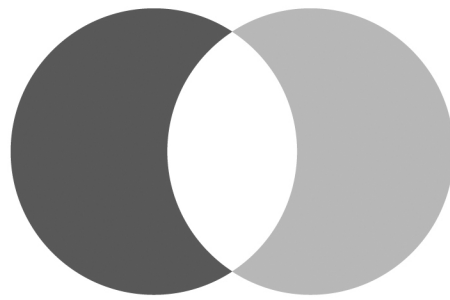


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A Note from the Managing Editors



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We are pleased to publish Lambda Pi Eta's inaugural journal issue. NCA is working to develop new opportunities to support undergraduate study in communication, including encouraging the development and dissemination of high-quality undergraduate research. This new LPH journal, exclusively for undergraduate members of LPH, will help meet that objective.

The journal is currently accepting submissions for its second issue, to be published in the spring of 2014. Submission will be electronic. Completed papers in PDF format should be sent to NCA Associate Director for Academic and Professional Affairs Brad Mello at bmello@natcom.org. Papers must be no longer than 25 pages, (double spaced, standard 1 inch margins, 12 point font), follow APA style, and must represent original research in the communication discipline. Co-authored papers are acceptable, but all authors must be undergraduate LPH members. The deadline for submissions for the spring issue is January 14, 2014.

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“ IT IS **what** IT IS ”

COLLEGE FEMALES AND ONE-NIGHT STANDS

The hookup culture, largely constructed and perpetuated by popular media, is a growing presence on college campuses. One-night stands and casual sex were once regarded as lewd, unacceptable behavior, but their negative stigma may be diminishing. Previously published literature helps create a composite picture of what the college hookup culture looks like as a whole, but does little to delve beneath the surface into individual motivations, perceptions, and desires. This study is intended to discover how female college students communicatively manage their expectations of a one-night stand. Interviews reveal a number of themes that suggest women's desire to be freed from the constraint of cultural norms and the infamous double standard.

For many individuals, college is a time of personal growth, freedom, and exploration—both in and out of the classroom. While a college education challenges and expands the boundaries of young minds, it also contests their physical and sexual inhibitions. Adolescent and young adult culture is strongly influenced by sexuality, in addition to factors “at work creating a potent need to comply with perceived peer sexual norms” (Paul, McManus & Hayes, 2000). Popular culture and media have glamorized sex and the hookup culture in a way that idealizes the stereotypical, *mythic* notion of a one-night stand. Casual, uncommitted sex was once deemed a profane, taboo subject matter, but the times have changed drastically: from TV to advertisements and movies to magazines, sex is an inextricable element of today’s society. The unrestricted brand of freedom unique to undergraduate students helps to further perpetuate and exacerbate their replication of the behaviors seen in the media. Even though the exploration of one’s sexual self is

an arguably significant component of human nature, the college hookup culture lends itself to a variety of worrisome issues, including lowered self-esteem and self-image, unplanned pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. While one-night stands and casual sex are often seen as harmless, no-strings-attached fun, many consider such activities to be dangerous, disappointing, and downright degrading.

Conversations with college-age women helped open my eyes to the prevalence of the one-night stand in this particular demographic. It became evident that although the one-night stand often results in zero commitment, emotions and values are indeed constructed and negotiated within the process. I became particularly interested in looking at the ways in which females communicate circumstances surrounding one-night stands, including their motivations and expectations. This study seeks to better understand the strategies college females use to manage these expectations, with an eye turned toward uncovering the meanings ascribed to a one-night stand.

The hookup culture, on college campuses and beyond, has been a topic of research and debate for over a decade. Previous studies have sought to create a holistic, overall picture of the college hookup culture; however, this research tends toward superficial, experiential-based accounts of casual sexual behavior. A precise definition of a one-night stand or hookup is difficult to pinpoint given the highly subjective and situational nature of such an encounter. According to Paul & Hayes, a *hookup* is a sexual encounter occurring between acquaintances or strangers, “that may or may not involve sexual intercourse...usually lasting only one night without the expectation of developing a relationship” (Paul & Hayes, 2002, p. 640).

Some studies suggest that males are more likely than females to engage in *uncommitted sex* (Eschler, 2004). In selecting a long- or short-term mate, males value physical attractiveness while females take socioeconomic status into consideration (Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). This tendency can be explained biologically, as having sex with multiple partners may “ensure his genetic legacy;” conversely, females choose partners based on their “willingness to invest in future offspring” (Eschler, 2004, p. 172). Concerns about this *investment* can be as seemingly insignificant as wondering if her partner will remember her name or call her the next day (Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Considering these biological motivations, women seem to be more emotionally involved in sex than their male counterparts. So when sex occurs outside of a committed relationship, it is not uncommon for females to focus on emotional intimacy rather than physical intimacy (Eschler, 2004). This correlates with socially constructed notions of female behavior as well as the culturally pervasive *double standard* that holds males and females to differing standards regarding sexual behavior.

Campbell’s (2008) study compared male and female reactions to one-night stands. In keeping with the evolutionary perspective, she noted that females are genetically predisposed to seek out partners “who are more likely to stay with them after insemination” (Campbell, 2008, p.158). In this way, casual sexual behaviors may allow females to sift through short-term partners in hopes of finding a long-term partner. For female college students with many sexual partners,

however, sex tends to create “feelings of bonding and vulnerability,” resulting in disappointment and perhaps lowered self-esteem after a one-night stand (Campbell, 2008, p. 160). These negative psychological side effects led the researcher to conclude that females are not as biologically inclined as males to enjoy casual sex.

Paul, McManus, and Hayes’ (2000) research sought to identify similarities and correlations among college students who engage in hookups. Their study analyzed social and individual predictors, such as alcohol use on college campuses and personal risky behaviors, as well as gender and psychological characteristics of the participants. Findings revealed that those who participate in hookups involving intercourse differ in social and individual characteristics from those whose hookups do not involve intercourse. The research also incorporated Lee’s six styles of love as a way to differentiate personalities and/or relationship behaviors: those who had hookups with intercourse were indicative of a *ludic*, or game-playing, style of love. Other factors linking these individuals were “high impulsivity, low concern for personal safety, low dependency, their erotic or passionate approach to relationships, and their avoidant attachment style” (Paul et al., 2000, p. 85).

Paul & Hayes’ (2002) research took an experiential approach to casual sex and hookups in order to assemble a composite picture of the college hookup culture. Because previous studies tended to focus solely on differences between the sexes, their study aimed to discover “perceptions of a typical hookup” while also gathering actual hookup descriptions (Paul & Hayes, 2002, p. 641). Common themes emerging from the data included variability of hookup experiences, both individual and within sexes; expectations of a romantic relationship; emotional ambivalence; presence of alcohol; females feeling pressured to have sexual relations; sharing hookup experiences with friends; and regret differentiation between sexes. Although their findings revealed a clearer understanding of the hookup culture as a whole, ways in which individuals communicate, negotiate, or manage their expectations of a casual sexual encounter were not addressed.

Likewise, Fielder & Carey (2010b) conducted a study to better characterize the attributes of a hookup, defined as “sexual interactions between partners who are not in a romantic relationship” (Fielder & Carey, 2010, p. 346). Interviewing first-semester female college

students, their research aligned with previous studies in that alcohol use was often present in hookup situations. They also found that many females had a previous relationship, whether platonic or romantic, with their casual partners, and that the term *hookup* is used as an umbrella term for a full range of sexual behaviors. Because the researchers compared romantic sexual encounters with casual sexual encounters, it was noted that women preferred and enjoyed the former to the latter.

A study by Townsend & Wasserman (2011) hoped to uncover connections between number of sexual partners and emotional reactions to casual sexual encounters. Their findings revealed that males had “more permissive sexual attitudes” than females, who reported feelings of worry and vulnerability post-encounter (Townsend & Wasserman, 2011, p. 1178). Males, who often note positive emotions after a one-night stand, are then further motivated to seek out similar experiences. Overall, males and females have significantly different motivations for low commitment sexual relations (Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Biological and sociological approaches are important for our understanding of the hookup culture as a whole, but a communication studies perspective may reveal the deeper motivations and perceptions of those engaging in one-night stands.

Fielder & Carey (2010a) sought to identify factors that may predict casual sexual behavior as well as potential consequences following a casual encounter. They believed factors such as sexual behavior, religiosity, parents’ marital status, alcohol use, and media exposure all contributed to college students’ likeliness to engage in hookups. After conducting their research, it was discovered that previous hookup behavior, intoxication, and “situational triggers” were all significant predictors of hookup behavior in college (Fielder & Carey, 2010a, p. 1115). Additionally, they proposed the implications of casual sex on females’ self-esteem and overall mental health as an issue to be further investigated by the public health sector.

Likewise, Eshbaugh & Gute (2008) examined predictors of regret in college women pertaining to hookups and casual sex. Regret is considered a feeling of “remembering the past and imagining that the present would be different if one had behaved differently” (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008, p. 78). Sexual

regret may result from a number of situations: behavior contrary to one’s values, behavior under the influence of alcohol, inconsistent expectations between partners, and neglecting to use condoms. Their study revealed that females were more likely to be regretful of coital hookups than hookups lacking intercourse; it also found that females resort to oral sex as a way to strike a compromise between the pressure to fit in and a society that largely condemns casual sex. Eshbaugh and Gute’s study brings another element into the academic discussion of the hookup culture by focusing on regret, a feeling often experienced after partaking in behavior potentially detrimental to one’s physical and/or emotional well being.

Taking these studies into consideration, I began to contemplate the issue of casual sex from a communication perspective. Personal desires, expectations, and emotions as well as the opinions, behaviors, and perceptions of one’s peer group combine to shape the actions of an individual. Additionally, these factors work to affect the ways in which a person communicates and makes sense of their experiences. The freedom of a college setting combined with inhibitions lowered by alcohol creates an environment conducive to hookups and one-night stands. My research seeks to understand the communication employed, during and after a one-night stand encounter, to express and manage one’s expectations, feelings, and motivations. It is my hope that this study will help enrich the available research on the college hookup culture by incorporating a communication studies approach. I formulated the following research question to help guide my study:

RQ1: How do female college students communicatively manage their expectations of a one-night stand?

METHODS ■■■■■

PARTICIPANTS

Ten female students attending a small, liberal arts college in the Midwestern United

States voluntarily participated in this study. The women ranged in age from 19 to 22. The group was comprised of two seniors, seven juniors, and one sophomore. Ages of participants' first one-night stands ranged from 15 to 21. Three participants reported having had one one-night stand, two had had two one-night stands, and the remaining participants reported having had five or six one-night stands.

INTERVIEWS

Face-to-face interviews were held with each of the 10 participants. Interviews were conducted and recorded in quiet, private spaces with minimal interruptions. The participants were asked several demographic questions before answering 21 primary interviewing questions. Participants were read a consent agreement in which they were informed that the interviews would be recorded and used for later research. Interviews lasted from nine minutes to approximately 20 minutes.

PROCEDURES

Participants were selected from a group of my peers and acquaintances. Initial interest was expressed verbally, and I later contacted these individuals via

email. The participants had to be female college students, age 18 or older, who had engaged in at least one one-night stand. For the purposes of this study, a *one-night stand* was defined as a *sexual relationship lasting only one night or occurring only one time*. The first several questions were intended to gain insight into the societal constructions and expectations of one-night stands. These questions were open-ended and asked about general perceptions, peer or friend groups' perceptions, and personal perceptions of a one-night stand. The remaining questions dealt with feelings, motivations, communication, and peers' reactions surrounding the participants' most recent one-night stand.

ANALYSIS

The interviews were transcribed in order to examine them for similar themes and commonalities. After multiple close readings of each interview transcription, several themes emerged to help answer the research question. Using a grounded theory approach, themes selected were those with the most supporting evidence from the interviews. The four themes include *one-night stand as emotional ambivalence*, *one-night stand as limited agency*, *one-night stand as college experience*, and *one-night stand as learning experience*. *College experience* and *limited agency* yielded sub-themes that reflect the themes' overall dimensionality.

ONE-NIGHT STAND AS EMOTIONAL AMBIVALENCE

Participants were able to share feelings and emotions surrounding their experiences, which revealed a significant amount of emotional ambivalence toward their one-night stands. Halie*, age 21, revealed, “Being a college student, I’m okay with the random one-night stand. Kinda sucks, like, being put in that situation. I think sometimes I would like more but...” Though she didn’t feel regretful of her most recent one-night stand, Halie did say, “There’ve been times when it’s like ‘ooh... that person’...or if I really don’t like that person or it just makes things awkward so I might regret it.” Bekah, 19, described her encounter as “pretty awkward...just very awkward” and admitted that she felt “disappointed” afterwards. Although she herself did not experience post-encounter ambivalence, when asked what a negative one-night stand might look like Jessica, 20, said, “awkwardness afterwards would be a negative” and “there are people that feel unclean or disappointed after them [one-night stands].”

Eileen, 21, described feeling torn about what to do: “I didn’t know whether I should sleep there or go home...I think I felt like if I stayed then it might mean that we might date, so I stayed.” Her uncertainty was further compounded by her friends’ opinions: “We were close, but we weren’t that close just ‘cause we were all freshmen... so I think they were weirded out, and they didn’t really know what type of person I was, which kind of sucks.” Likewise, Abigail, also 21, reported ambivalence during and after her one-night stand:

I was confused for a lot of it...and after it happened it was like, ‘oh, this could be weird... this could be *interesting* later’...And he would randomly call me sometimes, which was even more confusing. Honestly, really confusing because it was just kind of like, I had assumed that it was a one-time thing and that nothing was ever gonna become of it.

* All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

ONE-NIGHT STAND AS LIMITED AGENCY

The circumstances surrounding participants’ one-night stands lent themselves to a theme of limited agency. Interviews contained evidence of intoxication, male initiation of the encounter, or fear that rumors would be spread about their behavior—all factors that worked to compromise the participants’ sense of self-control.

Intoxication. Seven out of 10 participants admitted they had been drinking or were drunk when their one-night stands occurred. Statements such as “I was intoxicated,” “I was not in any...mind capacity to be making the decisions that I was,” “I wasn’t even really that drunk at all,” “we were both intoxicated,” and “I had been drinking an excessive amount of alcohol,” all explicitly reveal that participants were inebriated—thus operating under impaired judgment and lowered inhibitions—at the time of their encounters. Because alcohol greatly affects the brain and its decision-making capabilities, being intoxicated significantly reduces one’s ability to make healthy choices such as consenting to casual sex.

Male initiation. Nine out of 10 participants felt their male counterparts had been the instigators of their one-night stands. Even the sole participant, Eileen, who felt she had initiated the encounter said, “I remember him being like, ‘you can come over if you want,’ and I did, so I feel like that’s obviously initiating it.” Typically initiation was described as the male either making an effort to approach the female or explicit verbal initiation on his part. Gwen, 21, said her partner pursued her first: “He obviously didn’t know my name, and he’s like, ‘girl in the yellow dress, I’m not letting you out of my sight *all night!*’” On the other hand, Ingrid, also 21, said, “I may have initiated the initial conversation at the bar, but he definitely asked if I wanted to go back.” Abigail shared her feelings, saying, “I felt like I was participating, but at the same time I felt like he had all of the control because he was the one who showed up, and he was the one who kind of, you know, *said* it first...I felt like I didn’t have a lot of control or say.” She went on to say, “I don’t wanna say *victim*, but it kind of made me feel like I had been *slayed by the man whore* or something.” In similar fashion, Charlotte said, “I would say he initiated just because he approached me, and he asked if I wanted to leave, and we went to *his* room.”

