

Sociology 428: McCabe et al.

Review

- **Assignment 1**
- **New reading for Tuesday, September 27**
- **Pescosolido et al. and Kuperberg & Stone review**

McCabe et al.

- **One sentence summary?**
- **Multiple choice**
- **Differences with Pescosolido et al. and with Kuperberg and Stone**

REVIEW: PESCOSOLIDO & KUPERBERG AND STONE

Similarities:

- Both content analyses
- Both try to capture something about popular culture
- Both discuss changes in social structure and changes in popular culture

Differences:

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REVIEW: PESCOSOLIDO & KUPERBERG AND STONE

Similarities:

- Both content analyses
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- Both discuss changes in social structure and changes in popular culture

Differences:

- Gender vs. Race
- Sample sizes: 5 vs. 2448
- Description of content vs. Quantitative analyses
- Interpretation vs. Counts
- Averages vs. Trends
- Media (newspapers & magazines) vs. Children's books

MCCABE ET AL.: OVERVIEW

One line summary?

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One line summary?

Relative presence of female characters in children's books (popular culture) increases during periods of feminist mobilization/ protest.

McCABE ET AL.: 1

What is the main outcome that the authors measure in children's books?

the ratio of the number of males to females in titles and central characters

While the article claims that "we focus on the presence of males or females" the actual outcome in Figure 6 is the ratio of male to female characters in a year.

Ratios are generally not a good outcome variable to use. Years should not have been the unit of analysis for the tables or the statistical regression; books are the natural unit of analysis with year of publication a variable. So, there are some serious problems with the statistics here.

We will use # of articles with code (1-8)

MCCABE ET AL.: 2

The authors argue that the ideas in children's books have a causal effect on people's behavior and social outcomes.

True

Despite the authors' claims, there is actually very little evidence that this causal argument is true; and there is absolutely no evidence for this in the article. This reflects a more psychological than sociological perspective.

We will discuss.

CAUSAL EFFECTS OF CULTURE

Difference between:

- Changes in popular culture can affect behavior & social outcomes in society
- Changes in children's books can affect people's identity and thus behavior and society.

Children's books (or newspapers, films, etc.) as **causal agents** vs. as an **indicator** of broader culture which has a causal impact.

Our causal hypothesis?

MCCABE ET AL.: 3

The authors argue that the gender ideas in children's books are in part a consequence of what is happening in society at the time.

True

The authors also argue for this causal relationship. So, they want to have it both ways: the culture reflects what is happening and causes what is happening.

Both may be true, but we need to think carefully about causal direction, not simply assert it as if it were obvious.

Do changes in popular culture cause changes in society or does culture follow changes already going on for other reasons?

Timing can be a clue about which is causing which.

MCCABE ET AL.: 4

This research attempts to improve on past research on gender in the popular culture by:

- concentrating on children's books
- using a longer time frame than other studies
- employing more sophisticated statistical tests
- all of the above

The really interesting part though is the 100-year time frame.
What advantage does the 100 year time frame confer?

What should be the time frame for our analyses?

MCCABE ET AL.: 5

The researchers coded how many children's books?

over 5000

none

Although "none" might be considered correct also, since they actually didn't read the books themselves but rather the descriptions of the books in the Children's Catalog.

What is the advantage of 5000? The disadvantage?

Given our goals, should we aim for thousands? Or 51?

MCCABE ET AL.: 6

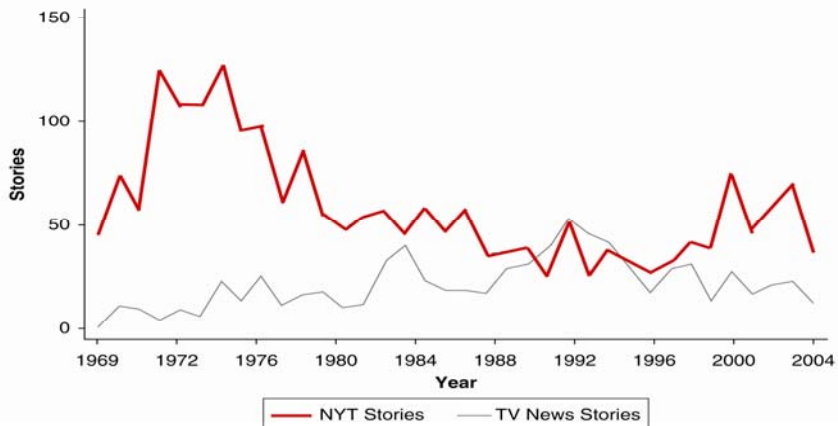
The 1960s were an era of rapidly increasing feminist activism.

