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# Ideologies of a Gravescape

## Sonja Loeser

What comes to mind when walking through a cemetery? Is it death? Is it life? Is it fear of what's to come? Often, we drive, walk, or bike by these places, places of memorial and sacred meaning, without much paying much attention to the true meaning of their presence. These places convey much more than we think they do, especially when we pass by them in a fleeting manner. It takes looking at them, assessing their aesthetic qualities, and then translating those observations into meanings, for us to really understand their rhetorical qualities. Cemeteries hold the bodies of the deceased as well as memorials of them, such as the tombstones with their names, dates of birth and death, and sometimes even a saying or quote. They can differ greatly, but they all continue to share similar aspects of memorializing the dead while creating a place that makes it possible to do so.

Richard Morris helps us to understand what a traditional gravescape conveys through three ideologies, religionist, romanticist, and heroist. He believes that the public debate over memorializing is due to these three American "cultures" struggling for cultural dominance and control of public memory over the course of American history (Meyer 1044). We, as viewers, can assess what different gravescapes convey using these ideas as a framework. Throughout this essay, I will explain how South Street Cemetery, located in Portsmouth, NH, combines all three of Richard Morris's religionist, romanticist, and heroist ideologies to convey the rhetorical manifestations within a gravescape.

I pass by, and through, South Street Cemetery in Portsmouth, NH quite regularly. It is located on the corner of Sagamore Avenue and South Street. Little Harbor lies along the backside of the cemetery and the downtown area is located about a mile away. It includes both paved and dirt pathways that guide the visitors and line the tombstones. Trees, bushes, and other plants frame the tombstones while a pond is located in

roughly the central area of the cemetery, which is also used as a skating rink during the wintertime. Plots are dispersed in a grid-like fashion among the rolling hills throughout the space. Earlier gravestones are located on the Northern, more elevated part of the grounds, while more recent gravestones make up the Southern, less elevated part.

The cemetery itself is quite large and is made up of five different cemeteries within the one termed, South Street Cemetery. They include Cotton Burial Ground established in 1671, Proprietor's Burial Ground established in 1831, Harmony Grove established in 1847, Sagamore Cemetery established in 1871, and Elmwood Cemetery established after 1900 (Knoblock). The plot of land making up Cotton Burial Ground, located in the Northern corner off of South Street, was originally granted to "Goodman" William Cotton in 1671. Its history is immense as it dates back to the 1600s and has been often considered one of the most haunted spots in Portsmouth, according to ghost hunters and enthusiasts of paranormal phenomena (Broome). Proprietor's Burial Ground was laid out in 1831, which shows the preferred gravescape style of that time with its elaborate gravestones (See Figures 4-5) and fenced-in family plots. Harmony Grove, which lies next to Proprietor's Burial Ground, also shows influence of the Victorian Era with its monumental sculptures. The addition of both Sagamore Cemetery and Elmwood Cemetery, located in the Southeastern part of the grounds and overlooking an inlet of the Piscataqua River, greatly expanded the area of South Street Cemetery (Knoblock). Today, Sagamore Cemetery and Elmwood Cemetery are still being used as burial grounds and contain the most modern grave sites and gravestones within the overall area.

Rhetoricians have increasingly turned their attention to material artifacts in recent years rather than say, speeches, as the material artifact can convey just as much as words can convey. The understanding of death and how we deal with it is an ongoing discussion among society. That is why the deathscape has become such a valid topic and artifact for rhetoricians to discuss. In my examination of the South Street Cemetery, I chose to walk through it more recently with a keener sense of this artifact being rhetorical and why that is so. I next analyzed the organization, the structures, and the aesthetics within the area. As it is very large and contains five cemeteries in one, I wanted to capture the essence of each part, noticing the differences between them all.

The old age is shown in the parts of the gravescape that include broken gravestones and barely legible inscriptions. In a way, these

parts looked neglected, especially those hidden behind bushes or small trees (See Figure 1). It was as though these graves did not need upkeep because of the notion that less and less people are going to visit them as the years pass. As you move along the areas established in the 1800s and during the Victorian Era, the evidence of the dedication to beauty and upkeep become more prevalent. The gravestones are more elaborately decorated with artistic components and lettering. They are organized in more aesthetically pleasing arrangements and are accompanied by groomed bushes and purposefully planted trees. The gravestones are arranged in a more spread out fashion than those of an earlier era, making it possible to walk around the area and read each one. This “spread out” arrangement also tends to be found in the more modern parts of the cemetery. For example, in the Southeast region, the Elmwood Cemetery, gravestones are setup in somewhat of a grid-like fashion as to accommodate those visiting the graves. These graves also have evidence of being more recent not just by the date on the gravestone, but by the surrounding flowers, trinkets and mementos (See Figure 10). They are fresh and not yet damaged or disintegrated, which marks in our mind that the anniversary of this person’s death was recent, or that they might have passed away very recently. All of these qualities within the distinct parts of South Street Cemetery convey different meanings of death that strike up thoughts and ideas regarding those meanings.

Richard Morris helps us to understand those thoughts and meanings in his analyses regarding traditional gravescapes and their rhetorical features mapped out by the gravescapes characteristics, purpose, and placement. Morris claims that gravescapes illustrate each of these ideologies through different appreciations, such as, for God, for nature, and for the individual. These terms help us make sense of the space itself concerning what it is attempting to convey to the public, whether they evoke feelings of death, feelings of pleasure, or feelings of tribute. Morris believes that there is a public debate over memorializing and these are the three contenders within the debate. The religionist, romanticist, and heroist ideologies can be applied to South Street Cemetery in regards to its variety of characteristics and the action conveyed by these ideologies in a traditional gravescape.

The religionist idea is one that derives from the wills and laws of God. People who believe in this concept would be dedicated to the idea that individuals are not meant to serve life for themselves but that they are instruments of God, meant to serve under his ultimate purpose.



Concerning gravescapes, Morris assigns the term *memento mori* as being the gravescape style that exemplifies and depicts the religionist ideology. Typically, the burial practices and grave markers of this style gravescape are simple while minimizing the importance of the individual and of life on earth (Bodnar 1203). Instead, celebration comes in the afterlife and therefore an elaborate memorial and dedication to an individual's life is not necessary. Morris believes that those dedicated to the religionist ideology held sway over social life and public memory and as *memento mori* gravescapes are often located centrally within a town so that the community is reminded death is never far away as life itself is indeed fragile (Prelli 205). The grave markers within a *memento mori* style are typically of a modest size with single arch shape (See Figure 12). In general, the religionist ideology brings about feelings of the divine and reminds us to minimize the significance of our life on earth.

The romanticist concept is one that focused on uniting man with man and man with nature. It moved away from the heavenly goals in religionist and envisioned a harmonious community on earth (Bodnar 1203). The cemeteries that fall under this category show appreciation for the dead by displaying an emotionally pleasing area for the living to visit. The gravestones are beautiful and aesthetically pleasing with artistic qualities that are apparent to the viewer. For example, one might notice that these cemeteries look inviting due to their picturesque settings. The headstones include more poetry and less of the minimalist descriptions from the past (See Figure 2). Richard Morris uses Mount Auburn Cemetery, established in 1831 and located in Boston, MA (French 37), as an example of a romantic gravescape as it was one of the first cemeteries that included a garden and more rural, but pleasing features than any before.

Finally, the concept of the heroist is one that memorializes the dead. It is meant to commemorate the heroic actions of the deceased and to pay tribute to them with a monument or statue. Often we can see such commemorations to powerful individuals, like presidents of our country. For example, the Washington Monument, which began construction in 1848, pays tribute to George Washington, the first president of the United States of America. The heroist tradition is meant to celebrate the expression of individualism over the idea of submission to God, from the religionists, or submission to nature, from the romanticists (Bodnar 1203). Morris relates this concept to figures who work their way up from the bottom to the top and who heroically triumph over adversity. He says

that heroists believed in making their lives a success through their own efforts rather than through others.

Within the South Street Cemetery, the Cotton Burial Ground, which was established in 1671, exemplifies the characteristics of that regarding a religionist ideology and memento mori style gravescape. At this time in history, puritan ideals and devotion to God ran high in the Northeast, so the depiction of a cemetery with simple features that was dedicated to remind the living that they are under the will and law of God is fitting. They believed that glory is not found in life but rather, in the afterlife, which rings true to the religionist ideology. This area of the cemetery dates back many years so many of the words or phrases on the gravestones are not legible. They are also in poor shape, in terms of breaking apart or falling over (See Figure 11). We can therefore see how the religionist ideology connects well to such characteristics in the Cotton Burial Ground, because it is not commemorating the life of those buried but rather, the afterlife of them all.

The South Street Cemetery has four different areas that include characteristics of the romanticist ideology. They are the Proprietor's Burial Ground established in 1831, Harmony Grove established in 1847, Sagamore Cemetery established in 1871, and Elmwood Cemetery established after 1900. Each of these areas contains gravestones that are more elaborate and artistic than those within the Cotton Burial Ground. Both the Proprietor's Burial Ground and Harmony Grove show apparent qualities of the romanticist ideology. For example, there are trees and bushes that frame family plots and there are poems written on many of the gravestones (See Figure 7). Because these areas were established right around the time of the Victorian Era, we can see a distinct connection to the style of that time period. Gardens and appreciation for nature became much more important, especially within a gravescape. A city with a garden cemetery thought of itself as demonstrating spiritual sensitivity and emotional sophistication (Rugg 46). Therefore, the spots within South Street Cemetery that display romantic qualities are probably interpreted by the community and by visitors as being more appreciative of the dead because they show an awareness of the emotions brought forth by death.

Certain grave markers throughout the South Street Cemetery are clear examples of memorials for the dead. They exemplify a heroist ideology through their commemoration and massive tribute to an individual. Although there is not one distinct area dedicated to only the heroist ideology, South Street Cemetery includes enough examples of heroic style for

it to be an apparent characteristic of the cemetery, such as the memorials that resemble the shape and style of the Washington Monument (See Figure 3). Their dominating size compared to other gravestones is apparent and therefore, contributes to celebrating the expression of individualism. Viewers can pick up on the dominance of these memorials from far away and must immediately think that this person was important or powerful in some way and deserved to be recognized in such a way.

Each of Morris's ideologies is apparent throughout South Street Cemetery and remind us as viewers, that we must consider past, present, and future trends when assessing the qualities of a gravescape. When applying the religionist ideology to South Street Cemetery, we must note that this concept is apparent within the oldest part of the cemetery, the Cotton Burial Ground. We consider that in the past, emphasis on God and living your life under his purpose was more apparent than it would be in the future. So, when we apply Morris's conceptual framework we can see that the rhetorical features of Cotton Burial Ground are its simple and modest gravestones and style throughout the area as they convey a sense of focus on the afterlife rather than the person's individual life. This can be found within the images provided (See Figures 11-12), which convey such emotions.