Spreading of rumors. Some participants expressed concern that rumors about their one-night stand and/or sexual behavior would be spread throughout campus. Whether for fear of being chastised by peers or harm to one's reputation, six participants cited this as a negative element of one-night stands. Frankie, 22, claimed that a negative experience would occur "with someone that's a bragger and cocky and is gonna go spilling it everywhere." Similarly, Dana said a negative outcome "would be when all of your friends are like, 'ohmygod I can't believe you did that' or when it gets around campus." Halie summed up her concern by saying, "People gossiping and people talking are probably the worst because I mean you don't really have control over that. And then it gets out of between those two people and it's when other people start getting involved."

ONE-NIGHT STAND AS COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Several participants discussed their one-night stand experiences as a normative behavior or component of one's college career. This was described in terms of *having fun* and also reaffirmed by peers and friends, perpetuating the belief that one-night stands are an integral part of college life.

Recreation and/or fun. Participants tended to relay their one-night stand perceptions or experiences as *fun* or recreational behavior. "I was kind of in the mindset of...ready for it, I guess," said Abigail, "...I thought it would be fun." Gwen held similar views, saying, "I think sex, if it's done in a healthy, safe way, then sex can be fun—fun for everyone." "During the encounter it's fun...I mean sex is fun," said Dana. Likewise, Jessica said, "I was *pumped!* I was ready to go!...'cause it had been a long time since I had had a sexual encounter." On her perceptions of a one-night stand, Ingrid said:

I really enjoy the ability to just kind of let loose, have fun, meet new people, and have a pretty much zero commitment good time without having to worry about...the social protocol following, you know, things like that.

Later, she also commented, "I also think it's kind of strangely empowering, just because it's very, like, go-getter attitude...you know what you want, go get it, kinda situation."

Peer affirmation. Personal desire as well as affirmation from friend groups contributed to the broader theme of one-night stand as a common element of the college experience. Participants' friends played a significant role in how individuals negotiated their own feelings following their one-night stands. Even if the individual was unsure what to make of her encounter, support and reassurance from friends nearly always diminished her qualms. After Charlotte's most recent one-night stand her friends reacted in a manner consistent with that of other participants:

I was feeling more down and crappy about it, and they were, like, 'no, it's really not a big deal... it happens to everyone, la la la, like ehh, it's college,' so I guess [they] reinforced or made me feel better about the incident.

Halie also received affirmation from her friends, and said:

I do think in some odd way we find support in each other...like it's our choice, maybe it's not the best, but this is what we make for ourselves, and if we're comfortable with it, other people should be, too.

Later she went on to say, "It was definitely reinforcement with what had happened, that they responded positively so I didn't regret it." Abigail shared similar sentiments: "They were like, 'yeah, you got it in, good for you!'...it made me feel better about it to tell someone and to have someone give me that reassurance that it was an okay thing...it was a positive reinforcement thing."

ONE-NIGHT STAND AS LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Another way in which participants framed their one-night stands was as a learning experience. Participants sometimes viewed the one-night stand through the lens of their age and naivetés. “I was really young and stupid,” said Eileen, “I made a mistake when I was a freshman.” Later, however, she went on to dismiss it by saying, “Shit happens.” Abigail described how she felt: “Afterwards I felt like ‘ssshhh, I probably shouldn’t have done that,’ because, you know, I didn’t want the people to think less of me even though we both obviously had that reputation.” Dana expressed her feelings about her past encounters:

Looking back, I wish...that some of them [one-night stands] hadn’t happened. But I feel like at this point I’ve learned from it and I’ve grown up from my past, and I’ve accepted what has happened and I’m able to move on from it. I mean I wish some of my friends weren’t going through the same thing that I’d gone through, but I think it’s their place to make their own mistakes just like I did.

Frankie framed her experience as one to help upcoming generations learn from her actions:

I guess it’s kind of a learning experience...that you can look back at and say, ‘yeah, I did that, but I didn’t do it 100 times, and nothing bad happened.’ So if my future daughter asks me about it, I can honestly tell her, and help educate her more.

Others viewed a one-night stand as a way to explore one’s self. Ingrid said, “I feel like especially as you get older, you kind of start to experience your views a little bit, and things become a little bit more acceptable.” Jessica agreed, saying, “It’s becoming more common and more socially acceptable to have sexual experiences and explore your sexuality, much more than it was even five, ten years ago.”

DISCUSSION

This research yielded results that support previous studies of hookup culture and add more depth to the information currently available on the topic. Of the themes identified, two appear to be consistent with previous research. Inherent in my research as

well as earlier published literature (Eschler, 2004; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Campbell, 2008; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011; Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008) was *emotional ambivalence* on the females’ part following casual sexual encounters. Participants in this study described feelings of confusion, disappointment, awkwardness, and uncertainty—all of which may be interpreted as contradictory or mixed feelings. Awkwardness was commonly cited as an ambivalence to be strongly avoided, as this feeling might result in damage to a friendship or platonic relationship that may have been present prior to the one-night stand. This may signal that participants were emotionally invested in the encounter at some level, which complements prior research positing females as the sex more likely to invest their emotions in sexual partners.

The second theme that supported previous research was the high prevalence of alcohol resulting in *limited agency* in one-night stand situations. Seven out of 10 participants claimed they had been drinking or intoxicated at the time of the encounter. It can be inferred that these participants were functioning under impaired judgment and thus emboldened by lowered inhibitions. We may also speculate that these participants may not have engaged in their respective one-night stands had they been sober. Therefore, it can be argued that participants who were drunk at the time of their encounters did not fully consent to having sex. Even if their mentalities had not been affected by drinking, individuals often turn to alcohol as a way to excuse questionable behavior (Fielder & Carey, 2010a). Because one-night stands are considered questionable by society at large, it may be that the participants sought an extraneous factor on which to cast blame for their actions.

The remaining themes were not directly supportive of earlier studies—suggesting a need for further research in these areas. The theme of *limited agency* due to male domination could be linked to earlier studies that showcase males’ permissive and non-committal attitudes toward casual sex and those with whom they copulate. Because males are more biologically driven to have a greater number of sexual partners, this could also increase their desire and motivation to seek out one-night stands. Several participants’ one-night stand descriptions implied

a lack of agency, as it was often male partners who initiated the encounters; female participants merely went with the flow of events. Whether the male had all the say in what took place, or the females' judgment was impaired, these circumstances lead us to believe (a) one-night stands are not something females actively pursue; or (b) females consider one-night stands as shameful or embarrassing, and therefore blame external influence for their actions.

Additionally, limited agency was generated from rumors being spread about one-night stand experiences. Over half the participants mentioned this as an extraneous factor over which they had no control, for once rumors begin to spread, they are impossible to exterminate. Because casual sexual behavior is frowned upon and dismissed as inappropriate behavior, the fear of rumors spreading throughout campus and beyond is quite legitimate. It may be advantageous to conduct further studies on the notion of limited agency through rumor spreading, as it could help uncover the social consequences females face when they disobey the traditional double standard.

Another theme, *college experience*, contradicts earlier studies, as it shows us that females may harbor views about sex that are just as permissive as their male counterparts. College, as depicted in society and popular culture, is a time of freedom—a chance to let loose, have fun, and be totally carefree. Mainstream depictions of one-night stands offer the total package: going out with friends, drinking, dancing, and sexual pleasure at the end of the night. Eight out of 10 participants explicitly stated either they wanted to engage in a one-night stand, or one-night stands were a *fun* activity and something to be desired. These statements were often strongly supported by positive reinforcement from their friend groups. More often than not, friends helped to positively reinforce participants' one-night stands, even when the participant herself was unsure how to feel about it. This affirmation could be interpreted as the friends' attempts to legitimize their own casual sexual behavior. While the gender of these peers is uncertain, these affirmations nevertheless reveal that casual sex is becoming more accepted among college females. These attitudes invite further research and suggest that cultural perceptions may be shifting in regards to casual sex and the notorious double standard.

The double standard is an ideal that “rewards young men for having more sexual partners” while at the same time condemning women for the very same actions—naturally, this leads to women's lowered self-esteem “because the behavior violates a social norm” (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008, p. 80). It is interesting to note that two participants made a point to share their displeasure with this longstanding cultural attitude. “I'd just like to say...I feel like it's very acceptable for men to have a one-night stand, and if it's acceptable for them, it should be just as acceptable for women. The end,” said Gwen when simply asked if she had anything to add to her interview responses. Halie shared similar sentiments:

Well what kinda pisses me off about one-night stands is a lot of the times...there'll be like a stigma towards women that they're the ones that get needy and clingy...even though men are supposed to be the dominant-macho figure they still have emotions like women do...the stigmas for men that there's the cocky asshole that wants to *get it in* and go...women can be the same way. I mean, that's viewed negatively for women, like they're viewed as a whore and that's frustrating, but I mean, it is what it is.

Halie's final statement, “it is what it is,” reflects the unfortunate reality of the patriarchal culture in which we live: until these sexist ideologies are overturned, the double standard will continue to thrive. Women may be becoming more open to the idea of casual sex, but our male-dominated society is not. These women's frustrations present an opportunity for more in-depth research into the struggles and repercussions females face when violating such an ingrained cultural norm as the double standard.

Framing the one-night as a *learning experience* supports the earlier research as well as the above claim of shifting cultural expectations. Because the phrase *learning experience* implies a *mistake* has been made (a couple participants called it just that) it contributes to the emotional ambivalence females feel after a one-night stand. Immediately following the encounter, a few participants admitted regret or similar *I-shouldn't-have-done-that* feelings. These negative psychological effects could be directly related to females' anxiety over their violation of the cultural norm.

However, nearly all participants reported that over time and with support from friends, they have come to accept their one-night stands and chalk them up to a life lesson. Participants did not divulge exactly what their experiences taught them, but we may be led to believe they either ceased casual sexual behavior or became more mindful of their actions. The participants' dismissal and seemingly indifferent attitudes toward their one-night stands may also contribute to a growing acceptance of casual sex.

As with any study, this one has its own limitations. The primary limitation in this study was my personal relationship with eight out of the ten participants. This was both a limitation and an enhancement. I was careful to conduct the interviews with professionalism and as unbiased as possible. Even if I had already heard the stories being shared, I made a conscious effort to dispel all previous perceptions and opinions. At the same time, my relationships with the participants allowed them to feel more comfortable discussing the subject matter than they may have with a stranger. One-night stands are incredibly personal experiences, and therefore it was important and almost necessary to have an established trust between researcher and participant. Even though I already knew a few of their stories, the interviews enabled me to gain access to their

personal beliefs, views, motivations, and mentalities.

For the purposes of this study, a one-night stand is a sexual relationship lasting only one night or occurring only one time. But what happens if the encounter turns into something more? During the interview process, I learned that a one-night stand is what led Abigail to become involved with her current boyfriend of about five months. Claiming they "didn't necessarily get along" beforehand, she and her partner began dating about two months after the one-night stand took place. Though Abigail is a discrepant case in the context of this study, she also helps confirm Campbell's (2008) research that suggests females may sort through a number of short-term partners in hopes of finding a long-term partner.

Studying previously published literature in conjunction with my own research, it seems that consideration of all perspectives create a richer, more in-depth understanding of college females and the ways by which they make sense of a one-night stand experience. While much of the previous literature was conducted from a sociological, biological, or public health approach, my study was an example of how the hookup culture may be examined from a communication perspective. By conducting this research, we now may have a bit more insight into just what makes the college hookup culture tick.

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ONLINE Disclosure

OF RELATIONAL INFORMATION

This paper is an analysis of interviews with twelve college students at Christopher Newport University. Participants were asked to comment on what sort of dialectical tensions arise between partners as a result of establishing their relationships on Facebook. Using grounded theory, generalizations about the findings were drawn from the collected data. Three themes were found after the analysis: gendered motivations behind Facebook, notions of reality, and tensions between autonomy and connectedness. Given a larger sample size and more time to conduct more interviews, different theories may have developed from the variance of information. Further studies may consider the effect of Facebook on different age groups, as this study only looked at college-age students.

As society progresses, it uncovers new branches of technological developments that function to keep its members connected. Communication theorist, Marshall McLuhan, further parsed this concept through his concept of the global village, where all the inhabitants of the world community are inevitably interconnected and interdependent to each other. One significant means of connecting people can be most readily seen through the advancement of social networking sites, primarily Facebook, which has over 500 million active users as of 2010 (Sheldon, 2008). According to Pavica Sheldon (2008), Facebook: allows users to stay in touch with old friends, to make new “friends,” to join “groups” that fit their interests, advertise their parties, check how many personal messages/wall posts they received from their friends, and see other people’s pictures and new features that Facebook continually adds. (p. 41)

This paper beckons the question: What dialectical tensions are developed between female and male

relational partners who establish their public relationships through social networking sites? After an analysis of several college student interviews, I discovered three important themes pertaining to how college students manage their relationships, which are established through such social networking sites like Facebook. First, there is a clear disparity between females and males regarding the importance of establishing relationships online. Second, the students’ conception of ‘real’ relationships are maintained and validated through Facebook statuses. Finally, I address the dialectical tensions between autonomy and connectedness. To help answer this question, I utilized the interview data from twelve transcribed interviews. The interviews were conducted among six couples from Christopher Newport University who identified themselves as heterosexuals; thus, the interviews contained information from six females and six males. The study was constructed to identify reasons for why college students choose to disclose their relational statuses on Facebook.