False

There was a lot of protest and activism in the 1960s, but feminist protest didn't really get going until the 1970s.

The authors claim, "women's lib' was on everyone's lips" by 1970" but that is really too early to date a mass movement of the second wave of feminist protest.

The End of the Gender Revolution?



Source: Barakso and Schaffner, 2006

McCABE ET AL.: 7

Earlier research found that newspapers and magazines coverage of women was lowest in:

the middle of the 20th century

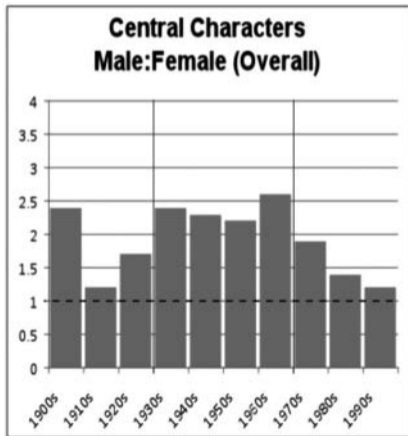
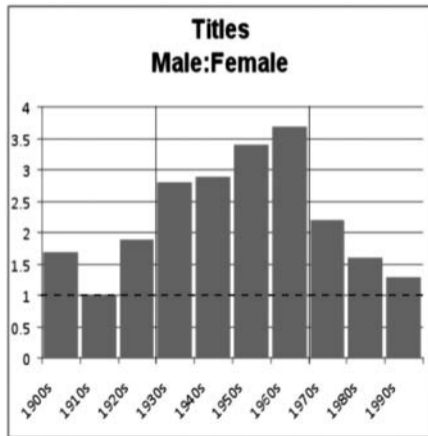
What is the *evidence* for this?

How do McCabe et al. handle *time*?

- How is this different from Pescosolido et al.?
- Why not year by year?

How should we deal with *time*?

Why is timing so theoretically important? So what (that it's lowest in the middle of the 20th century?



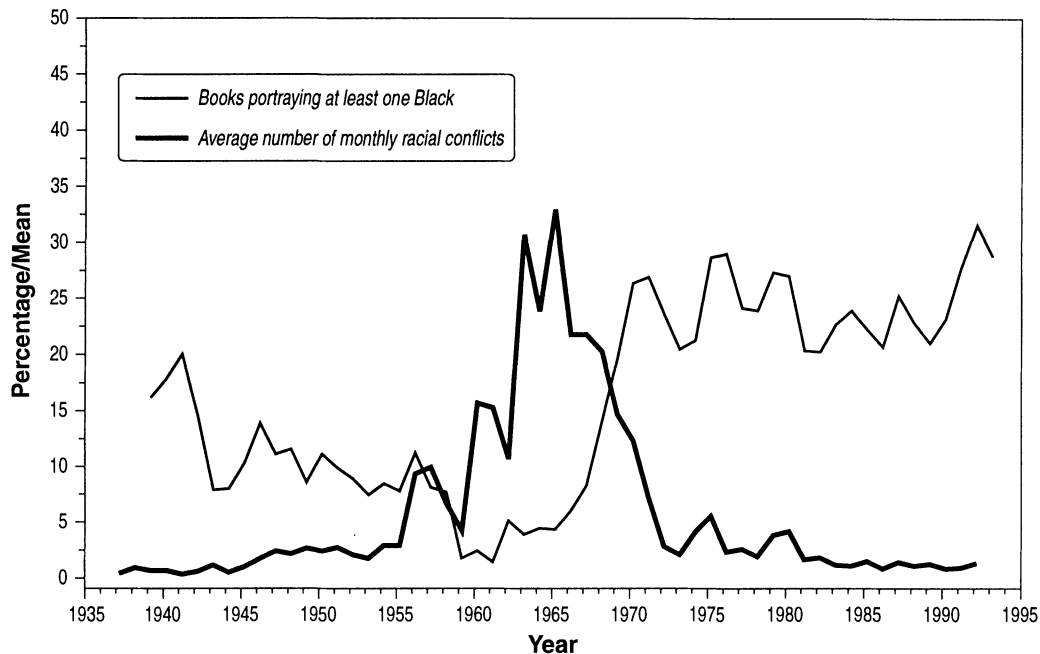


Figure 4. Percentage of Children's Books in Three Book Series that Portray at Least One Black Character and Average Number of Monthly Racial Conflicts, by Year: 1937 to 1993

Note: Percentages are three-year moving averages.

