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**Political Attitudes Towards The Bush Administration By Ethnic And Racial Groups**

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**ABSTRACT**

This project analyzes the attitudes towards political statements according to a person's ethnic and racial groups. The statements relate to the Bush administration and some of its policies. The different responses are categorized by age, gender and location as well. It is hypothesized that Caucasians would have a more positive outlook on the administration and its policies while racial and ethnic minorities would have a less positive response to the questions. Overall, a total of 219 participants were surveyed from Minnesota State University, Mankato and from communities of southeastern Minnesota through questions asking them to indicate their political attitudes. When analyzed, a significant difference between the majority and the minority was shown in three-fifths of the questions asked. This data supports the hypothesis that the racial/ethnic majority (Caucasians) would more strongly support the Bush administration and its policies when compared to racial and ethnic minorities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Since George W. Bush was elected as President of the United States in 2000, many policies have been enacted. These policies have varying degrees of impact on American constituents. Based on the amount of impact and also “socioeconomic status, history, culture and social identity” (Lee, 1993), a person forms their own political opinion. This study will analyze how the political responses of various ethnic and racial groups differ from one another with regard to the Bush administration and its policies.

Soon after his election, Bush and his administration quickly began to make policy changes. According to Michael Moore, a very liberal and outspoken opposer of Bush (2002), Bush had a “brutally impressive” list of “accomplishments” that was completed within less than 120 days after election. These “accomplishments” are many and include a number of cuts in human service and environmental programs, nominations of certain persons whose impartiality may be questionable based upon their personal interests and the rejection of certain warfare and human rights treaties, for example (Moore, 2002). Also within this first period as president, Bush enacted the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This act holds schools responsible for expectations that all of its students must meet on specific educational standards. But this was only the beginning of many changes that would take place during President Bush’s term.

The year 2001 was an intense year to be President of the United States of America. On September 11, now commonly referred to as 9/11, the United States was attacked. At home, the Bush administration enacted the Patriot Act which increased particular powers of law enforcement and was viewed as treading on the basic civil rights and civil liberties of the citizens of the United States (“Patriot Act,” 2003). With the enactment of the Patriot Act II, the government was given the power to tap into the telephone line of any American in its continuing search for terrorists. Around the world, many nations united with the U.S. in taking measures against Osama bin-Laden, the Al-Qa’idah and Taliban networks within Afghanistan. War was declared and later victory was won in January 2002 (BBC News, 2002).

The U.S. has continued to infiltrate the Middle Eastern region with their military forces (BBC News, 2002). Their first new anti-terrorism target became the country of Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein. This relatively quick transition from the Afghan war into a war with Iraq created negative attitudes towards the Bush administration and towards the United States among other nations (BBC News, 2002). As a result of the differing opinions from other countries, the Bush administration chose to enter alone into the war with Iraq. When the Bush administration (and the United States in general) began to make these decisions, many countries were offended and isolated the U.S. internationally.

Initially, the United States entered the war based on “intelligence” declaring that Iraq maintained weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (Yoo, 2003). United Nations arms inspectors were sent in to search the country for WMD only to return empty-handed. While their search was in progress, the United States conducted its own search for Saddam Hussein and his family, bombing any location where he was suspected to be hiding. Finally Saddam was captured in December 2003. Currently there is much political debate on whether the United States can justify this war with Iraq. Although the declaration of war was based on flawed intelligence (WMD that were not located), a number of people believe that the U.S. reacted in “anticipatory self-defense” (attempting to remove the threat of a possible attack) against a country that supports terrorism,

maintained a hostile, oppressive dictator and suggested that it possessed WMD (Yoo, 2003). The United States forces have been kept in Iraq in the hopes of a stable government being established.

Bush and his administration have stirred up the media on a number of other issues besides the war. The first, racial profiling, is a consequence of the distrust of the racially diverse population of the United States. Racial profiling can be defined as “using racial or ethnic characteristics such as skin color...to determine who is suspicious enough to warrant law enforcement attention” (Harris, 2003). In June of 2003, the Bush administration banned this procedure by issuing a policy guideline that prohibits the use of race in making common and routine law enforcement decisions (unless when used to describe a known suspect) and also states that race should not be used to predict personal behavior. But the guideline is seen to have a number of faults; the guideline is not a law, does not contain methods of enforcement so as to ensure that it is being upheld, only applies to federal agencies and not to those at the state and local levels and lastly contains immense exceptions for national security and immigration purposes (a nearly limitless loophole since 9/11).

