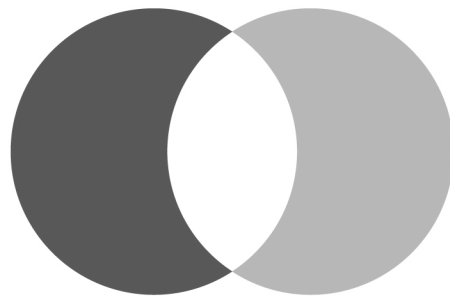


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# A Rhetorical Criticism

OF HILLARY CLINTON'S GENEVA  
ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS:

*FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS*

**T**he human rights struggle has been prominent in social, political, and personal realms since the birth of the term equality. On December 6, 2011, at the 66<sup>th</sup> general assembly of the United Nations in Geneva, Hillary Clinton, then Secretary of State, delivered an address on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people that has since been heralded as a modern day equivalent to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech (Browning, 2011). Given the current prominence of issues relating to gay and lesbian rights, particularly those on the subject of same-sex marriage, the significance of this rhetorical act is impossible to dismiss.

In her speech, Clinton recognizes the upcoming 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and strives to unify her audience in recognition of the ideal she maintains; human rights apply to all people, regardless of race, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation. Furthermore, Clinton attests that LGBT people represent an invisible minority of individuals subject to acts of discrimination, oppression, and in many cases, violence, because of their sexual identity (Clinton, 2011).

Critics who seek to understand the functionality, validity, or efficacy of a rhetorical act have often referred to Lloyd Bitzer's work, which explores and

defines the rhetorical situation. Rhetorical works, he says, are situational, and "...belong to the class of things which obtain their character from the circumstances of the historical context in which they occur" (Bitzer, 1968, p. 3). Thus, the following analysis examines this rhetorical act by evaluating the historical context surrounding the rhetor, her audience, and the subject she addresses, as well as the constraints Clinton faces regarding each of these aspects. Following this, I analyze the strategies and persuasive techniques of the rhetor through the lens of descriptive analysis, and finally, I discuss the societal implications of, and suggest alternative approaches to, the subject matter within the text.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT ■■■■

### RHETOR

Hillary Clinton's reputation and public distinction are factors that are impossible to ignore when examining the context surrounding this rhetorical act. At the time of this address, Clinton was well into her four-year term as United States Secretary of State (US Department of State, 2013). In addition to her political prominence, Clinton's credentials include a long history of outspoken advocacy for human rights (Brazile, 2013). In particular, she is acknowledged for her tenacious campaigning for women's rights. In September 1995, at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, Clinton (1995) declared, "it is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights" (para. 17). On this subject, she spoke "...more forcefully on human rights than any American dignitary has on Chinese soil" (Tyler, 1995, para. 1). Given these factors, Clinton's credibility as a rhetor may seem beyond reproach. As a political figure, however, she is no stranger to public scrutiny.

One of the primary constraints Clinton faces as a rhetor stems from this scrutiny of her historic—and very public—lack of support for same-sex marriage. Her speech in Geneva was, in fact, the first occasion on which she openly declared that LGBT individuals should be entitled to equality on all fronts (Babington, 2013;

Weiner, 2013). Here, Clinton speaks of an individual's right to love whomever they choose, and condemns the immoral and unethical persecution of LGBT people (Clinton, 2011). Nowhere, however, in her declaration of equality and human rights, does she address outright the legality of same-sex marriage.

Her omission of explicit terminology regarding this issue left some members of the LGBT community with the impression that Clinton's sudden outspokenness on their behalf was a mere act of political posturing—an attempt to secure support should she choose to campaign for office in the 2016 presidential election (Babington, 2013; Kengor, 2013). An article from USA Today states, "As late as the 2008 presidential race, Clinton still opposed same-sex marriage, advocating civil unions and leaving the legality of marriage to the states" (Kengor, 2013, para. 12). Many since then have expressed the opinion that if Clinton truly valued the rights of LGBT people, she would have honored their rights, as humans, to engage in state and federally recognized marriages, which differ distinctly from civil unions. As Schmitt, Lehmler, and Walsch (2007) argue, "... the dissimilitude between the terms 'civil marriage' and 'civil union' is not innocuous; it is a considered choice of language that reflects a demonstrable assigning of same-sex, largely homosexual, couples

to second-class status” (p. 443). It was over a year after her speech in Geneva that Clinton finally amended her public statements on equal rights to include marriage equality. This occurred in early 2013, and some still suspect her timing to be evidence of political opportunism, particularly because the course of her evolution on matters regarding LGBT rights aligns precisely with that of the administration under which she served at the time of the address (Gast, 2012; Kengor, 2013; Murse, 2013).

In 2011, none among the Obama Administration’s central leadership had yet endorsed the rights of same-sex couples to legally wed; Vice President Joseph Biden, in May 2012, was the first (Becker, 2014; Gast, 2012). In an interview with David Gregory, Biden stated his view that gay couples, lesbians couples, and heterosexual couples should be entitled to the same measure of Civil rights and liberties in all matters, the right to marry notwithstanding (Becker, 2014; Gast, 2012). Three days later, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, in an exclusive interview with *Good Morning America’s* Robin Roberts, President Barack Obama “offered what amounted to a carefully calibrated and incremental endorsement, one that had something for both opponents and supporters of same-sex marriage” (Becker, 2014, para. 56). Becker (2014) also notes that Obama’s former position, in support of Civil-unions for LGBT couples, did not necessarily reflect his true system of values. As early as 1996, Obama is on record as stating his willingness to fight efforts that would prohibit marriages between same-sex couples. His public opinion shifted only with the growth of his political aspirations.

On the morning of the interview in May, First Lady Michelle Obama remarked to her husband, “Enjoy this day, you are free” (Becker, 2014, para. 55). Unfortunately, publicly overturning the official position of the White House was not as liberating for Obama as it might have been. His advisors were not wholly resolved that the time had come to make this declaration. Biden’s remarks, however, left them with little choice, lest Obama “risk looking as if he were leading from behind” (Becker, 2014, para. 52). Thus, Obama attended his hastily scheduled interview on May 9, 2012, with comments strategically structured to portray administrative solidarity while mitigating the potential consequences

of taking a controversial stance on an issue laden with controversy. In Geneva, Clinton did much the same.

In paragraph 31 of her speech, Clinton (2011) states, “The Obama Administration defends the human rights of LGBT people as part of our comprehensive human rights policy and as a priority of our foreign policy.” Her words here reflect not only her station of status within the Obama Administration, but also her unanimity with its policies. Her position as Secretary of State affords Clinton no small amount of Credibility, but it also represents an inherent obstacle. Like President Obama, Clinton may not be at full liberty to express her personal convictions on the matter of same-sex marriage, leaving some doubt as to where her loyalties actually lie. Uncertainty regarding Clinton’s sincerity then becomes her primary constraint as a rhetor, potentially threatening the overall effectiveness of the rhetorical act. If members of her audience feel Clinton herself does not fully endorse her message, they may be far less likely to do so themselves, regardless of their previously existing perspectives on the issue.

## AUDIENCE

In regards to perspectives, Clinton’s audience was extremely diverse, representing a myriad of varying cultural backgrounds, systems of value, and predispositions. Lisa Keen (2011), in an article from *The Dallas Voice*, states, “The speech, web streamed live, took place before an audience of about 500 people that gave Clinton and her speech a prolonged and warm reception” (para. 12). Despite this apparently unanimous support for her message, it is noteworthy that even among an immediate audience consisting of only invited members, nations in which homosexual practices are currently illegal were represented (Keen, 2011; Stewart, 2013; United Nations, 2013).

Clinton, however, demonstrates her awareness of the heterogeneous nature of her audience throughout the entirety of her speech. As Keen (2011) notes later in her article, “Clinton made clear she knew she was speaking to a tougher audience” (para. 12). In the concluding paragraph of her introduction, for example, Clinton says, “Now, raising this issue, I know, is sensitive for many people and that the obstacles standing in the way of protecting the human rights of LGBT people rest on deeply held personal,

political, cultural and religious beliefs” (Clinton, 2011, para. 8). Consideration for the diversity of her audience members serves to bolster both the credibility and the appeal of this rhetorical act. Nonetheless, it is these widely varying beliefs that represent the primary constraint Clinton faces regarding her audience.

In her speech, Clinton clearly establishes her conviction that one’s sexual preference or identity is determined by birth rather than by choice. She explicitly rejects the idea that homosexuality is a deficiency or disease that can be either caught or cured (Clinton, 2011). Worldwide, however, opinions as to the nature or origins of homosexuality continue to be the subject of heated debate. As Ryan Johnson (2003) attests, “The current debate is whether or not homosexuality is a result of nature: a person’s environment and surroundings, or of his biology and genetics. The debate endures because both sides have the ability to create a scientific environment to support their cause” (para. 1). In a recent survey, statistics indicate a bipolar public opinion on this issue. Of americans polled in 2013, 41% believed that people are born gay or lesbian, while 42% felt that sexual preference is a lifestyle choice, and the remaining few held that a person’s upbringing determines sexuality (Pew Research Center, 2013). These numbers indicate that a large portion of Clinton’s audience members, in the United States alone, disagree with the value that underlies the majority of her claims. Unfortunately, regardless of her diplomatic approach to a disparate audience, Clinton’s arguments to promote equal rights for LGBT people function effectively only if her audience members agree that one’s sexual orientation is biologically determined.

Clinton’s first argument, for example, addresses the notion that gay rights and human rights are indivisible concepts (Clinton, 2011). To support this claim, she uses analogous references to other groups of people who have been subjected to inequality or discrimination. She says, “Like being a woman, like being a racial, religious, tribal, or ethnic minority, being LGBT does not make you less human” (Clinton, 2011, para. 10). For those among the 42% holding to the opinion that sexuality is a choice, the strength of these comparisons is lost. Columnist Michael Brown (2011) expressed, “The truth be told, the modern gay rights movement is a fruit of the

radical counterculture of the 1960’s, and it is grounded not in the civil rights movement... but in the sexual revolution, a revolution for which we are still paying the price” (para. 13). Brown (2011) concludes by saying, “Mrs. Clinton’s speech was a source of national embarrassment, not pride” (para. 17). In his article, Brown does not argue against equal rights for LGBT individuals, but it is clear that his views on the nature of sexual orientation differ from those of Clinton. As a result, he found her line of reasoning offensive. The constraint this opinion represents, grounded in beliefs, may have caused Clinton to lose some members of her audience for reasons similar to Brown’s.

## **SUBJECT**

Contextually speaking, Clinton presented these arguments at a time when the subject of LGBT rights had particular significance. She delivered her speech on the Friday prior to the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, making the matter of equality immediately relevant. Additionally, preceding Clinton’s remarks were those of President Barack Obama, who, earlier that same morning, presented a memorandum of initiatives designed to further the rights of LGBT individuals on an international scale (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2011). Clinton (2011) references this in her address: “This morning back in Washington, President Obama put into place the first U.S. Government strategy dedicated to combating human rights abuses against LGBT persons abroad” (para. 32). Clinton, then, was poised to deliver a message to an audience already predisposed to the subject. The opportune nature of her timing, however, represents not only a strength of this rhetorical act, but also a considerable hindrance.

Given her position as Secretary of State, it follows that Clinton would endorse the edicts of her administrative chief and commander. There is a risk, however, that her audience will find her motives suspect—interpreting Clinton’s sudden and unprecedented advocacy for LGBT rights as primarily politically motivated. In addition to this constraint, which speaks again to the issue of Clinton’s sincerity, also noteworthy is the question of Clinton’s ability to relate to her subject as a heterosexual woman.



Clinton's speech to the United Nations in Geneva bears resounding echoes of another of her most memorable public addresses. As mentioned, in 1995 Clinton delivered one of her most acclaimed and noteworthy speeches on the subject of women's rights to the delegates assembled in honor of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China (Tyler, 1995). In both instances, Clinton's speeches rested heavily on the notion that the concept of human rights sees no differences in race, gender, or religious, political, or sexual preferences. She

states "...members of all these groups are entitled to the full measure of dignity and rights..." (Clinton, 2011, para. 9). In Beijing, however, she spoke as a member of the group for which she was advocating. In Geneva, this is not the case; Clinton advocates for a minority group to which she herself does not belong, and herein lies the constraint. Clinton's ability to reach some members of the very group for which she is advocating might be somewhat diminished because she speaks from the perspective of one who cannot specifically relate to their struggles.

## RHETORICAL DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Exploring the historical context surrounding this rhetorical act is essential to understanding its construction, particularly in terms of establishing the many constraints Clinton faces as a rhetor. Equally as important to this evaluation are the elements of descriptive analysis. Clinton's strategic use of these elements demonstrates how she structures her speech to incorporate contextual components and overcome the constraints they present.

### AUDIENCE

Clinton uses a variety of strategies to address the diverse nature of her audience. She speaks directly not only to those immediately present at the assembly, but also to others who represent potential agents of Change. In paragraph 29, for example, she addresses leaders of nations that may not yet have embraced the notion of human rights for all: "To the leaders of those countries where people are jailed, beaten, or executed for being gay..." (Clinton, 2011, para. 29). Following this, she calls out to people of all nations conceivably sympathetic to the rights of LGBT people, and lastly, she speaks expressly to the worldwide community of LGBT people: "And finally, to LGBT men and women worldwide let me say this..." (Clinton, 2011, para. 31).

In each of these cases, when she speaks of LGBT people, she does so in relatable and humanizing terms. For example, Clinton makes it clear that gay people can and do commit crimes

and should be held accountable for them (Clinton, 2011, para. 29). In the next paragraph, she draws on the personage of Eleanor Roosevelt and her past humanitarian efforts, painting for her audience an image of rural American life that is fundamentally no different than it has always been, even with the presence and acceptance of LGBT people into the community (Clinton, 2011, para. 30). Following this, she addresses people of the LGBT community themselves, insisting that they are entitled to the same support and fellowship from around the globe as would any other people facing injustice (Clinton, 2011, para. 31). In addition to enabling her to cultivate a sentiment of Camaraderie, these types of references help Clinton to overcome the constraint she faces in regards to audience members who might not agree that sexuality is not a matter of Choice. By emphasizing the faults, responsibilities, and everyman qualities of LGBT men and women, Clinton is effectively redirecting the locus of Concern away from the issue of Choice and onto the issue of mutual humanity.

Clinton also strives to overcome this constraint in other ways. First, she includes analogous references to cases of inequality that are based on differences that could also be considered a matter of Choice, such as religious preference. Clinton says, "Combating Islamophobia or anti-Semitism is a task for people of all faiths" (Clinton, 2011, para. 26). Secondly, she employs appeals to the emotions of her audience by

turning the tables on them, asking them to consider a perspective that takes choice out of the equation. She asks the audience to consider this question: “How would it feel if it were a crime to love the person I love?” (Clinton, 2011, para. 24). Finally, in her fourth and fifth main points, Clinton entreats her audience to consider the political and social costs of inequality. She offers the example of President Truman’s order to desegregate the military, an action that was a source of much concern in its time. Many believed that this would cripple the cohesion of military units, when in fact, it “strengthened our social fabric” (Clinton, 2011, para. 23).

Finally, Clinton uses the strategy of Coalition-making to create an audience of people newly inspired to advocate for LGBT rights, including activists from other human rights groups that may provide support for the Global Equality Fund, and citizens that may step forward and offer assistance to those that have already been doing so (Clinton, 2011). She states this notion in paragraph 34, entreating the potential agents of Change to follow America’s example and “...forge partnerships with women’s organizations and other human rights groups” (Clinton, 2011, para. 34). Clinton simultaneously ensures that any action already made will not go without recognition, and enlists future participants in her cause. With further recognition of the heterogeneous nature of those to whom she speaks, Clinton’s relationship to her audience is, necessarily, two-fold.

## PERSONAE

Clinton relates to her audience, for the most part, as a peer. Following her introduction, wherein she does speak in terms such as “I” and “you” that differentiate herself from her spectators, it is not until her fifth and final point is coming to its close before these types of self-references are seen again (Clinton, 2011, para. 1, 6–8, 29). The bulk of her speech is delivered using inclusive language such as “we”, “our”, and “us”. Paragraph 16 contains an excellent example of this: “...we came to learn that no practice or tradition trumps the human rights that belong to all of us” (Clinton, 2011). The use of this type of terminology represents the strategy of identification, and lends itself to evoking a sense of belonging or kinship with the rhetor—

a useful relationship when one is advocating equality for humankind. Adopting the role of peer serves Clinton well in overcoming the constraint she faces in regards to her own history. She does not absolve herself of Culpability. Instead, she identifies with her audience, accepting an equal share of accountability for the past and responsibility for the future.

Although Clinton uses peer and inclusive language almost exclusively in the body of her speech, she introduces the subject matter from the first-person point of view. Interestingly, this establishes another role that she maintains simultaneously throughout the entirety of her speech—that of a teacher or educator. In this role, she informs her audience of the problem at hand and the various obstacles to be overcome: “...I want to talk about the difficult and important issues we must address together to reach a global consensus that recognizes the human rights of LGBT citizens everywhere” (Clinton, 2011, para. 8). Clinton, as Secretary of State, is already in a position of power and is therefore afforded a certain measure of respect. The authority that the educator wields only further bolsters her credibility; teachers are purveyors of knowledge. The role of educator also aids Clinton in overcoming obstacles related to her credibility as a rhetor. Clinton’s intricate knowledge of the subject and all of its complexities demonstrates that upholding the rights of LGBT people is a matter that represents her personal values and bears extreme social significance.

## TONE

That she views this subject as significant is evident in the diplomatic tone she adopts early on in her speech. She is both humble and respectful as well as entreating at times: “So I come before you with respect, understanding, and humility” (Clinton, 2011, para. 8). Later, in a familiar passage, she beseeches her audience to view the subject at hand from the perspective of the oppressed, asking them how it might feel if their own loving relationships were considered criminal acts (Clinton, 2011, para. 24). Tactfully and artfully, Clinton connects with her audience’s heterogeneous nature and acknowledges the fundamental differences that might exist regarding personal beliefs, cultural traditions, or political or religious affiliations.

Certainly, a tone of diplomacy is all but obligatory in a forum such as this, but given the diversity of her audience, it also represents another way in which she strives to overcome constraints on this front. An audience that does not agree with the underlying assumption of the proffered message is potentially hostile, and must be respectfully addressed. Clinton does this well; she humbly invites them to set aside potential differences and consider the issue at hand from an alternate perspective—one which identifies a struggle that, while the audience members themselves may not have experienced directly, most can certainly relate to or at least envision.

### STRUCTURE

The structure of Clinton's speech is another aspect that lends itself to engendering relatability with her audience members. She approaches her subject matter topically; on the macro level, each main idea is easily identifiable as a distinct perspective on the controversy of equal rights for LGBT people. She acknowledges and discusses each of the major points of Contention this human rights movement regularly encounters, then moves into her ideas for change, and lastly, her call to action (Clinton, 2011). This structure also represents a problem-cause-solution approach, and its relatively simple format serves to aid her audience in comprehension. This is accomplished, and easily evidenced by, the use of sign-posting at the start of each new premise. For example, "The first issue goes to the heart of the matter"; "The second issue is a question..."; "The third, and perhaps most challenging, issue..." (Clinton, 2011, para. 9, 12, 15).

This approach helps Clinton to overcome some of the constraints related to her complex subject. The clear delineation of ideas helps those who feel that the issue of LGBT rights has been somewhat exhausted over the years to see quite clearly all the ways in which this is not actually the case. In this way, Clinton is also able to address her plan for a solution in a very approachable manner. She achieves this on the micro level as well, as in her fourth main point wherein she details the process necessary to achieve progress. For example, in paragraph 19, she states, "Progress starts with honest discussion" and concludes the discussion in paragraph 24, saying, "Finally, progress

comes from being able to walk a mile in someone else's shoes" (Clinton, 2011, para. 19, 24). Overall, the comprehensive structure of Clinton's address demonstrates to her audience not only the feasibility of her plan, but also the current need for a solution.

### PURPOSE

Addressing the need to secure human rights for LGBT people represents the primary purpose of this rhetorical act. Clinton strives to formulate and reinforce beliefs that this need exists by instilling a sense of unity and collective purpose within her listeners. Her thesis is evident—the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people are equivalent to the rights of all human beings, and they must be upheld. A passage that echoes the title of her speech is evidence of this: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Clinton, 2011, para. 3).

Clinton appeals to her crowd as fellow humans; uniting her audience in a common humanity is the theme that underscores the entirety of her speech. To do this, she makes countless statements emphasizing that LGBT men and women are no different from members of the heterosexual population. In one example, she does this using the strategy of enumeration: "They are all ages, all races, all faiths; they are doctors and teachers, farmers and bankers, soldiers and athletes... they are our family, our friends, and our neighbors" (Clinton, para. 12). At other times, she makes analogous references to various other minority or marginalized groups of people who have historically suffered discrimination and oppression: "It was not only those who've justified slavery who leaned on religion, it was also those who sought to abolish it" (Clinton, 2011, para. 17). As a politician addressing potentially millions of audience members from all across the globe and from all walks of life, instilling this sense of unity is essential to ensuring that both the clarity and the significance of her message are well received, particularly in light of Clinton's potential political aspirations.

In partial accordance with those who speculate about the timing and motivation of Clinton's apparently sudden conversion on the issue of LGBT rights, I suggest that another purpose of her address has the underpinnings of political opportunism, though not with the disregard to ethics the term

implies. In 2011, Clinton's favorability ratings surpassed those of her president and vice president alike, and this fact has fueled speculations regarding her intentions to run for the presidency again in 2016 (Saad, 2011). Delaware Dem (2011) asserts, "...despite her frequent pronouncements to the contrary, I think [she] will run" (para. 6). Multitudes of similar conjectures indicate that many in the United States feel similarly. If Clinton's political ambitions do extend beyond her tenure in the office of Secretary of State, even her consistent dismissals of the notion may represent an act of political maneuvering. The skepticism of Clinton's motivations may have been far greater if it were common knowledge that her plans unequivocally included a future vie for the presidential office. However, even if Clinton is true to her word and chooses not to run in 2016, maintaining her position of favorability among the American people is essential in terms of overcoming the constraint she faces in regards to her sincerity.

Within her speech, despite her tone of diplomacy and careful consideration for the diversity of her audience, Clinton's words reflect a distinctly Western system of values. For example, she speaks of women's rights as applicable to all women worldwide, yet denies the validity of Certain cultural practices that contradict Western ideals of propriety or decency. On the subject of female genital mutilation, Clinton (2011) says, "But violence toward women isn't cultural; it's criminal" (para. 15). In later paragraphs, Clinton references freedom of religion, expression, and belief—concepts that are fundamental in the United States and many other Western cultures. Additionally, although Clinton does admit to the imperfect history of the country she represents, her overall portrayal of American citizens is that they are worthy of emulation. She says in her conclusion, "There is a phrase that people in the United States invoke when urging others to support human rights: 'Be on the right side of history'" (Clinton, 2011, para. 36). In these ways, Clinton is allying herself with members of a particular demographic—those who determine favorability ratings and may therefore influence her credibility.

I believe, however, that this purpose remains secondary for Clinton, representing a means to an end. By maneuvering herself into political favor, she strengthens support for, and receptiveness to, her larger

overall purpose—to nurture a sense of unity towards the common goal of ensuring equal rights for LGBT people worldwide. If Clinton's sincerity is under scrutiny, her audience is far less likely to receive or accept her declaration that human rights and gay rights are one and the same.

## EVIDENCE

Clinton speaks to the significance of this human rights struggle using a variety of types of evidence, many of which serve multiple purposes and appeal to the Aristotelian modes of persuasion of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* alike. These modes represent the three different means through which an idea may become persuasive. As detailed by Aristotle in the fourth century BC, they refer to appeals to authority (or credibility), logic, and emotion, respectively (Campbell & Huxman, 2009). Within Clinton's speech, a sub-structure narrative is evident at times, operating on each of these multiple levels to reinforce the validity and urgency of her purpose. For example, historical analogies within these narratives serve to demonstrate not only Clinton's extensive knowledge of her subject, enhancing her credibility, but also to draw logical conclusions from past events, and finally, to evoke empathy among her audience members.

Much of her introduction is comprised of one such narrative. Here, Clinton walks her audience through a short but compelling portrayal of the events leading up to the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "In the aftermath of World War II," Clinton says, "many nations pressed for a statement of this kind to help ensure that we would prevent future atrocities and protect the inherent humanity and dignity of all people" (Clinton, 2011, para. 2). Beginning her speech in this way establishes the momentousness of the occasion and inspires a common sentimentality regarding the injustices that occurred in World War II. She closes this narrative with a powerful statement that portends the speech to come: "And with that declaration, it was made clear that rights are not conferred by government; they are the birthright of all people" (Clinton, 2011, para. 3). In this statement, she links past with present, letting her audience know that this occasion commemorates not just an event, but also every person among them.

Several other examples of narratives are seen throughout Clinton's speech, most of them on a smaller scale. She offers a concise account of President Truman's efforts to desegregate the military. She says, "Many in my country thought that President Truman was making a grave error when he ordered the racial desegregation of our military" (Clinton, 2011, para. 23). Her use of figurative language emphasizes the severity and urgency of the issue at hand. The word "grave," for example, carries with it connotations of dire consequences.

### STRATEGIES

Figurative language is only one of the many strategies Clinton employs within this rhetorical act to address contextual constraints, but it is a pervasive one. Throughout her speech, birth language or metaphors are prevalent, occurring in passages such as "...human beings born free...;" "...gay people are born into..." and "...they are the birthright of all people" (Clinton, 2011, para. 7, 12, 3). In this way, Clinton is subtly affirming her assumption that one's sexual identity is determined by birth rather than by choice or by social or societal influence. Interestingly, this strategy, which outlines the substance of one of Clinton's primary constraints, is one and the same with her strategy to overcome it. Rebecca Kuehl argues that the birth or "procreation" metaphor in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "... emphasizes the relationship of individuals to one another through social relationships" (Kuehl, 2011, p. 173). One of Clinton's primary purposes in delivering this address is to unify her audience in the belief that every individual is entitled to human rights simply by virtue of being born human. As Kuehl notes, "Only through the full development of individuals... can a larger society that upholds human rights be fully realized" (Kuehl, 2011, p. 173). Some may disagree with Clinton's assertion that a person's sexuality is determined by birth, but this argument is somewhat irrelevant to the larger issue of the necessary evolution of human rights and the advancement of society on the whole.

Clinton's use of the birth metaphor also represents another form of figurative language—the strategy of anaphora, or repetition. Repetition can be an effective means of instilling a belief or enforcing a perspective, and Clinton has relied on this tactic in previous speeches as well.

This strategy serves to reinforce much of the evidence Clinton presents in this speech. The sheer number of times she repeats the word "human" or the phrase "human rights" speaks to her primary purpose—to unify her audience in the belief that LGBT rights are human rights (Clinton, 2011). Interestingly, following her introduction, the number of times she uses this word or phrase coincides precisely with the years passed since the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (63), and the number of nations that voted in favor of the declaration (48), respectively. Her aforementioned speech on women's rights in 1995 employed the repetition of a phrase similar to one that recurs in this one: "Women's rights are human rights" versus "...gay rights are human rights" (Clinton, 1995, para. 24; Clinton, 2011, para. 10).

In terms of subject matter, one constraint that Clinton faces is due to her own sexuality. She speaks on behalf of a marginalized group to which she does not belong. To overcome this constraint, she relies on the strategy of exemplification. Throughout her speech, she uses numerous examples that demonstrate not only why LGBT individuals are due equal rights, but also why affording these essential rights to all is in the best interest of all humans. In this case, she provides examples that illustrate why it is necessary for those who are not members of the minority group in question to act on behalf of those who are. She says, "Acting alone, minorities can never achieve the majorities necessary for political change," and, "Every time a barrier to progress has fallen, it has taken a cooperative effort from those on both sides of the barrier" (Clinton, 2011, para. 25, 26). In these examples, Clinton uses the strategy of Coalition building, acknowledging the constraint, but combating it in a way that demonstrates her ability to be both persuasive and artful in the constructing of her arguments.

Artistically, Clinton's rhetorical act lived up to the definition of this standard—rhetoric is poetic (Campbell & Huxman, 2009). Listening to her speech, of Course, provides an entirely different experience, but even on paper, Clinton's words achieve a high degree of aesthetic appeal. She consistently uses vivid language, analogous references, and other *pathos* appeals that lend an element of personal significance to the issue and create a virtual experience. Her arguments are grounded in personal beliefs or attitudes, and Clinton explicitly acknowledges the inherent difficulties of attempting to alter someone's beliefs. She says, "No one has ever abandoned a belief because he was forced to do so" (Clinton, 2011, para. 19). To overcome the obstacle of divergent beliefs among her audience members, Clinton creatively recognizes their right to believe whatever they choose: "Universal human rights include freedom of expression and freedom of belief, even if our beliefs denigrate the humanity of others" (Clinton, 2011, para. 20). Cleverly, Clinton tells her audience that they are free to maintain their beliefs, even those that inhibit progress, while also informing them that this freedom of belief applies to all individuals, including those who do not identify with heterosexuality. Therefore, even if her audience believes sexuality is a choice, they must accept an LGBT individual's right to make that choice.

The effects standard is somewhat more difficult to assess, as Clinton's speech in 2011 was not alone in its call to action for the promotion of LGBT rights. What can be measured is the response to Clinton's UN address. Her speech has received notoriety on a global scale. Foreign coverage from Africa, Asia, South and Central America, and European nations alike has been compiled in an effort to gauge its impact with largely favorable results (Hudson, 2011). Present at her speech in Geneva were 14 prominent activists for the LGBT rights movement, and their reactions were unanimously and overwhelmingly positive (Anderson-Minshall, 2011). In an article from *CNN*, Ghitis (2013) claims that Clinton's speech has set into motion "...a transformative change, one that advances the cause of human rights around the world—not just for gays and lesbians, but for everyone" (para. 2). Finally, if the aforementioned increase in her popularity is any indication, then she must have been successful. One poll taken in 2012 of Hillary Clinton's

popularity among Americans indicates the highest favorability ratings she has received since the 1999 Lewinsky scandal (Newport, 2012).

Clinton's adherence to the standard of truth is also difficult to assess, as the nature of her discourse is grounded in values and personal beliefs. Some elements of her speech can be evaluated for accuracy, however, such as her numerous historical references. While there has been no evidence to suggest that her factual evidence is in any way falsified, some did find her analogies to be grossly misrepresentative of the truth. Brown (2011) had the following to say on the matter:

Mrs. Clinton had the audacity to compare religious or cultural objections to homosexual practice to 'the justification offered for violent practices towards women like honor killings, widow burning, or female genital mutilation,' as if the religious and moral objection to men having sex with men is somehow equivalent to the Muslim practice of honor killings or the Hindu practice of burning widows (para. 4).

Clinton made numerous analogies of this kind, citing instances of brutality and injustices and comparing them to practices that are deeply rooted in cultural traditions. While her message is clear, so too is her use of false analogies to those who disagree with her premise that being LGBT is not a matter of Choice.

In terms of the final standard of ethics, Clinton's subject matter was laden with controversy. Unfortunately, many members of her audience felt that her rhetoric demonstrated a lack of Consideration for those who opposed her claim. To reference Brown (2011) again, he says:

In other words, if you have an issue with the lewd sexual displays at your city's gay pride parade, or if you're not comfortable with a man who dresses as a woman using the ladies bathroom, or if you don't want to see a kid raised by two lesbians and thereby deprived of having a father, or if you believe that God made men to be with women, then you are the moral equivalent of a slave trader or a slave owner (para. 7).

Here, he presents the idea that Clinton laced her speech with remarks insinuating that those whose beliefs were contrary to her own are ineluctably immoral.

Perhaps this type of Criticism is unavoidable when tackling an issue with such a long history of Contention, but her rhetoric incorporated numerous examples of sound refutation. In one example, she says, “Some have suggested that gay rights and human rights are separate and distinct; but, in fact, they are one and the same” (Clinton, 2011, para. 9). She supports this claim by elaborating on how perceptions of other marginalized groups have evolved to recognize their members as fully human, and “...entitled to the full measure of dignity and rights” (Clinton, 2011, para. 9). Given the contentious nature of the subject matter, Clinton adhered admirably to ethical standards.

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

Clinton’s primary purpose is indicative of a larger goal—one which she has demonstrated a passion for since her introduction into the political realm; she strives to attain equality for all people, worldwide. That said, any small amount of success can be measured as progress. As many have attested that the subject of LGBT rights has been largely exhausted in recent years, Clinton’s speech was significant in that it reignited a former enthusiasm for the cause, and drew attention to it from a new perspective. Some were emboldened by her remarks to speak out against LGBT rights as a matter of faith or principle, but this attention, too, demonstrates the need for further discourse on the subject. Clinton has, herself, evolved in her opinions on the rights entitled to gay and lesbian couples since 2011, and this, too, should be counted as a success.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

Due to the contentious nature of the debate surrounding LGBT rights, Clinton’s rhetorical act was commendable in its considerations of disparate perspectives. In some ways, however, she alienated members of her audience by avoiding specific mention of elements related to her major contextual constraints. Although she employs a variety of strategies to overcome the constraint regarding her historic lack of support for same-sex marriage, for example, she could have benefited by making specific mention of the issue. Clinton admits that she has personally undergone an evolution in her thinking regarding LGBT rights (Clinton, 2011). Taking this admission one step further to acknowledge her imperfect history could perhaps have engendered a kind of sympathy among her audience members, making them less likely to condemn her for this failing in the aftermath. Additionally, although it served her well in other ways, the admonishing tone she adopted at times was unappealing to some, and offensive to others. Given the very sensitive nature of Closely held personal and religious beliefs regarding sexuality, Clinton could have omitted some of the more gruesome comparisons to discriminatory acts or events. Had she done so, she may have avoided some of the more brutal criticisms, such as those presented by Brown.

The synthesis of historical context and rhetorical analysis reveals how and why this rhetorical act takes its final shape. The contextual elements of audience, subject, and rhetor allow Clinton to craft a speech that adapts to an extremely large and heterogeneous audience. Furthermore, the elements of descriptive analysis reveal Clinton’s strategic approach to the constraints she faces as a result of the historical context, demonstrating her greatest strengths as well as describing some weaknesses. Clinton’s speech invited her audience to participate in the ongoing conversation on the subject of human rights, offered them the opportunity to “Be on the right side of history” (Clinton, 2011, para. 36), and, perhaps most importantly, to take action to ensure that no man or woman will be subjected to future injustice. ■

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# The Chaos of Substance Abuse and Masculinity:

**AN OLDEST DAUGHTER'S PERSPECTIVE**

My dad has a troubled past.  
When he was my age,  
He moved to Texas.  
He created a lifestyle that was dangerous.  
Dangerous, but *exciting*.

**Drugs**, all types.

**Strippers**.

*All the wrong people.*

People who didn't want what was best for him.

But it was a letter.

A letter from his young teenage brother.

He told him he was afraid my dad would **die**,

He probably would've.

But he came back to Ohio.

A few years later,

He met my mom.

They quickly married,

They had me.

The drugs had stopped for the most part

But **alcohol** continued to be a problem,

He drank every afternoon into the evening.

"Can you get me a shot of **whiskey**?"

We would go to the freezer,

Grab a frosted shot glass,

Grab the **whiskey**

And fill it to the rim.

The first time I saw someone take a shot was weird,

*Dad sipped his liquor.*

Shot, after shot,

Sometimes in a cup,

Straight.

Work wasn't always steady for dad.

He tried owning his own machine shop,

Something he loves,

Something he's great at.

He got a lot of business,

*But was too nice to charge anyone,*

Unfortunately that's not how you make

a business work.

He tried working for other people

Something would go wrong,

He would be **laid off**,

He would **quit**,

They would hire someone they could pay less,

And there would go his income.

When he left a job when I was in high school,

It got really bad.

He said he had **back problems**,

*So he went to a doctor that his younger*

*brother recommended.*

The same brother that saved his life.

He was prescribed **oxycontin** and **oxycodone**.

Soon he was prescribed more,

And more,

And more.

Like his brother who recommended the *doctor*,

He became addicted.

He was buying more,

And selling.

My mom made him go,

She made him detox

But he didn't want to.

They gave him **Suboxone**,

A "miracle drug,"

It would replace the opiates in his brain

Block his pain receptors,

Not allowing him to abuse it,

Or anything else.

He started buying and selling that

So it didn't work

An addict will find a way to abuse

nearly everything.

He didn't come into the house as much,

He withdrew.

He was **depressed**.

*That doctor lost his license,*

Another doctor told him he was **bipolar**,

They put him on **Lithium**,

He took it wrong.

My senior year,  
Mock Trial,  
State Competition.  
I was elated to be there.  
My dad watches,  
Murmuring **racist** comments,  
Very unlike himself.  
My mom was worried,  
Wondering what is going on,  
Not tolerating it.  
My mom who told my grandpa  
She wouldn't bring me around,  
If he didn't stop saying the N-word.  
No, she wouldn't put up with that.

She asked my friend's mom,  
"How long does **Lithium** stay in your system?"  
"Up to 30 days..."

Later that year it was **heroine**,  
It was **bath salts**,  
It was every **opiate** he could get his hands on.  
He was **depressed**,  
He felt **lost**,  
He felt **inadequate**,  
He tried everything he could to **self-medicate**,  
To fix his problems with a **bottle**,  
A **pill**,  
An **injection**.

The ways in which masculinity is constructed are not only problematic to women and men who don't live up to society's prescribed standard, they can have significant adverse effects on the very men who attempt to embody them (Addis, 2011; Brown, 2012; & Kimmel, 2004). While millions of Americans are both actively addicted to a substance or in recovery, men are much more likely than women to use and abuse substances ranging from alcohol to illicit drugs. In fact, men who tested higher on a masculinity scale experience higher stress when faced with stressors they deemed masculine, such as job loss (Lash, Copenhaver, & Eisler, 1998). My dad is a clear case of this phenomenon. When he lost his job he felt inadequate. He became very withdrawn from our family and has expressed that he felt self-conscious about who he was and the fact that he wasn't providing for our family, a responsibility he takes very seriously. However, he was mentally in a place that made him unable to fix it. Because men are socialized to turn to alcohol and drunkenness rather than face their problems, they tend to self-medicate and deal with issues in ways that are "rigid and maladaptive" by abusing substances (Landrine, Bardwell, & Dean, 1988; Lash, Copenhaver, & Eisler, 1998). Once my dad got to the place where he believed he wouldn't find a job, he turned to substances to self-medicate.

