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The psychological effects of cultural myths: Manipulating beliefs about the American old west

Morganstern, Donna Rae, Ph.D.

The University of Arizona, 1987
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CULTURAL MYTHS:
MANIPULATING BELIEFS ABOUT THE
AMERICAN OLD WEST

by

Donna Morganstern

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1987
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read
the dissertation prepared by Donna R. Morganstern
entitled The Psychological Effects of Cultural Myths: Manipulating Beliefs
about the American Old West

and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement
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SIGNED: Donna Lee Morgenstern
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I don't remember exactly when or where my interest in theme parks first began. I thought it was one night in an RV park near Orlando, Florida. While waiting to make a telephone call, I overheard a middle-aged couple talking to their grandchildren back home. They recounted their adventures at Disney World, Sea World, Circus World, etc.; I was struck by their totally "themed" vacation. However, later I came across a series of magazine articles about the Disney parks, which I had packed away long before that night near Orlando. They led me to believe my interest in theme parks had begun, if subconsciously, long before.

With this in mind, I would like to acknowledge George Rand, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, UCLA, who taught me to "observe what people were doing and then observe what they were really doing." Although we would probably disagree on the effects of theme parks and how to study them, I doubt I would have gotten to this point without his influence.

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list them alphabetically, and without distinctions. Each, personally and professionally contributed uniquely to this project from their diverse philosophical and theoretical perspectives, to help me turn an unorthodox topic into a somewhat respectable psychological experiment.

In addition, my thanks to Joan Leiss, Old Tucson Corporation, without whose cooperation this project would have been impossible; Laurie Bienstock, currently at San Francisco State University, for her research assistance on this project, as well as numerous others; Dan Levi, California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo; Karen Moddy, who assisted with editing, and Joe Stevens and George Knight.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore how theme parks influence visitors' beliefs about the past and the emotional and attitudinal effects of such beliefs. It was based on the theory that theme parks in portraying an ideal past communicate cultural myths that have psychological impact and that faith in those myths influence current emotions and attitudes.

The experiment took place at Old Tucson, an old west theme park and movie location. The independent variables were designed to manipulate subjects' beliefs about what was true in the actual old west, as well as their motivation to reaffirm old west myths. Before entering Old Tucson, subjects were given either "no cue" or a "famous movie location cue." Earlier findings indicated "no cue" allowed reaffirmation of old west myths, while the "movie location cue" caused decreased mythic beliefs. Subjects also received either a culture boost or threat before entry, in the form of a trivia quiz. The boost was intended to leave subjects unmotivated to reaffirm old west myths; the threat was intended to motivate them to seek myth-affirmation at Old Tucson.

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Upon exit, subjects were surveyed about personal mood, the old west, Old Tucson, and social attitudes and beliefs. No-cue (allowed affirmation), culture-threat (motivation) subjects expressed significantly greater belief in the myth of the old west than their movie-cue (prevented affirmation), culture-threat (motivation) counterparts. Subjects who expressed great belief in the old west had significantly higher optimism about the future than those with lower beliefs.

Primary dependent measures included mood (anxiety, depression, hostility, positive affect, and sensation seeking) enjoyment of Old Tucson and desire to return dogmatism, authoritarianism, alienation, attitudes toward technology, death, politics and the environment. Enjoyment of Old Tucson, desire to return, dogmatism, and optimism were positively correlated with strength of old west beliefs among subjects motivated, and able, to reaffirm them.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

History is frequently used in current religious, educational and political contexts to instill and justify cultural beliefs, values, and customs (Susman, 1984). The most salient image of the American past comes from the old west, which continues to foster values (e.g., bravery) and role models. Will Rogers, John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, among others, achieved status by portraying western heroes.

Politicians often invoke the old west spirit to justify policy or bolster national pride (Susman, 1984), such as Reagan's use of Clint Eastwood's line "Go ahead--make my day," and the argument that "the west wasn't won with a registered gun." After colon surgery, Reagan was reported to be reading a Louis L'Amour novel and "chomping at the bit" to go home.

The Myth of the Old West

Wright (1974) argues against Levi-Strauss (e.g., primitive cultures have myths where modern cultures have history and science), and views westerns as narratives for
social action, with the heroism and symbolism of traditional myths.

Resolving the debate over whether old west tales are comparable to primitive cultures' myths is neither within the scope of, nor theoretically necessary to, this research.

Westerns (and their heroes and lessons) have always reflected the current sociological, economic and political trends in American society (Calder, 1974; French, 1972; Wright, 1975). To this extent, we have used the old west to proscribe a valuable and righteous life in the present, and provide inspiration for the future.

The 1920s-1930s attempt to renounce the pioneer spirit, which was considered too ignorant, brutal, and therefore "useless" for modern times, rendered it an effort to manipulate the past in order to influence the present (Susman, 1984).

Old west myths are basically variations of the hero myth, although the hero's qualities and actions change depending on his relationship to society. According to Wright (1975), westerns have undergone four major evolutionary stages. First, the "classical" hero began outside society, but ended up joining because of his strength and society's weakness. Prototypically, a lone
stranger rode into a troubled town and cleaned it up, "winning the respect of the townsfolk and the love of the schoolmarm" (Wright, 1975).

The "vengeance" plot's hero begin inside society, but ended up leaving because society was weak. The "transition" western also began with the hero within society at the start, but outside by the end. However, this society was strong; the hero did not fight the villains on society's behalf, but rather fought the villainous society. And finally, the "professional" western hero, once again outside a weak society and needed to fight the villains. However, both hero and villain were professional fighters; their fight itself was important, not its social implications. The professional hero defended society for money or love of fighting, not commitment to law and justice.

The western myth could be fulfilled in the open country or the bustling town. According to Calder (1974), the town always had certain distinctive features:

... a dusty main street, false-fronted buildings with the saloon and the general store in prominent position, hitching rails, a livery stable. In the southwest the buildings are of adobe, with low, dark openings and there is almost certainly a church. On the screen there are a few decorative Mexicans, dozing with hats pulled over their eyes, women making tortillas or suckling babies...
Towns ... appear to be no more than random communities with no obvious use other than to provide the drifting cowboy with a drink, a woman and a fresh horse. The Hollywood-built main street appears repeatedly with no sense of the town's origin, its growth or its function. Sometimes there is a railroad coming through, or a stagecoach once a week, a bank to be robbed, but no solid reason for the existence of these (p. 63).

The Psychological Importance of Myths

Both Sebastian de Grazia (1948) and Ernest Becker (1962, 1973, 1975) cite psychoanalytical theory to explain how maintaining faith in, and a sense of belonging within, the culture protects us from anxiety caused by inability to control the environment, the future and our own mortality. As individuals, humans are powerless in the face of devastating social and physical events. Culture's cohesive world view, norms, values, and social mechanisms imbue life and death with meaning (e.g., heroism), and buffer the anxiety this powerlessness engenders. Thus, maintaining belief in the culture's world view, and self-value within that culture (e.g., self-esteem), are psychologically important (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986).

To function as an anxiety buffer, the culture's explanatory system must be comprehensive and enduring. Our cultural world view and the social life it fosters must be flawless; another culture's existence proves menacing.
Often we scorn the strange customs of other lands to defend ourselves against the awareness that our own ways may be arbitrary or contrived.