When applying the romanticist ideology to South Street Cemetery, we must be aware of the period in history when romanticism was emerging as the most dominant style. The Victorian Era led to an appreciation for nature and beauty and therefore, influenced the structure and style of the gravescape. Cemeteries began to include gardens and artistically composed graves, such as the four cemeteries Proprietor's Burial Ground, Harmony Grove, Sagamore Cemetery, and Elmwood Cemetery within South Street Cemetery, established during or after the 1800s. Once we apply Morris's conceptual framework to these areas, we can see that the rhetorical features within these areas are the natural and artistic qualities on or around the gravestones that convey a sense of beauty and appreciation for nature while catering to a pleasant experience for the viewers.

Lastly, when we apply the heroist ideology to South Street Cemetery, we must take into consideration the importance of freedom in our country and the significance of those who fight for it. From our fight for independence to our ongoing fight for equality, the United States has celebrated those who took part. It is a big part of who we are as Americans and that is why the heroists dedicate their memorials to commemorating

powerful individuals. After applying Morris's conceptual framework to South Street Cemetery, we can see the rhetorical features within it are the dominant memorials often shaped like other historical memorials that paying tribute to and convey a sense of appreciation for an individual.

Overall, South Street Cemetery possesses Richard Morris's three ideologies of traditional gravescapes called religionist, romanticist, and heroist. It does so by combining different cemeteries within one large cemetery that either depict one ideology as a whole, such as the Cotton Burial Ground as *memento mori*, or by depicting qualities of two ideologies within several areas, such as having both romantic and heroic parts within the Proprietor's Burial Ground, Harmony Grove, Sagamore Cemetery and Elmwood Cemetery. We can use Morris's ideologies of gravescapes to analyze and assess South Street Cemetery because it is an area that memorializes the dead in more than one way. Morris believed that memorials and the traditions regarding them do not just exist because scholars describe them (Meyer 1045), but because they convey certain qualities that manifest feelings amongst their viewers. Cemeteries do not just act as places to bury the dead. They bring about ideas regarding death, therefore making them cultural institutions (French 42). They act as rhetorical spaces because different ideologies are crying out through the silent depictions of remembrance for God, of appreciation for nature, and of tribute for the individual. They are powerful locations for forgotten memory where much happens, such as their conveying of thought and feeling to those viewing them (Wright 60). South Street Cemetery is unique because it is a traditional gravescape that combines three different cultures among its vast area and different styles. It proves that the public debate over memorializing the dead is apparent and will continue to be discussed among rhetoricians.

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# Skepticism as Rhetorical Strategy in Scientific Argument

## Leigh Fraser

Science, like all other disciplines, must be proven to the masses in order to gain influence as truth. Because of the elevated nature of fact, or logos, in this modern age the field has grown competitive and streamlined. In order for a scientific discovery or theory to gain momentum, the scientists themselves must employ rhetoric to cement the relevance of their work against the backdrop of existing knowledge. The 1930's were a time of wavering unease. With the impending threat of Nazi Germany looming on the horizon, the development and emphasis on new weaponry rose to prominence. Proposed theories on the creation of a "super bomb" became an unavoidable topic in the field of physics. The Frisch-Peierls Memorandum and the ensuing MAUD (Military Applications of Uranium Detonation) Committee Report demonstrate successful rhetorical strategy that cooperates and functions over the course of two instances. Using similar tactics at various phases of development, both documents employ a strong scientific persuasion that ultimately reached the desired conclusion of the authors. By juxtaposing a strong interplay of Aristotle's rhetorical proofs with organized skepticism, both documents provided convincing scientific reasoning for experimentation. Their breakthrough promised both powerful benefit and devastating consequences that would alter the course of warfare forever.

The complexity of the argument for the nuclear bomb stems primarily from an untested theory and the controversial nature of its implications. During the early phases of World War II, sensing the rise of fascism in Germany, brilliant minds sought solace in England. The Frisch-Peierls Memorandum, written in March of 1940 just six months after the English declaration of war, engaged and urged the development of a significant threat to be employed by the Ally powers. Their concept of nuclear fission in 1 Kilogram of Uranium-235, resulting in the creation of a powerful radioactive explosion, was based upon the efforts of other

scientists' attempts. While none of these theories of creating successful bombs had been tested, their juxtaposition of rhetorical appeals with organized skepticism and elegant scientific explanation proved to be a successful rhetorical strategy. Dealing in the development of highly controversial science, Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls were able to overcome scrutiny and spark the interest of British physicists. As two physics scholars and alien refugees from enemy territories, their two-part memorandum overthrew obstacles facing them in both the national and academic spheres. Their work would soon gain momentum, prompting the formation of the MAUD committee and beginning the push that would result in the successful testing and development of the first atomic bombs in the Manhattan Project.

### **Constructing Ethos Under the Context of National Affairs**

Science holds great weight as bearing truth. According to Thomas Kuhn, the nature of science as explaining one reality calls for the replacement of knowledge or updated understanding. In order to accomplish this, scientists must be skilled in the art of rhetoric, capable of persuading others of their discoveries as contribution to a collective understanding of nature (Harris, XV). The field of science is goal oriented, operating against the context of a community. The Frisch-Peierls Memorandum and the MAUD Committee Report both employ rhetoric to persuade the testing of new theories, offering the backdrop of a community threatened by the atrocities of war. By citing the context of the threat of war and necessity to defend humanity against fascism, their concept gain scientific relevance.

Untested theories and instances of revolutionary science require scientists(new word)? to build a strong ethos in order to gain relevance. Being two virtually unknown scientists at a time of threatened national security, it was imperative for Frisch and Peierls to first construct scientific ethos. Frisch and Peierls, as outsiders of both the British science community and the projects of defense, were faced in building an identity as logical and moral men. Lawrence J. Prelli describes the construction of scientific ethos as being dependent on strategic employment of rhetorical topoi, based on Robert K. Merton's scientific virtues, as norms and sources of argument. "To inspire confidence in claims advanced discursively, a rhetor must display the qualities of intelligence, moral character, and good will that are held in esteem by an intended audience" (Prelli, 87). Frisch and Peierls develop this identity in two ways. A large part of the first section of their Memorandum deals in warning against the threat of Germany developing weapons first. Because the science that

they propose is untested, their theories have not yet served the benefit of either side. They appeal to logic through the elegance of their theoretical model, but also provide reasoning that their focus extends beyond the realm of pure science. Based in the assumed evil of the Nazi regime that scatters their writing, their warnings evoke a position of concern. By writing in defense of the good of humanity, appealing to the scientific community as a whole, Frisch and Peierls begin to construct their ethos through what Prelli refers to as the topoi of communality.

While they do not make allusions to themselves as writers, they do implicate the reader in their argument. Paying careful attention to language usage, they refer to themselves as “we” and “us,” contrasting against references to Nazi Germany as “them” and “the aggressors.” By doing so, they distance themselves from the enemy and associate themselves with their reader. This association carries implications of sharing an ideology, in particular, that of fighting for the greater good of mankind. In clearly aligning Germany with qualities of danger and aggression, the Memorandum renounces their allegiance to their countries of origin and places their support with the Ally powers. Terminology of “we” remains ambiguous throughout the paper, varying in meaning from referring to the writers, to the scientific community, and finally to all in opposition of fascist control. This demonstrates their virtue of disinterestedness, accepting anonymity for the cause and for the advancement of science, engaging rhetorical topoi once again to construct their ethos as serving the interests of a global scientific community.

### **The Interplay of Pathos in Controversial Science**

Due to the dire and untested nature of their studies, Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls pay careful attention to their language usage and explanations. Scientific arguments, particularly those that yield controversial implications, must also include appeals to pathos, or the emotions of the audience. Craig Waddell writes about the complex interplay of Aristotle’s rhetorical proofs in *The Role of Pathos in the Decision Making Process: A Study in the Rhetoric of Science Policy*. By carefully orchestrating appeals to ethos, logos, and pathos, scientists may garner influence but also provide essential knowledge for the audience to make informed decisions. Pathos must also appeal to logos, the emotional component bearing root in rational thought, while also relating to the speaker’s embodiment of trustworthiness, integrity and rationality. The highly dangerous nature of this science demands junction of logic with complex morality. By repeatedly contrasting the advantages and consequences, Frisch and Peierls make appeals to both. Their persuasive point, explain-



ing the logical necessity of developing an atomic bomb, is cemented through repeated references to the terrors of wartime. The pathetic proof of their argument is based in the logic of present danger. This evidence is supported both by the reader's understanding of national affairs and of their own fear of war itself. By fusing these logical and pathetic proofs, they are able to solidify their argument with a moral obligation to the good of mankind.

Frisch and Peierls pay close attention to pronoun use as an opportunity to engage the pathetic argument. While engaging the reader as a member of the same scientific community through their usage of "we," they also engage them as being involved on a collective level of concern. By asserting an us versus them mentality, they engage the discipline of science under the topoi of disinterestedness and communality, revoking sole ownership of their discovery and emphasizing the collective effort to enforce the greater good against a shared evil. By doing so, they prove their understanding and commitment to the war cause, further constructing their ethos through proving allegiance to the Ally powers. The implicated reader becomes not only a member of a scientific argument, but also of a moral dilemma. The sense of urgency that is established in the first section of the Frisch-Peierls Memorandum stresses the dangers that underlie two separate outcomes. They state, "all theoretical data bearing on this problem are published, it is quite conceivable that Germany is, in fact, developing this weapon..." (Frisch, 146). Addressing the dangers of refusing to build a powerful weapon, they cite the greater danger of being at a military disadvantage. By making an integral point of highlighting the time needed to develop this weapon they stress that urgency is essential. The required time to separate the necessary amount of uranium for a bomb is a process that takes several months. If the enemy were indeed constructing atomic bombs of the same kind, it would be already too late to begin. They also state the dangers of the bomb itself, painting its role as a last resort to function as a deterrent that would only be employed given no other option. By detailing the moral consequence of both outcomes, they set a basis for the reader's involvement in the decision making process.

To provide further appeal to the argument of pathos, Frisch and Peierls use language capable of evoking strong emotional reaction in their reader. They include information about the dangers of radiation, citing high casualties and an uncertain radius of impact. The already implicated reader becomes further addressed in the threats that either consequence yields. Using terms such as "kill," "deaths," and "danger," the reader's own humanity is brought into question under the context of

nuclear war. According to Aristotle's ethics, successful rhetoric engages the listener through appealing to a search for the highest good. Where both of the proposed outcomes of the memorandum engage dangerous consequences, the development and testing of the atomic bomb by the Ally powers is seen by the audience as being in a higher good than refusing and allowing the capability to fall into the wrong hands. "If one works on the assumption that Germany is, or will be, in the possession of this weapon, it must be realized that no shelters are available that would be effective and could be used on a large scale" (Frisch, 146). By using this fatal consequence as a basis of understanding, they imply that quick development is in the best interest for defense. The moral judgment of the reader engages their position as logical and moral thinkers, but also implies a practical obligation for them to assist.

