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Conditional Love: A Study of Situational Differences in Rooting for an Underdog

by

Sheila Margaret Hindle

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

University of Richmond

May, 2006

Mentored by

Dr. Scott Allison

Abstract

While people tend to root unabashedly for underdogs in the domain of athletics, underdogs do not generally receive the same tremendous support in matters of business. This may occur for a variety of reasons, but of particular interest is the fact that an individual's perception of a situation as both self-relevant and of high consequences may prove detrimental to his or her willingness to support an underdog. Two studies were conducted to explore these hypotheses. Study 1 (N=48) required participants to read a brief scenario depicting a situation of varied self-relevance and consequences, and then select a company to complete the task described in the scenario. Study 2 (N=45) sought to obtain a behavioral measure of rooting for the underdog. Study 1 demonstrated clear support for consequences hypothesis, while Study 2 showed both consequences and self-relevance as being powerful influences on individuals' willingness to root for an underdog.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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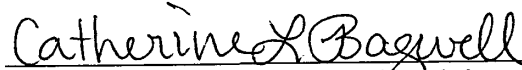
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CONDITIONAL LOVE: A STUDY OF SITUATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN
ROOTING FOR AN UNDERDOG

By

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B.A., Boston College, 2002

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Consequences, Self-Relevance, and Underdogs

Numerous movies and books appealing to the mass-market audience have portrayed the struggles of the underdog. The story of the underdog seems to be one that virtually everyone has heard of and can relate to in some way. Children begin hearing about the underdog phenomenon at very early ages, with the story of “The Little Engine That Could” and the fable of David and Goliath. As we grow up, the struggle of the underdog becomes pervasive (for some more than others), as we find it played out again and again through fiction, sports, and our own lives as well. We hear about underdogs almost daily, whenever we talk about any individual or group who is faced with a significant struggle or who is at a disadvantage, be it in a sporting match, a political campaign, or business endeavor. The concept of the underdog, along with its counterpart the topdog, has permeated our culture and has become as much a part of our heritage as baseball or apple pie.

Yet despite the underdog’s pervasiveness, there is a somewhat limited amount of social psychological research that has been conducted on this phenomenon. Most of the past research has focused on discovering why individuals will root for an underdog. In some of the first research devoted to uncovering the concept of the underdog, Frazier and Snyder (1991) proposed that individuals who tend to act hedonistically are most likely to support underdogs. They argue that the emotional investment in an underdog is a win-win situation for those who are primarily pleasure-seeking; if an underdog wins, they are repaid with excitement, while if the underdog loses they will not be particularly upset or

feel the loss as deeply as someone who has invested in a topdog that has lost (Frazier and Snyder, 1991).

In more recent research, the concepts of sympathy and identification have been of interest. It appears that one of the major reasons that people will root for an underdog is that they are able to sympathize and identify with these struggling entities (Markus, McGuire, Allison & Eylon, 2003; Kim, Allison, Eylon, Goethals, Markus & McGuire, 2005, unpublished manuscript). Many individuals are able to recognize themselves in the underdog; they can identify with their disadvantage, their feeling of being smaller and weaker, and the tenacity and drive that they possess which allows them to compete with the topdog. Thus, when people are rooting for the underdog, it is likely that they are actually rooting for themselves; if the struggling baseball team or fledgling company can overcome the obstacles they face, then there is hope that the average person can do so as well. In addition, identifying with an underdog that succeeds may provide an individual with a boost in self-esteem. This phenomenon of BIRGing (Basking In Reflected Glory) allows individuals to enjoy the benefits of identifying with an entity that has enjoyed some sort of success by internalizing it as their own triumph (Cacioppo, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976).

Another component of people's desire to root for the underdog may not be based on the underdog at all, but rather on their feelings regarding the topdog. While many people feel akin to the underdog's plight, they at the same time feel isolated from the topdog. For the average person, being a topdog is not something that they may have experienced in most aspects of their life, and thus they can neither identify with nor sympathize with these entities. Furthermore, many people show outright contempt for the

topdog. The topdog represents the unattainable, the elite, and in many ways a standard that the average person will never achieve. Thus, for some people, rooting for the underdog has less to do with identifying with its struggle than it does with fighting against a topdog in hopes of causing an upset. This principle has been deemed *schadenfreude* or the ‘tall poppy’ phenomenon, wherein individuals resent individuals or entities that enjoy greater success than themselves and thus take malicious pleasure when those entities suffer misfortunes or defeat (Brigham, Kelso, Jackson, & Smith, 1997 in Markus et al., 2003).

An alternate theory stems from studies conducted by Vandello, Goldschmied, & Richards (2004, unpublished manuscript), who argue that a desire for justice is the underlying motivator for the underdog effect. This line of research suggests that people root for underdogs because they sense some inequality and desire to see justice restored. Thus, Vandello et al. (2004) suggest that individuals who score low on Social Dominance (as indicated by scores on the Social Dominance Orientation scale developed by Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) will be most likely to support underdogs. More research in this area is required, however, as current data only minimally support this prediction.

Regardless of the underlying motivation, willingness to root for an underdog has been demonstrated through a variety of experiments, using not only the most obvious of underdog arenas, the sporting world, but business and political endeavors as well. In one series of experiments, participants were asked to read one of four scenarios about an upcoming basketball game between the University of Montana and the University of Wyoming. Each described the teams as having differing amounts of disparity between the

number of games they had won or lost against each other (from evenly matched to a large disparity). In all of the unevenly matched scenarios, participants were significantly more likely to root for the underdog than the topdog (Kim, Allison, Eylon, Goethals, Markus, & McGuire, 2005, unpublished manuscript). In another study conducted by the same authors, participants were asked to read a different set of underdog scenarios, half of which featured two basketball teams playing each other in an upcoming game, and half of which featured two construction companies competing for the same the bid. In both scenarios, the topdog was presented as having a win-loss record of 20-5, while the underdog's record was presented as 6-21. As in the previous study, participants were shown to root significantly more for the underdogs in both the sporting and construction scenarios, and were shown to root significantly more against the topdog (Kim et al., 2005, unpublished manuscript). It was also shown that participants sympathized and identified with the underdogs significantly more than the topdogs.

Following the desire for justice hypothesis, Vandello et al. (2004, unpublished manuscript), conducted a study in which participants were given one of four scenarios in which a sports competition was presented in which (a) Team A was presented as having a greater chance of winning than Team B; (B) Team A was presented as having a much larger payroll than Team B; (c) Team A was presented as having both a greater chance of winning and a larger payroll than Team B; or (D) Team A was presented as having a greater chance of winning but a smaller payroll than Team B. Participants were asked both how much they would like each team to win the game, and which team they considered the underdog. Results indicated that while Team B was liked slightly more than Team A when they were described as having a lesser chance of winning, while

Team B was preferred significantly more when described as having a smaller payroll. In the paired payroll condition Team B was again preferred significantly more than Team A. The most interesting finding from this study, however, comes from the results of the condition in which the teams' odds of winning and resources were unevenly matched: in this case, 67% of the participants preferred the team with a smaller payroll but greater chance of winning, indicating that it was the resources and not their odds of success which made the team more attractive, and which suggests the role of justice (Vandello et al., 2004, unpublished manuscript).

Despite these findings, support for the underdog is not necessarily present in all domains. In the business world in particular, there appears to occur a phenomenon which has been deigned the "Wal-Mart Effect," wherein consumers abandon the locally owned "mom and pop" stores of their neighborhoods in favor of discount mega-stores like Wal-Mart (Allison, Eylon, Goethals, Kim, Hindle, & Phillips, 2005 unpublished manuscript). There are many reasons that this phenomenon occurs; chief among them is the fact that while in athletic competitions the outcome does not truly matter, the outcomes of a business situation affect us directly. In many ways, it seems as though athletic events exist for the average person for the sole purpose of entertainment. Through sports, people are given the opportunity to escape from the 'real world' and any investment they make will not necessarily adversely affect their lives. In business, on the other hand, the outcome truly matters. A bad investment may cost time, money, or worse. This suggests that when someone must decide to whom they will give their business, he or she may claim to support the underdog 'mom and pop' stores, but ultimately his or her patronage and, more importantly her money, will go to the topdog.

This “Wal-Mart Effect” has important implications for understanding why people choose to root for, or in this case against, an underdog. Several principles may be at work, some of which have been mentioned previously. It may be the case that when it comes to business dealings people are more inclined to vote with their wallets; topdog entities such as Wal-Mart almost always offer better prices than smaller, localized underdog businesses. Additionally, it may be the case that people believe that the topdog businesses offer superior products. In a study conducted by Kim et al. (2005) participants were asked to judge the artwork of a well-known artist as well as that of an unknown artist. Participants deemed the quality of the topdog artist’s painting to be superior to that of the underdog, although they were in fact judging the same piece of work. This also occurred despite the fact that significantly more participants rooted for the struggling artists (Kim et al., 2005 in press). This suggests that while people may be pulling for the underdog in their hearts, they do not necessarily believe them to be as capable or talented as the topdog.

Another possible explanation for the Wal-Mart effect is the BIRG phenomenon. While this theory can also apply to people’s willingness to identify with an underdog, it can also readily explain their willingness to support a topdog. Since topdog entities are generally more likely to succeed than underdogs, individuals who associate with them run a smaller risk of suffering damage to their self-esteem. In most situations, the topdog will continue to be successful and the individuals that associate with this enterprise will be able to boast that they are affiliated with a successful entity.

Another set of possibilities arises that may help to explain the “Wal-Mart Effect” pertains to the influence that the consequences of a situation have on people’s decision of

making processes. As mentioned previously, in business situations people are perhaps more likely to root for a topdog because they are voting with their wallets; they want to ensure that their investment does not go to waste and that they are getting the most for their money. However, money alone is not enough to explain why so many people choose topdogs in ‘real world’ situations. In a study similar to the sports and business experiment used by Allison et al. (2005), participants were asked to read two scenarios, one of which described a situation wherein two basketball teams were competing in an important qualifying game for a tournament, while the other scenario described two florists competing to win a bid to provide the flowers for a high profile wedding. Some situations depicted the teams and/or florists as being evenly matched, with each having won 81 times, while in others, the teams and/or florists were depicted as being unevenly matched, with one of the two groups being a clear underdog. All participants read one sports scenario and one business scenario, and answered a series of identical questions about how much they rooted for and against each team/florist, how much they sympathized with them, etc.

In this situation, participants were just as likely to support an underdog in the business scenarios as they were in the sports scenarios (unpublished raw data, 2005). Additionally, in the two business situations, participants were equally likely to root for an underdog in the evenly and unevenly matched scenarios. This study is of particular interest for its failure to replicate the “Wal-Mart effect,” and it suggests that money and product/service quality alone are not enough to justify the support for a topdog in all business situations. To this end, several of the participants remarked during the debriefing that supporting one or another business in this situation seemed of little consequence

(unpublished raw data, 2005). Thus, it may be that while the “Wal-Mart effect” addresses people’s loyalty to a topdog who can provide what may or may not be a better product at a more economical cost, there is another element at work in which people weigh the consequences of a situation before choosing a topdog or underdog.