According to Ernest Becker (1962), the only way to psychologically deny death is to make it meaningful, by adhering to the culture's rituals and values, and identifying with its heroes, present or past. In fact, he uses the western hero as an example:

In Western films the self must above all be silent and self-sufficient, but capable of exploding into brutal murder while maintaining a disarming smile. The Western hero, in fact, provides the best proof that sustaining a convincing self is the basis for enhancing cultural meaning. With nothing but penetrating eyes, charged silence, and an IQ of 80, why does this character thrill audiences to the core? The Western hero conveys little more--but nothing less--than unshakable conviction that underneath it all there is genuine meaning in man's action... (p. 110).

When the culture's psychological protection system is threatened, reaffirming belief in an important cultural drama of the past, such as the old west, helps bolster faith and thereby buffer anxiety. Extrapolating from Ernest Becker, the individual should be most vulnerable to anxiety or alienation when unable to maintain, or reaffirm, faith in neither the culture's present or past simultaneously.

Investigating the psychological effects of beliefs about the old west is timely... The western, seemingly
eulogized by Blazing Saddles, has made a comeback: new westerns have been produced and old ones are on TV again. Our President is intimately connected with this revival, by virtue of his public appreciation of the old west and his roles in western films.

Importance of the Past

Most societies emphasize their pasts, ritualizing and embellishing minor events. History changes, depending on current cultural and personal missions in life (Becker, C., 1935; Susman, 1974), or to forge a symbolic relationship to the past and future in order to deal with death (Lifton, 1979). Over time, key players in cultural dramas take on the characteristics of mythic heroes (e.g., the Alamo).

Since . . . problems are frequently solved by reference to the way past experience dealt with similar problems, the control over the interpretation of the nature of the past becomes a burning cultural issue. . . . Not only is it important that we have the "right" view of the past, the proper attitudes can help us to solve our problems and change the course . . . of history itself. This is why Van Wyck Brooks' call in 1918 for a "usable past" made sense to American intellectuals all through the period under discussion, no matter how they might agree or disagree about which view of the past was most especially useful (Susman, 1974, pp. 18-19).

According to Sebastian de Grazia (1948), when the present and future are painful we seek new ideologies and
often, "like the man with a toothache who believed the time when he had no toothache his happiest" (p. 171), we look back to a golden age. Mass movements and cults are often based on mythologized view of the past, attractive to people who have lost faith in the culture.

Discussions of the psychological effect of idealized views of history often attempt to explain events in Nazi Germany (Becker, 1973, 1975; de Grazia, 1948; Fromm, 1963; Lifton, 1979). Sebastian de Grazia discusses how Germany glorified its past by returning to traditional architecture and entertainments: theater, radio and film concentrated on idealized stories set in 1820's-1830's Vienna; 19th century composers enjoyed revival, while modern compositions were outlawed; and the Labor Service rejected modern machinery for traditional tools, to inculcate pride and alleviate the chaotic anomie Germany was suffering. Similarly, Victoria de Grazia (1981) discusses fascist Italy's resistance to modernization and revival of rural traditions and festivals to foster feelings of racial unity and placate the proletariat.

Susman (1984), among others, contends that being beneficiary of a glorious and heroic past is necessary for maintaining meaningfulness in the present, as well as confidence in the future. An attempt to bolster cultural
meaningfulness by glorifying the past was evident in Reagan's 1987 State of the Union Address. He briefly referred to the Iran arms sale controversy and then spent a great deal of time discussing America's forefathers and the symbolism of George Washington's chair.

Cultural Meaningfulness

Traditionally, games have provided a way to symbolically participate in the culture:

The "democratization" of golf and tennis in the 1930's provides a special outlet for the competitive spirit the traditional values of the culture demand and which cannot easily be satisfied in the "real" world of economic and social life. The Parker Brothers' game "Monopoly" enables would-be entrepreneurs to "make a killing" of the kind the economic conditions of the times all but prohibited. Dance marathons, roller derbies, six-day bicycle races, flagpole-sitting contests, goldfish-swallowing competitions... are not just foolish ways out of the rat race, but rather alternative (if socially marginal) patterns duplicating in structure what institutionalized society demanded and normally assumed it could provide. Thus, the bank-nights... Bingo games... Irish Sweepstakes, the whole range of patterns of "luck" and "success"... provided a way to maintain and reinforce essential values... (Susman, 1984, p. 162).

Thus we expend so much time and energy in entertainment activities supports the contention that they provide opportunities to symbolically participate in society and achieve a personal sense of heroism. Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski's (1985) theory of social behavior, based
on the work of Ernest Becker, posits that entertainment activities embody cultural myths and values and function to instill and bolster faith in the culture's world view.

Today, film and television provide limitless opportunities to enjoy cultural myths and heroes, including those of the old west. However, a newer and, possibly, more influential entertainment activity involves theme parks, most of which include a "frontierland" or old west component.

Theme Parks

King (1981) considers theme parks the latter day pilgrimage site for reaffirming the culture's spiritual and philosophical teachings. Johnson (1981) believe their vivid, idealized portrayals of the past and future may influence visitors' views of history and the world. Solomon et al. (1985) agree that theme parks are enjoyed insofar as they instill and bolster faith in the culture's world view.

Discussion about theme parks (primarily those created by Disney) takes three major perspectives: psychological, socio-political-economic, and organizational (Berland, 1982; Brody, 1972; Fromm, 1963; Gottdiener, 1982; Jewett & Lawrence, 1977; Moore, 1980; Pastier, 1978; Schickel, 1985; Thompson, 1971; Wilson, 1986; Wolf, 1979).
Literature search has revealed only one empirical study (Blazey, 1984), about behavior patterns of elderly visitors to Hershey Park; others are undoubtedly proprietary.

Others discuss the social implications of world fairs and expositions (e.g., Kihlstedt, 1986; Segal, 1985), which are relevant considering Disney's role in the 1964-65 New York World's Fair (audio-animatronics to create Abraham Lincoln and Pepsi-Cola's Small World, both still existing at Disneyland). Many pavilions at Disneyland and the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) were inspired by the New York World's Fair, to glorify technology and the future.

Old Tucson

The fact that westerns change with current societal needs and influences indicates that beliefs about the old west are malleable, at least temporarily. Morganstern and Greenberg (in press) investigated an old west theme park's influence on visitors' beliefs about the old west.

Constructed in 1939 for filming Arizona, "Old Tucson" promotes the myth of the old west with Main Street shootouts, skits, country/western music in a saloon, employees in costume, and museum exhibits. Old Tucson was a good setting in which to study beliefs about the old west past because it embodies dual themes: it is both a recreation
of the stereotypical old west town (e.g., Calder, 1974) and
a film set for movies (western and non-western), TV shows,
commercials, etc.

This dual theme nature mediates Old Tucson's impact. Portraying the movie location theme requires exposing the back region of the authentic old west theme (cf. Goffman, 1959). Old Tucson visitors are invited behind the scenes of the western movie myth to learn about stunts and special effects. Within the apparent old west town, most structures are facades. Thus a visit to Old Tucson communicates the old west myth as well as how it was created on film.