### **Organized Skepticism as Means to Engage the Scientific Community**

Organized skepticism in science works alongside language. In the Frisch-Peierls Memorandum, they use ambiguous and uncertain language to express their skeptical nature. Frisch and Peierls open their argument by mentioning that their report addresses the "possibility of constructing a 'super-bomb'" (Frisch, 141). Throughout their work, they juxtapose skeptical urgency with scientific formula, creating a balance between the logic of fact and theory. By using words such as "possibility" and "probably" their theories hang tentatively on the participation of the greater scientific community. This skepticism, while undermining the exact scientific elegance of their theory, addresses pathetic caution in their conclusions. Their inclusion of scientific explanation in the second part of their document provides the logical reasoning behind their conclusions, but also engages the reader as being part of their scientific discipline. Contrasting against the emphasis of science as absolute truth, this renders a need for policy formation that relies on further collaboration based in moral judgment. While it is possible that displays of uncertainty could downgrade scientific ethos, in this case it does the opposite, offering up promising opportunity for collaboration. In the second segment of their Memorandum, they specifically alternate between uncertain and certain language, cementing reader understanding of an overall confidence in the work.

Their passive language usage renders them accessible to their audience while also signifying intuition in their field of study. As experts addressing other experts in the discipline of physics, their skepticism warrants further action. They use rhetorical strategy of language to tailor their argument to the audience that they address. John A. Campbell's

analysis of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* focuses on tone and language usage. Frisch and Peierls keep their language simple throughout, creating a polite tone that does not get lost in favor of eloquence. By doing so, they do not draw attention to the underlying rhetoric of their work. Through speaking plainly and making frequent reference to the reliability of their conclusions, they honorably question their own work and the deductive reasoning that brought them to this point. By carefully signaling the reader, Frisch and Peierls successfully address the obligation of their audience to continue their work and cement their conclusions.

## **Conclusion**

In response to the Frisch-Peierls Memorandum, a team of esteemed British Physicists formed a committee to discuss the necessity of constructing the atomic bomb. One year after receiving the memorandum, this committee wrote a report of their own. This report followed a similar format as the original memorandum, functioning as a detailed outline of the practicality of applying their theories. Employing similar appeals to the moral judgment of the reader, this document mirrored skeptical reasoning that warranted further push for testing. Their detailed reports estimated the technical costs of application, highlighting the potential power that the bomb would yield. These reports were forwarded on to American scientists in the S-1 Uranium Committee, which would eventually expand and change their name to the Manhattan Project in response to the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941.

The uncertainty in both the Frisch-Peierls Memorandum and the MAUD Committee Report provide a basis for other scientists to engage their work, accomplishing their aim of continuation. By first constructing a strong scientific ethos as logical and moral thinkers, Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls are able to gain the attention of the scientific community as a whole. Rather than striving for the credit of their theory, they offer it as a means to continue scientific progress in the realm of defense. Making further appeals to logos and pathos, their works engage conjunction of logical reasoning and moral argument. Through speaking to the reader as a fellow member of the scientific community, capable of taking action to prevent further atrocities, references to wartime fears become evidence and obligation for application to defend the good of humanity.

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# The Homogenization of National Identity: A Study of Reggaeton

## Ricky Wilson

In 2004 that the musical genre of reggaeton began to gain popularity in the United States. This blending of an array of countries' previously, most popular styles of music was been known as Spanish Reggae or "Reggae en Español". Reggaeton has its roots in Panama as well as Puerto Rico however; its history is far more complex than that. Reggaeton blends the traditional Jamaican genres of Dancehall and the Trinidadian Soca with a plethora of Latin American genres such as Bomba, Salsa, and Electronica. A mix of all of those traditional genres with the young genre of American hip-hop and now you have all of the ingredients that go into reggaeton. I raise this topic in order to reflect on the concept of national identity and how it is being challenged by globalization in today's era. This essay will take a closer look into reggaeton and the loss of cultural uniqueness.

During the 1960's, the style of music we have come to know as "reggae" was developed in Jamaica and began to spread all around the globe. Popular artists such as Lee Perry and Bob Marley helped spread the popularity of reggae with their hit singles that captured a place in the hearts of people all around the world. What resulted was more than just mindless consumption of music and instead adaptations from different musicians across the globe. "Reggae en Español" found its beginnings in Panama in the mid-1970s, around the time that Bob Marley was becoming an international icon. The popularity of this new hybrid of Latin music combined with reggae then spread to Puerto Rico where further adaptations came to fruition. With the spread of Reggae en Español from Panama to Puerto Rico came the spread of this musical genre to neighboring Caribbean nations through traveling musicians as well as the

media. With its widespread popularity also came adaptations from Caribbean musicians adding their own styles and renditions further changing the genre as it matured.

Meanwhile, during the 1970s and 1980s, hip-hop was arriving on the scene in the United States. Receiving its start in South Bronx, New York, hip-hop already had some Latin influence from the Latino community in the Bronx area. Hip-hop, however, became more affiliated with the African American community with whom it has remained for the most part up until the turn of the century. Already having some hip-hop influence to it, reggaeton became more assimilated to American hip-hop towards the beginning of the twenty first century. In 2004, reggaeton began to take the United States by storm as artists such as Daddy Yankee and Don Omar rose to stardom with their hit songs “Gasolina” and “Pobre Diabla” respectively. Reggaeton has gained popularity in the United States among not only the Latino community but also across all demographics. The catchy “dembow” beat, characteristic of a reggaeton song, makes up for the lack of an understanding of the Spanish lyrics by non-speakers. The beat alone has helped the reggaeton genre flourish in a land foreign to its homeland. To this day, songs of the reggaeton genre can be frequently found among Billboard’s top 100 songs on a daily basis. The genre itself truly has defied cultural boundaries and spread to all parts of the world. This essay further analyzes whether or not this blend of differing native genres is threatening the national identities of any cultures.

Stuart Hall reminds us that national identities “are not literally imprinted in our genes. However, we do think of them as if they are part of our essential natures” (Hall, 291). Although we may say that we are American because we were born and raised in the United States, no one possesses an internal characteristic that a doctor could look at and confirm one’s national identity. Instead, nations are “imagined communities” that we as people construct in which we possess a shared narrative that is “told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture” (Hall, 293). Our national identity is the narrative by which we recognize ourselves as American, Canadian, Italian, etc. The national identity of an American might be one that recognizes the fight for freedom, liberty, and democracy. An Italian might see their national identity as appreciators of food and the rich history that comes with the city of Rome. What then, is the national narrative of these countries from which reggaeton is being produced today? Obviously Panama does not share a national narrative that is in any way similar to that of the United States where a large majority of reggaeton music is being produced. Panama on

the other hand, fought for independence against Spain in 1821 and later versus Columbia in 1903. The United States, as many of us know, gained its independence from Great Britain in 1776 after the Revolutionary War. One culture primarily speaks Spanish with significantly different traditions from the American, English speaking culture. Our narratives are different but yet, we have found a commonality among the cultures today. With reggaeton rising in popularity among Americans, to which country's narrative does this genre belong?

Globalization plays a significant role in national narratives. According to Hall, globalization refers to those processes, operating on a global scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organizations in new space-time combinations, making the world in reality more interconnected" (Hall, 299). It can be said then that our national narratives are becoming less unique while homogenizing with the narratives of other nations. Hall mentions the idea of "time-space compression" in which our world feels smaller due to the ability to relay information and messages across space in such a short amount of time. Some might see this genre as native to the United States since many of the musical tracks gain mainstream status in North America. Our technology in today's digital age has created this illusion that our world is far more compact than it actually is. It is no longer clear where reggaeton began and where its home lies. Furthermore technology has allowed the popularity of reggaeton to spread throughout the world however; this globalization effect has blurred the metaphorical visibility of the genre's homeland.

Hall claims that, "national identities are declining but new identities of hybridity are taking their place" (Hall, 300). Is it now possible for reggaeton to be seen as not just a Latin American genre but an American genre as well? Many songs are now produced and composed in the United States rather than in Latin American countries. Don Omar, for instance, belongs to the record label Universal Music Latin Entertainment, which is based in Miami, Florida. How can we continue to refer to reggaeton as a Latin American genre when the most popular recording artist of the genre is producing his music in the United States? We are already seeing artists from the United States being influenced by this new wave of music and rising to stardom without having roots in neither Puerto Rico nor Panama. Pitbull, one of the more popular reggaeton artists today was born and raised in the United States and does not have ancestry from either country. This separation of space from place, as Hall refers to it, is part of the globalization process that is homogenizing our

world. No longer are we bound by the need to be in the same concrete place to feel togetherness. Today, “space” applies to a much larger entity as we can communicate with others despite literal physical separation. No longer must we be from the two countries from which reggaeton originated but instead we can hear and produce the genre anywhere in the world. Reggaeton is less of a Latin American genre and now more of a worldwide genre thanks to the effects of globalization.

According to Robert Bellah (et al), “So long as it is vital, the cultural tradition of a people—its symbols, ideals, and ways of feeling—is always an argument about the meaning of the destiny its members share” (Bellah et al, 27). The cultures of the United States and Latin American nations are homogenizing in more ways than just one. Today, some 50% of people in the United States speak the Spanish language. Hall’s first “consequence of globalization” claims that national identities are being eroded by globalization. The second consequence states that, “National and other ‘local’ or particularistic identities are being strengthened by the resistance to globalization” (Hall, 300). I would propose neither of these consequences to be true in the discussion of reggaeton in the United States. It is hard to argue that either of the nation’s identities are being strengthened by this particular case of globalization. Both cultures are adopting the traditions of the other nation rather than resisting the change. The nations are not reinforcing their old identities but are indeed adopting a new collaborative one. Neither the United States nor the Latin American nations are losing their identity but rather they are homogenizing into “identities of hybridity” like Hall suggests in his third and final consequence. Why must we see this homogenization as a negative consequence? Reggaeton is a rich array of traditions coming together to produce a new story of nations cooperating as one. Maybe it can lead us to a new “shared” destiny of worldwide creativity like the one to which Bellah refers.



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# Coffee as a Religion

## Olivia Mullen

### Introduction

People often joke that the rituals surrounding coffee in today's busy world have become a religion. If the boss doesn't get his coffee on time, heads will roll. The office secretary will not function correctly without her morning brew. College students would not pass their classes without the help of coffee during long study hours, and new mothers rely on it to remain functionally cognitive when they've missed days of sleep due to a newborn. In our culture, coffee is important to us, that much is clear (Reindl, 2012). In this research report, we will see how Americans' relationship with coffee can be understood through the lens of religion. We will see how the historical context of different religions and cultures have emerged in recent decades and we can argue how this relationship has become intertwined with consumerism and commercial culture is exemplified in the rivalry between two popular coffee houses in the U.S., Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts. To delve further into the rivalry of Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts, their differences will be analyzed to find out what makes people pick a side of the debate and worship these coffee houses with such loyalty. I will then analyze Starbucks a little more, looking at the scrutiny that the company has received for their campaign "The Way I See It," which is intended to promote conversation among Starbucks drinkers based on controversial quotes printed on their coffee cups. Lastly, I will look at the Starbucks logo and analyze whether it holds any religious symbolism or if it is just a marketing gimmick. Through these points of discussion, we will understand how the topic of coffee emphasizes the interdependent relationship of contemporary religion, spirituality, and consumerism.