The notion of consequences and its effects on behavior has shown up elsewhere in social psychological literature over the past several decades. Perhaps most notable is Piliavin and Piliavin’s 1973 study in which a victim (a confederate) fell down in a moving subway car and the likelihood of people helping this person was monitored. In some instances, the victim simply fell down, while in other cases he bled from the mouth. In the instances where the victim was bleeding, participants were less likely to help him, while when the victim was not bleeding, participants rushed to his aid. Thus, when the consequences were high for the participants, e.g., they risked coming in contact with the victim’s blood, and/or may have been blamed for his condition, they were less likely to help. When the consequences were low, however, and they could simply check on the victim without any major risk to their well being or image, people were significantly more likely to help the victim.

Latané and Darley have reported similar findings in their work on diffusion of responsibility. In one study, participants were asked to sit in a room and fill out a questionnaire either by themselves or in the presence of several other people that were in the same room but out of view. As smoke began to fill the room, participants were monitored for their reactions. All the participants who sat alone eventually got up and reported the situation to someone, but of those in the group situation, only 1 person in 10 different trials reported the smoke (Latané & Darley, 1968). These results suggest that in

the group situation, the sense of responsibility to act on the situation was diffused among the group members. Thus, when other people were present they did not perceive the situation as an emergency and/or they assumed that someone else would act. For the individuals who were alone when the smoke started coming in, they perceived the situation to be serious, and as there was no one else around to help, took responsibility for the taking action. When a person stands alone in an emergency situation, they bear the onus of dealing with it; more specifically, he or she may feel the guilty if they do not act, and they fear taking the blame for failing to act (Latané & Darley, 1970 in Cacioppo, Petty, & Losch, 1986).

Another way of looking at such emergency situations focuses on the fear that the individual(s) present feel when they consider dealing with the problem. In a study by Cacioppo, Petty, & Losch (1986), participants were asked to read about an emergency situation in which they leave a building and see an individual lifting a man to his feet and a pair of crutches lying nearby. Participants were asked to assume the role of either helper or bystander. Participants who assumed the role of bystander were more likely to view the helper as responsible for the victim's suffering, while participants who assumed the role of helper indicated that they feared that the bystander would believe them responsible for the victim's suffering (Cacioppo et al., 1986). Thus, when an individual is alone in an emergency, they may feel more inclined to act because they perceive the situation to be of low consequences; if no one else is around, then they will not bear the burden of possibly being blamed for whatever misfortune the victim has suffered. In an emergency where many bystanders are present, however, an individual may feel that the situation is of too high a (social) consequence for them to act; if they step in to assist the

victim they may be assuming the responsibility, in the other peoples' eyes, for whatever harm has been done.

Regardless of an individual's beliefs about whether they are solely responsible for rectifying the situation or if they fear taking blame for an emergency, it is clear that the perceived consequences of a situation can affect how an individual chooses to behave. These same principles should apply in more mundane situations, such as business transactions, and current research seems to support this idea. Participants were asked to consider two separate scenarios, one of which depicted two construction companies competing for the same bid, and while the other depicted two ambulance companies in a similar situation. For the construction companies, the low-consequence scenario described two companies competing for a chance to construct a giant gingerbread house for a local children's hospital. Neither company would be compensated financially, but whichever company was chosen for the project would receive a great deal of publicity. In the high-consequence scenario participants were told that the same two companies were competing for a bid to build a new bridge over a major river. The company that was chosen for the job would not only receive a great deal of money, but would also become the preferred construction company for all of the city's projects.

In the scenarios describing the ambulance companies, the low-consequence scenario depicted the two companies competing for a chance to be the lead vehicle in an upcoming 4th of July parade. Just as in the construction company scenario, the ambulance company that was chosen would not receive any financial compensation but would receive a great deal of publicity. In the high-consequence scenario, the same two companies were described as competing for a job as the preferred emergency transport

for a major hospital. The same rewards offered in the construction company scenario applied to this situation.

Participants were asked to read two of the four possible scenarios (one ambulance and one construction scenario), either or both of which depicted high or low consequences. In each scenario, they were asked to choose which company they would select for the job after reading the scenario and a brief description of both of the companies. One company was indicated as a clear topdog, while the other was a clear underdog; the same descriptions were used in both the ambulance and construction scenarios, although the names of the companies changed. In choosing a company for the job, participants were asked to pretend that they were either a member of the Board of City Planners or a Board of Trustees member for the hospital (roles were appropriate to the scenario they had previously read).

The results showed that in the high consequence scenarios, participants were significantly more likely to choose the topdog company over the underdog (unpublished raw data, 2005). This occurred in both the construction and ambulance scenarios, demonstrating that the particular type of companies chosen were not responsible for provoking the participants' responses. Conversely, participants chose the underdog company more often in the low-consequence scenarios (unpublished raw data, 2005). As predicted according to the Wal-Mart effect, the selection of the topdog in the high-consequence scenarios occurred independently of the participants' feelings of identification with or sympathy for the underdog. Thus, participants seemed to recognize that in the high-consequence scenarios their choice would be affecting the well-being of the general public and that there were serious consequences attached to their choices.

Despite the support that these results lend to the hypothesis that consequences affect individuals' behavior, the measures used in this study regarding the perceived importance and seriousness of the consequences of the situation failed to reach significance. While participants preferred the topdog in the high-consequence situations, they did not automatically perceive these scenarios as more serious or their decisions as more important than they did in the low-consequence scenarios. It may be that, lacking a frame of reference, the participants did not necessarily perceive the situations to be more serious than one another. In particular, the participants may have felt that the scenarios lacked self-relevance, as they were asked to assume the role of either a member of the hospital's Board of Trustees or a member of the Board of City Planners, neither of which the average undergraduate college student would have had experience with. Therefore, while the participants may have understood that their decisions impacted the well-being of others in their city, they may not have felt a personal connection to the role they were be asked to play and the decision they were being asked to make.

Self-relevance, then, may also play an important role in determining when individuals will root for an underdog. Previous research has found that self-relevance has the ability to affect a vast number of behaviors; of particular interest has been the work regarding the role of self-relevance and health risk prevention behavior. In one study (Renner, 2004), participants received cholesterol feedback on two separate occasions, six months apart. Initially, participants were asked to rate how serious of a health threat they perceived their cholesterol level to be. They were then given the results of their first cholesterol test; six months later, they were retested and given feedback from their second test. At both sessions, participants who received feedback about their cholesterol

levels that was consistent with what they were expecting to hear were more likely to accept the results as being accurate (Renner, 2004). At the first feedback session, participants who had indicated that they believed that their cholesterol level was a health threat and were then told that it was in the unhealthy range or, conversely, those who believed they were healthy and were told it was in the acceptable range, believed that the test information was truly accurate. At the second feedback session, those who were again given similar feedback about their health were still likely to have accepted the information they were given. For those participants who suspected that they had problems with their cholesterol levels and were subsequently told that this had been confirmed, self-relevance was high (Renner, 2004). At the same time, however, some participants were given information that was incongruous with either what they expected to hear or with what they had been told previously. Of particular interest are the results for the individuals who were given negative feedback about their cholesterol levels. For individuals who indicated that they did not believe that their health was at risk or were told at the first session that their cholesterol levels were fine, and then later received negative feedback, there was a tendency for them to discount the negative information that they were given regarding their health (Renner, 2004). These participants perceived the tests to be inaccurate when they had received information that contrasted with what they previously believed. Therefore, although they had just been told that their cholesterol levels were a serious threat to their well-being, the incongruence of this information with what they believed to be true allowed them to discount this news and assert that the test bore little relevance to their health. This implies that when individuals perceive the information they are given to be highly self-relevant, they will likely take

action that incorporates the news, whereas in situations of perceived low self-relevance, individuals are likely to ignore the information, regardless of its potential impact on their lives.

Additional research in the area of self-relevance includes the work of Abraham Tesser and his Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model (1988, 1991). Tesser's model states that people feel threatened when those they are close to outperform them in areas that they consider important for their self-identity (Leary, 2004). Thus, if someone is an avid golfer and he is out-played on the golf course by his best friend, he will feel threatened and be upset by this information. At the same time, however, if an individual has a sister that is an excellent dancer and this area is of little or no interest to him, he will be very happy about her success and use it to boost his own self-esteem.

For the current purposes, the most important element of Tesser's theory is his thoughts on the personal relevance of the area in which the individual is making the comparison. In situations of low-relevance, a person will be pleased by being outperformed by someone close to him or her; it will give them a boost in self-esteem to be associated with someone who is doing well and will possibly afford them the opportunity to BIRG. In situations of high-relevance, however, the success of someone close to them will not only hurt him or her but may also cause them to distance themselves from that individual or to sabotage that friend's or relative's efforts in that domain (Leary, 2004).

In applying the impact of self-relevance to the realm of the underdog, it should follow that when individuals perceive a situation to be of high self-relevance they will choose a topdog, thus ensuring themselves a better chance of success, particularly in

matters of business. At the same time, when low self-relevance is perceived, an individual should be more willing to give an underdog a chance, because they will not believe the outcome of the situation to influence them directly. Taken together with the literature on the effects of consequences, this suggests that individuals should be more willing to support an underdog when both the self-relevance *and* the consequences of the situation are low. On the other hand, when the self-relevance and consequences are high, individuals should be more likely to choose a topdog. For situations in which the self-relevance and consequences of a situation are mixed (high self-relevance, low consequences or low self-relevance, high consequences), it is difficult to say what course individuals will take in choosing whom to support. It seems likely that in all situations apart from them those of high self-relevance and high consequences individuals will support an underdog, because it either bears no direct relevance to them or it seems of no consequence. The following studies will be aimed at illuminating these situations by asking participants to choose between an underdog and a topdog business in situations of both low and high self-relevance and consequences. Study 1 attempted to do so through the use of a written scenario that participants read and then answered questions about. Study 2 attempted to obtain a behavioral measure of people's willingness to support an underdog by asking them help a group by making a charitable donation.

STUDY 1

Method

Overview

Subjects reported to the experiment location in groups of four to eight. After reading a brief scenario describing a construction job and the two companies competing for the bid, participants were asked to answer a series of questions regarding their thoughts and feelings regarding the two companies.

Subjects

Forty-eight participants were recruited both from the Introduction to Psychology subject pool and from convenience sampling on the University of Richmond campus. The Introduction to Psychology students signed up for a study on ‘Decision Making Processes’ and received course credit for their participation. Individuals from the convenience sample did not receive compensation.

