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Faculty & Staff | Angelia L. Brooks
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Michael A. Arbor
Southern University and A&M College
School of Nursing

Alanah Cooper
Hillsborough Community College Honors Institute

Jaime Williams
Grambling State University
Earl Lester Cole Honors College
Mentor: Dr. Steve Favors

Joshua Williams
Fisk University

Angelia L Brooks, MBA, MAcc
NAAAHP
National Executive Director, 2017

Student - Advisor Interactions and Effect on Student Stress Reduction in Nursing Programs

Michael A. Arbor
Southern University and A&M College
School of Nursing

Abstract

Research Problem and Purpose

Stress in nursing programs is a major concern with negative effects on the well-being, learning, and persistence of students. Although several studies have examined stress coping strategies, there is a dearth of research on student-advisor interaction and its effects on stress levels in the context of minority institutions in the U.S. This is the case especially at the level of senior nursing students (SNS). This study addresses this gap in knowledge with a focus on the following research questions:

1. What is the level of stress of nursing students at the beginning and at end of the senior academic year?
2. To what extent do senior-nursing students engage in student-advisor interactions?
3. What is the effect of SNS interactions with advisors on their levels of stress?

Method

The above research questions were examined using data collected from a convenient sample of SNS in a nursing program in a southern state in the U.S. A modified validated survey instrument measuring levels of stress at the beginning and end of the senior year, as well as student advisor interactions, was applied to collect the data for the study. The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software to test the hypotheses and conduct analysis to address the research questions.

Results

The results of the study show a significant statistical negative relationship between student-advisor interactions and Senior Nursing Students' reported stress level. Approximately 87 percent of SNS experience moderate to high-stress levels and more than 20 percent do not engage in student-advisor interactions. The study also found a significant negative relationship between peer interactions and student-advisor interactions.

Implications and Future Research

The results of this study provide the basis for developing SNS stress coping strategies with a focus on student-advisor interactions as well as other academic and wellness policies and programs in support of SNS wellness and learning outcomes. These implications are discussed and directions for future research are presented. The study contributes considering that no similar study could be identified in the context of a U.S. Historically Black University.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Stress in nursing programs is a major concern with negative effects on wellbeing, learning, and persistence (Del Prato, 2011; Turner and McCarthy, 2015). Although this problem has been addressed in many studies, "interventions for stress experienced within nursing education requires changing the current traditional model of the educational environment and empowering students to better cope with the stress they may encounter in the nursing program" (Del Prato, 2011). The need for new models for stress coping strategies by nursing students is supported by a recent review of the literature for the 2009-2015 period (Turner and McCarthy, 2015). The review identified only eight studies with a focus on improving student coping skills and none of these studies were conducted in the context of African American students. In view of this gap in knowledge, an important question that needs to be examined is: What strategies do African American nursing students use to cope with stress in nursing programs?

Stress is an inevitable component of human life and has positive, as well as negative, impacts on the mind and well-being of individuals (Lewis & Shaw, 2007). Due to its subjective nature, the term stress does not have a precise definition. Contextually, stress has been defined as a physiological and psychological response

to an environmental demand that occurs when the body lacks the adequate coping mechanism to deal with these demands (Lewis & Shaw, 2007). These demands are known as stressors. The response to a stressful event differs among individuals, and this is thereby termed perceived Stress. According to Cohen et al (1983), perceived stress is the feelings or thoughts to which a situation in one's life is deemed threatening.

College students have always reported elevated stress levels throughout their academic program; however, undergraduate nursing students experience unique stressors that differ from those reported by students in other professional programs (Stecker, 2004). Many studies have shown that when students are faced with severe stressors, learning is inhibited, academic performance is poor, and the attrition rate is high (Gibbons 2010; Reeve et al, 2013; Ajibade, 2016). Hence, several studies have examined stress coping strategies, however, there is a dearth of research on student-advisor interaction and its effects on stress levels in the context of minority institutions in the U.S.

Research Problem and Purpose

Stress in nursing programs is a major concern with negative effects on well-being, learning, and persistence. Although several studies have examined stress coping strategies, there is a dearth of research on student-advisor interactions and effects on stress levels in the context of minority institutions in the U.S. This is the case especially at the level of senior nursing students (SNS). This study addresses this gap in knowledge with a focus on the following research questions:

1. What is the level of stress of nursing students at the beginning and at end of the senior academic year?

2. To what extent do senior-nursing students engage in student-advisor interactions?

3. What is the effect of SNS interactions with advisors on their levels of stress?

THEORETICAL FRAMWORK

The two theoretical frameworks that guided this review were Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional model of psychological stress and Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring/Caring Science.

Since its comprehensive presentation in 1966, the Lazarus stress theory has had many revisions (Krohne, 2002). Lazarus and Folkman psychological stress model was meant to explain the role of emotion in shaping stress response (Lovallo, 2004). This transactional model (Fig 1) focuses on the imbalance between the environmental demands and the available resources needed to meet these demands (Baker, 2012).

According to this model, when an individual is faced with a situation, the individual appraises the event to ascertain if it is a threat, a challenge to wellbeing, or if the situation is not relevant. The individual also appraises if there are available resources in place to deal with this stressor (Lovallo, 2004). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1987), the above process is known as primary appraisal. If this event poses no threat to life, it is ignored; however, if this event is stressful and poses threat to life, the individual further analyzes the situation for available resources, this is known as secondary appraisal. During this time, the individual inherently asks series of questions and finally determines if the situation can be handle by self or additional resources are required. Some positive secondary appraisal statements indicated by Sincere (2012) include *"I can do it if I do my best"*, *"I will try whether my chances of success are high or not"*, and *"If this way fails, I can always try another method". One the other hand, statements like I can't do it; I know I will fail"*, *"I will not do it because no one believes I can"* and, *"I won't try because my chances are low" (sincere, 2012) indicate negative secondary appraisal.*

Figure 1. Lazarus and Folkman's model of psychological stress adapted by Lovallo and Gerin (2003).
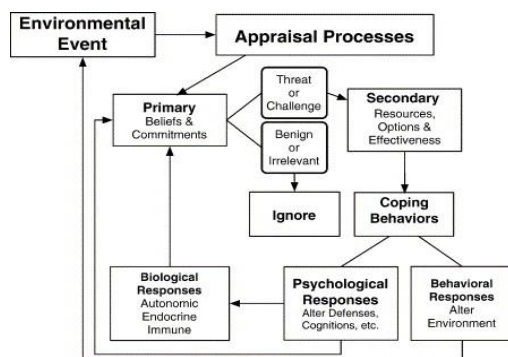
The authors gave me their permission to use this model (Appendix A). (Lovallo & Gerin, 2003)

This model illustrates how an individual can convert environmental stimuli into thoughts and emotion, and eventually into a reaction to stress (Lovallo, 2004). Thus, as humans continue to be exposed to stressors, they eventually learn to cope. The effective coping mechanism is thus paramount in preventing environmental stimuli from becoming stressors. The theory states that coping mechanisms are learned, and if use effective, individuals can reduce their stress levels (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987)

Another theory used in this study is the Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring/Caring Science. Caring Science has ten Caritas processes that can be utilized in both nursing practice and research. This theory has been tested and validated in the clinical setting. It has been shown that effective care can promote health and growth of an individual and family (Watson, 2008). In addition, this theory can also be incorporated into educational settings by nursing faculty. When used effectively, the caring of science can empower and promote the psychosocial well-being of nursing students (Catherine Short and Nadine Williams, 2010)

According to the Watson Caring Science Institute (2010), the Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring is made of ten caritas.

The two caritas that were found relevant to the purpose of this study include: 1) Engaging in genuine teaching-learning experiences that attend to unity of being and meaning, attempting to stay within another's frame of reference and 2) Creating healing environment at all levels (physical, non-physical, subtle environment of energy and consciousness), whereby wholeness, beauty, comfort, dignity, and peace are potentiated. According to Del Prato et al (2011), if these two caritas are attained, there will be harmony in a person, between a person and the environment, and transpersonal interactions.

It is imperative that nursing faculty create this healing environment for their students by understanding the rigorous nature of the program; being cognizant of the financial, social, and personal demands placed on the students; and providing necessary resources needed to enhance students' learning (Reeve et al, 2013). If healing environment (effective faculty-student relationship) and teaching-learning experiences are not attained, Del Prato et al (2013) emphasizes that disharmony, a lack of wellbeing, and difficulty in acquiring knowledge will ensue.

HYPOTHESES

The two hypotheses of this study include:

- HO1: Stress levels at the end of the semester are higher than at levels at the beginning of the semester.

- HO2: Student-Advisor interactions are significantly associated with stress reduction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reeve et al (2013) found that clinical preceptors have great impacts on students' clinical learning outcomes. In their research, Reeve et al found that when compared to senior level nursing students, sophomore student nurses have increased levels of irritability and grief, which all amount to elevated stress levels. The researchers suggested that to help reduce stress in this unique population of students, faculty should create a conducive clinical environment for students where there is effective collaboration among students, faculty, and nurses on the unit. In addition, Reeve et al proposed that faculty may provide social support to students by giving

constructive and timely feedback and being knowledgeable of the demands placed on these students, while also providing them with the required resources needed to enhance learning as they matriculate in the program.

Some studies have shown the interaction between student and faculty creates an environment where advising and learning can take place, which eventually leads to stress reduction. (Rowbotham et al. 2015; Bagcivan et al 2015; Reeve et al.2013). Thus, Rowbotham et al. (2015) indicated that certain personality traits that faculty possess can either hinder or foster learning in students. In addition, students' perception of their faculty plays an important role in this interaction. (Rowbotham et al. 2015). Characteristics like teaching abilities, impoliteness, belittling students, not being empathetic, and failing to identify students 'strengths and weaknesses were indicated in all the studies as being ineffective traits in instructors (Rowbotham et al. 2015; Bagcivan et al 2015; Altiok and Ustun, 2013). Furthermore, Rowbotham et al. 2015 found that students' self-efficacy is enhanced when they receive a positive evaluation from their faculty. In addition to being empathetic, expressing pleasure in helping students, and being motivational, providing timely feedback to students through evaluation was another trait students reported as being effective in reducing stress in a clinical environment (Rowbotham et al. 2015). Students tend to take ownership of their learning, feel motivated and experience less anxiety if they are meeting their goals. Thus, faculty can help students achieve these goals through constant motivation and creating a conducive environment for learning.

Further analysis of the literature indicated that the findings from Rowbotham et al. (2015) study concurred with those of Bagcivan et al (2015). Bagcivan et al (2015) found that students have high expectations of their faculty. The method of presenting lecture materials, doing fair students' evaluation, and being prepared for lecture were areas where the student had high expectations from their instructors. When these expectations are not met, the stress levels in students elevated (Bagcivan et al 2015). This elevation in stress levels is due to the fact that with faculty not using the proper education methods, students struggle to comprehend the information delivered. Furthermore, when students do not get timely and constructive feedback from their faculty, they are unaware and less motivated to improve in their weak areas. Thus, in order to enhance the student-faculty relationship, Bagcivan et al 2015 suggest that faculty should improve on their communication with students, revise their teaching methods, and constantly motivate their students to achieve their goals. On the other hand, students can use this opportunity to enhance their self-efficacy and reduce their stress levels.

METHODOLOGY

The above research questions were examined using data collected from a convenient sample of senior year nursing students in a nursing program in a Southern state in the U.S. A modified validated survey instrument (Appendix B) measuring levels of stress at the beginning and end of the senior year, as well as student advisor interactions, was applied to collect the data for the study.

Design

This descriptive survey was conducted on April 2017 after a comprehensive Computerized Examination (Kaplan). The survey questionnaire was designed by the researcher and approved for use by the course coordinator. This survey was administered to first-semester undergraduate senior nursing students.

Population

The sample of students used to collect data for this study consisted of a convenient sample of 54 senior year nursing students in a university in the Southern State of the U.S. This survey was anonymous and Demographic data were not collected. All 54 senior nursing students completed the survey (100%).

Data Collection

The instrument used to conduct the survey was a modified version of a validated survey scale

(Appendix B) After explaining the purpose of the study, the survey questionnaires were handed to the students, and students were provided with pen or pencil to complete the survey. No informed consent was obtained, and the survey was anonymous. Fifty-four qualitative and quantitative data were collected from 54 participants.

The first two quantitative questions asked students to rate their stress levels at the beginning and at the end of the semester, on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the least amount of stress and 10 being the greatest amount of stress perceived during the academic semester.
In addition, students were asked to list various coping mechanisms they utilize to cope with stress throughout the semester.

The fourth questions in the survey asked the students to select multiple responses to a list of social support coping mechanisms: Make appointment(s) with academic advisor, visit course coordinator(s), Engage in peer to peer support groups and physical activity.

The last question asked about students' engagement in the use of recreational drugs, as a coping mechanism. This question was included for future research purposes.

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science, IBM 22.0 (SPSS, 2015) software to test the hypotheses and conduct analysis to address the research questions.

RESULTS

A. STRESS AT BEGINNING AND END OF SEMESTER

RESEARCH QUESTION 1.
What is the level of stress of nursing students at the beginning and at end of the senior academic year?

The purpose of this study was to examine three questions. The results of the first question focusing on the stress level Senior nursing students experience at the beginning and end of the semester are shown in Tables 1 and 2. The subjects were required to report the perceived level of their stress at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The tables show the frequency distribution of perceived stress levels at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Overall, the number of students who reported high-stress levels (8-10 on a stress scale of 10) at the end of the semester was higher than at the beginning of the semester. The percentage of students who reported experiencing stress at levels 8, 9 and 10 (high-stress level) was 57.4 percent at the beginning of the semester. This number increased to 63 percent at the end of the semester. The percentage of students who experienced stress at level 10 at the beginning of the semester was 22 percent. This number increased to 35 percent at the end of the semester.

Table 1. Start of Semester Stress Levels

| StressStartQ1				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2.00	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
3.00	2	3.7	3.7	5.6
4.00	3	5.6	5.6	11.1
5.00	5	9.3	9.3	20.4
6.00	4	7.4	7.4	27.8
7.00	8	14.8	14.8	42.6
8.00	13	24.1	24.1	66.7
9.00	6	11.1	11.1	77.8
10.00	12	22.2	22.2	100.0
Total	54	100.0	100.0	

57.4% of high stress at beginning of the semester
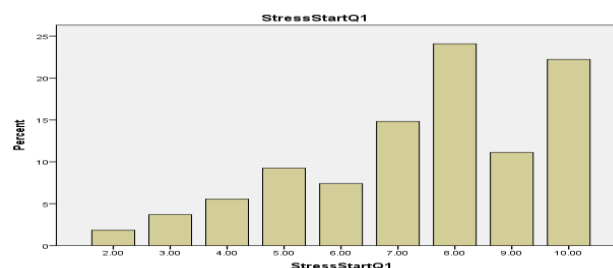
Table 2. End of Semester Stress Level

StreeeEndQ2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
	2.00	1	1.9	1.9	3.7
	3.00	2	3.7	3.7	7.4
	4.00	3	5.6	5.6	13.0
	5.00	6	11.1	11.1	24.1
	6.00	4	7.4	7.4	31.5
	7.00	3	5.6	5.6	37.0
	8.00	8	14.8	14.8	51.9
	9.00	7	13.0	13.0	64.8
	10.00	19	35.2	35.2	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

63% of high stress at end of the semester

StreeeEndQ2
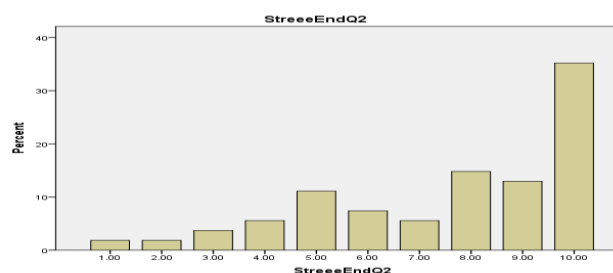
B. Student-Advisor Interactions

RESEARCH QUESTION 2.
To what extent do senior-nursing students engage in student-advisor interactions?