A second issue in the spotlight has been the issue of same-sex marriages. In June of 2003, the Supreme Court overturned a Texas ban on sodomy making gay sex no longer a crime (Woellert, 2003). Immediately thereafter, the definitions of “marriage” and “spouse” were added to the United States Constitution; according to United States Code Service (1 USCS § 7, 2003), ““marriage” means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word “spouse” refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife” (United States Code Service, 2003). Since this ruling, the courts have been busy attempting to make a decision on whether it is discrimination to ban same-sex marriages or whether it is perfectly legal to do so. As of yet, there is no federal restriction on same-sex marriages and state governments are allowed to enforce their own beliefs within their jurisdiction (as in California’s case). But because of the strong opposition expressed by the President and many U.S. citizens, it may not be much longer before the federal government takes a stand on same-sex marriages.

As stated at the beginning, constituents have a number of factors that influence their political opinions, among these being “socioeconomic status, history, culture and social identity” according to Lee (1993), but also including but not limited to “gender, race and cultural values” according to Brownstein (2003) of the *Los Angeles Times*. Since the incident of 9/11, a turning point has occurred in party identification; an increase was seen in Republican identification while a decline occurred in Democratic identification (currently 30% for Democrats and 32% for Republicans) (PEW, 2003). According to the PEW Research Center for the People & the Press (2003), Americans in general follow a number of trends; older Americans, women and those who are not married are generally more Democratic. When these statistics are broken down by racial characteristics, differences between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics can be seen. Whites are more commonly Republican in party affiliation (35% vs. 27%). Blacks are very solidly Democratic; 64% describing themselves as Democrats and only 7% as Republicans. Similar to the American trends, older Blacks and Black women are more Democratic. Hispanics and Latinos still remain primarily a Democratic constituency, but since 9/11 the Democrats have lost some of their lead against the Republicans (36% vs. 22%). Party identification demonstrates that differences in personal attitudes based on age, gender and race for example, play a significant role in voting trends.

Another factor that may explain the differing political responses of various ethnic and racial groups can be found in a previous study conducted concerning the Gulf War. In this study, Lee (1993) found that a large percentage of non-majority American students deviated from the mainstream American culture by their more negative attitudes towards the elder President Bush and their more hopeful look for a peaceful end to the Gulf War. Their attitudes may be the result of the

suffering that non-majority (minority) populations endured before, during and after wartime. During the war, minorities were killed at higher rates than majorities. Following the war, minorities had to continue to “experience much poverty, discrimination, prejudice, and other social injustice” (Lee, 1993). This is one piece of information among many that indicates a possible difference among ethnic groups and races in political responses.

Based on the above information, it is predicted that Caucasians would have a more positive outlook on the administration and its policies while racial and ethnic minorities would be seen to have a less positive response when surveyed.

## **METHODS**

### **Setting**

This study took place in the southern Minnesota area. The researchers obtained participation from two primary areas; on-campus at the Minnesota State University, Mankato and off-campus. On-campus locations primarily included the introduction courses within the Ethnic Studies Department. Off-campus locations were more varied including participants from the St. Paul/Minneapolis area, the Owatonna area (primarily within Steele County Human Services) and various other locations. These locations were selected because of the ease of which people could be surveyed and because of the various views that could be obtained among races, ages, gender and locations.

### **Participants**

The participants of the survey were 219 single adults (119 females and 100 males between the ages of 18 and 74, average age of 25.24 years). The on-campus participants ( $n = 167$ ) were determined by their enrollment in particular Department of Ethnic Studies introduction courses and their willingness to take part. The off-campus participants ( $n = 52$ ) were determined by their willingness to take a few minutes to complete a survey when asked. Of the participants, 169 identified themselves as the White majority while the remaining 50 identified themselves as non-Whites or minorities (20 Asians, 15 Blacks, 3 Latinos or Hispanics, 5 Arabs and 7 Other).

### **Materials**

The survey statements were obtained and adapted from the survey conducted by Lee (1993) and from information obtained from *Stupid White Men* (Moore, 2002). There were fifteen statements that assessed the attitudes of the participants on a five-point scale with a neutral center point. The participants were then asked to answer four questions based on personal information. To answer these questions they were asked to indicate their sex (by circling “female” or “male”) and to write down their age, race and ethnicity. Appendix B provides an example of the Informed Consent while Appendix C provides an example of the survey.