Procedure

After signing consent forms, participants were asked to read one of four scenarios depicting either high or low consequences and high or low self-relevance (see Appendix B for scenarios). In the high consequence scenarios, the participants were told that a new bridge was being built over a river located in either Richmond, Virginia (high self-relevance) or Fulton, Illinois (low self-relevance). In the low consequence scenarios, participants were told that a giant gingerbread house was being built for a Children’s Hospital located in either Richmond, Virginia or Fulton Illinois. All the participants then

read the descriptions of two construction companies competing for the bid to build either the bridge of the gingerbread house. In all scenarios Cory's Construction was described as the topdog, while Bill's Builders was described as the underdog. Participants were then asked to answer a series of questions regarding the scenario they had read, after being instructed to either distance themselves from the situation by pretending to be a hospital or city administrator, or to answer the questions as themselves (see Appendix C for instructions and questions). Upon completion, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Results

Results from a chi-square analysis of consequences and company chosen were significant, with $\chi^2(1, N=48) = 12.08, p = .00$ (*Figure 1*). Participants were significantly more likely to choose the underdog in situations of low consequence ($N = 19$), while the topdog was chosen more often in situations of high consequence ($N = 17$). No significant results were revealed from a chi-square analysis of self-relevance and company chosen. A two-way (self-relevance x consequences) ANOVA was conducted to determine whether rooting for the underdog varied across contexts. While no significant results were revealed for the perceived importance of the situation, a significant main effect of perceived seriousness was shown, $F(1,44) = 4.49, p = .04, \eta^2 = .09$. Participants believed the situation to be significantly more serious in the situations of high consequence ($M = 5.27$) than in those of low consequences ($M = 4.33$). A significant main effect of consequences was also revealed for company chosen, with $F(1,44) = 15.95, p = .00, \eta^2 = .27$. Participants were significantly more likely to choose the underdog business in

situations of low consequences than in those of high consequences. Accordingly, significant results were found for both rooting for the topdog and rooting for the underdog. A main effect of consequences was revealed for both rooting for the topdog and rooting for the underdog, $F(1, 44) = 10.10, p = .00, \eta^2 = .19$, and $F(1, 44) = 12.32, p = .00, \eta^2 = .22$, respectively (*Figure 2*). Participants were significantly more likely to root for the topdog in situations of high consequences ($M = 4.55$) than in those of low consequences ($M = 3.38$); conversely, participants were more likely to root for the underdog in situations of low consequences ($M = 5.25$) than in those of high consequences ($M = 4.02$). Interestingly, this pattern did not reverse itself when participants were asked how much they were rooting against both the topdog and underdog. A main effect of consequences occurred for rooting against the underdog, $F(1, 44) = 5.44, p = .00, \eta^2 = .22$, with individuals rooting against the underdog significantly more in situations of high consequences ($M = 3.70$) than in those of low consequences ($M = 2.70$) (*Figure 3*). However, significant effects were not revealed for rooting against the topdog: while there was a slight difference in the means of the high and low consequences conditions ($M = 3.25$ and $M = 3.71$, respectively), this difference was not marked enough to be significant.

Further examination of the results revealed a significant main effect of consequences on sympathy for the topdog, $F(1, 44) = 7.39, p = .01, \eta^2 = .14$. Participants were significantly more sympathetic to the topdog in situations of high consequences ($M = 3.77$) than in those of low consequences ($M = 2.63$) (*Figure 4*). Interestingly, there were no significant effects for sympathy for the underdog. A main effect of consequences on identification with the topdog was also revealed, $F(1, 44) = 10.10, p = .00, \eta^2 = .19$,

where participants identified with the topdog in situations of high consequences ($M = 4.00$) more so than in those of low consequences ($M = 2.91$) (*Figure 5*). No significant effects for identification with the underdog were revealed.

Discussion

This study attempted to replicate earlier findings demonstrating that rooting for the underdog is moderated by both the consequences and self-relevance of a situation. While the consequences hypothesis was supported, the self-relevance hypothesis was not. This merits some discussion, as it has been difficult to produce reliable differences between conditions of self-relevance. This may simply be an issue of sample size, as only forty-eight subjects participated in the present study. However, this may also indicate larger issues with the manipulation. Specifically, because it has been difficult to reliably produce significant results by varying the self-relevance of the situation, it may be that when considering both self-relevance and consequences the participants regard them as one in the same: when participants are faced with situations of high consequences, they may also consider the situation to be highly self-relevant. In the scenario used for this study, participants were asked to consider an underdog and topdog company for a job building a bridge over a major river either in the city that they currently reside in or elsewhere in the United States. At least two possibilities exist which might explain why this self-relevance manipulation failed to produce differences. It may be the case that since the low self-relevance city was in another state but still within the United States, participants may have felt it was too close to home. Demographic information was not requested from the participants but since this study was conducted on a college campus

the possibility exists that some of the participants came from the state (Illinois) that was used in the scenario, or that they have family or friends that live there. Furthermore, it may be that because the city described was within the United States the participants still felt that the people in that city and state were members of their in-group (as citizens of the same country) and therefore deemed the situation to be highly self-relevant. At the same time, participants may have considered anything that would negatively affect any human life to be of high self-relevance, rather than just those things that would affect themselves or the people of their own city. As the increased media presence in our country constantly bombards us with stories of human tragedy, it may be the case that we as a society have become increasingly sensitive to situations that involve harm to human lives, and as a result are more inclined to perceive any tragedy (or potential tragedy) as self-relevant. In particular, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the issues that arose from both the natural and man-made elements of this disaster (e.g., the problems with the levees), participants may have been more wary of any potential human tragedy, whereas a year prior, despite the devastating natural disasters in other regions of the world, individuals in this country may not have been quite as sensitive to potential catastrophes. Future investigations into the role of self-relevance should attempt to test this, perhaps by using another country, or experimenting with increasing self-relevance using mortality salience priming. However, it seems highly likely that any high consequence situation that will negatively affect other members of the human race will trigger some feeling of self-relevance in an individual. It may also be the case that consequences and self-relevance cannot be reasonably separated from one another, although further work in this area is needed to confirm this notion.

Regardless of the issues surrounding the manipulation of self-relevance, clear differences were exhibited with regard to the role of consequences in rooting for the underdog (or topdog). As expected, participants were significantly more likely to support an underdog in situations of low consequences than in those of high consequences, while the reverse was true of rooting for the topdog. This supports the idea that when little is at stake individuals should be more willing to give an underdog a chance to prove itself, while when the stakes are high it is more prudent to choose a topdog with a proven track record.

An interesting element of this study comes from the finding that participants were both sympathetic to and identified with the topdog, but failed to do so with the underdog. This runs counter to previous findings that have showed the people are more sympathetic to and identify more strongly with an underdog than a topdog. Despite the fact that these findings come mostly from studies of underdogs in athletic competitions, it seems reasonable that in keeping with the “Wal-Mart Effect” the same pattern of sympathy for and identification with the underdog would be exhibited. A possible explanation for the current findings is that the individuals participating in this study, college students at a reputable east coast university, all enjoy reasonably high self-esteem; thus, those that were faced with situations in which they chose the underdog for the task may not have felt a connection to this entity or they may have indicated low levels of sympathy and identification as a means of protecting their current level of self-esteem. At the same time, individuals may not have identified with the underdog because of the foreignness of a business underdog; while most, if not all, of the participants have likely rooted for a sports underdog in the past and/or have played a sport in which they or their team were

an underdog, the concept of an underdog in the business world may have been new to them. As a result, they may not have felt the same closeness that they would have felt had a sports scenario been provided.

STUDY 2

Method

Overview

A second study was conducted as a means of obtaining a behavioral measure of people rooting for the underdog. Participants came to the experiment location individually and were asked to wait a few moments while a fictional participant finished in the study in an adjacent room. While waiting, participants were asked whether they would be interested in purchasing an unknown band's CD to help a charitable organization. After hearing one of four stories about the band and the source of the money to be pledged, individuals were asked to fill out a pledge sheet and were given a copy of the CD. Participants were then asked to fill out a questionnaire that the researcher claimed was being used to help her write a paper for a graduate level course.

Subjects

Forty-five students were recruited from the Introduction to Psychology subject pool and through a message posted in SpiderBytes. Participants were scheduled for individual, half-hour time slots in exchange for either \$5.00 or one credit.

Procedure

Upon their arrival at the lab, participants were welcomed and informed that another individual was finishing up in the next room and that once he or she was finished (pronouns were alternated throughout the sessions) they would be able to get started. The researcher justified this waiting period by stating that the study involved using the computer and that the lab only had one working computer, which meant that participants must take the study one at a time. The researcher also stated that everyone prior to this participant had been late, and that the starting times had gradually been getting more and more off-track. While waiting, the participants were asked to fill out the consent form for the study, and were then engaged in casual conversation with the researcher.

Conversation was limited to mundane topics, including the weather, registration for courses, and plans for either Thanksgiving or Winter Break. After roughly five minutes, the researcher checked the time and told the participant that it shouldn't be much longer, and got up to check on the individual in the other room. The researcher then informed the participant that the other person looked like they were almost done and that it shouldn't be too much longer. After checking the time again, the researcher told the participant that in an effort to get the session times back on track, she would ask a favor of the participant that she hadn't planned on asking until the end. The participant was then told that the researcher's friend was a member of a Charlotte, North Carolina-based band called 'The Citizens,' and that the band was currently offering its CD in exchange for a donation to the ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease) Society. The researcher then described the band to the participant as either a topdog, in that the band had been together for six years, was well-known along the eastern seaboard,

and had recently signed a record contract with RCA that came with a large signing bonus; or an underdog, in that the band had only been together for a few months, practiced in a band member's basement, were almost completely unknown even in their hometown of Charlotte, and were struggling financially. The participants were then told that the band was 'selling' its CD in exchange for a donation to ALS research, and were told that the money would come from one of two sources: either their own money or money for the Psi Chi Honor Society's budget. Participants who were told that the money was coming from their own wallet were informed that they would be able to take the CD with them when they left the lab, and that someone from the ALS Society would follow up with them in the next few weeks. Participants were asked to fill out a pledge form that asked for their name, amount of donation, and contact information in the form of their phone number and/or email address. Alternatively, participants were told that several of the officers of Psi Chi, the Psychology Honor Society, had previously worked with the ALS Society through their research projects and that they had generously decided to donate a portion of their budget to the ALS Society in exchange for the CDs. Participants were told that instead of pledging their own money, they could pledge an amount that would come out of Psi Chi's budget and take the CD with them at no cost. Participants in this condition were given the same pledge form but were told to ignore the contact information section and simply fill out their name and the amount pledged. In both conditions, participants were then given a copy of the CD and were thanked for their help. The researcher then looked in on the 'other participant' once more, and told the participant that it looked like he or she had finished. The researcher collected the bag of CDs and money when appropriate (not all participants were paid) and told the participant

that she was going to take the other person into the next room to debrief them and that they would be back shortly to get them set up in the other room. Before leaving, the researcher again asked the participant for a favor, explaining that since she was a graduate student she was required to write extra papers for several of her classes, and that she was currently working on a paper about altruism. Instead of simply doing a literature review, she explained, she had decided to collect some data when the opportunity with the CDs came up. She then asked the participant if they would mind answering a few questions about why they were willing or unwilling to pledge money to this cause. All of the participants agreed to fill out the questionnaire, and the researcher left it with them as she went into the other room for several minutes.