Morganstern and Greenberg (in press) presented Old Tucson visitors with either no cue, an "authentic old west town" (town) cue or a "famous movie location" (movie) cue prior to entry. These visitors were also surveyed about what they believed had been true in the actual old west: randomly some were surveyed before entry and others after exit. Among movie-cue subjects, those surveyed before entry expressed strong belief in the popularized myth of the old west; however, those surveyed after exit expressed very low belief. Among no-cue visitors, those surveyed before entry expressed low belief in the myth of the old west, but those surveyed after exit express high belief.
While no-cue visitors exited with stronger beliefs than they had before entry, the "famous movie location" cue, which evoked very strong beliefs about the myth of the old west before entry, caused decreased belief by the time of exit.

It was hypothesized that the "famous movie location" cue made action-packed, heroic images of the old west highly salient (Fiske & Taylor, 1984), and that visitors who interpreted Old Tucson through these images attended more closely to the movie location elements and became more aware of the old west myth as a movie illusion, thus decreasing belief in the myth. These findings supported laboratory research on how primes influence information encoding (e.g., Bargh & Pietramonaco, 1982; Carver, Ganellen, Roming, & Chambers, 1983; Darley & Gross, 1983), and demonstrated that a priming effect would occur in a complex, real world environment. It also supported the theory that theme parks may influence beliefs about the past, and that such beliefs may have psychological impact.

Among no-cue subject, the correlation between beliefs about the old west (increased during the visit) and enjoyment of Old Tucson was statistically significant; this correlation was not significant for movie-cue subjects (whose beliefs decreased).
Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation research was to extend the original Morganstern and Greenberg (in press) findings about how cue (none, "famous movie location") mediated the Old Tucson experience and influenced beliefs about the old west, and investigate some theoretical approaches to how myth-embodying activities (e.g., Solomon et al., 1985), and faith in a cultural drama psychologically effect individuals.

Toward these ends, it was necessary to manipulate Old Tucson visitors' ability to reaffirm beliefs about the old west past (e.g., cues), as well as their motivation to reaffirm such beliefs depending on their faith in the culture's present (e.g., cultural esteem). Specifically, subjects received either no-cue or a "famous movie location" cue, as well as a culture boost or threat. Culture-boost subjects, regardless of cue, were expected to be unmotivated to reaffirm beliefs about the old west. However, culture-threat subjects were expected to be highly motivated to reaffirm beliefs about the old west past. Among culture-threat subjects, those in the no-cue condition were expected to be able to reaffirm beliefs and, thereby maintain a cultural anxiety buffer. However, movie-cue subjects were expected to be unable to reaffirm
beliefs (based on the earlier study), and, as a result, experience threats to the culture's present and past simultaneously.

Hypotheses

Belief in the Myth of the Old West

Regarding belief in the myth of the old west, a two-way (cue x cultural esteem) interaction was expected. Specifically, culture-boost subjects, unmotivated to seek out myth-affirming aspects of the park, would express only moderate beliefs. However, among culture-threat subjects, who would be motivated to reaffirm beliefs, those receiving no cue would be able to reaffirm beliefs and would express the strongest. However, the movie-cue would interfere with the ability to reaffirm such beliefs and those subjects would express the weakest. The process of encoding information through the movie cue would force attention to the artificial movie set elements, causing the myth to be debunked (Morganstern & Greenberg, in press).

In other words, no differences in mythic beliefs were expected for culture-boost subjects, regardless of cue condition, because they would not psychologically need to reaffirm mythic beliefs about the past. In contrast, among culture-threat subjects (motivated to seek myth-affirmation
to bolster faith in the culture), no-cue subjects were expected to express significantly higher beliefs than movie-cue subjects.

Emotional Responses

Anxiety and Depression. Regarding anxiety and depression, two-way (cue x cultural esteem) interactions were expected, such that movie-cue culture-threat subjects (e.g., motivated but unable to reaffirm mythic beliefs) would express significantly higher anxiety and depression than their no-cue culture-threat counterparts who, similarly motivated, would have been able to reaffirm cultural beliefs about the past. No differences were expected for culture-boost subjects who would not have experienced a threat to faith in the culture and the anxiety that should engender.

Hostility. Regarding hostility, a main effect of cue condition was expected, such that movie-cue subjects would express higher hostility overall than their no-cue counterparts. It was believed the "famous movie location" cue would make images of action-packed and violent western films more salient.

Positive Affect and Sensation Seeking. Regarding positive affect and sensation seeking, two-way (cue x cultural esteem) interactions were expected, such that
movie-cue culture-threat subjects who would have experienced threats to the present and past simultaneously would score significantly lower than the others.

Responses to Old Tucson

**Enjoyment of Old Tucson.** No differences on subjects' ratings of enjoyment of Old Tucson were expected, based on the earlier Morganstern and Greenberg study which yielded no enjoyment differences, despite differences in old west beliefs. Old Tucson can be enjoyed for reasons other than affirmation of the old west myth (e.g., rides, video and arcade games, music, food, shopping, etc.). However, among subjects motivated to reaffirm beliefs (culture-threat), a positive correlation between enjoyment of Old Tucson and belief in the myth of the old west was hypothesized for no-cue (high belief) subjects, but not movie-cue subjects (low belief).

**Desire to Return to Old Tucson.** Regarding desire to return to Old Tucson in the future, analysis of variance was expected to yield a significant two-way (cue x cultural esteem) interaction, such that no-cue culture-threat subjects would express strong desire to return to Old Tucson, but movie-cue culture-threat subjects (decreased belief) would express low desire to return.
Social Attitudes and Beliefs

Subjects completed a 78-item social attitudes and beliefs questionnaire consisting of randomly ordered statements concerning dogmatism, authoritarianism, optimism, technology, alienation, death, politics, and the environment. Separate factor analyses would be run on items within each area and those that loaded on the first factor would be used to compute individual factor scores.

Technology. Over time, religious myths about the universe have been replaced by science and technology, which purport that humans can understand the universe and bend it to their will. Perhaps discovering and eliminating the causes of death helps us deal with death anxiety (Becker, 1975; Pyke, 1967).

Considered the "New Eden" from its inception (Jewett & Lawrence, 1977), America promised to be a haven from pestilence, famine, war, etc. Americans highly value invention and technological innovation (e.g., Segal, 1985, 1986), and believe ourselves the world leader in these areas; our confidence that we can control nature (e.g., Hellman, 1976) is unsurpassed. Undoubtedly, our technological sophistication (e.g., space travel, organ transplants, etc.), has profound impact on our attitudes concerning death; it appears that we will soon have the
capabilities to prevent death and defy nature (Lifton, 1979).

Myths of the old west, despite being set in a technologically simple time, communicate attitudes about technology. According to Schwartz (1982), villainous cowboys distrusted science, technology and innovation, and could not plan for the future; good cowboys were future-oriented: if not themselves innovators, they facilitated the progress of those who were (e.g., Wright's "professional" hero distinguished by technical skill).