The results of this study show a significant statistical negative relationship between student-advisor interactions and stress level. Approximately 87 percent of SNS experience moderate to high-stress levels and more than 20 percent do not engage in student-advisor interactions (Table 3). The study also found a significant positive relationship between peer interactions and student-coordinator interactions.

Table 3: Student-Advisor Interactions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	See Advisor	43	79.6	79.6	79.6
	Not See Advisor	11	20.4	20.4	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

The second question examined student-advisor interaction. The results show that approximately 80 percent of students see their advisors.

C. EFFECT OF STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION ON STRESS REDUCTION

RESEARCH QUESTION 3.
What is the effect of SNS interactions with advisors on their levels of stress?

The table below shows the correlation matrix of the correlation between interactions with an advisor and stress level at the end of the semester. Control variables included in the analysis are common stress coping interventions. Visiting with the program Coordinator, peer support and physical activity were included in the analysis in order to control for their likely effect of stress reduction.

Table 4: CORRELATION MATRIX

		Stress level at the end of the semester	See Academic advisor	Visit Coordinator	Peer Support
Pearson Correlation	Stress level at the end of the semester	1.000	-.299*	-.083	.04
	See Academic advisor		1.000	-.084	-.21
	Visit Coordinator			1.000	.221*
	Peer Support				1.00
	Physical activity				

*P< 0.10 ** P<.05

The results show a significant negative relationship between stress at the end of the semester and interaction with advisors. The correlation is -.299, showing that a moderate relationship in the negative

direction between stress level and interacting with advisors.

The second question examined in the study focused on the correlation between Student-advisor interaction and stress reduction. A significant relationship was hypothesized.

MODEL, SUMMARY, AND CONFIRMATION OF HYPOTHESES

The second question examined in the study focused on the correlation between Student-advisor interaction and stress reduction. A significant relationship was hypothesized.

The results of a regression analysis shown in Table 4, including Tables 5 and 6 below, supported the hypothesis of a significant relationship between student-advisor interaction and stress reduction. As shown in Table 4, the correlation matrix of the model the correlation is approximately .30 and is significant. This finding is supported by the results of a regression analysis of a model of factors including control variables that are likely to reduce stress. Physical activity, peer support and visiting with the program Coordinator were included in the model. Although the results of the overall model are not significant (p>.05) (table 5), the factor, student-faculty interactions are significant (beta =.321; p<.024), as shown in Table 6. Therefore, the second hypothesis (HO2) is confirmed. The results confirm the findings shown in the correlation matrix and suggest a significant negative correlation between stress and student advisor interaction (table 4). These results suggest that interactions with advisors reduce the stress experienced by student nurses.

Table 5: ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 NS	Regression	39.662	4	9.916	1.660	.174b
	Residual	292.653	49	5.973		
	Total	332.315	53			

a. Dependent Variable: Stress at the end of the semester
b. Predictors: (Constant), Physical activity Peer Support, See Advisor4 Visit Coordinator

R Square =.119   M.s (p >.05)

Table 6: Coefficientsa

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1S	(Constant)	11.539	2.001		5.766	.000
	See Advisor	-1.978	.850	-.321	-2.327	.024
	Visit Coordinator	-.430	.729	-.083	-.590	.558
	Peer Support	.034	.696	.007	.049	.961
	Physical activity	-.705	.701	-.139	-1.005	.320

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Stress in nursing students has been shown to emanate from three main sources: clinical, academic, and social/personal factors. Nursing students have reported elevated stress throughout their matriculation in the nursing program, and the increased levels of stress experience in these students differ from those in other undergraduate programs. The findings of this study validated the findings of other studies that examined the perceived stress levels in nursing students, their coping mechanisms, and faculty-student interactions.

In addition, the results of this study provide the basis for developing stress coping strategies with a focus on student-advisor interactions as well as other academic and wellness policies and programs in support of SNS wellness and learning outcomes.
The negative effect of student-faculty interaction on stress may suggest the importance of interpersonal relationships. This consideration is consistent with Watson's human caring theory (2008), as well of other interpersonal theories.

Theoretical Implications

Student-advisor interactions for the purpose of academic advising offer opportunities for a variety of other interpersonal relations which support the success of students.

The interactions, therefore, may not only be limited to academic considerations. They can be used to address other issues which address an environment that is a source of stress experienced by students. Consequently, the concept of student-faculty

interaction needs to be considered in the development stress coping strategies

Practical and Nursing Implications

An important practical implication of the study is that advisors should extend their interactions with students beyond just academic curriculum advising to include other considerations that create stressful environments for students

More importantly, it is important to expand the concept of advising to include student-advisor interactions in support of stress reduction strategies. This recommendation suggests that the role of advisors should include stress considerations during advising.

Advising policies in colleges may, therefore, need to be modified. In this regard, for example, the second research question examined in this study focused on the extent to which students engage in student-advisor interactions. The results showed that approximately 20 percent of student do not engage with advisors. In view of the significant effect of interactions on stress reduction, it is therefore important that a policy that requires students to interact with advisors be enforced or developed in nursing programs.

In addition, nursing educators can reduce the stress levels of nursing students by providing a platform for conducive learning while also encouraging students to share their feelings and stressors (Bagcivan et al 2015).

Lastly, the literature reviewed indicated that nursing students are cognizant of their sources of stress. Hence, measures that reduce stress should be taken promptly so as minimize its complications. It is further indicated that problem-focus coping strategies are more effective than Emotion-focus strategies. Therefore, Student nurses should utilize Problem-focused coping strategies to tackle their stressors, either by problem-solving, time management, or utilizing instrumental social support systems like their faculty members (McLeod, 2015).

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the contributions of this study. it presents several limitations. First, the results cannot be generalized because of the small sample size and the context of the study. Therefore, more studies using bigger samples and other contexts offer the opportunity to extend knowledge on the relationship between student-faculty interaction and stress reduction. Furthermore, the research instrument used in the survey is a modified validated stress coping scales.

Despite these limitations, this study makes a major contribution. A search found no other study that has studied student-advisor interactions and its effect on stress reduction in the context of senior year nursing students in an HBCU. Future research targeting many HBCU nursing programs is strongly recommended to expand advising to include stress coping considerations.

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The African American Identity: Romare Bearden's Contributions

Alanah Cooper
Hillsborough Community College Honors Institute

"My subject is people. They just happen to turn out to be negro" (Hage.50) stated artist Romare Bearden. Bearden was not shy to represent what he believed in. His work gave a voice to the African American community by combining crisp, bold combinations of paper, paint, drawn lines, and bits of fabric and shiny foil (Plagens 1) on a canvas. Romare Bearden's life, art, and acts of activism helped shape the African American identity in the media.

Romare Bearden's life, from childhood to adulthood, was always eventful. Bearden was born on September 2, 1911, in Charlotte North Carolina, but he and his family moved to New York in 1914 (Amaki 44). When he was young he did a lot of traveling from Canada, to Pittsburgh, to New York (Amaki 44). His father worked on the railroads as a sanitation inspector (Plagens 1), and his mother, who became an influential Democrat in Harlem (Amaki 44), was a political activist and worked for the Chicago Defender newspaper (Plagens 1). Growing up Bearden had the opportunity to meet many Harlem Renaissance leaders because of his mother's job and influence in the community (Messinger 107). As Bearden got older he decided to serve in the US army in the WWII and was determined to use his G.I bill to study art in Paris (Goode 2). Bearden got a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics in 1935 (Amaki 45) and later became a caseworker for the city department of social services for thirty-four years (Plagens 1). Bearden's love for art was so strong that he took art classes at night (Plagens 1) and drew political cartoons for his school's magazine (Amaki 45). All these major events in his life helped Bearden build the basis of the inspiration for his work.

Before Bearden made great strides in representing the African American community in the media, the representation of the African American community was mischaracterized to oppress that community. White people tend to make images of themselves in media as symbolically and/or culturally good/moral and more advanced black, and to depict people with all the opposite images and symbols (Branch and Young 161). White artists often used tactics to mentally break down the consciousness and identity of the African American (Branch and Young 161). They would use words like "dirty, sinister, horrible" to associate with

people of color. Even terms like "brutish and bestial" are stereotypical images that are still being accepted in today's media (Branch and Young 162). Even in an interpretation of the Bible, characters who were cursed, killed or sinned are often compared to African Americans (Branch and Young 162), while white people are depicted as Jesus, God, angels and all "good" characters (Branch and Young 162). In science, Social Darwinism was also used to justify discrimination towards the African American community (Roshnavand and Torghabeh 38). These tactics made it "clear that the life experiences of the negro child are not such as to aid him in developing a positive sense of himself or of his place in his world" (Branch and Young 160). These images were hurtful to the African American community. Because of the weight of the stereotypes they had to "reject their African background" to follow what the white people imposed on them (Roshnavand and Torghabeh 38). The "back to Africa" movement, the Harlem Renaissance, the great migration, and artists who created black forms of artistic expression gave the start to African American shaping their own identity (Roshnavand and Torghabeh 39). The "back to Africa" movement encouraged many African Americans to discover and reclaim their African roots and lineage (Roshnavand and Torghabeh 39). The great migration from the rural south to the urban north gave the African Americans more money and an economic identity of being working men rather than farmers (Roshnavand and Torghabeh 39). Art was a form that gave the African Americans a tangible and visual image and sound that helped them set the groundwork for them to find their identity.

Bearden's work has and always will be a hallmark of the African American life and perspective. As Lisa Mintz Messinger points out, "Bearden was one of the few African American artists of the period to secure a following and gallery representation outside of the black community" (107). Bearden knew that African Americans were often depicted in a bad light, so he used his platform to show the world that the African American is beautiful and better than what is shown in the media. Bearden used the collage of *The Dove* as a representation of the true life, hustle, and bustle of the African American in the city. Bearden used pictures of

different people and figures in his collage to depict the different people and gave them each their own style and personality (Sayre 499). *The Dove* combines "forms of shifting scale and different orders of fragmentations" from the giant cigarette extending from the hand of the dandy sporting cap and the giant fingers of a women's hands reaching over the windowsill (Sayre 499). Bearden himself said "... in *The Dove* the variety of the scale in the human figure is such that some of the faces really function as areas of pacivity (297). He did this to depict the many people in the city range from all sizes and shades. *The Dove*, which is a symbol of peace, gives a depiction of the African American community with a sense of normality and harmony (Sayre 499). The image of the *Times* magazine cover that Bearden did reached everyone in the public. On the cover, he depicted the life of the African American community that contradicted the normal stereotypes placed on the African American community. The cover depicts the simplicity and normality of the life of the African American. Bearden used many techniques to express his past/history and the real normal life of the African American community. He used magazine clippings, old photos, and colored paper to make a picture of many interpretations (Messinger 107). Bearden stated, "I tore sections of the paper away, always attempting to tear upward and across on the pictures planes until some motif engaged me" (Bearden 292).

Bearden's work did what every great piece of art does: it questioned/challenged the norm. Bearden's work showed a depiction of the African American community in a different light rather than the stereotypical narratives of "angry looters" and "slum dwellers" (Hage 40). In Paris, he was influenced by cubist artists like George Braque, Consteintin Brancus, and Fernarel leger (Amaki 46). Bearden achieved the meaning of "thinking with material, [so] that new meaning is constructed" (Eisner 56) in his work. Bearden's work aimed to expose the complexity of the individual African American experience (Hage 44). Bearden felt that it was up to the people to determine what they wanted from American society (Bearden and Henderson 401). He put together pictures of family, love, and music. Bearden knew about the evils of racism and economic oppression, but

he never wanted his work to reflect that but for it to be vibrant and rich of life (Goode 2). Bearden's work gained a lot of attraction throughout the years. Many people were shocked that Bearden had the courage to depict the African American life in a mainstream way. They could not understand the prospective of his art and could not understand why he would want to paint the "Negro in America" (Bearden 299). But there were many people in awe over his work. People said that his work depicted African American's life "as fact, not an accusation" (Hage 40). He was known as an "indigenous interpreter of African American culture for the white community" (Hage 40). Critics had debates about his work saying his collage clipping was something like a "quilt full of symbols" and that he used these clippings to emphasize the civil rights movement and black history (Goode 2). Bearden's work will always be appreciated and have many interpretations.

Bearden's progress in the identity of the African American did not stop with his work; he started a group called Spiral in 1963 (Gibson 1). Spiral was a group of African American artists who created, discussed, and displayed their views of the "image of the negro" (Glazer 413).

There were many artists in the Spiral group, ranging from abstract expression to social protest painters (Bearden and Henderson 400). The artists in this time felt trapped in a box about their work. They wanted to express "the struggle" but not in the "traditional of protest painting" (Bearden and Henderson 400), and they wanted their work to be shown on a larger platform than just in the African American community. Spiral discussed the struggle of representation and social change (Amaki 45). The Spiral group pioneered a major force that helped propel the struggle, the reality, and the life of the African American community in the media. Bearden felt that the "western society was gravely ill" and felt that art, important leaders, and expression could transform the African American community (Bearden and Henderson 400). All the proceeds from the Spiral exhibits went to civil rights groups (Bearden and Henderson 402). Bearden was active in the need to have social change and representation in the media.

Bearden's life was adventurous and full of giving his time and work to the African American community until his death in 1988 (Goode 2). In Bearden's lifetime, he helped land the studio museum, he was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and he received the national medal of arts from Ronald Regan (Messinger 107). Bearden's art and life will forever be an "existing representation of black identity in the realm of popular culture" (Glazer 412) that will help give a platform for the next generation to further emphasize the complexity of the black identity. For example, Beyoncé, in her visual album *Lemonade*, presents black style in a nonjudgmental way, which celebrates and embraces the style and culture of the African American community (Ball 2). Bearden's work will forever touch many and give the viewer a sense of the African American community as vibrantly colorful, peaceful, and loving.

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Alabama: Great Destination or Place to Avoid for African Americans?