Though the frequency of substance abuse among men is important to consider, more frightening is the idea that substance abuse must be used to *achieve* masculinity. Especially for white, working class males, substance abuse is used as a rite of passage ("drink like a man"), is readily available, and is learned from other men such as fathers, brothers, or friends (Sanders, 2011). Moreover, it is a requirement to live up to the masculinity one has "earned" through continued participation in substance abuse: "To the extent that drinking is an aspect of masculinity, men may experience a need to drink, to drink beer, and to drink to excess in order to live up to this gender expectation and to prove their masculinity" (Landrine, Bardwell, & Dean, 1988). My dad grew up lower-middle class and many people around him abused substances. He went to a vocational school in high school and worked in manufacturing and "shop" atmospheres, which tend to be dominated by stereotypically masculine men. The number of those around him, including family members who abused substances, is astonishing. He is the product of many generations of family members that are plagued with substance abuse—he told me the other day that he now owns his grandfather's Alcoholics Anonymous book. While it's great for him to have an encouraging text that belonged to his grandfather, it is evidence of a larger problem: alcoholism is a consequence of both nature and nurture and has strong family ties.

Studies show that men turn to substance abuse to cure their problems, but how did drinking develop into an integral part of what we think of as masculine? Why do women, by and large, limit drinking to social environments and for special occasions, while men drink fast, for effect, in bars, in larger quantities, and regardless of occasion (Landrine, Bardwel, & Dean, 1988)? For women, drinking is stereotypically constructed around sipping wine and gossiping with friends, maybe talking about their feelings. Conversely, this is not acceptable for men. Men are *expected* to binge drink in order to exhibit their masculinity rather than talk about themselves or their pain. Men are expected to be silent in regards to emotional and personal matters. Addis discusses silence in men at length and gives examples of typical behaviors of men suffering from excessive silence, “He insists that he is not depressed, that it is ‘just stress’ and he copes by drinking more alcohol than usual” (2011, p. 15). He also explains three types of silence that men can suffer from: personal, private, and public. While personal and public silence may lead to substance abuse, private silence, defined as “knowing what is going on but choosing to keep it private” can have a great effect on men and their propensity to abuse substances (Addis, 2011, p. 20). When men face stress and triggers, especially highly masculine men, they understand their emotions, but to protect their masculine façade, they stay silent; they don’t ask for help. Instead, they turn to substances and self-medicate (Addis, 2011; Lash, Copenhaver, & Eisler, 1998). Men fall into this trap because they feel shamed by their “inadequacy” in regards to expectations of masculinity.

Shame is a feeling of being worthless; tying one’s worth to what one does, rather than who they are (Brown, 2012). While all people feel shame, men experience it when they feel as if they’re not enough, and they often turn to alcohol to combat it. Similarly, when substance abuse gets to the point that it affects the man’s life and those around him, they tend to feel shame because they feel as if they can’t handle their own problems anymore, thus appearing weak (Brown, 2012). It is difficult to discern whether expectations of silence and feelings of shame are precursors of substance abuse or the converse, but it is clear that both are inexorably tied to constructions and practice of masculinity.

While alcohol has been an issue for my dad for as long as I can remember, his abuse escalated to dangerous levels at different points. Looking back, I can see how he turned to alcohol to combat shame and how in turn, my mom, sisters, and I felt shame as a result of his actions. One occasion I remember vividly occurred when I was in junior high school. We were at a family friend’s house and they were having a bonfire and “mud run.” I remember getting in the car with dad and driving through the feet of mud, it felt like such an adventure. After it got dark, many of the children went to sleep and the women went inside. I remember sitting with my mom and someone asking where my dad was. We hadn’t seen him in a while so we went to look for him. We walked out towards the campfire, it was the first time I’d smelled weed, but he wasn’t there. We searched all over the place, but nothing. My mom went to the gas station just inside town and asked around; no one had seen him. She took us to a friend’s house and we fell asleep on the floor. She called the police. They found him. He didn’t have pants on and his blood alcohol level was nearly three times the legal limit for driving: no wonder he got lost. In our small hometown word travels quickly, my mom and I were absolutely humiliated that so many people knew because of the shame associated with it. Substance abuse just isn’t something that’s acceptable to discuss, even with people close to you.

We would pack the car with clothes and food  
And head to the campground.

The camper was a place we would go to escape  
Technology, work, the responsibilities of home.

When I went to college the camper went home.  
We didn’t escape reality anymore.

Our escape sat in our backyard,  
Empty.

But then things changed.

People started staying there.

Dad spent more time there.

But we didn’t go there.

Even more people began to come and go  
People I didn’t know.

I found out later they were  
Drug users,  
Drug dealers,  
*Convicted murderers.*

My dad was **using**,  
**Sharing needles**,  
**Cheating** on my mom,  
Putting us in **danger**,  
In my backyard.

He said he was worried about us.  
Worried that the **DEA** was watching us.  
Watching him.  
*Out to get us.*

He kept trying to tell us that they were there.  
They were in the weeds,  
They were following him in his car.

We told him,  
“We’ll be fine, we’re not doing drugs  
We’re not doing anything wrong:  
What could they do to us?”

“They’ll throw you on the ground,  
Who knows what else?  
That’s what they did to your aunt,  
They’ll do it to you too.”

*“They’re tracking our phones*  
I know they are.  
I texted myself and he looked at his phone  
He laughed,  
He’s following me.  
I know they’re there.  
I know they’re watching me.”

He would show us videos on YouTube  
Random videos of nature scenes.  
He continually pointed,  
“That’s a person,  
That’s a person,  
That’s a person.”

“Those aren’t people, dad,  
It’s grass,  
It’s the woods.”

**“NO!!” He would yell,**  
**There are people, don’t you see?”**

“No, dad, I don’t see a thing.”  
**“But WHY? It’s there, I promise you!**  
**Just like the backyard!”**

He would start to throw a fit.  
He acted like he was 2,  
Throwing a temper tantrum.

But we don’t talk about this.

---

## There are few children or adult children who do not have a painful Christmas or holiday memory of disappointment, fear, or harm.

(Brown, 1988, p. 21)

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The documented effects of parental alcohol abuse on families are many. Over 28 million children have grown up with an alcoholic parent (Brown, 1988; Walker & Lee, 1998). Alcoholism is a family disease that has a large genetic factor; about 30% of alcoholics have at least one alcoholic parent and children of alcoholics are four to six times more likely to develop alcoholism than children who do not have an alcoholic parent (Brown, 1988; Sher et al., 1991; Walker & Lee, 1998). Not only are children of alcoholics more likely to develop alcoholism, but

they also face many other issues as a result. Alcoholism in a parent can negatively affect academic achievement and cognitive ability, cause behavioral and emotional issues, codependency to a dangerous degree, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder-like symptoms (Brown, 1988; Sher et al., 1991). Equally at issue with the increased likelihood of developing alcohol dependency is the likelihood of developing depression, which rivals alcoholism in rate of occurrence in adult children of alcoholics (Brown, 1988). Children of alcoholics are trained to behave in the same ways as their alcoholic

and codependent parent. Without being explicitly told, I was taught to not talk about things that happened with my dad, but we knew something was wrong and that his behavior was not normal. This stress, both the actual events and the silence required after can have lasting effects on children of alcoholics and those addicted to drugs—modeled behavior has a stronger effect than anything a parent can tell a child.

I'm a lot like my dad,  
I look like him.  
*"You can tell she's your daughter"*  
We often think in similar ways.  
*"I always got good grades, too"*  
*"I'm so proud that you're mechanically inclined"*

A large part of who I am is a result  
of my dad's behavior.  
A lot of who I am is also a product of his  
alcoholism and drug abuse.  
Much of that was unintentional.  
My parents always expected "my best,"  
My best is always an "A," he says.  
They were always really strict with me,  
Early curfews,  
Strict rules about where I went and with whom.  
You always hear of children with strict  
upbringings  
Who rebel when they get on their own.  
But I'd read enough to know better.  
I knew that children of alcoholics,  
Have a greater chance of developing the  
disease themselves.  
So I stayed away.  
In college, I went to parties nearly every weekend.  
I didn't take a sip until my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.  
I've never been drunk,  
I'm too afraid.  
I'm too afraid I'll end up like him.  
I don't want to be a statistic:  
A product of that disease.

Along with the largely genetic-based cognitive effects in the emotional lives of children and their future wellness is a host of very real issues that exist while living with the alcoholic as well as the lasting effects of this experience. It is said that there

are three stages in living with an alcoholic: denial of the problem, social isolation, and tension relieving rather than stopping the drinking (Brown, 1988). Additionally, children are encouraged to participate in the denial of a problem with their parent, perpetuating the problem (Brown, 1988).

Tension relieving is a skill I've perfected over the years. When an alcoholic or drug user talks about their use, or behaves in a way that is dangerous, children and spouses will attempt to smother the problem rather than face it. This is something I did frequently. One such example occurred my junior or senior year in high school. I remember watching a movie in my living room with my sisters and mom. Minutes into the movie, my drunk dad stumbled in. He wanted to go to a friend's house and he said he would ride his bike. I pleaded with him not to go and we got into an argument. Soon, I was crying. It was always a defense mechanism with him growing up; he knew that he had really upset me when I was crying. My tears and pleading only addressed the current moment: I convinced him that riding his bike was illegal and that so was walking—both operating a vehicle (I prayed bikes were included) and being publically intoxicated were against the law. I resolved the tension of the moment, but the larger issue of his alcohol use remained untouched. We didn't talk about that situation again; I don't think he saw it as an issue.

As I stated earlier, shame is one of the most difficult emotions for a person to discuss and further, the events that caused the shame are sometimes even more difficult to come to terms with. Children of alcoholics regularly face shame and embarrassment because of a drunken parent (Brown, 1988). The feelings of shame come with a price: the encouragement of public silence. Shame and silence are not only present in those suffering from alcoholism, but those they care about. Addis states that public silence is not exclusive to the teenage years or time living with the alcoholic, "it is alive and well in the lives of many adult men who might otherwise risk exposing their need for support during difficult times in their lives" (Addis, 2011, p. 25). I would argue that silence extends even further, to the women and children in families with alcoholic fathers. Children are socialized to keep a parent's alcoholism a secret, as Brown reminds us. These children, regardless of gender, are socialized

in the typically masculine way of not discussing “private” issues with anyone, which can make personal development and relationship building difficult.

I’m a very outgoing person, talking to others is rarely difficult for me. However, I’ve found that any discussion of my experience with my father’s alcoholism is difficult to the point that I am sometimes unable to control my emotion, a form of embarrassment to me. I pride myself on being strong, getting over things quickly, and blocking emotion. I’ve been socialized in masculine ways that give me the same expectations of silence and dealing privately with my own issues in the same ways many men are. Much of this could be because of my role as the oldest child and support-person for my mom. Because this aspect of growing up with an alcoholic father has persisted in my life, I’ve had a hard time opening up to people about the issues I’ve faced. I have rarely discussed it with anyone I went to high school with and only in the process of writing this essay have I been able to discuss some things with my best friend and roommate of almost four years. It’s easier, however, to discuss these issues with people who share my experience, or something similar. I became particularly close with a friend I met freshmen year because we have the commonality of difficult experiences during childhood. Though much different, his seeming understanding of the foundation of my thinking made it easier to share with him. Furthermore, in the last year, I’ve had the opportunity to do a lot of reflective writing and research on the self. It’s only been through this type of academic study that I’ve even been able to begin to express the impact my past has on how I think and behave now. It has also given me a voice and the tools to express these experiences to others.

Developmental issues in children of alcoholics go much further than the propensity to develop alcoholism. Often, children imitate or identify with the alcoholic parent because they know nothing else. In addition, when parental behavior is unpredictable, children are unable to turn to internal development, that is, develop their personality and the building blocks of healthy relationships (Brown, 1988). This has been a particularly interesting issue in my family. My sisters and I have seemingly separated ourselves from identifying with our father because we’ve experienced the harmful effects of his identity and the actions that result.

My father is outgoing and we share much of the same personality. However, I’ve found the past few years, as I’ve dealt more deeply with issues with my father, that I’ve embodied more traits that belong to my mom. I feel less outgoing though in action, I appear the same. I’m also more emotional and talk about my issues more openly with others than before. Reflecting back, I think my identification with my dad scared me, so I began to shift away from that and take on a more cautious, feminine, caretaking role in order to cope with and protect myself from becoming what he was.

Though the research is sparse on the positive effects of being a child of an alcoholic, there are a few documented. Children of alcoholics who do not become alcoholics themselves tend to use alcohol responsibly or abstain completely. They also have a high level of resilience and adapt to stressors very well. They tend to be “super-dependable” and extremely loyal (Walker & Lee, 1998). On the other hand, adult children of alcoholics tend to seek approval and affection from others, judge themselves without mercy, and have a difficult time finishing things (Walker & Lee, 1998). I’ve observed many of these characteristics in my own personality—I’m very affectionate and tend to seek approval from others. My senior year of high school was filled with a lot of success, I was valedictorian, prom queen, went to state for Mock Trial, won “Junior Miss,” a scholarship program for senior girls, and a large number of scholarships. I did all of this while I was internally handling the results of my father’s substance abuse; we couldn’t afford much, I still struggled with silence, and as I matured, I began to understand the emotional implications of my father’s behavior. I trained myself to deal with these issues by seeking approval from others based solely on my achievements, something I felt in control of. While I think it’s positive to seek excellence in everything I do, the extent to which I relied on others’ approval often outweighed what I was doing. When I came to college and I wasn’t “winning” everything, I received the first “C” of my life, and didn’t get a couple of jobs I applied for, I felt like less of a person; I lost my self-confidence. Like most people, I have to work to remind myself of my inherent worth and do my best for me, rather than for the approval of others. Another result of my



father's substance abuse that has both negative and positive implications on my life is parentification, which I will discuss at length in the next section.

How do you tell your father no?

From

"Do what I say"

And

"Because I said so"

And

"Can't is never an option"

To

**NO.**

*I'm not hiding this from mom.*

*I won't pick you up, you're getting help.*

*You shouldn't be doing that.*

To

**I CAN'T.**

*I can't trust you completely.*

*I can't give you money, who knows if you're clean.*

*I can't let you drive, you keep falling asleep.*

*I can't stop worrying.*

*I can't stop thinking.*

But now I'm learning.

Learning to say **NO.**

Learning to care for myself.

Learning that you have to help yourself.

***Learning I'm not your parent.***

Learning I can support and love; but you have to help yourself.

I've always been the kind of person who takes care of others; I thought it was part of my nature. The academic term "parentification" accurately describes my relationship with my dad and as a result, with others. Because families with an alcoholic parent tend to be very unstable and inconsistent, roles of parent and child are not always clear (Burnett et al., 2006; Carol & Robinson, 2000; Early & Cushway, 2002). Parentification describes a situation in which a parent expects a child will fill

a parental role, which can include acting as a parent to siblings or being involved in family decision-making as a parent would (Earley & Cushway, 2002). Shame is often the result of a child's inability to live up to a parent's unrealistic standards (Earley & Cushway, 2002). However, the impact goes further than that, as there are lasting effects. "Adults who fulfilled a parental role as a child, continue to adopt caretaking roles with other adults in later life as they develop a self-concept that is adapted to the caring task" (Earley & Cushway, 2002, p. 168). This is often referred to as caretaking syndrome. Children who have these characteristics tend to support a family system with a substance abuser, they attempt to provide control in an environment in which there is very little (Earley & Cushway, 2002). Parentification is also common in families who have experienced divorce or are of low socioeconomic status, where there is even less control (Earley & Cushway, 2002).

Though I've taken a caretaker role for much of my life, it is particularly manifested in my relationship with my dad. I sometimes feel as if he can't help himself, that it's my responsibility to fix things for him. I'll never forget the time I believe best exemplifies the beginning of my parentification. As I said, I've always been a caretaker, but this is much more extreme. I had just arrived home from college for the summer. I woke up and he told me, "I've been using heroin." I started to cry, he started to cry. I didn't know what to do, so I went over, sat on the arm of the chair, and hugged him. He's sat there and sobbed, telling me that I couldn't tell my mom or she would leave him. He wanted me to fix his problems for him, to take responsibility for making him better. The process of parentification gives birth to expectations of the child that are unrealistic and often impossible to fulfill. I wasn't equipped to deal with my father's substance abuse, especially not alone. These expectations, and my internalization of them, have continued in the years since.

November 16, 2013, I'm sleeping in.  
 10:48 AM Dad, Missed Call  
 10:48 AM Dad, Missed Call  
 10:59 AM Dad, Missed Call  
 11:00 AM Dad, Outgoing Call  
 "Hi, I just woke up, what's up?"  
 "Can you come get me?"  
 I need to go get my car.  
 Myron took me  
 I forgot my keys"  
 "Yeah, let me get dressed and I'll be there"  
*I feel like I owe him, he helped me get my car  
 and drove me there.*  
*I should do it.*  
*It's almost embarrassing to tell my roommate  
 where I'm going.*  
 11:19 AM Dad, Missed Call  
 11:19 AM Dad, Received Call  
 "I'm eating breakfast, we'll be done soon"  
 "I'll be on my way in a few minutes"  
*I pull up and put my car in park.*  
*I get out.*  
*I approach an open door, where is he...*  
*I walk back towards my car, where is he?*  
 11:54 AM Dad, Outgoing Call  
 No answer.  
*He walks up to the passenger seat.*  
 "Hi, where have you been?"  
 "I was waiting in the car for you"  
*Something weird is going on...*  
*We start to drive and he gives me directions,*  
*We're talking,*  
*I realize he's not answering.*  
 "Dad! Are you okay? You just fell asleep."  
 "Yeah, I'm fine, just tired"  
 "Okay."  
*Except he's not fine, he keeps doing it,  
 mid-sentence. What is going on?*  
*I remember him saying he was smoking something,*  
*He said that it was legal.*  
*I get back to my apartment and go to Google,*  
 "What causes someone to instantly fall asleep?"  
 "What makes a person fall asleep while they're talking?"  
*And finally I do what I've done too many times,*  
*I Google, "What are the effects of \_\_\_\_?"*  
*This time the blank is filled with synthetic marijuana.*  
*Yet again, I'm met with more questions than answers.*

This situation occurred the day after I bought a new car. My father had been acting strange the afternoon before, he seemed to be slurring his words, and something about his eyes just wasn't right. I ended up driving his car to go pick mine up because I felt unsafe with him driving. That night, I had a concert; he told me he was coming. When we got into our places, I squinted into the audience; I saw a few friends, my mom, her husband, and my little sister, but I didn't see my dad. He told me he was going to come and instead of becoming upset he isn't there, I quickly began to wonder what happened to him. Was he okay? I made it through the concert and walked back upstairs after. I immediately grabbed my cell phone and read, "Call me as soon as you can." I couldn't hear anything around me. I said to my Mom, "It's Dad, and he said to call him." I walked out, showed everyone my new car, and say goodbye. As soon as I got to my room I got a phone call from him—thank God he's okay. He fell asleep driving and ended up in Reynoldsburg, nearly 15 miles past his turn; Myron had to go pick him up. I told him how my car was driving and said goodnight. I decided to sleep in the next morning and woke up at 11am to see my phone ringing. It was him. He asked if I could drive him to go pick up his car where he left it parked last night after falling asleep. It's the least I could do; he did find my car for me. When I hung up, I realized that he called me three times in a row before I answered. I got dressed, grabbed my purse and drove to his house to pick him up. I arrived and walked up to the door; it was open, weird. I called his name, but got no response, so I called him. I walked back towards my car and he appeared out of nowhere. I told him I went up to the house and he said he was in his car waiting for me. I took off and headed for Reynoldsburg. We were chatting and I was talking a lot as usual, but I quickly realized when I asked him a question and he didn't answer, that he had fallen asleep. I woke him up by speaking louder, but the same thing continued to happen again and again. When he fell asleep sitting up like that it was like a flashback to my childhood, when he would fall asleep anywhere and everywhere while he was drunk. I drove into town and asked him where his car was and he said it was further ahead. I have no idea how he drove so far without knowing what he was doing. We finally made it to his car and we chatted for a little bit longer.

I asked him a few times if he was okay to drive and he kept saying he was. I told him to stop and grab some coffee and to please text me when he arrived in Ashland, where my sister goes to college, he agreed.

Hours passed and no text message so I texted him, no response. I texted my sister to see if he made it. She said he did, but he was acting really weird, of course.

A few days later, I was sitting at my dining table working on this paper. I got a phone call from a number I didn't know and decided to pick it up, for some reason. I never pick up calls from unknown numbers, but I felt like I should. It was the guy that Dad lives with. He told me that he was worried about my dad and that Dad had been sick for a while. He almost begged me to try to get him to go to the doctor. He had been telling him for ages that he needed to go, but he would not. I didn't know what to say, so I spilled: Dad was using a synthetic marijuana product, but his roommate didn't know. I told him that I had looked up a free clinic; Dad wouldn't go anywhere else because he didn't have health insurance. The roommate apologized. He tells me that he didn't mean to put this kind of pressure on a little girl. I told him it was okay, that I would do my best to get him to go. A week before I had spent an hour searching for a doctor for him instead of studying for a test. I have a really hard time separating my responsibility to care for my dad with an unhealthy role-reversal where I try to fix his problems. I hung up the phone and started sobbing. How I held it together for that long is beyond me. I walked into my roommate's room, hysterical. Some claim positive outcomes of the development of parentification. Though the source of the obsessive care for others is negative, most agree that care for others is a positive trait. Some also claim that it forces one to be flexible and allows adaptation, and that role reversal may push forward the process of individuation (Walker & Lee, 1998). In addition, parentification can provide children of alcoholics with a sense of control in a situation in which they otherwise would feel completely out of control (Burnett et al., 2006). These feelings and habits persist long into adulthood, as they become a way of functioning for the individual. I experience both the negative and positive effects of parentification on a daily basis.

My father's alcoholism has affected my relationships with others.

I care deeply about others:  
Sometimes to the point it hurts.

I sometimes get myself into unhealthy relationships.

I want to care for people,  
I want to "fix" them.

I have a hard time understanding what  
I can do for someone,  
And a harder time understanding what  
I *should* do for them.

I've had hard conversations with friends.  
Telling them that their substance abuse  
makes me uncomfortable.

Telling them I'm worried about them.  
Trying to have a serious conversation with them,  
Sobbing,  
To realize that they're "tripping."  
It breaks my heart.

I tend to "mother" people.  
I'm the one with everything you could imagine  
in her purse,  
I've cleaned up vomit more times than I can count.

It seems like I'm caring for others,  
Like I'm just a good person,  
That's how I was raised.  
But it's not just that.

It's sometimes an unhealthy obsession,  
An obsession with control,  
Control of myself, others, or a situation,  
An obsession with making sure everything is okay,  
And everyone's all right.  
But no one really sees that.

I struggle daily with the effects of growing up and caring for a father who abused substances. Claiming that I only suffer from this experience, however, would be untrue. Much of who I am—the good and the bad—is a result of my upbringing and my relationship with my father. It is only through academic study that I've been able to come to terms with this. I've felt lost, depressed, and different from others, but I've never known how to explain it to others. I've also never been able to discuss my relationship with my father with anyone except those very close to me. Through reflection, research, and the writing process, I've learned to name the very phenomenon I deal with on a daily basis. Before exploring the topic in depth academically, I didn't know why I couldn't talk about my dad's substance abuse or why I felt like I shouldn't. I knew I took care of my father and acted as his parent, but I didn't know what to call it. Though I knew others deal with similar situations, I didn't realize how many. The process of autoethnography allows an individual to situate oneself among society and academia through reflection on and presentation of personal experience. Chang states, "Autoethnography is not about focusing on self alone, but about searching for understanding of others (culture/society) through self" (2008, pp. 48-49). Writing an ethnographic account has begun to prepare me to speak with others about my experience and to stand up for myself. Before beginning this process, I wanted to do these things, but research, writing, and re-writing has given me the tools to bring these tasks to fruition. It also has allowed me to understand myself academically, but not in a clinical way. The combination of reflection, personal experience, and academic work has allowed me to situate myself within a larger understanding; it allows academics to apply to me, rather than placing me within a diagnosis.

Writing wasn't an easy process, though. I tended to write my especially evocative pieces in my room because I feared I would burst into tears and others would see me. I felt angry with my dad, with myself. I'm still struggling with intense guilt. At times, I've felt I'm misrepresenting my father because, while I do have to deal with the effects of his alcohol and drug use, he's still my dad. I love him with all of my heart, and though there have been a lot of times he hasn't been there, there have been so many that he has. Communicating this is almost as hard to communicate as the hurt I feel as a result from his actions—others don't understand how you can love someone who causes you so much pain. I've learned over time and through this process that you love them in a different way; love does not equal trust; it only equals love.

I've been able to focus attention on knowing myself more deeply through writing and reflecting, something I otherwise tend to dismiss as an activity not worth my time. In actuality, reflection is not only worth my time, but a necessary and therapeutic task in the process of understanding myself at a deeper level. In addition to its therapeutic value, it also has allowed me to understand the social construction of phenomena that seem separate from me, namely, masculinity and alcohol use. "Like ethnography, autoethnography pursues the ultimate goal of cultural understanding underlying autobiographical experiences" (Chang 2008, p. 49). Autoethnography does not separate the individual from their own experience; researching and writing about myself has helped me to understand how I think and behave, my relationship with my dad and others, and how I fit within society at large. The self and society are inexorably intertwined, and examination of the self through the lens of a place in society is a productive means of understanding both. ■

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# A Media **Divided:**

## THE MANY FRAMES OF OCCUPY WALL STREET

**O**n September 17, 2011, hundreds of protestors began assembling themselves with tents and signs in Lower Manhattan’s Zuccotti Park. Inspired by AdBusters, a Canadian activist group and magazine, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) grew out of humble beginnings to become a worldwide phenomenon. Celebrities, such as Kanye West and Michael Moore, visited the protests and social media sites were abuzz with news about the movement. From Tokyo to Washington, D.C., people chanted the protestors’ most infamous slogan: “We Are The 99 Percent,” which was used to identify the protestors as separate from the greedy “one percent.” The encampments of people all around the country, physically occupying major public spaces, came as a shock. Growing out of frustration with both the federal government and the 2008 recession, it was the first major protest America had seen in decades. Yet despite its success at bringing wealth inequality to the forefront of American public discourse, the movement faced heavy criticism for lacking focus and direction. It was the first time in several decades that a leaderless movement had gained national interest and attention. Despite these setbacks, however, the protestors were able to propel their movement to an international scale.

**A**s powerful collective action tools capable of bringing about substantial change within society, social movements have warranted particular attention from Communication scholars (Bronstein, 2005; Gray, 2009). The manner in which protestors portray and frame their own message to gain supporters has been of particular interest. Furthermore, with the advent of the 24-hour news cycle, major social movements have garnered extensive coverage from the press. Still, this attention raises major concerns because a movement's legitimacy and its causes are now "certified through media coverage" (Gitlin, 2003, p. 1). Thus, protests face the challenge of garnering vital media attention in order to sustain their momentum; however, with any type of media coverage there is risk of being portrayed negatively, and social movements seem to be at the greatest risk for this. Mass-communication scholars have found that the media often dismiss social movements as fruitless (Gitlin, 2003, p. 27). Though the impetus behind this phenomenon can be attributed to a number of factors (including expanding readership), being framed in a negative light has detrimental effects. Because the public relies on the media for information, concepts, and images surrounding major public events, the media has the power to "orchestrate everyday

consciousness" (Gitlin, 2003, p. 2). Since the majority of Americans are not able to witness the protests firsthand, the media's "orchestrating" role is particularly important for social movements.

The goal of this study therefore, is to deepen existing knowledge of the relationship between media framing and social movements by looking at OWS through a rhetorical lens. According to Kuypers, media-framing analysis is ripe for understanding "the impact of rhetoric" (2005, p. 187). Furthermore, by examining blogs and mainstream news sources, this study will explore how these two means of communication frame conflicts in relation to one another. Even though OWS had a role in changing the overall discourse of American society and illuminated the country's major economic imbalances, the mainstream media's framing undermined the movement entirely, whereas conservative and liberal blogs framed the protestors themselves as either the problem or the victims. Put differently, newspapers found fault with the movement as a whole, whereas bloggers allowed their own political opinions to drive how the protestors were framed, and in turn, identified problems and proposed solutions. Thus, even though OWS set out to be a movement of the "99 percent," framing on the part of both conservative and liberal blogs, as well as the mainstream press, did not allow them to capture their true audience.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements have been of interest to Communication scholars long before the existence of OWS (Griffin, 1952; Simons, 1970; Cathcart, 1972; Atkinson and Cooley, 2012). Leland Griffin opened up the field of communication to include movements. He claimed that studies in this area should focus on uncovering a given movement's overarching rhetorical patterns and the persuasion tactics utilized by its participants (Griffin, 1952, p. 185). By analyzing movements through a historical methodology, Griffin claims these patterns can be uncovered (1952, pp. 184-185). Other scholars,

such as Simons, took issue with this viewpoint. Through his research, Simons concluded that the central problem for movements was not uncovering rhetorical themes, but rather the superior's leadership style. He claimed that a leader's chosen style has major consequences for movements, for it may lead followers to become involved or abandon the cause (Simons, 1970). Both of these theorists helped to validate social movements, such as OWS, as rhetorical acts and address different communication problems within classic social movement structures. They also allowed for further analysis of major protests as rhetorical artifacts.

More recent studies have strayed away from these traditional approaches of defining movements and instead focus on moral issues and communication tensions that arise. For instance, Robert Cathcart rejected the historical and sociological ways of looking at movements suggested by Griffin and Simons. He found that, instead, social movements are formed out of a growing dialectal tension that stems from moral conflict (Cathcart, 1972). He explains that movements are formed when dissatisfied out-groups create their own dialogue (Cathcart, 1972). This reasoning helps to account for why OWS may have formed and the power that rhetoric has in the formation of a large-scale social protest.

Recent scholarship in the field of Communication and movements has focused on the idea of “new social movements” (Atkinson and Cooley, 2010, p. 321). Atkinson and Cooley claim that these types of movements have turned into a “metaphor of the network” and discovered the role of narratives within movements themselves to help protestors communicate their ideas (2010, p. 321). The scholars also explore alternative forms of media and their roles in 21<sup>st</sup> century movements. Their research has found that these non-commercialized sources are able to “bridge divergent social justice organizations and construct temporary communities of resistance” (Atkinson and Cooley, 2010, p. 322). They also found that even though many movements have precipitated out of non-mainstream media outlets, they are still able to attract major headlines, as was the case with OWS (Atkinson and Cooley, 2010, p. 322).

## FRAMING

Framing research dates back to the 1970's. Sociologist Erving Goffman was one of the first researchers to study this phenomenon. He explained that, at the most fundamental level, framing helps to portray the most basic depiction of reality and allows people “to locate, perceive, identify and label” events (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Furthermore, Gamson and Wolsfeld's recent work on framing has focused on social movements. They hypothesize that the media is more likely to frame movements in a positive light if they are organized and have clear goals (Gamson and Wolsfeld, 1993). Relevant to this study, they also hypothesized that, “the narrower a

movement's demands, the more likely it is to receive coverage that presents it sympathetically to a broader public” (Gamson and Wolsfeld, 1993, p. 123).

Benford and Snow continued Goffman's research in their seminal work, studying collective action framing. Collective actions frames “are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define in need of change” (2000, p. 615). Their research uncovered three major functions that this type of framing serves within social movements. The first one is diagnostic framing, which deals with the identification of the issue and where the root cause of blame is placed. The second, prognostic framing, points to solutions that help alleviate the problems at hand. The third, motivational framing, concerns itself with the incentives that actually propel people to act in support of the movement (Benford and Snow, 2000). For example, when confronting challenges, a social movement needs to diagnose the problem in a way that appeals to potential supporters, come up with a viable solution, and effectively encourage participation (Benford and Snow, 2000).

Much of the initial research about the framing of social movements by the media, however, stemmed from Todd Gitlin's study on the media's framing of the student protests surrounding the Vietnam War. He found that the media tended to frame the protestors as disorganized and supported this by pointing to the absence of leaders and rational thought. Furthermore, Gitlin also discovered that the news media is largely responsible for defining the “who, what, where, when and how” of protest movements (Gitlin, 2003, p. 161). His research also pointed to the media's reliance on certain routines, or assumptions, about how movements function as well as stereotypes when reporting (Gitlin, 2003). This work served as an inaugural study into the power of framing by the media that sought to make sense of news organizations' often negative coverage of protests.

Utilizing Gitlin's framing work, in Entman's groundbreaking research on framing reports about major issues, he drew conclusions about two major functions of the media: selection and salience. He found that, “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a



particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). His work also extended that of Benford and Snow, pointing to the fact that not only do social movements define problems and causes themselves, but the media can also do this for them as well (Entman, 1993). Furthermore, after the important issues have been selected and crystallized in the eyes of the public, they allow for judgment calls and moral evaluations on the part of the observer (Entman, 1993).

## **BLOGS**

The role of blogs in the world of journalism has been widely debated since their inception. Messner and Garrison established that bloggers play a different role from tradition news reports. (Messner and Garrison, 2011). Their research found that bloggers function as commentators, not acting as unbiased reporters of events, but instead sharing their point of view, and often one which is in many ways polarizing (Messner and Garrison, 2011). Similarly, another study by Reese et al. found that blogs, “rely heavily on professional news sites and stories by journalists associated with professional media organizations” (Reese et al., 2007, p. 257). In this way, blogs themselves do not engage in investigative reporting techniques, but instead rely on what the mainstream media has already reported (Reese et al., 2007, p. 257).

Other studies have focused on the role of blogs in regard to agenda setting and priming. By comparing the news stories focusing on “hot button” issues, researchers found that blogs are gaining power in terms of agenda setting and may be more influential than print publications (Meraz, 2009, p. 187). This research also finds that blogs are also taking on similar roles to major newspapers such as “team writing, investigative journalism and editorial workflow practices” (Meraz, 2009, p. 187). This study supports the notion that blogs are becoming increasingly prevalent in the news landscape for offering opinions and deciding what is important. This research questions the fundamental role of blogs and how their role will continue to evolve in the changing media landscape.

However, most relevant to the study at hand, Stephen Cooper’s research has focused on blogs’ worthiness as rhetorical artifacts and their usefulness

in doing critical studies. He argues that there is a gap in research surrounding rhetorical criticism, particularly in the field of blog media criticism (Cooper, 2010, p. 150). His work finds that quantitative studies, which have been previously looked at to study blogs, only focus on the “problem, proportion and size” of the posts (Cooper, 2010, p. 148). However, because of the diverse language and tones used in blogs, a quantitative framing study is not necessarily the best methodology. He claims that “one quickly sees that the authorial voice of bloggers is considerably more diverse than the authorial voice of mainstream journalists” (Cooper, 2010, p. 146). Furthermore, he concludes that blogs provide particularly rich artifacts for framing because of their use of complex language and, unlike journalists, bloggers do not have to pretend to be detached from the stories they cover (Cooper, 2010, p. 147). Thus, since blogging was a primary medium people used to share their thoughts on OWS, it is essential to analyze blogs in this present study.

## **OCCUPY WALL STREET**

Initial research into the phenomenon of OWS did not focus on the media or blogs, but instead on how it has framed the “crisis of our time” (van Gelder, 2011, p. 1). van Gelder’s work looks into the fact that, though the movement had little organizational structure and lacked a clear, cohesive message, it changed the way the “99 percent” see themselves and allowed this phrase to become pertinent in the American vocabulary (van Gelder, 2011). Yet, the ways OWS went about spreading its cause and message were unconventional and never before seen in other movements. Unable to use loudspeakers, the protestors had to resort to other ways to get their message across, such as writing slogans on poster board and saying meaningful chants in unison.

Along with their protesting techniques, the artifacts and signs from OWS have been of interest to scholars as well. Protestors plastered their infamous slogans on signs, which often took the form of pizza boxes or scraps of cardboard, in order to get their points across. Hardesty looked at the specific words and phrases that protestors used and displayed throughout this movement. She found that these slogans and signs were focal points of the movement, and that some were so profound that they took several reads to fully absorb (Hardesty, 2012). This research acknowledged the

use of slogans as an important part of this particular movement since there were no defined leaders, and noted that the use of posters was central to the protestors' communication tactics (Hardesty, 2012).

Other studies of OWS have focused on the protestors' use of social media and how the media framed the movement. This research found that the prevalence of both alternative and traditional media covering the issue allowed this movement to be framed in a multitude of ways (DeLuca et al., 2012). Furthermore, these new media strategies allowed people all over the world to become engaged in the movement (DeLuca et al., 2012). DeLuca et al. also focused on the ways in which the movement was framed across blogs and newspapers—finding significant differences in the way right- and left-leaning blogs discussed the issue—and found that newspapers engaged in “frivolous framing” of OWS as well (DeLuca et al., 2012, p. 490). This research was also instrumental in laying the groundwork for initial studies into OWS. Other scholars have focused on the framing of other major protest movements; however, there have been limited Communication studies thus far into the OWS protests that took place between September and November of 2011.

Building upon past research in movements and the press, this study intends to examine the media coverage surrounding OWS. What set this movement apart from past ones was that the protestors themselves were aiming to embody all but one percent of society. Therefore, because they were rallying for most people, it seems that framing these protestors in a negative light would be contradictory. DeLuca et al.'s previous framing research has failed to address major concerns prevalent to this movement. The authors themselves note that their study offers a “preliminary charting of the fragmenting of mass media” (DeLuca et al., 2012, p. 500). As a result, this research seeks to expand insight into the media framing of OWS from a rhetorical perspective. Drawing from the fields of rhetorical criticism, journalism, mass communication, and Communication studies, the goal is to analyze major themes utilized in the mainstream media and blog coverage to understand how frames function within these articles and influence perceptions of the movement. Therefore, the questions at stake are: How did the mainstream media frame OWS? How did bloggers frame OWS? In what ways did the two different types of media differ in their framing?

## METHOD

For this study, a comparative framing analysis of both the mainstream press and blog posts was employed. The twelve mainstream press articles selected came from a number of print sources including, *Fox News*, *CBS*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Boston Globe*. Selected articles had to be published between September 15 and December 15, 2011, and had to be more than 500 words long. Selections included traditional news articles, as well as opinion and editorial pieces. The blog posts were selected from “A” list blogs. An “A” list blog

is a “high readership blog featured on the top one hundred popular blogs list published by Technorati.com” (Goldman and Kuypers, 2010, p. 5). Posts were taken from both traditionally liberal and conservative blogs, were chosen based on the amount they talked about OWS, and had to meet the same length criteria. The liberal blogs included *Talking Points Memo*, *The Huffington Post*, *Crooks and Liars*, and *Think Progress*. The conservative blogs were *Michelle Malkin*, *Newsbusters*, *The Daily Caller*, and *Hot Air*. Nine posts were chosen from each segment and analyzed for major themes regarding the framing of OWS.