Questions about technology were either originally created or derived from the Disaster Preparedness Pilot Survey (Holder & Levi, unpublished). Differences in attitudes about technology were expected such that subjects who exited Old Tucson with stronger belief in the myth of the old west were expected to express more confidence in, and less concern about, technological development. Conversely, those for whom the myth of the old west was debunked were expected to express less confidence and more concern.

**Environmental Conservation.** Questions about environmental conservation were originally created or derived from the General Beliefs Inventory (Coan & Dobyns, unpublished). An old west theme park might be expected to
influence environmental attitudes. The frontier ethic is associated with man's assault on the wilderness. Lewis (L1982) cites Fred Schroeder's 1977 contention that westerns justify our violent quarrel with the wilderness because it will yield a new, harmonious civilization. The 1960's TV western hero believed nature and the environment could be mastered (e.g., modernization and development), while the villain remained subjugated to both nature and his own impulses (e.g., impediments to progress) (Schwartz, 1982).

Thus, keeping the old west and its view of the environment alive may influence attitudes about conservation, alternative energy sources, etc. To this extent, subjects with strong beliefs in an idealized past with its unique brew of the environment were expected to express less concern about environmental conservation issues than those with weak old west beliefs.

**Dogmatism, Authoritarianism, Alienation, Political Attitudes.** Sebastian de Grazia discussed "directives," the community's ideas about how to act to avoid anxiety, describing them as "formulas for salvation . . . success . . . the good life," and how societies maintain conflicting directives (e.g., the economic directives of competition and cooperation). Similarly, Wallace (1970)
discussed conflicting social roles and values as stressors, and cultural conflict as influencing mental health, especially among those of low social status.

Simple anomie (de Grazia, 1948) results from conflicting directives and is alleviated by affectionate relationships. War, the "Great Association," provides opportunity to fight to preserve a non-anomic life of fraternity, nationalism and lofty ideals. In effect, a threat from outside the community allows individuals to overlook conflicts among "directives" and unite under common political beliefs, alleviating simple anomie.

A collection of individual consumers men will never be. They could not if they wanted to. It goes against the grain. But neither are they Citizens or Believers. Instead, men stand today in this twilight zone of a "society," uneasy, distressed, feeling joined to their fellows only in war or crises; and behind the inner doors of their mind they welcome war or crisis for the feeling of community it gives them (de Grazia, 1948, pp. x-xi).

Interestingly, Reagan's administration (e.g., welfare program cutbacks, increased military spending, renewed animosity toward communism, military involvement in Grenada and Libya, etc.) has also been a time of renewed interest in the myth of the old west. Questions were derived from or inspired by: Rokeach's Dogmation Scale; Dean's Public Opinion questionnaire; Delameter, Katz, and Kelman's Symbolic Commitment Scale; Comrey and Newmeyer's Radicalism
Scale (Robinson & Shaver, 1973); and the Manifest Alienation Scale (Gould, undated). Subjects manipulated to have increased belief in the myth of the old west (no-cue culture-threat) were expected to express greater dogmatism, authoritarianism and political conservatism than low belief (movie-cue culture-threat) subjects. However, those with lowest belief in old west myths were expected to have higher alienation than their high belief counterparts.

Optimism. Optimism questions were derived from Dean's Public Opinion Questionnaire and the General Beliefs Survey (Coan & Dobyns, unpublished). According to Susman (1984) and others who discuss the importance of history, portraying an ideal past fosters belief in a glorious future. Therefore, subjects manipulated to exit Old Tucson with strongest beliefs in the old west were expected to have the highest optimism scores, and those with weakest beliefs to have the lowest optimism.

Death. Questions were derived from Attitude Toward Death Scale (Lester, 1974). Western myths are basically variations of the hero myth. Achieving or identifying with the heroic is the primary way to achieve meaningfulness and avoid death anxiety (Becker, 1974). Therefore, subjects manipulated to have stronger beliefs in the old west myth were expected to express less concern about death than subjects manipulated to have weaker beliefs.
Subjects

Subjects were 64 introductory psychology students. To be eligible subjects had to be native to the United States, because foreign students would not be expected to have the emotional need to maintain faith in U.S. culture or its myths.

Thirteen subjects were omitted from the final analyses, twelve of whom reported minority ethnicities. Minority students, who had undoubtedly experienced prejudice or disadvantage within American society, were expected to derive more of their cultural meaningfulness from subculture affiliation and be less motivated to reaffirm belief in a myth that excluded or even discriminated (Calder, 1974) against them. The thirteenth, age 45, was eliminated because the experiment was specifically geared to a younger, less sophisticated, population. Therefore, the final analyses were performed on 51 Anglo subjects (25 males and 26 females).

Subjects were randomly assigned to experimental session. Within session, subjects were randomly assigned
to cue condition (none, movie). However, the cultural esteem manipulation (in the form of a trivia quiz) could not be assigned within group, because it could arouse discussion, and subsequently suspicion, upon discovery that there had been two different questions. Therefore, subjects in the first session received the culture boost and those in the second session received the culture threat.

**Experimental Manipulations**

**Cue Condition**

The cue manipulation was administered immediately prior to entering Old Tucson, based on the hypothesis that it would affect information encoding. Movie-cue consent forms had a drawing of a man operating a movie camera, using an Old Tucson products, and the worlds "Old Tucson Famous Movie Location" in the upper right hand corner. It began: We hope you enjoy your visit "behind the scenes" at Old Tucson, built as a location for filming some of the most famous westerns ever made, starring people such as John Wayne, Kirk Douglas, Lee Marvin, and numerous others.

No-cue consent forms had a picture of a gunfighter in the upper right hand corner. The gunfighter logo was also used on products within the park, as well as highway
billboards. It began: We hope you enjoy your visit to Old Tucson and appreciate your time and cooperation in this research effort. Although the gunfighter picture could have functioned as a cue, despite the no-cue condition that was intended, it was necessary for subjects to remain unaware of differences in experimental materials. Had no-cue subjects received consent forms with no picture, and noticed others had pictures, they may have become suspicious.

Cultural Esteem Condition

Subjects received either a culture threat (to create the need to reaffirm a cultural belief) or boost (to bolster faith in the culture's present), in the form of a trivia quiz. To determine which questions would best function as a boost and threat, statements were generated and pretested on volunteer upper division psychology students, ineligible to participate in the actual experiment. They indicated on a 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much) scale the extent to which they would be disturbed to find that each statement was true. Their responses were combined, and the most and least disturbing were chosen to be the threat and boost, respectively.
The boost read as follows:

Although there is a lot of publicity about Americans raising money to repair the Statue of Liberty, it is not common knowledge that similar efforts are being made by people from throughout the world. It was recently reported in Life Magazine that people from other countries see the United States as the most democratic nation in the world, and feel the Statue of Liberty must be saved because it symbolizes to all that there is a place where oppressed people will always find freedom.

Of the countries named below, from which has come the largest amount of financial contribution toward renovating the Statue of Liberty?

Circle one:

(Japan) (France) (Saudi Arabia) (Switzerland)

The threat read as follows:

Economists are concerned about the increasing amount of foreign investment in United States business and real estate. While foreign investment appears, on the surface, to boost our economy today, it will profoundly decrease the amount of control we have over our own country in the future.