Jaime Williams
Grambling State University
Earl Lester Cole Honors College
Mentor: Dr. Steve Favors

Abstract

This research project was conducted on the campus of Grambling State University. The purpose of the study was to collect data from potential black college graduates about their knowledge of career opportunities that currently exist within the state of Alabama with regards to education and employment. Data for the study was obtained from a review of literature about the state and a survey that was developed to collect student opinions. The survey was randomly distributed on campus. The survey identified a group of cities in states which students generally perceive to offer the social and career advantages which will help them to reach their career goals and provides some insight into the history and culture of the state of Alabama, racial climate, tremendous business growth and academic opportunities. The study presents some interesting information about the state of Alabama which is often overlooked by African Americans because of its history.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Before the British founded the Jamestown Colony in 1607, the Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto had been making fortunes trading slaves and looting gold in the West Indies and Central America. After he conquered Florida in 1539, de Soto landed in the area that is now Montgomery, Alabama in 1540 (Hirst, 2017). He was searching for gold as he ravished the Indigenous communities there and forced Chief Tuscaluza of the Atahachi area (Montgomery) to take him to find gold and women and took others as hostages. Tuscaluza led de Soto to Maubila, the area that is now Mobile, where a battle was fought with natives there. Twenty-five hundred Native Americans and twenty Spanish soldiers died in two days. Chief Tuscaluza and much more survived and sailed from the Tombigbee River in Mobile and settled in Moundville, a town twelve miles West of what is now the city of Tuscaloosa. The Northern portion of this river that runs through Tuscaloosa and Moundville, the Black Warrior River, is also named after Chief Tuscaluza, whose name translates to 'black warrior' in the Muskogean language (Hirst, 2017) After the U.S is officially founded in 1776, Americans began moving beyond the Appalachians and the Mississippi Territory was created in 1798. In 1817, the Alabama Territory is officially created when the Mississippi Territory is divided and given statehood (Lowery, 2000). The first capital of Alabama was Huntsville,

but it has had five capitals since its inception. After Huntsville, it was Cahaba, Tuscaloosa, Mobile, and finally Montgomery. On December 14, 1819, Alabama becomes the 22nd state admitted into the Union and the first of six of Alabama's Constitutions is ratified earlier the same year. Slavery in Alabama existed long before Alabama gained its statehood in 1819, and before the Civil War started, slaves made up 45% of Alabama's total population. During this period, slave owners were required to pay taxes on their properties- twenty-five cents for children under 11 and one dollar for any person older than 11 (Lyman, 2017). The slave-tax was the single biggest revenue for the state. On January 11, 1861, Alabama became the fourth state to secede from the Union and declared itself a Sovereign State. Montgomery served as the first Capital of the Confederacy, and the First Nation Pattern (the Confederate Flag) was flown there two months after secession. One-hundred and ninety-four military and land events and eight naval engagements took place in Alabama during the Civil War (Napier, 2012). After the war is over in 1865, Alabama wrote a new constitution in an attempt to rejoin the Union, but Congress rejected it. It is finally readmitted into the Union as a State in 1868 when its Constitution is ratified. Another constitution is ratified to "redeem" Alabama from Reconstruction policies in 1875, however, after a dispute between the Farmers Alliances, Bourbons, and Democrats, another constitution is constructed. The resulting 1901 Constitution not only restricted suffrage by adopting grandfather clauses, poll taxes, literacy tests and more divisive tactics intended to disenfranchise, but, also did little to make government more responsive to the challenges of a new century. The ratified 1901 constitution, was more a code of laws than a framework for government, as the Legislature retained near complete control over local affairs, making it necessary to propose hundreds of amendments over the next century (Warren, 2011). It now is the longest active constitution in the world. The state flag was adopted in 1895 and was to be modeled after the Confederate Flag. It depicts "a crimson Cross of St. Andrew upon a field of white." which very closely resembles a model of the Confederate flag without the stars and a lack of blue.

The first Historically Black University in Alabama was founded in in 1866 as Lincoln Normal School in Marion, Alabama. A black Union soldier founded the school, teaching freed slaves and later getting support from local African Americans and funding from the American Missionary Association. In 1887, the college changed its location to Montgomery and its name to Alabama State University. Alabama A&M got its present name in 1969 but, it founding took place in 1875 as Huntsville Normal and Industrial School. Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute were founded in 1881 by George Campbell and Lewis Adams. Booker T. Washington was the first President of the Institute and, he ran the Institute for the rest of his life while being a prominent leader in the black community (Gasmen, 2008). Washington introduced the Hampton-Tuskegee model to the Institution to persuade Southern blacks to focus on jobs in agriculture, building, and various domestic chores. The Hampton-Tuskegee model would be used in most HBCUs for almost until the mid-twentieth century. In the late 1930s, the military selected Tuskegee Institute for a Flight School because of its commitment to aeronautical training. Tuskegee had the facilities, and engineering and technical instructors, as well as a climate for year-round flying. The first Civilian Pilot Training Program students completed their instruction in May 1940. The Tuskegee program was then expanded and became the center for African-American aviation during World War II. The Tuskegee Airmen were skilled at the battle in sophisticated combat aircraft and executed several combat missions during the war (Haulman, 2011). The oldest and largest public university in Alabama is the University of Alabama located in Tuscaloosa. Auburn University was founded in 1856 and is perhaps the least diverse public university in Alabama.

Alabama was home to some of the most notorious civil rights events through the 50's and 60's. The Montgomery Bus Boycotts were prewarned by Jo Ann Robinson, president of the Women's Political Council in Montgomery in 1954 when she penned a letter to the Mayor stating that they will boycott the public transportation system of Montgomery if conditions were not improved (Woodham, 2011). In March 1955, Claudette Colvin, a fifteen-year-old junior in high

school refused to give up her seat to a white person. She was violently arrested, and a few small boycotts began around the city. Two months later Mary Louise Smith was arrested for the same offense. Later the same year on December 1, Rosa Parks who was a longtime women's activist and secretary at the local NAACP, refused to give up her seat to a white person. Jo Ann Robinson and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. organized over one-third of Montgomery's black population to participate in the boycott. It continued until Montgomery's buses were desegregated December 21, 1956 (Burns, 2008). John Lewis, Alabama native, and other students conducted Freedom rides across the South. When they came to Alabama, they were savagely beaten in Aniston, where their bus was also bombed. The Birmingham Campaign, led by Bull Conner in the early 60's caused some of the most violent methods of racism. He was famous for using dogs and water hoses on peaceful protestors against white supremacy. Two different locations in Birmingham were bombed. Bethel Baptist church was bombed by the KKK in Christmas of '56, and in September 1963 and four girls were killed in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church by the same terrorist organization. Dr. King's arrest during the Birmingham Campaign led to his production of the Letter from Birmingham Jail. The Marches from Selma to Montgomery to protest racism in Dallas County Voting regulations initially began in January 1965. From January to February, one person was killed and over 2400 demonstrators were arrested. On Sunday, March 7, some 600 black protesters, led by Hosea Williams and John Lewis, undertook the march. As they crossed the Edmund Pettis Bridge over the Alabama River, they were blocked by a contingent of 65 troopers, 10 or more Dallas County sheriff's deputies, and 15 mounted members of the sheriff's deputized posse all led by George Wallace. Amidst billowing tear gas, the law enforcement personnel beat the marchers back across the bridge. Fifty-six black marchers were hospitalized, including organizer Amelia Boynton Robinson, though only 18 of them were hurt seriously enough to be kept overnight (Fitts, 2008). The Civil Rights movement ended in the 1960s, but Alabama still struggles with equality and civil rights today. It is important to expose these issues and

also, to reveal economic opportunities available in the state today.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the influence of race relations on student's decision to have a career or pursue an education in Alabama. The study will offer information about educational and economic benefits in the state relative to African American students. The study will also reveal how respondent's opinions relate to the need for progression of race relations in the State.

Purpose of the Study

The principle purposes in this study are:

1. To provide information about educational and economic opportunities offered in Alabama.

2. To determine whether students are justified in their answer selections or whether there is truth to the stigma on the racial climate in Alabama.

3. To determine how much of an impact racist history and current racial disparities policies has on the selection of future destinations for African American millennials.

Other secondary purposes are:

To provide statistics on why Alabama can be a good place to live.

Assumptions

1. Alabama finds it hard to overcome its historical legacy of racial discrimination and injustice.

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2. African American students would not consider attending graduate school in Alabama.

3. The majority of African American students do not consider Alabama a major destination for success.

4. Alabama will continue to be an ultra-conservative, predominately Red State due to demographics.

Importance of the Study

From its inception in 1539, when Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto first landed in the area, Alabama has had a complicated history. Killing and enslaving the indigenous people native to the land was only the beginning of Alabama's racially oppressive history. Slavery was the state's number one source of income through planting, manufacturing, and the slave-tax. Alabama was the fourth State to withdraw from the Union, standing strong on its beliefs and, mostly, dependency on the system of slavery. The state capital of Montgomery served as the capital of the Confederacy. During Reconstruction, after slavery was abolished and black men were given voting rights, terrorist groups and other individuals would intimidate black voters, even going so far as to hurt and even kill them. The Reconstruction era was replaced by the Redemption Era in which Democrats were seeking the status quo antebellum, or the way things were before the war. They wanted African Americans back in slavery because the Southern economy had been failing since slavery ended. First Vagrancy Acts and Apprenticeship laws were used to made men without jobs and young children work for free. At the same time, convict leasing programs were adopted across the South leasing prisoners to corporations in all industries. Alabama had the worst conditions-prisoners in this state usually were never released and, they would die in months of disease or from overcrowding and over-exposure. Jim Crow became law after 1896 when "separate but equal" was declared Constitution is the Plessy case, making racism legal and guaranteeing the rest of Alabama's history to the present day. Even after the bloody battles, peaceful

protests, and overall Civil Rights movement across the South and Alabama especially, Alabama still fought the status quo of Civil Rights. Most high schools in Alabama did not desegregate until twenty years after Brown v. Board. Twenty years after court ordered desegregation orders in high schools, 53% of schools had been re-segregated and remain that way today (Hannah-Jones, 2014). It is extremely difficult to present information about educational and economic opportunities in the state without being truthful about the racial inequalities that plague the system. These racial disparities are obvious in the economy of Alabama, with black Alabamians having the fourth highest unemployment rate in the United States. Racial disparities in Alabama's social, political, and economic institutions are not isolated to this single state, which is why they must be challenged and met with opposition. If black people continue to lose interest in living and working in the State of Alabama, the progression of race relations and racial equality will likely not occur anytime soon, and Alabama will become a safe haven for those who fear diversity and who favor racist policies.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Review of all Relevant Journals, Articles, and Websites

After the institutions of slavery, convict leasing programs were developed to provide free labor to corporations that had initially depended on slave labor. When convict leasing programs were ended due to human rights violations in Alabama, the prison system was introduced to the states as a new form of slavery. Today in Alabama correctional facilities (prisons, county jails, detention centers, halfway houses), there is a gross overrepresentation of black people in the prison population. The total population of Alabama is 4,863,300 residents with 69.5% of the population being white and, 26.8% being black (2016). Despite minimal representation in the total population, black people make up 54% of the correctional facilities population while the white population is only 42% (Harrison, 2015). While only 535 of every 100,000 white residents and 767 of every 100,000 Hispanic residents will be incarcerated, 1,788 of every 100,000

black Alabamians will be incarcerated (Harrison, 2015). Not only are black residents unfairly imprisoned, residents who are not felons have also been severely disfranchised in Alabama's political system. The ACLU reported that in 2014, 31 Departments of Motor Vehicles were closed in mostly black counties (Watson, 2014). As a result, in the 2016 Presidential Election there were at least 250,000 registered voters who don't have IDs and could not vote unless they traveled outside their county to get a driver's license. Despite the state's attempt to disenfranchise its minorities, during the 2017 special Senatorial election between Democrat Doug Jones and Republican, accused child molester Roy Moore, black voter demonstrated their political power. Ninety-eight percent of black women and ninety-three percent of black men voted Moore in while 72% of white men and 63% of white women casted their votes for Roy Moore (Lockhart, 2017). In the six counties in the Black Belt region of Alabama with black populations of 70% or higher, at least 30% of those residents live below the poverty level. In counties with black populations of 50-70%, at least 20% of the residents under the poverty level (2017). As the state with the 4th highest poverty rate in America, 900,000 (19.2%) total people in Alabama live in poverty (citidata, 2014). Fourteen percent of whites live in poverty, 33.9 percent of Hispanics live in poverty, and 31.6 percent of black Alabamians live in poverty (Alabama Census, 2015). The average income for all families in Alabama is $42,849. However, in majority of counties that are at least 50% black, the average income for families is less than $30,000 (2017) (Citidata.com, 2015). Black people in Alabama have the 4th highest unemployment rate in the U.S at 10.8% behind, Illinois (14.1%), Pennsylvania (11.1%), and Michigan (11.0%) (Epi.org, 2016). School systems in Alabama also experience racial disparities as well as discrimination. The total high school graduation rate in Alabama is 89%. The rate for Black students is 87%, the lowest in the state. The rate for white students is 91%, and 90% for both Hispanic and Native American students (ache.state, 2015). Asian students have the highest rate at 94%. The average ACT scores by race is as follows: Black (16.2) Native American (17.9), white (20.2), Hispanic (17.2), Asian (23.4), and Native

Hawaiian (17.3). Of the total black student population in the state, at least 16% will be suspended compared to only 4.7% of white students (2016) (ache.state, 2016). Black children were 3.3 times more likely to be suspended and 3.5 times more likely to be expelled than their white counterparts during the 2013-2014 school year. A total of 3,157 black children were arrested or referred to law enforcement in schools during that same school year. Black children are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested or referred to law enforcement than white children in Alabama schools (SPLC, 2015). Black students in Alabama have also been experiencing the low-end of re-segregation since the late 1990s. Desegregation orders were lifted between 1990 and 2011 across the South, greatly decreasing funding and the quality of education in majority black school districts. Today, more than 53% of black students in Alabama attend apartheid schools, which are schools that are 99% black (Hannah-Jones, Nikole, 2014). However, Alabama's public schools and its separatist policies are not unlike the majority of the United States public school system, especially in the South.

Higher education, especially Historically Black Colleges and Universities, provide black residents of Alabama with ample educational opportunity. Most Colleges and Universities in the state have a black student population that make up more than 10% of the student body. The University of Alabama, Auburn University, and Samford University are the least diverse in the state, with black students comprising below 10% of the entire student body. Other predominately white institutions such as University of Alabama at Birmingham and Huntsville and Troy University have larger black student populations and great programs. In Alabama's top 30 colleges and Universities, Tuskegee University is #9, Alabama A&M University is #13 and, Alabama State University #11. Miles, Talladega, and Stillman colleges fall at #24, #25, and #27, respectively (. Of these Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Alabama A&M is statistically the most successful with the largest number of students completing degree programs in 2015-2016 school year (collegedata.org). Alabama A&M is partnered with the other Public Universities-University of North Alabama, University

of Alabama in Huntsville, Calhoun Community College and others- in the Tennessee Valley area of North Alabama, especially Huntsville, working to produce more graduates in STEM and information technology to supply the quickly growing tech industry in Alabama. According to NerdWallet, an online finance journal, Montgomery has one of the fastest growing black populations and almost a quarter of the Capital's businesses are black owned. NerdWallet ranks it as the second-best city for black businesses, between Atlanta at #1 and Memphis at number three.

Alabama's economy has been growing exponentially for the past fifteen years. Minority business ownership increased 30.7% from 2007 to 2012. Hispanic ownership increased 51.5% and black business ownership increased 28.7% in the same period (Todd, 2016). In 2014, 53,528 loans under $100,000 (and valued at $887.3 million) were issued by Alabama lending institutions reporting under the Community Reinvestment Act. The median income for individuals who were self-employed at their own incorporated businesses was $48,900 in 2014. In 2016, Alabama Department of Commerce announced its new program AlabamaWorks (AL Economic Guide, 2016). AlabamaWorks brings together key components of the K-12 and two-year college systems, state workforce training and placement services, and industry (2016). The program will connect businesses with job seekers and help prepare workers by linking them to career and job training opportunities. Figures from the U.S Commerce Department show Alabama's exports totaled $20.55 billion in 2016. Since 2006 exports rose 48% and, 15% since 2011 despite the decrease in U.S exports of 3% in 2016 (AL Economic Guide, 2015). The major industries in Alabama are the automotive, chemical manufacturing, information technology, forestry, and aeronautics industries. Jobs in the automotive industry have grown over 200% in the past fifteen years (AL EPSCoR, 2016). Toyota Motor Manufacturing in Huntsville, Mercedes Benz in Tuscaloosa, Honda in Lincoln, and Hyundai in Montgomery production facilities in the state produce 25% of all passenger vehicles in the South. Alabama is one the Top 5 producers of automobiles in the United States. Gadsden is home to the Goodyear Tire

and Rubber plant that supplies automobile accessories. These industries also employ thousands of employees at supplier facilities across the state. The number two export out of Alabama is manufactured chemical: oxidants, light stabilizers, emissions catalysts, and chlorine. Over 200 chemical manufacturing companies reside in the state. In the Tennessee Valley area, information technology has become the main industry (AL EPSCoR, 2016). More than 300 international and domestic corporations for information technology have been established and/or relocated to the area. Google along with other companies that specialize in gaming technology, modeling and simulation technology, cyber security and data centers have come to call Alabama home. Alabama is home to the third largest timberland in the U.S, leads the nation in pulp production, and is the number three paper producer in the States. Selma's Zilkha Biomass Energy plant is seeking to produce a wood-based fuel as a substitute for coal (AL Economic Guide, 2015). The aeronautics industry in Alabama is thriving today more than ever with major aerospace companies like NASA, Boeing, and Lockheed Martin with facilities in the North and South of the State. NASA and Boeing are partnered in Huntsville with Boeing producing the spacecraft and aircraft necessary to eventually take humans to Mars and Beyond. Airbus, a European based aircraft giant, will be assembled here and the Space Launch System will be tested sometime this year. Lockheed-Martin has a missile manufacturing site as well as a launching pad in Troy. Troy University is also beginning to train pilots, like Tuskegee during the mid-twentieth century. Birmingham, which was once the Iron Giant of the South because of the natural supply of iron, now has a main industry of finance and insurance. The only Fortune 500 Company in Alabama, Regions Financial Corp. is located here. University of Alabama at Birmingham, which is extremely diverse, fosters medical and biotechnical innovation and attracts patients from near and far due to its successes.

