination is a poor indicator of actual prejudice. Although it is disheartening to think American students still hold prejudicial attitudes, it is encouraging that students seem unwilling to translate their attitudes into behavior (Mehta, Ruby, and Letts, 1996).

Socio-economic status (Social Class)

Little research has been done on the relationship of socio-economic status as it relates to gender, age, and race among university students. Still, it is widely known that many minority students in higher education are recruited on scholarship or other forms of subsidy for their education. As with race, the percentage of enrolled low-socioeconomic students is a significant factor for performance in school (Capps, 2004). Students who do not “fit in” do not engage in academic or social endeavors as do those students who constitute the majority.

Attitudinally, students from low-socio-economic areas have high resistance to notions of welfare and other poverty related variables. Females are more sympathetic than males, but most students believe people should work. By and large, college students see the poor as not lazy, but in circumstances beyond their control (Egan, 2000).

Summary

This section has presented academic information related to the variables, dimensions, and attributes of this study. We know that previous research reveals that in an era of increasing student
diversity in educational settings, effective multicultural education is crucial (Ford and Moore, 2004). Moreover, simply recognizing or tolerating diversity is not enough. Understanding and respecting different cultural values and ethnicities is essential. Respect and appreciation must also happen through diversity education designed to bring about a transformation so that students from both genders, of any age, ethnic group, or socio-economic status will have an equal chance to experience school success. Finally, we must document current perceptions to see if and how these need to be altered via higher education pathways.

Methodology

The Sample

The four primary demographic variables document a representative sample of the population of first time, beginning freshmen. Compared to the university, however, there exist larger percentages of minorities among freshmen—with more females and Hispanics evidenced. In specific comparison with the entire university population of first time, beginning freshmen, this sample is quite accurate with 54.5% of them being female, compared to 53.3% of the population. Equally significant is the variable of ethnicity, with 83% being Caucasian, and 12.3% being Hispanic, which compares with 84.7% of the population being Caucasian, 9.9% being Hispanic, and 3.6% being African-American. As well, age characteristics of this sample correspond to the population, with 81% being 18 years old compared to the population demographic of 81.3%. Clearly, this random sample constitutes 14.7% (253) of first-time beginning freshmen in this university, and well represents the overall freshmen student body, allowing generalization to the population. (See Figure 1, which compares the Sample and Population.)

Regarding class, it is important to note that this constitutes self-reporting, and sociologists have long been aware that most people see themselves as “middle-class.” Further examination of the nature of the population finds 71% percent are meeting scholastic needs through financial aid and are being subsidized at an average total financial aid package of $8,000 per student. Hence, these students are most likely leaning toward the working or lower class, even though having self-reported a middle-class status.

The Instrument

A factor analysis demonstrates that the status positions cohered in the five main survey categories anticipated, namely: 1) gender, 2) age, 3) ethnicity, 4) social class, and 5) intelligence statuses. Spearman rank-order correlations of all statuses verify the internal validity of the questionnaire. For example, how subjects viewed boys was positively correlated with their views of girls (rs = .26), as well as with their views of men (rs = .32)—all of which are gender categories. Moreover, similar findings occurred in each of the status dimensions, with status correlations ranging from .20 to .39.

Trump Statuses

The primary purpose of this research was the documentation of statuses that “trump” others for first time beginning freshmen at a regional Texas state university. In most instances, these students rank highest people perceived to be like themselves—e.g., middle-class, women, men, and Caucasians. Table 1, at the end of the paper, shows a rank ordering of all statuses and, therefore, specifies preferred or trumping statuses. For this assessment, the qualitative responses (e.g., babies are cute) were coded using the ordinal measurement dimensions of extremely positive, positive,
neutral, negative, and extremely negative. The status rankings result from calculating percentage differences in positive versus negative comments, with positive percentages showing an overall, affirmative perception and negative percentages, showing the opposite. Trumping statuses vary across categories, so that all social classes, ethnic groups, age groups, etc., were dispersed in the rankings, with no seeming order by type. For example, middle-class people were the top ranking status (87.6%), followed by babies (56.7%), while later in the list we find smart people (48%), followed by men (47.8%) and then even lower were the categories of teens (-55.7%) and stupid people (-57.7%), the lowest status of all, with no trump value.