According to Bryant (2008), our identities are managed and negotiated at the intersections between social and cultural elements. The ways in which we seek to represent ourselves are prompted by larger social institutions, which define how we perform our identity, whether it is through age, class, race, or in this case, gender. It is commonly accepted that females and males are inherently different and that they communicate in different ways (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007). These differences are presumed to extend across all functions of social life, including work, family, education, and media. Consequently, the appropriated roles of females and males are diffused into networking sites like Facebook, which is “primarily intended to enable members to maintain existing relationships rather new develop new ones” (Mansson & Myers, 2011, p. 155). But while females use Facebook to maintain relationships, to entertain themselves, and to pass time, males are more likely to use Facebook to develop new relationships (Sheldon, 2009). This maintenance of relationships, whether they are platonic friendships or romantic connections, differs for females and males. In their research, Mansson and Myers (2011) examined the “extent to which biological sex affects perceived appropriateness and the amount of expressed affection” (p. 158). They found that “expressions of affection...are more appropriate when enacted by women than by men” (Mansson & Myers, 2011, p. 158). In several of the interviews analyzed, the majority of males indicated that relationship statuses on Facebook were more often than not introduced and established by

the females. Thus, gender is an important predictor in distinguishing the motivations behind using Facebook (Sheldon, 2008). Gender specific styles of communication are reproduced onto the Internet and other social networking sites. When asked about the communication that occurred between relational partners about selecting Facebook relationship statuses, MB explained, “Well I was like “oh! Can we put it on Facebook?” And he was like “I guess,” so I did it and at first he didn’t seem super excited”. While establishing relationships online served as an authenticating function for women, men used it to mark relational exclusivity or territory. For JC, one benefit of having a Facebook relationship status is that it “helps with people like either backing off you or not going towards her”. PH commented that Facebook statuses are helpful so that “creepos don’t try and hit on her”. Similarly, MP said “Guys know not to screw around with my girl”. This notion of relationships acting as signifiers for a person’s territory is closely tied to the dominant discourse that favors heterosexuality. Bryant (2008) elaborated, writing that “purposeful inclusion of this content [relationship statuses] is indicative of members’ desire to confirm their heterosexuality” (p. 22). Females and males try to appeal to their heterosexual desires by portraying themselves as strictly feminine or masculine; females embellish themselves online by making themselves appear more beautiful and friendly and also by writing longer self-descriptions, while males portray themselves as masculine through claims of status and power (Bryant, 2008).

FACEBOOK OFFICIAL: CREATING THE REALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

The study of twelve college students purported to examine the reasons for why they decided to share their relationship statuses on Facebook. While media certainly exerts power over how people perform identity everyday, I quickly discerned that the media also has the ability to control perceptions of reality (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007). According to Hosterman (2011), “the real is conceived of as power: power that does not readily extinguish itself and is...a way of grounding our understanding of the world around us” (p. 23). Members of society both actively and passively create and maintain notions of reality, which are most commonly established in dominant norms and values within society. Reality is defined by the forms, functions, and structures that allow the everydayness to occur; once the illusion of reality is broken, individuals will begin to question those same notions of reality. Hosterman (2008) continued, explaining that “human beings seek to find something familiar in the digital space, and this superimposes its fragile and narrow understanding of the real onto objects and actions that appear to be similar to those of our selves” (p. 24). The concept that Facebook mediates what can be considered official and real was a consistent pattern in many of the interviews. College students recognize the dominant norm that relationships are not in existence until

they are established on Facebook; determining these relationships online are seen as obligatory, natural, and common sense. The idea of communality is important because norms are not solely created through individual effort, rather, they stem from societal action. MP explained that “because it’s Facebook there’s more meaning behind relationship statuses...I think it’s more to the actual action of changing the status on Facebook. There’s more meaning behind it”. When asked about the reactions of her Facebook friends after establishing an online relationship, CM added:

“for it to be considered official it has to be acc—like um, accessed by all—like, all of my network friends. So I guess the more people that know about it, recognize it, like it, dislike it, the more it reinstates that our relationship exists, but that’s just through other people’s eyes”.

Later in the interview, CM elaborated on this pattern and said, “it kind of um, establishes a sense of commitment to each other...I think online, to make it public information, kinda solidifies that, you know, our relationship and our commitment to each other”. Thus, social networking sites such as Facebook control and maintain what constitutes as reality. This can create problems for Facebook couples who strive for connectedness online, but also desire privacy for personal issues such as relationship statuses.

DIALECTICAL TENSION: AUTONOMY AND CONNECTEDNESS

According to Waters and Ackerman (2011), “users of Facebook use it more for disclosing to distant friends rather than to close friends” (p. 101). College students especially “are simultaneously connected to hundreds of “friends” from home, friends who are communicating their experiences, feelings, excitements, and struggles” (Stephenson-Abetz & Holman, 2012, p. 177). Certainly, the desire for connection with others in our community is essential and demonstrated clearly through the use of Facebook and other social networking sites. However, while individuals strive for openness, they also seek a sense of control and ownership which “contends that each individual owns his or her private information and

controlling this information is a right managed by revealing and concealing private information” (Waters & Ackerman, 2011, p. 104). These oppositional forces create tensions between autonomy and connectedness, the desire to be private and the desire to be open. Tensions form what is known as the relational dialectics theory, which states that “dialectical tensions are the core of the meaning-making process and while contradictions always exist in an oppositional relationship, this often entails multiple interrelated oppositions” (Stephenson-Abetz & Holman, 2012, p. 178). Through self-disclosure, “what we choose to share online simultaneously constructs a very public self as well as a less-known private self” (Stern, 2011, p. 251).

The reasons for self-disclosure typically involve reciprocity of information, self-clarification, expression, and social validation. However, with the advent of Facebook and normality of disclosure, “expressions of affection are perceived as more appropriate in public settings than in private settings” (Mansson & Myers, 2011, p. 158). Despite this revelation, college students still must negotiate between revealing and concealing certain communication behaviors. CM expounded about when she and her partner first had a conversation about creating a Facebook relationship:

“It was difficult for me because I was more apprehensive and reluctant to have it official on Facebook—Facebook because I don’t like to have that kind of attention on me and I was um, nervous about the kind of responses it would get from people”.

College students and users of Facebook are more aware that their individual profiles will extend to many different sorts of audiences, whether they are close friends or distant relatives. Facebook statuses and interests communicate who we are and these

statements are ‘performed’ through the profile and open for public viewing. KS reflected on a conflict between her partner that ended up on Facebook:

“I got so many text messages through my friends saying—asking what was happening and to me I just didn’t really want to talk about it and that it was public for everyone to see was just hard for me and hard for [name omitted] as well so just everyone being able to see that my relationship status had changed to single”.

Some students, like KF, choose to deter this attention by not putting their relationship status on Facebook. She reasoned that “we decided not to change it because it’s just kind of an annoying thing to do...everybody immediately thinks that it’s like a really big concern”. However, students take a risk by not displaying their relationship status as such statuses connote what is reality. KF went into greater detail: “some of my friends think that I’m not serious about being in this relationship because it’s not on Facebook like it might show that I’m insecure about it or something like that so maybe they’re, they’re questioning me more”.

CONCLUSION

With the increased accessibility to technology and advancement of social networking sites, individuals within society are uncovering new processes of staying connected. As these processes become utilized in higher frequencies, we normalize their functions. Thus, media, including social networking sites in Facebook, become a way to mediate reality. The ways in which men and women use Facebook are different, and can sometimes cause tensions between what sorts of personal information they feel inclined to share.

Further research on this topic may include a larger sample size, as more information from

a larger variety of people may inspire different theories. Researchers might also consider studying different age groups, since this particular analysis only included college students. Younger and older individuals may have varying perceptions on the motivations behind Facebook relationship statuses. Additional research should include studies on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities, as they may have differing views on Facebook use too.

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Dubstep

YOUR PERSONAL GUIDE TO
pleasure and control

A LOOK AT DUBSTEP IN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Dubstep, an innovative form of electronic dance music, dominates popular advertisements for everything from electronics to candy. Although often associated with drugs and dismissed as psychedelic filler, I argue that dubstep circulates important messages and affects for contemporary audiences seeking stability in an increasingly chaotic media/social landscape. I analyze three television commercials to show how dubstep takes listeners on a sensory journey that communicates feelings of control while simultaneously highlighting the pleasures of chaotic transformation.

The world of electronic dance music (EDM) has been around for decades, but the specific compilation of genres grouped as United Kingdom Bass has an evident presence within today's ever-increasing technologically advanced world. UK Bass and its respective culture have grown tremendously over the past few years, notably in the UK and the United States. Originating from UK Bass is the increasingly popular genre of dubstep. Dubstep has now reached a level of commercialization that is energetic, commanding, and intriguing. It is fueling our ears, habits, and lives in many ways that are often unnoticed. Electronic dance music is a communicative tool that invites listeners to experience alternative realities in which they can distort time and space, gain power and control, and hopefully construct their identity. I initially became fascinated with dubstep and its viral attraction two years ago, but I began to fully become aware of its capabilities recently by realizing the emotions evoked in me when a genre that I admire for its artistic value was being used for commercial means. I then decided that dubstep's transatlantic travel and commercialization was inescapable, so my fascination began to focus on why dubstep has become so intriguing and effective in the realm of television commercials. Recent television advertisements use dubstep to offer an inviting experience that embodies presence and pleasure.

Scholars that have studied electronic dance music often relate its motives, capabilities, or appeal to the heightened sensations of drug-induced experiences. The conclusion that is often assumed is that electronic dance music has no valuable significance outside of some drug cultures or club cultures. Yet, electronic dance music culture has a great importance, because it gives value to the act of listening. Listening is a different way for us to engage the world, a way that challenges ideas and habits associated with understanding. Listening in this way leads to identification and the hunt for relationships. The listener seeks to find themselves or who they wish to be within the music. Identification and the rhythm

of music together create stories that communicate a "description of experience" that takes place while listening (Davis, 2008; 2005). Therefore, I consider the idea that with the guidance of electronic dance music, specifically dubstep, a listener has the ability to become the producer of their life by going on a journey to a world that provides satisfaction.

With this approach, I explore the current conversations about electronic dance music, music's communicative value, the role of drugs in EDM cultures, and music in television commercials. This suggests that dubstep has the ability to communicate with listeners and viewers, that which is not communicable. I do this in several stages. First, I set up the background of electronic dance music and its place in today's society as a commercialized product. I then describe how music, specifically EDM, communicates with the bodies and minds of people and how it contributes to one's desire to feel and identify. Finally I analyze how dubstep works as an additional medium within television commercials and why it is so effective within today's advertisements. I argue that dubstep does not conform to the ideas of useless psychedelic euphoria, but instead guides listeners to and through a state of pleasurable control over one's current reality. I found that the importance lies not in the fact that some club cultures do participate in drugs, but instead that there is a value in the feeling and identity that dubstep listeners desire and achieve in these cultures. And that desire to feel and identify is exactly the feeling that advertisers touch on to execute effective advertising.

Dubstep has a long history that has led to its current state, but instead of its road to commercialization I want to prompt the following questions that focus on why it is being chosen for appropriation: How is it that this music genre has the ability to intrigue and impact so many listeners? How is this music genre being used to promote the enjoyment and experience of a product? How does music work as a communication tool?

My project on dubstep and its ability to guide listeners towards attaining pleasurable control contributes to the three overarching conversations that are currently taking place. They involve discussions on the role electronic dance music has in the cultures that surround it, music as a means of communication, and the role of music within television commercials.

Due to the assumption that electronic dance music is associated with and fueled by the consumption of drugs, it is not surprising that many studies of club cultures and electronic dance music (EDM) have negative perceptions of the cultures that surround the music. Timothy Taylor, in his book *Strange Sounds*, focuses on the idea that participants in EDM club cultures come to feel together in what he coins “collective effervescence.”

Scholars such as Sarah Thornton and Dick Hebdige also highlight the idea that these cultures are for those who desire a feeling of community. Taylor claims that this feeling is often intensified by the use of drugs but is driven by the rhythm and vibes of the music (Taylor 2007.)

These feelings and their relation to the music are explored by Simon Reynolds who claims that electronic dance music cultures have shifted from a focus on peace, love, unity, and respect (here on out referred to as PLUR) to simply being a “cult of acceleration without destination,” one that cannot function without drugs (Reynolds, 1998). He furthers this idea in his books *Energy Flash* and *Generation Ecstasy* by focusing on the power of drugs to take clubbers and electronic dance music listeners into a state of heightened sensation.

With the initial assumption of electronic dance music and club cultures sole purpose being the use and experience of drugs, a reputation formed that often leads to a distaste for the genre by most outsiders. Yet, where the real importance lies is not in the fact that some of the cultures do participate in drugs, but instead that there is a value in the feeling and identity the ravers and listeners desire and achieve in these cultures.

Whether one scholar or listener believes that electronic dance music is fueling a meaningless drug lifestyle or a community of PLUR, the desire for control and pleasure in distortion is evident. What many ravers, listeners, clubbers,

and audience members are craving is an otherworldly experience. This experience is a place for one to find identity by escaping reality (Rietveld, 1998.) Music is a universal language, and it has the ability to communicate between producer and listener. Saul Williams describes this in “The Future of Language” as “eternal reverberation.” He claims that with an internal awareness we achieve a power to control our lives. This power can allow one to step out of reality and embrace their imagination, which Williams describes as difficult to do when one is trying to hold onto reality (Williams, 2008). Tapping into one’s imagination allows them to become closer to articulating the unspoken, which is why electronic dance music fuels the craving of control and distortion (Williams, 2008). EDM is a communication tool that allows one to feel and hear that which they cannot articulate.

One way in which this communication is executed is what Vijay Iyer describes as the “embodied experience.” Iyer claims that music has a dependency on the structure of our “bodies”, “environment”, and “culture in which our musical awareness emerges” (Iyer, 2008). To experience music one must realize that it is not passive, but instead, music and the listener’s participation within it are active. Communication is not one directional, instead, it is a two-way street that goes between the speaker and the audience, the producer and the listener. This causes the lines between creator and consumer to blur, pushing the effectiveness of dubstep in television advertisements.

Agreeing with the concepts that Rietveld, Williams, and Iyer have put forward, other scholars describe this otherworldly experience as being executed through electronic dance music’s specific technicalities. Many highlight the manipulative abilities of EDM production by illuminating how producers have the ability to shift, shape, and rearrange the music. The music then influences our minds and in what we place value (Miller, 2008; Haslam, 1998). This reconstruction has the ability to create a separate realm where one’s desires and values can be created and experienced. Electronic dance music provides one with the guidance to step out of their reality and put together something new, something unworldly, that comes together to create that which was not available before.

EDM is not only a communication tool; it guides its listeners through a world in which the noncommunicable can be expressed and experienced through increased and sensitized self-awareness.

With the ability to manipulate our thoughts and music alike, what is assumed to be real and definite has the tendency to be altered. Technological advancements are blurring the boundaries within electronic dance music itself. The lines that once separated DJ and audience and producer and performer have faded (Jordan, Miller, 2008; Keller, 2008).

Daphne Keller is in agreement with Jordan and Miller's claims that lines are blurring. Keller discusses cultural changes and art's (specifically music's) habit of reconfiguring itself. Notably, Keller does not only discuss the blurring lines between "listener" and "performer", but also between "creators" and "consumers" (Keller, 2008).

This reconfiguring of music allows for a listener to be more than a performer but also a producer. The boundaries of what constitutes reality are not definite, allowing the listener to also become a performer or producer of the life experiences they have.

An extension of these blurred lines is the cause of vague distinctions. Dubstep shapes and reconfigures segments of music to create a desired result. This idea of malleable distortion can be applied to the imagination. Dubstep guides its listeners through their imagination and alternate realities, allowing them to act as both an audience member and producers of their own lives.