Of the countries named below, from which has come the largest amount of financial investment in U. S. business and real estate?

Circle one:

(Japan) (France) (Saudi Arabia) (Switzerland)

The explicit premise was to thank participants by allowing those who answered correctly to enter a drawing for a $15.00 restaurant gift certificate. To enhance students' perceived probability of answering correctly and
increase their attention to the question, a multiple choice format with only four alternatives was used.

**Procedures**

Subjects met at the Psychology Building to board a University bus to Old Tucson. Before entering the park, all subjects were directed to read an information form about the nature of the study, amount of time it would take, etc., and to sign the consent statement at the bottom. This information-consent form contained the cue manipulation in the upper right hand corner. The "trivia quiz," which subjects were to complete and return to the experimenter as they left the bus, was attached.

Students were told to return to their original bus seats after two hours. Each had filled out two name tags, and been instructed to wear one and place the other on the back of the seat in front of them to remind them of their original seats and let the experimenter determine quickly who may have not yet returned. Also, wearing name tags in the park would help identify research participants, in case it was necessary to go in and find someone.

The real purpose was to allow coding of questionnaire forms; cue and cultural esteem manipulations had been turned in separately from the dependent measures. Also, an assistant was inside Old Tucson taking photographs
of subjects, distinguishable only by their name tags. The experimenter remained at the bus so participants would not feel they were being observed, and to supervise completion of dependent measures.

Upon return, each subject received a questionnaire packet containing a mood measure, survey of beliefs about the old west and opinions about Old Tucson, demographic information, and manipulation checks. Finally, there was a 78-item questionnaire concerning social beliefs and attitudes. When everyone was finished, subjects were returned to campus and debriefed about the procedure of the study and the underlying theory.

**Dependent Variables**

Emotional Responses

Emotions were measured using the 132-item Zuckerman and Lubin (1965) Affect Adjective Checklist, designed to yield five subscales: anxiety, depression, hostility, positive affect, and sensation seeking. Completion of this measure required that subjects check all adjectives that described how they were feeling at that moment.

Belief in the Myth of the Old West

Belief in the myth of the old west was based on a number of questions concerning the frequency of myth-
consistent events (Calder, 1974). Subjects estimated how frequently the following myth-related events occurred in the typical old west town, on a scale from 1 (never) to 9 (very often): gunfights; saloon brawls; bank, stagecoach and train robberies; incidents during which the sheriff fired a gun or rifle, or was killed; Indian attacks; and times when outlaws had control of the town. These responses were converted to an 11-point scale.

They continued to indicate what they believed was true in the typical old west town by estimating, on an 11-point scale (from 0% to 100%), the following percentages: men who carried guns, rode horses, and were cowboys, gunslingers, bounty hunters, ranchers, and outlaws; women who carried guns, rode horses, and worked in a saloon; and people who were Mexican and Indian.

Demographics and Preferences

Subjects reported age, ethnicity, and place of birth for themselves and their parents. This allowed the experimenter to eliminate data from the subjects who were of ethnic minorities or only first generation U. S. citizens. Subjects were also surveyed concerning what they saw and did within Old Tucson, length of time spent at each, and how they rated each from most to least favorite.
Social Attitudes and Beliefs

Finally there was a 78-item questionnaire, consisting of randomly ordered statements concerning attitudes and beliefs about dogmatism, authoritarianism, alienation, politics, technology, death, the environment, and the future. Subjects indicated, on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), the extent to which they agreed with each statement.
CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Beliefs About the Old West

Answers to all items concerning the old west were converted to an 11-point scale and entered into a factor analysis, yielding the two factors discussed below. Two separate index scores for belief in the myth of the old west were computed by adding the scores for items that loaded on each factor and dividing by the number of items. The pattern of means was similar for both factors, with no-cue culture-threat subjects the lowest. Factor scores are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Old West Beliefs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth 1</th>
<th>Lawlessness</th>
<th>No-Cue</th>
<th>Movie-Cue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boost</td>
<td>Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.398</td>
<td>6.420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Belief Factor 1. Items loading on the first factor, Lawlessness, concerning the following incidents when the
sheriff was killed (.843), there were Main Street shootouts (.825), times when the sheriff used a gun or rifle (.751), outlaws controlled the town (.749), train robberies (.745), stagecoach robberies (.745), saloon brawls (.682), Indian attacks (.661), bank robberies (.640), and the percentage of men who carried guns (.521). Analysis of variance of lawlessness factor scores yielded no significant effects.

**Belief Factor 2.** Items that loaded onto the second factor, Heroic Opportunity, concerned the following: proportions of men who were gunslingers (.789), bounty hunters (.783), cowboys (.754), and outlaws (.633), and women who worked in a saloon (.661). As expected, analysis of variance of the heroic factor yielded a significant two-way (cue x cultural esteem) interaction, $F(1,47) = 6.03$, $p = .0923$, such that no-cue subjects (mean = 5.081) scored higher overall than movie-cue subjects (mean = 4.137).

**Emotional Responses**

The hypotheses concerning anxiety, depression and hostility were not supported. Analyses of variance of these measures yielded no significant results, all $F$'s $< 2$. Group means for emotional measures are displayed in Table 2.
Table 2. Mood Measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No-Cue</th>
<th>Movie-Cue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boost</td>
<td>Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>1.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>6.444</td>
<td>7.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensation Seeking</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anxiety scores were a function of the following: afraid, fearful, frightened, impatient, nervous, panicky, shaky, tense, timed, and worrying (possible range, 0-10). Adjectives indicative of depression were: alone, destroyed, discouraged, forlorn, lonely, lost, miserable, rejected, sad, suffering, sunk, tormented (possible range, 0-12). Hostility adjectives were: angry, annoyed, complaining, critical, cross, disgusted, enraged, furious, hostile, incensed, irritated, mad, and mean (possible range, 0-13).

Positive Affect. Analysis of variance of positive affect scores yielded a marginal cue x cultural-esteem interaction, $F(1,47) = 3.11$, $p = .0844$, with movie-cue culture-boost subjects expressing the highest positive
affect, and movie-cue culture-threat subjects the lowest. Adjectives that indicated positive affect were: affectionate, free, friendly, glad, good, happy, interested, joyful, loving, peaceful, pleased, pleasant, polite, satisfied, secure, steady, tender, understanding, warm, whole (possible range, 0-20).

**Sensation Seeking.** Analysis of variance of sensation seeking scores yielded a significant two-way (cue x cultural esteem) interaction, $F(1,47) = 4.18$, $p = .0466$, such that movie-cue culture-boost subjects expressed the highest sensation seeking scores, and movie-cue culture-threat subjects the lowest. Sensation seeking scores were computed as follows: added were active, adventurous, aggressive, daring, energetic, enthusiastic, merry, and wild; subtracted were bored, mild, quiet, and tame. Therefore, scores could range from -4 to 8.

Responses to Old Tucson

**Enjoyment of the Old Tucson Visit.** Subjects indicated, on a 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much) scale, how much they enjoyed the Old Tucson visit (see Table 3). Although no effects on enjoyment ratings had been hypothesized, analysis of variance yielded a marginal cue x cultural esteem interaction, $F(1,47) = 3.74$, $p = .0591$, such that among culture-threat subjects, those receiving no
cue expressed greater enjoyment than those receiving the movie-cue.