Looking first at gender categories, women was the trumping status, with a 54.0% ranking of positive versus negative views, followed by men (47.8%), then girls (6.2%) and lastly, boys (-1.2%), the only gendered status negatively perceived. Age groupings showed babies trumping all categories, with a 56.7% ranking, followed distantly by middle-aged (36.8%), young adults (27.1%), older adults (27.0%), children (11.3%), and then very old adults (6.5%). Teenagers trumped the least and were perceived extremely negatively (second overall to stupid people), at 55.7%. Ethnic categories offered the most unforeseen rankings with the African-American status trumping all the rest at 49.4%, followed closely by Hispanics (40.8%), then Caucasians (31.2%), and lastly, and still a positive ranking, was Middle-Easterners (9.4%). Middle-class trumps all class groupings with a percentage ranking of 87.6%, the highest overall ranking of all categories. Then, falling far lower in the overall rankings, yet next among class categories, was lower class (17.3%). Moving into the negative rankings was upper class, at -20.3%. The final trump status grouping was intelligence, which identified two high and equally low statuses in student perceptions. Smart people, the fifth overall trumping status, ranked at 48.0%, while stupid people comprised the lowest of all statuses, at negative 57.7%.

Correlational Analysis

The majority of variables were ordinal in nature, calling for Spearmen rank-order correlations; however, the demographic nominal variables, such as gender and ethnicity, called for Phi ($\Phi$) in the case of 2 X 2 tables or Cramer’s V ($V$) if the table was larger than 2 X 2. Only correlations of a .19, or better, were considered statistically important. The analysis proceeds with an assessment of each demographic variable as related to the various statuses presented to the sample subjects.

Gender was the most significant demographic variable in assessing student attitudes toward different people in the form of trump statuses. The strongest correlation related gender to students’ views of babies, where females (97.7%) viewed babies much more positively than did males (31.8%) ($\Phi = .32$). The same pattern was established for views of children ($\Phi = .27$). While the relationship was not as strong, males assessed girls as a status more positively (61.6%) than females ($\Phi = .22$). Where age as a status dimension was concerned, males regarded young adults more positively than did females ($\Phi = .19$), and the reverse pattern was found for the middle-aged status ($\Phi = .19$). Ethnicity produced two significant correlations to gender—namely, males were shown to be more negative in their viewpoints of African American and Middle Easterners, with a Phi value of .19. On the dimension of Class, only middle-class was significantly correlated with gender, with a Phi value of .20, with females ranking the middle-class status more positively. Finally, in examining the intelligence level (i.e., stupid versus smart), both males and females regarded smart people positively and stupid people (the status that trumps the least of all) negatively—with female subjects’ views being stronger in regard to both categories.
When the demographic variable, ethnicity was correlated with status perceptions, only young adults was related with a Cramer’s V of .23. The pattern established African-Americans and others perceiving the position more negatively. In further analysis, the typical pattern that emerged found ethnicities, other than Caucasians, typically being more negative toward various statuses. One exception to this was Caucasians’ negative attitudes toward girls. On several statuses, African-Americans were more negative, such as Hispanics, Middle-Easterners, lower-class, upper-class, stupid people, and smart people, while they were more positive of very old adults. Nevertheless, in most instances, there was no patterned difference by ethnicity—including views of men, women, babies, children, teenagers, and the middle-aged.

**Discussion, Application of Qualitative Data, and Generalization**

The most important aspect of this research was the assessment of trumping statuses—in other words, of all the different kinds of people and within categories of those, which status trumped another. The research evidenced that freshmen students at this university essentially like people perceived to resemble themselves, namely, women, men, Caucasians, and the middle-class. In examining the qualitative comments for middle-class, a preponderance of responses listed these people as hard working. Moreover, this highest trumping status includes people described as smart, intelligent, and providing the backbone of society. Nevertheless, it was somewhat unexpected that a class status would trump all statuses, but not surprising that in general, babies and smart people were high in the list of admired positions.