Many of the articles included in this study framed the movement in a way that undermined its potential. The writers were able to do this in a number of ways; however, it was most notably done by comparing the movement to other protests and movements, and by focusing on the specific actions of the protestors while they were physically occupying Zuccotti Park. All of these worked together to frame the movement and protestors in a negative light because they enabled the reporters to point to the movement's weaknesses and prove how some protestors were not representative of the "99 percent."

#### HOW THE MOVEMENT WAS COMPARED

Comparisons and metaphors were employed by the reporters to frame the protestors as disorganized and not legitimate. The first major comparison drawn by journalists, which was featured in nearly every newspaper outlet researched, framed the protestors as putting on a type of "circus." The prevalence of this theme was unexpected. For one, the actions of the protestors as depicted on television, seemed anything but circus-like. Furthermore, there were no blatant indications that any of their activities resembled the behavior of any type of circus. Nevertheless, this comparison was consistently employed across a majority of the news articles studied.

Two *New York Times* articles included in the study, "Gunning for Wall Street, With Faulty Aim" and "Hippies and Hipsters Exhale," both framed the OWS protests in this way. The latter article focused on how OWS appeared to be a "festival of frustrations, a collective venting session with little edge or urgency" (Blow, 2011, p. A21). The article further described how the protestors appeared nonchalant. Though the reporter did not use the word "circus" explicitly, the use of the word "festival" and describing the protestors as having little stamina signaled that the OWS protests had little relevance other than for show. Furthermore, the second *New York Times* article also explained that the demands of the movement, such as ending corporate greed and social inequality, are not "easily exdistinguishable by street theatre" (Bellafante, 2011, p. MB1).

Other articles were more explicit when handling the circus comparison. In *The Boston Globe* Joanna Weiss wrote that "it is hard to take a protest fully

seriously when it looks more like a circus" (Weiss). She described how protestors wore "masks" (without showing any pictures) to support her point that the protests did not warrant serious attention. The journalists were able to do this because few of the readers were able to witness the movement firsthand. As Kuypers discusses in regards to first-hand accounts of speeches, "unless the reader has firsthand access... all public knowledge is filtered through the frame of the press" (Kuypers, 2005, p. 192). Thus, all accounts of what the general public knows about OWS were filtered through the media. The notion that OWS appeared to look like a circus was only made possible because a limited number of readers had first-hand access to the protests themselves.

The notable difference with the comparison to the OWS movement as a circus or street performance is that oftentimes these notions are positive. Yet, in the news coverage studied, the reporters utilized this comparison to degrade OWS. By taking an idea that holds positive meaning and aligning it with the movement, the authors allowed OWS to be taken less seriously. According to Kuypers, metaphors function rhetorically to allow "readers to see one thing, represented by the tenor of focus, in terms of another, represented by the vehicle or frame" (Kuypers, 2005, p. 109). When this happens, attributes associated with the frame are carried over to the "tenor" (Kuypers, 2005, p. 109). In this sense, comparing OWS to a circus framed it as a useless endeavor with only entertainment capabilities.

In numerous articles, reporters employed a comparison to the Arab Spring as well; however, in doing so they pointed to the current movement's weaknesses. *Los Angeles Times* reporter Tina Susman wrote, "the number of protestors on scene so far tops out at a few hundred, tiny by Athens or Cairo standards" (Susman, 2009). Reporters also cited that the main objective of the movement was to "turn Wall Street into Tahrir Square" (Weiss, 2011). Weiss followed up her claim about the protestors' goals by writing, "too many Americans *do* have jobs to make an Arab-Spring-style uprising possible," which again served to frame OWS as having unrealistic expectations and, more importantly, made light of the fact that the protestors were largely unemployed and not reflective of the majority of Americans (2011).

Not equating the movement with other past protests allowed OWS to be framed as a less effective, less meaningful version of what had happened previously in the Middle East. Susman continued by posing the question, “how about specific demands, a long-term strategy, maybe even office space?” (2011). In this way she assumed that the protestors’ ideas were taken directly from the uprisings in Tahrir Square and used it to frame the movement as a failed endeavor. Though the OWS participants had initially used the Arab Spring as a justification for their actions, the media coverage utilized this comparison to frame OWS as not living up to the success of its parent movement.

This idea that OWS was not living up to the expectations of past movements was also manifested in the notion that the protestors were aiming to spark their own “American Autumn,” a spin-off of what had originally happened in Cairo. *The New York Times* wrote that “ever since the Arab Spring, many people have been pining for an American Autumn. The closest we’ve gotten so far is Occupy Wall Street” (Blow, 2011, p. A21). The word “closest” implies that the OWS protestors have not fully achieved this goal and are in some ways incapable of coming close. Furthermore, by bring up this notion of an “American Autumn” the journalists also create a goal for the protestors to achieve, even though this was not their intention in the first place. Because OWS was not intending to spark an uprising on par with the turbulence in Egypt, this is not what the outcome of their protests was going to be. However, by creating this idea in the press of an “American Autumn” and framing the protestors as trying to live up to this idea, the journalists were able to create false expectations and frame OWS as a failing entity, as it was not able to achieve its “goal.” In this way, a metaphor functions in order to point to the pitfalls in the “tenor of focus.” By equating the Arab Spring and OWS to one another, the journalists allow the differences between the two movements to downplay OWS.

In numerous articles comparisons to the Vietnam protests of 1960’s were also used in order to frame the movement as a fruitless endeavor, and furthermore, to frame the participants as stereotypical 1960’s era hippies. *Bloomberg News* wrote that the movement took on the aspects of “Woodstock” and the “hippie protests of the 1960’s” (Alter, 2011). *The New York*

*Times* even labeled one of their articles “Hippies and Hipsters Exhale.” *The Atlantic* writes, “the cautionary tale is the anti-Vietnam War movement,” in regards to the dangers associated with OWS’s mission (Tierney, 2011). Although a majority of the protestors surveyed were liberal leaning, the newspaper articles framed their political leanings as a reason for OWS’s failure to reach any substantial legislative success. David Tierney for *The Atlantic* furthered his claim by saying, “the anti-Vietnam War movement never captured Americans hearts and minds” (Tierney). By drawing comparisons between OWS and Vietnam War protestors, the reporters framed the current movement as a doomed endeavor. This was done by assuming that the protestors were stereotypical hippies with little hope for making any real, long-lasting change in society. By utilizing a comparison to a protest that many readers had already lived through, reporters downplayed OWS’ originality, productivity, and potential.

Reporters framed the movement as a radical, less-effective endeavor by contrasting OWS to the Tea Party. References and comparisons to this movement were found in the majority of the newspaper articles selected. According to Entman, “texts can make information more salient by placement or repetition” (1993, p. 53). The Tea Party received harsh criticism from news outlets for their overtly patriotic apparel during rallies and for their seemingly conservative approaches to tackling government reform. Thus, by using the Tea Party as a baseline, the reporters framed OWS as a weaker opposition. *The New York Times* described OWS as a, “youth-driven lefty answer to the Tea Party” (Blow, 2011, p. A21). What this does is frame OWS as an extremist movement, just with different ideals. In *Bloomberg News*, Alter expressed a similar sentiment in saying, “it looks like a version of the early days of the Tea Party” (2011). Thus, through these comparisons the reporters mark the differences between the two movements, but in doing so they are able to portray frame OWS as more extreme.

Furthermore, just like the Arab Spring and Vietnam War protest comparisons, the Tea Party was also used to draw attention to OWS’s weaknesses. One article described how “The Tea Party has a specific agenda. This protest does not” (Blow, 2011). Also, Tierney mentions that, “the Tea Party is awash with stars and stripes” (2011). Both of these messages

point out how the Tea Party, despite criticism, in the very least, was able to portray their patriotism. These sentiments thus point out that OWS has not embraced these ideals and frames the movement as weaker as a result. By suggesting that the Tea Party is a more solidified, powerful movement, the reporters also give the public less reason to care about OWS as well. The Tea Party received its own fair share of criticism from the press, but by framing OWS as inferior to them not only gives OWS less legitimacy, but also, in many ways, dooms their support base.

In making these comparisons, reporters defined the movement in its early stages before the protestors had a chance to resort to assumptions about past movements to describe the present one. Many of these articles were printed within the first five weeks of OWS' inception and thus, it was far too early for them, with such a wide network, to effectively create any secure internal consensus about what values and vision they wanted to uphold. In Gitlin's study of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) Vietnam War protests, his research found that increasing media coverage led to a membership surge. This influx, in turn, created more identity problems. However, as the movement was continuing to define itself, the media was framing SDS in their own way (Gitlin, 2003). These metaphors, therefore, not only work to create identity problems for OWS, but also show how it does not measure up to past movements, thereby delegitimizing its progress.

### DESCRIBING THE PROTESTORS

Descriptions of the protestors were also utilized, along with the comparisons, to frame the movement as unproductive and useless. Whereas the comparisons and metaphors, such as the Tea Party or Vietnam War protests, framed the movement's overall appearance and served as a reference frame in order to delegitimize OWS as a whole, zeroing in on the protestors allowed them to be viewed individually as incompetent. Their behaviors were focused on to such a great extent that the protestor's cause was often overlooked. *CNN Money* wrote, "they practiced Tai Chi in a park, painted homemade signs and discussed what their demands should be" (Pepitone, 2011). *The New York Times* also remarked how OWS was "frustrated young people, with a default ambassador in a half-naked woman. [She] had taken off all but

her cotton underwear and was dancing" (Bellafante, 2011, p. MB1). *The Los Angeles Times* reported on the same woman, writing, "[the protestors] included a sleepy-eyed young man cuddling a pet rat, and woman who pranced around in her underwear" (Susman, 2011). By choosing to make these actions salient, the reporters digressed from the protestor's real reason for being there. There were plenty of opportunities to portray the protestors as holding signs and creating chants, but by highlighting actions such as "cuddling a rat" the reporters framed the protestors as lazy and uncommitted. *The New York Times* even wrote that protestors had, "put their lives on pause to try out protesting and see how it feels" (Kleinfeld and Buckley, 2011, p. A1). This using this notion that OWS was a "trial and error" process they framed the movement as not serious or likely to last long term. By dismissing the protestors collectively it did not allow the public to sympathize with them either. They are instead seen as working against themselves and alluded to the fact that perhaps there was a reason why they had yet to see the monetary success they believed they deserve.

The reporters also consistently described the protestors as radicals and extremists, who had an agenda to revolt against the government. For *Fox News* Klein wrote, "behind the current Occupy Wall Street protests is a 'red army' of radicals seeking no less than to provoke a new, definitive economic crisis, with their goal being the full collapse of the U.S. financial system" (Klein, 2011). *The Wall Street Journal* wrote that "the protestors have a distinct ideology and are bound by a deep commitment to radical left-wing policies" (Schoen, 2011). These descriptions framed the protestors as trying to radicalize the American economic system and didn't allow their views to resonate with the "99 percent" because they were portrayed as so extreme. Furthermore, through these descriptions, the journalists conveyed that the protestors were a threat to stability. *Bloomberg News* wrote that one protestor "was arrested for jumping a police barrier and resisting arrest" (Marcinek, 2011). In this way, the protests were seen not only as useless and unproductive, but also as irrational and dangerous. By describing the participants as radicals and defiant towards authority, the reporters framed OWS as a rebellious, extreme endeavor that was not actually committed to restoring unity and peace in

America. By undermining their true ideals and framing them as communists, it promoted feelings of fear and distrust in OWS.

Furthermore, by choosing to report repeatedly on the physical characteristics of the OWS encampment, the reporters placing more emphasis on the campsite and its appearance instead of the cause, framing the participants as not “protesting.” *The New York Times* wrote, “There are information stations, a recycling center, a media center where a gasoline generator power computers. At the east end sits a library,” (Kleinfeld and Buckley, 2011, p. A1). *The Los Angeles Times* reported that OWS’ “settlement has gelled into an organized community (Susman, 2011). These reports support the frame that protestors are not physically engaging in any useful activity and instead are putting on an overdone spectacle and have spent too much time dedicated to creating their environment instead of furthering their cause. Susman continued by adding that “Protestors stay there around the clock, their sleeping bags, guitars and clothing bundles spread on the ground” (2011). By giving a disproportionate amount of attention to the structure of the encampment itself, reporters suggested that the protestors cared more about the spectacle they were putting on, instead of engaging in rallies and other protest activities. Thus, the reporters allowed OWS to be seen as a cause without any authenticity and framed the protestors as the source of unrest. Furthermore, these descriptions suggested that perhaps the protestors were not fully committed to their cause and were more committed to the “show” they were trying to put on.

#### **BLOG ANALYSIS: CONSERVATIVE BLOGS**

Similarly to mainstream news articles, conservative blog posts tended to cast a negative light on OWS, which, as a result, framed the protestors as radical, untrustworthy, violent, and derogatory. This was done by both positioning the protestors in direct opposition to the Tea Party and by drawing attention to some of the anti-Semitic and racist comments made by the them during some of the rallies. Furthermore, these descriptions not only framed the protestors negatively, but also framed them as the *problem* with American society. Instead of showing how these protestors may have been responding to

the problems of wealth inequality and government practices, they were able to frame OWS participants as the source of their own misery.

#### **THE TEA PARTY**

What became immediately apparent when analyzing the texts was that the conservative blogs were quick to draw clear distinctions between the Tea Party and OWS. In a post on *Newsbusters*, Dickens’ reported that “The Occupy Wall Street protestors have received overwhelming positive coverage from the Big Three (ABC, CBS, NBC) with a whopping 33 full stories. This was a far cry from the greeting the Tea Party received” (2011). Furthermore, *The Daily Caller* wrote, “The ‘Occupy Wall Street’ protest movement... has been described as the left’s response to the tea party. But do the two movements share common ground? According to Tea Party Patriots National Chairman...’no’” (Nelson, 2011). These examples served as support for the notion that conservative bloggers attempted to set up a direct dichotomy between the two protests, both by showing how the mainstream media supported the movement and by explaining how participants themselves didn’t even believe the two shared any common ground.

As a result of this polarization, right-wing bloggers were able to frame similarities to the Tea Party as nonexistent and show how OWS was inferior. *The Daily Caller* wrote in response to arrests during an OWS protest march, “[The Tea Party participant] couldn’t recall any confrontations between tea party supporters and the police, nevermind on a scale similar to [OWS’] Saturday march over the Brooklyn Bridge” (Nelson, 2011). Daniel Gainor for *NewsBusters* wrote, “The Tea Party is its mirror opposite. Tea Party protestors are anti-Big Government, pro-American, pro-success...” (2011). These comparisons function as a way to point to how OWS is not only inferior, but more radical than the Tea Party. By describing how the Tea Party did not experience any arrests and how it was more “American,” bloggers were able to frame OWS as an extreme anti-government movement that was less successful and rational than the Tea Party. Michelle Malkin wrote, “When fiscally conservative Tea Party activists held protests over the past two years, they filed for all the required permits and paid for their own power. Occupy Boston, by contrast,

neither sought nor obtained any proper permits” (2011). Though the mainstream press also discussed OWS’ relation to the Tea Party and used it to point to their weaknesses, however, the blogs did so in a more polarizing way. Whereas the mainstream press focused on comparing OWS to a left-wing version of the Tea Party, these conservative writers denied any sort of relation at all. Furthermore, though the Tea Party comparison was used in both mediums to point to OWS’ weaknesses, in the case of the conservative blogs, this comparison was used not to just undermine the movement as a whole, but to also show how the protestors themselves were radical and against American ideals. This not only framed them as less successful, but also as the source of the problem.

### DESCRIBING THE PROTESTORS

In analyzing the conservative blogs, even though the authors paid significant attention to the protestors as individuals, they tended to focus not so much on their detailed actions, as the mainstream press did, but on their ethnic and socioeconomic makeup, along with their biases and prejudices. *The Daily Caller*, after looking at the demographic information of those who had been arrested during the protest found that “Many ‘Occupy Wall Street’ protestors arrested in New York City reside in more luxurious homes than some of their rhetoric might suggest” (Rahn, 2011). Furthermore, Matthew Boyle wrote that “in 26 photos...only one person from a minority group is clearly visible” (2011). *NewsBusters* also reported that the protestors were racist, citing an Africa-American man who held a sign at a rally calling Obama the n-word, and that young protestors had threatened an older Jewish man with anti-Semitic remarks. These descriptions framed the protestors as elitist, unreliable, and unidentifiable characters. They were portrayed as extreme, and therefore not the “99 percent.” These conservative bloggers were able to point to the fact that the protestors were not only wealthy, but also insensitive and racist. This undermined the movement and the ideals it preached, but also, again, framed the protestors themselves as the problem. Perhaps the protestors were the elitists they were raging against, and their personal ideals framed them as aggressive and ignorant. Thus, this framed them, not as the righteous people in society, but as the ones contributing to the inequalities.

### BLOG ANALYSIS: LIBERAL BLOGS

The major finding in the liberal blogs was that, unlike the previous articles studied, they were able to frame the protestors as victims instead of the problem themselves. This was done in three ways: by describing police brutality against the protestors, through discussing the economic issues facing America, and by describing the protestors in a more favorable light, such as based on their education or career.

### POLICE PRESENCE

The first major theme that was apparent, and mentioned more frequently than in the conservative blogs and news articles, was the discussion of the police presence in OWS. Of all the liberal articles analyzed, the police presence was mentioned in over half. When the police were mentioned in the conservative blogs and newspaper articles, they were mentioned in terms of how many people they had arrested, purely to give information. However, the liberal blogs mentioned the police more for their control function and utilized their actions to frame the protestors as victims. *The Huffington Post* wrote, “Protestors of Occupy Wall Street: Public Space movement had hoped to take command of Wall Street on September 17, 2011, but the New York Police Department quickly showed them who was in charge,” (Pace, 2011). *Think Progress* wrote, “the police began a surprise sweep of Zuccotti Park to destroy the Occupy Wall Street encampment” (Fang, 2011). *Crooks and Liars* also wrote a piece reporting on police brutality toward protestors remarking, “how ironic that the cops whose jobs and pensions are being attacked are the very people arresting the ones trying to protect their jobs” (Madrak, 2011).

In each of these mentions, the central focus was what the police were doing to the protestors directly. Furthermore, the police’s actions were centered on what they were doing to curb or end OWS. The descriptions of the police, therefore, frame the protestors as victims. The protestors were not seen as radicals themselves who were causing the problem, as in the conservative blogs and newspaper articles, but instead as victims of a complex, vicious system. The police reflected the systems of power in society that OWS was trying to combat. Framing the protestors as victims not only legitimized them, but also supported why OWS was an important endeavor,

and suggested that the protestors had a vital reason for protesting in the first place. One of OWS' main problems with American society was that power was in the hands of the few. By choosing to report on the police's control of the movement, these blogs framed OWS as necessary, and highlighting the police's actions only served to further justify this claim.

The liberal blogs also placed significantly more attention on power inequalities in society. *Think Progress* reported that the "average income of the top 1 percent increased 275 percent from 1979 to 2007, while growing by just 18 percent for the bottom 20 percent" (Seitz-Wald, 2011). Zaid Jilani in a post for *Talking Points Memo* discussed how "nearly three years after the start of the global economic crisis—where taxpayers in multiple countries were called upon to save the financial industry—most of the banking elite's top executives remain virtual untouched" (2011). By discussing economic unfairness, these blogs framed the protestors as having a reason to be angry and upset with their position in society. These bloggers positioned OWS within the context of a greater economic failure and framed them not as the creators of such disorder, but instead as responding to the already unfair system in place. Like the description of the police, by discussing the current economic conditions, liberal blogs justified the protestors' actions and certified their movement as a moral, rightful cause.

## DESCRIBING THE PROTESTORS

In their description of the protestors, the liberal blogs called significantly more attention to the fact that many of the protestors were students. Unlike the mainstream

press, who had chosen to report on the odd actions and dress of the protestors, the liberal blogs focused more on the educated participants in their posts. Regarding one participant *The Huffington Post* wrote "Their stories are ordinary, but in a charmed sort of way. One regular at the Assembly moved to New York from North Dakota on whim, without a job, a few months ago after finishing a master's degree" (Schneider, 2011). Another *Huffington Post* article described how the movement attracted "Vietnam Veterans, moms, families with children, young professionals...and students" (Pace, 2011). This same article described how many of the protestors were educated and spoke with an "economist vernacular" (Pace, 2011). What this created was the notion that those involved in OWS were capable and motivated. By stressing their professional and educational backgrounds, the liberal bloggers framed the protestors not as the problem in themselves, as was seen in the conservative blogs, but as victims of the greater unfair systems of society. *The Huffington Post* even outwardly stated this notion, writing that the OWS was a "small group of down-on-their-luck college kids with nothing to lose to wake America up" (Mitchell, 2011). This sentence itself framed the protestors as the ones trying to fix the economic wrongdoings, instead of the ones causing chaos. Thus, the liberal blogs, by initially discussing the inequalities and society, and then by focusing on the educated participants who were responding to such adverse outcomes, they framed the protestors not as the cause, but instead as the solution.

## CONCLUSION ■■■■

By analyzing selected coverage of OWS by both the mainstream press and blogs, I offer insight into the ways blogs and newspapers frame social movements. Because such few studies have engaged in this type of comparative analysis, these results provide early yet fruitful insight into the relationship between the framing functions of these two mediums. The mainstream press framed the movement as a

delegitimized endeavor, whereas the blogs identified problems and solutions. News framing is a topic that has been widely researched for decades. However, the framing function of blogs has not been as widely analyzed due to blogs' relatively recent emergence. In doing so, this work makes several contributions to rhetorical framing theory regarding the functions of the mainstream media and blogs.



Firstly, this analysis points to the fact that the bloggers tended to cast moral judgments upon OWS, whereas the mainstream media was more holistically dismissive of the movement. This is most accurately seen in the description of the protestors. Though both the blogs and mainstream press focused on describing them, they did so in varying ways. The mainstream press focused on the odd behaviors that protestors were engaging in, whereas the blog posts focused more on their educational background and personal ideologies. By focusing on more personal characteristics, the blogs framed the protestors as either the “cause or effect.” On the other hand, focusing on their observable actions, the mainstream press painted the protestors in a negative light, and on a larger scale, undermined the movement’s legitimacy entirely.

Multiple reasons may account for these differences. The discrepancies may be a result of the inherent differences between the medium’s followers. Since blog followers are more likely to already agree with the blogger they are choosing to read in the first place, they are afforded the ability to make more evaluative claims without running the risk of alienating readers. Instead of trying to convince a reader of a certain viewpoint, they are instead providing richer, more personal details that support their specific side. The mainstream press, however, needs to remain mindful of their diverse audience. In doing so, reporters refrain from overt criticism when providing readers with their own opinions. This may also be a product of the structure of news organizations. In order to appeal to the bureaucracy, reporters must not sound overly biased. However, these findings assert that it is not merely the opinionated nature of bloggers that led to differences in framing. Multiple editorials were included in the mainstream sample, and thus, though the reporters had an outward opinion, they still tended to take a more holistic approach when criticizing OWS.

Secondly, this research challenges the idea that blogs serve a “watchdog function,” often monitoring and commenting on what the mainstream press reports

(Cooper, 2010, p. 148). Though major themes, such as the Tea Party, were found in both the mainstream press and the blogs, the two mediums not only often differed in their content, but instead of evaluating the mainstream press for their interpretations and observations, the blogs often utilized their own material and information to advance their respective frames. This brings into question the content and purpose of blogs, as well as their relationship with the mainstream media. I offer that instead of serving one unified role within the news realm, blogs are instead an evolving information entity. These findings show that blogs may become more aligned with the mainstream press in terms of providing readers with relevant, updated information, though because they are upfront with their political leanings, they are able to make more polarizing statements without threatening their readership. Future studies could look into the influential blog posts surrounding other major events and track the changes that blogs have undergone since their inception.

Thus, though the framing from the blogs and newspapers did not form a coherent narrative, this analysis offers rich insight into the function of both of these mediums, particularly blogs. Through critical analysis I found that not only were the content of the stories often different, the way in which the writers utilized their information and organized frames were different as well. This study sets the groundwork for further research into the framing functions of blogs compared to news articles and also provides insight into how the media, as a power resource, frames modern movements. Based on this study, future research could center on the impacts frames have on actual movement participation and on policies as well. As much Communication research has focused on the frames movements display, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of the power that both mainstream news sources and blogs have in shaping the portrayal of modern social movements and the tactics they utilize to do so. ■

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RESPONDING TO

# Jealousy:

**PARTNER AND RELATIONAL UNCERTAINTY  
IN SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS**

**T**his study examines the effects of Communicative response to jealousy (CRJ) type and sibling dyad gender composition on relational and partner uncertainty levels. Communicative responses to jealousy are ways a jealous person can communicate his or her jealousy to a relational partner. Survey respondents read a hypothetical scenario about a young adult communicating jealousy to his or her sibling with a CRJ. They then answered questions about their relational and partner uncertainty levels by putting themselves in the place of the young adult sibling who received the jealous sibling's message. This study expands on Bevan's (2004) earlier work by looking at possible differences in reported uncertainty levels based on the scenario's CRJ (integrative communication, distributive communication, or negative affect expression) and sibling dyad gender composition (sister-sister scenario vs. brother-brother scenario). Statistical analyses show no main effect of sibling dyad gender composition on relational or partner uncertainty, no main effect of CRJ type on relational uncertainty, and no interaction effects on relational or partner uncertainty. However, statistical analyses show a main effect of CRJ type on partner uncertainty. Specifically, distributive communication led to more partner uncertainty than integrative communication. Distributive communication also led to more partner uncertainty than negative affect expression. Limitations and suggestions for future research are also considered.

## RESPONDING TO JEALOUSY:

### PARTNER AND RELATIONAL UNCERTAINTY IN SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

This study examines respondents' relational and partner uncertainty after reading a hypothetical scenario about a young adult communicating jealousy to his or her sibling. Jealousy is important to study in general because it can have potentially deleterious effects on lifetime relationships, such as sibling relationships. If a sibling feels an unhealthy amount of jealousy or communicates his or her jealousy in a hurtful way, he or she may find the sibling relationship harmed or even destroyed. This implies that an ethical reason for studying jealousy in sibling relationships is to help siblings adopt healthy ways to communicate their jealousy and improve their relationships.

Jealousy communication among young adult siblings is especially important to research partly because Bevan (2004) notes that only a few researchers have studied jealousy in late teens and young adults. This relative lack of past research means that many questions remain unanswered. Bevan researched relational and partner uncertainty by having young adult respondents read a hypothetical scenario about their real-life sibling, dating partner, or cross-sex friend communicating jealousy to the respondents. In this study, partner uncertainty referred to how unsure respondents felt about their sibling, dating partner, or cross-sex friend's behavior, attitudes, motives, and values. Relational uncertainty referred to how unsure respondents felt about the norms and status of the sibling relationship, romantic relationship, or friendship. Bevan found that respondents who

read a cross-sex friend scenario experienced more relational and partner uncertainty than respondents in the dating partner or sibling conditions. This finding fits Bevan's hypothesis based on Samter and Cupach's (1998) statement that cross-sex friendships often involve ambiguity around norms. Because of this statement, it makes sense to predict that respondents would experience relatively more uncertainty after reading a jealousy message from a cross-sex friend (as compared to a dating partner or sibling).

However, Bevan (2004) also found that respondents in the sibling conditions reported greater partner and relational uncertainty than those in the dating partner conditions, which was a finding opposite her hypothesis. She hypothesized that dating partners would experience more uncertainty than siblings partly because dating relationships are not permanent like sibling relationships. Given this unexpected finding, Bevan writes that her findings help validate the presence of uncertainty in sibling relationships and encourages future research on young adult siblings' uncertainty levels. This study extends Bevan's research by focusing exclusively on sibling uncertainty levels after each respondent reads a scenario with one of three communicative responses to jealousy (hereafter referred to as "CRJs"). In particular, it will look at the effects of CRJ type (integrative communication, distributive communication, and negative affect expression) and sibling dyad gender composition (Brother-brother dyad vs. sister-sister dyad) on uncertainty levels.

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## BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Before learning about the current study, one should know background information about jealousy, speech communities, CRJs, envy, and uncertainty reduction theory (URT).

**Jealousy and Speech Communities.** Aune and Comstock (2001) cite Parrot and Smith's (1993) definition of jealousy as a complex, generally negative emotional reaction to a perceived relationship threat. Aune and Comstock also add that jealousy involves worry, anger, and fear of losing or compromising a relationship. For example, a person might become jealous if his or her romantic partner starts communicating with an ex-lover. In this case, the jealous person may fear that his or her romantic relationship might end because of the ex-lover's interference and that the romantic partner will reunite with the ex-lover. Jealousy also occurs in family relationships. In this study, survey respondents read a scenario about a jealous sibling perceiving that his or her parents are giving him or her less affection and attention than they are giving another sibling. Subsequently, the jealous sibling thinks the sibling receiving a disproportionately high amount of parental resources is compromising the jealous sibling's parent-child relationship.

Family jealousy experiences such as the above scenario are quite common. Aune and Comstock (2001) found that most of their respondents' jealousy reports involved immediate family members. Their respondents reported that they coped with jealousy in mostly rational ways, including discussion with the family member who evoked the jealousy, discussion with a third party, acceptance, and increasing independence. These strategies may not necessarily represent ways non-family members communicate jealousy because Bevan, Stetzenbach, Batson, and Bullo (2006) claimed that families could be unique speech communities with their own rules for communicating and interpreting communication. Because of this idea of families as unique speech communities, it is important for scholars to study jealousy experience, communication, and interpretation in family-specific studies rather than assuming results of friend or romantic partner jealousy studies apply equally to family members. One way the idea of families as unique speech communities has manifested itself in research is Bevan's (2004)

unexpected finding that siblings reported more relational and partner uncertainty than dating partners.

**Communicative Responses to Jealousy.** Guerrero, Andersen, Jorgensen, Spitzberg, and Eloy (1995) describe 11 communicative responses to jealousy (CRJs) in their original context of romantic relationships. CRJs are ways a jealous person communicates jealousy to his or her relational partner. The 11 CRJs are active distancing, negative affect expression, integrative communication, distributive communication, avoidance/denial, violent communication/threats, surveillance/restriction, compensatory restoration, manipulation attempts, rival contacts, and violent behavior.

This study focuses on three CRJs: distributive communication, negative affect expression, and integrative communication. The author chose these three CRJs because Bevan (2004) found they best represented negative, neutral, and positive jealousy expression strategies, respectively. Distributive communication refers to direct, aggressive communication about jealousy. Negative affect expression involves nonverbal expressions of jealousy-related emotion. Integrative communication occurs when a person directly and constructively communicates his or her jealousy with the relational partner. Bevan and Stetzenbach (2007) note that while scholars had applied CRJs to romantic and friend relationships in the past, none had applied them to young adult sibling relationships before Bevan and Stetzenbach's study. This is important because it shows how applying CRJs to young adult sibling relationships is a relatively new development. Therefore, Bevan's research studies (Bevan, 2004; Bevan & Hale, 2006; Bevan & Stetzenbach, 2007) comprise the bulk of this specialized area of study.

Bevan and Stetzenbach's (2007) CRJ study found that over 75 percent of their respondents remembered a sibling jealousy situation, which helps support Aune and Comstock's (2001) finding that adult siblings still experience jealousy. Bevan and Stetzenbach also found that respondents reported using avoidance/denial significantly more often than the other CRJ types, that integrative communication is positively associated with communication satisfaction, and that communication satisfaction is negatively associated with distributive communication, avoidance/denial, and violence.

Because of these findings, they suggested that adult siblings may in fact still experience moderate jealousy and that young adults prefer avoidance as a jealousy response. Bevan and Stetzenbach's findings expanded family communication scholars' understanding of CRJ types in young adult sibling relationships. This current study's purpose is to provide even greater clarity about CRJ types by exploring whether they interact with sibling dyad gender composition to influence relational and partner uncertainty levels.

**Envy.** On a related note, Yoshimura (2010) found that siblings reported significantly more envy of each other than spouses and siblings-in-law. Yoshimura's study distinguished between envy and jealousy. As Yoshimura notes, jealousy and envy are often confused or conflated, but they are actually different experiences. Jealousy involves a person fearing that a third party or a thing is compromising an important relationship. For example, one might become jealous when a third party starts spending more time with one's relational partner because this might reduce one's time with one's relational partner. On the other hand, envy involves wanting what someone else has. For example, one might envy another person's wealth or status. Despite these differences, Yoshimura notes that jealousy and envy are similar in that they both start out as intrapsychic experiences. People then decide whether and how to communicate jealousy and envy. Yoshimura's study on envy's prevalence in adult sibling relationships helps corroborate the patterns of results reported by Bevan and Stetzenbach (2007). Even though jealousy and envy are different experiences, Yoshimura's finding that siblings reported more envy than spouses and siblings-in-law is important for this study because it helps validate the presence and frequency of an emotion closely related to jealousy in young adult sibling relationships.

**Theoretical Lens: Uncertainty Reduction Theory.** Bevan et al. (2006) cited Bedford (1989) as noting that sibling communication research has traditionally remained atheoretical. As a way of providing a grounded theory, they apply the concept of uncertainty to their research, which relates to Berger and Calabrese's (1975) uncertainty reduction theory (URT). URT explores how new acquaintances communicate to understand each other. Three circumstances increase the drive to reduce uncertainty: anticipation of future

interaction (the two people will likely meet again), incentive value (one person has something to offer the other person), and deviance (one person behaves strangely) (Berger and Calabrese). This theory offers eight axioms that explain relationships between various communication variables and uncertainty.

Knobloch and Solomon (1999) expanded URT by writing that scholars have usually operationalized uncertainty in a way that assesses partner uncertainty. However, they noted that URT's foundational writings refer to self, partner, and relational uncertainty. Because uncertainty is broader than just partner uncertainty, Knobloch and Solomon developed separate scales to measure self, partner, and relational uncertainty. They also developed separate subscales within each of these scales to provide an even more nuanced view of uncertainty. These separate scales and subscales are important because they give researchers a way to precisely measure and report on a specific type of uncertainty. This is an improvement from measuring a specific type of uncertainty (namely partner uncertainty) but reporting on uncertainty in general.

With URT and Knobloch and Solomon's (1999) distinctions between relational and partner uncertainty in mind, Bevan et al. (2006) found that young adult respondents reported low to moderate uncertainty about their sibling relationships and siblings, but they were significantly more uncertain about their siblings than about their sibling relationships. They also found that respondents with daily or weekly contact with their siblings were less uncertain about their siblings and sibling relationships when compared to respondents with monthly contact. This finding about differences in uncertainty levels according to frequency of Contact is consistent with URT's first axiom that states that uncertainty levels decrease as verbal communication increases (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Because of these findings, Bevan et al. concluded that at least low levels of uncertainty exist in established sibling relationships. Therefore, uncertainty is not limited to new relationships. They suggested that future researchers continue to explore other variables that may relate to sibling uncertainty, such as age, trust, and closeness.

Following Bevan et al.'s (2006) suggestions for future research, this study examines possible effects of CRJ type and sibling dyad gender composition on uncertainty levels. Interestingly, Bevan et al. found



no significant gender differences in young adult siblings' partner and relational uncertainty. They think this finding is surprising given past research on gender differences with respect to other variables. For example, Tucker, Barber, and Eccles (1997) found that female adolescent siblings reported getting more advice about life plans and personal problems from their siblings, being more satisfied with emotional support from their siblings, and being influenced more by their siblings than their male counterparts. However, Bevan et al.'s finding of no significant gender differences in uncertainty levels was based on a correlation between gender and young adult siblings' general feelings of relational and partner uncertainty. This correlation did not involve specific CRJ scenarios. Therefore, the purpose of this current study is to clarify whether gender interacts with specific CRJs to influence uncertainty levels. The introduction of CRJ scenarios provides a more nuanced look at sibling jealousy when compared to correlational data regarding gender and general uncertainty levels. Both approaches are important. Bevan et al.'s (2006) general correlational data allows for more macro-level trends, and this study explores more micro-level trends.

#### **CRJ RESEARCH IN OTHER RELATIONSHIP CONTEXTS**

Although Bevan et al. (2006) did not find gender differences in uncertainty levels in young adult sibling relationships, other researchers have found

gender differences in romantic jealousy situations. For example, Buunk (1982) looked at how people cope with jealousy when their spouse is having an affair. He found that women avoided their unfaithful spouse more than men. Guerrero, Jones, and Boburka (2006) also noted that jealous women are more likely than men to improve their physical appearance and communicate about their jealousy directly and positively with their partner, which seems akin to integrative communication. Jealous men are more likely than women to confront the rival or give the partner gifts. Although this research on jealousy in romantic relationships may not apply to sibling relationships, it shows that at least some relationship contexts contain gender differences in CRJ use. These gender differences raise the possibility that differences may also exist in young adult sibling relationships. For example, perhaps young adult sisters are more likely than brothers to communicate jealousy with integrative communication. In turn, survey respondents with the sister-integrative communication scenario may report significantly less relational and partner uncertainty than respondents with the brother-integrative communication scenario. This speculation is based on the reasoning that a greater likelihood of using a particular communication strategy (i.e. integrative communication) leads to less surprise when that strategy is actually used, which may then translate into less partner and relational uncertainty.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

In light of the above discussion, this study proposes the following research questions (RQ) and hypotheses (H):

**RQ<sub>1</sub>** Does sibling dyad gender composition (Brother-brother vs. sister-sister) exert a main effect on relational uncertainty?

**H<sub>1</sub>** Integrative communication leads to less relational uncertainty than distributive communication and negative affect expression.

H<sub>1</sub> is based on Aune and Comstock's (2001) finding that respondents reported mostly rational ways of Communicating their jealousy, including discussion with the family member who evoked jealousy. This rational discussion with the family members seems akin to integrative communication. If jealous family members act in predictable ways (such as consistently engaging in rational and integrative communication about their feelings of jealousy), the result may be less relational uncertainty on the part of the family member who receives the rational, integrative message. On the other hand, negative affect expression and distributive communication seem like less rational strategies (and, therefore, less frequently reported strategies). This infrequency of reporting may translate into infrequency and unpredictability of use in family jealousy communication situations. Therefore, when jealous family members use negative affect expression or distributive communication, the CRJ recipient may feel more relational uncertainty.

Notably, however, Aune and Comstock (2001) also found that "increasing independence" was another frequently reported rational coping strategy. Moreover, Bevan and Stetzenbach (2007) noted that respondents reported using avoidance/denial significantly more than the other CRJs. Increasing independence and avoidance/denial seem like

similar strategies because they both involve the jealous person distancing himself or herself from the relational partner who is causing the jealousy. Perhaps avoidance/denial is the most frequently occurring and predictable CRJ in sibling relationships (and is thus associated with the least relational uncertainty), followed by other rational coping strategies such as integrative communication (which might be associated with moderate relational uncertainty), followed by less rational strategies such as negative affect expression and distributive communication (which might be associated with the most relational uncertainty).