Table 3. Responses to Old Tucson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No-Cue Boost</th>
<th>No-Cue Threat</th>
<th>Movie-Cue Boost</th>
<th>Movie-Cue Threat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Return to Old Tucson</td>
<td>3.778</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>5.231</td>
<td>2.857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Desire to Return to Old Tucson. Subjects also indicated, on a 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much) scale, their desire to return to Old Tucson in the near future (see Table 3). As expected, analysis of variance of this measure yielded a significant two-way (cue x cultural esteem) interaction, $F(1,47) = 6.14$, $p = .0169$. Among culture-threat subjects, those with the strongest belief in the myth (no-cue) expressed strong desire to return, and those with weakest belief in the myth (movie-cue) weak desire to return. It is believed this result occurred because Old Tucson allowed the first group to reaffirm belief in the past (and alleviate emotional discomfort), but not the latter group. Although movie-cue culture-boost
subjects actually expressed the highest desire to return, the difference between them and no-cue threat subjects was not significant. Most likely Old Tucson did not serve the same purpose for them that it did for no-cue threat subjects.

Although no significant differences were expected on the enjoyment measure, some hypotheses concerning correlations between belief in the myth of the old west and enjoyment of Old Tucson had been made. Specifically, a positive correlation was expected among no-cue culture-threat, but not movie-cue culture-threat, subjects. Of course, at that time, it was expected that there would be only one measure of belief in the myth of the old west, not two. Correlations between all dependent measures and old west beliefs are displayed in Table 4.

The correlation between heroic opportunity beliefs (Myth 2) and enjoyment of the Old Tucson visit was highly significant among no-cue culture-threat subjects (.655) but not movie-cue culture-threat (-.347, n.s.) subjects.

The correlation between belief in the heroic myth and desire to return to Old Tucson in the near future (see Table 4) was also significant among no-cue culture-threat subjects (.520) but negative, and nonsignificant for their movie-cue counterparts (-.460).
Table 4. Correlations Between Beliefs in the Myths of the Old West and Other Dependent Measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth 1</th>
<th>Myth 2</th>
<th>Myth 1</th>
<th>Myth 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.655**</td>
<td>-.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Return</td>
<td>-.159</td>
<td>.520*</td>
<td>-.382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogmatism</td>
<td>.744**</td>
<td>.204*</td>
<td>.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>-.186</td>
<td>.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>.551*</td>
<td>.613*</td>
<td>-.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Hazard</td>
<td>-.231</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>-.184</td>
<td>-.404</td>
<td>-.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>-.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>.659**</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>-.111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*significant at .05
**significant at .01
Accuracy of TV Westerns and Old Tucson. Subjects indicated, on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) scale, how accurately they believed movie/TV westerns and Old Tucson portrayed life as it really was in the old west. Analysis of variance of movie/TV westerns accuracy yielded no significant effects. However, there was a marginally significant main effect of cue on accuracy of Old Tucson, $F(1,47) = 2.98, p = .0908$, such that no-cue subjects rated Old Tucson as more accurate overall (see Table 5).

Table 5. Accuracy of Old Tucson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boost</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No-Cue</td>
<td>4.111</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>4.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie-Cue</td>
<td>3.769</td>
<td>3.714</td>
<td>3.740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beliefs About the Old West Town. Subjects indicated, on a 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much) scale, their beliefs that the average citizen felt safe, people were corrupt, and people were treated equally in the typical old west town. Analyses of variance yielded no significant differences for the safety and corruption items. However there was a main effect of cue on the equality item, $F(1,47) = 4.21, p = .0457$, such that no-cue
subjects (mean = 4.750) expressed higher belief than movie-cue subjects (mean = 3.630) that people were treated equally in the actual old west.

Old Tucson Activities. Subjects indicated which attractions they saw and amount of time spent at each, in an effort to determine if the cues actually influenced activities within the park rather than interpretation of Old Tucson. Three separate scores were computed. The first, old west time, included the stagecoach and train rides, Main street gunfight, saloon stage show, gun museum and Dr. Wheezer's medicine show. The second, film set time, included the soundstage tour, the movie "Hollywood in the Desert," and visiting the movie sets. And third, other time, included shopping, eating, drinking, and activities such as the haunted mine ride, shooters' gallery, antique cars, Papago Indian Maze, etc. Analyses of variance of all three scores yielded no significant results.

Social Attitudes and Beliefs

Statements on the 78-item social attitudes and beliefs questionnaire concerned dogmatism, authoritarianism, optimism, technology, alienation, death, politics, and the environment. Items that conceptually fell within each category were factor analyzed separately. A score was
computed for each category by adding the items that loaded on the first factor and dividing by the number of items (see Appendix A). Items that loaded negatively were reverse scored. All factor score means are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Social Attitude and Beliefs Factor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No-Cue Boost</th>
<th>No-Cue Threat</th>
<th>Movie-Cue Boost</th>
<th>Movie-Cue Threat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dogmatism</td>
<td>4.278</td>
<td>4.133</td>
<td>4.135</td>
<td>3.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td>2.611</td>
<td>2.317</td>
<td>2.558</td>
<td>2.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>4.685</td>
<td>5.222</td>
<td>5.026</td>
<td>4.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Hazard</td>
<td>4.139</td>
<td>3.600</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>4.357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>3.056</td>
<td>3.217</td>
<td>3.538</td>
<td>3.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>3.333</td>
<td>3.350</td>
<td>3.423</td>
<td>3.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>5.278</td>
<td>4.167</td>
<td>4.462</td>
<td>3.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>4.556</td>
<td>4.222</td>
<td>4.615</td>
<td>4.071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dogmatism. Items loading on the dogmatism factor concerned belief the American public does not pay proper respect to the flag, and that the country's strength is largely a product of the free enterprise system, such that higher scores indicated higher dogmatism. Analysis of variance of yielded no significant results.
Among no-cue culture-threat subjects (highest old west beliefs) the correlation between dogmatism and Myth 1 (lawlessness) was .744, p<.01. The same correlation computed for their movie-cue counterparts was .306 (not significant), indicating a relationship between current dogmatism and beliefs about the lawlessness elements of the old west among those motivated and able to reaffirm old west beliefs. Correlations between dogmatism and Myth 2 (heroic beliefs) were not significant for either group.

Authoritarianism. Items that loaded onto the authoritarianism factor concerned beliefs that there are two kinds of people in the world: those for the truth and those against the truth, and that there is probably only one correct philosophy, such that higher scores indicated higher authoritarianism. Analysis of variance yielded no significant results, all F's<1. Similarly, there were no significant correlations between old west beliefs and authoritarianism.

Optimism. Items that loaded on the optimism measure concerned beliefs that life was an exciting adventure most of the time, and that the world is basically a friendly place, such that higher scores indicated greater optimism. As expected, analysis of variance yielded a significant cue x cultural esteem interaction, F(1,47) = 8.00, p = .0068.
No-cue culture-threat subjects, who expressed highest beliefs about the old west, also expressed highest optimism, while movie-cue culture-threat subjects (lowest beliefs) expressed least optimism.