### **Design and Procedure**

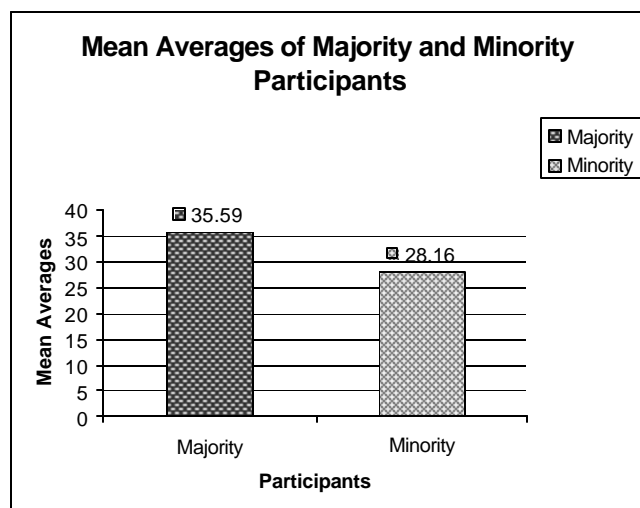
Surveying of participants took place from December 26, 2003 to February 20, 2004. All participants were chosen randomly by the researchers. Off-campus participants were randomly asked if they would be willing to take part in the research project. Upon their agreement, they were asked to read, date and sign the informed consent and were given personal space to complete the survey privately. Upon completion, off-campus participants were thanked for their participation

and allowed to ask any questions. Their survey was taken and immediately placed into an envelop to maintain the confidentiality of the participant.

Obtaining participants from on-campus was a slightly different procedure. First, the researchers contacted professors of the Ethnic Studies Department to gain their permission to survey their classes. Once permission was obtained, convenient times were set up with the researchers and the professors. When researchers entered the classroom, they first introduced themselves and gave a brief description of the project. Following this, they asked for the students' voluntary participation and when gained, had them sign and date the informed consent. Students were given time in class to complete the survey and when finished returned it to the researcher to place in an envelop.

A total of 247 participants completed the survey, but twenty-eight had to be excluded from the sample. In a large number of these cases, the participant chose not to answer one or more questions (often times those requesting personal information). In others, the participant chose to indicate an answer that was not allowed (i.e. to circle the space between 3 and 4). The final sample size was 219 participants.

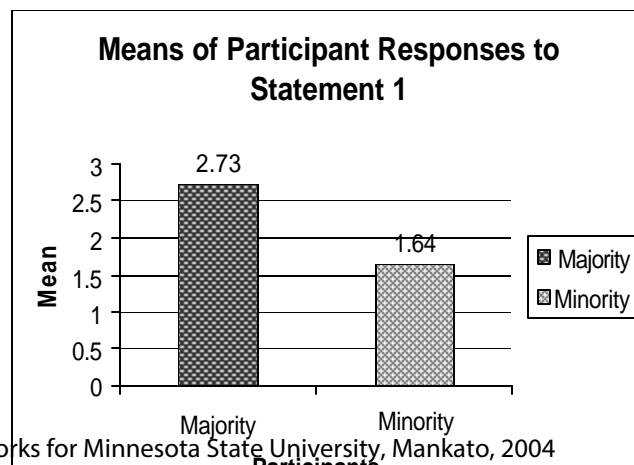
## RESULTS



In this study, each statement is scaled so that higher numbers indicated a more positive response towards the Bush administration and its policies. Table 1 displays the mean and the standard deviation for both the racial and ethnic majority and the racial and ethnic minority on each of the fifteen statements (Appendix A). The results indicate that the racial/ethnic majority (Caucasians) responded more positively towards the administration and the policies that it has created (Figure 1).