**RQ<sub>2</sub>** Do sibling dyad gender composition and CRJ type exert an interaction effect on relational uncertainty?

As an additional consideration, the researcher was interested in clarifying whether respondent sex influences uncertainty levels.

**RQ<sub>3</sub>** Does respondent sex exert a main effect on relational uncertainty?

The same types of research questions and hypotheses were repeated for partner uncertainty:

**RQ<sub>4</sub>** Does sibling dyad gender composition exert a main effect on partner uncertainty?

**H<sub>2</sub>** Integrative communication leads to less partner uncertainty than distributive communication and negative affect expression.

The rationale for H<sub>2</sub> is similar to the reasoning behind H<sub>1</sub>.

**RQ<sub>5</sub>** Do sibling dyad gender composition and CRJ type exert an interaction effect on partner uncertainty?

**RQ<sub>6</sub>** Does respondent sex exert a main effect on partner uncertainty?

**PROCEDURE**

This study collected responses from undergraduate students at a small to medium-sized private university in southern California. Many of the students were enrolled in communication classes, but other students were from the business school and other departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. A total of 205 students participated in this project. Out of this total number, 33 students read the integrative brother-brother scenario, 37 students read the integrative sister-sister scenario, 33 students read the negative affect expression brother-brother scenario, 35 students read the negative affect expression sister-sister scenario, 32 students read the distributive communication brother-brother scenario, and 35 students read the distributive communication sister-sister scenario. 158 respondents reported that they were female, 45 respondents reported that they were male, and two respondents did not specify their sex. Four respondents identified as African American, 13 respondents identified as Asian American, 120 respondents identified as European American, 18 respondents identified as Latino/a American, 21 respondents identified as multi-ethnic, 26 respondents identified as other, and three respondents did not specify their ethnicity.

After receiving approval from the university Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher made brief appearances in classes to announce the study and obtain email addresses of interested students. Each survey respondent had the chance to enter a raffle for a chance to win one of two \$50 Starbucks gift cards. Respondents accessed the survey by clicking on a link the researcher emailed them. Each respondent then randomly received a hypothetical scenario with one of three CRJs (integrative communication, negative affect expression, or distributive communication) and one of two hypothetical sibling dyads (two sisters or two brothers) followed by a set of questions about relational and partner uncertainty, resulting in a 3 x 2 design. Each respondent read only one of the six possible scenarios because the researcher did not want respondents' answers on the relational and partner uncertainty questions to be influenced by possible order effects of reading multiple scenarios.

**INSTRUMENTS**

The researcher adapted sibling jealousy scenarios from Bevan and Hale (2006), who constructed complete scenarios from a general situation given by Bringle (1991). The general situation involves a young adult being jealous of the fact that his or her sibling is receiving more attention and affection from their parents. In the integrative scenario, the sibling communicates this jealousy by calmly disclosing his or her feelings, trying to reach an understanding, and openly discussing the situation. The jealous sibling acts anxious, looks hurt, and cries in the negative affect expression scenario. In the distributive scenario, the jealous sibling accuses the other sibling, makes rude comments, and argues.

The researcher manipulated sibling dyad gender composition by changing the pronouns associated with two gender-neutral names ("Chris" and "Alex"). This manipulation of gender through pronouns is the main change from Bevan and Hale's (2006) original scenarios, which asked participants to write the initials of their real-life sibling in a blank embedded in the scenario itself. Alex is the jealous sibling in each scenario, and Chris is the sibling receiving more attention and affection from their parents. As such, Chris is the recipient of Alex's CRJ. The relational and partner uncertainty questions ask each survey participant to respond as if he or she were Chris and as if this situation had actually occurred.

General partner uncertainty was measured with eight items adapted from Bevan (2004), who in turn adapted Parks and Adelman's (1983) eight questions regarding uncertainty about one's dating partner to fit sibling uncertainty. Respondents answered these eight items (i.e. "If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would feel as if I did not know Alex very well") on seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from one ("strongly agree") to seven ("strongly disagree"). Relational uncertainty was measured with eight items adapted from Bevan (2004), who in turn adapted Knobloch and Solomon's (1999) relationship uncertainty scale. In particular, Bevan used the four items in Knobloch and Solomon's behavioral norms subscale and four items from their mutuality subscale. Respondents answered these eight items (i.e. "If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about what

I can or cannot say to Alex in this relationship”) on seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from one (“strongly agree”) to seven (“strongly disagree”). The researcher measured respondent sex with one item: “I am: Female Male.” Bevan (2013) gave the researcher all these questions and the CRJ scenarios in a personal email, which the researcher then adapted to fit this study (personal communication, July 23, 2013). See Appendix A for the researcher’s relational and partner uncertainty items and an example scenario (in this case, the brother-brother integrative scenario). Note that the researcher changed the masculine pronouns in the uncertainty

items to the corresponding feminine pronouns when the scenario involved a sister-sister dyad.

Reliability analyses indicated that respondents for a given scenario (distributive brother-brother scenario, distributive sister-sister scenario, integrative brother-brother scenario, etc.) answered the eight relational uncertainty questions and the eight partner uncertainty questions consistently. In other words, the estimates of internal covariation within the relational uncertainty scale and within the partner uncertainty scale were acceptable. Table 1 lists the Cronbach alphas ( $\alpha$ ) for each scenario’s relational and partner uncertainty scales.

TABLE 1	RELATIONAL UNCERTAINTY	PARTNER UNCERTAINTY
Distributive Communication: Brother-Brother Scenario	0.858	0.788
Distributive Communication: Sister-Sister Scenario	0.824	0.758
Integrative Communication: Brother-Brother Scenario	0.833	0.826
Integrative Communication: Sister-Sister Scenario	0.885	0.799
Negative Affect Expression: Brother-Brother Scenario	0.869	0.792
Negative Affect Expression: Sister-Sister Scenario	0.840	0.784

## RESULTS

### RQ1, H1, AND RQ2

A two-way ANOVA with CRJ type and sibling dyad gender composition as the two independent variables and relational uncertainty as the dependent variable yielded insignificant effects ( $F=0.67, p=0.65$ ). In terms of RQ1, results ( $F<.001, p=1.00$ ) indicated no main effect of sibling dyad gender composition on relational uncertainty. Results for H1 were also insignificant ( $F=1.43, p=0.24$ ), indicating no main effect of CRJ

type on relational uncertainty. Finally, RQ2 was also not supported ( $F=0.21, p=0.81$ ) indicating no interaction effect of sibling dyad gender composition and CRJ type on relational uncertainty.

### RQ4, H2, AND RQ5

A two-way ANOVA with CRJ type and sibling dyad gender composition as the two independent variables and partner uncertainty as the dependent variable

yielded insignificant effects ( $F=1.76$ ,  $p=0.12$ ). In terms of RQ<sub>4</sub>, results ( $F=1.12$ ,  $p=0.29$ ) indicated no main effect of sibling dyad gender composition on partner uncertainty. H<sub>2</sub> was partially supported with an  $F=3.69$  and a  $p=0.03$ , indicating a main effect of CRJ type on partner uncertainty. Like RQ<sub>4</sub>, RQ<sub>5</sub> was not supported ( $F=0.18$ ,  $p=0.84$ ), indicating no interaction effect of sibling dyad gender composition and CRJ type on partner uncertainty.

#### **FURTHER ANALYSES REGARDING H<sub>2</sub>**

Because of the main effect found for H<sub>2</sub>, the researcher ran a one-way ANOVA with CRJ type as the independent variable and partner uncertainty as the dependent variable and found significant effects ( $F=4.58$ ,  $p=0.01$ ). Tukey HSD *post hoc* tests indicated that respondents who received distributive scenarios ( $N=67$ ) reported greater partner uncertainty ( $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ) than respondents who received integrative scenarios ( $N=70$ ) ( $M=3.29$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) ( $p=0.02$ ). These tests also indicated that respondents who received distributive scenarios ( $N=67$ ) reported greater partner uncertainty ( $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ) than respondents who received negative affect expression scenarios ( $N=66$ ) ( $M=3.30$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ) ( $p=0.03$ ). Respondents who received integrative scenarios ( $N=70$ ) did not significantly differ in their reported partner uncertainty levels ( $M=3.29$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) from respondents who received negative affect expression scenarios ( $N=66$ ) ( $M=3.30$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ) ( $p=1.00$ ). Therefore, H<sub>2</sub> was supported in terms of integrative communication leading to less partner uncertainty than distributive communication, but it was not supported in terms of integrative communication leading to less partner uncertainty than negative affect expression. Because of these significant effects on partner uncertainty, the researcher decided to run another one-way ANOVA with CRJ type as the independent variable and relational uncertainty as the dependent variable and found insignificant results ( $F=1.57$ ,  $p=0.21$ ).

#### **RQ<sub>3</sub> AND RQ<sub>6</sub>**

The researcher ran a two-way ANOVA with respondent sex and CRJ type as the independent variables and relational uncertainty as the dependent variable and found insignificant effects ( $F=1.80$ ,

$p=0.11$ ). However, the  $F$  and  $p$  values associated with the main effect of respondent sex on relational uncertainty were  $3.84$  and  $0.051$ , respectively. Because of these numbers, the researcher ran an independent-samples two-tailed  $t$ -test with respondent sex as the independent variable and relational uncertainty as the dependent variable. Results of this  $t$ -test did not support RQ<sub>3</sub> ( $t=1.84$ ,  $p=0.07$ ), indicating no main effect of respondent sex on relational uncertainty.

The researcher also ran a two-way ANOVA with respondent sex and CRJ type as the independent variables and partner uncertainty as the dependent variable and found insignificant effects ( $F=1.87$ ,  $p=0.10$ ). This two-way ANOVA also showed no main effect of respondent sex on partner uncertainty ( $F=0.04$ ,  $p=0.85$ ), so RQ<sub>6</sub> was not supported.

To further explore the effects of gender, the researcher conducted a two-way ANOVA with respondent sex and sibling dyad gender composition as the independent variables and relational uncertainty as the dependent variable and found no significant effects ( $F=0.92$ ,  $p=0.43$ ). When relational uncertainty was replaced with partner uncertainty as the dependent variable in this test, the effects were also not significant ( $F=0.52$ ,  $p=0.67$ ).

#### **INCOMPLETENESS OF THREE-WAY ANOVAS**

The researcher also ran a three-way ANOVA with respondent sex, sibling dyad gender composition, and CRJ type as the independent variables and relational uncertainty as the dependent variable. However, he could not complete this test because the data was partitioned down to cell numbers that violated the assumptions of the test. For example, only five male respondents answered questions about the sister-sister distributive scenario. The three-way ANOVA could also not be completed when partner uncertainty was substituted for relational uncertainty.

The researcher also ran the same two-way ANOVAs and three-way ANOVAs with ethnicity replacing respondent sex as one of the independent variables. Like the above three-way ANOVAs with respondent sex as one of the independent variables, these two-way and three-way ANOVAs with ethnicity as an independent variable could not be completed because the data was too partitioned.

## DISCUSSION ■■■■■

In response to RQ<sub>1</sub> and RQ<sub>4</sub>, sibling dyad gender composition did not exert a main effect on CRJ recipients' relational or partner uncertainty. Respondent sex also did not exert a main effect on relational or partner uncertainty, which meant that RQ<sub>3</sub> and RQ<sub>6</sub> were also not supported. Like the four research questions, H<sub>1</sub> was not supported, but H<sub>2</sub> was partially supported. CRJ type exerted a main effect on partner uncertainty, but not on relational uncertainty. In particular, respondents who read a distributive scenario reported more partner uncertainty than respondents who read either an integrative or a negative affect expression scenario. However, H<sub>2</sub> was only partially supported because integrative communication did not lead to less partner uncertainty than negative affect expression. In addition to considering main effects, this study looked at possible interaction effects of sibling dyad gender composition and CRJ type on relational and partner uncertainty. Statistical tests revealed no significant effects, which meant that the combination of sibling dyad gender composition and CRJ type did not influence relational or partner uncertainty.

### THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

With the above findings in mind, this study suggests at least two theoretical contributions. First, the partial support for H<sub>2</sub> is important because it helps clarify Solomon and Theiss' (2011) discussion about the ambiguity surrounding the causal direction of interpersonal uncertainty. Solomon and Theiss described the relational turbulence model, which predicts that relational uncertainty acts as a catalyst for more intense emotions, thoughts, and communication. Conversely, they also asserted that it is "equally likely" that jealousy, hurt feelings, and communication difficulties may influence uncertainty. Because of this ambiguity about uncertainty, Solomon and Theiss wrote that scholars should conduct more research about uncertainty's place among other variables in a causal chain. The partial support for H<sub>2</sub> in this study helps support one of Solomon and Theiss' proposed causal directions, namely that communication difficulties might influence uncertainty.

Because this study found that scenario type affects partner uncertainty, perhaps distributive

communication is a communication difficulty. Indeed, the distributive scenarios noted that the jealous sibling communicated his or her jealousy by accusing the other sibling, making rude comments, and arguing. If respondents interpreted this description as an inappropriate response and thus as a communication difficulty (which is certainly a possibility), this study helps support Solomon and Theiss' (2011) proposal that communication difficulties may influence uncertainty levels. Future researchers should investigate whether respondents actually interpret distributive communication to be a communication difficulty.

The second theoretical contribution involves the researcher finding no support for an effect of sibling dyad gender composition or respondent sex on uncertainty. These findings contrast with Buunk's (1982) finding of significant gender differences in how men and women cope with romantic jealousy. This contrast reinforces Bevan et al.'s (2006) point that researchers should study families as unique speech communities. It also suggests that gender may not be a significant factor when applying URT to jealousy communication in sibling relationships. Instead, CRJ type may be much more important than gender in predicting interpersonal uncertainty.

### PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

One implication of distributive communication leading to more partner uncertainty than the other two CRJs is that people who receive distributive messages may have different sibling relationships in the future than people who receive integrative or negative affect expression messages. For example, do siblings who receive distributive messages trust their jealous siblings less than those siblings who receive integrative or negative affect expression messages as a result of the higher partner uncertainty that distributive communication evokes? Does this higher partner uncertainty lead distributive message recipients to be less satisfied with their sibling relationships? Does this higher partner uncertainty lead them to decrease future interactions with their jealous siblings? Decreased trust, satisfaction, and future interactions are just three possible consequences of increased partner uncertainty. Future researchers might want to systematically examine these possible effects.

## EXPLANATIONS FOR FINDINGS

Several possible explanations might account for the overall lack of significant findings in this study. First, it is possible that sibling dyad gender composition does not affect relational or partner uncertainty. It is also possible that the combination of sibling dyad gender composition and CRJ type does not affect relational or partner uncertainty. Another possible explanation is that the lack of sample representativeness impacted the findings. As noted at the beginning of the results section, 158 respondents identified as female, 45 respondents identified as male, and two respondents did not report their sex. When compared to the general population of young adult siblings, these numbers mean that females were overrepresented while males were underrepresented. As a result, this study's results may not be generalizable beyond the actual sample. Moreover, certain ethnicities were underrepresented in the sample (note, for instance, that only four out of 205 respondents identified as African American), which casts further doubt on whether these results are generalizable. The sample's disproportionate demographic characteristics are probably due to the fact that males, African Americans, and other demographic groups are underrepresented at the university as a whole. If future researchers want to obtain more generalizable results, they might want to consider whether both sexes and all ethnicities are proportionately represented. They might also want to consider whether college students, young adults in the workforce, and young adults in the armed services are also proportionately represented.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As suggested in the last section, one limitation of this study is the sample's lack of representativeness in comparison to the overall population of young adult siblings, which is something future researchers might want to consider. Another limitation involves the fact that this study only examined three CRJs. As noted in the literature review, there are 11 total CRJs, so future researchers might want to consider how to represent the remaining eight CRJs in scenarios. Researchers might also want to consider whether these eight CRJs significantly differ among each other and among the three CRJs in this study in

terms of the level of relational or partner uncertainty that they evoke. As noted above, one interpretation of this study's findings is that CRJ type may be more important than gender when applying URT to sibling jealousy communication. If this is the case, exploring the amount of uncertainty evoked by the other 11 CRJs is especially important.

A third limitation deals with this study's recruitment procedure. When recruiting undergraduate students to participate in the study, the researcher gave entire classes the same scenario. When he was getting close to his goal of 30 respondents for each scenario, he started splitting the later classes' students in half based on the order in which they signed their names on the sign-up sheet. Half of the class then received one scenario while the other half of the class received a different scenario. This is a limitation because the researcher did not ensure that female students with real-life sisters received scenarios with sister-sister jealousy communication. He also did not ensure that male students with real-life brothers received scenarios with brother-brother jealousy communication. Another limitation involves the fact that this study did not consider mixed gender (i.e. brother-sister) scenarios because of time constraints. This limitation means that the researcher investigated only half of the possible real-life sibling dyad gender compositions.

Future researchers might want to distribute scenarios in such a way that each student receives a scenario with a sibling dyad gender composition that reflects the gender composition of each respondent and his or her real-life sibling. This systematic distribution of scenarios might help ensure that the respondents' reported uncertainty levels are more realistic. For example, the researcher has four brothers but no sisters in real life. He speculates that he might be better equipped to report his uncertainty after reading a brother-brother scenario than after reading a sister-sister or brother-sister scenario. Because he has no real-life sisters, he wonders whether a scenario with a female character might seem too strange for him given his past life experiences.

Future researchers might also want to study certain CRJs that may be more extreme forms of distributive communication and negative affect expression. For example, one CRJ is violent communication/threats, which is arguably a more

extreme form of distributive communication. Bevan (2004) developed a pilot-tested violent communication/threats message that states, “Specifically, your relational partner communicates this jealousy by threatening to harm you, scaring you, and actually being rough with you” (p. 218). Moreover, active distancing seems to be a more extreme form of negative affect expression. Bevan’s pilot-tested message for active distancing says, “Specifically, your relational partner communicates this jealousy by giving you the silent treatment, storming out of the room, and giving you dirty treatment looks” (p. 218). Future researchers might consider adapting these messages to fit the scenario about Alex and Chris. In particular, future researchers might want to change the last sentence in Appendix A’s scenario to reflect violent communication/threats, active distancing, and other more extreme CRJs. In

this case, researchers could explore whether extreme CRJs interact with sibling dyad gender composition to influence relational and partner uncertainty.

Because violent communication/threats and active distancing seem more extreme, future researchers might also want to explore the presence and frequency of these CRJs in real-life sibling relationships. Researchers might explore the presence of an extreme CRJ by defining it and asking participants to recall a time in their lives when their siblings used that form of Communication with them. The frequency of an extreme CRJ might be explored by asking respondents how many times in a month or a year they receive a message with that CRJ from their siblings. If an extreme CRJ occurs often in respondents’ sibling relationships, that CRJ may lead to less relational and partner uncertainty even if that CRJ is not pleasant.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study examined the effects of sibling dyad gender composition and CRJ type on relational and partner uncertainty. It found no effects of sibling dyad gender composition on relational or partner uncertainty. It also found no effects of respondent sex on relational or partner uncertainty. Moreover, it found no effects of CRJ type on relational uncertainty. However, it found partial support for H<sub>2</sub> because distributive communication led to higher partner uncertainty than either integrative communication or negative affect expression. The absence of gender effects suggests that gender may not influence young adult siblings’ uncertainty levels after they receive a CRJ. One implication of these findings is that gender may

not be an important factor in this specific situation. Perhaps a gendered lens is not the best framework for exploring uncertainty in young adult sibling relationships during jealousy communication. However, the limitations discussed in the previous section suggest that this issue of gender is far from “settled.” Future researchers would be wise to explore possible gender effects on partner and relational uncertainty after designing studies that correct for some of this research’s limitations. This research would help strengthen sibling research in general by clarifying whether brothers and sisters have different experiences related to uncertainty or whether brothers and sisters share the same uncertainty experiences regardless of gender. ■



**BROTHERS: INTEGRATIVE COMMUNICATION**

Chris and Alex are brothers who both go to college. Their parents have recently been focusing on Chris and giving him a lot of attention. By the way Alex is acting, it is obvious that he is hurt and bothered by the fact that Chris is receiving more attention and affection from their parents. Alex obviously believes that their parents prefer Chris to him. Specifically, Alex communicates this jealousy by calmly disclosing his feelings to Chris, trying to reach an understanding with Chris, and openly discussing the situation.

**GENERAL PARTNER UNCERTAINTY-BROTHER SCENARIO**

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would feel as if I did not know Alex very well.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be confident of my ability to accurately predict Alex’s behavior.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, Alex would have said or done something which surprised me.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would have a very good idea of what Alex’s values and preferences were.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would have trouble understanding why Alex did what he did.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be able to accurately predict what Alex’s attitudes were.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be able to tell what Alex was feeling inside.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be able to accurately predict how Alex would respond to me in most situations.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

**RELATIONAL UNCERTAINTY-BROTHER SCENARIO**

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about what I can or cannot say to Alex in this relationship.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about the boundaries for appropriate and/or inappropriate behavior in this sibling relationship.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about the norms for this sibling relationship.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about how I could or could not behave around Alex.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about whether Chris and I feel the same way about each other.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about how Alex and I view this relationship.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about whether or not Alex likes me as much as I like him.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

If I were Chris and this situation actually occurred, I would be certain about the current status of this relationship.

Strongly Agree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Disagree

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# “TAKE IT A **day** AT A TIME”:

## **ANALYZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EGALITARIAN FAMILY ROLES AND OFF-TIMING PARENTHOOD**

**T**his case study analyzes the linkages between work and family phenomena within a middle-class family which either act as a source of conflict or a source of developing egalitarian roles. Using information from email and in-person interviews of the “Borkowski” family, I propose that egalitarian values and equal sharing of work and family responsibilities are more established in later life families, and are made easier by supportive organizational environments and flexible work-family policies. The father and mother, “Anthony” and “Ruth,” both consented to participating in the following case study. Names of all family members, including their two daughters mentioned in the interviews, have been changed to preserve interviewee confidentiality. The paper is divided into the present arrangement of the family studied, historical information regarding families of origin, an analysis of both present and past arrangements, and prescriptive recommendations for future families. Further research might consider the attitudes of the children of more egalitarian families to see if they too hold those perspectives as they age.

## INTRODUCTION ■■■■

This case study focuses on the intersections and challenges presented by the work-family phenomena in a middle-class family living in Northern Virginia. Through several email conversations and in-person interviews, I was able to establish three trends within this family that allowed them to successfully manage work and family commitments: off-timing fatherhood, flexible organizational policies that allowed the mother to ease back into full-time work, and nontraditional family arrangements that made equal sharing possible. By analyzing their responses, I suggest that egalitarian couples established later in the life course are more likely to have equal sharing responsibilities, which are made easier by supportive organizational cultures. This paper is divided into four sections: part one, which provides a snapshot of the present family arrangement; part two, which provides historical background

information about families of origin; part three, which offers analysis for present and past revelations; and part four, which establishes prescriptive behaviors for future families to achieve equal sharing status in work and family commitments.

This research contributes important findings to the study of family communication by illuminating both individual and organizational attitudes that make egalitarian parenthood a possibility. Viewing the field of Communication as different forms of expression and interaction from a social perspective, research regarding work and family intersections should focus on the effects of communication practices on the construction of behavior and attitudes toward work and family discourses. Although a certain limitation of this study was the small sample size, focusing on one family provided a rich and detailed analysis of this family's communication regarding work and family practices, on which future scholarship can build.

## PART ONE: SNAPSHOT OF THE PRESENT ■■■■

### FAMILY CONFIGURATION

The weekend begins early in the morning for the Borkowski household. Ruth, in her early 50s and who is transitioning between careers, is sitting at the kitchen table after her morning workout at the recreation center and is eating a hard-boiled egg and finishing the Saturday crossword puzzle. Anthony, a salesman in his early 60s, is already making a mental checklist of the chores he needs to complete before his golf game in the afternoon. "Bank, cleaners, and Costco," he says methodically, glancing over at his wife and two college-aged daughters—Louise, 21, and Lauren, 19—who are home for break to see if they would like to join him. They all shake their heads.

At present, the Borkowski household reflects a traditional family composition, with one husband, one wife, and two children. The daughters attend college and are living away from home. However, from this very brief narrative of a typical Saturday morning, we can already recognize that the family does not embody traditional gender roles as mirrored by the mother who solely attends to domestic work, such as

cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, and cooking. Anthony reveals through an email conversation that the current family configuration came about more from logistics, rather than the need to maintain traditional roles: "Our work and family configuration came about through an absolute working for and sharing in our family structure. Whoever could do well in a particular avenue took lead," he explained (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). While, as mentioned further on, Ruth may involve herself in indoor tasks, Anthony is also just as likely to do domestic chores. Through observation, for example, the daily chore of doing the dishes typically falls to Anthony. More significantly, Anthony talks about never suffering from false pretenses in relation to work and family roles. This is an important revelation, which suggests an unconscious acknowledgment that such roles are not natural. Ruth, also through an email conversation, agreed and included that this configuration was primarily made possible through her work circumstance, which allowed for many vacation and sick days to accommodate care work.

### TIME ALLOCATION BETWEEN TASKS

Although their two daughters have left their home for school, Anthony and Ruth still maintain busy schedules. Anthony divides his time equally between work activities and leisure and family activities. As a business equipment salesman, he admits feeling strain due to competitiveness and “insultingly small” profit margins, and also reveals a sense of indifference towards his career, especially the commute, on which he reports spending about three and one-half hours per day driving to and from the office (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Home and leisure time spent cleaning the house, gardening, or making home repairs, then, become a refuge from the stresses of the workplace. He also commits an hour, five nights per week to the gym after coming home from work.

Ruth, though she is exploring new career options after working 26 years at a nonprofit organization,

must also commit large amounts of time towards work. On average, she spends an estimated 30 hours per week networking, researching possible jobs, interviewing, and practicing for interviews. She also recently received a volunteer position at the Hogar Immigrant Services, where she spends roughly 15 hours per week supporting the efforts of green-card holders seeking United States citizenship. She has also participated in her church’s music ensemble since 1995, and will spend about three hours per week practicing and performing in the actual mass. In terms of household tasks, Ruth spends about ten hours per week grocery shopping, cooking, folding clothes, and doing other chores. For leisure, she spends about 25 hours per week at the gym and on other leisure activities, such as going to the movies and watching television. She also plays weekly poker games with extended family, including her siblings, nephews and nieces, and grandnephews and grandnieces.

### CHALLENGES TO WORK-FAMILY DYNAMICS

One of the primary challenges for the Borkowski family relates to Ruth’s current unemployment. As the main income-generator for the family, this poses some major concerns for Anthony and Ruth. However, Ruth comments that “Anthony’s smart financial planning and conservative money sense is paying dividends” (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Coupling Anthony’s planning with her earnings, as well as living below their means for the past 20 years, allowed Anthony and Ruth to implement savings and investment strategies to put both children through college; earlier planning has reduced financial strain during this time. Through positive affirmations and surrounding

themselves with support networks, Anthony and Ruth remain optimistic about their situation.

Another issue revolves around the care work of Anthony and Ruth’s aging parents. While Ruth’s father lives with one of his sons about 20 minutes away from where Ruth lives, which makes it easy to visit often, Anthony’s 93-year-old father resides in California with his 87-year-old wife, and is suffering from dementia. Anthony laments in a conversation that this makes timely responses and physical care difficult to manage. Anthony’s two siblings reside in Pennsylvania and Georgia, making responses to emergency situations slow. To catch up with his father, Anthony calls every Sunday, and tries to visit him and his stepmother once a year during the Christmas and New Year holidays, as this is the only time he can take a vacation from work.

### **ARRANGEMENTS IN FAMILIES OF ORIGIN**

The family arrangements of Anthony's and Ruth's families of origin are divided between more traditional views, which maintain the worker husband/homemaker wife dichotomy, and nontraditional views, or those deviating from the stated dichotomy. In Anthony's family, which consisted of a father, mother, and three sisters, the family arrangement was traditional. He said in an interview that "my father was the sole worker, [and] my mother was a housewife" (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Coinciding with traditional views, his father's tasks were allocated to the outdoors while his mother's tasks were found inside the home, such as buying groceries and preparing meals. Anthony himself also found many of his chores to be outdoors, while his sisters would help dry the dishes and vacuum indoors. However, while Anthony's father was the sole income generator, his career as a pilot in the Navy often resulted in sporadic pay, which affected the family tremendously when he was on duty elsewhere. Anthony explained of his mother: "she'd have to support the family with what, um, he was paid. And a lot of the times, his pay wasn't sent automatically. So...the Navy wives helped each other. If they were short on their monthly rent...another Navy wife would help her or they would pull resources together" (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). This reliance on the help of others outside the immediate family "impressed" Anthony; as the family relocated several times because of Anthony's father's new duty station, the military wives were always a network of care they could depend on (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013).

As one in a family of 14, Ruth's family configuration growing up in the Philippines was considerably different than Anthony's. While both of Ruth's parents worked for a living, her parents deviated from the traditional view in that her mother was the primary income generator of the family, working as a consultant in the guidance and counseling office, and in admissions at University of the Philippines, the largest university in the country. Ruth recalled a significant blur between the home and work lives of her mother, who could be found editing until early in the morning and advising students for their dissertations. This work would

intermingle with family life. As Ruth remembered, "We built an office, uh, a business, a research business at home. And so she had other people come to the house and we had a little office there" (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Even as a girl attending elementary school, she spoke of teachers who would pass on their dissertations to her to give to her mother; the separation of work and home became negligible for Ruth. Ruth's father was also a pilot who had served in the Filipino air force, as well as in private airline companies.

Another nontraditional aspect of her family was that her household also comprised other family members, such as cousins, as well as household staff who cooked, cleaned, and did laundry. While Anthony's mother could be seen as the manager of the family, Ruth described her family as "self-managing," primarily because of the staff that had allocated tasks (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Still, Ruth was responsible for her own chores, which were typically given to her by older sisters. Because her mother was occupied with work, the older daughters took the role of babysitting and also dividing chores. In other words, Ruth's mother was not responsible for managing the home but was the source of money through which those tasks could be completed.

### **ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

The value of education was apparent in both of Ruth and Anthony's accounts of their history. Anthony partially attributed the role of education in his life to the Vietnam War: "If you were in college in 1969," he said, "you could get a 2S deferment," which meant that a person was not eligible to be conscripted into the military (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). He received his education from Belmont Abbey College, earning a bachelor's degree in English. The value of education was also understood by both of Anthony's parents, especially his father who used education as a way to overcome poor circumstances. Anthony's father was able to leave the small town of Coatesville, Pennsylvania, by obtaining his pilot's license, which allowed him to join the Navy with a commission. During his time in the Navy, he completed his schooling through various universities such as Columbia University, Old Dominion

University, and Maryland University. Finally after receiving his degree and retiring from the Navy, he continued to pursue education by teaching in school.

Similarly, education had important value in Ruth's family since her mother herself was working in the university. This "tradition," as Ruth described it, led to the expectation that all twelve of the children would attend the university, a feat made easier by the fact that family members associated with the university through an employee received major discounts (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Still, despite the tradition of education, Ruth remarked that her mother was not strict about it: "My parents were just like, 'Here's your opportunity, do what you want with it.' But they made no expectations...they were not expecting any of us to be the brightest...[they] just want you to graduate to make something out of yourself" (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Despite these low expectations, no one in her family took school for granted, especially the women. Ruth's mother was the first woman in her department to receive a doctoral degree, and became a role model to Ruth and her sisters. Like Anthony, Ruth viewed education as a way to get out from under the economy of twelve children, which made it difficult for her parents to support them all.

#### **PLANS FOR WORK AND FAMILY**

However, despite the importance of education in both of their lives, Anthony and Ruth spoke wistfully of missed opportunities that might have originated from their parents' lack of direction when it came to their futures. Somewhat bitterly, Anthony explained that his parents never directed their children which surprised him, particularly with his father. "Everything he accomplished was on his own," he said of his father, continuing that, "his brothers and sisters stayed and remained...in Coatesville, Pennsylvania (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). And he was the only one of his family, I think they were like seven or eight brothers and sisters, he was the only one who left Coatesville and had a fantastic career in the Navy...He really did live his dream" (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). This sense of direction was not passed onto the children,

Anthony said, which might have contributed to the amount of indifference he currently feels about his work. "Unfortunately, I'm one of those people who never found what they wanted...[and] never had any predisposed ideas of where my life was going to go with somebody else other than me," he said (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). He described this lack of direction as harmful, since many people are not self-motivated when it comes to work: "I envy, again, some of my friends who went on to professional degrees. One of my friends, his father's a dentist, so he was going to go to medical school and he did go to medical school...He was no brighter than me, but he worked hard" and was motivated (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Partly attributed to his parents' lack of guidance, Anthony expressed that he did not have a blueprint for what he wanted in the future in terms of work and family. As mentioned previously, while he certainly took pride in excellent work, which ranged from managing retail stores to working in a shipyard, Anthony lamented that he never found a single career path where he enjoyed the work and found it fulfilling.

Ruth expressed similar sentiments that, like Anthony's father who understood the value of education, her mother who was so heavily involved in academia did not provide much guidance in terms of Ruth's future. "I don't remember her sitting me down to say this is what you're going to do," Ruth said (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). While she found success with her Communication degree, she regretted not being aware of all of the options available to her, something that her mother could have helped her with. "I think a little bit of guidance is good," she explained, "and then it's up to you, but just to show you what the options are, because really, the options [of what major to take] are what friends told me they were doing" (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Even without direction, Ruth said that she always understood that in whatever career she ended up, she would have to start at the bottom. When she first arrived in the United States approximately 30 years ago, she viewed menial jobs as a stepping stone to better opportunities: "When I first arrived here, I worked as, uh, a server, a cashier at Roy Rodgers



for two months...I had this very glamorous notion of myself being a scriptwriter on television and here I am wearing, uh, a cowboy hat...but I knew I had to do it, it was a part of the journey” (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013).

### **BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY**

Because Anthony and Ruth had not expressed any predetermined ideas of what their family and work life would be, when they were finally married and had children, they approached work and family responsibilities with daily practicality. Anthony reminisced about when they first brought daughter Louise home from the hospital: “We really did kind of take it a day at a time and we kind of learned as we went. Not all of it was easy” (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Anthony and Ruth credit four factors that made balancing the simultaneous responsibilities easier, which included reliance on extended networks of care, Ruth’s paid leave benefits, Anthony’s proximity to home, and their reputations at work and supportive management.

First, Ruth and Anthony were able to rely on Ruth’s parents to babysit and care for Louise while they were at work. This network of care made it easier for Ruth to return to work after her leave expired. Anthony remarked on feeling concerned about deciding who they should allow to watch over their children, so relying on close family relieved that strain.

Second, Ruth was able to take maternity leave for three months by combining her sick days with the organization’s own maternity leave policy. By working part-time during her maternity leave and also claiming long-term disability, Ruth was able to receive 60 percent of her salary in addition to her part-time salary. “I was really pulling my work,” she said of the time spent in maternity leave (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). “I was actually doing a special project on, uh, with members of Congress, on some lobbying we were doing and...I could do it at home,” she recalled (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Her organization’s work and family policies, combined with meaningful assignments, helped Ruth transition back into work.

A third factor was Anthony’s close proximity to home, which allowed for quick responses to family

responsibilities since Ruth’s commute to Washington, D.C., could be unpredictable and long. When Louise and Lauren were in elementary school, Anthony was able to pick them up from school and take them back to his office until he finished his work.

While this might have created stigma within the office, both Anthony and Ruth had supportive bosses who understood their life situations. At his previous job, one of his bosses would keep the other boss in check, Anthony said, saying that “she understood, cause she was raising her own children by herself” (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Ruth, too, had a boss who was very family-oriented and understood when she needed time for family responsibilities. “People trust us, trust us to work,” Ruth added, saying that their reputations at work influenced the flexibility they were given: “they were willing to give us some, some leeway...that kind of flexibility in the workplace also allowed us to manage the family a little bit better than normal” (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013).

The pressures of daycare and after-school care proved to be a challenge for Anthony and Ruth. While both strongly maintained that they were not influenced by stigma from other people in terms of making decisions about work and family, they both hinted, Ruth especially, at feelings of guilt from their own choices. One of the most standout stories they remember from the daycare experience had to do with one of their first babysitters: “She would have her second job,” Anthony recalled, “but then she’d take you to the store. It was kind of cute, in a way, that you’d be napping on the flour sacks” (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). Ruth remembered feeling “totally sad. I mean, I mean ‘What kind of mother am I?’ You know, that kind of a thing that I would let, allow this to happen” (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013).

Emotional challenges notwithstanding, there were also financial considerations to make in terms of daycare and after-school care. The cost of daycare could be so exorbitant that some people might think it was not even worth it to work, Ruth said, continuing, “If someone was earning a \$1,000 a month, which is \$250 per week, and you’re paying

\$200 a week for daycare...which to this person's mind, 'Why? Why am I working this hard for \$200? Because I'm giving everything to the daycare'" (R. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013). When Louise and Lauren were older, affordability was still an issue with after-school care. Ruth remembered many times when she would have to quietly ask the mother who ran the after-school care to not raise the prices because they would not be able to afford it. Anthony agreed, and

added that many times, parents pay large amounts of money for care that is not good. In one after-school situation, while it was less expensive than what other parents were charging, Ruth remembered when she found out that the woman who was taking care of her daughters was not giving them food after school. "We were so happy when you got to that age where you could come home" without adult supervision, Anthony concluded (A. Borkowski, personal communication, October 7, 2013).

### PART THREE: ANALYSIS OF THE BORKOWSKI FAMILY

#### OFF-TIMING FATHERHOOD

In the first section of analysis, I dissect meanings of fatherhood that are dominant messages in society, and then offer an argument relating to fatherhood, age, and the life course. According to Townsend (2002), fatherhood exists as a "package deal in which having children, being married, holding a steady job, and owning a home" are interconnected elements associated with fathering (2). Read from a dominant framework of the father who partakes in paid employment to provide the economic basis for the family, the package deal can lead to feelings of disappointment when fathers do not live up to these cultural expectations, and thus, are considered failures to ideas of masculinity. This is related to the concept of discourses, which are defined as shared systems of meaning and as sites of power, force, and struggle. One of the discourses about fatherhood relates to the concept of the life course, in which "individuals simultaneously occupy multiple roles in distinct social settings, and that their progression in each of these various roles is dependent on... behavior in other social domains" (Coone, Pedersen, Indelicato, & Palkovitz, 1993, 206). Furthermore, on-time and off-time moments within the life course signify appropriate and deviant behavior, with off-timing labeled as being unusual. However, when it comes to fatherhood and equal sharing, which will be discussed further in the paper, off-timing fatherhood eases the demands of childrearing that occur alongside challenges of work roles.