### Methodology

During the researching stage of this report, I found a lot of information from in-class articles that we have read along with a sub-

stantial amount of outside sources on this topic of coffee as a religion. I thought it would be interesting, along with internet based research, to go out and interview people on their take of what coffee means to them and if it signifies any religious correlation. I interviewed three avid coffee drinkers, my friend Emily, my dad, and my grandfather. I chose these three participants because I wanted to get multiple perspectives based on age and gender in my data findings. I asked the participants four questions: How often do you drink coffee? Do you prefer Dunkin Donuts or Starbucks? Do you have a special ritual for drinking coffee? Do you see drinking coffee as a cultural trend in our society?

## Results

When I interviewed the participants I found many similarities among the questions that I asked. I will highlight a few of the responses in this section to get an idea of how coffee is intertwined in our day to day activities in our culture. When I asked the question how often do you drink coffee, they all answered every day. When I asked them if they prefer Dunkin Donuts or Starbucks there were some differences. Emily she said she preferred Dunkin Donuts for the fact that the coffee is cheaper. The average price of a 20-ounce cup of Dunkin Donuts coffee costs \$1.95, while the average price for a 20-ounce cup of coffee at Starbucks costs \$2.25 (Ovide, 2011). She is a college student with a small budget but still needs her coffee fix so Dunkin Donuts prices prove to be more practical with her lifestyle.

My grandfather also drinks Dunkin Donuts coffee because he sees ordering as a simpler process. He said in his interview, “when I walk into a coffee place I don’t want to struggle the second I get in there and have to decide which cup size means what, tall, venti, grande, whatever they are. I don’t want it with foam or whipped or half soy half decaf. I’m too old to be walking around with some specialty drink, just give me my medium coffee with milk so I can get on with my day.” Dunkin’ Donuts and Starbucks have each benefited from the growing coffee market, which did not exist a few decades ago. The growth of coffee interest in our country during the past couple of decades has triggered both companies to extend their menus in hopes of creating new customers (Carroll, 2013). A business school professor at Harvard claims, “since when were there 9,000 permutations on a cup of coffee?” (Carroll, 2013) This quote refers to the infinite number of choices on the Starbucks menu. The simplicity that Dunkin Donuts has brought in earlier decades still brings old customers back to taste their favorite cup of Joe.

When talking to my dad, I discovered that he has a specific coffee ritual that he feels can be described as a sacred experience. His coffee ritual goes as followed: every night before he goes to bed he pre sets the coffee maker so that when he wakes up in the morning, he just has to press start and his coffee will be done in minutes. After he pours his coffee into a mug and adds a little bit of cream, he sits at the computer with his coffee and looks over emails, finances, and stocks. Once he is finished with his coffee he goes upstairs and gets ready for work. After he is ready, he packs his lunch and fills his travel mug with another cup of coffee for the ride to work. My dad told me that this ritual that he performs gives him a sense of a sacred experience because it is the part of the day where he is the only one awake in the house and he can relax before he has to start his often hectic work day. He feels at peace when he pours his morning coffee and the smell of the beans wafts throughout the house, while he simultaneously cherishes every minute of the silence in the house before the start of the day. Roof (1999) describes a spiritual experience as engaging emotions and impulses involving not just heads and hearts, but bodies. Generally, primacy is placed not on reason or inherited faith, but on experience, or anticipation of experience, engaging the whole person and activating, or reactivating, individual as well as collective energies.” (Roof, 1999) The experience my dad has every morning, tasting his coffee, smelling the brew, and listening to the silence collectively creates the energy that he needs to take on the day.

A way in which we can achieve this spiritual experience is by using our five senses. The senses used when drinking coffee create an experience of wholeness between body, mind, and heart. Smell, is achieved when you take a whiff of that strong scented aroma in your cup. Some associate this smell with pleasurable feelings or emotions. Taste is ever important in determining a spiritual experience as well. You gain a sense of fulfillment once you taste the coffee. When we touch our coffee mugs, the feeling of warmth gives us a sense of relaxation and coziness. When we feel the coffee on our tongue it gives us a sensation of warmth traveling on the tongue and through the body once we swallow. Hearing is often the first sense experienced on this spiritual journey as we hear the coffee grinder’s whir, the sounds of the coffee brewing into the pot, and the sounds of a spoon being swirled among the rim of the mug (Illy, 2010). The last sense is sight, where we examine the color of our coffee, whether it is black, or a light brown from added creamer. These senses have been illustrated by Starbucks’ CEO as a symbolic part of their environment. “The semiotic and the object affect coffee conjures is recoded symbolically through the sensuous descriptions of the smells, tastes and sensations of drinking coffee; orality, milk, bursting—the infant at the

breast, the plenitude of the semiotic, the return of the repressed in a cup of latte.” (Phillips and Rippin, 2011) We can associate all of these senses with a spiritual experience because they all come together to engage your emotions and energy, creating an experience of wholeness between mind, body, and heart.

### **A Brief History of Coffee and Religion**

In order to look at coffee through the lens of religion, it is important to note some of the historical background that coffee has brought to cultures around the world. Coffee holds a long and controversial history dated back to the 14th century. In Yemen and Africa, coffee was used in native religious ceremonies in place of wine. “In 1511, Khair Beg, the governor of Mecca, banned coffee after witnessing monks drinking coffee in preparation for evening prayers. He declared it sinful on the notion that alcohol was banned as an intoxicant, and the cheering, stimulating effects of coffee were similar.” (Reindl, 2012) Today, coffee can enjoy a better reputation among many cultures around the world but may express differences throughout those cultures from preparation methods to consumption habits. Countries such as Italy, Turkey, and Japan have distinct coffee cultural patterns among them. Venice, Italy was the birthplace of espresso in 1645. During this time, the first coffee bar emerged. Coffee served in these bars come in small cups, sometimes with a hint of sugar, and are finished in one or two sips. Italy can be named the headquarters for many major international coffee roasters and is tenth in the world’s coffee consumption (Illy, 2010). Turkey was one of the first stops where coffee landed on its way to Istanbul in the mid 1500’s. Ever since its arrival, coffee has played a major role in the Turkish society, politics, religious life, and hospitality. It is said that “to enjoy coffee with someone is still believed to ensure 40 years of friendship.” (Illy, 2010) Throughout Japan, coffee is seen as an energy drink mostly consumed cold and purchased in cans or bottles. These bottles are sold either in coffee bars or in the multitude of vending machines placed in the cities. With the recent arrival of coffee bar chains and European style restaurants, the Japanese are becoming “increasingly appreciative of the joy, comfort, invigoration and inspiration of coffee served hot.” (Illy, 2010) All of these cultures provide different ways of consuming coffee and show that coffee has become an important beverage throughout history and culture.

Although coffee has become increasingly important to many cultures of the world, there are some limitations in the religious world where coffee is still rejected. For example, Islam, Mormonism, Judaism, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Rastafarianism have certain religious

limitations and dietary restrictions based on coffee consumption. Islam is the world's second largest religion after Christianity. "Islam literally means 'submission.' Muslims exhibit their submission to Allah by practicing the Five Pillars of Islam." (Prothero, 2007) One of these Five Pillars is fasting during the month of Ramadan. It is during this month only when coffee is restricted to Muslims (Paajanen, 2012). Mormons also have strict rules regarding coffee consumption. "Mormons follow a health code called the Word of Wisdom, which prohibits the ingestion of tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine." (Prothero, 2007) As written in the Word of Wisdom: "hot drinks are not for the body or belly." (Paajanen, 2012) Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, was referring to coffee and tea in this statement because these were the only hot drinks available during the early 1800's. Today, this rule of hot drinks is taken at face value and only refers to coffee and tea as the hot drinks followers cannot consume (Paajanen, 2012). Judaism, another religion who has dietary restrictions regarding coffee can be described as "a religion based on practice and belief. It recognizes one God who is creator, lawgiver, and judge, whose words are recorded in the Torah." (Prothero, 2007) In Judaism there are no specific rules against coffee, except for the broader rules of kosher eating. Coffee is kosher on its own, but when you add flavored syrups or drink decaffeinated coffee, the kosher rules are broken and you are no longer being pure to your religion (Paajanen, 2012). Seventh Day Adventists and Rastafarianism share similar restrictions on coffee because both religions seek to fulfill a strict healthy diet, free from caffeine, tobacco, narcotics, and other stimulants. These substances must be avoided at all times (Paajanen, 2012). It is interesting to see how various religions view coffee in terms of their regimented scriptures and texts, and whether or not followers of these religions should consume coffee.

### **A Consumerist Look at Coffee Culture in the U.S.**

From tracing a history of religion and coffee together, we will now see how this relationship has become intertwined in recent decades with consumerism and commercial culture. To better understand this relationship we can highlight two of the most popular coffee shops in the U.S., Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts. Starbucks has 20,000 stores on six continents and \$13 billion in sales. Dunkin Donuts has 10,000 stores in 32 countries and sales of nearly \$9 billion. Both companies dominate the area they originated from, Starbucks in the Northwest and Dunkin Donuts in the Northeast (Carroll, 2013). The major difference between the companies is that Starbucks set out to sell a lifestyle, appealing to a higher demographic in metro areas, while Dunkin Donuts set out to sell coffee in more suburban areas, appealing more to the working class.

Because these two companies compete head to head with each other, a rivalry has emerged in the media. Dunkin Donuts has produced shirts that say, “Friends don’t let friends drink Starbucks.” This stab at Starbucks creates a united force of Dunkin Donuts customers, providing an ‘us versus them’ mentality and forces customers to pick a side of the rivalry. Lindstrom makes a claim that religious conflicts over time have also taken this ‘us versus them’ approach. “Successful religions strive to exert power over their enemies. It doesn’t take more than a glance at the news to see that taking sides against the other is a potent uniting force. Having an identifiable enemy gives us the chance not only to articulate and showcase our faith, but also unite ourselves with fellow believers. This kind of ‘us versus them’ mentality can be seen throughout the consumer world as well. The strategy attracts fans, incites controversy, creates loyalty, and gets us thinking and arguing—and of course buying” (Lindstrom, pg. 113). For instance, these t-shirts allow Dunkin Donuts customers to unite with its fellow believers and create loyalty to a certain brand, just like religions do in the same manner.

Each major brand has a loyal following of customers. Dunkin Donuts loyalty stems from its customers having an immense identity and pride with the city of Boston, the area where Dunkin Donuts originated in 1950. A columnist from Boston writes, “It’s a lynchpin of our identity. It’s a religion. It’s a cult. People in these parts freaking love Dunkin’ Donuts.” (Milliard, 2007) Dunkin Donuts Vice President of Communications claims, “the level of passion people feel for Dunkin’ Donuts here seems comparable to the level of passion they feel for the Red Sox, it’s our home, it’s our heritage, and it’s how we think of ourselves.” (Milliard, 2007) In the same way that customers show their loyalty to Dunkin Donuts, Dunkin Donuts reciprocated this loyalty when the city of Boston was shut down during the manhunt to find the Boston Bombers this past April. Dunkin Donut locations remained open to serve law enforcement and first responders (Milliard, 2007).