There is one Democratic Representative District in Alabama out of seven and, the incumbent U.S Representative for this district is a black woman, Terri Sewell. For Alabama State Representatives, there are 22 black representatives out of 105 available districts.

Six out of thirty-five state senators are black. There are no other minority groups representing districts in Alabama.

Summary and Conclusions Based on Review of Literature

Upon examination of the Alabama Correctional Facilities and Prison Systems, it would seem as if slavery in the state never ended. Just last year 21 states, including Alabama, went on strike to protest the conditions they were in. Mass Incarceration in Alabama has led to 200% occupancy rates in most County facilities, overcrowding, disease, and excessive violence. The Free Alabama Movement was started in 2016 by prisoners and their legal representatives to call for Fair Re-entry programs, the stopping of unfair targeting of black males to fill jails, and humane conditions inside of prisons. What is puzzling is that 250,000 citizens with no criminal record have been disenfranchised systematically by the closure of DMVs in mostly black counties. It would be silly to believe that it was not intentional to keep black residents from getting I.D's and drivers licenses, which are now required in Alabama to vote upon the lifting of the Voting Rights Act. Black residents in Alabama have responded to this discrimination with vigor. The 2016 Senatorial Election between Roy Moore and Doug Jones was such a polarizing issue in the state because conservatives upheld their party over the person who was running for office, whom is an accused child molester. Though Doug Jones is a centrist-democrat, black women and men utilized their voting power and carried Jones to his now Senate seat. It would be in the best interest of Doug Jones and the entire political system of Alabama to begin to acknowledge the power of the black vote and to support those voters in policy. Courts in Alabama have also lifted segregation bans between 1990 and 2011, creating a new era of segregation in k-12 schools and academies. Black children are over punished and even jailed in Alabama schools disproportionately in comparison to their white counterparts. There is a direct correlation between the educational disparities as well as the punitive disparities. Black students are treated like potential criminals throughout their education. Suspension and expulsion are extreme measures for a lot of students whose actions do not match the punishment they receive. A lot of these students, especially boys, ended up dropping out and becoming habitual offenders. Also, the lack of funding to black schools means a lack of resources. Black students at apartheid schools will typically not be on the same educational level as a black student at a predominately white institution because of the vast disparities in funding and resources. This was suggested in a study done by The Atlantic on a segregated high school in Tuscaloosa, Alabama (2014). Because of state laws, like most states, property taxes dictate the amount resources schools receives within their districts. Thus, poorer cities will have less successful schools and less funding. Lastly because of the population distribution in Alabama, black children are more likely to attend these schools than more well-funded ones.

Higher education in Alabama is more inclusive than not. Most public universities have a black population with 20% or higher, some with 10% or more. The only three universities with a black population less than 10% are University of Alabama (UA), Auburn University, and Samford University. UA has a known racist history, so it is not surprising. George Wallace famously, unsuccessfully blocked Vivian Malone and James Hood from entering the admissions office with his "Segregation Now, Segregation Forever, and Segregation tomorrow," speech in 1963. Auburn was integrated months' after UA by Harold Franklin with no drama by Wallace. Despite this, both are great universities to attend and produce more employees than any other colleges in the state. Auburn is known for its Veterinary Medicine, Forestry, Agriculture, and many other programs that ranks the school at number one in the State. The UA ranks at number two in the State, known well for its engineering and human sciences programs. Also, Alabama's law school ranks among top law schools in the nation. Black students made up 25.8% of University of Alabama at Birmingham's population (2016). Their medical school and hospital are largely successful, with many patients outside of Jefferson County dependent on their professional and efficient care. All colleges in the Tennessee Valley area are

partnered and very diverse including, Alabama A&M as the only HBCU in the area. Here most colleges specialize in information technology, engineering, chemistry, and other majors that coincide with the economy around them. In Montgomery, Alabama State graduates are producing businesses and attracting more black people to the area. ASU has a nationally known Performing Arts program, and, it also has an Aerospace, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Liberal Arts Programs amongst many more. This would an ideal place to work and live because there is a guaranteed job for a college graduate majoring in those studies because of the growing economy. Because we are a smaller population, a graduate degree and a doctorate degree in Alabama, at any major University, should guarantee opportunity for black students. In the AlabamaWorks initiative, all the corporations and companies that are mentioned in the Review section, along with many more not mentioned, are looking for graduates in those studies that cater to their economies. Not only are college graduates being hired, but people without colleges degrees are majority of the supplier plants' worker populations. These plants supply thousands of jobs to people across the state and, there is even population- if not a majority-minority population- of ethnic diversity in most plants, depending on the county. Students should really consider moving to Alabama if they seek a job in any of the fields mentioned above. Alabama has a great economy that has grown exponentially and, that will only grow from this point. Despite the amount of people that are in prisons, Governor Bentley has set an initiative to release 4,500 prisoners. Prisoners usually learn trades and/or get degrees while incarcerated so they could be able to find work at jobs that don't discriminate against records. Also, felons can apply for voting rights because it is supposed to be relieved to the person after they have served their time. If Alabama gets more minority representation in its political offices and, people who are willing to propose to amend laws and create equal opportunities for minorities, racial, social, and economic progression will be more probable. In conclusion, an Black American living anywhere in America is likely to face legal or interpersonal discrimination or racism. It is not to justify these behaviors, but it is to demonstrate that racism and discrimination are not limited to Alabama, or the South.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN

Collection of Data

To construct a hypothesis, a research instrument was designed. A questionnaire was organized with six demographic questions and ten additional questions concerning the students' perceptions towards the State of Alabama. Nine of the questions were open ended and one question gave students the option to choose two major cities they would live in out of ten major cities. The surveys were randomly given to twenty-five undergraduate students at Grambling State University, a historically black university in Northern Louisiana. Students were selected in two different course lectures and 23 surveys were distributed, completed by respondents, and collected by the researcher. After the questionnaires were collected they were analyzed and results of the survey have been presented in the following charts and tables.

Appendix

### Appendix A: Information Form Used in the Study

Project Survey

To gather information for an independent research project under the guidance of Dr. Steve Favors, it is necessary to carry out a survey and produce a report on the findings of this survey. Please be aware that some of the questions may require you to provide personal information. However, be assured that the information you provide is anonymous and will in no way identify you as the respondent. Therefore, please take a few minutes to complete this survey.

- **Gender**
  - Male Female
- **Age**
  - 16-18 19-21 22-24 older
- **Race**
  - Black White Two or more races other
- What country outside the U.S or U.S state are you from? Answer below.
  _____
- What is your classification?
  - Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
- What is your major? Answer below
  _____
1. Have you ever considered living in the state of Alabama?
  - Yes No
2. Do you think Alabama is a good place to live, compared to other States?
  - Yes No
3. Do you believe that Alabama is a racist state, considering its history?
  - Yes No
4. Do you believe that Alabama will become a major destination for black students in the near future?
  - Yes No
5. Would you attend a HBCU for graduate school in Alabama?
  - Yes No
6. Would you consider ever employment in Alabama?
  - Yes No
7. Do you think that Alabama will ever be a Blue State (Democratic) again?

Collection of Data
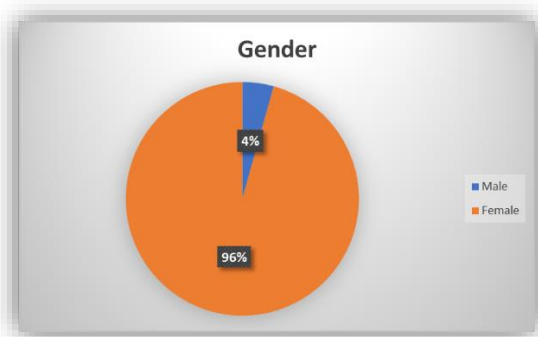
This chart represents the genders of twenty-three (23) respondents surveyed. Of these respondents, only 4% (1 student) identified as male and 96% (22 students) identified as female. Most respondents were female.
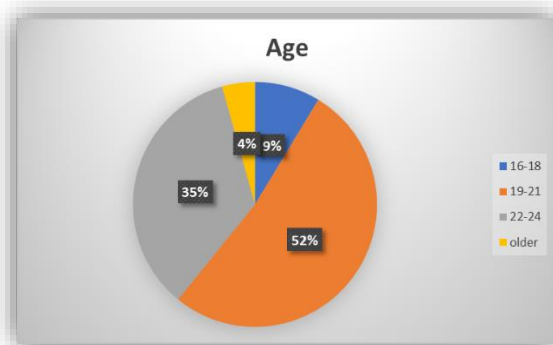
This chart reports the age ranges of the respondents of this survey. Of the respondents, 52% were between the ages 19-21, 35% were between the ages 22-24, 9% were between the ages 16-18, and 4% were older than 22.
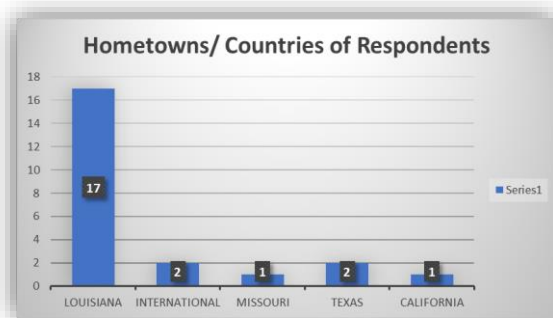

This chart represents the background diversity of the survey participants. Seventy-four percent of respondents were Louisiana Natives, 9% of the respondents were international students, 9% were from Texas, 4% were from Missouri and, 4% were from California.
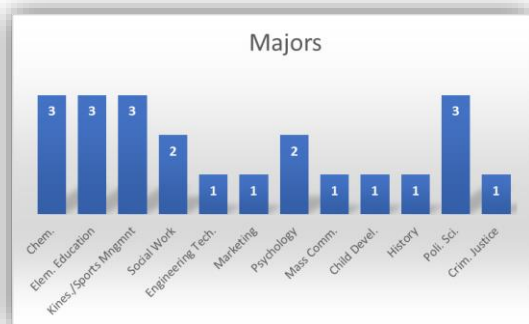
This graph reports to the majors of the respondents of the survey. The numbers of students in each major is indicated on the chart. Most students that were surveyed were Chemistry, Elementary Education, and Political Science Majors**.**
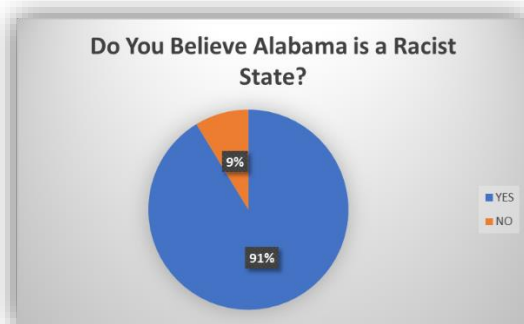
Question #1:
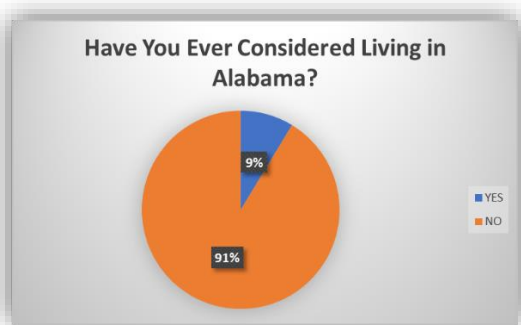
#1: This chart represents the responses to the question of a student's consideration of living in the state of Alabama, only two students answered "yes" and twenty-one (21) students answered "no".
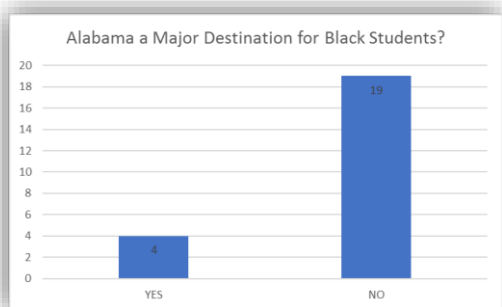
Question #2:
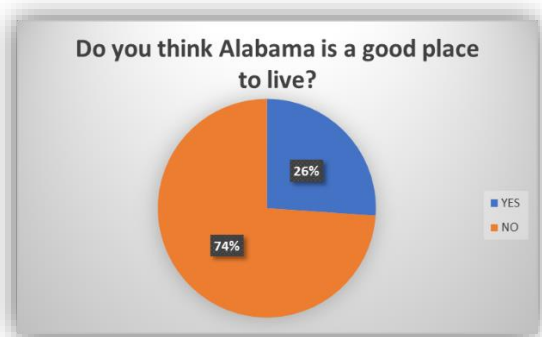
#2: This chart represents the responses to the question, "Do you believe Alabama is a good place to live, compared to other states?" Of the respondents, 26% answered "yes" and 74% of respondents answered "no".
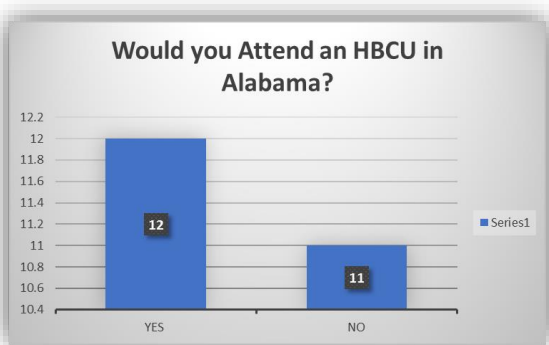
Question #3:

#3: This chart represents the responses to the question, "Do you believe Alabama is a racist state, considering its History?" A total of 91% of respondents answered "yes" and 9% of respondents answered "no".

Question #4:

Alabama a Major Destination for Black Students?

#4: This chart represents the responses to the question, "Do you believe Alabama will become a major destination for black students?" Only four respondents answered "yes" and 19 respondents answered "no".
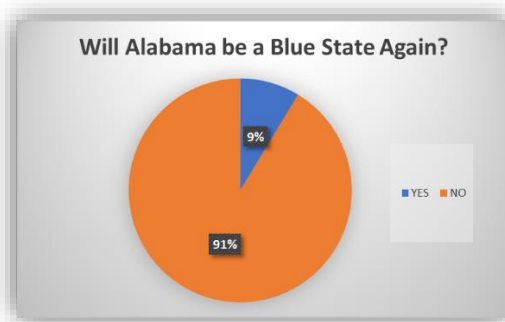
Question #5:

Would you Attend an HBCU in Alabama?

#5: This chart represents the responses to the question, "Would you attend an HBCU in Alabama?" About 48% of respondents (11 students) answered "yes" and 52% of respondents (12 students) answered "no".