Among no-cue culture-threat subjects (highest old west beliefs), optimism was significantly correlated with both Myth 1 (.551) and Myth 2 (.613), both p's < .05. The correlations for movie-cue culture-threat subjects were not significant, Myth 1 (-.238) and Myth 2 (-.331).

Technology. Items that loaded onto the technology factor concerned beliefs that a technological disaster was likely, and that nuclear war was more likely to start by accident than by deliberate intention of national leaders, such that high scores indicated greater concern about nuclear technology danger. Analysis of variance yielded no significant differences, all F's < 1, although subjects with lowest belief in old west myths evinced highest concern about nuclear technology danger. Perceived danger of nuclear technology did not correlate with old west beliefs for either culture-threat group.

Alienation. Items that loaded onto the alienation factor concerned beliefs that people's ideas change so much that one wonders if we'll ever have anything to depend on, and that there are so many ideas about right and wrong it
is hard to figure out how to live your life, such that higher scores indicate higher alienation. Analysis of variance yielded no significant results, and there were no significant correlations between alienation and old west beliefs.

**Death.** Items that loaded on the death factor included belief that one should be willing to sacrifice his life for his country, and that death is a release from earthly suffering, such that higher scores indicated less fear of death. Analysis of variance yielded no significant effects, all $F's < 2$. The correlation between fear of death and old west beliefs was negatively significant for movie-cue culture-threat subjects (lowest beliefs), $r = -.515, p < .01$, such that as belief in heroic aspects of the old west decreased, fear of death increased.

**Politics.** Items that loaded on the politics factor concerned belief that government should take care of people who couldn't take care of themselves and guarantee everyone enough to eat, such that higher scores indicated higher political liberalism. Analysis of variance yielded no significant effects, all $F's < 1$. Similarly, political liberalism was not correlated with old west beliefs for any group.

**Environment.** The environment factor concerned beliefs that someone would eventually invent something to
clean up air and water pollution, and that the best answer to our energy problems was solar energy. Analysis of variance yielded only a main effect of cultural esteem, $F(1,47) = 5.62, p = .0219$, such that culture-boost subjects (mean = 4.795) scored higher than culture-threat subjects (mean = 3.931).

Although both environment items go together from one perspective, they also appear to be dealing with two separate issues: the first intimates belief there will be a technological fix for pollution problems, while the second suggests a conservationist approach to energy resources. To this extent, it was justified to analyze the two items separately (see Table 7). Analysis of variance yielded no significant effects for the solar energy statement, but a significant cue x cultural esteem interaction regarding an invention to clean up pollution, $F(1,47) = 5.67, p = .0213$, such that subjects with high old west beliefs expressed the highest agreement and those with lowest old west beliefs expressed the least agreement. In addition, there was a marginal main effect of cue, $F(1,47) = 3.81, p = .057$, such that no-cue subjects (mean = 4.875) agreed more than movie-cue subjects (mean = 4.037).
Table 7. Cell Means for Environment Items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No-Cue Boost</th>
<th>No-Cue Threat</th>
<th>Movie-Cue Boost</th>
<th>Movie-Cue Threat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The best answer to our nation's energy problems is solar energy.</td>
<td>4.889</td>
<td>3.933</td>
<td>4.308</td>
<td>3.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone will eventually invent something to clean up air and water pollution.</td>
<td>5.667</td>
<td>4.400</td>
<td>4.615</td>
<td>3.500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Manipulation Checks

Perception of the Old Tucson Visit. Subjects were asked to estimate what portion of their Old Tucson visit fell into the following categories, such that they added up to 100%: historic old west town; Hollywood movie and TV film set specifically for westerns; Hollywood movie and TV set in general; traditional amusement park with rides and games; and other. Analyses of variance computed on subjects' estimates of what proportion of their visit had been to a historic old west town, and what proportion had been a visit to a Hollywood movie and TV film set for westerns and in general, yielded no significant results, all $F$'s < 2.
Cue Manipulation. Some attempt was made to check effectiveness of the cue manipulation. Within their questionnaire packets, subjects received a photocopy of an Old Tucson map available immediately within the gate. There is no way of knowing how many subjects took those maps; however, any maps or Old Tucson purchases that would have provided information during this time were temporarily confiscated. The actual map available at the park contained the gunfighter logo (that no-cue subjects received to avoid suspicion) and the words: Famous Movie Location. The photocopy had those words blacked out. Subjects were asked to look at the photocopy and circle which of the following phrases they believed had been on the original map: Authentic Old West Town, Famous Movie Location, or Old West Theme Park (see Table 8). And finally, subjects recommended which phrase they believed Old Tucson should use because it best described the park (see Table 9).
Table 8. Subjects' Choices of Words on Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Authentic Old West Town</th>
<th>Famous Movie Location</th>
<th>Old West Theme Park</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No-Cue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boost</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Movie-Cue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boost</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Subjects' Suggested Words on Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Authentic Old West Town</th>
<th>Famous Movie Location</th>
<th>Old West Theme Park</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No-Cue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boost</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Movie-Cue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boost</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

This research supports the view that beliefs about the past have impact on attitudes relevant for the present and future. Further, it lends strong support to the contention that beliefs about the past have psychological importance, and that such importance may depend on the individual's faith in the culture's present.

Belief in Old West Myths

Beliefs about the old west had two components, lawlessness and heroic opportunity, a reminder that the old west myth is multi-faceted. Items that loaded onto the Myth 1 factor (lawlessness) concerned violence, often portrayed in movie and TV westerns, which does not actually embody the hero myth but provides the plot in which the heroic takes place.

Analysis of the Myth 2 factor, heroic opportunity, yielded the significant interaction effect hypothesized, such that no-cue culture-threat subjects evinced the highest, and movie-cue culture-threat subjects the lowest, old west beliefs. Thus, the theories concerning priming
effects on information encoding, and motivation to reaffirm an important cultural myth of the past after experiencing a threat in the present, were supported. In addition, for a control group, which differed from the experimental only in that its subjects received the culture boost or threat after exiting Old Tucson, there were no differences in beliefs about the old west.

Emotional Measures

The hypotheses concerning increased anxiety and depression on the part of subjects motivated, but unable, to reaffirm old west beliefs were not supported. Perhaps the culture threat was too mild, only suggesting a future threat. Similarly, the expectation of higher hostility scores among movie-cue subjects was not supported. Hypotheses about positive affect and sensation seeking, especially the latter, were supported and indicate entertainment activities that embody important cultural myths have emotional impact.

Responses to Old Tucson

Regarding enjoyment of Old Tucson, a marginally significant cue x cultural esteem interaction ($p = .059$) was found where none was expected, such that among those who received the culture-threat no-cue subjects enjoyed
the visit significantly more than movie-cue. While no statistical significance had been expected, these results support the theory that a component of the enjoyment of entertainment activities concerns the extent to which they allow reaffirmation of important cultural myths. The high correlation between enjoyment of Old Tucson and Belief 2 (heroic opportunity) among no-cue culture-threat subjects further strengthens that support. The fact that the correlations were negative among subjects culture-threat movie-cue (lowest old west beliefs) supports the earlier Morganstern and Greenberg contention that Old Tucson can be enjoyed on many levels.