Positively speaking, babies were labeled as cool, pure, precious, sweet, innocent, and even perfect gifts from God. Smart people attracted positive terminology, such as good people, who are hard-working, intelligent geniuses, who are very good to be around because they spread knowledge. Further, they were considered amazing people that many students want to be—and who were even described as “world leaders.” Even though quantitatively African-American and Hispanic statuses were in the middle range of positive rankings, many of the qualitative comments documented prejudice. On the one hand, these students seemed to realize a cultural norm of accepting diverse ethnicities, except where Middle-Easterners were concerned—the ethnic status receiving the most extreme percentages and negative comments. In fact, Middle-Eastern people were called horrible terrorists that “need to go back to their own country.” They were viewed as bad, weird, scary, creepy, freaks who are our enemy. They were labeled “NOT Americans,” should be banned from all planes, and as “dangerous ALL of the time.” Other negative statements included, “They are going to take over the world” and “are going to Hell.” We should “kill them all.” They “piss” students off and they “can’t stand them.” Ethnic slurs abounded where Middle-Eastern people were concerned, as they were dubbed: sand niggers, rag heads, towel heads, and camel jockeys. Given the state of our country currently at war with this group of people, this finding was more in line with research expectations.

Other statuses that had little, if any, trumping ability, included positions the students themselves no longer filled or positions never desired to fill such as teenagers (the second lowest status), girls, boys, the upper class, and stupid people. Given the large emphasis in the mandatory freshmen orientation experience on transitioning from high school to college, in general, these students no longer appreciate being a boy, a girl, a teenager, and certainly they do not want to be stupid—apparently the worst status of all. In this vein, teenager comments were negative, with an overriding emphasis on teens as confused, irresponsible, moody, people who often behaved in wild, rebellious ways that got them into trouble. Many respondents also portrayed them as cocky
and full of attitude, as well as stubborn people who think they know everything. Other negative images painted them as dramatic, evil, sarcastic, annoying, stupid and retarded morons—who are punks with no respect, bad news, or are just simply bad. While some students appeared to pity stupid people and believed that either no one is stupid, or they can’t help being stupid, most others depicted them in negative terms. They were lazy, “dumb and dumber,” stupid, ignorant, irritating, obnoxious idiots, who choose stupidity. They were also labeled as useless and a waste of time. Other students suggested that stupid people either work at McDonald’s or are a menace to society. Some students see them so negatively they expressed the desire to physically attack them by declaring that “I want to hit them,” or “I want to beat the shit out of them.”

When examining the statuses across the five dimensional categories—perhaps the most significant finding was that women trumped all gender categories. These researchers believe this would not have been the case ten years ago. In past gender literature and research in sociology (see for example—Rubin, 1979; Anderson and Hendrickson, 2003; Kimmel, 2000), even women perceived men as the higher status. While some comments concerning women were negative (high maintenance, expensive, bitchy, back-stabbing, etc.), most responses were positive to extremely positive. Many student comments about women were related to attractiveness with replies including words such as: stylish, beautiful, pretty, hot, and sexy. Women were also positively perceived in instrumental ways and were branded as kind, caring, understanding and nurturing; as well, they were said to be good listeners and helpers, and even loving gifts to the world. In the area of conduct women were called nice, polite, well-mannered, and honest people who have integrity. Students went on to say these kinds of people are classy, and that sophisticated women are also charismatic, fun, mature persons. They were also described as great, independent, confident, successful, brave, intelligent, strong, reliable, hard-working individuals who are responsible, which makes them clean and tidy. One student even replied women are perfect.

In general and overall men were also perceived positively with males perceiving men even more positively. When men were viewed negatively, students made comments regarding males’ personality and hygiene characteristics. Other negative responses included descriptions such as horny and mean to nasty and sloppy. Positive comments typically depicted men as strong and hard-working, and again these comments over rode the negative.

Apparently, everyone loves babies, and even male students submitted numerous positive adjectives for the status of baby—another probable change in a culture that now “deems males” involvement with babies as more the norm than in times past (Lamanna and Reidmann, 2006). Given the documentation of college students’ attitudes toward the elderly, the low placement in the trump list of very old persons was expected and in line with the vast majority of literature. While the researchers (and other middle-aged and older adults) likely see first time freshmen as “still teenagers”, this study documented that they themselves relegate that status to the lowest of age positions, perceiving this category only a step above being stupid.