DUBSTEP AS A GUIDE

Dubstep within advertisements offers new perspectives on the genre and also provides a new realm of understanding for the day-to-day life that we experience. Dubstep as a guide offers a way in which we can balance our fast paced lives and our need to slow things down and enjoy/take in individual moments that pleasure us. Dubstep offers us the control to compile our individual sensations, producing a heightened inner awareness. This control and production allow the listener to compose a liberating realm that resembles the desired "interpersonal

Ken Jordan suggests that we relate to sound through personal experiences. He discusses the fact that without our digital technologies of today it is possible to "integrate sound at a fundamental level into artworks that employ other media" (Jordan, 2008). He points out that sound is an experience that wraps around us and forms images, even claiming that "a sound can lead to an image, which can in turn provoke a gesture" (Jordan, 2008). He points out that sound is an experience that wraps around us and forms images. He even claims, "a sound can lead to an image, which can in turn provoke a gesture" (Jordan, 2008). This is why music in television commercials has such great power. One associates jingles or rhythms or emotions evoked by sound with the product being presented before them. Television commercials today have gone beyond merely presenting information or an identity, but are now becoming works of art that invite the audience to participate. Jordan gives value to sound as an experience, which illuminates the discussions that Sterling, Taylor, Allan and Scott have on the power of television commercials and the music used within them. One associates jingles or rhythms or emotions evoked by sound with the product being presented before them. Television commercials today have gone beyond merely presenting information or an identity, but are now becoming works of art that invite the audience to participate.

communication and self-discovery" that is present during a drug-induced experience (Reynolds, 2012).

Dubstep allows for listener's to relate to it by acting as a guide. It takes its listener on a trip (similar to that of an acid trip or as if someone is "tripping" on drugs.) It is a journey that most could not experience without tapping into their imagination or having an aid that takes them to this alternate psychological state.

Minimally, it is appealing, and it is capable of stimulating emotions and senses. Television commercials illuminate this depiction by presenting

the ways in which electronic music and the dubstep sound persuasively translate the needs of people into rhythms and beats that can lead to a satisfactory state.

As a guide, or a 30 second persuasive storyteller, the dubstep sound works well with action. It leads listeners on their journey to control with auditory rhythms and beats, allowing them to experience sensory intensification. It ignites dancing crowds or a tapping foot by provoking immediate reflection. The segmented portions of the songs used in the commercials allow the viewer to reflect upon each individual moment and experience shown on the screen.

As in all television advertisements, the product is presented as an advantageous investment. This is often just a presentation, but with the aid of dubstep, the products in these advertisements are projecting the idea that the audience has the control to find pleasure by offering them the ability to shape a liberating alternate reality.

I have selected three commercials that each contain a diverse range of products, visuals,

presentation of control and distortion, and the relation that the products have to dubstep. The commercials use the musical technicalities of dubstep to attract listeners and offer them a brief teaser of how they could experience the ability to alter their reality to their own preference.

With most advertisements, the hope of the company is that in a subtle way the consumer will believe that the products define who they are, but what dubstep in television commercials does is present a world in which listeners and viewers wish to belong, experience, and find control (Allan, 2006). With the following advertisements, dubstep has the ability to reel in both customers that do and do not identify with it. The corporations hope that consumers will identify with their product like some identify with dubstep and club cultures, and by doing so they put forth the idea that with that purchase a consumer will gain control over their life experiences. These corporations aim to exert an experience that is just as powerful as the music being consumed by our ears by emulating their perception of the drug-induced experience.

THE JOURNEY

The dubstep sound has its own specific pattern. It has a constant rhythm of 140 beats per minute (bpm) that usually starts off pretty basic. As the song rises, it gradually adds beats and rhythms, progressing towards a collaboration of different rhythmic elements. The journey experienced through dubstep is mimicked within television advertisements that feature dubstep. This sound accompanies the segmented scenes placed on the screen that are pieced together to present the highlights of any given exhilarating experience. This journey goes through a certain process. First it begins with a rise, like dubstep itself, the television commercials start off slowly with a repetitive beat that begins to increase in speed and intensity. Second they add additional elements to fill the spaces. In dubstep, this is the addition of technical constituents, layer by layer, an assembled sequence. These layers are a combination of flashing scenes and words shown in

an intermittent manner. I hereon refer to these as subliminal messages. Accompanied with an increasing speed and intensity, the subliminal messages show the audience what is ideal and have the potential to replicate the disconnected moments of time that can be experienced while one is under the influence of drugs. The moments are both fast and slow concepts of time that contribute to the companies' tactics of using substance influenced perceptions to sell products. The third part of the journey is the drop. This is when we reach the climax of our song and the physical and psychological senses are at their peak. Within these commercials this is the moment in which the product is consumed or actively experienced. It is followed by a continuous compilation of increased speed and distortion. In the ads this moment serves as the musical conclusion and the time for product presentation.

SOUTHERN COMFORT: REPETITIVE RHYTHMS, DROPS, & HEIGHTENED SENSES

The first advertisement, Southern Comfort's 2011 commercial for their Fiery Pepper whiskey features the song "Burn It Down" by Crush Effect Feat. Vokab Kompan. The television commercial uses this song to highlight the intensified and stimulating moments that are experienced by the actors in the advertisement, as they taste the whiskey. As the journey begins, the advertisement starts with a visual of the product and its label, creating a familiarity with the company for the viewer. The music begins with a rise, a constant flow to the climax of the ad. The actors on the screen even raise their shot glasses with the rise of the music. While the music heightens and amplifies, scenes such as the raising of the glasses are shown. They present time as supple and malleable. For example, when the advertisement starts only the camera is moving, gliding along the bar, giving an outside perspective of the experiences that are being presented. Then when the camera becomes stationary only the arms of the actors are moving, slowly. These opening scenes offer a perspective that slows down time and allows the viewer to take in each moment of the alcohol tasting experience, exerting control over these sensations.

In this opening rise, when the narrator says the words "Southern Comfort" and "Tabasco," the words are flashed before our eyes, functioning as the subliminal messages previously discussed. The flashes have hard beats accompanying them and give attention to the ideal goal of the advertisers, which is product familiarity that then leads to a purchase of the product. These subliminal messages begin to appear in between the slowed down scenes that feature the actors enjoying their pleasurable experiences. The flashes begin to feature isolated viewpoints of the actors' body parts. They show their eyes, mouths, hair, lips, chin, all parts that are sensualized by the camera's viewpoint.

This sensualization not only adds an intimate viewpoint highlighting pleasurable experiences caused by the consumption of the product, but these viewpoints feature a psychoanalytic approach to these body parts by playing with dimensions of time and space through somewhat fetishistic gazes. The shots are sensual and teasing the viewer, making them want what they do not have. They desire it. The dubstep

sound helps heighten these feelings that are presented by the visual, by placing emphasis when one should look at the screen and building tension when needed.

In this commercial, the dubstep sound leading up to the drop is a very simplistic repetitive beat. A pulsing beat that increases as it approaches the climax of the commercial, the product consumption, and the drop of the music. It begins, Tap Tap Tap Tap, gradually intensifying, TAPTAPTAPTAPTAP. It is pulse that is leading you to your release, breaking through a barrier. Rapidly speeding up before busting into an alternative reality. The escalating crescendo of the background synthesizer lead placed in a higher register and one continuing note accompanying the repetitive pulse are teasing you with the simple enhancement of the senses. The sound guides one to the top, and with the drop it all hits. Every emotion, sense, feeling all coming together, just like the synthesizer, the repetitive beat, the drum kicks and high hats, modulated bass lines and sound effects. The repetitive nature builds to an achievement, allowing the drop to feel like a successful moment (Scott, 1990). The ad now becomes full of segmented scene flashes that target the feelings and emotions experienced. It is spliced with sensual sound effects, sighs and moans, some sexual, highlighting the pleasure that is acquired. And a slight segment of dancing, it goes by quickly as a mere flash of the end result of consuming the whiskey. These scene flashes are not connected. They are splices and pieces of what is wanted and ideal. They are titillating. These feelings and emotions are not simply results of being a listener or a viewer, but they allow the audience to entice a new way to communicate and experience life (Davis, 2008).

Within the Southern Comfort advertisement, the rise of the initial drumbeat signifies our increasing desire, and with the taste of the alcohol, the barrier is crossed and pleasure is achieved, right in line with the music. Along with the dubstep sound used in these advertisements the slow motion scenes countered by the increased speed of rapid screen shots are reminiscent of the production techniques both of dubstep and an alternate reality. These fluctuating rhythms, sounds, and images trigger a range of emotions creating vulnerability.

As the song and commercial comes to an end, one of the actors raises his hand and cheers.

He has successfully reached his pleasurable moment and achieved his desires. He has crossed the theoretical finish line, all with the help of Southern Comfort Fiery Pepper Whiskey.

The dubstep song chosen is telling the audience and consumers: “This is what you should do, who you can be, and we want you to have the power to experience this.” With dubstep, it is not about presenting an identity; rather it is about inviting viewers to embrace a pleasurable reality that they can produce. The viewers are the DJs and the product is their key to their mixing board.

HEWLETT-PACKARD: PRODUCTION AND CONTROL

Hewlett-Packard’s 2012 advertisement contains a similar format to the Southern Comfort ad. It starts off slowly, like the music, and begins with a musical rise that leads to the drop. The dubstep sound guides the viewers to the climax, places them directly in the scene, and leads them to the drop. The ad then features an increased array of scenes quickly after the drop. These scenes are spliced with flashes of the product and eventually lead with a concluding visual of the laptop itself.

The ad begins with a person stepping out of a vehicle, walking up to a ticket booth, and then experiencing the dubstep scene and sound. This person is starting their journey to enjoyment and pleasure. This opening scene presents the idea that the viewer is heading somewhere. They will be going on a journey with the person on screen. After that idea is presented, the rest of the advertisement works as an illustration of the pleasure achieved if the viewer or listener decides to take the journey. It acts as a view into the alternate world that they can experience if they purchase the product.

From the first scene onward a red circle, or item, is placed in the center of the screen throughout each scene. It appears through each shot as a brake light on a vehicle, on a ticket booth, and as a stage light. It even appears in action as a dancing body clothed in red pants and the flow of hair on a woman in red makeup. Most importantly, this circle is flashed before the eyes of its viewers with the company, HP, and the laptop’s name, Beats. This circle is a signifier of the laptop logo that is a red circle with the

letter ‘B’ inside, representing how these experiences are possible with the presence of the laptop.

This circle is a point of focus to keep the eyes of the viewer in one location so that when the HP or Beats logo is shown the viewer is already looking in the right location. With this red circle the important message within the ad is that it lets the consumer know that they too can produce this sound. All one needs is a dm4 Beats edition laptop, and that power is yours. This alludes to the blurred boundaries between “artist” and “audience,” as well as what separates a “listener” and “performer” that Jordan, Miller, and Keller discuss. This is not only true within the advertisement, but also in the technologically advancing world of electronic dance music. The dubstep sound within the ad functions as a guide, but it specifically is as an intensifier to gather more attention when the HP logo is highlighted on the screen.

The logo is shown twice before the drop in the music takes place. This tactic of flashing images of the product and its logo begins to take place more rapidly after the drop in the music. The logo is shown eight times once the drop takes place, which is a very large amount for an ad that is only thirty seconds long. These flashes of the laptop are dispersed throughout scenes of crowds, DJs, and performers experiencing the dubstep sound. They are accompanied by hard drum hits, grabbing the attention of the viewer with each intense beat, reminding them with each flash exactly what the advertisers want them to take away from the short commercial. They need this specific laptop to have what appears to be an exhilarating experience.

In this advertisement, the use of fast and slow time speeds is used to effectively coordinate with the dubstep sound and execute the feeling of successfully achieving pleasure. Each moment and action is fierce. There is an array of speeds. There are slow, fast, and normal timings that give the illusion of both length and satisfaction. These moments are accompanied with the sections of music that match their timing. In the song the changes between quickly repeated rhythms and drawn out beats provide guidance for the journey’s visual representations on screen.

The interesting aspect of the use of dubstep within television commercials is how it replicates that work of a DJ or dubstep producer and the process they go through of combining different elements and musical

technicalities with the depths of their imagination and desires to create a pleasing product. In the case of a DJ or a producer that would be a song in which they were most satisfied with. Within the television commercials, these are scenes that contain the creative compilations of dubstep songs and various timings such as the ones in this HP advertisement. These scenes further the blurred division between consumer and producer.

WONK NERDS: EXPERIENCING THE ALTERNATE REALITY

With Wonka Candy's 2012 Nerds commercial, the journey is visually evident. This commercial differs from the previous two advertisements, because it features dubstep sounds that were created to cater specifically to their product. This personalized dubstep song has sounds that replicate dubstep sounds and feature the usual drops, synthesizers, and 140 bpm. It also features a similar rise at the start of the ad. Though the rise is shorter, it leads us to the start of the experience and focuses on the actual journey of heightened sensations through an alternate reality. Visually, in the commercial, the Nerds candy acts as an illustration to dubstep's journey.

As the previous commercials discussed have alluded to the drug-induced experience, this advertisement does the same by opening the mind that is immersed in the pleasurable reality instead of presenting experiences of the alternate reality. The mind under the influence of Ecstasy, a primary club drug, experiences intensified "sensory stimuli" and more vivid perceptions, "sometimes to the point of hallucination." Ecstasy makes "colours, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations more vivid," which is the exact perception presented on the screen during this advertisement (Reynolds, 2012)

In the commercial, the viewer is first presented with a Wonka hat. The hat lifts up and out of the screen, revealing the Nerds candy below. The tabs of the candy (used to open the candy for consumption) are opened. They first go out to the side, then down, causing Wonka Nerds to erupt from the box. This quick three-step motion replicates that of a rocket ship or an airplane, devices that take one on a journey through realms that one is not familiar with. The candy then fills the screen creating a transition. Before they enter this alternate realm, they spell out the

word "Nerds," making it clear that the product is the initiator of the experience. Flashes, contrasting colors, and distortion in the music accompany the spelling out of the word "Nerds". This replicates both the light shows often displayed at dubstep performances and contributes to the pattern of subliminal flashes previously discussed. These flashes along with the sporadic distortion of the dubstep sound that occurs when they are shown highlight the intensity that the Nerds can provide while serving as a reminder of the brand name.

The Nerds then move forward on the journey by forming the shapes of the alternate reality. They create buildings and concrete objects that make an imaginary world. They even form actual airplanes/rockets that lead viewers further along the journey. The scene transitions feature sound distortion, repetitive sounds, distortion of the lyrics "Nerds," and "doodles" or "sketches" in the atmosphere of the imagined world. Often, doodles and sketches are products of one's creative mind and are used as representations of what one cannot articulate or put into words. It is a presentation of the mind's inner workings.

The airplanes/rockets made of Nerds then continue the visual journey with continuous subliminal flashes of the product name. They lead us to an alternate planet that then becomes an abstract human head. The Nerds journey then continues to show the viewers how the Nerds enter the mouth of the head for consumption and then how the human head becomes completely made of Nerds. At the point in which the human head consumes the Nerds, the advertisement coasts its way to the end by leading its viewers back to reality and into a box that closes itself up and goes back under the hat. The advertisement ends with "Feed your imagination," reminding the viewers that to achieve this alternate world they must consume the product.