Anthony mentioned in an in-person interview that he had not married Ruth until he was 35 years old and did not have his first child until the age of 41, which certainly categorizes him as an off-time father. However, having children later in life has been shown to have positive effects on equal sharing of family and domestic labor. Studies have found that late-parenting fathers were more likely to share child care and housework and were more experienced within the work domain, which allowed for flexibility in terms of family commitments. Ruth commented early on that one of the reasons they were able to obtain flexible working arrangements was partly due to the fact that their supervisors trusted them as reliable workers, something that could not be achieved if they were younger and new additions of their respective organizations. Furthermore, a deeper sense of maturity in Anthony prevented him from caring about how stigmatization would affect his performance at work. In an in-person interview, Anthony commented that he did not care what others thought if he knew that his children were being cared for, an attitude that might not be shared by younger fathers who are still establishing their roles within the organization.

According to Heath (1994), nearly two thirds of late-time fathers reported having regular responsibility for daily child-care routines, and three fourths "took on a sizeable share of child-care responsibilities" (para. 18). While younger fathers have been found to be less expressive with their children, Heath (1994) also found that late-time

fathers spent more time interacting with their children, placed more importance on their children's behavior, and showed greater levels of nurturing behavior toward their children through hugging and praising. Marital success is also interconnected to increased levels of father involvement, according to Cooney, Pedersen, Indelicato, and Palkovtiz (1993). While marital success was not mentioned overtly in the interview, Anthony and Ruth stressed the importance of togetherness when dealing with family challenges.

### ON-RAMPING TRANSITIONS

A second point of analysis focuses on the concept of on-ramping and off-ramping, also referred to as opting out, that is defined as a "trend among...women of electing to leave their careers either temporarily or permanently to become full-time mothers" or to partake in other care responsibilities (Lovejoy & Stone, 2012, 632). Interestingly, and often contrary to the difficulty faced by women who marginalize family duties to on-ramp into their careers, Ruth's paid leave policies and involvement in meaningful part-time work while taking maternity leave helped ease her transition back into her full-time position. In this section, I will focus first on defining factors and challenges that contribute to on-ramping and off-ramping, as well as the importance of supportive organizational culture, and then continue to an analysis of Ruth's and Anthony's work situations.

According to Lovejoy and Stone (2012), women are three times more likely to leave the labor force and point towards family responsibilities as their reason. While some may argue that women's choice to leave originates from tendencies for caring and relational work, overreliance on these factors are too simplistic and ignore organizational challenges. According to Major and Lauzun (2010), work interference with family—"the extent to which participating in the work role hinders fulfilling the family role"—is more prevalent than family interference with work (70). While pull factors from the family such as child responsibilities are important, scholars have found that the push factors related to work are more apparent in women's reasoning. Push factors stemming from work include lack of advancement, discrimination, and stigmatization due to family commitments. When women want to return to work, however, they are also

faced with barriers that prevent easy transition, such as perceived skill obsolescence, career redirection to lower status tasks, difficulty in explaining long periods of unemployment, and the lack of understanding for women who take time off from their careers. As will be discussed later, all of these challenges originate from the masculinity of organizational cultures, according to Cabrera (2007). Probably most significant to these challenges is the idea of stigma, which Stone and Hernandez (2013) explain as the attribute itself not being intrinsically discrediting, except when in a particular social context. Stigma is more likely to be present if the characteristic being questioned is seen as being under the control of the individual involved, such as pregnancy and motherhood. This relates to the discourse of choice rhetoric, which is viewed as a discursive move used to justify decisions made within constraints as free choice. Working for straight commission, Anthony hinted at this concept of choice rhetoric subtly, when he commented that his supervisors would tell him that spending too much time with his children would only hurt himself. In another example, if a woman became pregnant and had to opt-out because of strain spillover, for example, her choice would position the blame onto her lack of commitment, rather than inflexible work policies that pushed her to leave. Fortunately with Ruth, as will be discussed later, supportive organizational culture made it possible to juggle both family and work commitments.

As mentioned above, organizational culture based on masculine norms functions as a major barrier to most women who try to reenter the workplace, especially within high-level professional careers that are characterized by cultures of intense commitment and linear career trajectories. Stone and Hernandez (2013) describe career mystique as "the expectation that employees will invest all their time, energy, and commitment throughout their 'prime' adult years in their jobs, with the promise of moving up in seniority or ascending job ladders" (236). Career mystique relates to the white male career model introduced in Hewlett's (2007) book, which focuses on continuous, linear employment history; emphasizes full-time employment and physical presence; emphasizes the expectation that careers are either made or lost in the time frame of one's mid-30s; and assumes that workers are only motivated by financial gain. This relates to the norm

of the ideal worker that gives preference to workers who are unrestricted by caregiving responsibilities and are able to solely focus on their careers. This model is time-oriented to the clockwork of male careers and is directly at odds with family life landmarks that most influence women. According to Lovejoy and Stone (2012), the “hegemony of the linear career model... means that taking time out typically exacts a penalty in terms of earning and advancement for women” (634). While the most obvious step may seem to be to restructure the workplace model, Hewlett (2007) suggests that developing a model contrary to the white male career model threatens those who have benefitted from its rules—“men lose a last piece of competitive advantage over women” if the model changes (15).

However, not changing the model to benefit women’s nonlinear career paths has serious detriments, including exorbitant costs to replace employees due to turnover rates and effects on an organization’s bottom line. In all instances, Barcenas-Frausto (2009) notes that if the employee benefits and his or her basic needs are met, he or she will display more commitment and the organization will benefit mutually as well. Although Ruth admitted in an email conversation that her maternity leave only comprised of one week, she was able to utilize her vacation days and long-term disability to extend her leave, as well as receive 60 percent of her salary while also involving herself in part-time assignments. While not partaking in complete off-ramping, these idiosyncratic policies allowed Ruth to participate in both work and family tasks. As her old organization grew more stable, it was able to adapt more family-friendly policies to accommodate its workers’ needs. Her ability to keep one foot in the organization and one foot at home worked to her advantage, allowing her to maintain her ambition while also caring for her first child.

Along with paid maternity leave, Ruth credits her ability to transition back into full-time work to a supportive organizational culture. As suggested by Major and Lauzun (2010), managerial support is an important factor to the organization’s work-family culture, which is described as “the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives” (72). Ruth’s immediate manager, who was also the president of the

organization, had two young children when she first started working, and she recalls many days where he made sure that he could attend his children’s after-school activities such as sports games. By expressing the value and importance of balancing work and family responsibilities, her supervisor demonstrated his own personal commitment to family-friendly policies. Similarly, Anthony expressed that although one of his supervisors maintained a traditional gender ideology that the woman should take care of the child, his other supervisor, who was a single mother, was able to relate to his circumstances and kept the other supervisor in check, allowing Anthony to take time to pick up his daughters from school or take them back to his office until he was finished with work. Employees who are provided with flexibility report having better job performance, greater job satisfaction, and higher commitment to the organization.

#### **NONTRADITIONAL FAMILY ROLES**

A final point of analysis relates to the nontraditional family roles found within the Borkowski family. Traditional models of the family involve an income generator father and a homemaking mother whose tasks are divided through specialization, where the father focuses on market work and the mother focuses on domestic work. However, the “rise in female labor force participation, the growth of dual-earner families, and recent reductions in the gender wage gap indicate that gender-based specialization models cannot accurately capture the experiences of the majority” of families in America (Winslow-Bowe, 2006, 825). Still, we cannot assume that a change in diversity of families will restructure the inequalities of family roles related to household labor—according to Greenstein (1996), husbands of employed wives may do an average of 4.3 more hours of housework per week, but this finding becomes insignificant when we recognize that men are not doing more, women are just doing less.

Earning power may have an impact on nontraditional roles in the family, as the percentage of wives who out-earn their husbands has increased by 40 percent between 1987 and 2003, according to Winslow-Bowe (2006). Based on the resource bargaining approach, in which the division of labor results “from implicit negotiation between spouses

over inputs and outcomes in the household,” wage earning becomes a source of power for wives in the family and can enhance their power within the marital relationship (Greenstein, 1996, 586). Ruth’s earning advantage may have subconsciously given her more power to negotiate nontraditional family roles, although both stress the importance of practicality in their arrangements. In previous email conversations, Anthony notes not having been under any false pretenses when it came to the gendering of work, which reflects his own gender ideology, or “how a person identifies herself or himself with regard to marital and family roles” (Greenstein, 1996, 586). Furthermore, husbands who embrace more egalitarian gender ideologies usually perform more hours of housework because they do not view themselves as being entitled to their wives’ labor. This relates to the concept of economy of gratitude: a traditional husband may view his wife’s domestic labor as something he is entitled to, while an egalitarian husband may see his wife’s labor as a gift because he does not necessarily feel entitled to her work.

Another main contributor to an equal division of labor comes from parenting, “because the drastic asymmetry in workloads and the divergence in life courses between husbands and wives develop when children enter the picture” (Deutsch, 2000, 5). In this sense equal sharing, which is applied “if husband and wife agreed that, overall, when everything that went into the care of children in a typical week was taken into account, the work was split 50-50,” is the by-product of daily negotiations of divisions of labor rather than applications of gender ideologies (Deutsch, 2000, 5). Because the birth of a first child represents a new kind of crisis within the family, the family arrangements must be structured on a day-to-day basis. Anthony mirrored this sentiment when describing the feeling of confusion when first bringing daughter Louise home from the hospital, remarking that he and Ruth had to structure their responsibilities daily. In another example, Anthony and Ruth recalled deciding who would pick up their daughters from school based on who it was more practical for, and since Anthony was closer to home than Ruth, pick up responsibilities were given to Anthony as a matter of convenience.

#### **PART FOUR: PRESCRIPTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**



Based on the previous sections of analysis (off-timing fatherhood, opting-out, nontraditional family roles), this part of the paper offers prescriptive recommendations to other families. The decision to have children later in the life course rather than earlier has effects on both the involvement and equal sharing in childrearing and domestic tasks for older fathers, mainly because of personal maturity and establishment in careers that make flexibility easier. Although not all families can perfectly schedule when they will have children so that birth will occur when the father is older, if employers recognize the connection between work balance and increased involvement in family life for fathers they might be more willing to create policies that promote flexibility for employees who are fathers, such as wider acceptance of paternity leave. This solution, however, is not without limitations,

as it would first need to address the discourse that men are supposed to be entirely committed to their work.

In terms of opting-out for women, Ruth’s situation was ideal in that she never completely off-ramped from her organization but was able to apply flexible part-time work and maternity leave in order to attend to both work and family needs. Although she decreased her workload and time spent in the office, she maintained her ambition by requesting special projects that she could complete during her time at home. By keeping her feet wet, as the phrase goes, her transition back into full-time work was smoother than if she had left her organization completely. Organizations can help women’s transitions by implementing reduced-hour schedules and short-term arrangements, in the case of Ernst & Young and other larger corporations (Hewlett, 2007). Some challenges

to these approaches would be reducing stigma and ensuring commitment from top-level managers.

Equal sharing regarding childrearing and doing domestic labor, as in the case of Anthony and Ruth, can be achieved through reliance on practicality rather than gender ideologies to determine who will do what tasks. Again, as Anthony and Ruth noted, there were no false pretenses for gender-based specialization; juggling family, home, and work commitments were based on who could do what with the most convenience. One way this can be achieved is through open communication and negotiation about what roles each partner can do on a day-to-day basis. Although Anthony and Ruth could not remember having a formal conversation about equal sharing, they both expressed realizing that they had to work together in order to provide the best care for their children.

While these recommendations may be feasible for many families, discourses regarding motherhood and the ideal worker still perpetuate the male breadwinner and female homemaker roles, which

can become challenging to parents trying to establish equal sharing. Because of this, although the options described above were certainly viable for the Borkowski family, they may not be possible for families who still subscribe to traditional definitions of family arrangements. One way to critique these norms might be to require students in university environments to take feminist education classes to bring light to these invisible discourses and norms that guide our behavior. Perhaps the largest reason that these norms go unquestioned, aside from maintaining privilege to the few, is that people have not been trained to analyze with a critical eye. This might also be achieved through organizational workshops or training sessions giving employees information about equal sharing within the family, especially among younger employees, which could help create a new culture of acceptance of flexibility in the workplace. When these young employees establish higher positions in their companies, they will be able to take with them new attitudes and perspective that could shift workplace policies regarding work and family.

## CONCLUSION ■■■■

Through an analysis of the Borkowski family, there were many various factors that contributed to their egalitarian status, primarily Anthony's off-timing fatherhood, which suggests that older fathers have less traditional views and are more likely to be involved in family life; Ruth's ability to transition into full-time employment due to part-time work and supportive managers; and the nontraditional family roles that were established on practicality, not gender ideologies. By working together, Anthony

and Ruth were able to successfully raise their family and manage their careers simultaneously. One major limitation of this study was the small sample size. However by focusing on one family, the study could offer insight into an extremely detailed discussion of work and family practices, on which future research could build. Further research regarding this topic might also consider the effects of egalitarian parental roles on children, to see if they internalize those attitudes within their own families. ■

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AN ANALYSIS OF NISSAN'S

# *What if Everything Ran on Gas?*

## ADVERTISEMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

**T**his paper analyzes the effectiveness of Nissan's *Gas Powered Everything* television advertisement through the lens of Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory. The present analysis discusses the history of electric and hybrid vehicles, Cognitive Dissonance Theory as it applies to mass media marketing and environmental behaviors, and the creation of a common bond between the viewer and the character who is portrayed in a negative manner. Through analyzing portions of an advertisement that introduces dissonant cognitions to the viewer and subsequently offers the Nissan LEAF as a solution to the induced dissonance, this paper ventures to begin a discussion of Persuasive tactics within advertisements utilizing Cognitive Dissonance Theory.

*Keywords:* Advertisement Cognitive Dissonance Theory, Consonance, Dissonant, Electric Vehicle, Environmental Advertisement, *Gas Powered Everything*, Nissan



## INTRODUCTION ■■■■

**A**nounced in 2009 and sent to market in 2011, Nissan's LEAF was the first mass-produced vehicle to run strictly on electricity, released as part of an environmental initiative (Nissan announces national market roll-out plan for zero-emission Nissan LEAF, 2010, para. 1). In support of the vehicle's release, Nissan subsequently launched a minute-long advertisement depicting a world in which every imaginable appliance is powered by a gasoline motor, concluding with the tagline: "What if everything ran on gas?" This paper will employ Cognitive Dissonance Theory to evaluate the effectiveness of the Nissan campaign in inducing dissonance that attempts to prompt buyer behavior.

The present analysis will review the presentation of dissonant thoughts perhaps brought on by the Nissan LEAF advertisement, Cognitive Dissonance Theory, and an analysis of the effectiveness of the Nissan LEAF advertisement. First, this paper overviews the history of the electric car and the development of the Nissan LEAF. Moving forward, the paper briefly examines the advertisement and Cognitive Dissonance Theory, both of which are then discussed fully in the analysis. Following the analysis, this paper concludes with a discussion of the dissonance induced within the viewer, specifically within the target demographic of the advertisement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW ■■■■

While the first mass-produced electric car was released in 2011, the notion of the electric car is not new; rather, the first electric cars were invented and operational by the late 1800s (Idaho National Laboratory, para. 1). By 1920, gasoline engines were cheaper to manufacture and could, therefore, be offered at a lower cost. Given lack of knowledge or attention regarding the harmful environmental effects of combustion engines and cheaper cost, gasoline became the primary source of fuel within the automotive industry (Idaho National Laboratory, para. 4). From the 1920s to the present, the electric vehicle has been attempting to compete with the less expensive, easier to manufacture internal combustion engine vehicle, which was the cause of the drastically diminished use of the electric vehicle after 1930 (Santini, 2011). Recent media attention and pressing awareness of the impact gasoline and other fossil fuels have on the environment has led to a search for an alternative fuel source to power vehicles. As such, Nissan launched into the electric car industry in 2007 with the announcement of the gasoline-electric hybrid 2007 Altima Hybrid (2007 Nissan Altima Hybrid Press Kit, 2007, para. 2), and then again in 2010 with the announcement of the all-electric LEAF (2011 Nissan LEAF Press Kit, 2011, para. 4).

Only recently have technological innovations that reduced manufacturing and sales costs made electric cars a viable alternative, thus pushing electric cars to the mass market with Nissan's LEAF in 2011.

Nissan began in 1911 as a domestic Japanese automaker. Through a series of mergers and transitions, Nissan was given its current name in 1934 (The short history of Nissan Motor Company, para. 2). At the announcement of the LEAF, Nissan explained the environmental need for an all-electric vehicle, claiming that: "there's little debate on the need to reduce vehicle emissions in the future. Nissan is taking an aggressive approach to establishing leadership in zero-emission vehicles, with the LEAF being our first effort" (Nissan announces national market roll-out plan for zero-emission Nissan LEAF, 2010, para. 4). Therefore, the LEAF became the world's first mass-produced, all-electric vehicle.

While the LEAF represented an environmental initiative for Nissan, the LEAF's release represented a premier for the national car market as well (The short history of Nissan Motor Company, para. 1). When released in 2011, the Nissan LEAF was touted as the first affordable electric car (Nissan announces national market roll-out plan for zero-emission Nissan LEAF, 2010, para. 1). The target

demographic for the vehicle, according to the manufacturer, includes those who are: married, approximately 40 years of age, have an annual household income of \$75,000 or more, and most likely already own a hybrid vehicle (Mansfield, 2011). Targeting this specified demographic necessitates that both the vehicle and its advertisements highlight the needs and the mindsets of these individuals.

In order to market the vehicle towards the demographic described above, Nissan's *Gas Powered Everything* television commercial began to air in 2011. The 60-second advertisement is a string of vignettes that feature a world of muted colors in which all household and small electronics are, like vehicles, fueled by gasoline. The commercial begins with a man approximately 40 years of age as he goes about preparing for his workday. He uses ordinary household appliances, such as a coffee maker and alarm clock, and then at his office continues his daily functions with use of a computer and copier, but these appliances are shown as gas, rather than electrically powered. The machines in the advertisement are depicted with black exhaust being expelled forth into the home, workplace, and even at a dentist's office. Smoke debris accumulates on the walls, furniture, and in the air—causing these regular, everyday citizens to cough and have a caustic reaction to the exhaust. The portrayal is that of People similar to the target demographic experiencing obvious physical and assumed mental discomfort.

In an attempt to better understand the imagery contained within the advertisement and the potential emotions felt by the viewer while watching this 60-second advertisement, the commercial can be evaluated via Cognitive Dissonance Theory, which can explain whether the Nissan advertisement is effective in creating dissonant feelings within the target viewer. First, though, the present analysis will provide an overview of Cognitive Dissonance Theory.

The theory of Cognitive Dissonance was first introduced by Leon Festinger in which the state of dissonance is explained as: “two elements are in dissonant relation if, considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other” (1957, p. 9). Further, others have described cognitive dissonance as, “...a psychological state in which an individual's cognitions—beliefs, attitudes,

and behaviors—are at odds” (Egan, Santos, & Bloom, 2007, p. 978). In the first publication of the theory, Festinger first posited that, “the existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance” (1957, p. 3). The present analysis seeks to discuss if the *Gas Powered Everything* advertisement is effective in inducing psychological dissonance within the target demographic.

Within Cognitive Dissonance Theory, there are two types of relationships between thoughts or cognitions: the first being consonant cognitions, and the inverse of consonant, being dissonant cognitions. Festinger originally detailed Cognitive Dissonance Theory as dealing with the “relations which exist between pairs of elements” (1957, p. 9). Festinger (1957) explained consonant cognitions or elements, as occurring when the relationships between two elements are consistent and dissonance cognitions as occurring as a result of inconsistency between elements, cognitions, or thoughts. Understanding that inconsistent relationships amongst cognitions will cause an individual to experience cognitive dissonance, the present analysis will discuss the capacities in which individuals may experience dissonance within advertisements and the possible results of such dissonance.

As individuals come in contact with dissonant information, Festinger (1957) described three actions that individuals are likely to take in order to reduce the discomfort of dissonance. First, as two cognitions clash, an individual may change a behavior in order to restore consonance. Second, instead of changing one's actions or behaviors, an individual may simply choose to change one's opinion on a matter in order to reduce dissonance and maintain consonance. Lastly, an individual who is experiencing dissonance may reduce the importance of cognition, thereby restoring consonance. As the present analysis moves forward, knowing the routes to dissonance reduction becomes applicable in analyzing the effectiveness of Nissan's advertisement. Has Nissan presented the LEAF as a one of the three possible actions to reduce dissonance?

Having discussed cognitive dissonance and the situations in which dissonance might occur, to put Cognitive Dissonance Theory in the context of the

present analysis, we might place ourselves into a hypothetical situation. What would happen if a self-proclaimed environmentalist who drives a traditional gas-fueled pickup truck is forced to watch the *Gas Powered Everything* commercial, where the notion of using gasoline as fuel is shown to be incompatible with a healthy environment? According to Festinger and Carlsmith (1959), this individual may or may not change attitudes to rationalize his or her behavior; moreover, can Nissan present the purchase of a LEAF as an action to be taken in order to reduce dissonance, as outlined above? An examination of the *Gas Powered Everything* advertisement through Cognitive Dissonance Theory will allow us to draw further conclusions.

The present examination of the Nissan LEAF advertisement is not the first application of Cognitive Dissonance Theory to advertising, environmental actions, or sales studies. The current substantial body of literature regarding Cognitive Dissonance Theory illustrates the employment of dissonance in, for example, sales efforts (Spangenberg et al., 2003).

Further, the Nissan advertisement highlights what most drivers are already aware of: burning gasoline is detrimental for the health of the environment. Research also suggests that individuals feel the need for consistency while performing environmental acts (Thorgeresen, 2003; Wade-Benzoni, Li, Thompsen, and Bazerman, 2007). Also present in the current body of research are studies demonstrating how individuals employ “consistency” in behaviors to avoid being hypocritical, and therefore bringing about dissonance (Friend & Aronson, 1995). Similarly, the Nissan advertisement can be evaluated through Cognitive Dissonance Theory to discuss the effectiveness of dissonant tactics in product sales (Oshikawa, 1969; Cummings & Venkatesen, 1976). The studies highlighted above advance the present analysis by providing insight into precisely how cognitive dissonance may be used in advertising, as well as how individuals seek consistency in their behaviors and cognitions, which can be applied to the present analysis in the form of Pro-environmental actions.

## ANALYSIS ■■■■

This paper seeks to determine the effectiveness of the Nissan advertisement in creating dissonant feelings in the viewer. Having already explained the necessary conditions for dissonance to occur, this analysis will now discuss specific portions of the *Gas Powered Everything* advertisement and evaluate if the portions are effective in inducing dissonance through a lens of Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Lastly, has Nissan presented the LEAF as a step to be taken in order to reduce the dissonance presented within the advertisement? The present analysis seeks to answer that question.

### VISUAL FILTH FROM EXHAUST

Cognitive Dissonance Theory, as previously explained, details what steps an individual may take to alleviate any dissonance one may come in contact with. The accumulation of filth as a result of exhaust being spewed forth by the gasoline-powered engines reinforces the common sense notion that fossil fuels are dirty and harmful towards the environment, as accented by the individual's coughing and unhealthy reactions to the exhaust. The cognition that gasoline is filthy may cause dissonance by forcing the viewer to fully grasp the depth of how unclean gasoline engines are, as well as face the notion of Precisely how much energy one consumes. The dissonant reminder that gasoline engines are dirty may inspire cognitive dissonance within the viewer, which may spur a viewer to take the aforementioned steps to reduce the uncomfortable state of dissonance.

### USE OF COLOR DIFFERENCE

While the illustration of exhaust and the reminder that burning fossil fuels is harmful to the environment may be an attempt to inspire cognitive dissonance, the use of muted colors in the gas-powered world may also be used to conjure dissonant feelings in the viewer. Moreover, seeing that only 57,451 electric cars exist in the United States (U.S. Energy Information Administration, para. 2) compared to the 230 million gas-powered engines (Advanced Combustion Engines, para. 2), the majority of car-owning individuals identify with the man from the gas-powered world. Forging a common identity with this character

may be seen as an attempt to make the majority of viewers feel dissonant when confronted with the notion of belonging to a hypothetical world which is portrayed in an unhealthy, bland manner.

### COMMON IDENTITY BETWEEN TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC AND MAIN CHARACTER

Being cast in an unfavorable light, as the viewers have been equated with this character may cause the viewer to feel unbalanced, regardless of whether they drive a hybrid or gas-powered vehicle. The advertisement clearly portrays an individual who lives in an undesirable world, living a filthy life, and simultaneously suggests that the viewer may in fact be living a similar life. As such, building a common identity between the viewer and the main character of the advertisement may lead to cognitive dissonance.

### CONNECTION BETWEEN THE VIEWER AND INNOVATION FOR ALL

The advertisement closes with a narration proclaiming, "innovation for the planet: innovation for all." Such a statement could be construed in several capacities: the narration may be perceived as invitation for all to participate in innovations designed to improve the planet and to do so through the purchase and use of a Nissan LEAF: a solution to the proposed dissonance in the Nissan advertisement. Given that only 20,000 Nissan LEAFs were sold at the end of 2012 (Tuttle, para. 1), this message may produce cognitive dissonance in those who do not own a Nissan LEAF—or at least in those who do own gas-powered cars. As illustrated above, a small portion of the population owns an all-electric vehicle, a figure accented even further when compared to the 230 million gas-powered vehicles on the road. The advertisement has already suggested that the gas-powered world is dirty and unwanted by most. This portion of the advertisement, though, proposes the Nissan LEAF as a solution to gas-powered world. Yet, individuals may feel unbalanced and may experience cognitive dissonance after the advertisement first identifies the gas-powered world as an issue, second, offers the LEAF as a solution, but lastly, do not yet own a LEAF.

The *Gas Powered Everything* commercial, launched in 2011, includes several notable instances in which there are overt attempts to conjure cognitive dissonance within the viewer. The present analysis provides specific illustrations as to what portions of the advertisement attempted to induce dissonance and will now discuss which vignettes were effective at inducing dissonance. The first attempt to conjure cognitive dissonance consists of the visual illustration of the exhaust dirtying the aforementioned fictional home and workplace. Further, the advertisement shows what several daily-use appliances would look like if Powered exclusively by gasoline engines. Understanding that there are three courses of action an individual can take to reduce cognitive dissonance, this paper has sought to explore whether Nissan has presented the LEAF as a solution to the dissonance induced by the *Gas Powered Everything* advertisement. Upon viewing the Nissan advertisement, individuals are most likely to reduce the importance of their gasoline consumption. Therefore, individuals are most likely to ignore the thoughts regarding how much energy and resources the audience may use, instead perhaps dismissing the advertisement as “humorous” (Woodyard, 2013, para. 2). Individuals will be able to reduce the effectiveness of the dissonance, rendering this portion of the advertisement ineffective.

The second portion of the advertisement highlighted in the analysis focuses on the target demographic and illustrates the potential behaviors of the demographic. As the advertisement begins to close and depicts the main character fueling a vehicle, it is clearly visible that the vehicle shown is a Chevrolet Volt, a hybrid vehicle, as opposed to the all-electric Nissan LEAF. This notion is furthered by the on-screen caption, stating, “The Volt is a gas-electric hybrid” (YouTube, 2011). As discussed in the literature review, the target demographic of the vehicle already owns a hybrid. The depiction of the main character at a gas pump, fueling a hybrid, is meant to further build a common identity between the target demographic and the main character, who is living in undesirable gas-powered world. After the majority of the advertisement is spent portraying the main character as living in such an undesirable world and suggesting that

the target viewer may be living in a similar world is meant to, and does, induce cognitive dissonance.

Lastly, as the advertisement ends and the invitation “for all” to participate in aiding the environment begins, individuals may feel dissonant about contributing to a filthy environment and not owning the proposed solution to the damaged environment, the LEAF. This cognition, coupled with the previously mentioned notion of feeling dissonant regarding owning only a hybrid, may be enough psychological discomfort to urge an individual within the target demographic to search for further information regarding the LEAF to reduce the cognitive dissonance induced by the advertisement.

Understanding that the target demographic includes individuals who are married, approximately 40 years-old, and have an annual household income of \$75,000 per year, this advertisement is effective at inducing cognitive dissonance within that audience. The main character of the advertisement aesthetically fits this demographic well, although one cannot assume the annual household income from simply viewing a person. Further, given that the target demographic is likely to already own a hybrid (Mansfield, 2011); the portrayal of an individual living in a downtrodden world and owning a hybrid is likely to induce cognitive dissonance within the viewer.

Effectively targeting the demographic mentioned above is logical. That being said, inducing cognitive dissonance in the hopes that an individual will make a large purchase, such as a car, in order to reduce dissonant feelings, is a significant goal for a 60-second advertisement. Those with the monetary ability to do so would be within the target demographic, however.

As mentioned above, individuals strive to obtain and maintain consistency regarding pro-environmental decisions and to avoid taking actions that may be considered hypocritical. However, Nissan’s advertisement seeks to highlight such hypocrisy in what some may perhaps call a “humorous” manner (Woodyard, 2013, para. 2). The advertisement calls to mind the cognition that most people seek to not damage the environment, yet the advertisement reminds the 230 million gasoline vehicle drivers that they are indeed harming the environment.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

While extensive, the present analysis is not comprehensive. The *Gas Powered Everything* campaign consisted of only one video advertisement; however, there was a social media aspect to the campaign through Facebook, which was not analyzed. Further, the *Gas Powered Everything* advertisement is not the only advertisement to promote the Nissan LEAF, as several more advertisements were released alongside subsequent model years of the vehicle. Further studies could benefit from using different theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, to analyze the newer advertisements, several of which feature celebrity endorsements such as Lance Armstrong. Further studies may be able to demonstrate precisely how effective celebrity endorsements are in advertisements for products such as vehicles.

The most recent advertisements used to promote later models of the Nissan LEAF stay consistent with the theme of the *Gas Powered Everything* advertisements, following the journey of a polar bear escaping melting arctic scenery and venturing on a journey to give a thankful hug to a Nissan LEAF owner for contributing to pro-environmental efforts. Further studies analyzing subsequent advertisements could utilize different theories, as well as implementing Cognitive Dissonance Theory once again. Moreover, further studies could analyze and contrast advertisements relating to other hybrid vehicle models, such as the Toyota Prius or Chevy Volt with Nissan's *Gas Powered Everything* advertisement and advertisements pertaining to subsequent model years.

## CONCLUSION

The present analysis reviewed only one 60-second advertisement, yet found several instances in which cognitive dissonance was effectively used against the target audience. Further, it is important to understand that advertisements can select a target audience, complete with age, income likely behaviors, and conjure uncomfortable feelings in

the hope that individuals will purchase an offered product to reduce such feelings. After better understanding how this takes place through this present analysis, individuals would hopefully be able to better recognize attempts at cognitive dissonance throughout daily exposures to advertisements. ■

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# To Live and Die

IN LOS SANTOS

**O**n September 18, 2013, around 1 a.m. I had just robbed a convenience store. At the sight of only getting \$510 I decided to shoot the clerk point blank in the head with my shotgun. As the first police car arrived I immediately opened fire, killing the two officers, but while speeding away I ran over a man and a woman on their bicycle and then promptly slammed into the back of a small sedan waiting at a red light, instantly killing the driver. At that point more police cars arrived on the scene and I realized I was in trouble, so I decided to put the game on hold and get a drink to think over my escape plan.



To be honest, what I just described is nothing new within the world of *Grand Theft Auto*, just as the controversy surrounding this video game series is nothing new as well. In a recent interview Senator Joe Manchin said, “Look at *Grand Theft Auto*, put out by Rockstar Games in New York City and see what it promotes. Shouldn’t that be looked into and maybe be banned?” (Welch, 2012, para. 5). In another interview with the San Francisco Chronicle State Senator Leland Yee argued that “Gamers have got to just quiet down,” and that “Gamers have no credibility in this argument. This is all about their lust for violence and the industry’s lust for money. This is a billion-dollar industry. This is about their self-interest.” (Evangelista, 2013, para. 5).

Recent advances in the scope, size, and violent nature of video games not to mention more than a hundred billion dollars in revenue have made this issue a hotbed of controversy. Keep in mind that what hangs in the balance is a complete economic system of major companies such as Sony, Microsoft, Nintendo, and Apple. The billions of dollars in revenue that these companies make strictly off the sale of video games is evident by the recent release and success of *Grand Theft Auto V* (GTA V) which, according to Makuch (2013) “generated \$1 billion in global retail sales in three days, reaching the milestone faster than any entertainment property in history” he continues by reminding us that “*The Avengers* took 19 days to reach the milestone.” (para, 1, 5).

One might say that GTA V is one of the biggest success stories to have come out of the video game world in quite some time. Along with the unprecedented sales figures that it has already put up, it has continued to impress fans, critics, and just about anyone who has played it. Although the Xbox 360 is over nine years old and has thousands of video games available, GTA V, according to IGN (2013) is already being called the second best game ever made for the system. And while reviews and the critical reception have been nothing less than stellar, let us not forget how this game stacks up financially as well.

With \$1 billion dollars in sales in three days it has smashed the record across all other global entertainment media areas. To give us some context

Makuch (2013) who interviewed former Electronic Arts CEO Don Riccitiello compares “GTAV’s numbers to the latest Super Bowl, which he said generated \$263 million in advertisements, \$73 million in ticket sales, and \$463 million for the city of New Orleans in hotel, meals, and other spending.” But even all that is “still \$30 million short of one day for one game.” He continued with another example, citing “that GTA V’s one day haul was larger than *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*’s \$483 million opening weekend.” (para 6, 7, 8).

To compare this single video game and its sales to another entertainment area, Bleeker (2013) reminds us that “the global music industry sees less than \$1.4 billion in record and song sales each month. In its first month of release, *Grand Theft Auto 5* looks set to outsell the entire global music industry.” (para, 16). What must be remembered throughout this paper is that this is not an obscure “video game.” Instead, I argue that we are dealing with *the* video game and its impact on a global scale.

On that theme we also have to realize that the game in question is not a racing, role-playing, plat-forming, and action/adventure/stealth game: it’s all of those and much more. And as such, we need to look at it, according to Simon (2006), as “an analysis of computer games and game cultures as critical locations for understanding the role of digital technologies in mediating and constituting the social interaction and organization of subjects in late modern information societies” (p. 63). Along those lines we need to be more informed about GTA V as a “digital technology” (p. 63) in both the legal and sociological aspects.

In essence, what we have within this medium is something wherein extreme interactive violence can generate historically large amounts of revenue. The short-term, and definitely the long-term consequences and effects of that violence are mostly unknown and not understood. This medium is continuously changing and the topic of violence within video games is undeniably heading for more heated discussions. The companies involved are major, the money to be made is historically large, and the importance of this matter can’t be ignored, either socially or legally.

In the following literature review I will be covering two main themes that will be the foundation for my eventual research and analysis of GTA V. The first part will deal more specifically with the legal impacts that not only the Grand Theft Auto series has had, but how violent video games as a whole are viewed within the legal spectrum relating to free speech. The second area will be focused on my methodological approach using Walter R. Fisher's Narrative Paradigm on storytelling and how contextual knowledge (in this case, the game GTA V) plays a vital and important role in understanding any medium of narrative.

Starting with the legal aspect we need to remember that the main reason the Supreme Court in *Brown vs. Entertainment Merchants Association* gave video games free speech protection was the lack of scientific evidence connecting violent video games with direct violent behavior. Referring to this idea, Teng (2011) states that "Although >100 studies have been conducted to examine the impact of violent video games on aggression, no clear consensus has been reached, particularly in terms of their long-term impact on violent behavior and aggressive cognitions" (p. 597). He continues by adding that "For many, perhaps prematurely, the debate on whether playing violent video games causes people to think and act more aggressively seems to be over" (p. 597).

Although there was an understanding that violent video games needed to be governed, the Supreme Court still realized that video games, even violent ones, had freedom of speech protection. Yet, there were some governing rules according to Gibson (2013) that started "in the early 1990s" as "a public outcry over emerging violence in video games led Congress to hold hearings discussing whether to regulate the sale of video games. The Senate drafted the "Video Game Rating Act of 1994," which would have established a commission to assist those in the video game industry in developing a ratings system" (p. 1). So, if the idea that violent video games were to be watched over was not something that hadn't come before the government before, why are we still talking about it today?

While the discussion of censorship in video games has been around since the days of the original Atari system, only recently have there been major legal and social impacts regarding them. In a 7-2 decision, the Supreme Court in 2010 ruled that "Like protected

books, plays, and movies, they communicate ideas through familiar literary devices and features distinctive to the medium" (*Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association*, 2010, p. 1). In *Joseph Burstyn, Inc. v. Wilson* the court also cited that "the basic principles of freedom of speech... do not vary" (1952, p. 343). The court ruled that video games like the medium of print, art, and film, convey ideas and therefore, should enjoy the same constitutional free speech protection. While referring to the ruling, Gibson (2013) stated "that as long as there is no causal link between playing violent video games and exhibiting violent behavior, there is no hope for success for government regulation of violent video games" (para. VI).

While the Court's decision allows for video games to have free speech protection, it doesn't address the issue of how to censor certain violent video games. This issue is in part because of the lack of psychological and social studies that have a definitive idea of how the games affect people. Teng (2011) states that "we lack solid experimental evidence indicating that prolonged or repeated exposure to violent video games leads to increased aggression" (p. 598). That problem is enhanced by the introduction of new video game consoles every few years that can drastically change the medium itself.

While video game blogs, opinions, reviews, and articles are easy to find, actual empirical data and testing is quite rare. Anderson (2000) argues that "much research has examined the effects of exposure to movie and television violence, and although popular press commentaries about possible effects of video games abound, the empirical literature on video game violence is sparse" (p. 775). On top of that, the achievement structure within the medium of video games and their link to causality are either nonexistent or currently being studied.

While that area might be new and uncertain, I am base my analysis of GTA V on other literature that deals with the longer-term cultivation effects that video games might have. In a summary of his study, Gabriel (2012) "aims to extend the body of cultivation research into the medium of video games and explore if playing video games leads to cultivation effects" (p. 953). I hope to use this literature as a springboard to give my findings

context in a long-term perspective, and hopefully to show how some beliefs, attitudes, and maybe actions can be cultivated through the playing of a violent video game like GTA V for an extended period.

Make no mistake that the legal debate over violent video games and their effects is not static, but continually fluid, dynamic, and evolving. Just recently, the full report from Danbury State's Attorney Stephen J. Sedensky III detailing the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting was released. In his report, Sedensky (2013) states that "Numerous video games were located in the basement computer/gaming area. The list of video games includes, but is not limited to: 'Grand Theft Auto'-'Vice City.'" (p. 25). It is worthwhile to note that the official list only says "Vice City" yet I know that the full title of that game is "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City." Once again, it is not hard to see why games like Grand Theft Auto are at the forefront of the debate on violent video games and the subsequent effects of playing them.