One of the most unanticipated, yet retrospectively explainable findings of this research entailed students’ scrutiny of ethnic statuses. African-Americans trumped all ethnic positions, even though all ethnic categories fell in the middle of the positive rankings, indicating mixed views. Given the current bias in a “post-9/11” American society, Middle-Easterners falling in the lowest position was anticipated, while African-Americans in the trump position was not. Still, even though many students positively described African-Americans as “just like anyone else,” and even cool or awesome, there were many negative comments describing them as racist, welfare-grabbing, pains in the ass. Some used drug terminology in their attitudes towards African-Americans, depicting
them as “loud weed smokers,” thieving crack heads,” or “drug dealers.” Additionally, there were a few ethnic and racial slurs included in responses, with students describing African-Americans as “niggers” and “lawn apes.” Hispanics, viewed even more positively overall than Caucasians, evidenced a preponderance of positive responses portraying them as hard-workers and good cooks. Still, there were a variety of negative responses depicting Hispanics as mean, dirty, greasy, and beaners who “ought to go home.” Other negative descriptions included illegal, wetback, migrant workers who are overpopulating and “invading our country,” as well as, describing them as rude, cocky, drug addicts, who “always think racist.” Caucasians were of course viewed positively by the majority white students, who saw them “like themselves” or “normal.” They said they are friendly, classy, and even “awesome.” However, not all students describe whites in positive ways. Some said, they are loud, judgmental, snobs, who hate others and think they rule the world. Slurs used to describe Caucasians included: “honkies,” “red-necks,” and “nerds.” Again, as expected, very few responses described Middle-Easterners favorably. The positive comments were like other positive racial comments—such as, they were “just like any other person” or “no different than anyone else.”

Many of the positive ethnic responses seemed dictated, as in all probability, students have been socialized and sanctioned to avoid displaying prejudicial attitudes; however, this characteristically pertained to African-Americans and Hispanics. These researchers would argue that the pressure for diversity appreciation becomes “just too much,” however, where Middle-Easterners were contemplated. Thus, the latter status trumps least, while all ethnic positions still rank in a positive perception.

Sociologically speaking, it matters not that many of these students would present as lower class if typical measures had been appropriated—in fact, what was their perception of their class. Lower class (i.e., poor people) ranked much lower in the overall positive rankings of trump statuses, while still seen positively, and upper class (i.e., rich people) were clearly perceived and positioned negatively about midway in the listings. Qualitative assessments, again, unmistakably denote these perceptions evidenced in the quantitative assessment, as students tended to see poor people with empathy and compassion. Responses supporting this stance described them as sweet, nice, hard-working people who are unfortunate and can’t help their circumstances. Others, however, viewed them very negatively, including their portrayal as nasty, dirty, trashy, depressed, bums who choose poverty, live on welfare, and ought to get a job. Rich people were perceived even more negatively, even though there were a few favorable responses. These indicate rich people are happy, smart, high-class, lucky people, who are living the good life. However, many more students responded that they are cocky, conceited and arrogant, spoiled snobs who are corrupted by their money, and who try to buy their happiness. The most negative comments depicted them as greedy, fake, inconsiderate, persons who are bastards, assholes, crap, or pricks.

The final grouping included intelligence statuses of stupid and smart people, which loaded in the ranks as expected. Stupid people were perceived as the lowest of the low, while smart people were the fifth overall trumping status (see Table 1). The qualitative endorsements evidence the explanation for these figures, as students denoted smart people as good people, who are hard-working, intelligent geniuses, who are very good to be around because they spread knowledge. They were considered amazing people that many students want to be—and who were even described as “world leaders.” When smart people were seen negatively, they were seen as cocky, arrogant, and hung up on themselves, even though, most students described them positively. As for stupid people, again, this was the lowest of the low, with the most prejudice expressed. The comments were noted previously when describing the lowest of the trump statuses.
In assessing gendered relationships to trump statuses, it is possible that female self-esteem affected this difference, since sociologists have long since documented the lower nature of this important concept for females; however, equally plausible may be the notion that females, more than males, are simply distancing themselves from the “girl role.” Even though males typically have higher self-esteem at all age levels, they may just appreciate themselves respective of age--i.e., boys or men were seen more positively, and additionally, once past a certain age, males typically like females, whether girls or women. These ideas are supported in the findings on gender as related to the statuses of men and women, with both groups imputing trump quality to the status to which they potentially aspire--i.e., males viewed men as the trump status, while females determined it to be women. Again, according to literature cited previously, women being the trump status for females would perhaps have been different some years earlier, when even females viewed men more positively.