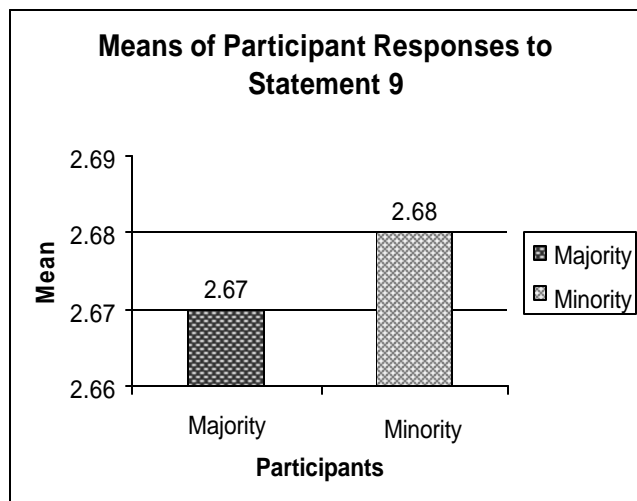
**Figure 1.** The mean of racial and ethnic majorities and minorities concerning the overall results.

There were a number of statements that exhibited a significant difference between the majority and minority participants. Of the fifteen statements, significant difference was demonstrated in nine of the statements (Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11 & 15). On each of these statements, the majority participants responded more positively while



the minority participants responded more negatively. Concerning the statement “I supported the war on Iraq prior to the declaration of war made by the president,” there was shown the greatest difference of means between the two participant groups with the majority group ( $M = 2.73$ ) responding more positively than the minority group ( $M = 1.64$ ) (Figure 2). Even though this demonstrated the most difference in means, observe the fact that the majority group is only responding 0.23 more positively than the exact midpoint of 2.5.

**Figure 2.** *The means of participant responses concerning the statement “I supported the war on Iraq prior to the declaration of war made by the president.”*



Of all of the statements, there was only one in which the minority group responded very slightly more positive than the majority group. To the statement “Has legally defined marriage only as a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife,” the minority group ( $M = 2.68$ ) responded only one-hundredth of a point higher than the majority group ( $M = 2.67$ ). Although the groups are in very close agreement on this statement, it was interesting to note that this was the only statement in which the minority was slightly more in support (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** *The means of participant responses to the statement “Has legally defined marriage only as a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.”*

When the statements were analyzed by gender, an overall difference between men and women was not found. Primarily men ( $n = 100$ ) answered more positively than the women ( $n = 119$ ) except for on three of the statements (Statements 4, 7 & 11). When each of the answers was analyzed on its own, the statement “Has cut \$39 million from federal spending on libraries,” showed significant difference between the two groups where women ( $M = 1.89$ ) disagreed with this statement more than men ( $M = 2.21$ ). This was the only statement that demonstrated significant difference between the genders.

Similarly, only one statement showed significant difference between those from the ages 18-24 (ages of traditional students,  $n = 166$ ) and those 25 or older (ages of non-traditional students,  $n = 53$ ). Responses to the statement, “Has cut funding for the Girls and Boys Clubs of America programs in public housing by \$60 million,” showed significant difference where participants 25+ ( $M = 2.34$ ) responded more positively than the younger participants ( $M = 2.00$ ). Those from the ages 18-25 answered more positively to only five of the fifteen responses compared to the older participants (Statements 4, 10, 11, 13 & 14).

Lastly, when the statements were analyzed by location of the participant, one statement demonstrated significant difference between on-campus participants ( $n = 166$ ) and off-campus participants ( $n = 52$ ). To the statement, "Has legally defined marriage only as a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife," on-campus participants responded more negatively ( $M = 2.51$ ) than off-campus participants ( $M = 3.19$ ). On-campus participants responded more positively than off-campus participants on only four of the fifteen statements (Statements 10, 11, 14 & 15).

Overall the results of the survey indicated that the ethnic and racial majority was more strongly in favor of the Bush administration and its policies than ethnic and racial minorities. To a lesser extent, it was also shown that there was no significant difference overall between males and females, 18-24 year olds and those 25+ years old and on-campus and off-campus participants within this study.

## **DISCUSSION**

Overall, the data supported the hypothesis that the racial and ethnic majority (Caucasians) would have a more positive response towards the Bush administration and its policies than racial and ethnic minorities. These results are in agreement with the study conducted by Lee (1993) where it was found that the attitudes of minority students differed from those of non-minority students concerning the Gulf War and President Bush.

There are a number of possible explanations for why the majority responded more positively than the minority groups to the statements of the survey. The bulk of President Bush's term has involved war in the Middle East. As stated previously in the literature review, minorities are killed at higher rates than those from majorities during wartime (Lee, 1993). Also according to Lee (1993), following the war, minorities continue to face social injustice at home (Lee, 1993). The President and his administration have the power to make policies intended to assist in remedying some of the difficulties in life of minorities, but many hardships continue to exist for racial and ethnic minorities.