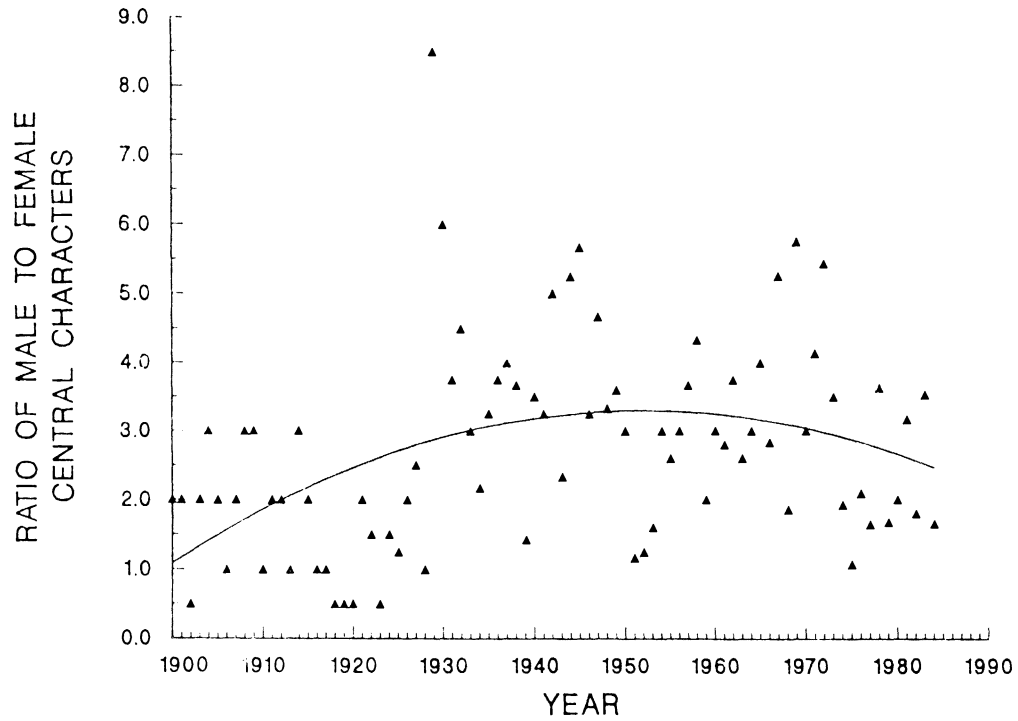


Figure 2

McCABE ET AL.: 7

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McCABE ET AL.: 10

The McCabe et al. results show for gender issues what Pescosolido et al show for racial issues: when disadvantaged groups protest and create conflict, children's books tend to avoid the controversy.

False

McCabe et al., show exactly the opposite, that protest increases the proportion of relevant characters.

Their discussion totally ducks this interesting question of why racial protest has such different effects as feminist protest.

MCCABE ET AL.: 8

The authors calculate their coding reliabilities as in the high 90s percentages.

True

What does this mean?

Why is this so high?

How do they calculate this statistic?

How will we calculate inter-coder reliabilities?

MCCABE ET AL.: 9

The greater frequency of males over female characters is observed most for:

animals

children

adults

title characters

So? What is the significance of the fact that animal characters are more gender unbalanced than human characters? Do we really care?

Make sure that everything we bother to measure is theoretically meaningful.

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- Over time analyses
- Related to social protest
- Counts of presence/ absence as the basis

Differences with Pescosolido et al.:

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Differences with Pescosolido et al.:

- Gender not race (& different relationship)
- Longer time frame (100 years!)
- No *measure* of social protest, just time
- Pescosolido et al., do add some qualitative interpretations beyond the counts (But not as rich descriptions as in Kuperberg and Stone)

McCABE ET AL.: LESSONS FOR US?

Time frame?

Measure of social structure?

How to do both counts and qualitative content?