Question #6:

Would you Consider Employment in Alabama?
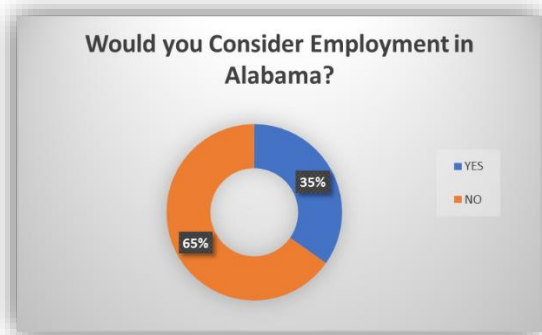
#6: This chart represents the responses to the question, "Would you consider employment in Alabama?" Of the respondents, only 35% (8 students) answered "yes" and 65% of respondents (15 students) answered "no".

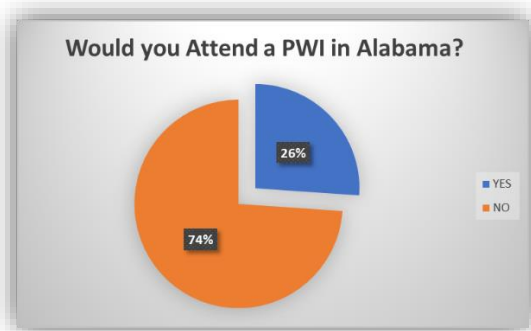**Question #7:**

Will Alabama be a Blue State Again?

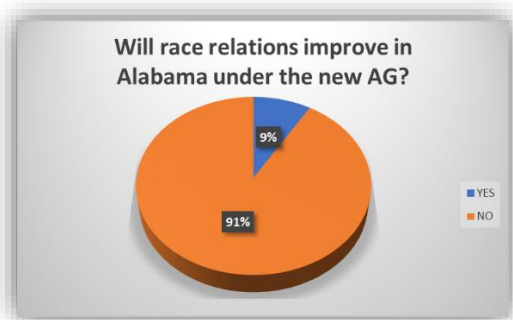#7: This chart represents the responses to the question, "Do you think Alabama will ever be a blue State

(Democratic) again?" Only 9% of respondents (2 students) answered "yes" and 91% of respondents (21 students) answered "no".

Question #8:

#8: The chart above represents the responses to the question of "Would you attend a PWI in Alabama?" A mere 26% of respondents (6 students) answered "yes" and 74% of respondents (17 students) answered "no".

Question #9:

#9: The chart above represents the responses to the question of: "Former Alabama Attorney General Jefferson Sessions, a known racist, is the new Attorney General for the country under President Trump. Do you believe race relations will improve in Alabama now that he has been replaced by another conservative?" Thirty-five percent of respondents (8

students) answered "yes" and 65% of respondents (15 students) answered "no".

Question #10:
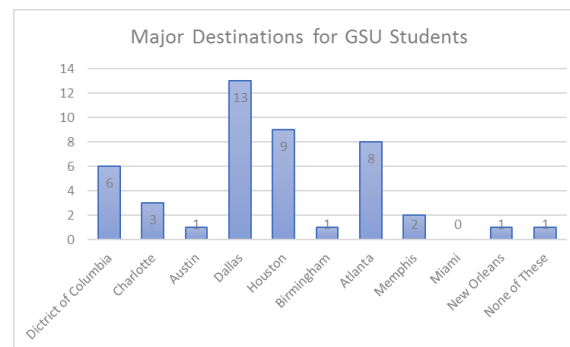
#10: This chart represents the choices students made when they were asked to choose two major cities out of ten that they would relocate to for graduate school or a career. Dallas, Houston, Atlanta were the top three choices for GSU students, with D.C trailing Atlanta at six students.

CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

After sampling a small population of students at Grambling State University to get a snap check opinion, I have concluded that Alabama does not seem to be on the radar at all. In forming the questions on the survey, I had four assumptions based on popular opinions and student culture. Those four assumptions were:

1. Alabama finds it hard to overcome its historical legacy of racial discrimination and injustice.

2. African American students would not consider attending graduate school in Alabama.

3. Most African American students do not consider Alabama a major destination for success.

4. Alabama will continue to be an ultra-conservative, predominately Red State due to demographics.

The first assumption was proven in the students' responses to the question, "Do you believe Alabama is a Racist State, considering its history?" Ninety-one percent of students had indicated that they believe Alabama is racist, based on historical events. Based on information and facts found in the literature used in this research, this is barely debatable. However, when considering the entire colonist and racist history of the United States, most states are barely distinguishable in their histories. On the question of whether students would attend an HBCU or PWI in the State, ost students indicated that they would not attend either. Only eleven students out of twenty-three would attend an HBCU and, only six of twenty-three would attend a PWI in the State. It is not exactly clear what the stigma is on HBCUs in the State, although one might understand why a black student would be hesitant to attend The University of Alabama or Auburn. The two major Historically Black Colleges are very successful programs with comparatively good funding and, are great options for in-state and out of state students, especially in STEM. Most students would not consider living in Alabama or pursuing a career in Alabama. Only eight people said they would work in the State and only two had ever considered living there. The state population is comparatively low, and the cost of living is below the national average. The economy of the state is growing, and programs are being developed to recruit black students and black business owners in the state. It would be an advantage for one to live here where careers and living space is available compared to more crowded cities. The last assumption was disproven by the last election, though most students believed that it would always be a red state. The political climate of Alabama is changing and can change more if more black residents sought to relocate and establish their careers and lives in Alabama other than going to cities that are accustomed to an influx of black residents. Most students chose Dallas, Houston, and Atlanta as their major choices for cities in which they would pursue graduate or a career in. These choices are typical and do not guarantee success for all

individuals that move to those places. Students should explore options not only in Alabama, but anywhere they would like to go. This research was intended to highlight the racism that is apparent in Alabama but also to uncover opportunities available to students that they would not have previously considered. Also, I intended to suggest that the political and economic climate of Alabama is shifting, and black people are a part of the State's progression.

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"One Bad Day": The Philosophy of Extremism in Popular Media

Joshua Williams
Fisk University

In the entirety of cultural memory, many of the most successful stories, real or fictional, owe their achievements largely in part to one figure: the antagonist. The complexities of a villain, such as his or her motivations or ideology, can make or break a film or novel. These beliefs, whether they are rooted in controversy or based on good intentions, are supportive of what is deemed by others as needlessly extreme. By examining the beliefs of extremist characters in popular media via comparison to their corresponding real world dogmatic belief systems, such as consequentialism, utilitarianism, anarchy, and nihilism, an understanding of similar ideologies formed in the real world will begin to be fostered. Likewise, the results of these conclusions will lead to a greater understanding of why a given story must have a well-developed villain to be successful. The establishment of these characteristics will also lend proof to the contention that, rather than being limited to select individuals who are emotionally and mentally unstable, extremism is instead often a response to the inevitable existential trauma in one's life.

Essential as they are to the success of any great story, the mantles of villainy and extremism date back to the earliest forms of cultural expression. From Satan himself in John Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost, to Wilson Fisk of the live-action edition of Marvel's Daredevil, extremist characters have over the course of centuries left an indelible mark across multiple mediums, growing from oral tradition and literature to later include graphic novels and film. For example, it is difficult to imagine the paragons of western culture without evoking memories of their nemeses: the narrative of Sherlock Holmes isn't complete without Professor Moriarty, and The Silence of the Lambs is similarly crippled when Clarice Starling isn't at odds

with Hannibal Lecter. The belligerent chemistry between protagonist and antagonist are one of the many driving forces behind a narrative's success. Of these iconic and complex relationships between hero and villain, the bond shared by Batman and the Joker of DC Comics lore is perhaps the most well-recognized.

Beginning in May of 1939 in Detective Comics #27, a hard-boiled crime series of anthologized comics, Batman was introduced as a tragic figure determined to root out crime. Witnessing the murder of his parents by a back-alley thug named Joe Chill, Bruce Wayne spent the remainder of his formative years being raised by his faithful butler, Alfred Pennyworth. The trauma of the murder stuck with Bruce throughout his adolescence and into his early adulthood, where he underwent a journey of self-discovery that resulted in the birth of Batman. Stylized as a vengeful vigilante who fights crime in his home city of Gotham, Batman is a figure who uses fear and brutality to keep Gotham, a city famous for its crime and corruption, from destroying itself. The moral center of Batman's crusade against crime is rooted in his refusal to overstep certain moral boundaries.

While Batman qualifies as an extremist in his own right—a billionaire who dresses up as a bat and terrorizes the criminal population of Gotham—his version of extremism is used for the benefit of his fellow man. Specifically, Batman's code of ethics is deontological in nature, meaning that he makes moral judgments about how the decisions a person makes follow or violate societal rules. Because Batman's ethics prioritize the reason behind a person's decisions over the consequences of those decisions, he can rationalize handing the Joker over to the police after every encounter, even when he knows that the Joker will inevitably escape whatever prison he is placed in. In his thesis, "The Demands of Consequentialism", University of Auckland Professor of Philosophy Tim Mulgan details the logical extremes one must go to when considering themselves a true consequentialist:
It looks as if I must keep donating till I reach the point where my own basic needs, or my ability to keep earning dollars, are in jeopardy. Most of my current activities will have to go. Nor will my sacrifice be only financial. According to Consequentialism, I should also spend my time where it will do most good. I should devote all my energies to charity work, as well as all my money. (Mulgan 3-4)

From Mulgan's perspective, Consequentialism is an ideal that, while idealistically noble and respectable, is an all-consuming drain on resources. Bruce Wayne encompasses both traits: as CEO of his family company, Wayne Enterprises, he uses his family's wealth to serve as a philanthropist for Gotham's less fortunate. As his crime-fighting vigilante alter ego, Batman, the sacrifice ceases to be merely financial and Bruce embodies Mulgan's image of a Consequentialist, if crimefighting is equated to charity. However, Mulgan goes on to point out another popular Consequentialist viewpoint that contests this interpretation of Batman, regarding the aftermath of his actions:

Some advocates of Consequentialism have even suggested that our failure to [devote all our resources to charity] is morally no different from murder. (On the grounds that there is no morally significant difference between killing someone and allowing him to die when one could have saved him.) (Mulgan 4)
Utilitarianism, a derivative Consequentialist thought system that focuses on maximizing happiness, and which regards intentions as less important, is at odds with Batman's philosophy: even if Batman breaks the law by subverting the justice system and murdering the Joker, the end result would mean that Batman would be saving untold numbers of potential victims from the Joker's crimes. Utilitarianist thought would dictate that Batman's mission is incomplete if he refuses to kill the Joker for the greater good, while deontological ethics contend that murdering the Joker would render Batman's ethical standing inept. In Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul, essayist Mark White confronts the issue using both utilitarian and deontological viewpoints.

The argument in favor of killing the Joker is straightforward—if Batman kills the Joker, he would prevent all the murders the Joker would otherwise commit in the future…. While utilitarians would generally endorse killing one person to prevent killing more, members of the school of ethics known as deontology would not. Deontologists judge the morality of an act based on features intrinsic to the act

itself, regardless of the consequences stemming from the act. To deontologists, the ends never justify the means, but rather the means must be justifiable on their own merits. So, the fact that the killing would prevent future killings is irrelevant—the only relevant factor is that killing is wrong, period. (White 7-8)

However, both stances present issues when the long-term consequences are examined: if Batman kills the Joker to save lives, he must also continue killing other homicidal supervillains to continue saving lives, to justify a utilitarianist moral position. Batman's moral stance concerns the opposite issue, one that has been addressed in his many comic book incarnations: because he refuses to dirty his hands by killing the Joker, Batman indirectly enables the Joker to escape imprisonment and continue a life of crime. In either case, Batman's mission is fundamentally flawed, leaving his brand of extremism insufficient and Batman himself responsible for the deaths of countless innocents, despite his good intentions. These flaws are one of many sources behind the moral arguments held between Batman and his many enemies.

Despite being the unequivocal Batman nemesis, the Joker wouldn't debut in comic book canon until Batman #1, the spin-off series that was spawned in the spring of 1940. The Joker's adherence to his personal world views are the driving force of what makes his relationship with Batman so compelling, and, in a larger perspective, give insight into what makes the supervillains of the Batman mythology equally compelling. The major antagonists in Batman's campaign against crime are constructed as dark parallels to Batman's own personal demons: the eco-terrorist Ra's Al-Ghul, cultist leader of the League of Assassins, serves as a representation of a crusade taken too far. Oswald Cobblepot, also known as the Penguin, uses his family's wealth to fund a criminal career, as opposed to the philanthropist Bruce Wayne, who mainly uses his wealth to finance a crime-fighting career in his secret life as Batman. Similar to how Batman uses fear as the defining psychological weapon of his mantle to discourage crime in Gotham, psychologist-turned-criminal Scarecrow hordes psychotic drugs to use power of fear to commit crimes. Nearly every major villain who finds themselves opposed to Batman has suffered trauma that makes their suffering relatable to each other—such as the loss of a loved one, suffered by Bruce in the loss of his parents, as well as Victor Fries, a scientist specializing in cryogenics who loses his wife to an incurable disease, and adopts the villainous persona of Mr. Freeze in a desperate bid to save her. However, the greatest parallel exists in the form of the Joker, whose ideology is diametrically opposed to everything that Batman stands for.

The classical representation of the Joker shows him as a criminal mastermind who, despite being insane and having none of the training or conditioning that Batman possesses, manages to outsmart many of his enemies through supernatural charisma and resourcefulness. Despite their years of conflict, the Joker remains an antagonist that even Batman often finds impossible to anticipate, due to the former's lack of rationality. The bond that the two enemies share, rather than deterrence of crime, fear, or loss, is based in insanity. Batman's goals are rooted in an ultimately insane cause: in order to combat crime, a crusade that is debatably absurd in itself, he dresses like a bat and brutalizes thugs and supervillains. Conversely, the Joker is literally insane while Batman himself is ideologically so; the inverse is also possibly true, where the Joker sees the futility of one arguably insane man trying to save another. Moreso than any of Batman's enemies, the Joker seeks to show Batman the folly of his struggle, believing existence itself to be nothing more than a bad joke. The Joker's philosophy regarding life is explored in-depth in Alan Moore's 1988 graphic novel, The Killing Joke.