Starbucks also has a loyal following of customers who seek to be part of the experience that Starbucks has to offer of luxury, relaxation, and individual self-expression. Starbucks customers feel a sense of belonging through this exclusive experience. This sense of belonging is a profound influence on our behavior (Lindstrom, pg. 112) and it makes people come back for more, hence why so many people love Starbucks and why the company is gaining a strong presence around the country in recent decades. Starbucks drinkers tend to associate with spiritual but not religious values. The experience that they have in the Starbucks coffee shop is spiritual because it gives them a sense of self-worth. They gain

self-worth because they feel accepted into a luxurious experience, which can be expressed through the individual self-expression of ordering particular beverages. Everyone has different coffee orders at Starbucks whether they get their coffee whipped, with foam, with soymilk, and numerous other possibilities. This individualization affirms their spiritual experience at Starbucks. According to brand expert Priya Raghbir, a marketing professor at NYU's Stern School of Business, "Starbucks has gone out of its way to create a comfortable, welcoming environment in each shop where customers are happy to spend a few hours with friends or make use of the free Wi-Fi. I think the customer's value the convenience, they value the welcome, and they value the fact that they can find the Starbucks anywhere. In other words, Starbucks goes out of its way to make each location feel uniquely yours, and that builds brand loyalty." (Shayon, 2013)

Although Starbucks has a steady following of customers, they have recently started to jeopardize some of their customers' loyalty by introducing a campaign of controversial quotes placed on their coffee cups. The campaign is called "The Way I See It," and Starbucks is printing quotes from "writers, scientists, musicians, athletes, politicians and cultural critics on cups for company-run and licensed locations to carry on the coffeehouse tradition of conversation and debate." (Grossman, 2005) These cups have certainly caused conversation and debate, creating uproar in the nation because people felt that some quotes were "anti god." (Kovacs, 2007) They believe that some of these quotes are a slam to their faith and their religious values are being attacked by this campaign. For example, a quote from Joel Stein, a columnist for the Los Angeles Times reads:

Heaven is totally overrated. It seems boring. Clouds, listening to people play the harp. It should be somewhere you can't wait to go, like a luxury hotel. Maybe blue skies and soft music were enough to keep people in line in the 17th century, but Heaven has to step it up a bit. They're basically getting by because they only have to be better than Hell." (Kovacs, 2007)

The man who purchased the cup of coffee with this quote on it was appalled by the statement and found that there was no reason for marketing such slander. He thought it was a slam to his Christian faith and has since boycotted Starbucks in favor of local coffee shops instead (Kovacs, 2007). Others felt that the campaign was serving its intended purpose, to create conversation and debate. Another Starbucks customer commented on the quotes in favor of the campaign and said, "the quotes



were meant to spark conversation. If you're a Christian, which I am, then converse about Christ. Starbucks never said you have to agree with the quotes, just talk about them. If you ask me, it sounds like the perfect opportunity to witness." (Kovacs, 2007) This man is also a Christian and didn't feel that the quotes were disrespectful to his faith, and he will continue to buy coffee from Starbucks because he enjoys it.

The intent of this campaign was for Starbucks customers to spread the word about different perspectives of various topics featured on their coffee cups. Mara Einstein correlates this idea of spreading the word in evangelical terms. "Being an evangelical means you want to spread the good word, but—and this is the core issue—you have to spread the word to non-believers." (Einstein, 2008) Starbucks is spreading "pro-god" and "anti-god" quotes among its customers in an attempt to get people talking about different viewpoints. Some customers are going to accept these quotes, the believers, and some may not, the non-believers, both of which have commented on this campaign. The believers of this campaign will continue to buy products from Starbucks, and the non-believers might stop buying products, but this campaign proves an attempt to reach out to the non-believers. Either way, both are exposed to the marketing tactics of Starbucks and help to play a part in our commercial culture.

Starbucks has not only been stirring up controversy with these campaign quotes, but also with its popular brand logo that has been known for its controversial and potentially religious symbolism over many decades. A major question regarding the logo is whether or not there is religious symbolism behind it or if it's just a marketing plea. So what does the Starbucks logo represent? Pictured below are three Starbucks logos developed and modified over time. The consistency between all three images depicts the presence of a female who can be identified as a "siren." A siren is a type of mythical creature, much like a mermaid, but only she has two tails (Phillips and Rippin, 2010).

In Figure 1, which shows the original logo from the 1970's, the mermaid has luxurious hair, pert breasts and a ripe belly promising erotic and fleshy adventure as she holds up her tails and smiles seductively at the would-be customer. Her belly also signals that this is an overtly reproductive body, literally embodying 'excessive and disordered' physicality (Phillips and Rippin, 2010). This logo is supposed to be as seductive as the coffee itself (Phillips and Rippin, 2010), as it mirrors the vision of what the U.S culture looked like in the 70's. In Figure 2, the logo has been modified quite a bit in the 80's decade. "The mermaid has lost her



(Figure 1) Original Logo (Figure 2) Modified Logo (Figure 3) Current Logo

breasts and nipples and her representation is in graphic form rather than any attempt at realism. Her smile has lost much of its seductive power as she now looks directly at the viewer.” (Phillips and Rippin, 2010) In the current Starbucks logo (Figure 3) created in the 90’s, the Mermaid’s navel has been airbrushed out and the genital area where the tails meet has no place in this new, sanitized depiction. Indeed, it is difficult to discern that this is a two-tailed mermaid. She has become a goddess in her starry crown, which is a symbol of phallocratic authority and any association with sex, sexual difference or the messy business of parturition has been eliminated (Phillips and Rippin, 2010).

Phillips and Rippin (2010) cite Hopfl, in her study of abjection in organizations. She points out: “To be honored, women must conform to male order, must submit to regulation, must become homologues. The female and the feminine are abject, and therefore threaten the intrusion of pollution, disorder, subversion, excess emotion and uncontrollable bodies into the rational and disembodied organization.” However, at the same time, women are needed for their maternal and reproductive functions, and thus are necessary for the reproduction of patriarchy. The Virgin Mary, which is also commonly represented as crowned with stars, is the utmost elevation of motherhood and its conflation with virginity, which shows that the feminine can fulfill a necessary maternal function but not pose a threat to the male order. The Virgin is ‘alone of all her sex’, something to which other women should aspire, but can never emulate (Phillips and Rippin, 2010). Through the development of these three logos, the mermaid has been physically neutered so that she is no longer overtly female and her representation has been harnessed to serve the Starbucks organization (Phillips and Rippin, 2010). Starbucks may have originally used this overtly feminine logo as a marketing tactic because its sensuality drew in customers. Over time, the feminine picture has become neutralized in a new marketing attempt so that it does not pose a threat to

the patriarchic society that we live in today. Therefore, Starbucks aims to create an experience of self-expression and of luxury, and doesn't want "loose" self-expressions to be a part of their brand.

## Conclusion

From this research, we can see how coffee plays a large part in our commercial culture today. By looking at coffee from a historical context all the way through recent years, it is clear that the growing industry of coffee has created a consumer rivalry of marketing tactics and brand loyalty, along with a spiritual sense of religion. Mara Einstein and Martin Lindstrom's insightful readings regarding religion in a consumer culture have provided great evidence of the relationship between coffee and the consumer culture we are surrounded by every day. These marketing tactics and cultural attitudes from this consumer culture are shown through the powerful coffee house brands of Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts. Wade Clark Roof also gives us important insight of religion as spirituality and as a quest culture. We understand how coffee can be seen as spiritual from the rituals people perform with their coffee, and how their emotions and sensations are so deeply rooted in these rituals. The combined ideas demonstrate how religion, spirituality, and consumerism have become intertwined with one another as we look at them through the topic of coffee.

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# Metrospirituality

## Kelley Ray

### Introduction

Spirituality is trending and has become advertisers' newest tool to attract and sell in today's society. This emerging phenomenon in advertising culture has developed a whole new branding name: metrospirituality. This new marketing trend is the culmination of a long history in American culture of the comingling of consumerism, religion and spirituality. Metrospirituality is essentially the fusion of spirituality and commercialism. It includes all products marketed with an attached set of spiritual beliefs. The term is defined as the mainstreaming of Taoist, Buddhist and Hindu values into easily digestible, buyable forms (powertochange.com). With it, the term has begun to arise controversial debates relating to businesses ethical practices as well as insulting traditional practitioners of these religious values. However, this new marketing approach has turned out to be quite successful for brands that have begun implementing it. Metrospiritual culture is now essential to the study of media religion and culture since it attempts to bridge the gap between individuals' discernable physical and emotional needs with our often indiscernible and intangible spiritual needs. By implementing metrospirituality into their brands, businesses are addressing the physical needs of the consumer while also addressing the consumer's spiritual and emotional wellbeing; an inexhaustible marketing niche to fill. By offering a piece of a set of beliefs, or even pieces of different sets of beliefs, metrospirituality promises a sense of enlightenment, of doing something good, and without asking too much in return. As long as people continue to ask the age-old questions like, "What is the meaning of life," "What is my purpose here," or "How do I find fulfillment", there will always be new ideas and new solutions offered. Businesses are apt to this change in the consumer world, and are more than willing and able to compete to fill this desirable, unbounded marketing niche.

Umpteen brands are beginning to entrench the values of metro-spirituality. They are incorporating the components of metrospirituality in every level of product value; core, symbolic and augmented. Consumers have the ability to buy into this lifestyle through a smorgasbord of product offerings containing gradations of spirituality woven into them. You yourself may be buying into this type of lifestyle if you've ever shopped at well-respected businesses such as Jamba Juice, Kashi, Whole Foods, Lululemon Athletica, Alex & Ani, Aveda or even Toyota. One thing to note here is that all of these brands sell products that are recognized as luxury goods. Metrospirituals want to treat the earth and native cultures with respect, connect with their inner sources and inspirations, and test their bodies and expand their minds with ancient physical practices-and do it all with serious style (justluxe.com). Although not every customer of brands like these would identify as metrospiritual, they are still buying into this unique marketing approach, fostering metrospirituality whether they are aware or not.

The act of marketing items by incorporating characteristics of metrospirituality did not originate overnight. This trend is the culmination of a long history in American culture of the blending of consumerism, religion, spirituality and the material world. To understand how and why this comingling originated, it's necessary to examine the basis of the consumer world, dating back to the beginning of our time and developing throughout post-modern society.