When the researcher returned, participants were asked to come into the other room and have a seat at the computer. At this point the researcher informed the participant that the study was complete and that they would not be required to do anything with the computer. Participants were then debriefed, and those participants that had received the CD were asked to return it to the researcher. Participants were asked not to discuss the study and were thanked for their participation.

Results

A 2 (underdog v. topdog) X 2 (subject's money v. Psi Chi's money) ANOVA revealed both significant main effects of self-relevance and consequences ($F(1,41) = 4.144, p = .05, \eta^2 = .09$, and $F(1,41) = 29.142, p = .00, \eta^2 = .42$, respectively), as well as a significant interaction, $F(1, 41) = 5.355, p = .03, \eta^2 = .12$ (*Figure 6*). As expected, participants were willing to pledge significantly more money when using Psi Chi's

money as opposed to their own. Most interesting, however, is the fact that participants pledged significantly more money to the underdog band ($M = \$29.00$) with Psi Chi's money than they did to the topdog band ($M = \$15.18$). Participants pledged the least amount of money when it was their own bank account being affected, although they did pledge slightly more money to the topdog band ($M = \$5.39$) than the underdog band ($M = \$4.50$). Further analyses revealed only one additional set of significant results; a main effect of band (underdog v. topdog) on rooting for the underdog occurred, $F(1, 39) = 6.59, p < .01, \eta^2 = .15$, as well as a significant interaction, $F(1, 39) = 6.59, p < .01, \eta^2 = .15$ (Figure 7). While the source of the money made no difference on individuals' willingness to root for the topdog or underdog, participants were significantly more likely to root for the topdog ($M = 6.00$) than the underdog ($M = 4.20$) when it was their own money being spent. Analyses of the remaining questions did not reveal additional significant effects, although several questions (sympathy for the band, hope for the band's success, and tenacity of the band) approached significance.

Discussion

The main hypothesis of this study, that individuals would be willing to contribute more money to an underdog band when the consequences/self-relevance of the situation were low (e.g. when it was someone else's money), was supported. This bolsters the notion that rooting for the underdog is moderated by the context of the situation. It is also interesting that in light of Study 1's failure to produce significant effects from the self-relevance manipulation, that in this study wherein consequences and self-relevance were essentially consolidated into one variable, self-relevance appears to have played a strong

role in producing the results. This supports the possibility that self-relevance and consequences are often indistinguishable from one another, and that teasing the two apart may be substantially more difficult than expected. Regardless, this study was unique in that it was able to capture a behavioral measure of people's willingness to support an underdog, rather than having them speculate about how they would behave in a hypothetical scenario. The fact that there were significant differences in people's willingness to commit money to an unknown band based on both the band's description and the source of the money provides strong support for the idea that rooting for the underdog is not a universal phenomenon. Interestingly, however, a significant main effect of band type was produced, albeit in a different direction than would be predicted by the 'Wal-Mart Effect.'

Several possibilities exist that may explain why none of the other survey questions yielded significant results. First and foremost, the relatively small sample size may have failed to produce adequate power to detect results. As noted previously, several questions approached significance; thus, it may be the case that had the sample size been larger there would have been significant results for a greater number of questions. Another possibility stems from the fact that since the participants were led to believe that they were answering the survey questions as a favor to the researcher and not as part of the actual study, they may have failed to take the survey as seriously as they might have had they considered it to be part of the study. Furthermore, since the questions all dealt with the participants' feelings about the band, participants may have had trouble answering the questions due to the fact that they had not listened to the band's music and

may have felt that they did not know enough about them to feel one way or another about the band and its potential for success.

Of particular interest, however, is the fact that while participants were willing to pledge a great deal more to an underdog band when they were using Psi Chi's money, this commitment did not affect their willingness to root for the underdog. Participants showed no differences in the amount of rooting for the topdog and underdog when they were pledging Psi Chi's money, and yet when their own money was pledged this was not true. Despite nearly similar amounts pledged to the underdog and topdog with the participants' own money, the topdog enjoyed significantly more support (with regard to rooting) than the underdog. These interesting results may be related to several issues, one of which pertains to the characteristics of the sample. The participants in this study were all university students, a group that is generally greatly affected by music and base much of their identity on the type of music that they listen to. As this is such a central aspect to this particular population's self-concepts, the tendency to show greater rooting for the topdog may reflect their interest in music and their desire to be a part of something popular and yet innovative. Because the topdog band was still a relative unknown (despite their local success and record contract), the participants may have perceived this band as on the cusp of greatness and may have been excited by the prospect of being one of the first to 'discover' this great new talent. Thus, while they were reluctant to make any sort of monetary commitment (of their own money) to the band, they were still able to take the CD with them and potentially set the trend by following this new group.

Another possibility reflects a type of double standard with regard to morality: while we may want to self-present as moral and charitable, in reality we are truly rooting

for our self-interests, which are most often tied to the topdog. Thus, while people were willing to make sizeable pledges to the underdog when Psi Chi's money was being used, they may have been doing so not because they care about the welfare of the underdog, but rather because making the donation came at no cost to them personally and validated them morally. At the same time, however, their unwillingness to root for an underdog in this situation (when the pledge money came from Psi Chi) demonstrates a disconnect; while they may have supported the underdog monetarily, their self-interests and values were not affected by their pledge. Meanwhile, despite people's unwillingness to pledge a great amount of money to either the topdog or underdog when the source of money was their own, people nonetheless exhibited a strong tendency to root for the topdog in this situation. Thus, as previously noted with regard to the characteristics of the participant population, because this was a self-relevant domain, people were more likely to invest their emotions in the topdog. This finding, though unexpected and in contrast to the 'Walmart Effect,' provides further evidence that suggests that the underdog is not as universally loved as it was once thought to be.

General Discussion

In our society a great deal of attention is given to those on top: the CEOs, professional athletes, politicians, and media moguls we hear about day in and day out are most often noticed not because of their mediocrity, but because they embody the type of success that we as Americans value and hope to achieve ourselves. Despite this focus on the wealthy, the powerful, and the ubiquitous, however, our culture still clings dearly to the notion of the underdog: the little guy who pulls himself up from his bootstraps, faces

a more powerful enemy, and stands joyfully triumphant at the end. The people that garner most attention embody this phenomenon, rising from a position of frailty and disadvantage to one of great power, success, and acclaim. However, inherent in this process of struggle is the transition from the weak underdog to the champion topdog that stands on top. Indeed, the 'American Dream' touts our ability to live this rags-to-riches life, making both us as individuals but also the American Culture as a whole a story of success, power, and ultimately, topdogs.

Regardless, the underdog phenomenon is quite prevalent in our society and can be found illustrated in everyday life. One of the most common areas in which we hear about the underdog is that of athletics: underdog stories are constantly being told and retold in the world of sports, and great excitement is generated by watching an underdog take on a topdog in an athletic contest. Research on the phenomenon has shown almost universal support for the underdog in sporting events. In one series of experiments, participants were asked to read about an upcoming basketball game between the University of Montana and the University of Wyoming. Teams were described as being either evenly matched or unevenly matched in their records, with some variation in the size of the disparity between the records (either a small difference between the two teams or a large difference). In all of the unevenly matched scenarios, participants were significantly more likely to root for the underdog than the topdog (Kim, Allison, Eylon, Goethals, Markus, & McGuire, 2005, unpublished manuscript). This, along with a number of other studies, has helped to demonstrate just how prevalent the underdog phenomenon within our culture.

But why is the underdog so popular? One theory posits that one of the major reasons that people will root for an underdog is that they are able to sympathize and identify with these struggling entities (Markus, McGuire, Allison and Eylon, 2003; Kim, Allison, Eylon, Goethals, Markus and McGuire, 2005, unpublished manuscript). Many individuals are able to recognize themselves in the underdog; they can identify with their disadvantage, their feeling of being smaller and weaker, and the tenacity and drive that they possess which allows them to compete with the topdog. Thus, when people are rooting for the underdog, it is likely that they are actually rooting for themselves; if the struggling baseball team or fledgling company can overcome the obstacles they face, then there is hope that the average person can do so as well. In addition, identifying with an underdog that succeeds may provide an individual with a boost in self-esteem. This phenomenon, referred to as BIRGing (Basking In Reflected Glory), allows individuals to enjoy the benefits of identifying with an entity that has enjoyed some sort of success by internalizing it as their own triumph (Cacioppo, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976).

An alternate hypothesis regarding the popularity of the underdog stems from work by Vandello, Goldschmied, and Richards (2004, unpublished manuscript), which posits that individuals have an underlying desire for justice that drives their willingness to root for an underdog. In a study conducted by Vandello et al. (2004), it was demonstrated the individuals were more likely to root for a team with a lesser chance of winning, and that they were more likely to root for a team with a smaller payroll relative to their competitor. The most interesting finding from this study, however, comes from the results of the condition in which the teams' odds of winning and resources were unevenly

matched: in this case, 67% of the participants preferred the team with a smaller payroll but greater chance of winning, indicating that it was the resources and not their odds of success which made the team more attractive and suggests the role of justice (Vandello et al., 2004, unpublished manuscript).

It would appear then, that regardless of one's motivation for rooting for the underdog, whether it is sympathy, identification, desire for justice, or some other as yet unnamed variable, the tendency to support teams or individuals that are described as weaker relative to a competitor is quite strong. Yet while the underdog has enjoyed robust support in the realm of athletics, the business world has not been as kind to these entities. While the sports underdog enjoys a majority of support in most cases, in business, however, this is not the case. Within the 'real world,' wherein business transactions occur, there appears to be a phenomenon taking place that has been deigned the "Wal-Mart Effect." While in the realm of athletics individuals are likely to both say that they support an underdog *and* act upon this support (by cheering, attending games, wearing team clothing, etc.), individuals faced with real-world consumer transactions will often say that they support the underdog, but their behavior then reflects support for the topdog (as evidenced by their patronage). Thus, consumers abandon the locally owned "mom and pop" stores of their neighborhoods in favor of discount mega-stores like Wal-Mart (Allison, et al., 2005 unpublished manuscript), despite their insistence that they support the 'little guy'. There are many reasons that this phenomenon occurs; of particular interest is the fact that while in athletic competitions the outcome does not truly matter, the outcomes of a business situation affect individuals directly. In many ways, for the majority of individuals who participate in sports as mere spectators, it appears as

though the realm of athletics exists as a somewhat disconnected fantasy world. Through sports, people are given the opportunity to escape from the 'real world' and any investment they make will not necessarily generally affect their lives. In business, on the other hand, the outcome truly matters. A bad investment may cost time, money, or one's livelihood if the wager is large enough. This suggests that when someone must decide whom they will give their business to, while he or she may support the underdog 'mom and pop' stores in our hearts, his or her patronage will ultimately go to the topdog business.