But the backbone of this paper will be constructed upon the Supreme Court's decision that has structured much of how we legally view violent video games. In conjunction with the theme of cultivating violent behavior, Gibson (2012) argues that the case "was not narrowly tailored to serve a compelling government interest in protecting children from harm that may develop from playing violent video games" (p. 1). Note the keyword of "may" and how that reflects the lack of empirical data and understanding we have on the subject.

This is where the sociological perspectives on video games start to come into play because video games as a whole are not static, instead they are dynamic and fluid. Many scholars and researchers understand that while science has not proven a link of causality, they have also asked the more intriguing question: what if science just doesn't know how to test for it? Maybe scientists should not be testing the people playing the games, but instead play the game and then test themselves. Referring to this scientific notion, Ruch (2012) argues that "These various approaches are synthesized here to examine different aspects of a highly complex media object" (p. 336).

He continues this intriguing idea by arguing that "the methodologies of 'reading' may be combined with exploratory ethnography and tourism, because

the player/researcher is able to organize their interactions with the gameworld in a highly dynamic way. The researcher can, and must, engage with the media artifact in a configurative, self-directed manner." (p. 331). In conclusion he states that "This renders traditional content-analysis methods incomplete—not incompatible, but not able to account for the subjective experience of contingency that is vital in the video game text" (p. 336).

Continuing with this train of thought we need to ask the question: are there are other scholars who believe in this notion? According to my research, the overwhelming consensus is yes. While Ruch (2012) seems to take a holistic view, he argues that "For GTA IV, which can function as a tool for distraction, procrastination or simply escapism, there is the palpable link to the real world in virtually every piece of aesthetic material the player is presented with" (p. 335). Concurring with this idea Hess (2007) adds that "video games must be recognized as more than just narratives." (p. 344). He then adds "however, to recognize distinct features of this particular narrative, I consider specific elements that are unique to video games" (p. 344).

We can therefore see that these scholars realize that without firsthand and extended knowledge of the video game, there cannot be educated understanding of the material. Even more scholars, like Sillars (2001), state that this understanding comes from the "users of the stories and the state of culture that is revealed in their understanding of symbols" (p. 212). The symbols of a specific video game (in this case GTA V) are purely contextual and, as Ruch (2012) adds, "presents the player with meaningful fiction not unlike the fiction presented by novels or films, but in a dynamic experience that encapsulates certain themes that underlie key modernist texts" (p. 333). These same symbols found in video games are part of a larger narrative of texts that Fisher (1989) believes "test his understanding of it." (p. 55). Yet, he adds a final part to this belief. He argues that the contextual link may be there, but if we don't realize it "it is his understanding that has failed" (p. 55).

We have now come to a crossroad of sorts. We have established that the government cannot act on violent video games without a definitive link to causality. We have also established that many scholars

believe that a dynamic and complex medium such as violent video games might have some link, but it isn't proven. And as Teng (2011) acknowledges, science doesn't have all the answers because "they cannot completely rule out alternative explanations" (p. 598). So one might ask not only how we should view the video game medium (especially our artifact of GTA V), but also how we test for a causal link, or if there even is one.

The first thing would be to understand that GTA V is more than a "video game." As Ruch (2012) states, it is "a collection of 'nodes' between which flows of information pass in various relationships" (p. 334). But how do we put all of these relationships together? This is where the answer to another question will bridge the gap between the artifact we need to study (GTA V) and how we will study it (the methodology). And to answer this we must find the answer to this question Fisher (1989) posed: "what can we disclose in a text by knowing the audiences for whom it is intended or meaningful" (p. 55). I believe we can find a lot. And using the methodology of his narrative paradigm I hope to show that we can not only find those answers, but that they were there all along.

Using Fishers Narrative Paradigm, we can see that it is by understanding the deep contextual and specific knowledge of any given artifact (in this case GTA V) that we can gain a deeper knowledge of the connections it may present. We must remember that Fisher (1989) himself believes that "the narrative paradigm is a philosophical statement that is meant to offer an approach to interpretation and assessment of human communication—assuming that all forms of human communication can be seen fundamentally as stories, as interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character" (p. 54). We must understand that without looking at this video game and its effects within the lens of a cultural context we may come up lacking in our future analyzing of it.

Even other scholars, like Hanan (2008), realize that "narrative fidelity is concerned with the individuated details of arguments, or how one's claims coincide with an 'accurate assertion about social reality and thereby constitute good reasons for belief or

action". (p. 5). According to Hanan (2008) "humans are 'storytelling animals' (p. 3). and that behind every reason lays a value. As a result, *reasoning* is not a "mirror of truth," but instead is a contingent product of one's "history, biography, culture, and character" (p. 3)

We can already see that without an understanding of the story, the reasoning, and the values of any given narrative we lack the ability to understand it fully. Fisher also reminds us that we must be able to look at it within a contextual and cultural setting as well to gain a full understanding of the artifact in question. When analyzing GTA V, I hope to find if there are any links between that game and violent behavior and actions. Fisher (1989) adds another piece to the puzzle when he reminds us that "it is only when communication is considered seriously in regard to its advice or fostering of belief, attitude, or action that the narrative paradigm becomes relevant" (p. 55).

Therefore, we must realize that without some sort of narrative structure aiding us in the analyzing of any artifact we become lost. The frame I hope to use is that of the achievement system within the Xbox 360. Without context, firsthand knowledge, and a solid understanding of not only the story, but who the story is talking to, we cannot hope to analyze on that deeper spectrum. It is by using Fisher's Narrative Paradigm that I hope to attain this understanding. Fisher (1987) states that "all arguments are limited by their audience." As a result, he proposes that "narrative fidelity should be assessed by both an idealized version of the storyteller's own audience and a universalized audience" (p. 5).

By using the Narrative Paradigm to explore GTA V, maybe we can find a link somewhere hiding in this artifact, and while that idea has yet to be substantiated, I believe that Fisher gives me the roadmap to make it happen. But as Fisher and many other scholars have stated before, I am now the player *and* researcher, which is a role that I have not been in despite years of playing many "role-playing" games. This position leads me to the research question that I will use to frame my exploration of the artifact which is: What link (if any) is there between the achievement structures of GTA V and contextually specific violent actions?

Before we begin to analyze the narrative components of the achievement structure of GTA V, it will be worthwhile to explain exactly what “achievements” are. This will then enable us to more fully discuss how the framing and use of such achievements are relevant to censorship in video games. Therefore, by first understanding what they are and then how the Xbox 360 uses them, it will allow us to come full circle when analyzing their relation to GTA V specifically, as well as violent video games in general.

Although we are talking more specifically about the achievements within this Xbox 360 game, the ideas of achievements are actually something that is not new. This idea has been around since the days of the original Atari system. It was a little known fact that there was a small program run by Atari that allowed players to take a picture of their high score within a game like Pitfall, and then send that picture with a letter to the company as proof of your achievement. Then the company would verify that you played the game, got the high score, and then send you a physical patch (like a Boy Scout merit badge) that you could sew or iron onto your favorite jacket or backpack as a sign to others that you had “achieved” the related high score.

This was only done for a few years before the system became defunct and the new era of 8-bit systems like the original Nintendo Entertainment System took hold. But even then, the discussion of high scores, beating of levels, and other feats of amazing skill were rampant among elementary schools around the world. I was a firsthand witness to one such feat that literally stopped a full game of touch football dead in its tracks. I don’t remember what he was wearing, his name, or even what grade I was in, but I will never forget what he said that day.

It was something that many of us thought was not possible, and as our jaws dropped (and stayed there) we all were in a state of shock. He told us again with even more fervor that “I beat Mike Tyson *on Punch Out!*” We all knew that beating *Mike Tyson’s Punch-Out!* was on the verge of impossible. The dexterity, hand eye coordination, reflexes, and otherworldly skill that it required to beat that game was something to be marveled at. Even now, at thirty years of age, I have only beaten it *twice* in the thousands of times playing it, and it was brutal. Yet one boy from

the group stated what seemed to be the obvious by saying “no you didn’t! How do we know you did?” to which we all agreed, well how do *we know* you did?

These types of interactions, among many others, caused game developers to take note and put in functions that would allow a player to show his “achievements.” Most notably were such things as, after beating the game unlocking a special costume for the main character, special weapons, and new levels among many others. These were inserted to allow a player to show others that he had completed specific requirements, and therefore had achieved the desired reward.

This system of “in-game” rewards persisted for most video game consoles and even linger today within certain video games. But, where we see the evolution of this idea to something more solid that could be shared on a global scale was with the Xbox 360 and its achievement structure. According to the website Giantbomb (2013) “Achievements range from simple tasks the player would do anyway, such as completing a level or defeating a boss, to more complicated challenges, such as killing a certain number of enemies in a specific way or completing a level without firing a gun. Microsoft makes it mandatory that every game on the Xbox 360 has Achievements built into it” (para. 1).

These achievements became part of your profile, of who you were to the world. They have many effects on how people within that system might view you, and at any time, any one of the millions of Xbox Live users can view your achievement history. There they can see what games you played, how long you played them, if you have beaten the game, if you had experience with certain levels, all from looking at your achievements. In some games you couldn’t even play a game because if the other people looked at your achievements and found that you lacked the required expertise for a level, you would be kicked from the lobby.

But it wasn’t long after the Xbox 360 made its achievement structure that others followed suit. First was the Sony PlayStation and their “trophy” structure, then computer games followed by building extensive structures of “in-game” achievements. The same idea is a foundation for this structure in every system: certain actions that you do get you certain achievements. On the PlayStation, doing something

easy gets you a bronze trophy, while something hard gets you a gold one. Xbox 360 uses points. Beating a level might net you 40 “Gamerscore” or achievement points, while beating the final boss may net you 100.

So now we come to my time within the world of GTA V and its satirist view of southern California, the fictional Blaine County, and Los Santos City. Throughout the more than 100 hours that I spent playing GTA V I racked up more than 600 out of the 1000 possible achievement points. And while I was expecting to get achievements like “GORY BEHEADING” or “KILLING POLICE OFFICERS,” it was never the case. Many of the achievements came after an hour-long mission involving running triathlons, or racing cars. I even looked at the actual list of achievements for the game, and out of 40 achievements only 3 stated something specifically violent like “stick up all convenient stores”. Many of the achievements simply said “Solid Gold, Baby!” or “Multi-Disciplined.” Maybe I was wrong to assume a connection, maybe other games before had violent achievements, but maybe GTA V had gotten rid of its soiled past?

The connection between the achievement structure of GTA V and its violent actions didn’t come apparent until a mission entitled “By the Book.” In this mission, the character that I controlled was to interrogate a suspect and get the location of his accomplice, who needed to be killed. But this time, I did more than just ask a few questions. While the suspect was tied to a chair with his shirt off, the man interrogating him turned to my in-game character and asked me to “make him talk.” It was then that I was presented with a gas can full of water, a set of pliers, a wrench, and a set of cables hooked up to a car battery. I flicked the controller thumb-stick slowly looking over each torture tool at my disposal: it seemed almost surreal. I thought, well this game isn’t going to make me actually torture a man, is it?

It did. My first choice was the wrench, which my character in the game picked up, and after asking the man if he was ready to talk, it then gave me the option of the arm or leg. I chose the leg. My character swung the baseball-bat sized wrench into the man’s leg, his bone crunched, he screamed in agony as I set it down and asked again if he was ready to talk. He said he didn’t know, he said he couldn’t tell me what I wanted

to know. At this point the game prompted me to check his heart rate on a monitor he was hooked up to at regular intervals as to make sure he didn’t die, noting that if I did any torture for too long he would go into shock and need to be revived. Next I chose the pliers.

It must be reminded to the reader before I go on that I was not merely watching this happen and pressing a button or two to make it happen. This narrative is interactive, which films, books, and other forms of media so far have not been able to realize except on a surface level. When I next chose the pliers, I had to hold the right trigger of the controller down, which made my character grasp the tooth that I wanted to pull out of the man’s mouth. Letting the trigger go let the tooth go. At that point I had to rotate the control stick counter-clockwise again and again, as my pliers rotated around his mouth. The roots of his tooth were on screen, letting me know how far I had till I pulled it out. The harder I rotated the stick, the farther the tooth came out, all while switching between buttons to regularly check his heart rate to make sure he didn’t go into shock.

After what seemed like an eternity of screaming, the tooth came out, and then my victim promptly passed out. After I awoke him and continued with the torture scene, I eventually came to the end of the mission and was rewarded a silver medal. Well, I wanted a gold medal, that’s how I got multiple achievements that were worth a lot more “Gamerscore” than the silver medals. And at this point, I found the connection I was looking for. To receive a gold medal in that mission, you had to monitor his heart rate closely enough to not make him pass out by torturing him in specific ways. In response to this particular mission, Hern (2013) explained that some people believe that Rockstar North has crossed a line by effectively forcing people to take on the role of a torturer and perform a series of unspeakable acts if they want to achieve success in the game, Keith Best, CEO of Freedom from Torture, said in a statement. Torture is a reality, not a game and glamourizing it in popular culture undoes the work of organizations like Freedom from Torture and survivor activists to campaign against it.” (para. 7). He continues by adding that “This adds insult to injury for survivors who are left physically and mentally scarred by torture in the real world.

If Rockstar North's message is a satirical critique of the practice of torture, it's lost on us" (para. 23, 24).

Some answers can only be found by asking question after question and my first question was "what did I need to do get that gold medal for this mission" the next question was "how many more specific violent actions did I need to do to get gold medals in the other missions?" The answer to that question is, simply stated as, a lot.

Fisher was right. Just by looking at the achievement list you would have no idea how violent your actions needed to be to get these achievements. But by playing the game, immersing myself within the world of GTA V, and becoming part of this medium, the contextual knowledge I gained shed new light on the connection I had previously discovered. More than 90% of the gold medal status missions could only be achieved with specific, violent actions and behaviors, such things as performing the required number of headshots, dismembering people, killing pedestrians, torturing in such a specific manner, and the list goes on and on.

In reevaluating my previous assessment of the few achievements that were actually labeled violent, like robbing convenient stores, I discovered there was much more to them than they originally appeared. To get the achievement you had to be online, interacting with other players in real time. At this point I wasn't just playing a game; I was robbing stores and banks and planning meticulously for expected resistance and perceived threats, with possible escape routes, and contingency plans. I would coordinate with friends as to who would rob the clerk, who would watch traffic, who would drive, what road to take to escape, and checking that we all had body armor. At one point I felt like I wasn't playing a game, but that the game was an extension of me, all in an attempt to get gold medals and attain those achievements.

This complex scenario becomes even more serious when, instead of playing for an in-game reward; you can play for a real life reward. The Xbox 360 has a reward program called "My Xbox 360 Achievement Rewards Program" where, according to your Gamerscore, you can get refunds of real money in your Microsoft account when you spend real money, like a cash back reward program. The more Gamerscore you have, the more achievements, the more gold

medals, the more headshots, and the more specific torturing that you do, the more you are rewarded.

At this point many people might ask if there is some agency that watches over violent video games and their content. And while the Electronic Rating Software Board (ESRB) is tasked with grading the content for the sale of any video game, what if they weren't required to do so? What many people do not fully understand is that the ERSB is not government sanctioned, and not surprisingly, they do not actually take into account what achievements might be in the game and how they contribute to the violent nature of any game, even GTA V. The ERSB is funded through agreements with video game companies, much like the Motion Picture Association of America and the Music Ratings Board. However, they do not, nor are they required to, look at the achievements of any game and ask if they are violent in any way.

Even with all my research, I understand that I have not empirically proven the link of causality, or that it has been fully connected based on my findings. I look at these revelations in the same sense as Fisher (1987) in that "all arguments are limited by their audience" and "narrative fidelity should be assessed by both an idealized version of the storyteller's own audience and a universalized audience" (p. 5). I have been the audience of the storyteller, which in this case was GTA V. But the irony was that I wasn't just a member of an audience listening to a story, reading a book, or watching a movie. I was instead an interactive participant in creating these stories.

As I played GTA V I found that while the game itself has its boundaries and may sometimes be linear, many times I made the decision on how and what to do, who to kill, and most importantly, how to kill them. Even in the last mission, you can decide to kill one of the other three main protagonists to save yourself. At the end of the game, I wasn't sure what percentage of my experience was my own doing and what was simply laid out in front of me by the game developers. But with actually playing the game and having firsthand contextual knowledge, it felt like I was in control and that most of the violent decisions were of my own choosing.

Using the analogy of global climate change, the early scientists in that field were not asking the question of "how is the weather changing." At the

time, many of them had no knowledge that it was changing one way or another. But, some started to ask “could it be changing?” And it is that position, and that sort of question, that I find myself asking now. Not that the achievement structure and narrative of GTA V are explicable intertwined with violent behavior and eventual violent actions. Instead, I leave the reader to ponder the question of “could there be a link?” and

“could the achievement structure be part of that link?” Unfortunately, I find that I don’t know the answer to that question based on my research, nor do I find my experience conclusive of what a video game, even an extremely violent one, can make someone do. Yet, the questions still linger and the answers remain elusive. But sometimes, you won’t get the right answer until you start to ask the right questions. ■

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# Campanology, Identity, and Power

IN AN ERA OF CONVERGENCE

**T**his study positions campanology (the study of bells) at the nexus of contemporary issues in rhetoric, sociology, and new media convergence. Through a comparison of two case studies set in urban Philadelphia at different historical periods, the social and cultural relationship between the historical bell tower and digital convergence is examined. Particular attention is placed upon the silencing of tower bells in response to viral contaminants during the Industrial Revolution in its *ecosocial* space vis-à-vis the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793, and expressions of *biopower* through curfews during the postindustrial Philadelphia flash mobs of 2011. Findings suggest that the bell's transmogrification (or physical and social changes) follows historical patterns of biopolitical influence, when examined within the context of Foucauldian theories on discourse, power, and surveillance. I propose that this is due to the pervasive and salient existence of *biopower* within our society across timeframes.

During the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Summer Olympic Games, a bell was unveiled as a core element of its media spectacle. The bell was forged in the famous fires of Whitechapel foundry, the same foundry that created such cultural icons as Big Ben, the Liberty Bell, and many other famous English and American bells (Jury & Luke, 2012). On that day, it rang out to a mediated crowd of one billion, symbolically declaring the start of the world games. Yet this was not the only bell activity that day. Martin Creed, a contemporary artist and musician, organized a work of art entitled: “Work No. 1197: All the Bells in the Country Rung as Quickly and as Loudly as Possible for Three Minutes.” As the *London Evening Standard* reported, “From the mighty clangs of Big Ben to the chimes of mobile phone apps and cow bells, church bells and bicycle bells, Londoners of every age, color and creed joined in the mass three-minute bell-ringing—defying critics who wondered whether the public would embrace the dream of turner Prize-winning artist Martin Creed’s attempt at collective behavior” (Jury & Luke, 2012).

What is important about this historical media event is that perhaps without realizing it, Martin Creed stumbled upon a connection between the historical bell and the decentralized performance of the newly emerging digital convergence in media formats. This connection highlights the digital revolution and the ancient code that it relies upon. His artistic conceptualization presents an interesting segue to the theoretical transmogrification of the bell and its relationship with biopolitical power. I am utilizing Michel Foucault’s definition of biopower as noted in his lectures at the College de France. During the lectures, he defines biopower as an extension of knowledge/power in both invisible and coercive contexts (Foucault, 1990). It is through this text that we become aware of the connection between biopower and state racism. What we may be tempted to ask is why study bells in the context of biopower?

What could we possibly learn about our complex media institutions from a simple bell? Furthermore, how does a media moment in London relate to our understanding of past and future media studies? I believe that it may take a bit of creative imagination and a willingness to contextualize the effects of bells on history, biology, sociology, and even constructions

of identity through the object-subject relationship to fully understand the importance of the relationship between technology and biopower. Through Foucault’s work, in the aggregate, we see a connection between these factors that is worthy of our reflection.

At the heart of my argument is an understanding that bells are media and that issues concerning media convergence must consider the implications of the historical bell in order to see deeper into the historical effect of convergence (Corbin, 1998; Morris, 1974; and Westcott, 1970). Ultimately, this realization leads us to a comparison between the structure of the bell’s hierarchical authoritarian form and social code with the emerging decentralized and mobile forms of wireless media technologies that are dependent on the same cultural and algorithmic coding to transmit information. For instance, the use of bell towers and bells had an influence on the development of the telegraph and has been noted as an early manifestation of more complex media transmissions (Standage, 1998).

As Gregory Bateson suggests, the place to look for insights on primitive digital code may, in fact, be music (Bateson, 1972). Beyond any other primitive form of communication, I propose that the melodic ringing of the bell in the tower is related to the beginnings of mass communication message-sending and digital convergence. Today, the cellular “bell” that we now hold in our hands easily demands our attention and preoccupies our lives. By looking at the transformation of the bell from the primary transmitter to the decentralized forms of convergence-driven digital technology (i.e., cell phones and mobile computers), we may be able to make visible the cultural effects of media’s power on manifestations of collective human behavior that may have gone unrecognized as historical media moments.

Our understanding of power divisions within deployment of biopower is a key aspect to formulating a discussion concerning the connection of new media and the bell. Just as Michel Foucault (1975/1977) looked at Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon as the diagram of power reduced to its ideal form, I would suggest that the tower bell and the architecture that houses it should be considered in the same context. The difference then lies within the stationary nature of the tower and the mobility of cellular technology; thus, it is not in

the lack of discipline and control, only in how power is being deployed. In today's media-driven society, anyone can ring the bell, but the question of who controls the bell and how he or she controls it moves to the foreground. The bell's relation to the panopticon

can be thought of in terms of the watchful eye that is most powerful when it is unseen. Therefore, the role of both human and nonhuman interactions in mediated social space is informed by the method of surveillance that can be generalized into the mundane (Lowe, 2011).

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## Language stabilizes around a parish, a bishopric, or a capital. It forms a bulb. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 7)

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### BELLS, LANGUAGE, MEDIA AND SYMBOLIC POWER

Before we can fully understand the bell's relationship to media and social power, we must first acknowledge its connection to culture, community, and the development of personal identity. For much of history, the voice of the bell formed a shared language, or what I have dubbed "auditory iconography," that defined the boundaries of both secular and religious communities. As Alain Corbin's analysis in his book *Village Bells* has given rise to scholarship in this context and we can now bring the work forward (Corbin, 1998). In this way, bells can be seen as a technology that throughout time has helped organize society's communicative needs. In these structural terms, the sounds of the bell can be examined to help us appreciate communication technology's relationship to power. The bell not only affects the creation of community, but as a language, it is only known by its dialogical code or shared meaning that we use to shape our identities (Corbin, 1998; Peters, 2013; Morris, 1974). I believe that we should look at this type of identity formation in terms of how we see the intersection of access, privilege, and power.

The bell is a companion to the regular functions of building norms concerning life in the Western world. Not only did the bell frame our conception of time itself, but an understanding of specific peals and the contextualized messages denoted affiliation and boundaries of community and identity (Peters, 2013).

For instance, membership in a parish would in many ways define norms of identity in your symbolic, moral, political, and spiritual life. Identity-building through social communication is a powerful force, and the bell has been critical in this effect (Kaminski, 2005). Through the role of identity-building, the bell distributed the knowledge that would promote the formation of collective identity and those that can control identity wield a powerful tool. This is perhaps why bells have continued to play such a significant role in symbolic expressions of power. The role of bells in the pre-mass-media age was a complex network of cultural signification. According to Deborah Lubken, "contemporary readers recognized tolling and ringing as different methods with contrasting cultural meanings" (Lubken, 2012, p. 823). How you read the code was in fact a type of identity-creating literacy. Lubken (2012) goes on to note that:

Historians writing about celebrations and protests of the colonial period and early Republic have enumerated the occasions on which bells sounded and addressed their place in a 'vocabulary of celebration' shared by British subjects on both sides of the Atlantic, but they have seldom considered how bells were sounded or how listeners interpreted those sounds (p. 824).

This role of cultural signification highlights the intrinsic or cultural code that was built into the messages of the bell's ring or toll. "When deciphering the meaning of a bell's sound on any given occasion, early Americans considered the method of sounding (whether the bell rang or tolled), local conventions, and information from other sources" (Lubken, 2012). For example, to ring for the king is to praise the king, to not ring for the king is to snub the king (Lubken, 2012). As Alain Corbin states, in terms of national festivals, the bell marks "the community as signified" beyond that of the divine signifier (Corbin, 1998, p. 274). This is a further example of the complex relationship of the bell and political and social

sphere and its ultimate function as a coding device and the biopolitical mechanism of power.

This division of power through the use of denoting both time and space is a battle that predates modernity (Peters, 2013). Who gets to ring the bell, control the bell, or quell the bell is, at its core, the question that we still ask of our media institutions regardless of their form. For example, keys, codes, and "reach" are all matters of consequence and concern that relate to the segmenting of identity and use of control mechanisms. The idea of access and keys is perhaps the most fascinating expression of who controls the code and is noted by Corbin extensively in terms of impact of the destruction of bells on collective identity (Corbin, 1998).

## TRANSMUTATIONS AND CODES

In order to fully understand the intersection of the bell and digital convergence in media, we must briefly examine the development of code from its basic form and the structures of power that the bell-ringers possess. From the complex and fascinating phenomena of "change-ringing" to its simplest expressions in the towers of old, the bell has functioned as a powerful producer of signals and codes that have had longstanding cultural impacts (Corbin, 1998). Over time, the basic system of coding both in terms of mathematical "codes" and cultural "codes" has increased in complexity, making power more and more difficult to identify as it continues to converge into new technological forms. Howard Rheingold looks at the political ability of digital technology, whether intentional or not, when he highlights the difficulty of identifying power in the "new media" era (2002). In his book concerning smart mob revolutions, Rheingold notes, "The most important question about this new wrinkle in power/knowledge is whether it sets the stage for counter-power that would surprise Adorno, Horkheimer, Baudrillard, or whether it is yet another simulacrum, a simulation of counter-power that really doesn't change who has the chips" (Rheingold, 2002, p. 197).

However, Rheingold ultimately suggests that mobile technologies, particularly in decentralized contexts, highlight the power of collective behavior to challenge the status quo. This mobility is in fact a quality that a bell tower does not hold if it is to remain a type of mass communication in the traditional sense. Through his exploration of human swarm and its technological intersections, he acknowledges the power of the collective to also use media technology to combat the hegemonic structure of power in his examination of "outbreaks of cooperation and mob dynamics" (Rheingold, 2002). For instance, he shows the role of this intersection in creating conditions of cooperation in the Battle of Seattle World Trade Organization protest, the overthrowing of President Estrada in the Philippines, and others (Rheingold, 2002).

In this context, it is easy to argue that the bell has moved at a steady pace towards decentralization, suggesting that these outbreaks of resistance through collective communication have increased our ability to resist power, and that the bell has left the tower and now is decentralized and in the hands of the individual's sense of identity. However, I would argue that the political and social ramifications have still not made themselves totally

clear as the dialectic tension between cultural and biological technological are still in many ways up for grabs. By looking at the historical case studies that highlight moments of media transmutation and convergence, our current moment can be contextualized in a more complete way. This is particularly salient as the continuation of this discourse affects how we organize social movements

as well as investigate the limits of political power. We can then examine the ways in which those in control of the hieratical power structures have responded, not in isolation, but as a part of a greater pattern to keep the bell locked in the tower. As we will see, these issues arise in a collection of circumstances throughout time that present us with a pattern that can derive significant insights.

## METHOD

The role between communication formats (the bell and the cell phone/mobile Internet) and collective behavior was examined through two qualitative case studies. The first case study highlights the role of the biopolitical impact on the historical bell during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793 as it relates to access to public information. The second case study highlights contemporary media rhetoric and the use of biopolitics to control similar communicative abilities and behaviors of a segment group during the 2011 flash mobs. The content of the case studies was coded by comparing their use of communication processes and the deployment of biopower by looking to key words in popular press.

In addition, the cases were used to construct theoretical coordinates concerning the transmogrification of the bell and its relationship to new media communication and social structures of power. The two case studies were selected for their relation to three criteria: relationship to the bells or digital media technology that included issues of power, significant Philadelphian historical impact, and linguistic evidence of biopolitical expressions of technological control over and involving biological entities.

Historical documents were retrieved from the Philadelphia Historical Society and the Philadelphia Public Library both in original form and microfiche. These included the *Philadelphia Gazette*, ranging from July 25, 1793 to November 25, 1793. This date was significant, as it represented the height of the outbreak and the highest level of political effect on

the public sphere. Inscriptions on local historical bells, shipping manifests, personal letters, maps and census information functioned as texts and artifacts that gave insight to the historically situated culture and mindset of the time. Artifacts were chosen within this time period to partition the data as it pertained to the virus and the subsequent collective and political behavior.

Newspaper articles concerning the flash mobs and their designation as a “public epidemic” were retrieved using the LexisNexis database to analyze the public discourse. The key words of “flash mobs,” “epidemic,” and “Philadelphia” were used to look at a one hundred articles at the local level. We looked at these articles during 2011 and 2012 when the crisis was in the public eye. Because Philadelphia experienced a unique set of issues, that being the Philadelphian flash mobs’ violent posture, nonviolent flash mobs were excluded from the analysis. This hyper-local definition should be considered as part of the discourse and therefore a part of the issues as a whole. The defining or redefining of the term is outlined in the previous sections respectively.

These time periods were chosen because of similarities in rhetoric surrounding the events. For example, during the Yellow Fever Epidemic, the bell was silenced and in many ways both cell phones and voices were silenced during the flash mob events. By highlighting the use of media technology in public discourse, rather than attempting to map a linear progression of technological responses to biological conditions, anachronism and retrospective projections were avoided.

Of note to this study is the bell's communication to the community in times of crisis. As the bell called people together for many purposes, none is more urgent than the call to protect the community in times of threat. Corbin states, "no code was as refined as that marking the death agony and death itself" (Corbin, 1998, p. 165). In the case of the Yellow Fever Epidemic, the ringing of the death knell was a well-understood warning of threat and impending doom to the entire community.

The bells of Philadelphia in 1793 were a major part of the flow of information in the newly formed capital. However, following the experience of war, Philadelphia found itself confronted with an unexpected and unprecedented tragedy. The Yellow Fever Epidemic caused the death of ten percent of all Philadelphians, and the resulting panic and exodus brought the structure of colonial society to the brink of collapse (Miller, 2005). This panic affected not just one group, but all facets of society, and would lead to a series of acts of biopolitical power including the silencing of public bells. I am using the biopolitical connection to suggest that the use of systems of power were significant to those who lived, died, and were put at the most risk.

As the death toll rose and reality set in, many Philadelphians who could afford to escape the area did so. Amazingly, during the Yellow Fever Epidemic, 17,000 of the approximately 40,000 residents left the city (Strough, 1939). Yellow Fever had frightening symptoms that included black vomit, yellowing of the eyes, and blood leaking from the body. Terror and panic filled the city as the bells rang out an individual death knoll as each citizen died. Perhaps worse than the symptoms was the reality that there was no known cause and no known cure. Driven almost to a state of insanity, society's search for a suitable cure would play itself out in the media and the public sphere.

It was on August 26, 1793, that the bells and the death toll that they emanated were silenced throughout the city. What had so joyfully celebrated the revolution, called the faithful to church, marked time, and sounded the fire alarms, had now come under attack. The conditions of the epidemic would come to challenge and reshape the media landscape of early colonial America. The main newspaper of the time, *The Philadelphia Gazette*, would announce a new

plan to impose the will of men of science and save the city from itself. According to Powell, "On an average August day, Philadelphia would have five burials, but two days after Dr. Rush's discovery (of the fever) the totals began rising, to 12, 13, and even on August 24, to 17 burials. The Church bells tolled endlessly" (Powell, 1949). Dr. Benjamin Rush, who would be an influential figure in the episode, eventually declared that the fever (and the tolling of the bells) "merely mocks in most instance the power of medicine" (Powell, 1949).

J. H. Powell paints a perfect picture of the mood of August 26, 1793, "It was damp and sultry and through the muddy streets that day 17 bodies were carried to the graveyard—three to the Catholic, four to the Lutheran, two to Christ Church, people counted the frightening train and slammed down their windows as coffins passed. Before their hearths, they sat listening to the mournful tolling of the bells" (Powell, 1949). It was on that day the College of Physicians, which was headed by Dr. Rush, reported that the church bells should be silenced (Powell, 1949). The cessation of the tolling was proposed by the College in an attempt to quell the panic and stop the spread of disease (Smith, 1996). The document released on August 25 by the College suggested, among other things, the marking of houses of the sick, the cessation of the tolling of the bells, and the quick burying of the dead. This period would come to be known as the great silencing (Powell, 1949). The effects of this would be widespread and affect the city in surprising ways.

Although there was a strong newspaper industry blooming, the role of media in colonial times was not equal for all and identity would play a major role in the epidemic. Those who could not read would be reliant on word-of-mouth, their local community leaders, and, most important to our study, the ringing of the local bells. One aspect of media that the bells produced was the death tolling, and during the fever, this simple act would have a dramatic effect (Corbin, 1998). What is hard to imagine is that half of all the inhabitants deserted the city, and those that stayed lived in a silence that made panic and terror a way of life (Smith, 1996). Abandoned and lost in panic, the fabric of Philadelphia society was coming apart. The loss of the bells, the threat of fire, and the fear of death would cause social

structures to collapse. The use of cannon fire to clean the air began to take the place of the sound of the bells. Combined with vinegar and tobacco smoke the city became a foul and deathly scene (Powell, 1949).

Sadly, with the bells silenced and the community looking for answers, the blame would come to rest on the African American community. During this time, some Philadelphians began to spread rumors that the African American community had poisoned the water wells, intensifying rifts in a population that sat on the edge of chaos where identity became more rather than less significant (Smith, 1996). It should be noted that African Americans took on the role of public service despite the threat of death. During the fever, African Americans who were persecuted and oppressed took

on the work of removing bodies and burying the dead. Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, two freedmen who were elders of the African American community, played a significant civil service role in the epidemic and paid an equally significant price for their commitment to the public sphere (Miller, 2005). This was despite a strong racial bias by whites, who openly discussed a fundamental lack of human designation towards the African American community. This would suggest that the role of technology to address the biopolitical power structures failed to account for those at the lowest strata of society. Coincidentally, although society was on the brink of collapse, it was those on the lowest level, not those that could afford to leave, who saved the city.

## CASE STUDY TWO: THE CALL OF THE DIGITAL BELL

More than two centuries after the great silencing and in the midst of a global transformation in communication and technology, Philadelphia found itself in the grip of another panic that revolved around the emergence of a new technology, social order, and power. These events involved violent outbreaks brought on by the fragmentation of media technology and the role of new media platforms. Beginning in 2010, some flash mobs took on a violent nature and caused a media spectacle in the “city of brotherly love” (Kiltz, 2011). Flash mobs are defined broadly as a newly formed expression of digital organization which takes place in public spaces and have begun to take on not simply artistic expressions, but political and traditional mob activities as well (Shirky, 2008).

In 2010, in Philadelphia and other cities around America, these new media swarm events became larger, more random, and in many cases, more aggressive (Kiltz, 2011). Words like “wolf packing” and “raging” became a new nomenclature in the rapidly changing digital world of collective behavior. These events were violent, serious, and random expressions of digital convergence that highlighted not only the generational gap in technological knowledge, but also the reality that decentralized communication channels in social platforms have come to represent.

The issues of flash mobs emerging as a criminal activity, forced authorities to take new measures of biopolitical power to stop them (Kiltz, 2011). These would take the form of identity-profiling and digital surveillance that targeted specific minority groups.

Because of their inability to predict the locations and intensities of the events, the authorities had no idea how to stop them, and flash mob media representation began to take on qualities of panic directed towards a specific radicalized population. Television, newspapers, and other traditional media outlets made it clear that the streets were not safe; flash mobs, they suggested, were out of control and would change the relationship between the suburban and urban populations dramatically, if not irreparably. The issues of power, class, and identity were being debated, and the safety of the city from new, more violent flash mobs and new media anarchy came under intense media scrutiny surrounding the question of identity.

One prominent narrative was that the more violent expression of flash mobbing was being perpetrated by young African Americans (Lubrano, 2010). This race tension, coupled with lack of knowledge by law enforcement and the media of how to stop the mobs, led to a confused and panicked language being used by the media and subsequent curfews imposed by



the mayor directed at African American urban youth (Graham, 2011). At the heart of this, was the question of identity and the control of biological entities in digital and physical space. Were these gangs? Was it just “black kids” without supervision? Or were flash mobs simply new expressions of mobile and decentralized technology that were functioning at the boundaries of acceptable behavior in the public sphere? Were all technologically mediated protests flash mobs? The questions remain complex as we are currently in the process of experiencing and evaluating the effects of new media technology.

As the flash mobs had a strong racial element and were composed of African American youths, the danger of the technology and the danger of the “other” began to become intertwined. Tensions within and without the African American community were noted by Professor Molefi K. Assante from Temple University who suggested in response to the news, “We cannot criminalize all the youth in the Black community...I really resent that” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. B06). The bell, represented

in the form of mobile technology was now in the hands of a historically disempowered public. The ability to ring out and gather by using the mobile cell phone and mobile Internet was demonstrating that the citizens had in many ways overthrown the structures of biopower.

Mainstream media in many cases remained openly unapologetic towards using “tough” language that placed blame on the lack of supervision in the African American communities. The news also reported involvement by the FBI and its goal to remove the leadership of these new media “gangs” (Jones, 2011). The threat of virtual surveillance indicated the ability of authorities to track and stop these events from taking place. Also emerging were calls for harsher regulation and increased surveillance on social media sites that would have real-world implications through the physical controlling of bodies through the deployment of curfews (Graham, 2011). The biological began to take a unique step into the digital and out again through identity politics and biopolitical expressions of power.

## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Segmentation of space and the enclosure of bodies in both case studies is a complicated concept that necessitates multiple conceptual frameworks. These can be defined by the use of ecosocial space, a structural analysis of media’s social role, and research in collective behavior of biological entities. We see this intersection clearly emerging from the case studies through Foucauldian discourse, which brings biopower into dialogue with surveillance culture and issues surrounding preindustrial media technology. Not only did identity play a role in the management of information distribution, but it was central to how the public saw the value of one’s identity in the ecosocial space as an intergraded society as a whole. What is clear is that in both studies, the populations were impacted by the bell/digital media as a deployment of the Foucauldian discipline model, through its segmentation and omnipresence (Foucault, 1975/1977).