However, the full implications of the psychological effect of myth-affirming experiences become more obvious when one looks at subjects' desire to return to Old Tucson in the future. While high belief subjects expressed strong desire to return, for low belief subjects desire to return was very low; most likely the latters' sources of enjoyment were not unique to Old Tucson. Theme parks that collect market research data from exiting patrons should be aware that enjoyment ratings may not be the best indicators of desire to return.
Social Attitudes and Beliefs

**Dogmatism.** The hypotheses that no-cue culture-threat subjects (highest belief in the myth) would express highest dogmatism, authoritarianism and political conservatism were not supported; analysis of variance yielded no significant results. However, dogmatism was highly correlated with beliefs about lawlessness elements of the old west (Myth 1) among no-cue culture-threat subjects (highest beliefs). Although not conclusive, it suggests a relationship between strong beliefs about violence in the old west and dogmatism. Perhaps increased belief about the old west as very violent mediates dogmatism, and provides a focus for it.

**Optimism.** The hypothesis concerning optimism was strongly supported. Subjects with lowest belief in the heroic aspects of the old west myth expressed the lowest optimism; subjects with highest belief in the heroic expressed the highest optimism. These results go beyond supporting the contention that beliefs about the past influence beliefs about the future; they also contribute to the understanding of social and cultural influences on mental health.

**Technology.** Items that loaded on the technology factor primarily concerned nuclear technology danger.
Analysis indicated that the experimental manipulations did not affect attitudes about nuclear technology danger, nor were there any correlations with old west beliefs.

While these results do not support the hypotheses, attitudes toward science and technology are complex. On one hand, science and technology endow us with the capacity to influence nature and plan for the future, which on the surfaces, would appear to lessen anxiety (Becker, 1973). On the other hand, they demystify the universe and, subsequently, ourselves as humans (e.g., theory of evolution). Understanding our place in the cosmic order is not derived from science, but the religious views rendered obsolete by scientific investigation (Dubos, 1968). As technological development, especially nuclear weapons capable of annihilation, progresses, we more avidly seek religious symbolism (Lifton, 1979). In this particular study, questionnaire items concerning nuclear technology danger may have been more salient than items concerning the promise of technology. Therefore, beliefs about the old west may have influenced the latter if the nuclear danger aspects of technology had not dominated.

Alienation. Expectations about alienation were not supported. The trivia quiz about foreign contributors to the Statute of Liberty, intended to bolster cultural pride,
may have actually functioned as a low-level threat. The belief that a foreign country was financing the Statue's renovation (e.g., compromising it as exclusively American) may have undermined faith in American culture and endowed a sense of heroism to that other country. Given the political atmosphere in the U. S. today, even the prospect of increased immigration may have been threatening. Were the study to be done again, a culture boost with less potential for misinterpretation would be used.

Critique

It is believed the experimental design and procedure were adequate, especially considering its field nature and budget limitations. In-depth debriefing following each session revealed no suspicion about independent variables or deception.

However, there were drawbacks to this particular study. Subjects were participating as part of a course research requirement (although they could have been in any number of other studies), not typical Old Tucson visitors (e.g., Morganstern & Greenberg). Being assigned to session day and time and a given time limit in the park may have fostered reactance and/or other mood effects, or prevented subjects from experiencing Old Tucson's full impact.
Transportation and admission costs were provided, which may have influenced mediated perceptions of Old Tucson (e.g., dissonance).

People usually visit theme parks with friends or family members, which undoubtedly influences their experiences. By chance, some subjects had friends in the same session; for those who knew nobody, the Old Tucson visit may have been a lonely, alienating experience, regardless of experimental condition.

The main weakness of this study involved measurement of beliefs about the old west. First, there may have been an unintended ceiling effect on population estimates. Although not instructed to keep their totals within 100%, subjects must have been aware that they could not logically estimate 50% of the men to be bounty hunters if they estimated that 70% were cowboys.

Second, wording of questions about the frequency of myth-consistent events in the old west may not have truly tapped the hero myth. Subjects were asked how frequently outlaws controlled the town; a better question might have concerned how frequently a gang of outlaws was successfully prevented from taking over the town. Similarly, asking how frequently gunfights were won by the good guys may have been better than simply the frequency of gunfights.
The fact that many hypotheses were not supported does not indicate that theme park visits, and other culturally significant activities do not have a psychological effect, or fulfill a psychological need. The fact that we expend so much of our resources in leisure activities does indicate that they serve very important functions.

The results of this experiment, however inconclusive, indicate that further study of the psychological effects of cultural, activities, such as entertainment, is worthwhile. Humans are social and cultural beings (Lifton, 1979); investigating psychological phenomena, influenced (Wallace, 1970), by social and cultural factors, while attempting to control such factors in the laboratory may be misleading.
APPENDIX A

SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS FACTORS

(AND CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS)
Dogmatism

Our country should be engaged constantly in research to develop superior weapons for our national defense. (.745)

Whereas some people feel that they are citizens of the world, that they belong to mankind and not to any one nation, I feel that I am first, last, and always an American. (.675)

This country should disarm regardless of whether or not other countries do. (-.654)

Authoritarianism

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who are for truth and those who are against truth. (.833)

Of all the different philosophies which exist in the world there is probably only one which is correct. (.740)

Ideas that have no useful or practical applications are of little use to man. (.681)

If people are not intelligent and educated they should not be allowed to vote. (.588)

Optimism

Life is an exciting adventure most of the time. (.803)

The world in which we live is basically a friendly place. (.758)

The future looks very dismal. (-.659)

There are so many things to be happy about in life that people have little excuse for becoming depressed. (.620)

Most people would be better off if they would spend more time looking at all the good things in life instead of complaining about the few bad things. (.526)

If people worked hard at their jobs, they would reap the full benefits of our society. (.510)
Technology

It is likely that there will be some kind of technological disaster. (.680)

A nuclear war is more likely to start by accident (e.g., the automatic launching of missiles in response to a computer malfunction or misinterpreted data) than by the deliberate intention of the leaders of any country. (.655)

If our country doesn't rely on nuclear energy, one of our future concerns will be reliance on foreign countries for energy, which may destroy our quality of life. (-.647)

The technological progress we make today will assure a better world for tomorrow. (-.577)

Alienation

People's ideas change so much that I wonder if we'll ever have anything to depend on. (.780)

There are so many ideas about what is right and wrong these days that it is hard to figure out how to live your own life. (.661)

The religious organizations of our country have little influence in making society a better place to live. (.647)

We are so regimented today that there's not much room for choice, even in personal matters. (.604)

Politics

It is the responsibility of government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves. (.903)

The government should guarantee every citizen enough to eat. (.893)

Environment

Someone will eventually invent something to clean up air and water pollution. (.881)

The best answer to our nation's energy problems is solar energy. (.796)
Death

If called upon to do so, a citizen should be willing to sacrifice his life for his country. (.728)

I view death as a release from earthly suffering. (.665)

If I had a fatal disease, I would like to be told. (.601)
REFERENCES