In The Killing Joke, the origins of the Joker are explored: a nameless man, having just lost his pregnant wife, finds himself indebted to criminals after quitting his job as a chemical engineer and failing as a comedian. Donning a red hood and being forced to lead the criminals through his old workplace, the man is stopped by Batman and falls into a chemical vat during the skirmish. These experiences drive the man to insanity: the chemicals bleach his skin white and turn his hair green, his visage now resembling that of a clown. Now a permanently disfigured widower, the crisis the Joker experiences shatters his view of the world within a single day; his resulting mentality is later expressed during his torturing of Commissioner

Gordon, whom the Joker has stripped naked and placed in a carnival cage as a mock-exhibit:

Most repulsive of all, are its frail and useless notions of order and sanity. If too much weight is placed upon them…they snap…. Faced with the inescapable fact that human existence is mad, random and pointless, one in eight of them crack up and go stark slavering buggo! (Moore 34)

The Joker, himself a witness of what he perceives to be the mad irrationality of human existence, aims to convert Gordon to insanity, in order to prove that even the most mentally stable people are only so far from turning out like the Joker at any given time. To prove the fragility of sanity to Batman, the Joker escapes Arkham Asylum, Gotham's mental institution, purchases the deeds to a derelict theme park, and kidnaps and humiliates Gordon in a sadistic carnival ride that can only be described as macabre. During the carnival ride, the Joker attempts to drive Gordon to madness by showing him pictures he took of his daughter, Barbara Gordon, who he paralyzed earlier that day with a bullet to the spine, before stripping her naked and taking illicit photos. The Joker preempts his torture of Gordon with his advice of forgoing sanity to avoid future trauma:

We aren't contractually tied down to rationality. There is no sanity clause. So, when you find yourself locked down in an unpleasant train of thought, heading for the places in your past where the screaming is unbearable, remember: There's always madness. Madness is the emergency exit… You can just step outside and close the door on all those dreadful things that happened, you can lock them away...forever. (Moore 22)

Batman rescues Gordon from the Joker's trap and finds that despite the trauma inflicted by the Joker's torture, Gordon's morals are still intact. This is seen in Gordon's statement to Batman immediately before the latter goes to pursue the Joker: "I want him brought in, and I want him brought in by the book! We have to show [the Joker]! We have to show him that our way works!" (Moore 38) In the ensuing confrontation between the two enemies, years after Batman and the Joker have clashed multiple times and find themselves in a seemingly endless cycle of destruction, the Joker

explains his views on insanity, and his irreconcilable issues with Batman's mission:

All it takes is one bad day to reduce the sanest man alive to lunacy. That's how far the world is from where I am. Just one bad day. You had a bad day once, am I right? I know I am. I can tell. You had a bad day, and everything changed. Why else would you dress up like a flying rat?... But my point is... my point is, I went crazy. When I saw what a black, awful joke the world was, I went crazy as a coot! I admit it! Why can't you? I mean, you're not unintelligent! You must see the reality of the situation…. It's all a joke! Everything everybody ever valued or struggled for... it's all a monstrous, demented gag! So why can't you see the funny side? Why aren't you laughing? (Moore 39-40)

By arguing against the meaningless of Batman's cause, the Joker reveals the root of his own extremism: the Joker is a nihilist, unable to find any inherent meaning in life as a result of his own traumatic experiences. He later comes to view the people who try to ascribe meaning to their existence as truly insane. Because life is meaningless, and things such as morality and justice are fabricated social constructs, nothing the Joker does truly has any consequences, something that the Joker finds humorous. The Joker's goal in The Killing Joke, which is to show Batman the futility of maintaining a facade of morality in a world that only has the meanings you assign to it, shows that his nihilistic views are a result of an existential crisis, which he refers to as 'one bad day'. From his viewpoint, the conventions of morality and justice are frail social constructs that fade away when sufficient stress is introduced.

For many readers, the Joker's relevance stems primarily from his disillusioned worldview, which is as bleak as Batman's, but rejects any concept of self-imposed principles.

The main strength of the Joker's appeal is in his refusal to participate in what he believes is society's continued denial of an existence that is ultimately devoid of meaning, and therefore free of consequence. Owlman, the main antagonist of the 2010 film, Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths, has nihilistic views that are similar to those of the Joker. A villainous doppleganger to Batman from an Earth held ransom by the Crime Syndicate, an evil equivalent to the Justice

League, Owlman discovers that every decision made by anyone in history has resulted in the creation of a new universe, with the amalgam of new realities being dubbed the multiverse. Upon this discovery, Owlman develops the belief that, because each new decision brings about the creation of a new universe, every decision ever made is robbed of any meaning, as there must by necessity exist a universe where the opposite choice was made. Out of spite, Owlman elects to make what he believes to be "the only possible real choice", in detonating a planet-destroying bomb on the earth from which all versions of Earth are derived.

Like the Joker, Owlman operates in what he interprets to be a moral vacuum: because free will is an illusion, nothing aside from killing every living creature on Earth that has lived or would ever live is a meaningful choice. His decision, while selfish, is the most important goal of one with nihilistic leanings: to be able to achieve meaning in an otherwise meaningless universe. Unlike the Joker, whose brand of nihilism is formed around the absurdity of maintaining a pretense of morality in an uncaring world, Owlman's nihilistic outlook is more active, where he seeks to create meaning out of void. In the climax of their battle, during which Batman bests his counterpart, he outlines the key difference between himself and Owlman: "We both looked into the abyss, but when it looked back at us...you blinked," (Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths). Batman references Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher who founded the ideology of nihilism, though Nietzsche himself was not a nihilist. In his 1886 book, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, Nietzsche gives an infamous caveat: "He who fights monsters should see to it that he himself does not become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you," (Nietzsche 69). By invoking the metaphor of Nietzsche's abyss, Batman is stating that, while both he and Owlman are confronted with the existential trauma of their own tragic pasts, as well as being confronted with a seemingly indifferent universe, Owlman has allowed that trauma to desensitize him from the rest of humanity. Through that loss, Owlman believes himself to have lost his agency, which he tries to reclaim with his attempted mass murder. Because

Batman believes in the importance of preserving life at any cost, he maintains his agency as well as his humanity through his actions. In doing so, Batman's entire crusade is shown to be humanistic at its core, allowing him to persist in his mission, in defiance of what can seem like a random and irrational universe.

Rivaling the Joker in popularity as well as sheer importance to the trend of increasingly complex characters, Darth Vader of 1977's Star Wars is the Lawful Evil to the Joker's Chaotic Evil. Vader, perhaps the most iconic villain in cinematic history, has motivations that, unlike the Joker's, are rational and stem from an unequivocally human issue. The primary issue in Vader's morality is his implementation, as well as the lengths he goes to achieve his desires.

Darth Vader's character design is textbook villainy: in an army of soldiers clad in white armor, he is the sole figure in black, the sword-wielding space wizard in sci-fi samurai armor. Furthermore, the seductiveness of power wielded by Vader—political, mystical, and physical—cements him as a memorable character who always maintains the most powerful sense of presence in the scenes he appears in. However, the true terror of Darth Vader doesn't lie in his appearance or in his sheer strength, but in his relatability; specifically, his fall to the Dark side of the Force that leads to the betrayal of his loved ones and genocide on a planetary scale. Anakin Skywalker, the young man who would transform into Darth Vader through various hardships and disfigurements, made his transformation by appealing to the aspects of human nature that are held to be natural and defensible: namely, a fear of death and the importance of love. Given Anakin's initial characterization, where he is introduced as a well-meaning nine-year-old boy in 1999's Star Wars prequel, The Phantom Menace, his future choices seem out of character. Though Anakin's decisions become increasingly violent and selfish, one need only place themselves in Anakin's position to understand how relatively easy it would be to follow a similar mindset.

After the events of The Phantom Menace, Anakin is taken in as an Jedi apprentice to Obi-Wan Kenobi, a young Jedi Knight who has recently lost his mentor. The Jedi Order, essentially a futuristic monastery

inclusive of superpowerful individuals of all species and genders, raises Anakin and other young children to follow what is called the light side of the Force. For all intents and purposes, the Jedi are Buddhists: stoic individuals who train themselves to be unattached from the material world and follow the Force, an all-encompassing metaphysical entity similar to the Buddhist concept of Brahman. The greatest example of the similarities between the Jedi religion and Buddhism are given in 2005's Revenge of the Sith, the final entry in the prequel trilogy. In a pivotal scene in his internal conflict, Anakin seeks advice from Yoda, the leader of the Jedi Order, on dealing with visions Anakin has received of the deaths of his loved ones. Yoda reminds Anakin of his role as a Jedi, telling Anakin to train himself to "let go of everything you fear to lose," (Revenge of the Sith). In this respect, Anakin is at a disadvantage: most Jedi are brought up learning the ways of the Force at an extremely young age, before they are faced with an understanding of death or its permanent consequences. Anakin, being inducted into the Jedi Order at age nine in The Phantom Menace, has already developed an understanding of the mortality of those around him without the guidance of the Jedi to help him develop an acceptance of death. A major component of his understanding is the funeral of Qui-Gon Jinn, Obi-Wan's mentor and a father figure whom Anakin had become attached to. As Anakin is a child in The Phantom Menace, the issue of his early maturation outside of the Jedi Order in his formative years isn't as apparent. In later years, such as in 2002's Attack of the Clones, Anakin's inability to reconcile himself with the concept of death becomes his greatest weakness.

As Anakin grows older and his fear-induced fixation on the inevitability of death grows, the Jedi Order's fears are validated to the audience. At nineteen years old, Anakin becomes a participant in the Clone Wars, where he begins to face the issue of the mortality of his comrades as well as his own on a regular basis. To maintain a sense of control over his own mortality, Anakin becomes more accustomed to killing, even when less violent solutions are possible. Because of Anakin's fear of death, and his refusal to accept its place in his existence, he faces a conflict as a Jedi: Padme, a senator who he illegally married, is about to

give birth, a process that Anakin anticipates will end in her death. As a result of his love for Padme and his future children—both of which, as a Jedi, could lead to him being excommunicated—Anakin ultimately rejects the Jedi's answer of non-attachment in order to escape a fear of death, and instead turns to Sheev Palpatine, a Sith Lord in control of the Galactic Senate, in order to learn how to conquer death. By doing so, Anakin turns his back on everything that he stood for. Unlike the Joker, who was arguably thrust into villainy as a response to the absurdity of a tortuous existence, Anakin is responsible for his own fall. Though Anakin's goals of saving his mother, wife and children are noble and human, his willingness to do so at any cost have him cross a point of no return. Due to the selfish decisions he's made, Anakin becomes a shell of his former self, both figuratively and literally. In attempting to subvert death, Anakin only maintains a semblance of life, having failed in his original goals to save his loved ones. This abandonment of values leads to the creation of Darth Vader: having forsaken everything that he once stood for, Vader existence is now little more than the terrifying enforcer of the Galactic Empire. Rather than a war hero, loving husband and father, through the extremes he goes to in order to escape the natural phenomenon of death, Anakin Skywalker becomes Darth Vader, a symbol of terror whose refusal of death rules him.

A recurring theme among the disillusioned villains of pop culture is one of agency: while it is made clear that characters such as the Joker, Owlman, or Darth Vader possess an inherent goodness prior to the trauma that set them on their respective paths, no one character begins their journey with the intention to harm others. Instead, they are confronted with realistic choices with consequences that continually push them towards extremist retaliations. However, while characters such as these were undoubtedly treated unfairly and had moral transformations that are if nothing else understandable, they still were allowed to choose their paths. The defining factor between a hero and villain and these cases is how an individual decides to react after being subjected to the traumatic experiences. Batman, while an extremist, is still considered heroic because of the selflessness of his cause, where he tries to improve the lives of his fellow

man by fighting crime both physically and ideologically. Others, such as the Joker, are villainous because of the selfish and destructive natures of their responses: The Joker aims to counter Batman's crusade by declaring life devoid of meaning, embracing what he believes is the authentic human experience with meaningless violence to show the fragility of societal norms. Similarly, Darth Vader is villainous in spite of his willingness to embrace his human nature, which is in conflict with his attempts to conquer a fear of death with the murder of others. The elements of free will and extremist motivations are determining factors in the perception of many extremist characters and are defining traits of whether the audience can sympathize with a character. However, equally important is a character's charisma and likeability, as is the case in Mary Shelley's 1818 publication, Frankenstein.

Western culture has absorbed Mary Shelley's Frankenstein to such a degree that many who haven't read the novel or seen its many adaptations possess a general understanding of the plot: Victor Frankenstein, an intelligent but misguided scientist, takes it upon himself to father a new race of beings by attempting to bring the dead back to life. However, rather than the shambling, awkward green giant incapable of speech that has become popularized by later adaptations, such as James Whale's 1931 iconic film Frankenstein, the Creature is instead crafted to be as physically perfect as possible:

His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful….His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips. (Shelley 35).

Though the Creature is later violently rejected from every person he interacts with due to his grotesque appearance, Frankenstein's original design was to create him as beautiful. It is only after the monster awakens, after two years of experimentation, that Frankenstein realizes the horror of the being whose existence he has authored. Stating that "now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart," (Shelley 36). Frankenstein deserts the Creature, cementing himself as the target of the Creature's hatred for the rejection. Because of the Creature's unnatural form, he is attacked on sight by several people, including a family that he stalks for several weeks, forming an emotional attachment to them as he slowly learns to speak from watching their interactions. After being assaulted by the bewildered family members, who believe the Creature to be attacking their elderly father, the Creature's grief swells, causing him to curse Frankenstein, his creator, for making his appearance so reproachful. Though the Creature initially wishes only to be accepted by human society, the constant rejection hardens him against humankind. In the culmination of his rage at the continued mistreatment he suffers, the Creature murders Frankenstein's prepubescent brother William, and revels in the act:

I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment, he lay dead at my feet. I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph: clapping my hands, I exclaimed, 'I, too, can create desolation; my enemy is not impregnable; this death will carry despair to [Frankenstein], and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him.' (Shelley 100)

The complexities of the Creature's suffering and his violent responses are, if not defendable, then at least understandable. Unlike the portrayals of the 1931 film, where the Creature's murders are at best random and unmotivated, the Creature of Shelley's novel is calculating and vindictive, choosing his victims to cause Frankenstein the most pain possible. In this manner, both sides are shown to have faults in their mutual conflict, rather than the black and white morality evoked in the culture surrounding Frankenstein, where the Creature is essentially a newborn in a man's body and Victor Frankenstein is a mad scientist to be avoided. In truth, Frankenstein himself is responsible for the Creature's existence and never takes responsibility for his role in doing so; Frankenstein's refusal to accept the Creature is what leads to the deaths of his innocent loved ones, rather than an inherent evil which he believes the Creature to

possess. The Creature, while initially innocent and wanting nothing more than to be accepted by humanity, knowingly embraces evil and seeks revenge on Frankenstein of his own free will. The roles exhibited by Frankenstein and the Creature are purposefully reminiscent of an earlier work that inspired Shelley: John Milton's Paradise Lost.

Released in 1667, John Milton's Paradise Lost portrays the story of Satan's fall from heaven, as well as Satan's subsequent manipulation of Eve, leading to humanity's original sin as presented in the Bible's first book, Genesis. In the middle of the epic poem's invocation to the Muses of Greek myth, a staple of Romantic poetic tradition, Milton himself presents his objective, where he seeks to "assert Eternal Providence, /And justify the ways of God to men," (Milton 25-26). Milton's goal, therefore, is to represent mankind's fall from grace from the moral perspective of God, while also representing Satan, Adam, and Eve in a manner that makes them relatable to a reading audience. In doing so, Milton portrays the rebellion in Genesis as rhetorically convincing in Satan's favor when compared to the story presented in the Bible. This reception of the Devil's character is widespread throughout western canon, leading many to believe that, despite his role as the epic's antagonist, Satan is in many ways the protagonist.

In the literary work, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", author William Blake proclaims that "the reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it," (Blake 1433). Blake's argument that Milton's reluctance to ascribe the same characterization to God and his Angels that was applied to Satan and his demons shows an implicit-- and, as far as Blake is concerned, unintentional--bias in favor of Satan. The depth of introspection devoted to the Devil is a major component of what makes his characterization so appealing to readers. Satan's inner conflict, brought about by the consequences of his failed coup, casts him in a sympathetic light to readers, especially in a soliloquy taking place in Book 4: "Me miserable! which way shall I fly/ Infinite wrath and infinite despair? Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell," (Milton 116). This passage, in which Satan

agonizes over his irreversible mistake, shows his willingness to acknowledge his own hubris; because of his ill-conceived rebellion, Satan's true imprisonment isn't confined to a place, but is a mental and emotional state that travels with him. Likewise, Frankenstein has the Creature invoke Satan's sorrow in a similar struggle: "All, save I, were at rest or enjoyment: I, like the arch fiend, bore a hell within me," (Shelley 95). The Creature himself continually compares himself to Milton's Satan, as well as Adam, using the novel to make sense of his own struggle and to find sympathy in fiction:

[Adam] was allowed to converse with and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature; but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times, I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me. (Shelley 90)

While the Creature's lamentations are understandable due to the unwarranted mistreatment he faces at the hands of both Frankenstein and society, his decision to become the monster he is perceived to be is born of a rebellious and vindictive response to Frankenstein, his creator. Milton's Satan, whom the Creature continually finds himself identifying with, faces the scorn of society as a result of his own sins; his extremism is the root of his isolation, while the Creature's isolation is causative of his extremism. Though similar in motivations, either villain reaches his moral nadir from opposite directions: the Creature as a victim of circumstance, and Satan as the originator of the same.