Another explanation may be that racial and ethnic minorities believe that the majority justifies its "military and aggressive behavior" (Lee, 1993). As shown in Statements 1-3, racial and ethnic majorities and minorities differed quite significantly in their view of war with Iraq. The Bush administration appears very willing to go to war over human rights abuses abroad, but allows particular abuses to continue within the United States. Also, by the constant fighting and stationing of troops overseas, the costs of the war are continuously rising and programs are being cut or financed very little in order to support the cost of this war. Minorities may be seeing cuts in programs that are valuable to their livelihood. This may be an additional reason why minorities responded more negatively towards the Bush administration and its policies than majorities.

## **LIMITATIONS**

There were a number of limitations to the study. The first dealt with the format of the survey. The survey was formatted so that higher numbers always indicated a more positive response towards the Bush administration possibly influencing the participants to always answer in



a particular fashion whether positive or negative. Also the word “cut” has a negative connotation that may also have influenced the participants’ responses; a synonym for this word may have made the statements more neutral and not as biased. Lastly, there were issues with the open-ended answering of the participants’ race and ethnicity. A number of the participants would answer with either one or the other, leaving the researcher to make the generalization that the description given was self-explanatory for both (i.e. “Black” also means “African” and vice versa). There were also difficulties with those who answered that they were of two racial backgrounds (i.e. Black and White) or of a country that was difficult to fit into a particular ethnicity (i.e. East Indian). These difficulties just mentioned were placed into an “Other” category of the racial and ethnic minorities.

Also the locations of where data was gathered may have been biased to an extent. Off-campus surveys were completed primarily at Steele County Human Services while on-campus surveys were almost entirely taken in introductory courses of the Ethnic Studies Department. Because of these locations, it could be assumed that the participants would respond more negatively to the Bush administration and its policies due to the obvious interest in minority affairs. But regardless of this assumption, significant differences were still found between the majority participants and minority participants. This issue could be resolved by more random selection of respondents

Because of the limitations of this project, overgeneralization of these results should be avoided. Also, it is felt by the researchers that further studies are needed to determine more specifically what influences the political attitudes of Caucasians and racial and ethnic minorities in the South Central Minnesota area.

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## APPENDIX A

**Table 1.**

Responses of Racial and Ethnic Minorities Towards the Bush Administration and its Policies

<u>Statement</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Majority Participants</u>		<u>Minority Participants</u>	
	<u>M</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>n</u>
Statement 1	2.73	169	1.64	50
Statement 2	2.56	169	1.64	50
Statement 3	2.75	169	1.68	50
Statement 4	2.39	169	1.52	50
Statement 5	2.16	169	1.62	50
Statement 6	1.89	169	1.44	50
Statement 7	3.16	169	2.88	50
Statement 8	2.17	169	1.80	50
Statement 9	2.67	169	2.68	50
Statement 10	1.62	169	1.44	50
Statement 11	2.04	169	1.52	50
Statement 12	1.76	169	1.52	50

<sup>1</sup> Statement 1: I supported the war on Iraq prior to the declaration of war made by the president.

Statement 2: I still support the war on Iraq after the United States has already won.

Statement 3: I think that what the Bush administration has done in Iraq has been very successful.

Statement 4: I believe the Bush administration has brought good changes to the U.S. economy.

Statement 5: Has cut \$39 million from federal spending on libraries.

Statement 6: Has cut \$200 million from the Childcare and Development grant (a program that provides child care to low income families).

Statement 7: Has implemented the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that will hold schools responsible for expectations that their students must meet on specific standards.

Statement 8: Has cut funding for the Girls and Boys Clubs of America programs in public housing by \$60 million.

Statement 9: Has legally defined marriage only as a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.

Statement 10: Has cut nearly \$16 million from programs dealing with child abuse and neglect.

Statement 11: Has by the Patriot Act II, declared that the government can tap into any American's telephone line without warning.

Statement 12: Has reduced the funding for the Community Access Program by 86% ( a program that coordinates care for people without health insurance among public hospitals, clinics and other healthcare providers).