This Nerds candy is a signifier of the brain, that which holds our imagination, desires, and needs. Even the colors that were chosen were pink and purple as opposed to the less natural colors offered by the product. Those colors accompanied with the visual texture of the candy, signify a brain under the top hat. The candy's journey from the brain (the box that contains it), to and through an alternate reality, and its act of guiding us through it, around it, and back out

of it again are all in rhythm with the dubstep sounds and musical technicalities that communicate both a pleasure and distortion that leads to control through escape. The rhythms and imaginative perceptions of an alternate reality represent the “freeing” of the individual (Reynolds, 2012)

This journey from reality and out of the brain into an alternate reality that is triggered by the imagination (and the Nerds candy) is a visual representation of the journey that dubstep takes its listeners on. This journey to a pleasurable state is valuable within both club cultures and every day life, which is the reason this advertisement was selected. It was chosen due to the product’s irrelevance to music as well as the company’s valuation of dubstep by creating a Wonka Nerds song

that falls into the dubstep genre, while also presenting a visual experience for the viewer and listener.

There is an evident use of the dubstep sound in this advertisement. The creation of this song strictly for the Nerds commercial emphasizes the ability of repetitive rhythms and significant bass drops to lead listener’s to embrace their desire for control. In addition to the repetitive sounds of the music, a pattern of lyrics is also incorporated. These lyrics state, “*take the tab and tear it, shake your box and share it,*” providing directions on how to consume the candy. Paired with the visual movement of the Nerds on the screen, these words are also instructions on how to successfully travel to the state of pleasure. These instructions are selling the alternate reality as an experience that is easy to achieve.

THE TEASE: PLEASURE AND DESIRE

The evolving world of electronic dance music is not a destructive, chaotic, or mindless inhibitor. Some may think that dubstep molds to the desire for lucid imagery and complete release of one’s body and thoughts, yet the reverse side for this must be examined. Is it what some see as a complete release, or is it complete control? Dubstep is not about the idea or desire to partake in drug use, but instead it primarily serves as a navigator.

Dubstep is a guide for those who wish for more in their lives. The television commercials that I have presented each end on a limiting note. They act as a teaser for the life consumers could have. They present these heightened senses and entertaining experiences, yet claim that the next step to achieve these experiences is purchasing the products. Southern Comfort reminds us that their whiskey is “Made with genuine Tabasco sauce” and that with it “Heat never tasted so good.” They are putting forth the idea that

something that is not so pleasurable (heat/reality) can be altered and improved with their product. Wonka tells us to “feed your imagination,” because to reach this state of happiness an aid is needed. And HP tells us that their product has a “bold look” and a “bolder sound.” They then restate the product name and that it is “only from HP, because the music matters.” This is followed by a sentence stating where this laptop can be purchased. All of these serve as reminders of the “necessary” product consumption. This is an example of how dubstep is a guide, but in the end the listener as a consumer must make their own decision. These commercials aim to encourage the active participation of the consumer. They hope to get them off of the couch and into the store to purchase. Dubstep encourages this active mobilization as well. By stimulating the viewer’s senses and creating feelings similar to those felt when influenced by drugs.

CONCLUSION ■■■■

It is clear that several commercials today reify the idea that a product can enhance one's life, but when that advertisement is accompanied with dubstep such enhancement is more specific. Viewers are not simply watching a commercial in which they like what they see. They are being invited to believe they can create what they want, just as a producer of dubstep does. Viewers and listeners are invited to imagine something that is out of this world and produce their own lives (with the necessary products of course.) And with these products they can have the ability to slow their experiences down, take them apart, distort them, shuffle them, piece them back as wanted, and embrace this alternative reality in which any desires are achievable.

The dubstep sound derives from a culture that is based off of the art of production; therefore it encourages the listener to produce their own life as desired. We all desire pleasure, and to achieve it we must take control. Without the accompaniment of dubstep, these products would be commonplace items, but with the guidance of dubstep they gain more appeal and importance, because they have the ability to provide consumers with control of their lives. With any other genre of music, this control would not be as substantial or believable, due to the rigid composition of their musical technicalities. The malleable characteristics of dubstep contribute to the credibility of the products' capabilities.

Dubstep is here and working well within advertising, but it would be interesting to follow this pattern and its process with other electronic dance genres. Dubstep derived from previous sub genres of United Kingdom bass such as jungle, grime, or

drum n bass. These sub genres helped form, influence, and develop dubstep into what it has become today. Yet many listeners of UK bass may admit that those sub genres have come and gone. They may not necessarily be "dead," but they have run their course. I feel that it may be coming to the time in which dubstep has run its course. I may also be saying this due to the fact that it has now been commercialized. Music fans seem to always come face to face with this dilemma.

I want to question where this will go. The use of dubstep in television commercials is popular now, and it appears to be effective and moving. Will this continue with further genres or the subgenres that are already taking dubstep's place? For instance, will trap music become popular due to its combination of hip-hop and dubstep and its already growing presence amongst mainstream artists such as Kanye West?

It would also be worth noting other ways in which dubstep becomes commercialized. Clearly television commercials are utilizing it, and they are what personally caught my eye, but how else is its power to guide and present pleasurable experiences able to impact consumers? Would dubstep, as a guide still be effective in another area of commercialization or advertising besides television commercials? Whether the same pattern or tactic is effective, I cannot predict, but I do believe that whether you are the producer of your life or the producer of dubstep, that desired control is all about distortion and the ability to move moments around, slow them down, and highlight the satisfying pieces. Dubstep helps us do exactly that, and it encourages us to embrace and produce our own ideal world.

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THE ROAD TO Indifference

**“THE OPPOSITE OF LOVE IS NOT HATE [...] IT’S INDIFFERENCE.”
—Elie Wiesel (Elie)**

Witnessing the change of the millennium is like driving down a seemingly endless road of familiarity, and suddenly taking a sharp turn down an unpredictable, uncharted path. Compelled to look in the rearview mirror for a glimpse of the route left behind, the driver recalls his or her errors in hopes of learning from them for the sake of the road that lies ahead. Elie Wiesel unwillingly assumed the driver's seat of a fatal vehicle as a young Jewish boy, forced to travel down a rugged road of manmade potholes, and violently jolted in all directions by the Nazi regime. He veered down a new path in the year 2000, and has been steadily traveling ever since, yet has never let the reflection of Holocaust images in his rearview mirror out of sight. Shortly before making this momentous turn, on the brink of the new millennium, Wiesel delivers a speech in which he discusses the perils of one of the worst crimes committed against the human race – the crime of indifference. As a victim and survivor of this injustice, Wiesel expresses his hope for the dawn of the new millennium to bring about the dawn of a world devoid of its dangers. He assumes the role of a man targeted by “The Perils of Indifference” of the closing century, reshaped as a man of great experience who, through his rhetoric, aims to eliminate these evils in the approaching millennium by sharing what he has learned. In doing so, Wiesel produces a fitting rhetorical response for the “Remarks at Millennium Evening” occasion.

The production of a fitting rhetorical response, however, is no simple process, and requires a thorough understanding of the historic context in which the rhetorical act occurs. According to Lloyd F. Bitzer, author of “The Rhetorical Situation” all rhetoric is a response to the situation which generates it. Therefore, in order to fully grasp the significance of a piece of rhetoric, it is crucial to apprehend all of the elements of situational criticism that Bitzer explores in his work. He assumes that rhetoric operates in a pragmatic fashion to serve some sort of purpose beyond itself; thus, changing thoughts and perceptions and consequently altering reality (Bitzer, 3). Bitzer argues that although the emergence of a rhetorical situation does not necessitate a response, rhetorical discourse does not exist without a situation that invites it (Bitzer, 4). He alludes to the duty of a fisherman to

use discourse in responding appropriately to the precise time in which the nets should be thrown into the sea (Bitzer, 5). The invited response is one that “fits,” as it is prescribed by the situation, and therefore meets the conditions set up by the situation itself. Bitzer presents a formal definition of the rhetorical situation to provide a more concrete explanation for the reader, but the terms he uses to depict its three main components are unclear (Bitzer, 6). As a result, Bitzer elaborates on the significance of these situational elements within the next few paragraphs of his piece.

The first component of the rhetorical situation that Bitzer explains is the exigence. He defines this term as “an imperfection marked by urgency,” and describes it as an obstruction that poses a problem that must be fixed (Bitzer, 6). He distinguishes rhetorical exigencies, which can be modified through discourse, from non-rhetorical exigencies, which cannot. There is one primary exigence in every rhetorical situation that acts as the “organizing principle.” Bitzer deduces this exigence to be subjective on the grounds that it is a matter of perception and not identical for everyone involved in the situation (Bitzer, 7). Next, Bitzer sheds light on the audience, which he specifies to function as the “mediators of change” in response to discourse. This element of the rhetorical situation is essential to rhetoric because the audience that is open to persuasion and capable of being influenced can change the imperfection marked by urgency. Bitzer distinguishes the audience of rhetorical discourse from the audience of scientific and poetic discourse in that the former is fit to bring about the change that the speaker wants. The third constituent that Bitzer discusses are the constraints, which have the leverage to restrict the rhetorical choices of the speaker and therefore impose upon the “action needed to modify the exigence” in every rhetorical situation. Constraints present limitations to discourse and the way in which a rhetor may confront a situation. To reinforce his description, Bitzer provides examples of common rhetorical constraints such as beliefs, traditions, and oratorical style (Bitzer, 8). Bitzer distinguishes between simple and complex rhetorical structures based upon the interaction between elements; and highly and loosely structured situations, on the grounds of the availability of these elements for the task (Bitzer, 11). In closing his dissection of situational criticism, Bitzer deliberates

what would constitute the “best of all possible worlds,” but recognizes that in reality, “rhetorical exigencies abound.” Yet, these imperfections can be altered through discourse to bring the world a step closer to betterment (Bitzer, 13). On April 12, 1999, the cusp of a new millennium presented a fitting moment for Elie Wiesel to address a mediating audience about the failures of humanity, and take this step towards the betterment of mankind.

Wiesel’s impending movement from the calamities of one millennium to the unforeseen events of another invites his discourse. The context surrounding his speech, “The Perils of Indifference,” consists of large-scale historical events for the purpose of reflecting on the past, and giving direction for the future. Unlike a speech such as President Bush’s “Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” which displays a reaction to the “crisis situation” that occurred on September 11, 2001, Wiesel’s rhetoric embodies the culmination of centuries of failure (Bitzer, 2). Given that the speech was delivered at the close of the 20th century, the events that transpired during this time period called the discourse into existence at the present time. In his essay entitled “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History” Charles Maier, Professor of History at Harvard University, refers to the twentieth century as an “epoch of moral atrocity” (Maier, 807). Furthermore, the nature of the context surrounding Wiesel’s speech has been characterized by “unprecedented levels of bloodshed” and mass violence as a product of political upheavals, genocide and ethnic cleansings, world wars, and struggles for liberation, just to name a few. Wiesel’s speech obtains its temperament from these misfortunes of the days that preceded it. The unremitting violence of the Cold War evoked a sense of danger, the persecution of Jews in the Holocaust instilled a sense of dehumanization, and the genocide in Rwanda produced an apparent decline in the meaning of life (Mazower, 1158). Following countless anguish-ridden events of the 20th century and the close of the millennium, historians were left wondering how to make sense of the past one thousand years, human beings were left disoriented after witnessing the capabilities of malevolence, and a hopeful shadow loomed over the rhetorical sphere to voice a need for change (Maier, 810).

The atmosphere of the East Room of the White

House stands still amongst deep reflection of the new millennium’s uncharted path at the “Remarks at Millennium Evening.” First Lady Hillary Clinton opens up the platform for Wiesel, providing a bit about his background, commemorating his experiences and accomplishments, and discussing the importance of his voice at the end of this particular century. Highlighting the pervasiveness of maltreated children across the globe, Clinton shares her disbelief that although Wiesel addresses the nation tonight on the cusp of a new century, the same form of injustice he was victim to in the last one has not ceased to exist. Children continue to be “robbed of their ... humanity,” and the human beings of the world insensitively continue to turn their heads in silence, paralyzed by the perils of indifference (Clinton).

Wiesel takes the platform and recalls his experience struggling to survive the evils of the Holocaust (Elie). He goes on to identify with the children currently suffering as victims of injustice as he once did, and wonders aloud how this enduring injustice will influence the way in which the closing century will be remembered. In recognizing the failures of the past century, Wiesel proclaims that they “have cast a dark shadow over humanity.” This insinuates that regardless of the location of the injustice, or the race, religion, or any other characteristic of its victims, this injustice is equivalent, and the imperfections of the world take root in the same soil. After providing several instances of this reoccurring injustice of the past century, Wiesel asserts this injustice to be that of indifference (Wiesel). Denouncing the apathy of indifference as a significant secular obstacle that must be fixed, Wiesel deems it to be an “imperfection marked by urgency,” and concurrently establishes the primary exigence of his speech (Bitzer, 6).

After regarding human indifference as a destructive form of injustice facing the world, Wiesel defines the exigence literally, as well as abstractly. “Etymologically, [he states,] the word means ‘no difference.’” In support of this explicit definition, Wiesel employs binary oppositions such as “dusk and dawn” to depict indifference as a state of lifelessness (Elie). He builds upon his explanation through the use of rhetorical questions and the first-person narrative, which keeps the audience on track and enhances his credibility as a speaker.

Wiesel appropriately handles the definition of indifference by displaying the gravity of its meaning through his experiences as one of its victims. For instance, he states, “[w]e felt that to be abandoned by God was worse than to be punished by him. Better an unjust God than an indifferent one.” This powerful assertion adds the term abandonment to the lengthy list of synonyms he provides for indifference (along with nonresponsive, friend of the enemy, insensitivity, and several others). In continuing to develop human indifference as the controlling worldly imperfection, Wiesel notes several instances in which indifference was practiced throughout the passing millennium, such as the incident of the St. Louis ship of human cargo. Following his clarification of the full meaning of indifference, Wiesel asserts that he still does not understand it—why the indifference? How can it be explained? While these inquiries seem ineffective at first, they appropriately and convincingly imply that no definition will ever justify the existence of indifference, reinforcing its necessary banishment from society. At the end of his speech, Wiesel displays his passionate determination to intervene and protect the human race from the perils of indifference. He will do this by responding to the “indifference [that] elicits no response,” and breaking the silence surrounding the context of indifference through rhetoric, as he does in this speech (Wiesel).