Thus, the 'Wal-Mart Effect' (Kim et al., 2005) has demonstrated that one's willingness to support an underdog depends largely on the consequences of the situation. In particular, whenever an individual is forced to spend their own money, the stakes are high, which generally leads them to choose the business with the best product, service, and/or price. Most often, this business is a topdog, and thus while many people openly denigrate these corporate giants and speak fondly of their love for small, local businesses, when it comes time for them to make a purchase they will most likely give their vote (with their wallet) to the topdog. Hence, the 'Wal-Mart Effect' helps explain why the topdog enjoys such great support in the business world, despite people's insistence that they are strong supporters of the underdog. The current studies attempted to build on this finding by not only varying the consequences of a situation, but also by varying the self-relevance. While the consequences hypothesis had been reliably demonstrated prior to this point, the element of self-relevance needed further exploration.

Overall, both studies were successful in demonstrating that situational differences have the ability to affect individuals' willingness to root for an underdog. Despite this,

however, it appeared that the consequences of the situation were most instrumental in altering one's willingness to support an underdog or topdog business, particularly in Study 1. As previously noted, it seems highly likely that the self-relevance manipulation used in Study 1 failed not because this variable does not influence one's willingness to support an underdog, but because it is entwined with the consequences of the situation, and the two cannot be separated as easily as originally believed. While it initially seemed surprising that the self-relevance manipulation in Study 1 did not produce significant differences between conditions, further reflection generated the possibility that because the city that was meant to appear to be low in self-relevance was still a city within this country, an outgroup was never created. It seems reasonable to suggest that participants reading those scenarios that were set in Fulton, Illinois still believed the situation to be fairly relevant since they may have had friends or family living in the state, or since they as college students may have actually been residents of the state themselves. It also seems possible that because of this variable's lack of power the participants may not have perceived the situation to be of either high or low self-relevance at all. Due to the nature of the consequences manipulation, they may not have considered the self-relevance of the situation and instead focused their attention completely on the consequences manipulation, which produced strong differences between conditions. Another possibility is that the self-relevance manipulation was effective, but that in light of recent events (Hurricane Katrina, the Asian Tsunami in 2004, and perhaps even the events of September 11, 2001), individuals were more sensitive to anything that may cause harm to human life. Thus, the manipulation may have been adequate, had it not been for the

barrage of media stories describing human tragedies that have increased our mindfulness about looking out for our fellow man or woman.

Regardless of these potential shortcomings of the self-relevance manipulation, however, the consequences manipulation enjoyed strong support, demonstrating reliable differences in people's willingness to root for an underdog in situations of high versus low consequences. This lends further support to the 'Wal-Mart Effect' hypothesis, as it was once again shown that the consequences of the situation play a major role in determining whether one will truly support an underdog, or simply claim to do so.

The lack of sympathy for and identification with the underdog in Study 1 merits some discussion, as it runs counter to the previous findings which have showed that support for the underdog is generally associated with sympathy for and identification with these entities. While the underdog did enjoy the greatest level of sympathy in the scenario depicting both low self-relevance and low consequences (wherein the underdog received the greatest level of support), the level of sympathy here was not significantly different than that exhibited in other conditions. The same basic results were revealed with regard to identification with the underdog. As previously noted, this may be an issue of sample size, with a larger sample holding the potential to produce a significant result for both sympathy and identification. However, this may instead indicate that feelings of sympathy for and identification with the underdog are simply not as prominent in business ventures as they are in athletic endeavors. While the issue of the sample's generally high level of self-esteem was mentioned previously, another possibility is that because of the harsh reality of the 'real world' in which business transactions occur, people are less willing to risk not only their self-esteem but their self-image by

sympathizing or identifying with an underdog. While some may consider these feelings to be mostly private, giving support to an underdog business may cause others to speculate that the supporter harbors sympathetic tendencies for the underdog, and this may for whatever reason prove damaging to their reputation. This risk does not usually exist in the realm of athletics; since the sporting world is largely one of fantasy, the risk of damaging one's self-image are less severe if one chooses to support an underdog in this arena. Thus, it may be the case that the topdog not only enjoys greater support in the business world because of their superior product, service, or price, but also because they are seen as a safer choice in terms of protecting one's self-image and self-esteem.

In Study 2, while there were no attempts to separate the self-relevance of the situation from consequences, the possibility exists that because money was involved, self-relevance and consequences were one in the same for many of the participants. Thus, while it was not explicitly manipulated, it seems that the self-relevance aspect of this study was effective, as there were sizeable differences between the amounts of money that individuals donated in the conditions that required them to pledge their own money (high self-relevance) as opposed to those that allowed them pledge money from the Psi Chi Honor Society (low self-relevance). Assuming that consequences were also involved in the participants' decision-making processes, this aspect of the manipulation also appears to have been quite successful, demonstrating once again that consequences are powerful motivators with regard to rooting for the underdog. While this finding is powerful in and of itself, it is particularly poignant because of the fact that this study furnished one of the first behavioral measures of rooting for the underdog within the lab context. The fact that this study provided a behavioral measure of rooting for the

underdog lends additional credibility to the ‘Wal-Mart Effect’ that has been demonstrated previously through traditional pencil and paper studies. Despite the relative lack of knowledge that the participants had about the band described to them, apart from the information given by the researcher, significant differences were demonstrated in the participants’ willingness to donate money in exchange for the band’s CD. The fact that there were sizeable differences in the amounts of money given in exchange for the CD based on both the description of the band as an underdog or topdog and the source of the money provides striking support for the notion that the consequences and self-relevance are powerful moderators of support for an underdog.

A potential problem that deserves some discussion is the possibility that since none of the participants had ever heard of the band or its music, they may have all considered the band, regardless of its description, an underdog relative to the more famous, well-known bands that are heard on the radio and seen on television. Efforts were made to control for this by making the topdog band’s description as close to a real-life successful band’s description as possible, trying to emphasize the band’s financial success, their upcoming album release, and their large fan base. It is not believed that this caused any substantial problems, as noticeable differences occurred between the conditions and do not appear to have come about by chance.

While the results of the survey questions included in this study did not reveal significant differences, this is somewhat unsurprising due to the nature of the study. Participants were given the surveys and asked to fill them out as a favor to the researcher. No real import was attached to their compliance to this request, as participants were led to believe that the ‘real’ study had yet to take place, and attaching any significance to the

survey may have aroused suspicion. Thus, participants may not have made a full effort while filling out the survey, nor may they have cared. Since none of the participants knew anything more about the band than what the researcher had told them in the previous five minutes, they may not have felt confident in their ability to answer questions regarding this sympathy and identity with the band since they knew so little about them. This seems particularly likely because of this particular sample's strong identification with music and musicians. Because college-aged students often use music to define themselves, it may be the case that they did not want to answer the questions and run the risk of their answer reflecting poorly upon them, as they knew so little about the band. Therefore, the results from the survey questions may not have accurately reflected individuals' feelings of sympathy for, identification with, etc., the underdog, since they had not had time to adequately process the information.

Despite the relative lack of returns on the survey, however, the significant results produced by the measures of the amount pledged and the participants' willingness to root for the band may be quite telling. Of particular interest is the fact that while participants were willing to pledge a great deal more to an underdog band they were nonetheless rooting for the topdog band, particularly when the pledge came from their own wallet. Despite this, the topdog band received only slightly more in pledge money than did the underdog when participants were using their own money. Furthermore, participants showed no differences in the amount of rooting for the topdog and underdog when they were pledging Psi Chi's money. One possible explanation for these results is the strong relationship between music and identity with regard to the sample population, as previously mentioned. Because college students are generally quite attuned to the music

industry and base a fair amount of their self-concept on the type of music that they listen to, the target of this study may have been particularly self-relevant for many of the participants. Thus, self-relevance may have been the strongest component of the manipulation, with consequences contributing less to the results overall. Participants may have perceived the topdog as being on the cusp of greatness and the tendency to show greater support (with regard to rooting) for the topdog may reflect not only their interest in music but also their desire to be a part of something new and innovative. Thus, while they were reluctant to make any sort of monetary commitment (of their own money) to the band, they were still able to take the CD with them and potentially set the trend by following this new group and being ahead of the curve with regard to new music. Interestingly, and in support of this, is the fact that participants across conditions were reluctant to return the CD to the researcher upon being told that the story they were given was fictional. While no attitude measures were given to evaluate this, many participants indicated disappointment that they must give the CD back and that it was in fact a blank disc. This suggests that the possibility of possessing new music that others did not have access to was quite appealing to the participants and that this sense of trend-setting played an important role in their decision making process.

Another possibility reflects our willingness to self-present as moral citizens but rather our true desire to keep our best interests at heart. Despite the fact that the participants were willing to contribute a great deal to the underdog band in the situation in which Psi Chi's money was being pledged, this demonstration of charity stood in direct opposition to their attitudes with regard to rooting. Although participants donated a great deal more to both the topdog and the underdog when using Psi Chi's money, they

failed to indicate attitudinal support when asked how much they were rooting for the band. At the same time, however, despite their reluctance to pledge their own money to the band (either topdog or underdog), participants in the own-money condition indicated strong rooting for the topdog. This suggests that while people may have not been willing to take a financial risk on the band, they were also unwilling to take an attitudinal risk on the band; participants pledging their own money had a greater desire to associate themselves with the topdog band, thereby ensuring that they would not tarnish their image by committing to a 'loser.' Participants pledging Psi Chi's money, however, disassociated themselves after receiving (internal) moral validation for their deed. This finding stands in direct opposition to the 'Wal-Mart Effect,' wherein individuals are willing to root for an underdog in their hearts but direct their behavior towards supporting the topdog. Instead, the present results indicate that people were willing to support an underdog behaviorally (albeit with someone else's funds), while attitudinally they invested in the safer choice, e.g., the topdog. This finding, when taken in conjunction with the 'Wal-Mart Effect' suggests an alarming betrayal of the underdog, and a weakness in a phenomenon that was previously believed to be universal and robust. Further investigation of this finding is clearly merited, and future attempts to replicate this study should be made.

