University Honors Program
Tradition, Excellence, Community

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

- Henry Ford
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Memories are never forgotten, but always remembered. Each time a memory is recollected it varies slightly in shape and form, but the message of the memory always remains true. There are many memories that have taken place at Northern Illinois University, both good and bad. From traveling to the Orange Bowl for Huskie Football to inaugurating a new president, Northern Illinois University has many positive memories. Unfortunately, it has several sad memories too.

Many students will be familiar with the date February 14, 2008—a day that is extremely important to the story and history of Northern Illinois University. Although several students lost their lives on this day, their passing should not be thought of in a negative light, but in a positive one. This day was one in which students, faculty, and the DeKalb community united as one. While this event was entirely awful, it allowed for individuals from all areas of NIU to work together. Different organizations collaborated and cooperated to move forward through this unfortunate time. Differences in race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion did not matter between students and faculty during this time.

In addition, Northern Illinois University could not have moved forward without the help and generous support of the DeKalb community. This unity created a strong NIU bond between the university and DeKalb residents. This link allowed NIU students to become more aware of life outside of the NIU campus. Since this event, students of Northern Illinois University have given their time and energy to help create a better atmosphere for both the DeKalb community and NIU. This unity between students, faculty, and DeKalb residents, helped to create the phrase “Forward, Together, Forward.” This phrase has a different meaning to every individual. To some, it means pushing past old and negative experiences in life and hoping for even better experiences in the future. To others, the combination of the two words creates a unifying bond. As the anniversary of this tragic event draws near, the message from this memory shines bright. We are reminded of the unity and unique bond between students, faculty, and the DeKalb community. We must always remember the students who lost their lives and the message to continue to create a tight-knit bond with one another and work together to persevere.
My Trip to the Poinsettia Bowl
by Anthony Roberts

The Northern Illinois University Huskies football team closed out a record-breaking 2013 season in beautiful and sunny San Diego, California on December 26, 2013. The NIU Huskies were selected to play in the San Diego Credit Union Poinsettia Bowl against Utah State Aggies at the Qualcomm Stadium. NIU (12-2) then ranked 23 in the nation were a strong opposition for the unranked Utah State (10-5) of the Mountain West Conference. This would be a very important game for the Huskies who were upset in the MAC championship game against Bowling Green. This game was televised live on ESPN.

The NIU Huskies would go on and lose to the Utah State Aggies 21-14 for the Poinsettia bowl. However, despite the loss, this game was very unique to me. What made this game special to me was that I was selected to be one of ten V.I.P students to attend the game with President Baker and the NIU Alumni Association. I received an email from Dr. Spears, the Vice Provost of Engaged Learning that I was invited to attend the game and have lunch with the Alumni Association. The invitation was for ten high achieving student leaders around campus. I was blown away and I was so honored and humbled by the invitation. It was an all-expense paid trip to watch the football game! It was great to know that my achievements and my efforts to inspire students did not go unnoticed.
The “Lucky Ten” as Dr. Spears termed the V.I.P students all met at Midway Airport. We convened at the airport, met the President and his entourage and then flew out to San Diego on a chartered flight. It was a Christmas day but upon landing in San Diego the weather was warm and beautiful and much more enjoyable than the white cold in the Midwest. As V.I.P students, we mingled with President Baker, university officials and other key stakeholders during the trip. We attended the Welcome Gathering on that Christmas evening. The Alumni Association welcomed us and we had the opportunity to talk to the President and some alumni members. The next day before the game we were also invited to attend the President’s luncheon. At lunch, we were given an opportunity to address and appreciate the Alumni Association for providing the resources for us to attend the bowl game. It was an inspiring experience and the food was great!

Before the game, we attended the tailgate party and showed our true Huskie spirits. It was very fun to see everyone all in NIU gear and having a good time. Also in attendance was the Governor of Illinois, Gov. Pat Quinn.
Despite the loss, it was a very special and inspiring trip for me. I had only finished my first semester at NIU but I was given this honorable opportunity. This opportunity renewed my passion for this university and it motivated to give back to the university to the best of my capacity. The trip was truly an inspiring and humbling experience. On a final note, my advice for students who want to have such opportunities would be the words of Sarah Stuebing, NIU’s 2013 Lincoln Laureate, she said, “Work hard, be involved, and find your passion. If you are able to find your passion and pursue it, all the rest will fall into place.” I could not have said it any better. I look forward to seeing more Huskies helping Huskies.
My Time as a McKearn Fellow
By Ashley Palin

My time as a McKearn Fellow entailed designing and completing an independent and intensive research project. The work included a series of five case study analyses in order to determine any correlation or causation between the level of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) penetration and democracy/repression across the spectrum of governmental structures.

Opposites Attract: How NGO Penetration Affects Repression

Ashley Palin, McKearn Fellow
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Abstract:
Much research has taken place on the various roles of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the promotion of democracy (Honeich, 2008). Despite this, few studies have focused on the possible relationship between NGO penetration and corresponding levels of repression. This relationship, as well as whether it is influenced by governmental structure, is explored here.

Freedom House scores (measuring indicators of democracy) and Corruption Perceptions Index scores (measuring transparency and perceived levels of corruption) are compared with annual trends in NGO levels for five nations. These five nations—United States, South Africa, Iraq, Russian Federation and China—correspond with the five major governmental structures: liberal democracy, open autocracy, closed autocracy, and autocracy, respectively (Shahani and Gau, 2015).