By modifying the exigence of indifference, Wiesel’s rhetorical work functions to produce change in the world through discourse. Therefore, the audiences of Wiesel’s speech are capable of being influenced by his rhetoric, and assume the role of his agents of change (Bitzer, 6). The target audience of Wiesel’s address is each and every being of the human race – individuals of all nationalities, ethnicities, religions, ages, and so on. Wiesel utilizes language to open the eyes of human beings across the globe to see their betrayal of their own humanity through practicing indifference. By depicting the audience as a force empowering the enemy of mankind, Wiesel increases the relevancy of the exigence and effectively arouses mediation in thought and action amongst human beings from coast to coast (Wiesel). While he ultimately strives to produce change moving forward by teaching all human beings about the indifferences of the past century, Wiesel addresses

more specific audiences as well. He singles out victims of indifference, whether they are the sufferers of the Holocaust, the starving children residing in Third World countries, or historical figures subjected to assassination. In reaching out to these different victims, he breaks the surrounding silence. Wiesel effectively distinguishes his American listeners from the rest of his audience numerous times throughout his address by commemorating the American military and praising the American values of democracy (Cohen). In doing so, he succeeds in encouraging the American people to become mediators of change due to their commitment to the fundamental ideologies upon which their nation was founded. Wiesel also speaks directly to Hillary Clinton throughout his discourse in response to the remarks she made prior to his speech. Wiesel addresses all of his different audiences as his “friends,” which encourages each distinct audience to trust his discourse, and act as the warriors to enact change in the battle against indifference (Wiesel).

In order to understand the rhetorical situation embodying Wiesel’s “The Perils of Indifference,” one must grasp the two major constraints he is forced to cope with: the emotions of the audience towards the topic he discusses, and the potential to offend anyone of varying religious beliefs. Wiesel successfully overcomes these constraints by means of identification. Discussing the injustices and indifferences of the past century creates a risky situation for the orator to confront because the evils they produce may have a profound significance for audience members on a personal level. For instance, the two World Wars or Holocaust concentration camps may have adversely affected loved ones close to members of the audience, or audience members themselves. Consequently, mention of them may generate feelings of instability or sorrow, or divert an audience member’s attention from his discourse. Although Wiesel does not explicitly address these emotional constraints, he is able to overcome them because of his own experience. Listeners are aware of Wiesel’s tragic experiences in the Holocaust, which allows them to identify with his own emotional state and makes it difficult for them to oppose his discourse. Additionally, Wiesel’s heavy references to God, including his remark that He “is wherever we are,” may be viewed as religious and unwarranted by evidence. From this standpoint,

Wiesel's own persona may pose a limit to his rhetorical choices being that those of other religions may screen the words he delivers as coming from the mouth of a Jewish man. Nevertheless, Wiesel works through this religious constraint by identifying with individuals of all religious faiths on the common ground of humanity, which takes precedence (Wiesel). All in all, Wiesel's speech delivered on the threshold of the new millennium provides a fitting response to the rhetorical situation that calls the discourse into existence. From beginning to end, he works to establish the primary exigence of indifference, define it on literal and abstract levels, and handle it appropriately in reflecting on the past century and future to come. Wiesel effectively targets all of mankind as his true audience and calls them to action by declaring them to be friends of the enemy and betrayers of the human race if they ignore the perils of indifference. While Wiesel does not overtly address the constraints he faces in his rhetorical response, he is able to overcome them by establishing common ground through identification with his audiences (Wiesel). He attends to a complex, loosely structured situation at the appropriate time of crossover from one millennium to the next, providing the lessons learned in the former to protect the latter.

The tattoo that remains on Wiesel's forearm from his concentration camp days justifies his utmost credibility to speak of the indifferences of the century (Elie).

At the end of his speech, Wiesel highlights several positive occurrences, such as the defeat of Nazism, and the collapse of Communism. In an epideictic fashion, he commemorates the Days of Remembrance, which hold the memories and mistakes of history, and hopes that similar blunders never occur in the days to follow. Ending his speech on a positive note, Wiesel sets the tone for the commencement of a millennium free of the imperfections presented by indifference. As a survivor of the failures of the 20th century, survivor of the Nazi Party's Final Solution, survivor of unwarranted silence, and most significantly, a survivor of indifference, Wiesel walks away from the podium after presenting a fitting response to a situation that prescribed it (Bitzer, 6). By sustaining the livelihood of his Holocaust memoirs despite the passage of time, Wiesel offers a lesson for the world to carry over thousands upon thousands of years. On the night of April 12, 1999, he sits in the drivers seat as his vehicle moves forward, but his glance is putatively in reverse, as the perils of indifference remain so far down the road behind him.

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A Voice IN THE my Head BACK OF

She sits dressed up, suit and skirt, nice outfit, dark hair neat. Her office is small with a chair for me and for her. She sits behind her desk, made of metal, like all the desks in the school, slightly worn down and old, bringing back a sense of the 1970's.

It is 1997.

With the desk between us I feel more like I am being interrogated than talked to. The bland color scheme of the room, its tans and beiges, clashes with the spotted marble-esque floor. Everything is outdated, it's dark because there are no new windows in the basement, and even with the lights on, a familiar crucifix hanging in the corner, and her personal trinkets scattered about her small office, it feels ominous to me.

I look away as she asks me questions, unsure why I have to be here, not wanting to and feeling uncomfortable. I must baffle her, she is young after all, as only young people or old nuns work in this school. I wonder if working in a small private catholic school was her first choice job. Can't be much pay.

Again, she still asks me questions, trying to get me to give her a clear answer that she can diagnose becoming slightly more desperate the more I fail to reveal without consciously intending to omit things.

"Do your parents hurt you, Amanda?"

I look at her, shocked, visions of my house, happy and well-cared for, and my loving parents flood into my mind. I am taken aback by the thought of it.

"No, they love me." I reply.

"Are you sad?"

"No."

"Then...why do you cry in class?"

I pause, looking away from her again. I know the answer to this question, but I can't possibly tell this stranger. It's a secret, something I can't ever share with someone else because they can't possibly understand the voice. *My own voice.* Ringing inside my head whenever I do the **slightest thing wrong**. I do not even know how to explain it to her.

"I do not know." I reply.

But I do.

As defined by scholars Trenholm and Jensen in their book, *Interpersonal Communication*, (2008), an individual's self-schemata are "cognitive structures that organize and guide the processing of self-related information" (p. 207). These structures can manifest in many different ways, and commonly become a "life script," or a "fixed way" of perceiving and interpreting the self, as well as how that self relates to others (Trenholm and Jensen, 2008; Wang, 2000). The word *script* implies a set, repeated internal dialogue one engages in, both in times of reflection and when interacting (Trenholm and Jensen, 2008). This dialogue has the power to ultimately affect our own perceived identity and behaviors (Doster, Mieleke, Riley, Toledo & Goven, 2006; Trenholm and Jensen, 2008; Wang, 2000; Wheeler, Petty, & Bizer, 2005). If the dialogue is one which promotes a negative self-view, both in comparison to others and to perceived societal standards, an individual is more likely to have a negative view of self (Trenholm and Jensen, 2008). Resulting from this, an individual's behavior and self-esteem will thus be affected by a negative self-schema (Trenholm and Jensen, 2008), creating the first step in a continuous cycle.

After re-reading this paragraph, I feel more relieved; more grounded and confident in writing this paper. Since starting this auto ethnography, I have been afraid I made a mistake.

After all, I have never been to see a psychiatrist. I have never been diagnosed with any mental defect. I keep thinking: Do not all people experience a lack of confidence at times or a critical self-voice? Do not all people feel the pressure to change themselves in some way, from both external sources and internal? Is not everyone a little dissatisfied with who they are and how they behave?

It makes me uncertain that these experiences of mine are unique, but I know that they are. Other children were not sent out into the hallway at school when they were seven years old to cry from the enormous amount of anxiety and self-deprecation they experienced as I was. Other children did not have special conferences about their progress in class because they were unable to satisfactorily complete or keep up with class assignments. Other children did not feel the pressure to remain quiet and stay in their own worlds and minds, rather than risk interacting with someone in the wrong way. Other children developed confidence in themselves and their abilities long before I was ever able to achieve this, and for this reason I have to take it upon myself to critically reflect and ask why that was. The research I have done confirms for me that what I felt and never thought to question was part of a larger societal and complex problem.

I sit in the hallway next to my first grade classroom. The space is very public, there are four other classrooms around me and one down the hall, all full of children. The ugliness of the beige walls mocking me as the poor fluorescent lighting shows my shame to the world.

I am sobbing uncontrollably.

I sit in the chair I was told to sit in when I started crying in class. Again. The teacher, a woman I love, is just so fed up with me. She does not know what to do when this happens anymore, so she sends me into the hallway. I do not know what to tell her.

My own voice rings out in the back of my mind

I am so stupid. I am so stupid. I am so stupid.

The words pound in my head from somewhere I do not know, and they make me cry harder. It's true. It's so true. My own thoughts are telling me it's true. My own voice is thinking it, from somewhere in the back of my mind, but it's so mean and full of hate. It's not the same as the one that I think with, which whispers

I am stupid, aren't I?

My sobs grow in volume. The older boy sitting in the hallway taking a test looks up at me, annoyed. I feel bad that I am disrupting him but I cannot stop.

I . F E E L . S O . T E R R I B L E .

The crying makes my head hurt, and my face is scrunched up into an ugly red ball as my nose begins to run. No one pays any attention to me though.

This has all happened before.

*Stop making all this fuss! Stop crying!
You're so stupid! Why can't you be normal you crybaby?!
STUPID STUPID STUPID STUPID STUIPD!*

I cannot stop crying. These words, coming from my mind, make me feel ashamed and low and dirty, and I absorb them like a sponge. They just keep hitting me, their meaning flooding my consciousness and filling it.

I cry there in that miserable hallway until I am too **exhausted** to cry anymore.

I am only six years old.

For as long as I can remember, no one has ever asked me, past that particularly bad year in first grade, why it was that I became so upset. No one ever asked me to sit down and explore the things that happened to me, or why they did, or how I felt about them. No one ever asked me about the voice. It's been as if no one thought what happened to me was particularly traumatic or relevant, and so they just quietly pushed it under a rug and forgot about it when I stopped crying and continued to be quiet and shy.

Thinking back, this makes me upset.

I think those experiences, those thoughts and feelings, might have been particularly useful if anyone had encouraged me to explore them. I feel my brow knit with frustration when I consider how different my life could have been if I had been able to conquer the voices of doubt in my head from an early age with the positive self-schema I have only recently discovered.

I am trying not to blame anyone. I do not think anyone knew I needed help, or rather, I was not able to articulate what I was feeling to anyone. I think in our extroverted society, my failure to act out, aside from my occasional elementary school crying, which declined with age, might have been misinterpreted by the adults in my life as a sign that all was well. What may not have been clear was that the decline in my outward displays of sadness was not an improvement in my negative thoughts, but rather an attempt to avoid the negative stigma of a “cry-baby.”

I never stopped living in a culture that made me feel strange for being a shy, quiet girl. As a result, I grew to lack confidence in myself. Assertiveness is rewarded over docility, making “the very behavior prized in girls,” such as being shy and quiet and nice “become an obstacle to their success,” as boys continue to be taught to be more aggressive and are rewarded for this behavior instead (Orenstein, 1994, p. 36). A willingness to be individualistic, to seek self-goals over others, is what is prized in our culture, not the quiet and patient way that I wanted to be as a child, and that is over-encouraged for my sex. So, I never felt like I could achieve anything.

I never felt like I was ‘normal.’

I have undergone a massive change in the past few years, mostly in that I am finally able to quiet the voice when I do not want to hear it. This auto ethnography is not about who I am now, however. I see it as being about who I was for the majority of my life.

It is about all of the lies I told myself over and over again, and all of the crippling barriers I created for myself, which at the time I did not even realize I was doing. It is about how a naturally introverted and introspective child is labeled as defunct in a society that values extroversion, speech, and self-promotion, even though those same values are promoted in girls. It is about how, feeling those pressures and expectations of extroverted behavior which I could not bring myself to feel comfortable performing, I internalized and reinforced the feeling that there was something wrong with me. I did this so drastically, that its manifestation can be crippling to me even now as an adult.

The self-schema I created is the voice which haunted me as a child, and which haunts me still. I feel sick, almost, when I think about how, for most of my life, I left these negative tapes of dialogue running in the background of my mind, without my ever thinking to question them, or trying to turn them off.

It is scary to me now because as I look back, all I can see is the **ENORMOUS** damage one schema can do to a person, and how deeply those scars can run.

To varying degrees, male approval determines [girls’] self-esteem. An adolescent girl who wants boys to like her must act out and embody her cultural feminine ideal (Orenstein, 1994, p. 22).

I stand in the darkened cafeteria of my school. The pop music and strobe lights blare and shine all around me as a hundred or so seventh and eighth graders from different catholic private schools shuffle awkwardly past each other. A few girls are brave enough to dance with their friends for a few minutes in the center of what has now become the dance floor, before scuttling back into the crowd of carefully concocted teenage apathy. The boys do not move from their posts along the wall. They simply stand with their arms crossed or in their pockets, watching and talking to each other as they wait for the only thing that will make them move all evening: A slow song.

My hair is down and curly, with my new headband in it, and I have on my favorite pair of bell-bottom jeans and my new shirt with flowing sleeves and a sparkly design on the front. These are the coolest things I own, as most of my clothes aren't fashionable because my mother shops for me, and her taste is not the same as the other girls in my eighth grade class. My friend Lauren is next to me, and next to her is my friend Ash. We stand, making sarcastic comments and talking about teachers. They both look pretty tonight too, although Ash looks prettier than all of us. She is thin and tan, her dark eyes contrasting with her blonde-colored hair. Her tall legs making her tower over both of us.

It's no wonder she has a boyfriend.

Suddenly, a slow song comes on. The boys make their move, asking girls to dance, as the atmosphere becomes more romantic. Will, who has only been a few feet away talking to someone, moves to tap Ash on the shoulder, asking her if she would like to dance. His smile enchanting, he acknowledges Lauren and I, and Ash shyly replies yes, smiling as well. The two of them distance themselves from us to be with the other couples.

She puts her hands behind his neck, and he puts his on her waist, slowly rotating. I feel my stomach churn. Everything becomes dark and cold inside me, as I watch the boy I have feelings for dance with my beautiful best friend.

I have never had a boyfriend.

*"Maybe, if you were not ugly,
And you actually talked for once instead of clamming up,
Will would have asked you out instead."*

The voice in the back of my mind speaks. I try to ignore it. Not now. Not now while I am here, in my favorite clothes, with my friends, with all of these people. I do not want to feel bad about myself **now**.

But I cannot block out anything. The cheesy slow-song hits its chorus, and all I can hear is Kelly Clarkson's voice, singing:

A moment like this / Some people wait a lifetime / For a moment like this / Some people search forever / For that one special kiss / Oh, I can't believe it's happening to me / Some people wait a lifetime / For a moment like this

Its words hit me like a ton of bricks. I can feel the tears welling up in the corners of my eyes, though I do not want to cry. Not now. I stare at Ash and Will. Their happiness apparent as they dance, whispering to each other. This song is perfect for them. This is a perfect moment.

I stare at what I wish my life were like.

The voice in my head creeps in again.

A moment like this, huh?

What a moment.

You'll never have something like that.

What boy will ever like you like that?

No, you're just too ugly and stupid.

You never have anything interesting to say.

A crybaby too, look at you. Pathetic.

Face it, you're going to be alone forever.

You'll never have a moment like in this song."

The tears are too much to hold back now. They begin to leak from the corners of my eyes, but I rush past Lauren without explanation, out of that crowded cafeteria. I seek solace in a lonely but comfortable bathroom stall, where I can let the tears fall until they stop coming.