### **Historical Background and Overview**

Human beings did not suddenly become materialistic overnight. Mankind has always had a natural 'need of things'. We are desirous by nature, plain and simple. Mid-twentieth-century American culture is often criticized for being too materialistic, but that is not the case. If we craved objects and knew what they meant, there would be no need to add meaning through marketing or advertising. These business practices would not need to exist. We would simply gather, use, toss out, or hoard objects indiscriminately- but we don't. We don't know what to gather. We like to trade what we gather. We need to know how to value objects that have little practical use. The point to be made here is that most things in and of themselves simply do not mean enough. What we crave is not the objects at all but rather their meaning.

By adding value to material, adding meaning to objects, and by branding things, advertising performs a role historically associated with religion and spirituality. Now add in spiritual value to material, spiritual

meaning to objects and spiritual branding of things, and you've just defined metrospirituality.

Consumerism today can be defined as an order based on the systematic creation and fostering of a desire to purchase goods or services in ever-greater amounts. Though mankind desires by nature, a famous philosopher explains that this human characteristic has been modernized and fulfilled by the development of the consumer world, incorporating business tactics like branding and advertising. Arnold Toynbee concludes, "A considerable part of our ability, energy, time and material resources is being spent today on inducing us to find the money for buying material goods that we should never have dreamed of wanting had we been left to ourselves," (Adcult USA, 12). The modernization of desire comes hand and hand with the development of consumer goods. The value of items we consume is found not in the physical items themselves but within what we are being told these items encompass.

Consumerism in the United States particularly began to flourish in the years following World War II and has continued to expand throughout the modern twenty first century. Victor Lebow, a renowned 20th century economist, may best explain the formulation of consumer capitalism. In 1955 Lebow explains, "Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption...we need things consumed, burned up, replaced and discarded at an ever-accelerating rate," (Lebow, 7). Lebow's explanation of the American economy is perhaps a serious blueprint for American business to insinuate consumerism into the spiritual center of American life.

Harvard researcher and author of *A Consumer's Republic*, Lizabeth Cohen has conducted extensive research in the field of consumerism. Cohen, who specializes in the politics of post-war American consumption, argues that individuals' capacity to consume cannot be a barrier to economic development. "The capitalist system must therefore induce ever-new needs in the human spirit, manipulating desires for commodities and increasing them incessantly," (Cohen, 75).

One thing that Toynbee, Lebow and Cohen all agree on is that human desire coupled with the evolution of our economy is what led to the development of the consumer world and further expanded our desire to obtain. Businesses have been loading objects with meaning as a way to net greater sales ever since the beginnings of the consumer world.



Although still a fairly new term, metrospirituality has been around much longer than anyone has been able to recognize. It is indeed the culmination of a long history of American culture stemming from mankind's natural feeling of desire and blending with consumerism, religion, and spirituality.

### Case Study and Results

The term metrospirituality is not well known amongst many. Since it is a fairly new idea, currently there are not many sources to research. The term is still not accepted in the English dictionary. Web articles written by websites such as [beliefnet.org](http://beliefnet.org) and [powertochange.com](http://powertochange.com) attempt to tie concrete definitions to the term. Many public blogs and archives relating to metrospirituality provide insight on the new marketing strategy from the perspective of the consumer. Articles on this topic written by well-respected Christian Pastors such as Floridian William Graham Tullian Tchividjian provide interesting views.

To obtain more background knowledge into this new marketing concept, I set out to a few stores whose brands are fall under the metro-spiritual marketing approach. Some brands that market as metrospiritualists include well-known names such as Alex & Ani, Lululemon Athletica, Aveda, Prius, Anthropologie, Whole Foods, Dagoba and Kashi.

Designed to adorn the body, enlighten the mind, and empower the spirit, the Alex and Ani collection focuses on positive energy with its spiritual, universal and religious charms. I visited the Alex and Ani store in Portsmouth, New Hampshire to obtain a relatable understanding of metrospirituality and experience its characteristics first hand. The interior of the store can is sleek, modern and natural. Natural wood paneling that incorporated natural earth tones and complimented by crisp white paint are strewn together ever so perfectly. Strategically placed lighting also worked to contribute to the relaxed atmosphere of the small retail shop. After being approached by a smiling sales representative, I asked her what the Alex and Ani brand was all about. A slender white woman who looked to be not much older than I, she was very open to discussion. We got to talk a bit and throughout the conversation she ended up reciting some lines that are strikingly similar to one I came across while researching the company online:

*“Alex and Ani products are created for customers to feel empowered, enlightened, and beautiful. Each collection is based on spiritual, insightful, or powerful symbols that provide*



*distinct energies that the consumer can feel connected to. Words are powerful, symbols are powerful, and the wearer can experience this heightened sense of inspiration through our pieces.” (justluxe.com)*

It seemed that she had been trained to respond to questions like mine in a particular fashion.

Lulu Lemon Athletica, another brand identified as metrospiritual, is a self-described yoga-inspired athletic apparel company which produces a clothing line and runs international clothing stores from its company base in Vancouver, British Columbia. Rather than a mission statement, Lulu Lemon has a manifesto of ideas and life philosophies for healthy and positive thinking. Some of the quotes include “practice yoga,” “breathe deeply and appreciate the moment, living in the moment could be the meaning of life,” and “choose a positive thought”. Some describe Lululemon as pop culture’s answer to wearable spirituality. According to Lindstrom, it is brands like these that provoke the same kind of emotions in us and inspire the same sense of devotion and loyalty provoked by religion (Lindstrom, 106). The connection between spirituality and consumers’ buying behavior can be applied to Lululemon’s marketing strategies. According to Lululemon’s success, people are willing to pay large sums of money for their essentially ‘basic’ apparel that consumers believe have spiritual significance. This means that spirituality and branding are inextricably linked. The marketers and advertisers of this company are borrowing even more from the world of religion to entice consumers to buy their products.

Lululemon actually offers weekly, complimentary yoga classes. They provide the space, the mats, and instruction from teachers within that specific community. I visited the Lululemon in the Natick Collection while doing some shopping. The interior of the store was designed with earthy inspirations. Customers are ushered into a lush relaxed environment full of natural wood and oak accents. This gives the retail store that ‘earthy’ ‘eco-friendly’ feel. Their clothing products are colorful and eye catching. This particular store does not offer the free yoga classes but instead features a real live yoga instructor in the window of their store front on a weekly basis. I know this because a former high school colleague of mine, Eliza Shirazi had been invited to “perform” in their window a few months ago. She has been a kick-boxing and yoga instructor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst for four years and has developed a high reputation. I was able to chat with Eliza via social media to ask what this was all about. She told me that she became part of the Lululemon

Team Research and Development Program. What this is is a Lulu's way of thanking fitness and yoga leaders in local communities. To become one, you must be a certified yoga, Pilates, fitness, dance instructor or personal trainer. The R&D program offers its members 15% off store goods as well as paid opportunities to practice their exercises in Lulu store fronts. What I got from all this is that Lululemon is really going out of their way to market their products with an attached set of spiritual beliefs. Lululemon is the perfect example of metrospirituality at work. Their steep increase in sales over the last few years signifies that metrospirituality is in fact a very successful marketing strategy.

Components of marketing metrospirituality have sparked heated debates, specifically amongst religious practitioners of the three core religions metrospirituality takes its values from: Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The commercialization of yoga specifically has been scrutinized. Many argue that the commercialism of Yoga depletes its core values, weakening the true meaning of the meditational art. Specifically, Zen leaders argue that it ignores "Buddhism's traditional role as 'protector' of the nation and its rulers," (Victoria, 233). A New York Times article entitled "Hindu Group Stirs a Debate over Yoga's Soul" published in 2010 has catapulted the attention of the Hindu American Foundation. This article brought the campaign to new levels and has resulted in a flurry of debate, discussion and dialog over the Hindu roots of yoga.

Nearly twenty million people in the United States gather together routinely, fold their hands and utter the Hindu greeting of Namaste; "the Divine in me bows to the same Divine in you". Then they close their eyes and focus their minds with chants of "Om," the Hindu representation of the first and eternal vibration of creation. Arrayed in linear patterns, they stretch, bend, contort and control their respirations as a mentor calls out names of Hindu divinity linked to various postures: Natarajasana (Lord Shiva) or Hanumanasana (Lord Hanuman) among many others. They chant their assigned "mantra of the month," taken as they are from lines directly from the Vedas, Hinduism's holiest scripture (Waters, 1). This is the practice of yoga in today's western world. "From asanas named after Hindu Gods to the shared goal of moksha to the common pluralistic philosophy, the Hindu roots of yoga seem difficult to deny. Yet, more often than not, many Western yoga practitioners are aghast at the very suggestion that the cherished "spiritual practice" of yoga is firmly grounded in Hindu philosophy," (NYT). Hindu American Foundation analyzes the issue further: "The popularity of yoga continues to skyrocket in the Western world as yoga studios become as prevalent as Starbucks and the likes of Lululemon find continued success in the mass

marketing of \$108 form enhancing yoga pants. As this \$6 billion industry completes one Suryanamaskar (sun salutation) after another, there has been growing concern from the Hindu American Foundation about a conscious delinking of yoga from its Hindu roots “ (hafsite.org). The Great Yoga Debate is an open discussion of the issue and has received hundreds of comments from readers across the board. The Hindu roots of yoga are difficult for anyone to deny. However, western practitioners of yoga do not recognize the Hindu roots of this spiritual practice. Brands like Lululemon claim no affiliation whatsoever to religious Hindu beliefs. They choose instead to market their products with a set of spiritual beliefs backed by the meditational practice of yoga.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The concept of metrospirituality fits well with what Martin Lindstrom explains in one chapter of his book, “I Say a Little Prayer: Faith, Religion and Brands.” Lindstrom explains the success of Holy Land Earth, a unique USDA-approved business that transports so-called ‘holy dirt’ from countries like Israel back to the United States. Holy Land Earth makes this ‘holy dirt’ available to consumers for a retail price of twenty-five dollars for a sixteen ounce supply. Their website explains, “Similar in spirit to the Kosher certification process, Holy Land Earth is certified genuine by Rabbi Velvel Brevda—the director of the Council of Geula, Jerusalem.” The rabbi “travels between Israel and America and oversees the entire collecting, importing, and packaging processes” (holylanearth.com). Essentially, they are selling dirt. However, this dirt is unique in that it is marketed with an attached set of religious and spiritual beliefs. Sound crazy? Maybe- but owner and mastermind behind it all, Steven Friedman, may beg to differ. The demand has been astounding. Lindstrom has realized that if people are willing to pay sums large and small for things like dirt and water that they believe have religious or spiritual significance then clearly spirituality and branding are inextricably linked. Mara Einstein, in her article, “The Business of Religion,” analyzes the rise in popular religious books at the beginning of the millennium, which correlates to the rise in spiritual marketing strategies around this same time.