Research Questions:
1. How does the level of NGO penetration in a given country relate to the level of repression?
2. Does this differ based on governmental structure?

Purpose:
This project is meant to serve as the starting point for a larger, extended research endeavor with the purpose of understanding the relationship between NGO penetration, government actions, and oppressive practices. It is arguably significant in its credit:

1. Inform governments of foreign policy to act more responsibly when dealing with repressive regimes.
2. Provide for the promulgation of practices among NGOs operating in oppressive regimes that prevent harm to target populations.

Results:

United States Repression Data

South Africa Repression Data

Bulgarian Repression Data

Chinese Repression Data

Methodology:
The included nations were chosen from the Polity IV Index to represent the 5 major governmental structures. In order to establish data sets, organizations were located by their governmental affiliation. The data included is a measure of democracy and Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index scores during the years 2001 to 2015 period. These countries were then compared to NGO penetration from respective government.

Case Study: Russian Federation
For the purpose of this research, the Russian Federation is of particular importance. This research began with the assumption that, as with most developing nations (as well as some developed), the Russian Federation would require NGOs to register through the government, and make such information available to the public. However, this was not the case.

Statistics regarding the exact number and nature of NGOs in Russia have been collected since 2001 when Russian Federal Law 303-152 on Charitable Organizations and Associations began the formal registration process through the Federal State Registration Service. This law was amended in 2012 to require that any organization that receives funding from outside sources and is engaged in political activities register as a foreign agent. Failure to do so is punished by heavy fines.

Despite the protest of NGOs and political activists, the law was enacted in March of 2013. The law would result in the government agencies engaging NGOs as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Transparency International. The latter of these groups even went so far as to file a complaint stating that the procurator's actions were illegal.

Discussion & Conclusions:
The data gathered in this project shows several major trends:

1. The repression data supports the “More Muddy in the Mud” thesis proposed by Helen Fein (1999). The nations in the “muddy” of the governmental spectrum, in this case South Africa, Bangladesh and Russia, showed much greater variance in their repression levels.
2. If the sample is representative, NGO numbers are growing at a steady, though varied pace, worldwide.
3. While the autonomy remained relatively stable, the democratic nations showed a slight increase in repression as the number of NGOs started increasing more rapidly.
4. More research needs to be done in order to ascertain universal relationships between NGOs and repression.

References:


Citations:


Northern Illinois University

Q: Why was data not available for Russian NGOs?
A: While no detailed figures are on file, the group is quite likely a proposed action on the part of the Russian government. This step was likely taken in response to NGOs being registered (at a rate of 57%) in the Russian Federation. It is also possible that the law itself is a ploy to stifle NGO activity. Not only are NGOs required to register as NGOs, but also are required to register as “foreign agents” if they receive funding from outside sources that are not approved in Russian law.
“Time that Goes By”
By Olivia Guerra
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Plastic Bottles
by Naomi Manns

Abstract

This essay will address the reasons as to why people should recycle plastic bottles and how we can improve the recycling habits of local residents in the DeKalb County. Through the use of a self-constructed survey, information pertaining to individuals lack of interest in recycling was strongly correlated to the inadequate amount of recycle bins. From this data, it can be concluded that the inaccessibility to recycling bins may be a probable cause for a reduced amount of recycled plastic bottles. By increasing the number of recycling bins around the DeKalb County, this may very well improve the recycling rates. Further research has also shown how recycling plastic bottles will benefit the earth. Such benefits include conserving oil, saving energy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These important factors and more are essential to the living and are valid reasons as to why people should recycle plastic bottles. In the DeKalb County, Waste Management is responsible for the recyclable products here. With their help, we will be able to improve DeKalb both environmentally and economically.

Keywords: recycling, Waste Management, plastic
As the semester carries on in full swing, University Honors is gearing up for the semester kick-off of one of its most popular programming events: SOUPer Wednesday.

SOUPer Wednesday is an integral part of the honors community in which University Honors students and staff enjoy a free lunch, network, and listen to guest presentations.

Through partnering with the NIU Alumni Association, SOUPer Wednesday has been designated as the Year of the Alumni. Presentations have been given by notable alumni including: Jeff Yordon, Ralph Strozza and Dave Hewson. As well, distinguished guests, such as, First Lady Dana Stover has been in attendance.

The University Honors program looks forward to seeing familiar and new faces this upcoming event. In addition to our distinguished alumni guest this week, we will also be joined by Dr. Gabriel Holbrook who heads up NIU’s Oxford Study Abroad Program. The Oxford presentation begins at 11:40 and the alumni presentation begins at noon.

The University Honors program extends a warm invitation to its students, faculty, and anyone who is interested in joining University Honors, to attend SOUPer Wednesday, February 5th in Campus Life Building, Room 110.
New Series

Ethical Leadership

Info Session: January 30, 5pm @ Campus Life Building 100

Guest Lecturer: Dr. William McCoy
Director, BELIEF Program-NIU

Speakers to include: Mike Brown-CEO, Rock River YMCA and Becky Meggesin-V.P., Human Resources, AGL Resources

5 SESSIONS
Feb 20 & Feb. 27; Mar. 6, 20, & 27


Questions & to register: honors@niu.edu