I am never quite able to listen to that song again.

Physical appearance becomes extremely important to emerging adolescents. These factors play a large role in their developing sense of self-worth, but girls are much more impacted by their appearance than are boys. "Physical appearance is most important for girls in middle school, the time of greatest decline in self-esteem" (American Association of University Women, 1994, p. 8).

SELF-ESTEEM

A person’s sense of self worth, or self-esteem, is “a perception rather than a reality” (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003, p. 2). It is an individual’s belief about whether she is intelligent, attractive, capable, significant, successful, and worthy, and is not necessarily based in reality (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Herz and Gullone, 1999). Rather, this sense develops out of interactions and feedback from others and one’s social culture, as well as the individuals’ self-schemas. The two terms, while closely interrelated, are different in that the schema is the internal voice, while the self-esteem is the internal sense of worth and self-view. Those who have low self-esteem are often drawn toward more negative views of people, situations, and realities, and thus also possess a negative view of self as well (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Saying or thinking frequent critical self-remarks, this feeds back into the cycle of the creation of a negative self-schema, which in turn causes low self-esteem.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHANGE

Whenever I do something wrong
 Something I regret
 Something I should not have
 Something I should have
 Something others criticize
I do not think what happens is normal.

In my mind what I’ve done plays like a video
 over and
 over and over and
 over and over and over and over and over and over

So that I cannot escape it
 I cannot stop it
I cannot concentrate on anything else.
 So I try to sleep,

 But I cannot sleep.
Because in my mind, every sensation
 Every word
 Every action
Is being re-lived so vividly
 over and
 over and over and
 over and over and over and over and
 over and over and over and over and over and over and over

That I curl myself up into a ball
And I feel cold and full of dread
And I feel sick to my stomach
And feel myself shaking.

The negative voice in my head is doing this.
It's got control of the remote of my mind,
And it will not give it up.

It whispers to me

*What have you done?
How could you have been so stupid?
You've ruined everything, everything.
Nothing will EVER be ok again.
Your world is COLLAPSING.*

They HATE YOU AND THEY WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU.

So I ask it

*What can I do to make it right?
What can I do?
I'll do anything,
Let me find it, let me fix it,
Let me erase it, let me beg, let me plead.
I will swim through broken glass if it will make it right.
I will do anything, ANYTHING.
I HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO FIX THIS.*

WHAT HAVE I DONE?

*WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
YOU WERE SO STUPID,
HOW COULD YOU HAVE BEEN SO STUPID?*

*Oh no, no no no no
Oh God, what have I done?*

And I stay like that
Unable to lie still
Thinking those things
Re-living that moment

*over and
over and over and
over and over and over and over and
over and over and over and over and
over and over and over and over and over*

Until I am so mentally and physically exhausted

I cannot stay awake anymore
And my worn-out body
Saves me from my own mind.



Amanda DiMartini, 2011

The United States, when compared to other more collectivist countries like Japan, is a highly individualistic nation (Helgoe, 2008; Trenholm and Jensen, 2008). This results in social interactions in United States culture being prized and positively reinforced if they display individualism, self-sufficiency, separation, competition, strict objectivity and rationality, and extroverted qualities and a high degree of speech (Helgoe, 2008; Kapoor, Wolfe, & Blue, 1995; McCann, Honeycutt, & Keaton, 2010; Trenholm and Jensen, 2008; Wang, 2000, p. 206;). As a culture, we value the act of doing much more so than simply being, as it is associated with extroversion (Helgoe, 2008). We then dislike long periods of reflection or silence, which may be perceived as “wasting’ time” (Trenholm and Jensen, 2008, p. 377; p. 380), as it is associated with introversion (Helgoe, 2008). Despite this, however, Dr. Laurie Helgoe (2008) cites in her book, *Introvert Power*, that nearly 50% of the population of the United States is made up of people who possess more introverted tendencies of personality. Introversion is “an inward orientation to life” in which a person gains “energy by reflecting and expend[s] energy when interacting” (Helgoe, 2008, p. xviii). Yet in the cultural context of the United States, introversion is commonly portrayed and thought of as a defect which needs to be fixed (Helgoe, 2008). It is not seen as a legitimate way of functioning in the world. This is referenced in multiple ways, and can most prevalently be seen in texts which aim to help introverted readers “get...over” the obstacle of their shyness, and behave more competently, like the extroverted cultural ideal (Helgoe, 2008, p. 7). Such a culture naturally produces a negative bias towards introverts, the cultural pressures of which can be internalized by those who identify more as introverted, especially in terms of how they identify themselves in their self-schema, thus ultimately feeding into a negative view of self (Helgoe, 2008).

I reluctantly get out of my mother’s red Ford Crown Victoria, the thought of the next few hours the most unbearable thing my fourteen-year-old mind can imagine. Walking into an unfamiliar retreat center through a pair of glass doors. I enter a dark room, which is almost underground. Looking around at the dull reddish room, the outdated furniture and the plastic and metal tables full of teenagers my own age who I do not know.

Despite going to a private Catholic school, my priest and his office assistant have insisted that I must attend a pre-Confirmation retreat with the rest of the Parish youth to be able to be confirmed this year in the Catholic sacrament of adulthood. I am the only one here who does not attend the local public school, and I **do not know anyone**. Quietly, I go over to a table and sit alone with another girl who is not talking to anyone, her dark hoodie and gothic pants setting her apart from everyone else there in Abercrombie t-shirts and shorts. I try to catch her eye, intrigued by the band names on her belongings, but she does not seem interested in acknowledging me. I sit there as more people arrive, seeing pretty bleached-blond girls talk to handsome athletic boys.

I am in a room full of people and I have never felt more uncomfortable and alone.

The woman in charge of this event and her staff eventually emerge, giving a brief introduction and then splitting us off into groups for “team building” exercises.

I stand next to several people, all complaining quietly to each other how lame everything is, wanting to talk so desperately and yet being unable to make my mouth open.

*Why can't you just talk to someone?
Why can't you think of something funny to say?
Why do you have to be such a freak?
No one is going to help you in these activities if you do not talk,
They don't even know you.*

We go to play a game outside, where we have to work together to get across an asphalt basketball court, which has become a lake of lava. No one in my group is particularly interested in accomplishing the activity as a team. They ignore me and another girl, the majority of them friends and strategizing lazily how to get each other across, leaving us out. It's not a malicious act, but they are simply without concern for anyone but themselves.

*You're going to be the only one who does not make it across the lava.
Say something. Figure out the solution to this!
Why aren't you smart enough? They'd talk to you if you did that.
Do you really want everyone here to notice you're the freak with no friends?
You're already weird enough for going to a private school
Do you have to be such a shy, dumb dork too?*

I cannot think of anything to say.

The other girl and I look on longing as our teammates try different strategies, not asking us for help and becoming more and more unsuccessful. Looking around, I see that none of the other groups are doing much better. Eventually, the forty minutes allotted for the activity has gone by and the head woman calls our attention. She is furious. She yells that no group of students has ever been this unsuccessful at the activity and worked less as a team than we have. She shouts, saying how terribly disappointed in us she is.

*You failed.
Look how upset that woman is, you're awful.*

*No, no, I was not part of this group!
I do not know any of these kids, I do not even know her!
This time it's not my fault!*

*Fine.
But you still did not talk to anyone the entire day.
If you were not so shy you would not be a freak.
If you were normal, the day might have actually been bearable.*

I sit by myself again, this time very purposefully, until they dismiss us and I can walk out of that horrible place as fast as I can go. My mom is waiting for me in her car. I tell her about the disastrous experience this meeting was when she asks, exploding with frustrations. I slowly simmer down, and my mom kindly agrees with me, comforting me as we drive home. I look out the car window tiredly at the trees and houses passing us by.

You did not talk to anyone the entire day.

Still, I cannot quite get the taste of disappointment in myself out of the back of my mouth.

“Adolescent girls are more likely than boys to have their declining sense of themselves inhibit their actions and abilities. This difference grows more pronounced with age” (American Association of University Women, 1994, p. 8).

According to author Sara Shandler (1999), young adolescent women all over the country, of various personal backgrounds, experience the feelings of inadequacy and self-dissatisfaction living in the cultural context of the United States. Shandler expresses her own experience of feeling “intense insecurity” and experiencing “self-deprecation;” despite her “general happiness” in her outward appearance and behavior, she felt like she was “dying” internally (1999, p. xv). She reflects through the materials gathered to write her book, *Ophelia Speaks*, that even the “[s]o-called perfect girls feel trapped by others’ expectations,” (Shandler 1999, p. xii). While young women in the United States are aware that they “have been raised in a culture that cradles double-standards, impossible ideals of beauty,” they “have been caught in the crossfire between where [they] have been told [they] should be and where [they] really are” (Shandler 1999, p. xiii). which leads to the conflicting views of the internal and external self which Schandler herself felt. Because of this cultural climate, even girls who are aggressive, extroverted, or “[s]elf-directed” experience periods of internal doubt and self-dissatisfaction (Shandler 1999, p. xii). Thus, it follows to reason that those girls who are more introverted, internally inclined, and already at a cultural handicap, may be even more affected by these periods or experiences of discontent than those who process things more outwardly (Helgoe, 2008). Introverts “tend to internalize their problems,” placing the source of their problems, and the blame for their existence, within themselves (Helgoe, 2008, p. 174).

Shandler’s use of the word “trapped,” (1999, p. xii), is one that resonates with me deeply. I have oftentimes visualized the negative self-schema in my head as a cage, which prevents me from exerting myself beyond certain limits. Fearful of what others might think, whether or not they will disapprove, whether I will be forced to dwell on the incident later should my actions be received poorly, I am unable to move beyond it at times. Knowing that my own natural inclination toward the internal and introversion already puts me at a cultural disadvantage as it does not meet “others’ expectations” of what my behavior should be,

I find myself in a similar “crossfire” (Shandler 1999, p. xii). As I see it, I internalized society’s dissatisfaction with personality so deeply that my schema caused severe damage to my self-esteem. Because of this, I lacked the confidence to act in a more extroverted manner, thus only helping to perpetuate the cycle of self-deprecation I took part in.

If I think about this, I become sad, but I begin to see why it took me so long to realize this. I think it is only when one can break free of the cage, of the circle, and step away, that you can truly see it in all its intricate complexity.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

The wide open space of my kindergarten classroom is filled with toys and tables which children are free to use during play time. Right now, we all sit at tables with dark construction paper and chalk. The windows let in the daylight as it reflects off the snow outside, making it especially bright, as we go about our assigned task: Make a drawing with the chalk and the paper.

The other children around me hurriedly make snowflakes and other wintertime things, inspired by the world outside. They’re enjoying themselves, but the things they make look indistinguishable from a pile of scribbles. They never seem to enjoy drawing as much as I do, or take as much time on their work. They never seem to enjoy their inner worlds of their imagination as much as I do.

With my paper to myself, I carefully draw a girl ice-skating on a pond as snow gently falls around her. I am pleased with the drawing, as my teacher for this activity, Sr. Colleen, an older woman in her early forties whose passion in life is these small children, walks around to look at everyone’s creations. She stops when she gets to mine, however, and a look of surprise washes over her face. She speaks, bending down closer to me to look at my work

“Why Amanda, that’s beautiful!”

I am shocked by the sudden positive attention, but delighted by the compliment. I allow her to look at the paper, taking it from my hands and looking at my hard work.

She excitedly tells me that she’s going to call some other sisters in to look at it as well, putting a sticky-note on it and setting it on her desk for the time being. I am allowed to play with the other children in the mean-time, but eventually two older sisters wander in. Those, I imagine, who have the time in their day to stop by a classroom to see if anything interesting is going on. Sr. Colleen shows them my drawing and asks me to come over as they look at it, their faces delighted beneath their white-grey hair.

“You’re very talented honey. This is very good, I love the little ice-skater!” Says one, smiling at me. I shyly thank her, still nervous around strangers.

“Do you want to be an artist some day?” Asks the other, happily. I think about the question for a moment. In class we often talk about what we want to be when we grow up. I think about what I know artists do. I think about how much special attention I am getting right now, and how happy it makes me. I think about how all artists have to do is make pictures all day and have people tell them that they’re good. I would have people tell me all day I was good at drawing things.

“Yes, I think I want to be an artist.” I say, deciding, and giving them a happy smile.

For once, the voice in my head has nothing bad to say to me.

‘...’

I discover that in my talent I can make it be quiet.

When people will complement me and I can feel proud.

Just so, for a moment, as I look at my work, as I begin to embrace the possibility of doing something that I am good at and enjoy, just so

the voice can not say anything at all.

A growing child needs positive reinforcement and encouragement to do well, as, according to Social Learning Theory (Krumboltz, Mitchell, Jones, 1976; Trenholm and Jensen, 2008), these positive feedback experiences encourage a child to continue to engage in similar activities as those that initially earned them praise (Bandura, 1969; Rosenstock, Strecher, Becker, 1988; Trenholm and Jensen, 2008). I think I was in need of far more positive feedback and encouragement than other children, however. My constant self-deprecation stemmed from my natural introversion and the negative feedback I received. This only made me more uncertain of my abilities and self-worth in a social environment, which made me feel abnormal at my introverted, reflective self (Helgoe, 2008). What I needed was positive affirmation from others; telling me that the way I was, shy, quiet, and introspective, was not only acceptable, but a good thing. Yet I never received this affirmation, and so my internal schema continued as it always had. I was unable to see my own psychological processes for the destructive things that they were as a child. I did not know there was any other way to be internally, so I simply lived with my negative schema, letting it shame myself vision as inferior, and thus my behavior.

I am not alone. I believe my natural introversion made me susceptible to what Orenstein (1994) calls the myth of “a superior self...the perfect [American] girl” who has “no bad thoughts or feelings, [who is] the kind of persona everyone wants to be with” and who is quiet, calm, nice and not bossy (p. 37). This vision “reminds young women to silence themselves rather than speak their true feelings” (Orenstein, 1994, p. 37).

So rather than allowing me a place to escape the outside pressures I felt, my internalization of those conflicting ideals of extroversion and female docility helped to perpetuate my low self-esteem. My self-schema evolved my simple introverted desires to process the world internally, to one that encouraged me not to be myself or express myself at all, for fear I would be ridiculed by others. It evolved into a bully who berated me daily, and at the same time kept my mouth sealed tight as to its very existence.

So that the voice in my head was mine alone for a very, very long time.

ARMOR

I feel like a manufactured being.

There is this armor I have built all around my once fragile body. There is this coating I keep over myself, and it is made of other people's words. It is made of their words and smiles, their encouragement. Their praise. When they lifted me up and made me feel like I was worth something. When they made me feel fantastic. When they forced me to look at myself and see tremendous worth and talent and potential there because they saw it.

I've been collecting their words because it's the strongest material I have to make my armor with. I have been collecting it ever since I realized I do not want to hate myself anymore.

I cannot argue with another person's perspective. Or rather, my negative self schema cannot argue with their perspective.