Lindstrom set out to prove that spirituality and branding are inextricably linked. He began by finding out exactly what qualities characterize a religion in the first place. What he discovered was that despite their differences, almost every leading religion has ten common pillars underlying its foundation: a sense of belonging, a clear vision, power over enemies, sensory appeal, storytelling, grandeur, evangelism, sym-

bols, mystery and rituals. He noted that all of which have a great deal in common with our most beloved brands and products. Consumers feel a strong sense of belonging among other users of the brands they buy into. He explained the sensation as like being a member of a not-so-exclusive club. This sense of belonging has a profound influence on our behavior. Like religions, successful companies and successful brands have a clear, and very powerful sense of mission. Products and brands evoke certain feelings and associations based on how they look, feel, smell or what they remind consumers of. Past inhibitions play a major role. There are three important levels to note when examining the concept behind every product. At the center and upmost importance to the product, of course, are its core benefits; what the product would serve to its target audience. The next is symbolic representation; color, style and branding all impact how people think of or view the product. Finally there is product augmentation, that is, the 'extras' that come with a product like services or customer care. An item is metrospiritual when it incorporates spiritual or religious attributions in all three of these categories. These products address the consumer's need of spiritual and emotional well-being. Many consumers find this void to be more difficult to fill than most others simply because spirituality is not something you can physically obtain. Spirituality is an ecclesiastical belief. Some define it as the search for "the sacred". Spiritual wellbeing is about finding meaning and purpose in our life and our place in the greater universe. "Exploring our unique spirituality can help us choose actions that are consistent with our personal beliefs and values. Reconciling our actions with our beliefs can be central to the development of spiritual wellbeing, among many other facets of our life," (wsu.edu). Those who believe in the term say that in order to find peace and harmony in our life and surroundings, we must obtain a certain balance in spiritual wellbeing (wsu.edu). This need for spiritual wellbeing creates a very particular marketing niche in which metrospirituality attempts to fulfill.

Renowned author and professor Mara Einstein exemplifies metrospirituality. She says that the success of religious books at the beginning of the millennium put religious titles at the top of the best-selling fiction and nonfiction lists for the first time ever. The combination of cultural phenomena that led to heightened spiritual interest and expanded distribution resulted in heretofore-unseen commercial success of this category. The rise in evangelism in the twentieth century also helped promote this specific book category (*The Business of Religion*, pg. 40). Today, its not uncommon for a bookstore to have a an entire shelf devoted to the category of spiritualism or religion. Highly religious books such as the *Left Behind* series and *The Purpose Driven Life* have

become so popular amongst consumers that now they actually function like brands. According to Einstein, the religious book industry is promoted with specific methods that have turned the sales of religious products into a big business (Einstein, 35). Einstein suggests, “it is impossible in today’s religious marketplace to separate out religion from religious products because they have become so intertwined” (Einstein, 37). The *Left Behind* series was one of the first books to cross over from the traditional Christian market to the popular book market, opening up the religious book market to a vastly wider audience and setting the stage for a whole new book category. This is evidence that religion and spirituality have become increasingly popular in the consumer world. The fusion of spirituality and commercialism is growing and this acts as proof that people feel the need to buy into this idea with an ever-increasing desire.

## **Conclusion**

The fusion of spirituality and commercialism is the newest marketing trend in the consumer world. The ever-expanding economy constantly pushes consumerism to its brink. Americans are being exposed to countless numbers of advertisements every day and behind every product being forced upon consumers is a very well thought out, strategic marketing strategy. Consumption is our way of life and we have converted the act of buying and the use of goods into much more than it’s ever been. Now, consumers seek spiritual satisfaction and wellbeing. People strive to ‘do-good’ in society by purchasing items that make them feel like they really are doing just that. Consumers are attracted to products that sell more than just a physical item; now they crave that attached set of spiritual beliefs that come with it. The popularity of metrospirituality however does not leave everyone happy. News articles relating to the controversial modern day use of yoga and its actual origins has brought controversy on the topic to new levels and has resulted in a flurry of debate, discussion and dialog over the Hindu roots of yoga. Through decades of consumerism, Metrospirituality has emerged. It has evolved through the culmination of a long history in American culture of the fusion of consumerism and spirituality and is certainly here to stay.

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# Environmental Protest Framing as “Ecoterrorism”

## Brieanne Young

Many social movements use television as a medium to spread their message to the world or a community; however the televised rhetoric presented on certain issues can be tainted by the news media screen, altering the perception of a protest and creating a passive public. Frames are interpretive structures through which public citizens make sense of an ambiguous stream of events and issues in the world (Goffman 1974). Framing is used by media, law enforcement and government officials strategically as a communication process to attempt to influence public policy debate and formation (Deluca 2003). In many cases, the discourse frames particular protests, such as environmental protests, in a one-sided negative slant. By utilizing the slander of “eco-terrorism,” news media further elaborates on “us” (average American citizens and society) versus “them” (radical dangerous terrorist) rhetoric. Creating new laws to limit these protests of non-violent expression, environmental groups, such as Earth First, are framed in a villainous and terroristic forum without acknowledgement of the fundamental reasoning behind the protests.

“The number one domestic terrorism threat is ecoterrorism,” confirms John Lewis, an FBI deputy assistant director and lead official in charge of domestic terrorism (Potter 44). According to Lewis, there’s been “no other movement that has brought as much violence and destruction and vandalism” (Potter 45). Those who break the law in the name of the environment once were labeled by industry groups “monkey wrencher,” “saboteur” or “criminals,” but now the language has evolved to much more powerful marker of “terrorists” (Potter 55). Ron Arnold of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise states that in a 1983 Reason article, he invented the term “eco-terrorism,” which he defines as “a crime committed



to save nature.” The original goal of the “ecotage” term was to redefine the debate and to falsely expose those at fault - not the corporations destroying the environment but rather those trying to stop them (Potter, 56). Government officials then incorporated the term into their lexicon and changed the conversation around sabotage. News media participates in the production and reproduction of ecotage discourse commonly through a lens of radical domestic terrorism (Wagner 2008).

The application of “terrorism” labels towards non-killing environmental movements has risen since 2001 (Konova, 2004). In Wagner’s study, there was a marked shift in framing ecotage “as terrorism starting in 2001, before 9/11” (Wagner 2008). In 2001, the FBI classified the Environmental Liberation Front as the top domestic terrorism threat despite, as Konova argues, that the movement speaks in defense of all forms of life and there have never been any victims in consequence of their actions. Since then, there have been multiple cases of attempted crimes against mass amounts of U.S. citizens, and the bureau estimates that by 2004, every act of domestic terrorism will be mainly the work of environmental activists. There is a distinct difference between acts of economic sabotage directed against property versus against terrorism, or possessing a threat against human beings. However, in the U.S. mainstream discourse the line between these concepts is blurred by mixing the “notions and emphasizing the potential danger of the environmentalists’ tactics” (Konova 2010). Despite threats from right-wing extremists, currently the Department of Homeland Security lists environmental groups on the roster of national security threats. Potter offers one possibility: that this unwarranted label of terrorism is “purely political” and the government treats attacks on corporate property as more important than attacks on citizens (Potter 45). The Foundation for Biomedical Research tracks crimes of eco-terrorists and produced the “Top 20 List of Illegal Actions by Animal and Eco Terrorists 1996-2007,” which includes the top three eco-terrorism acts. In every case, no injury was reported (Potter 48).

As Rebecca Smith writes in her study, the economic and political framework provided by news media is inappropriately branded as it diminishes the true meaning of the word “terrorism” (Smith 2004). The eco-terrorism brand given by government officials and news media misrepresents many environmental protests and promotes the “protection of private economic gains at the expense of efforts to protect the environment” (Smith 2004). Similar to Smith’s views, William Potter, author of the book *Green is the New Red: An Insider’s Account of a Social Movement under Siege*,



describes how the word ‘terrorism’ has been “stretched and pulled and hemmed and cuffed and torn and mended to fit a growing body of political whims...and tailoring” (Potter 251). The definition of terrorism—both in policy and public opinion—are inherently tied to violence and violence “both in history and of the word in the minds of most people—is associated with physical violence against human beings, not inanimate objects” (Potter 41). According to Potter, fundamentally the definition of terrorism does not apply to the systemic violence of people in positions of power (the corporations) against the powerless (the environmental protestors). Rather than being charged with terrorist conspiracy, the protests ought to fall under non-violent civil protests and their constitutional rights of free speech.

Furthermore, through this misrepresentative lens, environmental protestors are clichéd as the villains or terrorists despite the depraved acts against the environment by the “victim” companies. In Brant Short’s essay “The Rhetoric of Moral Confrontation,” he argues that such agitated rhetoric or actions generate public attention for specific issues and “gives the public a touchstone to differentiate extreme and moderate elements within the social movement” (Brant 2000). It is understood that extreme elements within any social protest or movement can create immense tension. However, once the sphere between the public and the protestors is tainted by news media, the fundamental issues the movement is protesting can be lost to the public; therefore, the only translatable aspect of the protest is the aggravation: the agitation of the campaigning and a claim of physical violence threats.

One of the most famous fabricated claims of physical violence involved Earth First and “tree spiking,” in which allegedly heavy nails were hammered into the trees marked for clear cutting. Lumber companies were warned that if they preceded the cut, they threatened the equipment and employees (Potter 52). A prevalent case in 1998 involved George Alexander, a Louisiana-Pacific sawmill cutter. His “run in with Earth First” was splashed over the media when his logging blade hit a metal spike and shattered. Alexander was brutally injured in the face and neck. The company offered a \$20,000 reward for the information leading to the arrest of the violent environmentalists who caused Alexander’s injuries (Potter 50). However, FBI files revealed that the primary suspect was not affiliated with Earth First but rather a disgruntled local who spiked the trees in order to keep timber companies away from his land, despite what the media portrayed to the public (Potter 52). One news reporter on the CBS nightly

news report further vilifying the Earth First protesters by stating, “many of [these people] are very dangerous... they don’t believe in right and wrong as most people do in society” (Potter 54). These tree spiking incidents are still frequently blamed on environmental groups such as Earth First, despite the fact that Earth First is composed of protesters who preach non-violence.

Founded in 1979, Earth First’s (EF) mission statement involves “using all the tools in the tool box, ranging from grassroots organizing and involvement in the legal process to civil disobedience” (“Earth First Worldwide”). This environmental advocacy group emerged in the Southwestern United States, and since its founding Earth First groups span across the Philippines, India, New Zealand, Nigeria and more. There is a broad diversity within EF from “animal rights vegans to wilderness hunting guides, from shrill voices to careful followers of Gandhi, from whiskey-drinking backwoods riffraff to thoughtful philosophers, from misanthropes to humanist,” united in the need for action (“Earth First Worldwide”). Mainly, Earth First participates in stopping fracking projects, tree sitting, waste water protests, environmental conferences and more. In many cases, the group participates in body rhetoric in order to physically protect the earth, as in the tree sitting protests. Their belief system relies on biocentrism: that the Earth comes first in the list of priorities and the practice of putting these beliefs into action is crucial. In response to “overpaid corporate environmentalists who suck up to bureaucrats and industry,” the EF’s method is to work for the protection of the Earth and only the Earth without sacrificing innocent citizen lives (quote source?). Rhetorician theorist Paul Joose argues that a main contribution to the media’s terrorist framing of these environmental groups, such as EF, is the organizational strategy of “leaderless resistance” (Joose 2013). This type of resistance, unlike civil disobedience movements in the past, creates an unsympathetically faceless and nameless social movement when framed by the media and law enforcement. For years, the news rhetoric revolving around Earth First’s protests labels the group as extremists or radical environmentalists, which was only heightened by Alexander and the tree spiking rumors.