Despite the various shortcomings of both the studies, they both proved successful in demonstrating differences in people's willingness to root for an underdog under various conditions. This area clearly merits further exploration, and there should be attempts to replicate the results of these studies, in particular those of Study 2 because of their novelty. Future attempts to replicate should also build upon these results, expanding

the research into various areas of business as well as moving into other arenas such as politics. It would be interesting to attempt a manipulation that could exploit prior knowledge of the participants' interests in music, art, sports, etc., and use this knowledge to create a situation in which there is a true topdog as a basis of comparison. With regard to strengthening the manipulations, attempts should be made to create a more powerful and clear-cut manipulation of self-relevance. This may be difficult to do, as matters of life and death are particularly complicated, and issues regarding money will most likely always invoke both self-relevance as well as consequences. If a manipulation of self-relevance can be created and applied to rooting for the topdog, it should stand that low self-relevance situations produce greater rooting for the underdog than those of high self-relevance. It will be interesting to see whether this type of manipulation is possible, and if so, what the results of this manipulation will show.

Furthermore, with regard to study two, an effort should be made to distinguish between self-relevance and consequences, and to discern how each effects the behaviors and attitudes of the participants. The possibility of a third variable, risk-taking, as having a role in the results should also be investigated. Efforts should also be made to replicate the results of the study by using a non-charitable source for the expenditure of money. While Psi Chi is not generally regarded as a charitable organization, participants may have believed that since the group was donating money, they must be a somewhat charitable organization, and this may have led them to increase their donations on Psi Chi's behalf. Thus, it seems important to replicate the findings using a context devoid of charity.

With research on the underdog now flourishing, there are many exciting possibilities for both the directions that this research can take and the applications of the findings from this research. Now that the universality of preference for the underdog is being deconstructed, it seems relevant to attempt to discern the limits of the underdog's popularity in a variety of arenas. While the realms of sports and business have enjoyed a great deal of attention and will continue to produce interesting variations on current research, the areas of politics and social interactions (e.g. interactions between friends, co-workers, interactions among strangers, etc.), to name a few possibilities, have gone largely untouched. If the underdog is as prevalent as it is currently believed to be, we should be able to discover the limits to its popularity in all manner of situation.

The results of both the current and future research holds exciting possibilities for variety of fields. Not only will the areas within which the underdog is being researched benefit, but other areas will also be able to learn from the underdog research and apply to their own situations. Marketers, advertisers, athletic groups, businesses, and even individuals will be able to apply the underdog research to their own lives in order to make themselves the most appealing, successful, or powerful. The future for this area of research is filled with promise and excitement, and is sure to provide stirring insight for people of all walks of life.

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Appendix A- Study 1 materials

(A) High self-relevance, low consequences

Please read the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.

This coming December, St. Mary’s Hospital of Richmond will be putting up a giant gingerbread house to entertain the many children that are treated in the facility. Currently, the hospital administrators are trying to choose a construction company to design and to build the gingerbread house with the help of a local bakery. They have narrowed their choices to two companies:

Cory’s Construction:

- Is a fairly large company with over 60 employees and 32 years of experience.
- Is well-known in the community and well-respected.

Bill’s Builders:

- Is a smaller, younger company that employs 15 people.
- Has been in business for only 3 years and is trying to established itself as a viable alternative to Cory’s Construction.

The company that is chosen to build the gingerbread house will not be compensated financially for their work, but will receive a great deal of publicity for this charitable deed.

Pretend that you are a hospital administrator at St. Mary’s of Richmond as you answer the following questions.

Which company will you select to build the gingerbread house? (Circle one)

Cory’s Construction	Bill’s Builders
---------------------	-----------------

How important do you perceive this decision to be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						extremely

How serious do you perceive the consequences of this decision to be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						extremely

How relevant to your life do you perceive this situation to be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						extremely

How much would you like to see Cory’s Construction build the gingerbread house?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						extremely

(C) Low self-relevance, low consequences

Please read the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.

This coming December, St. Mary’s Hospital of Fulton, Illinois will be putting up a giant gingerbread house to entertain the many children that are treated in the facility. Currently, the hospital administrators are trying to choose a construction company to design and to build the gingerbread house with the help of a local bakery. They have narrowed their choices to two companies:

Cory’s Construction:

- Is a fairly large company with over 60 employees and 32 years of experience.
- Is well-known in the community and well-respected.

Bill’s Builders:

- Is a smaller, younger company that employs 15 people.
- Has been in business for only 3 years and is trying to established itself as a viable alternative to Cory’s Construction.

The company that is chosen to build the gingerbread house will not be compensated financially for their work, but will receive a great deal of publicity for this charitable deed.

Please answer the following questions as **yourself** (i.e. not someone working for the hospital).

Which company will you select to build the gingerbread house? (Circle one)

Cory’s Construction	Bill’s Builders
---------------------	-----------------

How important do you perceive this decision to be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						extremely

How serious do you perceive the consequences of this decision to be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						extremely

How relevant to your life do you perceive this situation to be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						extremely

How much would you like to see Cory’s Construction build the gingerbread house?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						extremely

Appendix B- Study 1 Written Debriefing

You have just participated in a study that looks at the differences in people's willingness to root for an underdog. Specifically, this study examines people's attitudes towards rooting for a business underdog. Past research has shown that the tendency to root for the underdog which occurs reliably in a sports setting does not generally carry over to the business world, and if it does, the effect is not as strong. The reason for this may be that the consequences associated with supporting a given business differ, while supporting a sports team always has fairly low consequences attached to it. Thus, in a high consequence situation (for example, selecting a construction company to build a bridge) we expect that people will choose the topdog business because it is more likely that they will deliver a better product. Conversely, in a low consequence situation (for example, leading a parade) people should be more willing to give the underdog a chance, because the stakes are much lower.

Because this study will be going on for the next several weeks, the researcher requests that you do not discuss its contents with other individuals, in an effort to keep the subject pool uncontaminated. However, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher at sheila.hindle@richmond.edu. Thank you for your participation!

Appendix E- Study 2 Debriefing

You have just participated in a study about rooting for the underdog. Specifically, the researcher is interested in whether you would be more likely to help a cause in the name of weak, new underdog than an old, well-established underdog. People are generally more likely to help the struggling, (financially) weak, and new underdog over a well-established and (financially) strong underdog. Often, this occurs because people feel that underdogs who have been around for some time and have money should be able to succeed without winning people's hearts. New, weak entities, on the other hand, are 'true' underdogs and their characteristics 'tug at our heart strings' and make us want to support them.

The band that you read about is fictional and was not meant to bear likeness to any band in the Richmond area or elsewhere. The CD is also a fake, and you will be asked to return it so that the researcher can use it in other sessions of this experiment. It is asked that you do not talk about this study so as to keep the subject pool uncontaminated. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Sheila Hindle at sheila.hindle@richmond.edu or her advisor, Dr. Scott Allison at sallison@richmond.edu. Thank you for your participation!

Appendix F – Figure Captions

Figure 1 – Study 1, company chosen (topdog or underdog) in situations of high and low consequences, high and low self-relevance.

Figure 2 – Study 1, mean rooting for the topdog and underdog in situations of high and low consequences, high and low self-relevance.

Figure 3 – Study 1, mean rooting against the underdog in situations of high and low consequences, high and low self-relevance.

Figure 4 - Study 1, mean sympathy for the topdog in situations of high and low consequences, high and low self-relevance.

Figure 5 – Study 1, mean identification with the topdog in situations of high and low consequences, high and low self-relevance.

Figure 6 - Study 2, amount of money pledged to a topdog or underdog band as a function of the source of money (own vs. Psi Chi's.)

Figure 7 - Study 2, rooting for 'The Citizens' as a function of type of band.