You have to understand, for me, other people's words have more power than my own ever will. Maybe it is because girls in our society are taught to minimize their successes and instead put others successes before their own, looking up to others while looking down on themselves (Orenstein, 1994). I just know that all the negative voice in my head has ever done is push me down and raise other people higher.

Other people are wonderful.

Other people know what they're doing.

You'll never be as good as other people.

So I turned its own weapons against it

Well fine then.

If they're so wonderful and so much better than you,

then how can you ignore them

when they tell you these wonderful things about yourself?

How can you doubt what they're saying?

You can not have it both ways voice.

They're telling me I mean something,

and it's genuine because they do not even know

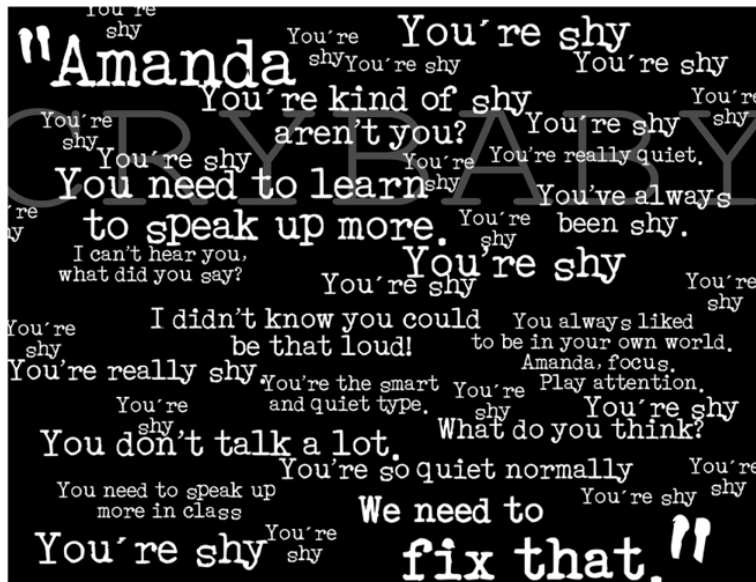
how much their words are saving me.

If other people are wonderful and they're telling me I am wonderful then I must be wonderful too.

I started collecting other people's words and I keep them around me like armor. Whenever the voice speaks, trying to convince me I am not worth anything, I pull out someone else's words and deflect it. The side of myself that sees self-worth and potential in me uses them and fights it.

Every day, though, it is a battle.

This is what it's like
to fight with myself
when I look in the mirror
on a bad day.



Amanda DiMartini, 2011

ATTACHMENT AND SELF-VALIDATION

Attachment style is also related to one's sense of self-worth, and helps determine how a person suffering from low-self esteem interacts with others. Those with a negative view of self either possess a negative view of others (a fearful style), or an extremely positive view of others (a preoccupied style), the later of which is the case for this study (Bachman and Zakahi, 2000; Trenholm and Jensen, 2008). Those in possession of this preoccupied style are able to see others very positively, despite their own self-doubt and low self-esteem, leading them to be very attached to those who accept them. They are also in need of constant reassurance and positive confirmation of self-worth from those individuals to whom they feel a strong attachment (Bachman and Zakahi, 2000; Trenholm and Jensen, 2008).

According to Orenstein (1994),

[p]ersonal psychology, physiology, family dynamics, and culture all play a role in an individual girl's vulnerability...[b]ut the girls who are at the highest risk for negative body images, which contribute to low self-esteem, are "white, and middle- or upper-middle-class girls, who are most likely to receive the conflicting messages of silence and assertiveness at home, at school, [and] from boys. Among these girls, negative body image is rampant" (p. 92-93).

DAMAGE

I need a new bathing suit.

The dull lights of a department store dressing room beam down on my mother and I, the white walls of the large handicap stall bleak and slightly hopeless feeling. My mother has picked out several one-piece bathing suits with my assistance, all colorful with the colorful patterns and swirls of fabrics in the early 2000's. The one that I liked is the first one I want to try on, though. I am so excited.

I take off my clothes and begin wriggling myself into the suit, pulling this way and that until I have gotten it up and it is on me. Turning, I finally look into the mirror, and my face falls.

You look so ugly.

My eyes immediately go to the rolls of fat the suit emphasizes on my little overweight body. My shape is not thin at this age but more round. My hips are wide and my stomach is big, I am short, and I have body fat.

The suit shows all of these things.

*Look at how fat you are! You look TERRIBLE! You cannot go out like that!
I really liked this suit too. If you were not so fat and ugly you would not have ruined it.*

*Look at how fat you are! LOOK! YOU'RE LIKE A BLIMP!
Why can't you just look like all the other girls in swim class, WHY? Why can't you be
skinny and pretty instead of fat and ugly like a whale?*

You're so STUPID! Why can't you be less ugly?

I am overwhelmed by the intensity of the voice and my feelings. The tears well up in the corners of my eyes as I find myself stuck, staring into the mirror and letting the voice consume me.

My mother can see something is wrong in my face in the mirror.

“What’s wrong honey?” She asks, concerned.

My face scrunches up as I begin to cry.

“Look at me mom! Why can’t I be skinny like all the other girls in my class? I am so fat.”

My mother is shocked. She begins to quietly comfort me, saying little and trying to get me to calm down, hugging me. The voice never leaves though.

Look how she does not even contradict you.

Look at her face.

You know she knows it's true, that's why she's not saying anything.

*She's not going to deny that you're the fattest girl in class,
because you are, and she knows it.*

My mother holds me until I stop my crying.

The damage is already done, though.

I am ten years old.

Writing that story, I feel ashamed, because it makes it sound like I blame my mother for this. I do not blame her. She is a wonderful parent, and she has always given me love and support in so many ways, both of my parents have. As I told my teachers and the school guidance counselor, my life has been happy and full of love because of the two of them.

There are times, though, when I think my mother feels it's her duty to be honest with me more than to blatantly lie about something she knows is true. Even if lying, or semi-hopeless optimism, is what I actually need from her. McCann, Honeycutt, and Keaton (2010) suggest that Americans are biased towards optimism, and that for their well-being to remain in-tact, they need assurances of their positive qualities more-so than other cultures. Reflecting on myself, I do not think I am an exception to this finding, and in fact I may embody it. As someone with a preoccupied attachment style, and a natural inclination toward low self-esteem due to internalized societal pressures, I need someone else's positive words to counter-act the negative ones inside my head. Sometimes, like when I saw myself in that bathing suit, I need to be lied to just so the voice in my head is not crushing me with its negativity, even when I know the words of that lie are untrue.

POWER

My sixth-grade classmates stare beady-eyed ahead of themselves, their boredom apparent as they lean on their desks, playing with erasers and pretending to have an interest in what is going on. The Halloween decorations on the classroom walls provide a cheesy atmosphere as one of my classmates stands at the front of the room, reading aloud an original story they've written for this particular assignment.

I sit nervously rigid in my chair, looking down at my own story in my hand. I am **so proud** of it. The minute we received the assignment to write a Halloween short story, I started thinking of ideas, and then I wrote a first draft. Then a second. Then I changed my storyline completely to incorporate a brilliant twist at the end, and my mom even proof-read it. This story has everything I could think of, from humor to terror, as it chillingly ends in a haunted mansion with no way out for the main character.

But I cannot bring myself to get up and read it.

The teacher has asked six times now who else would like to read their story, and each time I have tried to raise my hand, but I feel as though invisible anvils are tied to my wrist.

*What if it's no good? What if it's actually terrible?
You read it, you know it's not **that** great.
What are you going to do if its terrible and they do not laugh?
You'll feel so stupid.
Look, look at them.
They do not even want you to read it.
They're bored.
Besides, you're too soft-spoken to read it anyway.*

*Well, maybe they're bored
because these stories being read are awful.*

*Oh, and yours is so much better? I don't think so.
It's not that good.
You **cannot possibly** read it.*

My classmate finishes and we all give an unenthusiastic round of applause. The teacher, Ms. L, looks up from her notes and again asks if anyone wants to read their story. There is a pause as we all wait, but no one volunteers.

I really want to read this.

**YOU CANNOT.
IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH.**

My hand quivers, but remains on the desk in front of me. Ms. L takes the silence to mean we are done with the readings, and asks us to pass up our papers to the front row so she can collect them. I sit in shock.

My chance is gone. The thing I had envisioned since I wrote this story...did not happen. I feel a sadness set over me like I've never experienced before, as Ms. L takes my paper away and returns to her desk, telling us to take out our workbooks and turn to section six.

Until this moment,

I never realized how much abusive power my voice has over me.

Sometimes, the negative self-schema in my head thinks
about all the things I've ever done that I regret,
and makes me want to sink into the floor
and not exist anymore
because the shame is so great.

But then the positive self-schema in my head starts to talk back to it.

You're such a freak

You're so ugly

Are you serious?

Are you LISTENING to this?

You're unlovable

You're untalented in every way

NONE of that is true,

Look at how many things you've accomplished!

Look how many people care about you

It does not matter

It DOES matter

You're awful

I am wonderful

I work hard to be a good person

There's got to be something wrong with you

That's why you never get what you want

There's nothing wrong with me

Nobody gets everything they want

You're not ever enough.

I AM ENOUGH.

Who I am is enough.

SHUT. UP.

*I do not want to **hear** it*

I always looked down on myself until about a little over two years ago, when I discovered my Myers Briggs Type indicator (MBTI) personality type, an Introverted iNtuitive Feeling Perceiving (INFP).

I sat outside in the open air of Frick Park in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the warm summer sun just beginning to set as I guarded the entrance to the park, dissuading people from entering so that the outdoor play I was interning on could rehearse more smoothly. I opened a career guide book based on the Myers Briggs test that I had been lent for fun.

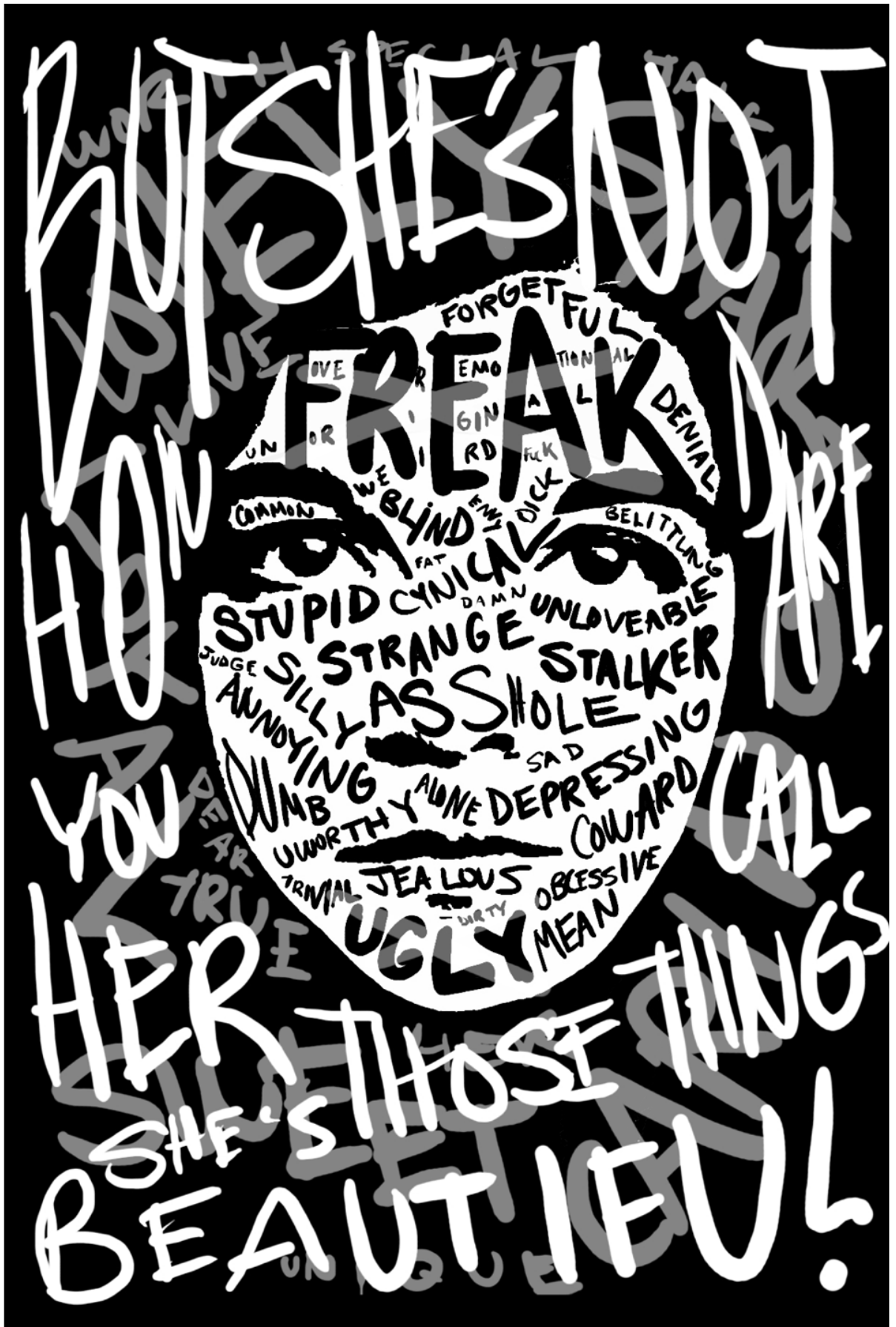
The first chapter told me that there were two kinds of people in the world: Introverts and Extroverts. The chapter did not categorize introverts as a defunct version of the correct way to behave, however. It classified them as their own legitimate personality type. It implied that neither one was right or wrong, they were just different. And I had to stop reading and take a minute to breathe, because I felt so overwhelmed by that thought that I was crying by the end of reading that chapter. I am crying not because it was profound knowledge, but because until this point, it had **never** occurred or been said to me that being shy or quiet was good. That it was not weird or abnormal or wrong like I had always been made to feel. That it was a fault. It was just the way I was.

A n d . I t . W a s . O k .

I have tried so hard my whole life to ‘get over’ being this introverted, but it’s not something to get over, it’s something to embrace (Helgoe, 2008). Compared to how shy and quiet I was as a child, I’ve made incredible progress learning to act more extroverted, like I always felt the pressure to become if I wanted to be successful. I’ve also improved my self-esteem and stopped letting my negative self-schema have such tremendous power over me. Extroverted is really not me at my default, though. I am a quiet person, who does not often speak eloquently, but likes to daydream and draw and speak in ways other than words. I’ve begun to embrace that now as a source of strength and power (Helgoe, 2007). It no longer matters to me that my culture indicates introverted is a feminine and lesser, weaker way to be. I know that’s not true at all, especially after having written this paper.

What happened that day was the start of a change in me that is still on-going, but one from which I will never back down. Once I realized the way I was was not wrong, I gained an incredible peace of mind I never thought I would have. Having let my negative inner voice rule over me for so long, I finally found my strongest weapon for **battling** it and all of the cultural individualism and extroversion and gender expectations I had internalized.

The voice in my head is still there...but I don’t have to listen to it anymore.



Amanda DiMartini, 2011

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