Statement 13: Has proposed that Medicare prescription drug coverage be provided only to those seniors who switch from Medicare to private managed healthcare plans.

Statement 14: Has banned the use of racial profiling within federal agencies.

Statement 15: Has cut \$700 million in funds for public housing repairs.

<sup>2</sup> A higher score means a stronger agreement towards the Bush administration and its policies.

Statement 13	1.84	169	1.74	50
Statement 14	3.60	169	3.36	50
Statement 15	2.25	169	1.68	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>35.59</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>28.16</b>	<b>50</b>

## APPENDIX B

This survey is being conducted by three students from the Ethnic Studies Department to be used for a presentation at the Undergraduate Research Conference in April 2004. By participating in this survey, there will be no harm done to you as a participant and you have the choice to quit the survey at any time for any reason. If you desire to learn the results of the survey, contact the Chair of the Ethnic Studies Department, Dr. Lee at 389-6318. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

**By signing and dating this form, I am giving my written consent to allow the information that I provide to be used in this project.**

## APPENDIX C

**Please indicate the degree that you agree with these statements**

	No	Neutral			Yes
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I supported the war on Iraq prior to the declaration of war made by the president.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I still support the war on Iraq after the United States has already won.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I think that what the Bush administration has done in Iraq has been very successful.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I believe the Bush administration has brought good changes to the U.S. economy.	1	2	3	4	5

**Here are some of the policies that the Bush administration has made or proposes to put into action in the future.**

**Please indicate the degree of whether you support or do not support.**

	Not support		Neutral		Support
	1	2	3	4	5
5. Has cut \$39 million from federal spending on libraries.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Has cut \$200 million from the Childcare and Development grant (a program that provides child care to low income families).	1	2	3	4	5
7. Has implemented the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that will hold schools responsible for expectations that their students must meet on specific standards.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Has cut funding for the Girls and Boys Clubs of America programs in public housing by \$60 million.	1	2	3	4	5

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Has legally defined marriage only as a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Has cut nearly \$16 million from programs dealing with child abuse and neglect.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. By the Patriot Act II has, declared that the government can tap into any American's telephone line without warning.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Has reduced the funding for the Community Access Program by 86% (a program that coordinates care for people without health insurance among public hospitals, clinics and other healthcare providers). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Has proposed that Medicare prescription drug coverage be provided only to those seniors who switch from Medicare to private managed healthcare plans.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Has banned the use of racial profiling within federal agencies.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Has cut \$700 million in funds for public housing repairs.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Please answer the following personal information about yourself.**

Sex:      Female      Male

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Race & Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION.**

**Authors Biographies:**

**Amber Elzen** will graduate from Minnesota State University, Mankato in 2005 with Bachelor's Degrees in both Ethnic Studies and Spanish. Her research interests include the various political attitudes of ethnicities and races, the discrimination of Hispanics and Latinos by California's government policies and immigration agencies.

**Mai Inoue** completed an Associate Degree at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington and obtained a Bachelor's Degree in both Ethnic Studies and Scandinavian Studies from Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is currently enrolling at a graduate school in Sweden to study more about international relations and political issues. Her studies focus on the international community, human services and social issues world-wide.

**Julianna Koomen** earned her Bachelor's Degree in Ethnic Studies from Minnesota State University, Mankato in 2004. Her research interests include local Hispanic and Latino outreach groups that support the minority population in the surrounding area and the varying attitudes of International students and those of the United States when questioned about gays, lesbians, bisexuals and Tran gendered lifestyles (GLBT).

**Faculty Mentor Biography:**

**Dr. Yueh-Ting Lee** received his BA in English Language and American Literature from Southern University (Zhong Nan Da Xue in Changsha, Hunan) in China in 1984 and MS in the Department of Psychology from Beijing Normal University (Bei Shi Da) in 1986. In 1991, he received his

Ph.D. in Personality and Social Psychology in the Department of Psychology at State University of New York at Stony Brook. He had his post-doctoral training at University of Pennsylvania in the early 1990s. Currently, he is a chairperson and full professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Both cross-culturally and experimentally, he has been doing much scholarly/scientific research on stereotypes and stereotyping, person perception, social judgment, social justice and identity, intergroup and interpersonal conflict. Ancient civilizations and modern globalization kindle his interest in paleo-psychology and future human relations. He has authored or co-authored 60 scientific articles in referred journals and also has published six scholarly books.