Figure 1

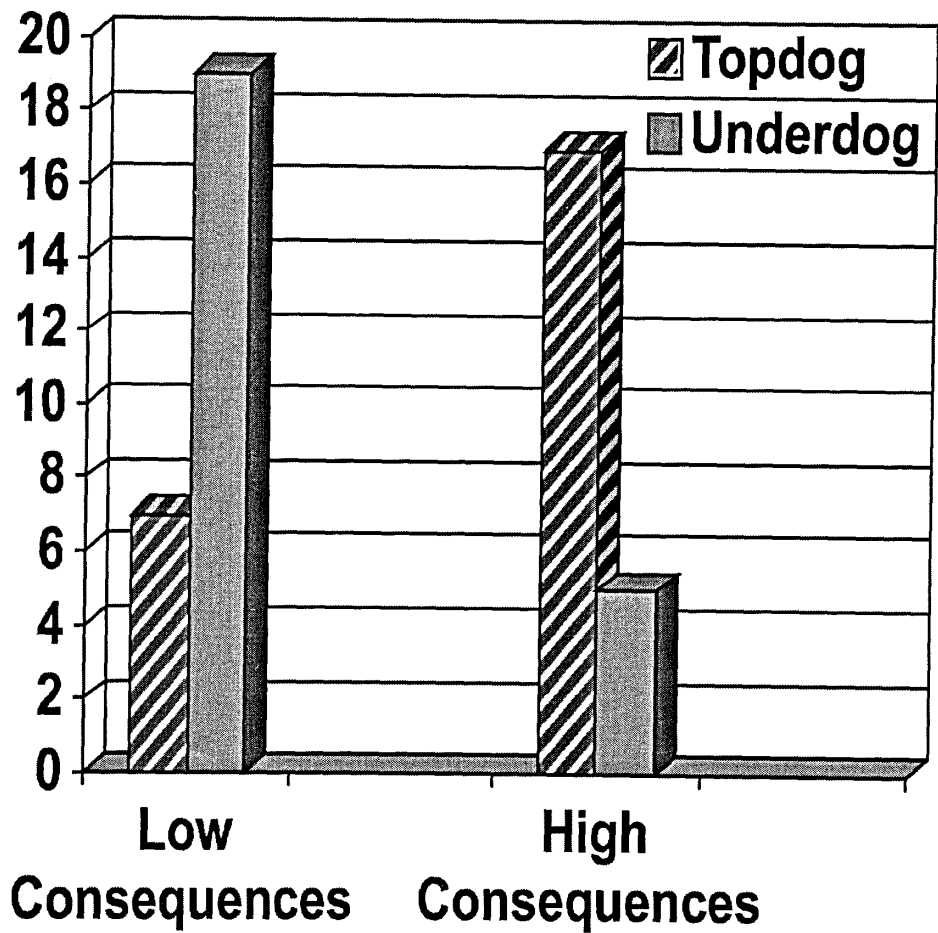


Figure 2

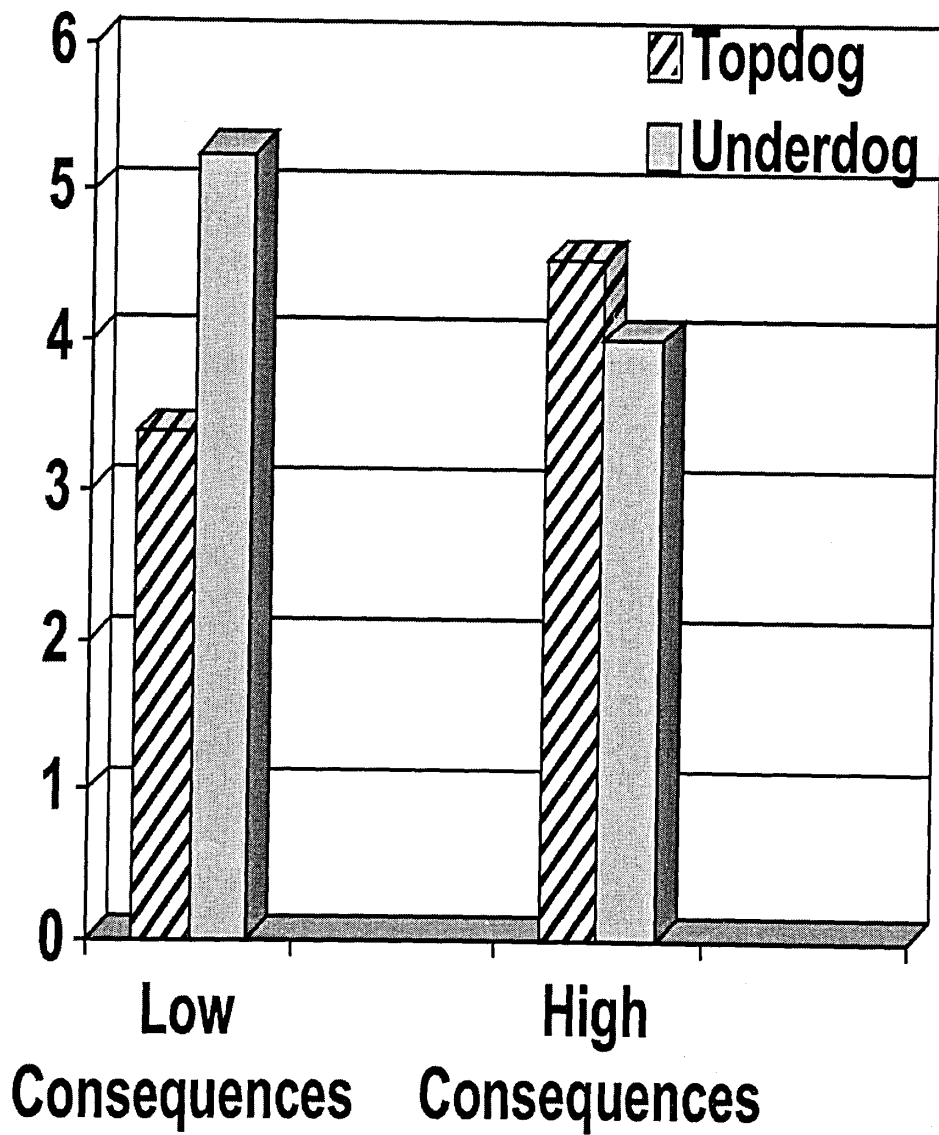


Figure 3

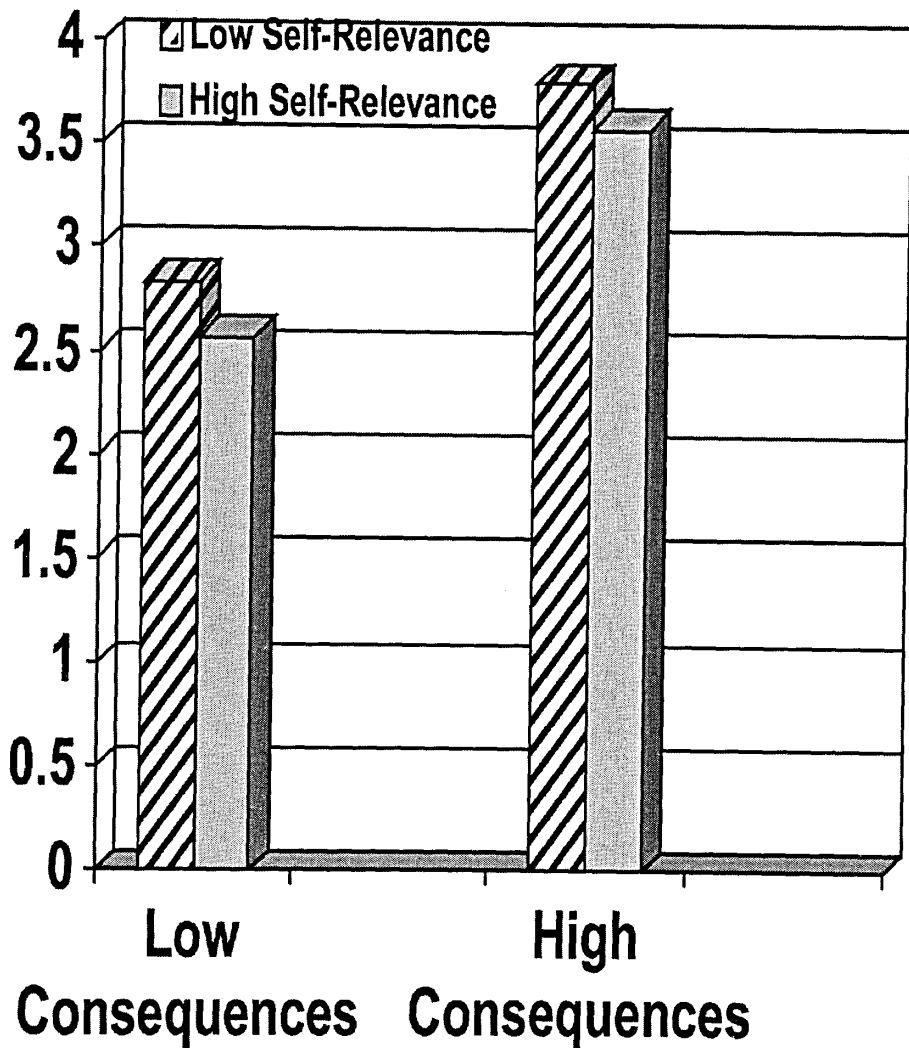


Figure 4

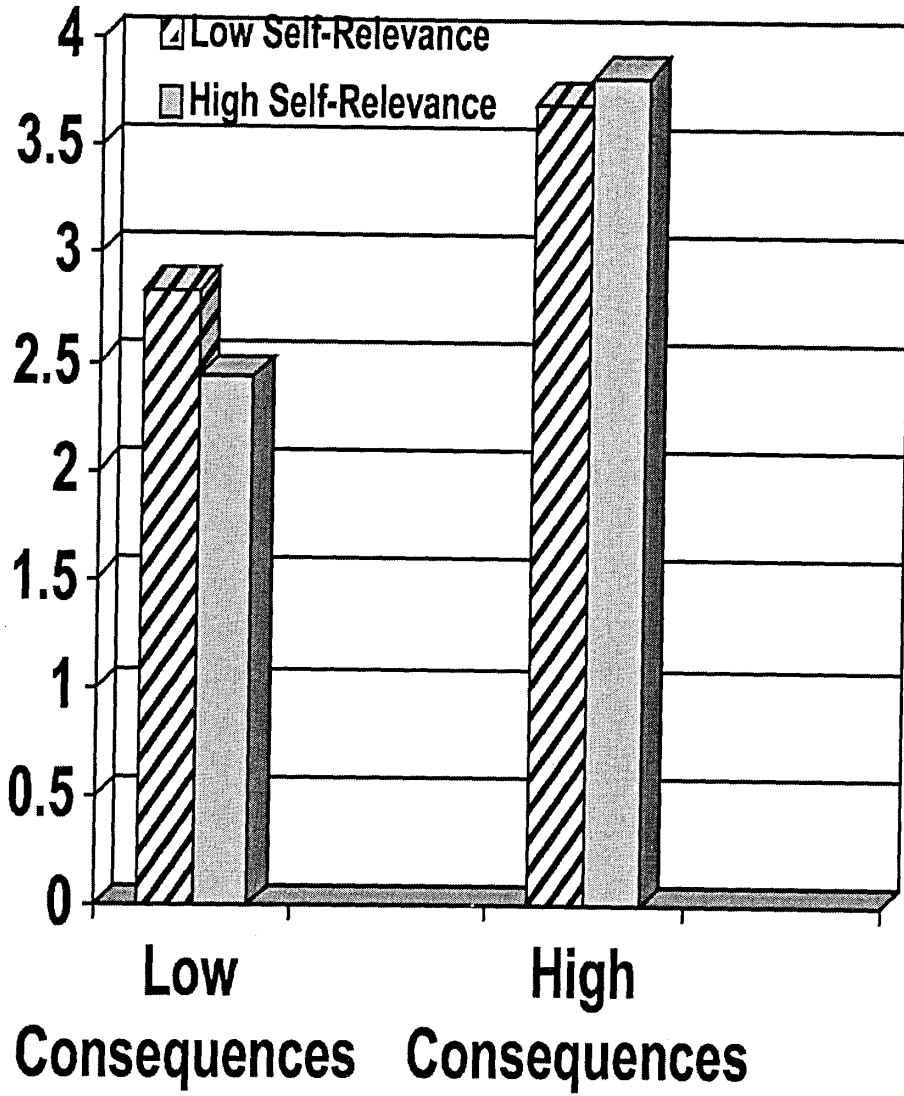


Figure 5

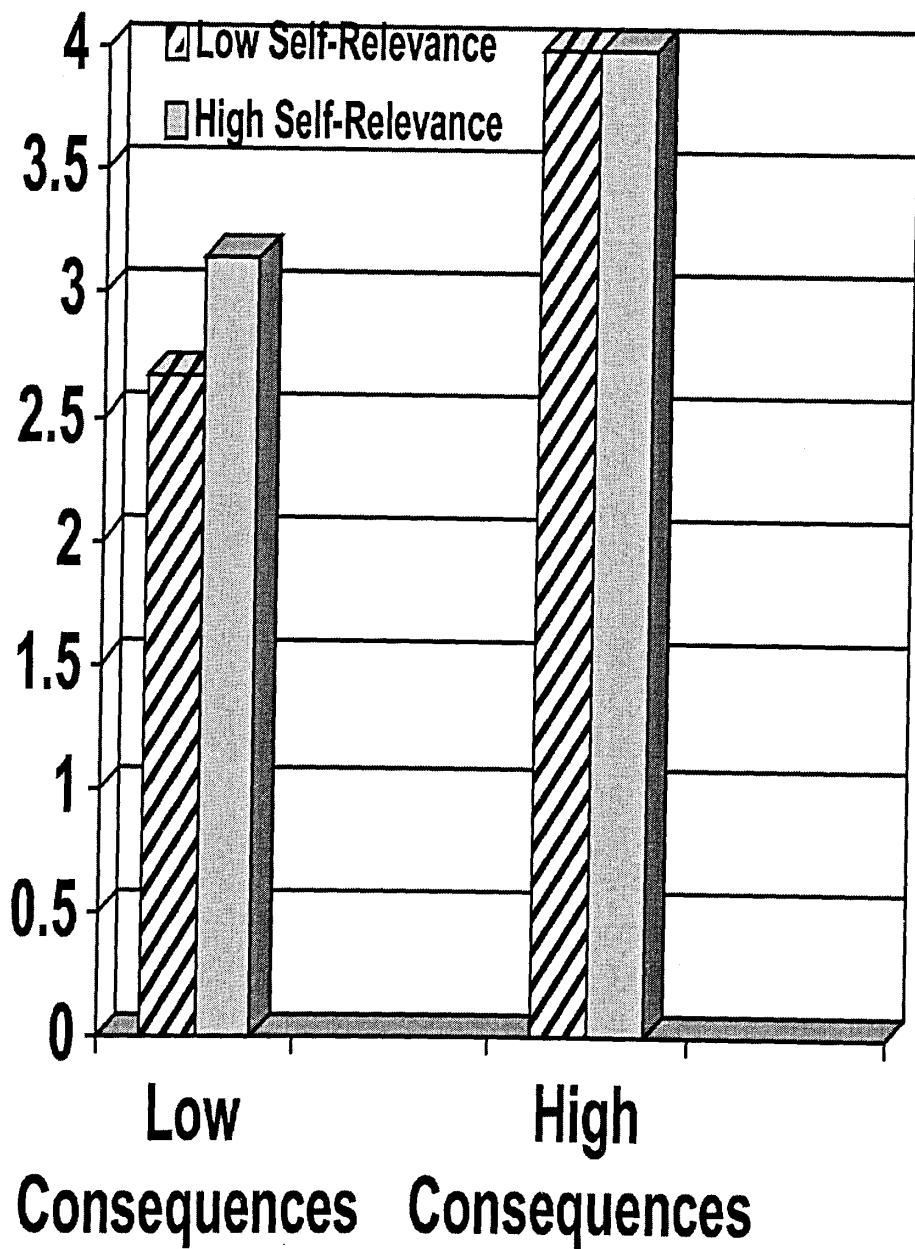


Figure 6

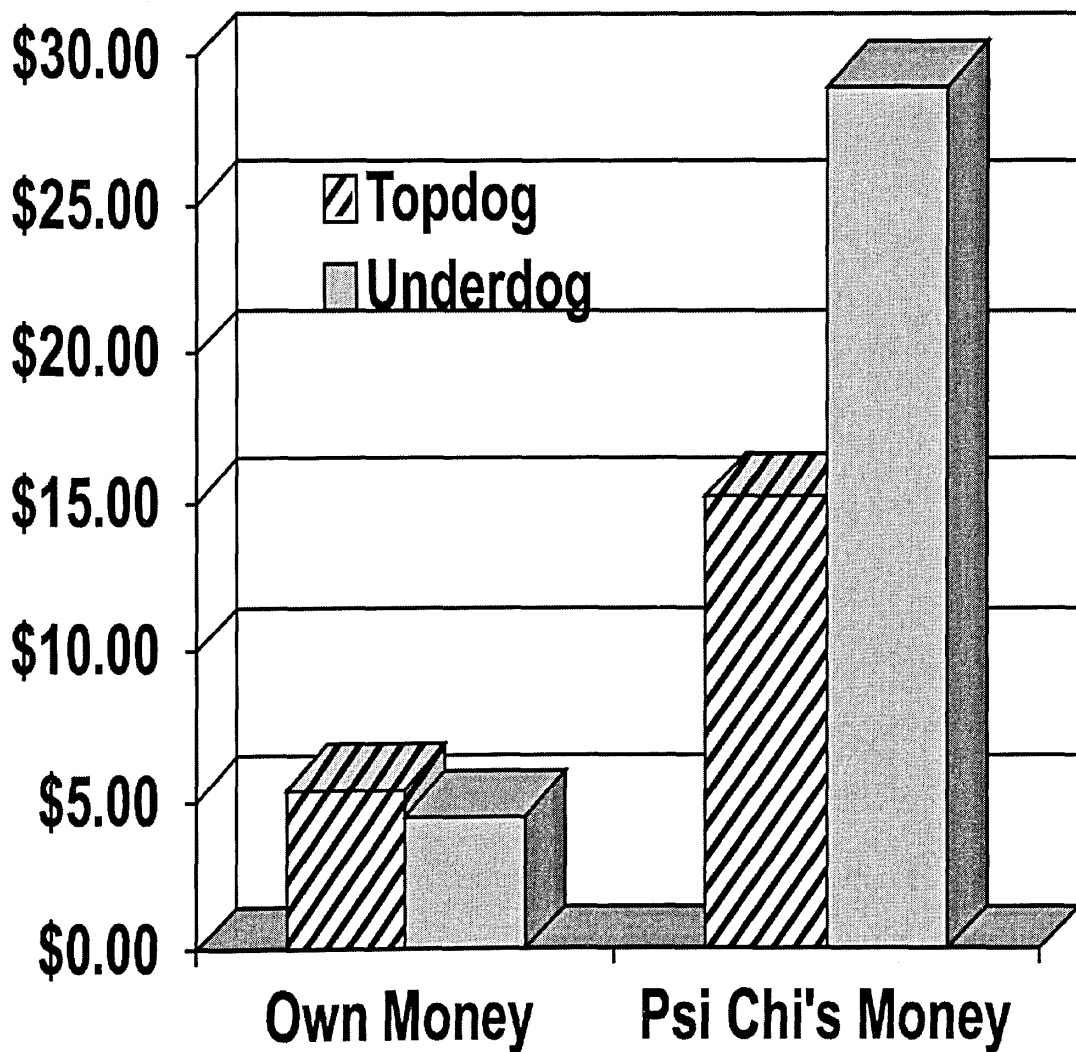
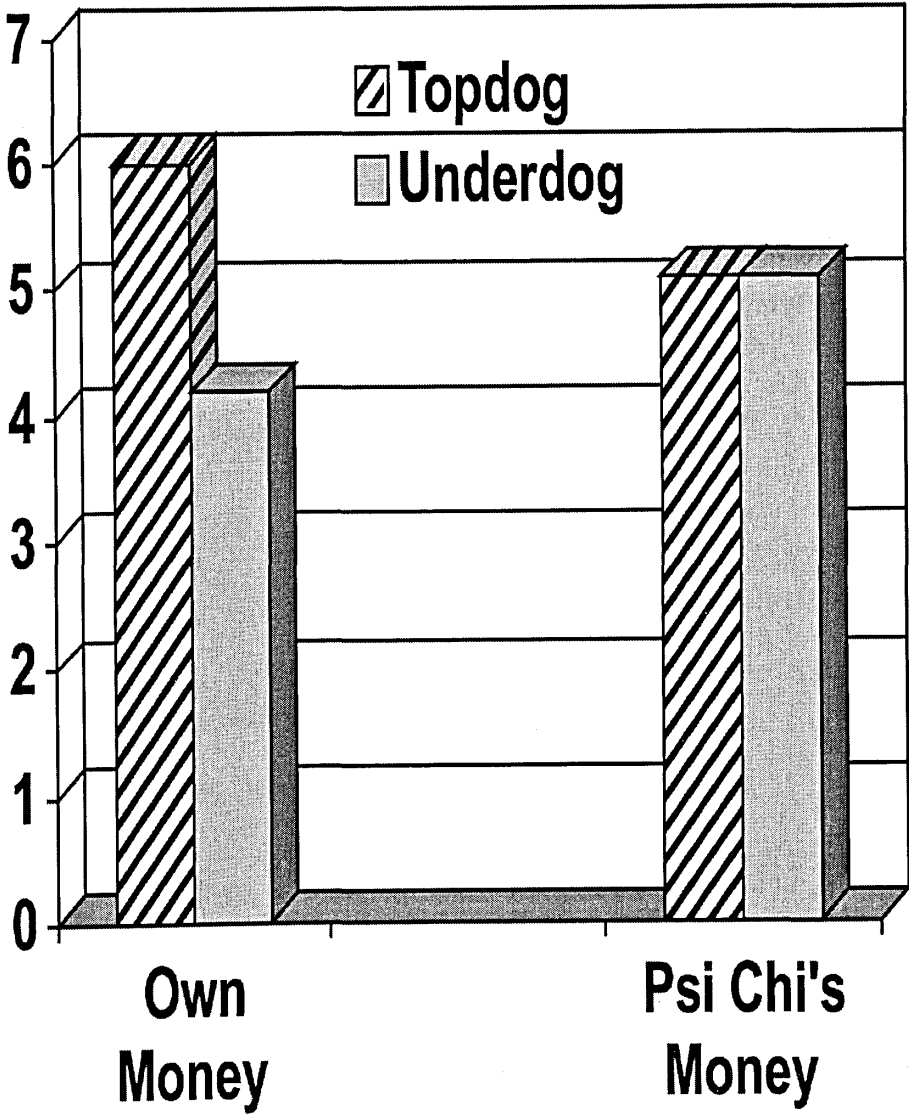


Figure 7



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University of Richmond, 8/2004 – 5/2006
 Research Assistant, 8/2004 – 5/2006
 Teaching Assistant, 8/2004 – 5/2006
Richmond Juvenile Detention Center, 9/2004 - 12/2004
 Tutor (volunteer)
Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, 1/2005 - 5/2005
 Program Facilitator (volunteer)

Academic Awards, Honors, and Grants:

Psi Chi Honor Society, Boston College, 2000-2002
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Graduate Research Grants, University of Richmond, 2004, 2005
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Papers and Publications:

Allison, S.T., Beggan, J.K., & Hindle, S.M. (2005, under review). Subverting the stereotypic African-American father-son relationship: an analysis of Star Trek Deep Space Nine.

Allison, S.T., Eylon, D., Goethals, G.R., Kim, J., Hindle, S.M., & Phillips, J.S. (2005, in progress). Abandoning the underdog when it matters most: the Wal-Mart effect.

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Allison, S.T., Beggan, J.K., Dyjak, K., & Hindle, S.M. Ronald Reagan and death positivity biases in the media. Paper presented at the American Culture Association/Popular Culture Association Annual Convention, San Diego, California, March 2005.

Allison, S.T., Kim, J., Eylon, D., Beggan, J.K., and Hindle, S.M. Media Portrayals of Double-Standards among Underdogs and Top Dogs. Paper to be presented at the American Culture Association/Popular Culture Association Annual Convention, Atlanta, Georgia, April 2006.