For villainous characters such as the Joker and Milton's Satan, an indelible mainstay of their personalities is their ability to engender support from the audience despite their misdeeds. Their likeability is directly influential towards the success of their respective narratives; some characters, such as Loki of the Thor movie franchise, or Hannibal Lecter of The Silence of the Lambs, are so compelling that their participation alone serves as their story's main attraction for audiences. However, the opposite is also true: while some extremist icons are designed to garner support for the protagonist's opposition, others are presented deliberately to inspire a near-universal

hatred in onlookers, followed by equally-universal emotional catharsis upon their defeat. Such a figure is found in Dolores Umbridge, the secondary antagonist in J.K. Rowling's 2003 novel, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.

The character of Dolores Umbridge is first introduced early into the novel, described as looking like a "large, pale toad" (Rowling 146). After the earlier events of the story, where the titular character Harry is nearly expelled from his school, Hogwarts, it is revealed that Umbridge is one of several conspirators who attempted to shame Harry to discredit him in the public eye after the events of the previous novel, where he claimed that a known terrorist had returned from obscurity. Later, after Umbridge and her superiors are forced to concede Harry's innocence, Umbridge is forcibly instated at Hogwarts as a professor, in order to monitor the activities there. Despite her appointment as the school's Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, Umbridge refuses to teach any students how to defend themselves; this is born out of a fear that the headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore, plans to militarize his students in order to stage a coup and seize the position held by Umbridge's superior. As the year progresses at Hogwarts, Umbridge is shown to be a cruel, racist woman who willingly engages in the interrogation and torture of underage students. This is seen when Harry, having been given detention for standing up to Umbridge's propaganda, is subjected to her punishments:

He let out a gasp of pain. The words had appeared on the parchment in what appeared to be shining red ink. At the same time, the words had appeared on the back of Harry's right hand, cut into his skin as though traced there by a scalpel — yet even as he stared at the shining cut, the skin healed over again, leaving the place where it had been slightly redder than before but quite smooth. (Rowling 267)

Harry, along with other students, silently endures this mistreatment from Umbridge for months as retribution for questioning her motives. Similarly, as Umbridge gains power at Hogwarts, eventually being appointed to the office of High Inquisitor by her superiors, her fellow professors are forced to fall into line for fear of being fired. Umbridge's tyranny culminates when she attempts to have a fellow professor, Rubeus Hagrid, arrested. Hagrid, who is half-giant, is a subject of Umbridge's racial prejudice, and is forced to flee the school grounds during the attack. Professor McGonagall, an elderly witch and one of the only authorities at Hogwarts unafraid of Umbridge, is nearly killed in the crossfire. When Umbridge interrogates Harry immediately after the assault, she deems it necessary to curse him to divulge the whereabouts of a weapon she believes Dumbledore's insurgents to be hiding. The curse in question, designed for inflicting pain intense enough to drive its victims to insanity, is a serious enough offense for any users to be immediately sent to prison without trial; Umbridge embraces the opportunity, and it is observed that "[t]here was a nasty, eager, excited look on her face that Harry had never seen before," (Rowling 746). Though the torture is not carried out, Umbridge's sadistic nature comes to the forefront, and her saccharine persona remains present until her eventual defeat.

Despite Umbridge's role as a temporary antagonist, as opposed to more permanent villains such as Harry's arch nemesis, Lord Voldemort, Umbridge is almost universally agreed upon to be the series' most hated villain. The reason for the audience's animosity towards her character is twofold: firstly, Umbridge is a detestable person with no redeeming qualities to speak of. As the events of The Order of the Phoenix show, she is a manipulative, sadistic racist who maintains a veneer of maternal friendliness. The second facet of her dislikable character is tied into a major theme of the Harry Potter universe: part of the franchise's appeal is its timeless nature, where both the magical world of Hogwarts and the surface world of modern London are always represented as realistic places. Villains of Harry Potter lore and their agendas are inspired by real world precedents, such as Lord Voldemort and his attempted genocide on 'impure' wizards being direct parallels to Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany during World War II. However, Umbridge is unique in that despite being present only in the magical half of Harry's life, she embodies traits that many readers have experienced personally in their own lives. While Voldemort is the main villain of the story at large, his saga is more representative of the more

fantasy-oriented portion of the lore; Umbridge's detestability lies in the shared sorrows felt by readers, inflicted upon them by similar authority figures during their various upbringings.

The core of Umbridge's extremism, as well as other more realistic villains such as her, who abuse their authority to cause deliberate harm, is found in her principles. Despite her idiosyncrasies and ruthless practices, she earnestly believes at some level that she is doing the right thing. The degree to which she and other villains experience this delusion allows them to commit atrocities in the name of furthering what they perceive to be justice. Because of this flaw in their respective moralities, extremists such as Umbridge are exceptions to the previous assertion that extremism is a response to trauma; such characters embrace extremism to enforce their beliefs for the well-being of others, and instead justify their actions by embracing extremist values within the confines of their respective systems of authority. This outlook is personified in the character of Mustapha Mond from Aldous Huxley's Brave New World.

Published in 1932, Brave New World presents an inversion of the trend presented by traditional futuristic dystopian novels, such as its literary contemporary, George Orwell's 1984. In a society where "every one belongs to every one else", (Huxley 26) sex is easily attainable and emotional attachment to any one person is discouraged in favor of a focus on community. Similarly, government-sanctioned opiates known as soma are used as a coping mechanism whenever one is faced with any degree of hardship, allowing users to escape their troubles through hallucinations. When stating the aforementioned accepted truth of sexual free use, Mustapha Mond, head government official of the United Kingdom, is reinforcing a claim that has been ingrained into society's members since birth: "The students nodded, emphatically agreeing with a statement which upwards of sixty-two thousand repetitions in the dark had made them accept, not merely as true, but as axiomatic, self-evident, utterly indisputable," (Huxley 26). The inversion of trends rests in the nature of how societies in Brave New World have reached a dystopian status; rather than through methods of government oppression, citizens are instead conditioned from birth to embrace a life of vice and pleasure. In doing so, society reshapes its definitions of morality, such as making drug-fueled orgies in public a common occurrence, while labeling terms such as 'father and mother' as smut. By alienating the population so completely from current social norms, government officials such as Mustapha Mond keep the masses placated and reliant on the truths they have been conditioned to accept.

While part of the novel's appeal lies in seeing the dichotomy of beliefs held by the indoctrinated citizens of the distant future and the audience's own cultural expectations, several characters within Brave New World serve as audience stand-ins. Labeled as those "who have, for one reason or another, have got too self-consciously individual to fit into community life," these characters, who realize the morally corrupt nature of the modern world and long for the currently-scandalized moral values of the twentieth century, are forcibly removed from regular society and isolated on various islands with like-minded people. Several of these characters are protagonists, such as the naïve but idealistic John, also known as the Savage; Mustapha Mond is another. Mond, who is shown to be an experienced intellectual who understands the flaws of the current world in light of an unbiased view of the old one, reveals that in "choosing to serve happiness" (Huxley 155), he has relinquished his chance to separate himself from the world. Mond, who had been labeled as abnormal due to illegal research as a physicist, chooses to work within the system for the benefit of those under his jurisdiction. In his conversation with the protagonists during the climax of the novel, Mond states that he regrets choosing his government position over being exiled and being able to continue his research: "I rather regret the science. Happiness is a hard master—particularly other people's happiness," (Huxley 154). In choosing to serve others, Mond abandons truth, labeling it a menace in the face of a previous event labeled the Nine Years War. In regard to this conflict, Mond poses the rhetorical question of "[w]hat's the point of truth or beauty or knowledge when the anthrax bombs are popping all around you?" (Huxley 155). Mond's predecessors, the first World Controllers, one of ten men wielding absolute political power, established a

precedent that would lead to Brave New World's warped social values, with the goal of pacifying the terrors held by the victims of the Nine Years War with government-regulated pleasure and happiness. Henry Ford, creator of the Model T automobile, is deified due to his role in creating the society presented in Brave New World:

Our Ford himself did a great deal to shift the emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness. Mass production demanded the shift. Universal happiness keeps the wheels steadily turning; truth and beauty can't…. We've gone on controlling ever since. It hasn't been very good for truth, of course. But it's been very good for happiness. One can't have something for nothing. Happiness has got to be paid for. (Huxley 155)

Mond, as a scientist, laments the loss of truth as a sacrifice for the happiness of the world at large, but recognizes the usefulness of indoctrination for preventing conflicts by keeping the world sedated and ignorant. By accepting the cost of global happiness, Mond, who sees himself as a leader sacrificing his own interests for the interests of others, exists as one who embraces extremism to the logical peak from a bureaucratic standpoint. In his prioritization of comfort over truth and morality, Mond's values align with those of consequentialism, specifically the philosophy of utilitarianism. Mond, despite his political position leading to his necessary opposition to John and his allies, is a sympathetic character. He is an extremist who willingly embraces his position out of a desire to achieve positive results in a system he is either unable or unwilling to change. He allows John and the other dissenters to leave England to find a home with like-minded peers, when an easier alternative might have been to execute them; in doing so, Mond is revealed to be a fair and open-minded individual even towards his enemies. His extremism, while morally harmful, is based out of a desire to work with what he is given, for the good of those involved.

The characters of Mustapha Mond and Dolores Umbridge, despite their respective stories taking place in fantasy settings, are representative of some of the most relatable extremist positions in popular fiction. Mond's consequentialist outlook towards a gentle brand of extremism in favor of world peace speaks to his role as a necessary evil, and is willing to sacrifice both his own moral fiber and resources for the benefit of others. Umbridge, however, seeks to actively cause harm in pursuit of her goals, and finds pleasure in doing so; while Umbridge embraces extremism in the name of order, she takes unnecessary steps to mistreat others, implying that her particular brand of extremism exploits her bureaucratic position in order to carry out her sadistic desires, sometimes overstepping legal boundaries to do so. Despite similarities in their characters, both villains achieve vastly different results due to their motivations: Umbridge is hated due to the pleasure she feels in harming and belittling others, in addition to lacking the redeeming qualities of similar characters, such as the Joker. Conversely, Mustapha Mond stands behind a cause that is sympathetic, if not pragmatic; similar to Milton's Satan, he is intelligent and likeable, making the most of his situation and at times seeming preferable to the protagonists by virtue of his worldly charisma. Furthermore, Mond's credibility stays intact throughout his confrontation with John, who, after choosing the freedom of sin and suffering without government oversight, chooses to hang himself after exercising those freedoms. For all intents and purposes, Mond won the argument. The likeability of either character is therefore shown to be incontrovertibly linked to their moral commitments as well as their victories.

The roots of extremism, as elaborated upon in the fictional mediums of literature, graphic novels, and cinema, are based out of both conviction and dogmatic belief. Though some examples of extremist characters, such as DC Comics' Joker or Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, serve at best as distilled representations of these beliefs, and at worst as caricatures of their real life counterparts, their responses to trauma show their attitudes towards concepts of justice and morality to be, if not heroic, then at least realistic. These extremist responses to trauma, in which a given character expresses a shift in world view, allows for audiences to resonate with the victims, allowing for a more compelling story to be told. In portraying the philosophy of extremism, a narrative can present a compelling character who more accurately reflects the

complexities of our own society. By showing the motivations behind an individual's fall, their adoption bleaker outlooks lead to an abandonment of their humanity, which in turn leads to a greater understanding of our own.

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Coventional Approaches to Working Capital Management

Angelia L Brooks, MBA, MAcc
NAAAHP
National Executive Director, 2017

Introduction

The focus of this final paper is to review approaches to capital management and determine the best strategy firms should employ to maintain the optimal level of cash. The final paper is organized as follows. This literature review will first familiarize readers with scholarship dedicated to conventional approaches of capital management. The definition and purpose of working capital management will be explored. Three perspectives of working capital management will be highlighted. Working capital management from a shareholder's lens may differ from the lens of the Chief Financial Officer. An emphasis on the relevance of working capital management will first be explained. A historical background of working capital management will follow the relevance of the topic. The background is important because it sets the tone for the urgency of liquidity policy following a financial crisis or during turbulent times. The approach to working capital management will be discussed during both turbulent and non-turbulent times. Conventional and unconventional approaches, related to advancements in technology will also be shared. Examples of companies who are using the new approaches to working capital management will be shared, although there are few studies on the most recent advantages in working capital management. The literature review will conclude with opportunities for further research related to aggressive capital management models.

Kroflin and Kratz (2015) both agree unstable markets have the following characteristics: low-interest rates, limited sources of liquidity, and reductions of current assets and current liabilities. The abovementioned characteristics involve elements of capital management. Various perspectives of capital management must be understood to ensure optimal levels of working capital management during turbulent times (Kroflin & Kratz, 2015). The historical economic climate suggests long-term financing should be less expensive than short-term financing, but that is not a fact in today's economic climate, especially during times of uncertainty (Kroflin & Kratz, 2015). Working capital is the cheapest way to fund operations according to Ek and

Guerin (2011). What is capital management and is it relevant today.

What is Capital Management?

Working capital has several meanings, and the definition depends on the user. Financial officers agree that working capital is the life of an organization, and is necessary for the business to continue, but there are three purposes of working capital. One user views working capital to invest in short-term assets to meet the immediate needs of the organization. Another perspective is to address the firm's seasonal funding requirements. The third purpose of working capital is to provide liquidity. Working capital involves the most liquid assets on a company's balance sheet, including cash and other current assets, such as receivables. Working capital is also known as circulating capital. The current ratio indicates whether the firm will have enough resources to meet obligations becoming due during the next period. The current ratio is the quotient of current assets divided by current liabilities. The cash on hand that is used to address the short-term concerns of the business continuity is working capital (Mullins, 2009). Some short-term obligations include salaries payable, accounts payable to suppliers, and taxes payable to local, state and federal governing entities. Less profitable firms have taken longer to pay their bills if businesses reduce the number of days of accounts receivable they can maximize the value for shareholders (Deloof, 2003).

Capital management is an accounting, financial, and managerial strategy, to ensure the maximum efficiency of cash flow. Managing working capital is not just an application of models left by pioneers of the topic of working capital, rather an attitude (Kroflin & Kratz, 2015). Because capital management involves application, it is also a routine. Capital management includes two components of working capital, current assets and current liabilities. Capital management is concerned with the management of current assets and current liabilities. The current assets are those that can be converted to cash within a year without a significant loss in value. Some examples of current assets are cash, marketable securities, accounts receivable, and

inventory. Current liabilities are payables due within the normal course of business that are paid within one year. Examples of current liabilities are accounts payable, bills payable, bank overdrafts, and other outstanding expenses. Cash flow is considered the lifeblood of a business (Ek & Guerin, 2011; Lifland, 2011). Working capital is the key to healthy cash flow and companies that do not manage working capital well lose flexibility and have a disadvantage compared to competitors that better manage working capital (Filbeck, Krueger, & Preece, 2007). Hyun-Han and Soenen (2000) agree that efficient liquidity management builds shareholder value. For a business to be a going concern it must management elements of working capital: receivables, inventory, and payables (Filbeck & Krueger, 2005). Too much investment in current assets and liabilities can signal inefficiencies in other parts of the business, on the other hand, too little working capital can but the company at risk during turbulent economic times.