As such, when analyzing the case studies, we can acknowledge that the use of space moves in and out of the psychical and digital and into the construction of identity. More specifically, we can look at how our bodies are viewed in relation to space, and how it has changed and developed in significant ways over time, but in many ways the hierarchical power structures have continued to adjust to changes in technology despite utopian claims during each epoch. The process of silencing and managing populations through silencing is a key deployment of biopower that is not dependent on media form.

In the Yellow Fever Epidemic and the flash mob incidents, the shared space of the urban environment and the transformation of the role of biopower from the tower bell to modern media highlight the spectacle of information dissemination that is embedded within sociological impacts. For instance, the silencing of the bells during the Yellow Fever

Epidemic and disrupting the use of cellphones in the flash mobs, mirror similar responses of power to manage memory and ideological control in ecosocial space. We can look to both case studies as examples. This follows insights gleaned from *Discipline and Punish*, where Foucault suggests “new media” (in this he is referring to newspapers) have become the new battleground for memory and ideological control (Foucault, 1975/1977, p. 68).

The activities of the flash mobs and the Yellow Fever Epidemic’s construction of space regarding privilege, power, and knowledge, had political ramifications. For instance, when looking at the history of public space, we see that the embedded structures of power greatly influence our collective behavior and identity formation. The historical bell evidences this, and as it matures, it shifts from concerns about the body of man to the man as a mass population, and thus it fulfills criteria necessary of biopower. As Btihaj Ajana suggests, “What characterizes biopower is not so much discipline directed at ‘man-as-body’, as was the case in disciplinary society, but the will to control and regulate ‘man-as-species’ in a preventive way so much so that biological life becomes the main problem and the salient concern of politics” (Ajana, 2005, p. 2). Here we see that the bell and new deployments of digital convergence share the same concerns in regard to controlling the movement of segmented populations in space and time through the silencing of technology. Here we are perhaps reminded of the Bay Area Regional Transit (B.A.R.T.) subway riots. This incident reflected a shift in policy where the police shut down cell phone towers in order to pacify collective action of a population (Kravets, 2011). This was a clear example of the use of silencing to shut down a dissenting voice.

This media bell connection can be thought of in terms of its connection to expressions of biopower and suggests that the ecological space was challenged in terms of shared codes and their relationship between the social world and development of network communication tools. In both cases, the ecosocial space was influenced by our relationship to the natural world and communication technologies. By looking at the bell in this context, we see that its regulation of ecosocial space is a product of hieratical reactions

to biological events regardless of the psychical state of the technology. Convergence is embedded with biopower norms and expectations. However, this is a complex issue. For instance, in his essay *Claiming Space*, Yrjo Haila suggests that the symbolic space that we create through communication is rooted in the management of highly complex integrated ecosocial systems (2008). Furthermore, he notes, “The ecosocial space is marked by symbolic meanings that arise from the merging together of eco-facts and artifacts all over the sphere of human life” (Haila, 2008, p. 28). As such, the role of bell ringing in ecosocial space is the process by which it is deployed as an expression of biopolitics, wielding its power over life as it attempts to manage the chaos within a shared ecosocial space in the forming of identity.

This is highlighted in my analysis of crews in Graham’s article concerning flash mobs, and the racial exploitation of labor in Powell’s recounting of the Yellow Fever Epidemic (Powell, 1949; Graham, 2011). This has a dramatic impact on how we position the bell in this symbolic social space, and acts as a lens in which we can engage with the bell in the context of its transmogrifications on power and identity. We see that where the bell as an expression of biopolitics creates its highest social meaning is through its performance of ringing or, in the cases of the Yellow Fever Epidemic and the flash mob incidences, the deployment of silence.

The process of calling out to our communities is still defined by the status and privilege of the management of messages and tools in the biopolitical or ecosocial space as a whole. This brings us full circle to the discipline and control of new media that reflects that of plagued towns. Or as Ajana has suggested, it is the passage from power to biopower, from politics to biopolitics from discipline to control, which the move from “traditional” surveillance to “new” surveillance lurks” (Ajana, 2005, p. 4). The shifting of expectations of control is therefore a product of shifts in convergence itself. We can see this clearly in surveillance of space despite the utopian claims of decentralization’s capacity. I think we need to look no further than the recent developments in the United States domestic surveillance program to grasp the significance of Ajana’s claim and the claim of the paper as well.

## ENSORSHIP AND SILENCING THE MESSAGE

In both case studies, the role of the bell as a symbolic artifact, message producer, and logistical media are intertwined. For instance, in the Yellow Fever Epidemic, the death tolling not only served as a religious power structure, but also played a secular and logistical role, letting the community know that someone had died. In the case of the flash mobs, the logistical use of technology not only organized the events, but also acted as a symbolic performance against the power structure of Western social norms. In attempting to silence the flash mob activities, the norms are imposed by denoting the activities of the mobs as uncivil. However, although the acts themselves are aggressive, the choice to frame the events as nonpolitical within the rhetoric of message is, of course, a journalistic choice that impacts our perception of the validity of the events. What makes one event of collective action a riot and the other a revolution has still been left to those in power despite new media impact or claims (Cohen, 1980).

Here it is clear that the idea of the parish within language and architecture frames our thinking about our identity and group membership. Corbin highlights this in his look at keys, doors, and ropes that are put in place to guard against strangers “who did not belong to the zone of recognition” (Corbin, 1998, p. 242). This in-group access would also signify the right to ring the bell and was charged with meaning concerning the status of the individual that brings a great deal of offense (Corbin, 1998). Corbin notes that this designation of who gets to ring the bell and the offense that could be taken by a town locking its tower in the presence of an untrusted stranger is key to understanding the social code of signification and the high value that a community would place on its bells (1998). Although the organization of flash mobs took place through new media channels, the rhetoric of the coverage was upheld through the use of language from a position of privilege and ownership. Any suggestion of disenfranchisement or greater social responsibility was squashed.

## THE BELL, CONSTRUCTED IDENTITY, AND SOCIAL POWER

In both case studies, race emerged as a central factor in collective behavior upheld by a hegemonic narrative that reinforced the notion of the classical designation of the “Other.” Because of the historical role of community-building by bell towers, those that are not included are considered outsiders. This process when applied to a liberal democracy highlights the embedded social hypocrisy. As we see in both case studies, race plays a major role in the defining of social tension in American culture and specifically to the city of Philadelphia. In the Yellow Fever Epidemic, the African American community was kept out of the message by their inability to take part in the newly forming media literacy requirements. The bells’ auditory iconography being silenced created an information gap. In the flash mobs, the media’s representations of the African American community were mediated by the same white, privileged position. The message was in fact more democratic in its transmission of news because of the rise in

literacy rates. However, the issues of suburban privilege and urban fear remained congruent.

The case studies indicated that trends in the uses of communication technologies—even in disjointed time periods and despite complexity of technologies—is connected through the continued reassertion of borders and the media spectacle surrounding their upkeep. For example, Foucault suggests, “the panoptic schema, without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was designed to spread throughout the social body; its vocation was to become a generalized function” (Foucault, 1975/1977, p. 207). As such, we can suggest that the bell’s functions embedded in what we have been calling new media, have been reestablished as a manifestation of a more generalizable system that predates its current transmogrification in form. Through this system of discipline, constantly reconstructed racial destinations and roles are constantly reestablished and brought in line with objectives of those in control.

The role of the racialization of the flash mob and the role of race in the Yellow Fever Epidemic highlights a structural oppression and an underlying agreement of the refusal to allow African Americans into the normative media space. This is related to the use of physical control of bodies through

biopower, in order to regulate the rhetorical space and the linguistic defining of the other. This seems symmetrical to the continuation of early polis models that continued as the parish construction, and the subsequent urban ethnic neighborhoods we are all familiar with today (Peters, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

This paper highlighted the significance of the historical bell in the tower; the transmogrification of that bell into more decentralized or individualized mobile media technologies and the formation of identity through biopower in ecosocial space. These new technologies have become associated with specific political actions and a resurgence of claims of technological determinism. Yet, the newly emerging track record for new media and mobility to facilitate lasting political changes has proven to be suspect and that resistance emerges from a situated identity. For example, we can see this in the events surrounding the democratically elected Mohamed Morsi or the insights recently gained concerning the National Security Agency, which moderates utopian claims about the democratic effects of convergence and media technologies in bringing about political change (Kirkpatrick, 2013; Schneier, 2013; and Lynch, 2011).

The fact is that as stone and mortar become outdated forms of control, we are entering into a new biopolitical space. As Zygmunt Bauman seems to suggest in *Liquid Modernity*, “the Panopticon-like, bulky, clumsy and awkward installations of surveillance and drill are no longer necessary” (Bauman, 2000, p. 121). However, and perhaps answering Rheingold’s question, this does not mean that there is a gap in power. Citing Mathiesen, Bauman suggests that we have “moved away from the *Panopticon* to a *Synopticon*-style society where the many watch the few” or “where spectacles take the place of surveillance without losing any of the disciplining power of their predecessor” (Bauman, 2000, p. 86). This is often cited as the break from the traditional Foucauldian model of discipline. But is it?

If we look deeper at the narrative of media and power existing in multiple periods of development, we are brought to the same intersection that Gilles Deleuze noted in his reading of Foucault. Both scholars show that we can “unfix the subject of surveillance, to enable a fluid social and individual field, while still maintaining empirical and political goals” (Elmer, 2012, p. 26). The individual’s relationship with decentralized media is therefore a continuation of both free will and collective action that is constitutive of an understanding of the role of identity in the greater system as a whole. The role of the political is therefore intersected with both economic realities and systems of control that often appear invisible to the individual. It seems that all three authors suggest we must take care to not confuse this decentralization with democratic empowerment.

This may ultimately lead to a better understanding of the role of transitional technologies in developing a deeper understanding of media convergence in terms of both its political and technological intersection to reform identity in the context of resisting silence. The biopolitical and technological patterns that emerged through the cases studies indicate that the narrative is more complex and that the dissolving of power through decentralized communication has not yet fully emerged. For instance, in terms of increased surveillance, Mark Andrejevic shows that being watched is a labor, and that we are performing this labor simply by living under the media gaze, in terms of “the work of being watched” (Andrejevic, 2002, p. 233). What we can therefore argue is that the move towards decentralization is supported by the structures of power when it suits the interests of the market, but has not radically altered the methods or classical

systems of media control (Deleuze, 1992). Yes, we can see that decentralization has helped consumer choice, but it often falls short of meaningful political change or development of more complex identity formation. The locks and keys that control access to the bell found in the cell phone is still highly controlled and mediated by power elites in the biopolitical sphere.

Even in cases where revolutions have taken place, the reestablishment of traditional and hieratical control has often been the end result, the growing body of literature follows that “Twitter does not cause revolution but revolutions are tweeted” (Lynch, 2011, p. 304). For instance, we see that claims concerning the events in Egypt were used as an example of the role of new media in the Arab Spring Uprising. These claims need to be readdressed due to the subsequent military intervention/coup d’état of 2013 (Kirkpatrick, 2013). The Arab Spring revolutions were a collection of events that took place beginning in 2010 when protesters overthrew totalitarian regimes through collective political action. The protesters placed a high emphasis on the use of digital technology, particularly social media, to achieve their goals. Although this is still an unresolved matter, it seems as if new media ability to promote and spread democracy has succumbed to what Lynch calls “political opportunity structures” (Lynch, 2011, p. 304). Mainly, it seems that we underestimated the role of capital. For instance, both Clay Shirky and Jeff Pooley have outlined the ability of markets to repackage revolutions into traditional market ideology and systems of control through the process of cultural production (Shirky, 2008; Pooley, 2010; and Andrejevic, 2002).

The relationship between the concerns of capital and its expressions concerning the production and distribution of messages can then be seen as symmetrical to the power of the historical bell and the agendas of its ringers who understood the power of controlling time and space. As Ajana suggests, we can apply the metaphor of “spatialisation” despite media’s transition from fixity to mobility in terms of biopolitics (Ajana, 2005, p. 6). In other words,

mobile communication technology can still create disciplining borders by “segmenting and immobilizing space, as well as the placing of individuals within enclosures under severe and permanent supervision” (Ajana, 2005 p. 4). Therefore, the demarcation of old to new is perhaps not as clean as many have perhaps prematurely argued, and we should therefore look to identity formation as a key element to the resistance of dysfunctional expressions of biopolitical influence.

As I have suggested, the bell provides a window of clarity in examining the process of media convergence through its ability to influence and be influenced by the continuing presence of biopolitics and identity formation. As Deleuze suggests in his essay *Postscript on Societies of Control*, “It’s not a question of asking whether the old or new system is harsher or more bearable, because there’s a conflict in each between the ways they free and enslave us” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 178). The use of the bell can therefore be seen in the context of existing on this same continuum. Gains and losses in the social and political arenas are in tension, but not revolutionary as such that we can disregard basic technologies when we assume to confer revolutionary status on technological development. We must stop fetishizing new technology and look to the way that we see and build communities.

In conclusion, and again looking to the idea of biopower, we see this relationship is made clear in terms of the process of self-organization and stratification that is constantly present when various thresholds of chaos emerge and threaten safety. This is mirrored in the case studies as we see power evolving parallel to technology, even during breakdowns in control as seen in both the flash mobs and the Yellow Fever Epidemic. However, the evolutionary processes of continued transmogrification must be factored into the equation. Therefore, we must entertain all possible spaces concerning decentralized media. To use this insight to empower identity formation within disadvantaged communities should therefore be the ultimate goal. ■

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# Damned Language:

## HOW PERCEPTIONS OF CURSE WORDS AFFECT FREQUENCY OF USE

**W**hile communication research abounds on the topic of taboo language, several facets of study have not yet been pioneered. The relationship between perceptions of common American curse words (in 18- to 24-year old English speakers) as either profane or not and the frequency of their occurrence in everyday conversation is one such unconquered area. In this paper, the research goes beyond simply viewing the implications of curse word use, the religious connotations, epistemologies, or specific social utilities, taking a more phenomenological approach. A descriptive online survey was utilized to gauge respondents' perceptions and use. In general, this study found that use of curse words increases when perceptions of said words as profane are higher. Demographics played a role in the data as well, exhibiting that groups with hegemonic power often found curse words more profane but equally more permissible and used them thusly. This paper ends by drawing upon Social Judgment Theory to legitimize the value of studying how the intersection of perceptions and use of profanity reveal larger implications about how language is processed and utilized in everyday communication.

*Keywords:* curse words, profane, Social Judgment Theory, taboo



From interpersonal communication to mass media, the average American is surrounded by curse words. There are few locations to which one can retreat from “bad language,” so it would be safe to label it a dominant, modern lingual phenomena. Thus, one might expect research on the topic to be overflowing. However, existing literature mostly examines the discourse on the binary of curse words as either obscene or not obscene, but it (arguably) does not adequately express how this discourse affects one’s use of curse words. The research is saturated with questions regarding the religious implications, types, origins, and the purpose for using common American profanities. Perhaps now the more pressing question is how these issues affect people’s use of them in everyday conversation. While there is not a standard comprehensive list of American expletives, people generally tend to sense when a word is perverse due to unsaid societal linguistic rules. One could find multiple lists of what constitutes a curse word, most with a multitude of overlap, one such list being comedian George Carlin’s infamous seven dirty words (Carlin, 1972), but to formulate an operational definition (Leslie, 2010) for the purpose of this study, I shall consider the following, with the understanding that derivative terms are apt to surface and evolve over time: ass, bastard, bitch, cunt, fuck, (god)damn, hell and shit. Certainly, one could contest this list, but as phenomenology would remind us, every individual perceives linguistic perversity differently; sources, both in this paper’s literature review and otherwise, are wont to have different or more comprehensive lists. This ebb and flow of use and perception prompts an interesting question: how does use of common American curse words amongst in 18- to 24-year olds in everyday conversation vary depending on her or his perception of them as either profane or not profane?

As this study involves individuals’ judgment of the social phenomena known as ‘curse words’ as it relates to their initial assessment of profanity, it would be of great use to utilize the lens Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland birthed in the early 1960s known as Social Judgment Theory. Sherif and Hovland posited that, especially in regards to persuasive messages (Mallard, 2010), communicators judge messages, in this case common American curse words, based on their attitudes and preconceived notions of the message itself (Social, 2001). The individual then

sorts the message into three categories: latitude of acceptance, latitude of noncommitment, and latitude of rejection (Atkin & Smith, 2008; Mallard, 2010). These categories represent agreement, relative indifference, and disagreement respectively (Mallard, 2010) and placement of particular messages into these categories determines the communicator’s response and attitude toward any future instances of receiving similar messages. The determination of curse words as “not profane” would coincide with either agreement (acceptance) or indifference whereas determination of curse words as “profane” would coincide with disagreement (rejection). The proposed survey research would tie directly into Social Judgment Theory by showing how people’s perceptions (attitude) of curse words (message) are sorted (latitudes) but takes it a step further by investigating frequency of use to test the nature of this sorting.

It is undoubtedly an interesting research question to which one could apply communication theories, but do its implications hold significance? This question can be seen as exposing “several versions of reality or social constructions” (Leslie, 2010, p. 39). Perceptions and use of curse words may not have direct correlation but there is still a relationship between the two. To unveil information on the various perception-use combinations by way of survey would provide data that presents further opportunities for research. Answering, or at least delving into, the topic may expose a new level of linguistic research altogether. Also, the results would provide historical commentary on curse words. In the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, curse words were still considered “linguistic taboos” (Haller, 1976, p. 25) but nowadays, many consider the unstated prohibition of expletives to be waning and many others view obscenities as “the norm” (Steinberg, 2011, p. 16). As our society moves toward a state where curse words are still considered taboo yet woven deeper into the fabric of everyday speech, it is imperative to examine the issue. Furthermore, there are various neurological, psychological and sociocultural factors (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008) involved in the usage of taboo language, such as the cognitive dissonance one may feel depending on her or his stance versus her or his use.

These reasons are not comprehensive, but only a window meant to shed a bit of light on why one would investigate the posed research question.

Would there be obstacles in the investigation, such as my chosen methodologies and the purposeful objectification to “bad language”? Absolutely, there will be, but I will take and consider these challenges very seriously before implementation (like offering incentives for participation and refraining from use of the curse words in execution) since the study could reap significant responses to the research question. On a personal level, as the researcher, I find particular interest in the topic. As a child, I was never explicitly taught the concept of “curse words.” My exposure to the arbitrary definitions of these words as perverse came later in life, beyond the point of having them concreted in my mind as ‘bad language’. Also, my interest in the field of linguistics fuels my need to

research the topic because I feel that taboo lexicon is merely an unsupported and insignificant social construct that exists because we are told so. The idea of prohibited language intrigues me because it serves as evidence that society has shut linguistic doors and attempted to cut itself off from an entire realm of language that often proves effective and facilitative. Together, my personal interests and the need to branch expletive research in a new direction hold more than enough validity to explore the varied perceptions of curse words as either obscene or not obscene as they relate to an individual’s use of them. This proclaimed validity is given further proof beyond my own interests by perusing the existing research and literature on the topic.

## A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The use of “curse words” is a linguistic phenomenon that so deeply penetrates society that it is fucking impossible to avoid. It goes by many other names: swear words, dirty words, cuss words, foul language, offensive language, off-color language, vulgar language, expletives, obscenity, profanity, and verbal indecency, and it is as undoubtedly present in everyday conversation as it is in the first sentence of this paragraph. Profanity is easily discernable by most people, but what precisely is a “swear word”? While most Americans can identify words that are obscene, there is, ironically, a lack of a “common definition of swearing... across academic studies” (Johnson & Lewis, 2010, p. 106). A concrete definition for obscenity does not yet exist despite it having been studied specifically for over 100 years, tracing the research back to George Thomas White Patrick’s study of the cathartic release one experiences from using profanity (Patrick, 1901). After such an expanse of time and in-depth research, the nature of vulgar language is not fully known, yet the phenomenon is “now the norm” (Steinberg, 2011, p. 16). The rather enigmatic field of study is certainly one worthy of critical examination and from scrutinizing the existing literature on the topic, I have discovered that it would be particularly

fruitful to delve into the study of individual perceptions of curse words and how those perceptions affect usage in interpersonal communication.

Current literature seems weak in the area of interpersonal communication, especially in regards to addressing the use of vulgarity in everyday conversation. The concept of expletives exists across geographical and cultural boundaries; John Haller (1976) noted that “linguistic taboos exist in every culture” (p. 25) and have existed throughout history, although modern society has paid more attention to offensive language than ever before (Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009). What is the reason for this increased attention to vulgarity? There is no singular reason; explanations abound about the increase: studies in technological advancements, recent understandings about socioeconomic and cultural status, implications about the human condition, linguistic issues, perceived harmful effects and even social utility. However, it remains to be seen in current research exactly how an individual’s perception of curse words affects her or his frequency of use. In Johnson and Lewis’ study *Perceptions of Swearing in the Work Setting*, they note that there is “limited research on effects of swearing in interpersonal contexts” (2010, p. 107). This limitation in research could also reflect a limitation in “our

knowledge of semantic, comprehensive, and contextual language processes” (Jay, 1981, p. 29). Additionally, profanity is an ever-changing linguistic phenomenon and what is profane today may not be profane in ten years. Taboo language “changes through time” and the “changing nature of offensive language indicates a need to explore what is currently considered taboo,” (Kaye, Sapolsky, & Shafer, 2011, p. 47-48) which gives further urgency to the proposed study on profanity.

It is an effortless task to find literature about the relationship between mass media and profanity. There are numerous ongoing debates about the effects of media-related vulgarity. Turn on the television or radio and your ears will be rapidly met with a slew of dirty words. Kaye and Sapolsky published a study in 2009 that demonstrated that nine out of 10 primetime broadcast and cable programs included at least one instance of obscenity at a rate of “12.58 cuss words per hour” (p. 22). In 1990, the supposedly conservative television station CBS received flak for airing an episode of *Uncle Buck* in which a small child exclaimed, “You suck!” (a derivative of curses outlined earlier) in the opening moments. Fourteen years later, the same station showed an uncensored version of the profanity-laden film *Saving Private Ryan* and currently boasts *S#!\*! My Dad Says* in its lineup (Steinberg, 2011, p. 16). Scherer and Sagarin posited in a 2006 article in *Social Influence* that society has become more susceptible to and comfortable with curse words in media (p. 138). This desensitization, however, is opposed, particularly by “Christian and family organizations” with conservative standards and values (Clark, 2012, para. 10).

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) currently holds that expletives in mass media, whether fleeting, incidental, or intentional, may be subject to punishment (Almas, 2010; Wyatt, 2010). Though the FCC holds that public expletive use may warrant harsh penalties, due to previously ambiguous judicial backing, actual implementation of these penalties has been scant. In 2003, for instance, 202,032 complaints were submitted but only one of those was paid within the next year (Federal, 2005). Chief Justice John Roberts noted that a lower court’s standing ruling to ban fleeting expletives was “flawed” (Rowland, 2008, para. 6). The decision was later renounced to rectify this violation of citizens’ First Amendment rights

(Wyatt, 2010). Finally, in 2009, the Supreme Court ruled to reverse the appellate court’s verdict, making a final decision, but furthering the state of confusion on the government’s interpretation of First Amendment rights (Bravin & Schatz, 2009). There is also a vigorous ongoing debate in the communications sphere whether these “expletive-laced programs” and popular media phenomena reflect pop culture or create it (Kaye, Sapolsky, & Shafer, 2011; Schneider, 2010; Steinberg, 2011). Clearly, knowing how much the media affects society and how superfluously the use of expletives has escalated and continues to escalate, the issue of vulgarity is a topic to be scrutinized further. If expletives are becoming normal in pop culture, perhaps it is becoming a blasé phenomenon in interpersonal communication as well. As John Haller stated: “at a time when... all linguistic taboos... are being broken, it is fitting to reexamine the nature of such taboos” (1976, p. 25) and their effects on everyday communication.

The aforementioned media have serious socioeconomic implications as well. The “demonization” of rap and rap lyrics (i.e., common pejorative themes of the genre) has led to the demonization of the language by association (Schneider, 2010, p. 51). The perception of rap as being a low-class or even criminal style solidifies the language as being equally low-class in many instances and vice versa. This fact is relevant to my proposed study because it has been shown, especially in Jay and Janschewitz’s article *Pragmatics of Swearing* (2008), that there is a correlation between perceived societal social status and sentiments about curse words. While it has already been established that there is not a concrete denotative or connotative definition of curse words, there is still a cultivated notion in society that they are of a lower register, despite their heightened social utility (as discussed later). However, there is still a widespread enduring debate about the “two-tiered linguistic value system” presented: how language defines status or how status defines language (Haller, 1976, p. 32). In many cases and cultures, even in our own, this value system can be discerned in the tendency for many people to only use expletives in the presence of those they perceive as being the same socioeconomic status; thus, those of a higher status or in a position of superiority can “talk down” to others

using profanity but not against the socioeconomic grain (Dewaele, 2011; Haller, 1976; Johnson & Lewis, 2010; Schneider, 2010). These linguistic debates and questions linger, and the quest for answers must be rich with revelations about how people of different systems and statuses perceive and use curse words.

While it is clear that curse words often cultivate a type of linguistic caste system, there are positives as well: obscenity used in personal and/or intimate verbal situations can reinforce or establish a sense of identification. They promote linguistic bonds via familiarity (Haller, 1976). In this way, use of profanity provides valuable insight into the way in which humans communicate and connect. Erving Goffman (1959) discusses this concept in *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life* in his promotion of the “backstage” where expletives are considered more personal language or, in most cases, merely unintended language (p. 69). Goffman continues by adding that the use of curse words exhibits the existence of “maintenance of expressive control,” especially in regards to fleeting expletives (p. 50). Others have suggested that use of (fleeting) expletives only “underscore[s] our inability to communicate” competently (Lev, 2011, para. 13). Many would argue, however, that a lack in expressive control is often necessary as a cathartic and less aggressive means of expression. The very taboo nature of verbal obscenity could prove valuable so that humans may choose to articulate negative emotion with expletives rather than physical aggression (Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009). John Haller (1976) also makes a valid point about the fleeting and subjective nature of profanity as it pertains to the human condition: “Even if profane and obscene expletives could miraculously be thrown out of the language tomorrow, new ones would at once be invented to replace them. Obscene language will disappear only when obscene attitudes cease to exist” (p. 34). In short, expletives are only arbitrarily vulgar and temporarily created words, existing across cultural and lingual boundaries, to express the natural human propensity for “obscene attitudes.”

Haller makes another interesting and relevant observation on this topic. In general, the mildest obscenities and names are totally inorganic (“stick in the mud,” “stone,” *etc.*) while more vulgar profanities are organic, but of other organisms (“dog,” “swine,” *etc.*)

and the most offensive of expletives are related to the human body, generally the anatomy (dick, asshole, *etc.*). In the words of Haller: “What a commentary on our attitude toward ourselves!” (p. 29). Lastly, perception and use of foul language is inexplicably tied to gender/sex assumptions, providing insight into the manners in which societies globally view and typify gender roles. In the words of researchers DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007), “Females who use profanity are more likely to be criticized than men who use it,” (p. 72) as profanity is considered by many to be “rough” and “inappropriate for ladies” (p. 71). The disparity between the different genders’ use of swear words in general does not even account for increasingly offensive gender-related curses such as “faggot,” “dyke,” or “cunt.” These tendencies in perception and use only add to the intrigue of how obscenity both reflects and creates the current human condition.

Hand-in-hand with the human assumptions that can be derived from the study of curse words are the linguistic implications. First of all, as mentioned earlier, there is a fluid and undefined continuum of swear words based on their offensiveness and intensity. In the study conducted by Kaye, Sapolsky, and Shafer (2011) amongst television viewers, the following twenty words were defined as the most popular instances of offensive language (in a loosely ascending order of perceived offensiveness): piss, bastard, shit, asshole, son-of-a-bitch, slut, douchebag, shithead, God/Lord, tits, bitch, dick, Jesus/Christ, whore, Goddamn, fuck, pussy, motherfucker, cocksucker, and cunt (p. 61). In addition to the offensiveness continuum, there is a widely agreed-upon triadic set of topical categories across scholarly studies: religious, excretory and sexual (Almas, 2010; Haller, 1976; Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009; Kaye, Sapolsky, & Shafer, 2011; Scherer & Sagarin, 2006). Obviously, there are several ways to classify these supposedly undefined “curse words” but linguistically, what are they? Goffman (1981) presents them as “response cries” that do not necessarily follow a prescribed grammatical or lexical pattern in speech. He likens an expletive to a laugh, groan, sob, snicker, or giggle as they are both natural and emotional vocal responses (p. 100). However, looking at expletives as only a response cry does not create the distinction between intentional and unintentional use. Butler and Fitzgerald (2011)

distinguish the binary of “know better faults” and “doesn’t know better faults,” or intentional and unintentional use respectively (p. 526). However, unfortunately, this binary distinction still fails to account for a very important perspective. Butler and Fitzgerald posit the phenomenon of off-color language as being a “fault” in any instance even though they also posit that profanity is a natural linguistic impulse. If it is a natural impulse, why portray expletives as a “fault” in all, if any, possible usages? This lack of specification is clearly another significant reason to conduct a study such as the one I have suggested. Also interesting in the field of linguistic implications, the taboo nature of swear words lies solely in the “shift from denotation to connotation” (Kaye, Sapolsky, & Shafer, 2011, p. 47) and these “dirty words” are unique linguistic phenomena because “connotative meaning is dominant over denotative meaning” (Jay, 1981, p. 30). For instance, while most words are capable of having associated connotations, vulgar or otherwise (i.e., using “banana” as a substitute for male genitalia rather than the tropical fruit), curse words are primarily utilized for their connotations rather than denotations (i.e., using “shit” as a substitute for “etcetera” rather than human excrement). This reinforces my previous allegation, in accordance with Haller, that the attitude (or perception) behind the expletive is almost equally important, and thus, in itself a source of offensiveness, perhaps in some cases even more so than the denotation. In 2002, San Francisco Chronicle columnist Jon Carroll noted that, although lexical definitions and attitudes change with time, curse words seem to change at a more sluggish pace than other slang. If language is theoretically a living entity, why do their denotations and connotations not age in the same way? These revelations also spur a necessary interest in the individual perceptions of and attitudes toward curse words, a main component of my proposed investigation. Finally, multilingually, there are linguistic aspects of expletives that are rife with reasons to study them. Jay and Janschewitz (2008) show that competence in the native language of curse words can significantly affect use. Bilinguals and multilinguals most emphatically choose their maternal tongue when swearing, suggesting again that it is a natural impulse used in a comfortable linguistic setting or state (Dewaele, 2011). If this is true, would

it be reasonable to assume that swear words are almost exclusively culturally learned and not pedagogically learned, making them more semantically arbitrary? As a bilingual interested in the study of sociolinguistics, I find these facts infinitely fascinating, and the existing literature fails to account for them in depth. While it is easily discernable even without reiteration, there is much to be learned still from an expletive study.

By now, it is clear that further investigations into the field of swearing are warranted. However, to also garner the acceptance of my proposed study from the pragmatists, there are also many purposeful uses for curse words, as well as many harmful effects. In their article *Indecent Influence: The Positive Effects of Obscenity on Persuasion*, Scherer and Sagarin noted ten important uses or motives for the utilization of curse words: (1) express anger, (2) emphasize conviction, (3) exercise habit, (4) submit to peer pressure, (5) relieve tension, (6) behave in a taboo manner, (7) act cool, (8) garner attention, (9) inability to think of an alternative word and (10) ability to use such language merely because it is acceptable in the context or situation (p. 139). Additionally, Butler and Fitzgerald conjecture that, due to the comfortable and instinctive nature of swear word use, they may be used to express genuineness and authenticity of character. It is clear that profanity can be used in successful and individually gratifying ways, but many suggest that the typical usage of obscenity is generally more sinister. One could use them to “besmirch” or “belittle” others (Haller, 1976, p. 31). This use is especially exemplified through rap music (Schneider, 2010). Such antithetical uses often result in unfortunate consequences. Extensive utilization of curse words, especially in regards to belittling, can result in “long term-self-concept damage” to those on the receiving end and an incitement or augmentation of physical aggression in the user. Extended use also leads to desensitization to “verbal indecency” and thus possible tolerance of physical indecency (Kaye, Sapolsky, & Shafer, 2011, p. 48). Although American citizens experience a general freedom of speech, public swearing, especially in the media, is often “subject to strict regulations” and even “harsh penalties” (Butler & Fitzgerald, 2011, p. 525). Other negative effects and outcomes of curse word use include, but are not limited to, perceived incompetence (Johnson & Lewis, 2010),

untrustworthiness, decrease in credibility (Scherer & Sagarin, 2006), perceived lack of respect and dignity (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008), and public stigma of criminality (Schneider, 2010). While most academic studies acknowledge and identify the benefits of swear word use, there is widespread agreement that swear word use is equally, if not more, potentially dangerous than beneficial. They are purposeful but harmful, depending on use and perception of listeners. My study proposes studying precisely that: the relationship between use and perception in individuals.

Having mentioned all of the aforesaid academic implications, one may be left with a muddled understanding of the current state of research on cursing. I can feel the same confusion. Technologically, society is becoming more accepting of curse words while simultaneously enforcing stricter regulation of them. Socioeconomically, offensive language harmfully proliferates and cultivates a sense of social casting, but is also used to break social barriers due to its ability to create conversational comfort and human connectivity. In regards to the human

condition, a study of expletives shows that they give insight into self-degradation and esteem issues of humankind, while it also posits that use of swear words exhibits a type of expressive control used for bonding and as an alternative to harsher actions. Linguistically, one can see how verbal indecencies are emotional, natural impulses although they are also culturally learned, depending on the vocal competence of the speaker. In reference to use, swear words can be immensely useful, but immensely detrimental at the same time. Research of vulgar language has existed for over 100 years, but it has apparently only led our comprehension of profanity into murkier waters. The research has also shown that perceptions of offensiveness vastly change from person to person, culture to culture, and context to context. Unfortunately, a phenomenological study into the perceived offensiveness of profanity versus use has yet to be seen. Not only is my proposed study necessary because it has not truly been yet performed, but it is necessary because a more fundamental look at the use of swear words would certainly take a step in the right direction to clearing the muddy waters.

## THE METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

In examining the research question—How does use of common American curse words amongst 18- to 24-year olds in everyday conversation vary depending on her or his perception of them as either profane or not profane?—I propose that the correlation between individuals' perception and use of curse words would best be studied using a descriptive web-based survey. A survey, as defined by Larry Leslie (2010), is a “detailed investigation of the behavior, attitudes, values, opinions, beliefs, and/or personal characteristics of individuals” (p. 66). My proposed study involves determining how *individuals'* perceptions of curse words as either profane or not profane and social judgment of *value* and/or *belief* affect her or his use of said curse words, i.e., linguistic *behavior*. Therefore, a survey is an excellent fit. To narrow down what type of survey, I look to the two overarching types: descriptive and analytical. While an analytical

survey attempts to determine the roots of a particular situation or phenomenon, a descriptive survey strives to “document current conditions or attitudes,” which is precisely my intention (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 179). To further narrow the kind of survey, I have chosen a web-based survey via Qualtrics. A web-based survey allows for simultaneous survey-taking and serves the intended audience of technologically savvy, Internet dwelling 18- to 24-year olds. I will make personal appeals by word-of-mouth, in classes, in extracurricular settings, and through mass e-mails. A small, palm-sized handout with a QR link to the survey will also be administered by hand and through snowball sampling. Furthermore, the participants will be able to complete the survey whenever they have ample time in a location that is socially comfortable, hopefully eliciting more colloquial results (i.e., from “everyday conversation”).

After deciding on a type of survey, one must further plan before implementing, concocting the actual survey, pre-testing and revising the questions, and dealing with logistics such as the budget. Aside from time and effort of advertising the survey, the survey administration will cost nothing. Qualtrics is a free service for those with legitimate university e-mail accounts looking to implement research projects for academia. Utilizing professional web-based software for administration also cuts down on my time of analysis (as the site has analytical, downloadable features in the form of cross-tabulation) and alleviates the inconvenience of paper surveys, especially given that the target number of participants is 100+.

With method justification and logistic considerations out of the way, the questioning format can be discussed. The survey is broken into three categories and begins with inquiries regarding demographic information. The obvious pieces of information include age, sex, ethnicity, religion, and income, as these all relate directly back to the review of literature as factors contributing to curse word use. Additional pieces of personal information that have been included in the demographic section due to hints that they may have a slight effect on curse word use are employment, language(s), education, and self-esteem. Two more sections exist to gauge use and perception, respectively. The second section asks the participants how often they hear curse words, reasons for using curse words, an open-ended inquiry about which words (or types of words) the participants consider swear words, settings in which participants are most likely to use profanity, etc. While encouraging participants to acknowledge their ideas of what constitutes a curse word almost forces them to confront the words which they may proactively endeavor to subvert or avoid for ethical reasons, the nature of an open-ended question implies the potential to decline to answer. Also, since the very intention of the survey is to confront this potential ethical issue and/or cognitive dissonance, the question is acceptable to include. Plus, this question will be labeled as non-obligatory and a disclaimer will appear at the beginning of the survey. The third section asks the participants to acknowledge which, if any, situations or conditions are unacceptable in relation to curse words use (e.g., interpersonal, public, etc.).

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS	
Q11	How many curse words do you hear during the course of a typical day?
Q12	How many curse words do you use during the course of a typical day?
Q13	What words or type of words do you consider curse/swear/dirty words?
Q14	Why do you typically use curse words?
Q17	In which communication setting are you most likely to use curse words?
Q19	How permissible is curse word use in everyday communication?

The section further includes Likert scales on which the participants may gauge the permissibility of curse words. After creating these three aforementioned sections, the survey was pretested by colleagues aged 18 to 24 for reading comprehension, then rearranged and reworded in order to better suit the understanding of the potential survey takers and to ensure cohesiveness, mutual exclusivity, and exhaustiveness.

Within the community of professionals, there is often a sense of skepticism shrouding the use of a survey as a methodology. I am not blind to such perceptions and difficulties. However, a descriptive online survey best suits the needs of this study. The targeted age group is typically technologically savvy and constantly online for both educational and personal reasons. Also, while performing a survey online obviously excludes those without access, the survey will be advertised by word-of-mouth, through

paper handouts and e-mail around campus where resources and accommodations are available. Surveys also respect the schedules of the participants, allowing flexibility in when and where they complete the survey. Another issue regarding the results of this survey is operationalizing. In the project justification, I have already examined what constitutes common American curse words by referencing cross-disciplinary definitions (ass, bastard, bitch, cunt, fuck, (god)damn, hell, and shit). However, everyday conversation refers to interpersonal interaction, fleeting or incidental, between the participant and any of the following social groups: boss/superior/professional, co-worker, family, friend, spouse/partner, and stranger/acquaintance;

## ANALYSIS

A total of 107 participants responded, reaching target participation. In doing so, the study found certain correlations between the use of curse words and characteristics such as sex, gender, languages spoken, ethnicity/race, and religion. Neither average family income nor education played an apparent role. While the data did not support the original hypothesis as strongly as I imagined, there were still meaningful bits of data to describe the relationship between perception and use of common American curse words in everyday conversation. Regardless of the findings, the study still holds consequential implications and proves useful to communication studies at large.