Two of the age statuses (e.g., babies, children, teenagers, etc.) were related to gender--namely, middle-age and young adults. In these cases, males and females differed, with males perceiving young adults more positively, while females endorsed the middle-age status. The qualitative responses to the original survey again assist in explaining this gendered differential, in that males focused considerably on the status in which they currently resided; whereas, females endorsed and looked toward the status to which they aspired. Both males and females looked back at the status they had recently occupied as teenagers, devaluing this status; nevertheless, females, again, seemingly more focused on maturation, were even more negative in this regard. Another trend regarding gender that seemed to occur most of the time, typically found females more positive than males, as was the case with older and very old adults. Older people were described as sweet, interesting persons, full of wisdom and interesting stories, while males were more likely to say they are needy and dependent, near death, or in the dying process. They were also called sick, depressed, gross, messy, invalids, who were reverting to children. The exceptions to this trend can best be explained around the differences in maturation--where females viewed girls and teenagers as statuses negatively, while looking positively at positions later to be occupied.

Consistent with the literature, males tended to express prejudicial views stronger and more negatively than did females. Qualitative descriptions of African-Americans and Middle-Easterners document the views evidenced among the first time freshmen male students that were presented above.

Following the thread of discussion regarding female maturational issues was the finding that females felt more strongly regarding intellectual statuses of smart and stupid people. While the relationship to gender turned out to be insignificant statistically, the pattern showed females more negatively assessed stupid people and more positively assessed smart people than did males. Even among college students, females still tend to be maturationally advanced in comparison to their male counterparts--an idea that explained several of these findings.

Finally, class categories were examined in relation to gender, and significant differences were established for middle-class alone. The patterns in all class groupings were gender consistent with females feeling more strongly regarding middle-class people, more strongly in favor of poor people and more negative where the rich were concerned. These findings seem to document the more mature, diverse, and liberal nature of females, as has been consistently documented in other categories.
Summary and Conclusions

With a representative sample, the researchers were able to generalize to this Texas regional State University first time freshmen regarding their attitudes toward a variety of different kinds of people, establishing many significant relationships and interesting patterns that correspond to the literature documented herein. The trump status—the best of all was middle class, while stupid people was the lowest of all. Trump statuses were also depicted by gender, with women trumping girls, boys, and men; by ethnicity, with African American trumping Hispanic, Caucasians, and Middle-Easterners; by social class, with middle-class trumping upper-class and lower-class; and by age, with babies trumping children, teenagers, young people, middle aged, old people, and very old people. The qualitative comments broaden the study by specifically denoting the areas where first time freshmen students still hold prejudicial views ripe for diversity education. When examined four years from now, the resultant comparison data will detail the extent of that change. Finally, the results of this research lend understanding to the statuses of importance to graduating high school students, who are about to begin their freshmen college experience; these results tell university professors where diversity education should be targeted, and will later in the follow-up survey allow us to determine if university diversity education is effective, and if so how.
## Tables and Figures

### TABLE 1: PREFERRED, TRUMPING STATUSES IN RANK ORDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRUMP STATUS</th>
<th>% POSITIVE VS. NEGATIVE VIEW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE CLASS</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BABIES</td>
<td>56.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>WOMEN</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOWER CLASS</td>
<td>17.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHILDREN</td>
<td>11.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIDDLE-EASTERNERS</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERY OLD ADULTS</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIRLS</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOYS</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER CLASS</td>
<td>-20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEENS</td>
<td>-55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUPID PEOPLE</td>
<td>-57.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE COMPARISON OF THE SAMPLE TO THE POPULATIONS (N=335)

[Bar graph showing percentage comparison of sample to populations for demographic categories such as age, gender, ethnicity, etc.]
References