Capital Management Relevance

So far it has been concluded that too much cash tied up in working capital can lead to inefficiency and too little cash put the company at risk with having enough products to meet demand and carry out normal operations (Ek & Guerin, 2011). Theories of working capital management suggest liquid assets can provide financings when companies lack investors and have fewer obligations (Yujun, Sepehri, & Foley, 2011). Most finance textbooks stress the importance of capital management while there are many articles targeted towards practitioners that discourage the necessity of working capital management (Ek & Guerin, 2011). The financial policy included the topics of dividend policy and capital structure, little attention has been given to working capital management (Hyun-Han, & Soenen, 2000). The importance of working capital management loses relevance when Chief Financial Officers fail to demonstrate to the Board of Directors the optimal level of working capital (Ek & Guerin, 2011). The issue is not the importance of capital management but finding the optimal level of working capital (Ek & Guerin, 2011). There is empirical evidence that shows

working capital has an impact on the performance of companies (Aktas, Croci, & Petmezas, 2015). Therefore Chief Financial Officers should be aware of components that impact working capital. Johnson and Soenen (2003) also agree that firms with efficient working capital are successful and profitable. The significance of working capital management is undeniable according to Filbeck and Krueger (2005). The economic crisis has renewed companies' sensitivity to working capital management.

Historical Background

Information available on unconventional approaches to capital management can be organized in many ways, such as the impact on of working capital financial ratios, determinants of working capital management, methods used, or economic climates. This study will organize literature based on economic climates; working capital management approaches to use during turbulent and non-turbulent economic times.

Turbulent Economic Times and Working Capital Management

Downturns in the economy, uncertainty, and major shifts in the financial system equate to turbulent economic times. The Great Depression of 1930 and the Global Crisis of 2008 had a significant economic impact on the global economy (Duraskovic, 2014). Both episodes were traumatic for businesses but helped shape economic policy (Duraskovic, 2014). Companies across the globe had to make substantial changes after the crisis. Some firms shut their doors while other companies endured and flourished (Yujun, Sepehri, & Foley, 2011). What was the difference between those firms who were forced to close and those who thrived? The answer is the effective management of cash holdings.

Poor working capital management strategies was a culprit of the global economic crisis from 2007 to 2008 (Aktas, Croci, & Petmezas, 2015; Gorkey & Gokhan, 2011). Overproduction was also a cause of the global crisis of 2008 according to Rapoport and Gerts, (2010). During the summer of 2008, the world experienced the worst financial crisis since the global crisis of 1929 to 1933 (Radun, 2010). Many researchers agree that holding cash is costly due to the lower return on liquid assets (Yujun, Sepehri, & Foley, 2011). Companies still prefer to hold a cash reserve for as a risk management tool against turbulent times (Yujun, Sepehri, & Foley, 2011). Cash also provides warranties to debtors and having a cash reserve allows a company to take hold of investment prospects (Yujun, Sepehri, & Foley, 2011). The motives firms have for holding cash include the transaction, precautionary, and speculative motives. Industries that cannot predict the demand for transactions has a difficult time satisfying transactional requirements have a transactional motive to reserve cash. The precautionary motive involves industries or economic times that make profitability unpredictable. The airline industry has threats of inclement weather, fluctuating fuel costs, and strikes by airline personnel; these threats create an uncertainty and encourage increased cash reserves under the precautionary motive. The speculative motive is perhaps the least important reason; it involves companies holding out for an opportunity that may occur. Firms that do not have sufficient cash reserves cannot take advantage of attractive investment offers, they may even have trouble surviving, therefore companies build a cash reserve to protect their market position (Yujun, Sepehri, & Foley, 2011). More cash is spent during a financial crisis and cash management strategies are aggressive. However, following an economic crisis, the demand for capital contracts and cash management policies become relaxed during non-turbulent times (Yujun, Sepehri, & Foley, 2011). In a perfect capital market exist, as described by Modigliani and Miller, there is no need to reserve cash, an economic crisis does not have the characteristics of a perfect market, therefore, conservative working capital strategies result (Yujun, Sepehri, & Foley, 2011).

Non-Turbulent Economic Times and Working Capital Management

Working capital is a result of imperfections in an organization's operating cycle during the management of day-to-day operations (Nasif & Shubiri, 2011). The

aggressive approach to working capital has three main conduits: to use short-term credit, reduce inventory holding time, and draw out payments as long as possible. Firms that apply an aggressive working capital approach can achieve a lower level of current assets as a percentage of total assets (Nazir & Afza, 2009). On the contrary, firms can use the aggressive approach for financing assessments, with higher levels of current liabilities as a percentage of total liabilities (Nazir & Afza, 2009). The exception to stretching out bills as long as possible is the payment of interest. The aggressive approach is the best policy for a company whose goal is to put as much money to work as possible. The method decreases the time it takes to produce products, turn over inventory, and get products to customers sooner. The primary objective of working capital management is to sustain an optimal balance of every working capital component; the aggressive approach aims for optimization of those components. Working capital components again include short-term assets and short-term liabilities such as cash, receivables, inventory, and payables (Nazir & Afza, 2009). Sustaining the best possible level of working capital components decreases financing costs and increases resources available for the firms' growth. Aggressive management of working capital gives way to superior productivity and more significantly, results in efficient cash flow per share and a reduction the level of corporate reinvestment (Boisjoly, 2009).

Approaches to Working Capital Management

It has been settled and agreed upon, based on empirical evidence, working capital management is relevant for managing profitability and liquidity to manage the financial health of individual businesses and the world economy (Talonpoika, Karri, Pirttila, & Monto, 2016). Working capital management has three perspectives, net working capital, operational working capital, and financial working capital (Talonpoika, Karri, Pirttila, & Monto, 2016). After the most recent fiscal crisis the studies on working capital management has increased significantly. Financial working capital is the division that has received less attention from researchers and is generally viewed as

a subset of working capital if referenced in text books. Recall, financial working capital includes components that are not tied to operations, such as cash. (Talonpoika, Karri, Pirttila, & Monto, 2016). Operational working capital management strategies deal with profitability and have been the favored among the three divisions of working capital management (Talonpoika, Karri, Pirttila, & Monto, 2016). Still financial working capital and be insightful and unconventional approach to working capital management.

Aziz and Percey (2009) agree it is rare for an organization to forecast with precision. There are three reasons for the imprecision of forecast management: the analyzer's approach, bias, and preferences (Aziz & Percey, 2009). Some models forecast more accurately than others. Many dynamics impact working capital such as the industry, cash requirements, manufacturing time, nature of the business, inventory turnover, business cycle, sales volume, operating efficiency, credit control, cash reserves, attitudes towards risk, and changes in technology. In regard to risk management, companies may not be able to focus on everything with precision; firms must select the right factors as focal points for their industry and their particular enterprise, pick five or six things to concentrate on and work on them (Laureate Education, 2011). Guiding principles for assessing the appropriate model involves understanding the forecasting method, considering the firm's needs, assessing key variables, deal with data collection challenges, and documenting forecasting procedures (Elikai & Hall, 1999). As firms invest in current assets, both risk and profitability are lower. Therefore, some models will work better than others depending on what management has deemed essential. It is important that a variety of models be applied and tested to measure the accuracy of the model and the best fit for individual firms.

Conventional Approaches to Working Capital Management

Empirical studies link working cash management to profitability (Lifland, 2011). The conventional approach to capital management is to analyze the

behavior of working capital components. How are the current assets to liabilities, for example? Several metrics are used to test this behavior. Working capital, current ratio, cash ratio, and the acid test ratios will examine the behavior of working capital components. The liquidity formula for working capital is simply the difference between current liabilities and current assets. A company that has a positive net working capital can pay off current liabilities. A negative net working capital means the business is not producing enough to maintain current debts. The current ratio, while straight forward, is a little more robust than net working capital. The current ratio, working capital position, or working cash flow ratio, is another liquidity metric of working capital management, the formula is current assets divided by current liabilities. It is easy to understand but the answer could be misleading, higher ratios are not always good and lower ratios are not always bad. The cash asset ratio is similar to the current ratio, for the current asset component only cash and cash equivalents are included in the formula. Items like accounts receivables and inventory are removed from the cash ratio. The ratio is used to measure a firm's ability to pay short-term debt. The acid test ratio is synonymous with the quick ratio. The quick ratio is more rigorous than the current ratio because it excludes inventory. The formula is cash and cash equivalents, plus short-term investments divided by current liabilities; notice inventory is excluded. Companies that have an acid test or quick ratio less than one, do not have enough current assets to pay current liabilities. If the asset test is significantly lower than the current ration, it means the company is heavily dependent on inventory, which may not be a tough situation for some industries. Liquidity ratios do not provide investors with enough information to appraise their liquidity position (Lifland, 2011). The ratios assume the entity will liquidate all current assets to cover current liabilities, but investors view the business as a going concern (Lifland, 2011). In addition to monitoring liquidity ratios, some conventional approaches to working capital management include the analysis of average maturities of current assets and observing present values of current liability accounts (Medeiros, 2005).

William J. Baumol developed a cash management model known as the Transactions Demand for Cash, An Inventory Theoretic Approach, to help determine the optimum cash balance under certainty. Baumol's model is like the Economic Quantity Order (EQO) model. Like the Baulmol model, the idea is to minimize holding cost. The Economic Order Quantity model helps companies determine the amount of inventory given other variables, to minimize the use of cash. Miller and Orr's cash management model allow companies cash balance to fluctuate between the upper and lower limits. According to Miller and Orr's model, a company should only purchase marketable securities if their cash levels are between the predefined upper and lower limits, assuming cash distribution is normal. Just-in-Time (JIT) Inventory advocates claim this model can reduce the holding cost associated with inventory (Howton & Higgins, 2000). Critics of JIT claim this method has pros and cons and may put business at risk of stock outs (Howton & Higgins, 2000). Gallinger and Healey's cash management cash management model and the ABC inventory model are additional conventional approaches to working cash management (Medeiros, 2005).

Unconventional Approach to Working Capital Management

The Fleuriet Model

Financial working capital management evolved in the 1980s with French professor, Michel Fleuriet's model. Financial working capital management is also known as advanced or dynamic working capital analysis (Medeiros, 2005). Up to this point of the paper it was emphasized both current assets and current liabilities or working capital are the most important components to control in working capital management. This unconventional approach to working capital management states that current assets and current liabilities are too erratic and have no correlation to a firm's operations (Medeiros, 2005). This is an aggressive paradigm shift from the cyclical or operational approach towards working capital management. Fleuriet's model is simply inconsistent

with models from aforementioned of working capital management strategies.

The new model includes a formula, working capital requirements (WCR) equal current operating assets (COA) less current operating liabilities (COL), which is different from net working capital because it only involves operational accounts (Medeiros, 2005). Fleuriet's model takes additional steps to segregate current assets between financial assets and current operational assets. Current financial assets would include cash, short-term financial investments, whereas current operational assets would include inventory, accounts receivables, and bad debt provisions, essentially any account related to current operations (Medeiros, 2005). The same division is made between current liabilities. Current financial liabilities include short-term debt and bank loans, short-term portion of long-term debt, and dividends. Current operating liabilities include obligations that are identifiable by operations, such as suppliers, salaries payable, and taxes (Medeiros, 2005). This advanced working capital management model divides the existing balance sheet between financial and operational, emphasizing financial accounts are disconnected from operating activities. The model implies that when a business's cash outflow from operations is faster than cash inflow from operations a permanent working capital requirement is recognized (Medeiros, 2005). Working capital and treasury balance are additional concepts of this unconventional approach to working cash management.

Working capital under this model is the difference between permanent liabilities and permanent assets. This metric should change only when the firm makes a new investment. The treasury balance is considered the residual balance between Fleuriet's WC and WCR. Fleuriet's model has affirmed by researchers such as Medeiros (2005) that the theory cannot be validated and conventional approaches to working capital management should be used.

Electronic Payments

Managing collections can speed up cash flow and make it more efficient. There are three reasons that delay the time it takes to receive consumer's cash.

Mail float, processing float, and transit float are events that delay the receipt of cash to firms. Mail float is the time a check takes to transfer through the mail. The time it takes to invoice and process a check is processing float. Transit float is the time required to for a check to process through a check-clearing system. Speeding up the float time enhances the float time for transactions. Some

Cash management is an important aspect of working capital management, the role of the treasurer is becoming just as concerned with cash flow as capital structure (Lifland, 2011). More emphasis is being placed on the strength of the balance sheet. Corresponding liquidity concerns, such as evaluating when a firm holds too much cash, is a concern for equity investors. Shareholders would prefer interest income from short-term investments, rather than having their investment inactive on the balance sheet (Lifland, 2011). Large cash balance signals the firm to buy back shares or pay dividends (Lifland, 2011). Many firms have shifted their perspective of uncertainty from the bottom line to the certainty of cash flow (Lifland, 2011).

Technology has allowed businesses to make transactions faster online, reducing the flow of cash. This has helped companies manage working capital more efficiently. It is not unconventional because it is a new model; it is unconventional because of modern technology. The introduction of the Electronic Clearing System in the late 90s, along with the National Electronic Funds Transfer has made cash management more manageable (Balakrishnan, 2011). Prior to the Electronic Clearing System, the payment process was complex; companies do not have to wait on a wire transfer and can move funds between their internal accounts. This gives firms and advantage to make payments to suppliers quickly and prevent stock outs which translates to increased profitability (Balakrishnan, 2011).

Consumer Certainty as Cash Flow

Some companies have used technology to tap into an unconventional approach to cash management. Amazon, Netflix, and Starbucks are companies that have converted consumer certainty into consumer cash

flow (Eddie, 2015). Consumers who become contractual subscribers offer beneficiaries a predictable demand and efficient working capital management; the companies have the ability to create transactional wealth from online subscriptions (Eddie, 2015). Amazon is an American online electronic commerce and cloud computing company. It is based in Seattle Washington. Amazon's current ratio, quick ratio, and cash ratio was 108%, 77%, and 56% respectively as of December 2015. For Amazon, cash is being used to expand growth; it does not need to issue stock to fund growth (Fox, 2014). Amazon plans to free up more cash by purchasing their supply chain. If Amazon purchasing ocean shipping business it can free up $100 million in free cash flow (Max, 2016). Amazon collects from consumers before payments to suppliers are due. Starbucks does not have a traditional subscription; however, Starbucks has a loyalty card that allows consumers to prepay for products with cash. Starbucks is an American coffee and coffeehouse chain, also based in Seattle Washington. Starbucks's current ratio, quick ratio, and cash ratio was 105%, 67%, and 50% respectively as of October 2016. In 2014 consumers preloaded Starbucks loyalty cards with $1.4 billion in payments (Eddie, 2015). In 2013 Starbucks made $146 million in interest income for investing preloaded cash from customers, this was 8% of profit (Eddie, 2015). The combination of digital payment innovations and brands has made demand more predictable (Eddie, 2015).

Conclusion

In this final paper the definition and relevance of working capital management was discussed. Conventional and non-conventional approaches were examined and challenged. Several variables matter when applying the best approach to working capital management, including the current economic climate. Advances in technology and the impact to capital management were also shared. In summary, during non-turbulent times a perfect market exists and there is no need to reserve cash, according to market theory. However in turbulent times firms pay greater attention to cash reserves and those firms who find the balance survive, thrive, and become profitable.

Maximizing shareholder wealth is the ultimate goal of any corporation. Empirical studies show that aggressive working capital asset policies result in a higher return and risk (Nazir & Afza, 2009). However, other traditional views suggest there is no linear correlation between the level of current assets and profitability (Nazir & Afza, 2009). There has been a lengthy discussion in the literature about which working capital policy works best, but there is no debate in regard to working capital being an essential part of the overall corporate strategy (Nazir & Afza, 2009). Implementation of the aggressive approach to working capital management requires the company to monitor cash, receivables, inventory, and payables continuously. If a company is in non-turbulent economic times, the aggressive approach is suited to address market imperfections. A more conservative approach is better during turbulent times such as the fiscal crisis of 2007 and businesses in seasonal industries. Working capital management is a balancing act that must be approached based on individual industries and goals of the organization. Opportunities for efficient cash management strategies exist in the future as technology closes the gap on collecting cash from consumers. Technology advances has also allowed some companies such as Amazon and Starbucks to rely on obtain cash flow from customers before the product is delivered. Since the technology and advantages are new, little research is available on the topic as it presents opportunities for additional research.

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