In order to determine implications, utility, or value, it is imperative to examine the findings on an individual, as well as demographic, basis. As the purpose was to look at frequency of use as it relates to perceptions of curse words as perverse or not, it is relevant to begin with this fact: only one participant indicated that he did not consider words profane, instead writing that intent, or the attitude behind the word, is what constitutes profanity or obscenity. Of course other participants may have agreed without indicating so in their answer, but instead of refraining like he did, the rest of them listed profanities, indicating their perception that profane words indeed exist. The words listed as profane, or

words deemed inappropriate in one communicative setting may be considered acceptable in another. Finally, profane signifies culturally constructed crudity that leads to personal offensiveness. Profanity may refer to the twenty words referenced in the review of literature (piss, bastard, shit, asshole, son-of-a-bitch, slut, etc.) or any other word that elicits similar personal offensiveness and holds a semblance of religious, excretory and/or sexual connotation (Almas, 2010; Haller, 1976; Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009; Kaye, Sapolsky, & Shafer, 2011; Scherer & Sagarin, 2006). With a clear understanding of how the study will be conducted and how responses will be interpreted, implementation and analysis begin.

curse/swear/dirty words, ranged from various forms of “fuck” (82 times) to “cunt” (24 times) to even “prick,” “boobies,” and “girl” (1 time each). Also, every participant indicated that s/he had used curse words. Since each respondent acknowledged the existence of curse words, if only perceptual, as well as the ability to distinguish which words are profane and not profane, the report in the review of literature that curse words are exceptionally pervasive is supported.

In the Likert scale questions regarding permissibility, taboo nature, and social utility of curse words, there were interesting responses as well. The results showed that participants felt that profanity is definitely culturally taboo, registering a 3.40 average out of 5.0. Nevertheless, participants also said that, generally, curse words were neither particularly permissible nor prohibited (2.43/5.0), but that they ought to be at least relatively permissible in everyday conversation (2.62/5.0). A look at specific demographic responses—discussed later—reveal richer data than these initial average numbers. Though the gap between the data is minimal, the fact that participants denoted that desired permissibility was higher than actual permissibility provides commentary on general perceptions of profanity.

Respondents also indicated that curse words are relatively effective (2.53/5.0). Although the numbers



are not definitive, they do carry significance. For instance, participants found curse words to be more useful than permissible. In this way, the data suggests that societal language norms may be limiting speakers from generally useful speech behavior. If common American curse words are considered somewhat useful in expressing intense emotion, stressing conviction, partially alleviating pain, *etc.*, but are concurrently considered somewhat prohibited by social norms, it is apparent that acceptable speech patterns (i.e., curse words) do not fully serve the needs of the speakers. Participants also found curse words to be less prohibited (2.57) than perceived cultural taboos supposedly allow (3.40). Again, the data suggest that linguistic expectations are not representative of actual speech. If respondents found profanity to be significantly taboo, but only slightly prohibited in actual everyday conversation, then frequency of use is bound to be affected by this disparity. Furthermore, a comparison of data reveals that participants may desire for profanity to be more allowable in everyday conversation than perceived taboos permit. This is a key piece of information as it indicates that frequency of use is most likely restricted by perceptions of curse words as being more profane than most people apparently consider them to be. The main source of curse word use restriction appears to lie not in the speakers, but in the collective cultural perception of profanity. It could be deduced from the survey results that the ways in which we communicate *about* profanity does not match the ways in which we communicate *using* profanity. Though some may suggest that exposure to curse words may affect individuals' perceptions or use, the data hints otherwise. The average amount of curse words that participants heard throughout a typical day did not correlate in any way with perceptions of permissibility. The average amount of curse words used did not correlate with perceptions of permissibility either. Therefore, how many curse words a person perceived or utilized had little to no effect on how s/he felt about how permissible they were in daily conversation. The fact that daily exposure was not a factor seems to reinforce that the overt, overarching societal view of curse words is most likely the main contributor to individual perceptions and use

of profanity. Regardless, the main idea is that there is an ostensible link between perceptions and use.

Examining the list of words that constituted profanity for the participants further gives more specificity and insight into their perceptions. First, less than 9% of the survey participants who responded to "*What words or type of words do you consider 'curse/swear/dirty' words?*" refrained from using specific curse words to answer the question when approximately 8% said they did not use curse words. Although it would seem that the 8% who said they did not use curse words would fall under the 9% who refrained from using them, almost half of the respondents who chose "*I do not use curse words*" actually used completely spelled-out profanities to respond to the previous question. Even though the responses were confidential and for research purposes, many of the participants who claimed to not use profanity still used specific profanities in their answers. This furthers the idea that perceptions of curse words as profane or not profane do not necessarily match the frequency of use. To be more exact about what participants labeled in their answers as instances of profanity, the most overwhelming agreement amongst all participants was that sexual words are extremely profane. Over a third of respondents that indicated that they do *not* use profanity said sexual words were profane and about 92% of participants who use over 20 curse words per day *did* find them profane. Excretory words were next with almost half saying excretory words were profane and a third saying otherwise. Possibly more shocking, none of the respondents who used an average of 0 curse words daily indicated that ethnic/racial words or religious words were profane. Only one-sixth of those who use over 20 curse words per day said ethnic/racial slurs were profane and 15.38% of participants who do *not* use curse words daily found religious words profane. Clearly, it is possible that respondents felt that certain words they neglected to list were also profane, but as the survey was looking for profanities in everyday conversation, the impromptu list of curse words sufficed for the purposes of this study. With this disclaimer in mind, and from analyzing these results, it is obvious that, with the exception of obscenities with religious connotation, those surveyed who

had a higher frequency of vulgarity use were more likely to find certain words profane—there is definitely a relationship between frequency of use and perceptions of words as profane or not.

Certain demographic data affected perception and use as well. For example, in regards to sex, males recorded that they were more likely to both hear and use profanities daily, more likely to begin using curses earlier in life, and slightly more likely to find obscenity more permissible in everyday conversation. Also, males were liable to have more polarized or extreme views on the permissibility of curse words (either entirely permissible 5.0/5.0, or entirely prohibited 0.0/5.0) than females. This data could be the result of cultural privilege. As males are perceived and treated as hegemonic, it is possible that males feel more comfortable utilizing taboo language, or at the very least having stronger rights to and opinions about it. The idea of hegemony continues throughout several other demographics. Heterosexual participants found curse words more permissible in everyday conversation, more useful, and less culturally taboo than non-heterosexuals. Christian participants found curse words to be significantly more permissible, more useful, and less culturally taboo than non-Christians. Though the results did not present any clear correlations between perceived utility or taboo quality of profanity and family income, those with higher incomes *were* more likely to find curse words permissible in daily dialogue. Though monolinguals are not necessarily of alleged higher power status, they could be considered hegemonic in that most citizens of the United States speak only one language (Kominski & Shin, 2010). Monolinguals found curse words to be more permissible in everyday conversation and less culturally taboo. By a small margin, however, despite their apparent views

of profanity as less permissible, multilinguals found more social utility in curse words, and likewise stated a higher desire for permissible use. Caucasians reported curse words as being more permissible in everyday conversation than non-Caucasians, but found them to be more taboo and less useful. However, it is likely the Caucasian participants found profanities more allowable despite perceptions of them as more taboo due to having hegemonic power. Often, those with such power have the advantage of deciding what is and is not profane in the first place. At any rate, in considering the sex, gender, religion, lingual abilities, and ethnicities of the survey respondents, it seems that groups with hegemonic power, in general, perceive curse words as less prohibited. Clearly, rankings within the hegemony help foster certain perceptions of profanity and use.

From these analyses, it is apparent that a relationship between frequency of use and perception of words as profane or not profane exists. Those who specified certain categories of curses to be especially profane were more likely to use them. Also, considering that participants seemed to indicate a desire for a higher permissibility of curse words in everyday conversation further indicates that perceptions of certain words as profane limit speech behaviors. If curse words were recorded as being particularly limited in everyday conversation, and respondents found inclinations toward using words that they perceived as profane, it would stand to reason that frequency of use does/would generally increase when words are perceived as profane. Thus, the answer to the original research question is revealed: 18- to 24-year olds' use of common American curse words, as outlined in the justification and review of literature, tends to increase when the words are perceived as being profane.

## CONCLUSIONS

What can Communication professionals do with this data? First, the results offer descriptive documentation of current values in language. This study serves as a record of the relationships and disparities between speakers' perceptions of taboo language and the actual use of it. This research is a slight step outside of the typical methodologies of curse word studies and further replications would yield rich records about the ebb and flow of cultural communication taboos. After all, (taboo) language is ever-changing and this study serves as another, more modern documentation of previously under-documented conditions. Besides mere records of current states, researchers could better focus the direction of their own studies by being cognizant of the individual differences between desired use and actual use. This study holds for mass media scholars as well. With lawsuits and academic discussions ongoing about the prevalence and consequence of curse word use in media (Almas, 2010; Bravin & Schatz, 2009; Kaye, Sapolsky, & Shafer, 2011; Schneider, 2010; Steinberg, 2011; Wyatt, 2010), the results of this research could at the very least serve as a springboard for discussion. It could also become particularly useful evidence in arguing for continued broadcast of obscenity.

On a larger scale, the implications about hegemony add an extra dimension to the value of this study. It could either solidify the perceptions of specific demographics as having power, or reveal shifts in hegemony. For instance, the fact that Caucasians' views of profanity and use varied from the consistent views of other hegemonic facets could be indicative of changes in power or communication. It is also possible via the findings of this research that discrepancies in perception and use of taboo language could echo current linguistic behaviors in society or even predict them. Finally, the discovery that individuals perceive curse words as more culturally taboo than conversationally prohibited could reflect, as the review of literature suggests, a time disparity. Words that are perceived as significantly taboo are much more permissible in everyday conversation possibly due to the fact that the connotations of curse words take longer to change than other slang or language. This study could provide more evidence or paths to research in the communicative investigation of connotative and denotative meanings. The

potential utilities of this research are endless. Though it is a descriptive survey, it should serve as the basis for more analytical survey research in the future, as substantiation for any further studies in taboo language or communication behaviors.

Sherif and Hovland's Social Judgment Theory paints a somewhat more in-depth picture of the utility and value of the study. The theory posits that communicators judge messages based on preconceived notions of the message itself (Social, 2001). As one can see, this is a perfect theory for the research; communicators (the respondents) receive messages (curse words) and evaluate them based on pre-existing attitudes (profane or not profane). The evaluation process classifies the words into (1) latitude of acceptance, (2) latitude of noncommitment, or (3) latitude of rejection, which indicate agreement, indifference and disagreement respectively, before making a response choice. It was clear that most survey participants fell mainly into the latitude of rejection since all but one indicated specific words they felt were profane to some degree. The one outlying respondent processed the curse words into either acceptance or noncommitment, based on his dismissal of common American curse words as profane. These classifications not only shape how language is perceived but how responses are formed. In this study, participants who found curse words to be permissible but still indicated that they were profane probably filed them into the latitude of rejection based on the aforementioned overarching societal view. In fact, the overt taboo nature of obscenity probably affects all speakers in some manner by labeling the latitude of rejection as the correct reaction to perceiving profanity. In this way, it becomes obvious that perceptions of curse words as either profane or not profane are greatly affected by the culturally decided latitude. Even those who used profanity frequently and saw it as permissible knew precisely what response to give: rejection. Society instills perceptions of profanity and that in turn affects the reciprocal use. However, as the study showed, for the most part, the more a respondent placed curse words into the latitude of rejection the more s/he was likely to use them. The social commentary here is that even though the perceptions of language may fall into acceptance,

noncommitment, or rejection, the actual use of said language does not necessarily have to correlate. Though this particular study found that use of curse words varied by perceptions of them as either profane or not profane, there are other factors at play. Whether

profanity or any other speech, language is categorized and then processed before either being used or being retained, and disagreement or disapproval of the language in question is not necessarily reflected in the speaker's response. ■

## APPENDIX A

**TABLE 1** MALES AND FEMALES ON PERMISSIBILITY AND UTILITY

Sex	Desired Permissibility (average)	Actual Permissibility (average)	Perceived Utility
Male	2.42 out of 5.0	2.42 out of 5.0	2.46 out of 5.0
Female	2.69 out of 5.0	2.42 out of 5.0	2.60 out of 5.0

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# THE Confrontationality OF VEGETARIANISM:

**A MEDIA AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS ON  
VEGETARIAN CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES**

**A**s the vegetarian movement progresses in the United States along with other social movements about food, the rhetoric that vegetarians use to justify their behaviors tends to engender a feeling of moral degradation in non-vegetarians who base their diet on meat. By analyzing the extreme sexual representation of vegetarianism in two banned People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) advertisements, this study explores the unspoken superiority of vegetarians and identifies the confrontationality of the vegetarian rhetoric. Additionally, to explain the origin of the confrontationality associated with vegetarianism that revolts the cultural norm, this study looks into the modern history of food production to determine the process of normalization. In this section, this study applies the Hegelian theory of dialectic as the structure to discuss the current diet norm as the thesis, vegetarianism as the antithesis and the potential future norm as the synthesis to dynamically understand food politics in the U.S.

*Keywords:* vegetarianism, confrontationality, dialectic

**F**ood. Identity. Norm. Connecting the concrete with the abstract, meanings and social practices interweave traces of life to construct cultures, generate discourses, define human relationships, and exercise powers. In human society, food is never merely the nutrient source for survival; rather, its representation and symbolism has been impacting human civilizations and modernizations throughout histories and across cultures. According to Frye and Bruner (2012), “modes of producing, distributing, consuming, and marketing food have socio-ecological, socio-economic, and socio-political motives and consequences” (p. 1). As people constantly involve themselves in the food system, what and how they eat become imperative parameters of their social, cultural, and moral identities.

Defined by lack of meat in one’s diet, Beer (2010) contended that vegetarianism denoted the ritual associated with the abstinence of food since antiquity. However, in a modern context, particular reasons for abstaining from food choices such as ethical and environmental concerns impart different meanings of being a vegetarian. Propagandized through mass media, whether one should take a vegetable diet has become a social issue rather than a personal concern that is challenging the diet norm of the U.S. In this context, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the largest animal rights organization in the world that mainly focuses on opposing the abuse of animals in factory farming, the clothing trade, laboratories, and the entertainment industry,

has launched multiple advertising campaigns that involve nudity, sex, and brutality, which attract audiences’ attention and communicate PETA’s extreme stance on vegetarianism (About PETA, 2013). To understand the pertinent food politics in this case, this study explores the sexual representation of vegetarianism by looking into two of PETA’s most offensive advertisements and their indications of the mainstream diet culture in the U.S.

Additionally, answers to questions such as “how does the vegetarian movement transmit its values and beliefs to the public” and “what do some of its media representations indicate about the identity of being a vegetarian” are crucial in revealing troubles with normality and the process of normalization. While the media representation of vegetarian campaigns plays a significant role in embodying and renegotiating the meanings of vegetarianism, the broader economic, political, and cultural contexts tend to marginalize vegetarians as a counterpart to normality. Also, the complexity associated with vegetarian identity in American society is situated in an ideological sphere of consumerism, liberalism, and atomism that concomitantly affects the production of mass media. In this case, the norm that vegetarians are opposed to is massive, but obscure. Therefore, the goal of this study is to identify the abnormality of vegetarians’ image in the extreme case of PETA and the ways in which such abnormality are represented, structured, and justified in the power system of normalization in current American society.

Scholarly studies on vegetarianism are abundant and various. From an anthropological perspective, Beer (2010) studied how literary texts use dietary restriction in Greek and Roman literature to convey identity. By drawing parallels between food restrictions in antiquity with modern vegetarianism, Beer (2010) pointed out that the underlying philosophy and impacts of food abstinence in the ancient Greco-Roman world is similar to that of vegetarianism nowadays, in which case vegetarianism helped the society to unite through self-identification and the exclusion of the others. This subject implies the power nexus among discourses, identities, and social movements that anchor vegetarianism in culture. It also offers historical references for the growth of modern vegetarianism in western society.

Averred by scholars such as K. Iacobbo and M. Iacobbo (2006), vegetarianism has become a thriving subculture in American society under the current social and economic contexts. According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study, in 1979 only 1.2% of Americans were classified as vegetarians; while by 1994, this number had increased to 7% (Janda and Trocchia, 2001, p. 1206). Additionally, more and more vegetarian products were available in grocery stores and restaurants to fulfill the growing demand of non-meat eaters. For instance, Janda and Trocchia (2001) maintained that supermarkets such as Whole Foods Market (Colorado based) and Mother Earth Storehouse (New York based) continue to prosper because they specialize in providing vegetarian and organic food.

However, some scholars suspect the achievements of the vegetarian movement. Maurer (2002) surveyed a number of vegetarian groups and organizations in North America and concluded that vegetarian leaders have failed to persuade the public to make a conscious choice on diet. Discerning the challenge, Bruner and Hahn (2012) compared vegetarian movements with organic movements by analyzing the rhetorical trends of both. Bruner and Hahn pointed out that the managerial rhetoric of organic movements “are designed to keep the existing system viable” without questioning “the underlying epistemology and group ethic.” In contrast, the vegetarian movement applies confrontational rhetoric in public discourses by

inquiring into the ethical value systems of societies on controversial issues such as animal treatment (p. 52).

Concerning people’s reactions to animal welfare, Herzog and Golden (2009) studied the relationship between moral emotion and social activism by surveying a wide range of participants. In their study, half of the animal activists ate meat while half of the vegetarians did not consider themselves to be animal activists. They found out that people’s disgust sensitivities are correlated with their attitudes towards animal welfare, but not with meat consumption. This argument challenges the stance of many ethical vegetarians (including PETA members) who deeply believe that eating meat is immoral because people’s understanding of ethics regarding animal welfare is very subjective. In this case, differences among people’s opinions of what they should eat create an arena for the contest of power.

Despite the complexity associated with vegetarianism and animal activism, Maurer (2002) specified that many people become vegetarians primarily for health reasons. That is to say, meat has been considered as unhealthy because of its industrial means of production and distribution in the U.S. (Pollan, 2006). As environmental movements prevailed in the U.S. in the second half of the twentieth century, the relative scarcity of vegetables in the mainstream diet progressively reinforced the value of being a vegetarian. Interpreting vegetarianism as a branch of environmentalism, Freeman (2010) provided a thorough analysis on the U.S. environmental advocacy organizations regarding the issues of a meat-based diet. He suggested that environmental discourses in the public domain should explicitly address the environmental and nutrient costs of industrial meat production so as to strategically promote a plant-based diet in society.

As far as scholars’ arguments are developed, discourses pertaining to vegetarianism present a binary structure of identification that differentiates vegetarians from the rest of people in society. Regardless of advocacy for or opposition to vegetarianism, Romo and Donovan-Kicken (2012) pointed out that vegetarians are perceived as the “healthy deviants” who violate the mainstream diet norm. From the perspective of interpersonal communication, their study revealed that many



vegetarians find it challenging to talk about vegetarianism without coming across as judging others. To maintain the interpersonal relationship between vegetarians and meat-eaters, Romo and Donovan-Kicken (2012) suggested that vegetarians should enact certain communication strategies to minimize the discomfort of meat-eaters on the topic of vegetarianism. In this case, vegetarianism is regarded as confrontational.

Additionally, Bruner and Hahn (2012) identified the vegetarian movement as a radical social movement because it emphasizes identity shifts and cultural changes. Particularly, the social meanings of vegetarian identity are intertwined with people's understanding of gender, race, and social class. For instance, Maurer (2002) indicated that the "average" vegetarian from the U.S. and Canada is female, white, and middle-class. Exaggerating this "stereotype," PETA's vegetarian campaigns utilize bio-politics pertaining to gender and body size to impart its moral or environmental values, which constantly reshapes the image of vegetarians in American society. That is to say, the intersection of vegetarian identity with

other stigmatizations situates vegetarianism in a complicated web of power and representations.

Under these circumstances, vegetarians are constructed to be not only health deviant, but also morally, environmentally, body, sexually, and social class deviant as their differences are prevalently manifested through interpersonal and mass media communications. In several studies, scholars such as Romo and Donovan-Kicken (2012) and Bruner and Hahn (2012) proposed different strategies to alleviate the tension between vegetarianism and mainstream culture. However, the binary structure reinforced by the discourses and the representation of vegetarians in the public domain has created difficulties in integrating vegetarianism into the norm. In the U.S., vegetarians remain marginalized because they confront the norm by shouting out to the system, "You cannot go on assuming you are the true and correct order; you must see yourself as the evil things you are" (Cathcart, 1978, p. 100). Reflecting upon such antagonism, the central question of this study appears: Is this diatribe the antithesis demanded by the norm *per se* to exert its power?

## THEORETICAL APPROACH

To determine the construction of the confrontationality associated with modern vegetarian movements, I apply Bourdieu's theory of habitus to examine the vegetarian identity. Specifically, the theory provides a useful definition of social and cultural capital by transubstantiating the connotations of economic capital to its symbolic form. Traditionally, capital indicates wealth in the form of money or other assets that tend to facilitate a production process. Different from the concept of economic capital, social and cultural capital are understood as the knowledge that produces and reproduces social differences and inequality based on pre-existing hierarchies and discriminations (Moore, 2012).

For Bourdieu, habitus is the principle that structures the production of such knowledge through the symbolic form of capital. In this regard, vegetarianism is the habitus where a certain structure

of mindset, sensibility, and ritual is created and practiced during the cultural production of vegetarian identity. However, the formation of such habitus entails an examination of the vegetarian identity as both input and output of cultural production throughout time. That is to say, unlike economic capital leading to a linear production, social and cultural capital prompt a recursive production that dynamically reshapes the habitus and reproduces the knowledge of convention. As a result, vegetarianism and vegetarian identity are constantly changing and mutually drive the changes of each other during the process of culture production. In later analysis, I will provide a detailed examination of PETA's media representation of vegetarian identity and its impacts on vegetarian culture. Mass media plays an important role in transmitting cultural messages. Nevertheless, vegetarianism exercises its own habitus to cultivate

vegetarian identities. In other words, how the general public thinks about vegetarians could be different from how some vegetarians think about themselves.

To explain why confrontationality is inevitable in the vegetarian movement in the U.S., I use the Hegelian theory of dialectic to analyze social, economic, and cultural spheres of food production. Regarding the binary structure of vegetarianism and the mainstream diet culture, Desmond (1985) introduced a Hegelian dialectic that involves a double affirmation of *wholeness*. Specifically, “double affirmation” indicates the ability to integrate plural meanings into a seemingly univocal system while some of the meanings are actually contradictory (p. 245). The Hegelian dialectic challenges the traditional logic of repudiating contradiction in the western consciousness; rather, this stream of

thought acknowledges that the changing power relation of things would engender the possibility to integrate contradictory meanings in a paradoxical, yet univocal system. That is to say, the superimposed meanings of things would reduce the “univocal” to the “equivocal” throughout time. According to Desmond (1985), the construction of the equivocal meaning(s) is not chaotic, but structural in Hegel’s philosophy. Particularly, the Hegelian theorists identify dialectic as an on-going and recurring process of deforming the *thesis*, forming the *antithesis*, and reforming the *synthesis*, which articulates the forms of *becoming* (p. 253). In the case of vegetarianism, I apply this structure of dialectic to discuss the current diet norm as the thesis, vegetarianism as the antithesis, and the potential future norm as the synthesis to understand food politics in the U.S.

## METHODOLOGY

To study the confrontationality of the vegetarian culture in American society, I take a semiotic analysis to construe two recent vegetarian advertisements promoted by PETA, who offensively appeal to vegetarianism through transgressive portrayals of the female body. The first one is *Veggie Love*, which was banned from being shown during the 2009 Super Bowl intermission; the second one is *Alicia Silverstone’s Veggie PSA*, which was also banned from the airwaves in Houston, Texas, in 2007. Although these videos did not air on TV channels, they are publicized online through YouTube and other sources to reach a wide range of audiences. Also, since PETA is the largest animal advocacy organization in the world, transgressions in its advertising campaigns tend to generate more attention from the public.

Considering the potential impact of the advertisements, I examine the symbolicity of the sexual bodies in both videos to determine the confrontationality of vegetarianism. Additionally, by applying Bourdieu’s theory of habitus, I discuss the ideas behind the justifications of vegetarianism and its connections with body and identity in general. Given the impact of food production in the U.S., vegetarian identity is negotiated both in and out of the vegetarian culture. Therefore, vegetarian identity presented by PETA advertisements is both the product and input of the vegetarian culture. After identifying the confrontationality of vegetarian identity through PETA’s case, I use the Hegelian theory of dialectic to investigate the norm to which the vegetarian culture is opposed.

## ANALYSIS OF THE CONFRONTATIONALITY OF VEGETARIANISM: FROM BODY TO IDEA ■■■■

In its vegetarian campaigns, PETA launched a series of images and videos involving nudity and sexuality. In 2009, PETA submitted the Super Bowl advertisement *Veggie Love*, but it was banned by NBC. This advertisement featured a group of attractive models showing their sexual love for different vegetables. In this thirty-second advertisement, the camera switches among scenes of four models with bikinis who physically “flirt” with their favorite vegetables. NBC’s rejection letter described the inappropriate details explicitly: Niki licked the pumpkin, moved the pumpkin in between her legs and “*rubbed pelvic region with pumpkin*”; Amanda rubbed asparagus on her breasts and laps “*appearing as if it is ready to be inserted into vagina*”; Berenice “*touched her breasts with her hands while eating broccoli*”; Kathy took a hot pool bath with a variety of veggies (2009). At the end of the advertisement, text snapped in: “Study How” “Vegetarians have better sex” “Go VEG” (PETA, 2009).

The italicized sentences are direct quotes about activities in the advertisement that NBC considered as violating the sexuality standard for public airwaves. According to Bordo (1993), the reason behind such sexual transgression associated with the female body is that it speaks “a language of provocation” (p. 6). Specifically, she pointed out that the intersection of the negativity between body (as opposed to mind) and female (as opposed to male) provides a degraded image of the female body that indicates “the distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death” (p. 5). By utilizing the female body sexually, the video *Veggie Love* consolidates the conventional bodily-constructed female identity. Controversially, the way this PETA’s advertisement integrates vegetarian identity with the female identity drastically magnifies the transgression of sexuality. In a conventional sense, Bordo (1993) indicated that females are considered “passive, vegetative, and primitive” since they historically possess less power than males (p. 12). Therefore, it is socially acceptable to associate vegetables with a female who tries to appeal for a healthy diet to take care of her family. However, coupling vegetables with sexuality is unprecedented. Unlike the mom taking care of her family, which signifies heterosexual sex, the images of non-maternal

women getting erotic with vegetables tap into fears of the non-necessity of males, coding masturbation and solitary sex into the PETA text. In such a way, the transgression of the models using different vegetables as tools to sexually entertain themselves grasps people’s attention and challenges their sense. Regardless of the visual rhetoric of this advertisement, its core message indicates that a female’s love for vegetables would lead her to have better sex. Indeed, another PETA advertisement that features the testimonial of Alicia Silverstone seems to illustrate the relationship between vegetarian and female identity on the issue of sex.

In *Alicia Silverstone’s Veggie PSA*, Alicia, nude, surges from a marble structured swimming pool in an elegant garden. The camera first zooms to a close up shot of her wet and pretty face and chest. Then it zooms out into a long shot as Alicia pulls herself out of the pool. The camera gives additional close up shots of her hands and her sexy waist, but subtly preventing her breasts from being seen. With a gentle movement of her head, Alicia’s attractive profile is displayed as she swings her hair to the back. At the same time, her testimonial starts, “I am Alicia Silverstone and I am a vegetarian. There is nothing in the world that has changed me as much as this. I feel so much better and have so much more energy. It is so amazing” (PETA, 2007). As her statement proceeds, the camera gives sequential shots of her sexy back, her pretty profile, and her seductive facial expressions. In the end, the text “GoVeg.com” appears on a green screen.

In this advertisement, Alicia Silverstone expresses that she feels better and has much more energy after she committed to a plant-based diet. Her testimonial provides a clue to resolve the myth that vegetarians somehow have better sex than non-vegetarians. The close up shots of Alicia’s body particularly evidence the benefit of being a vegetarian that PETA intends to impart: a sexy body. Sexy in this context indicates a prevalently valued body image of female with slenderness and curviness. Then the logic surfaces: in order to have better sex, one needs to be sexually appealing with a sexy body. Accordingly, one major way to have a sexy body is to control one’s diet. Being a vegetarian, therefore, could help people to achieve this goal. This advertisement reveals the superiority of a vegetarian’s body. Such superiority challenges the prevailing social phenomenon of the defective

obese body caused by the mainstream diet culture in American society. In this case, PETA actually aggrandizes the vegetarian by implicitly demeaning the people who rarely control what they eat in their lives.

The core message of both PETA's advertisements infers the rhetoric of the vegetarian movement in modern times, which tends to appraise the superiority of vegetarian ideal. In the Romo and Donovan-Kicken's study (2012), a 29-year old vegetarian interviewee pointed out that because vegetarians go against the norm of society by eating healthily, he felt like a standout (p. 410). Through the theoretical lens of Bourdieu, the conception that being a vegetarian is healthier than others is one of the fibers that construct the vegetarianism habitus. Within the cultural sphere of vegetarianism, the knowledge of benefits associated with a vegetable-based diet constantly cultivates the superiority of vegetables to meat. Referring to Alicia Silverstone's testimonial, vegetarians feel better, refreshed, energetic, healthy, more ethical, and environment-friendly because of their commitments to a vegetable-based diet. However, this identification of "a healthy self" through developing a reverent relationship with vegetables could be culturally

subjective, whereas other scholars are concerned about the calcium deficiency associated with a vegetable-based diet (Bruner and Hahn, 2012, p. 48). In this case, people who are reluctant to appreciate the value of a vegetable-based diet may find the rhetoric of vegetarianism confrontational.

Additionally, a balanced diet combining a variety of meats and vegetables is inadequately explored. Nutrition experts, particularly in the U.S., mainly study food by mechanically analyzing its chemical components and the pertinent impacts on the human body. However, Michael Pollan pointed out that solely relying on scientific information, which he referred as "nutritionism," might impede people from holistically understanding phenomena associated with food (2008, p. 28). In other words, how normal people understand a vegetable-based diet may be different from how vegetarians understand it. Therefore, PETA's vegetarian campaigns exaggerate the value of being a vegetarian from the perspective of vegetarian culture, which unilaterally transmits the cultural messages by confronting the norm and understating the diverse possibilities of eating meat healthily, ethically, and environmental-friendly.

## ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGIN OF THE CONFRONTATIONALITY OF VEGETARIANISM



To deepen understanding of the confrontationality discussed previously, this section investigates the origin of the vegetarian confrontationality in the U.S. From a historical perspective, capitalism emerged as a major means of economic production that fundamentally transformed the sphere of social and cultural production during the nineteenth century. According to the theory of western Marxism, capitalism degraded human relationships into quantitative measures and maximized the utility of human bodies as resources for production (Kearney & Rainwater, 1996). This form of quantification also led to a radical change in people's views towards nature, to which they used to be subordinate. Specifically, nature has become a resource that is utilized for economic production. In fact, Adorno and Horkheimer (1996) identified this

mechanical view as "the disenchantment of nature" (p. 205). However, under the rule of capitalism, "the disenchantment of nature" unprecedentedly improved the productivity and prosperity of western society with an abundance of commodities and convenience in every aspect of human life. The mass production of food nowadays demonstrates well the power of capitalist productivity. For instance, it allows a fertilized egg to yield a pound of chicken breast in 48 days; but this form of production is achieved by selectively breeding heavy, large-breasted chickens and raising them in large, crowded rearing sheds, which actually leads to crippling leg disorders or heart failure in the chickens (*Food Inc.*, 2008). In this case, capitalist productivity gave rise to a form of moral degradation regarding animal treatment.

Furthermore, under the structure of a capitalist economy, efficient production also yields cheap commodities. Regarding the food market, it became increasingly easier for people to access a significant amount of food, particularly animal products, at a cheap price. A cultural as well as a social phenomenon emerged while fast food restaurants expanded throughout the U.S. in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to deliver unimaginably cheap meat. At these sites, the working-class fed their hungry stomachs without knowing the potential health problems to which these products might lead. The unchecked gluttony liberated by capitalist productivity becomes normalized, and indeed shapes and reshapes the mainstream diet culture in the U.S.

Along with the capitalist over-development, pertinent consequences such as climate change have made more and more people realize the problems associated with the mass production of food in the 21st century. The rising recognition of moral values in environmental and animal protection as well as health issues becomes the counterpart to the ideology behind the distorted food production and the diet norm in the U.S.; however, Desmond (1985) suggested that norm may “serve to hide as much as it discloses as a drift towards a denial, falsification” (p. 246). That is to say, the disciplinary power of the norm is not only embodied in the mainstream diet culture but also operates in its counterpart accordingly. In particular, by examining the industrial production of meat, Romo and Donovan-Kicken (2012) indicated that “the livestock industry is one of the world’s largest contributors to land degradation, climate change, water use, and pollution” (p. 406). Additionally, scientific studies show that meat contains higher levels of saturated fat, cholesterol, and animal protein content that may expose people to higher rates of coronary heart disease, hypertension, renal disease, and diabetes (Janda and Trocchia, 2001, p. 1212; Jacob and Burri, 1996, p. 986).

These discourses contribute to the development of a certain domain of knowledge that reconstructs the cultural meanings of meat. Conceptually, meat is no longer merely a source for nutrients and pleasure; rather, to some extent, it has become an evil representation of the disenchantment of nature and a target for environmentalists, animal rights

activists, and vegetarians to attack. In other words, there emerges the antithesis of the disenchantment of nature, which works in the polar opposite direction: treating the natural environment and all its creatures with respect while combating every deed that tends to harm nature. However, as previously discussed, the disenchantment of nature is produced and encapsulated in the capitalist economy as a part of the norm. Under the disciplinary power of the norm that also operates in its counterpart, people tend to analyze and correct the superficially presented problems while ignoring the fundamental structural cause of these problems. Therefore, the rise of the antithesis is more or less a symptom of the unsustainable norm instead of an ultimate model to which the society must convert. Specifically, the antithesis turned to vegetarian culture and transformed vegetarianism into a political platform. The clash between the ideologies behind food production and the prevailing health, ethical, and environmental concerns, engendered a war between the disenchantment with nature and the enchantment with nature. In other words, vegetarianism in the U.S. nowadays is more or less a product of the prevailing carnivorous culture resulting from the nation’s capitalist mode of production.

The incompatibility of the norm and its counterpart gives rise to the confrontationality of vegetarianism. As Mueller (1958) specified,

Any “ism”—which has a polar opposite, or is a special viewpoint leaving “the rest” to itself—must be criticized by the logic of philosophical thought, whose problem is reality as such, the “world-itself” (p. 411).

Therefore, by examining the transgression of PETA’s advertisements and further reevaluating the meaning of vegetarianism, I find that the confrontationality of modern vegetarian identity is not originated from eating a vegetable-based diet *per se*, but rather deeply rooted in the thesis, which is the norm of producing and eating unhealthy meat. Such a norm is much more inconspicuous, powerful, and insidious.

However, according to Desmond (1985), the resistance of the vegetarian ideal to the norm and its attempt to re-enchant nature create generative power to deform the norm, the reality, and the consciousness

in its partiality and limitation. Nevertheless, it opens up possibilities for reconstitution of the norm. Theoretically speaking, the Hegelian dialectic renders the concept of synthesis as the potential reconciliation between the thesis and the antithesis. Therefore, in the case of the diet norm, the crux of the synthesis is to demolish the antagonistic structure posed by the thesis and the antithesis, through which vegetarianism would be integrated as a part of the current norm. Such

synthesis entails transformations in the means of current food production and people's conventional understandings of food, which indeed involves a constitutive process to exercise new power and knowledge. Throughout time, the society may achieve a new trend of norm as the synthesis. For instance, Michael Pollan (2008) envisioned a fine diet for future that would be "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly Plants" (p. 1).

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the sexual representation of vegetarianism in PETA's vegetarian campaigns and the impacts of mainstream diet on the vegetarian culture in the U.S. On the one hand, by analyzing the media representation of vegetarian identity in PETA's advertisements, this study identifies the confrontationality exhibited in the modern vegetarianism of the U.S. Through the lens of PETA, I found that the construction of vegetarian identity imparts the superiority of eating a vegetable-based diet. Consequently, the rhetoric of vegetarianism appears to be confrontational when it demeans the potential physical, environmental, and cultural values of eating meat. On the other hand, by applying the Hegelian dialectic, the study provides a tentative explanation on the origin of the proposed confrontationality as a cultural phenomenon in the U.S. From economic and political perspectives, I discuss the disenchantment of nature as a contingent byproduct of capitalism that

transforms the vegetarian culture into a battlefield where the re-enchantment of nature is compulsively promoted. The opposing structure presented by the vegetarian and the non-vegetarian positions indicates not only the hegemony of the norm but also the potential shift of normalization. In this sense, the struggle of vegetarianism under the current social, economic, and cultural contexts in the U.S. attenuates the power of the diet norm and reallocates the power to its counterpart. However, to eliminate problems with the present norm, the current political and social investments in the vegetarian habitus are insufficient to engender a proper solution. Rather, a critical synthesis is essential to reconstitute the norm, which is healthier and more integrating. In a word, the confrontationality of vegetarianism is a cultural phenomenon of power struggles. A new understanding in its meanings could potentially facilitate the reformation of food culture in American society. ■

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## 2015 LPH JOURNAL



# CALL for Submissions

**T**he LPH journal, exclusively for undergraduate members of LPH, is currently accepting submissions for its third volume to be e-published in the Spring of 2015.

Papers must be no longer than 8,000 words inclusive of all text and references, follow APA style, and represent original research in the Communication discipline. Co-authored papers are acceptable, but all authors must be undergraduate LPH members.

Send completed papers to Trevor Parry-Giles, NCA's Director of Academic and Professional Affairs. Complete submissions will include two files. The first will be a Word document including a cover page for the article featuring the paper's title, the author information, and the LPH chapter and school represented. The second will be a PDF of the paper with all author information removed to facilitate the blind peer-review process.

All papers will be reviewed by the journal's editorial board, which consists of LPH faculty advisors.

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