Shortly after this tree-spiking incident, the U.S. House Subcommittee on Crime held a hearing named “Acts of Ecoterrorism by Radical Environmental Organizations.” Earth First infiltrator Barry Clausen testified that EF “advocates anarchy, revolution and terrorism to the youth of our country” (Potter 57). Clausen’s commentary, although misleading, fueled political statements, press releases and news stories as official Con-

gressional evidence of a growing national threat. Joose argues that in news there are common frames that mentally connect the EF spokespersons and activists with terrorist groups like al-Qaída or the Taliban (Joose 2010). As previously mentioned, this coverage prevents the expression of the EF's ideology, foreclosing "the potential for the mainstream media to represent as legitimate the concerns of the environmental groups" (Joose 2013). Epitomizing Joose's theory by the mid-2000s, the Washington Times added a new name for environmental groups by calling for action against the "eco-al-Qaída," and industry groups hired PR firms to include ecoterrorism into national security dialogue (Potter 58). Travis Wagner, a professor of environmental science and policy at the University of Southern Maine, examined top-tier newspaper articles from 1984 to 2010 and found that ecoterrorism-related stories have increased since 2001, while there has been a decline in overall crime. Furthermore, the Earth First groups have lost public support with their environmental connection with the "eco-al-Qaída" tactics despite their non-violent civil disobedience protests (Wagner 45). The growth of this "Green Scare," compared to the promotion of communistic related fear in 1950s America, slowly merged into the rhetoric of industry groups with that of politicians and law enforcement (Potter 78).

Known for their "cowboy machismo," The Earth First's code of conduct emphasizes three main things: "remain non-violent towards other human beings, do not engage in sabotage, respect all forms of life and educate the public" ("Earth First" 3). However, currently the U.S. army lists Earth First as terrorist threat alongside Al-Qaeda. U.S. Army training manuals instruct troops how to recognize terrorist organizations and are "designed to specifically provide trainers, leaders and soldiers a 'hip pocket' reference to identify all the known logos used by insurgents, terrorists, paramilitary and other militant groups worldwide" ("U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command" 71). Amongst the pictures featured on the "environmental terrorists" page, there are images of Earth First shirts and patches and the training guide offers "no information on the types of threats these groups pose, and in doing so presents non-violent activists as violent threats" ("U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command" 72). Teaching military and law enforcement that these environmental protests are on par with Al-Qaeda furthers a disillusion of eco-terrorism and the threat against American people, rather than Earth First's true goal.

The terrorist rhetoric around Earth First taints their protest, even at peaceful tree sitting events, and the state legislatures and law enforce-

ment are cracking down on the protestors. These tree-sitting events are not new events: Earth First members have climbed 100-foot-tall Redwoods to protest the cuttings for the past twenty or so years. In 1997, one member of Earth First lived in a Humboldt, California tree for two years until enough money was raised to prevent it from being axed (Potter 1). Tree-sitting was an effective protest method for environmental groups until 2005, when a series of multiple arrests against environmentalist labeled them as “terrorists” on their arrest records. Following these happenings, tree sitting dwindled slightly for a while. Then in Oregon in the summer of 2011, one blockade of tree sitters took fifty cops, a backhoe and a 125-foot crane to remove the Earth First protesters. Now the government is enforcing the law on environmental protests, although non-violent, and establishing felony offenses. On April 29, 2013, the Oregon House passed two bills stating that non-violent protestors and tree sitters would be charged with felonies and mandatory minimum sentences (Potter 2). Oregon republican representative Wayne Krieger is determined to stop the “30-year reign of terror by these people having no respect for the rights of others” (Potter 1). Krieger introduced HB 2595, which plans to establish a new crime of “interference with state forestland management” (Potter 3). The offenses include a felony that carries a minimum sentence of 13 months—by the second offence, protests will be slapped a \$25,000 fine and five years in prison for non-violent civil disobedience. Furthermore, the companion bill, HB 2596, allows loggers to “sue protestors for up to \$10,000 in lost income up to six years after a protest ended” (Potter, 2). Protestor Jason Gonzales, a kindergarten soccer coach, testified against the bill stating, “[protestors] are professionals, we meet with governors, we present at panels and when it’s the last resort we put our bodies on the line” (Potter 2). There has been minimal protective measure from the Obama administration. Obama signed off on logging in the Alaskan rainforest and many activists believe his new national forest proposal lacks gumption. During November 2013, the Department of State Lands was considering a proposal to sell three tracts of the Elliott State Forest to private bidders (Potter 4). The Oregon House passed Rep. Wayne Krieger’s HP 2595 and HP 2596 bills in July of 2013. It is likely that protestors in the future will be tried in the name of ectotage and ecoterrorism as well.

Although these Oregon bills are an important step for the state government and environmental protestors, the televised media hardly mentions the Elliot Forest unless applying the stereotypical “us” versus “them” filter, once again vilifying the protestors. This dynamic of public communication had significant effects on the “process of social issue con-

struction and public opinion information” (Deluca 2003). According to Deluca, public communication and cognition has profoundly changed in a televisual public sphere; therefore, the analysis of political and public discourse must now account for the argumentative functions of images (Deluca 2003). In this case, the pictures of a burning ski lodge are a powerful and dangerous image. It’s easy to classify all environmental groups under the label of ecoterrorism when few are acting and no citizens have been injured. Labeling the incident as a terrorist attack does not fully inform the public the reasoning behind the act of arson, nor does it portray the damages that revolved around corporations that caused the protestors to act in the first place.

Ultimately, much to the chagrin of the Earth First, the discourse of ecoterrorism has normalized the mainstream media and authoritative conversation. Although there have been instances in the past where activists have made this “Green Scare” easier, such as with radical groups, they have not created the movement. It exists not because of the nature of their words or actions - the only way to explain the conflation of mainstream and radical groups as terrorists is to assume that all of it “from ballot initiatives to sabotage poses a threat” (Potter 247). Some leaders of the environmental movements have argued that if it were not for the actions of radical activists, ecotage would not be attached to their causes. Nonetheless, the government does not filter out the difference between the radical and grassroots groups.

In the past ten years, the FBI has credited \$300 million in property damages to eco-terrorism. Thus, states such as Oregon have introduced laws aimed at these notorious activities. This eco-terrorism, defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as “the use or threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against people or property by an environmentally oriented, sub-national group for environmental-political reasons or aimed at an audience beyond the target often of a symbolic nature” is overly applied to peaceful demonstrations, such as with the environmental tree sittings and activities of Earth First. Finally, the use of this term frames the environmental groups as villains. The terroristic label would more properly describe the environmentally-damaging activities of corporations. Alternative media organizations condemned arrests as a “witch hunt... aimed at disrupting and discrediting political movements,” thus creating the term the “Green Scare.” The FBI disputes these claims, as Director Robert Mueller claims the FBI only takes action “when volatile talk crosses the line” into violence and criminal activity (“U.S. Federal Doctrine” 125).

Nonetheless, unfortunately the anti-ecotage laws will flourish against the acts of “terrorism” and media will continue to place Earth First and other environmentalist protesters in the stereotypical villain format to further expand the distance of “them” versus “us.” The representatives of these environmental movements are not content with creating another recycling campaign or hanging up posters. At their core, they “challenge fundamental beliefs that have guided humanity for thousands of years [previously unquestioned]... human beings are the center of the universe and our interests are intrinsically superior to those of other species and the natural world” (Potter 254). Author William Potter argues that the extensive over-application of ecoterrorism exists “not because of the nature of [the groups’] words and actions but because these movements have grown increasingly effective and accepted... the only way to explain the conflation of mainstream and radical groups as terrorists is to assume that all of it—from ballot initiatives to sabotage—poses a threat” (Potter 247). There will be more arrests, ecotage labels and ecoterrorism legislation, however, as Potter points out many of history’s radicals that are revered today were once feared and vilified in their time. If the mythology and stigma surrounding environmental groups, in particular Earth First, is disbanded then not only will the group’s message remain unheard, but perhaps in the future the stake of the natural world will further be at risk.

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# Are We Fake? The Internet Masks We So Boldly Adorn

## Emily Varnese

In this paper, I will confront Nathan Jurgenson's claim that the web gives us a picturesque version of reality. Unraveling the confines of his article, *Picture Pluperfect*, I will address how the Internet takes reality and presents it in a way that is sugarcoated, beautiful, and unauthentic. This depiction leaves the viewer always in search of perfection, living in a distorted reality and investing in the illusion of the Internet. This illusion transcends into the offline in the form of advertisements. In Erving Goffman's, *Gender Advertisements*, he develops the notion of commercial realism. Commercial realism is how advertisements take something that already exists in the world and chooses what aspects of that object it wishes to emphasize or de-emphasize. This process stimulates a misshapen reality that appears realistic even though it is simply a facade. The distortions in advertisements reveal many of the same patterns of online images posted by Internet users. These images are uploaded and made faulty by editing, blurring, and adding special effects, leading to question if our online life has taken on the same aspects used to generate gender advertisements. In order to investigate this claim, I will dive deeper into the connections between Jurgenson and Goffman while applying Rob Horning's *SEO and Self*. I will use these connections in order to reveal whether our online expressions are simply an advertisement of ourselves formulated through social media or lead to a more creative form of our actual self. This discovery will uncover whether our online expressions are favoring the realm of authenticity or fraudulence.

The Internet provides a platform for creation. This platform has the ability to generate the picturesque in every nook and cranny of its websites. It buzzes on our newsfeeds, stumbles through our Tumblr, pins on Pinterest, and flashes along our screen. We entice it by logging in and signing up for the very sites that promote augmented realities. One



example of these these augmented realities is Pinterest. Pinterest is a site of heightened real-life where all of the images are categorized, perfected, and perceived as flawless. Jurgenson relates Pinterest to a candy-like experience noting that, “Wandering on Pinterest can prompt a disorienting vertigo, a dizzying sugar high, with so much that is adorable and clean and sweet.” He addresses the false persona Pinterest mandates, a place where everything is so perfect that it makes the user forget what reality is—forget that the world is an imperfect place.

The users embrace the site as they float through images, re-pin what they like, and ignore what they do not like, generating personalized boards that flaunt idealized realities in the form of dream food, clothing, home, and even weddings. These images take a version of real-life and clean it up, smoothing unattractive curvatures, mitigating the labor behind the creations, and presenting the viewer with something worth seeking; a something, however, that may never be within reach. In this way, as Jurgenson puts it, the Internet creates an, “...intersection of materiality and information, physicality, and digitality...” A place where the physical meets the digital, the materialistic aspects of the world take on a heightened life of perfection online and drive us to interact, connect, and seek the very things it promotes. This promotion extends into the world of commercial realism, the selling of the picturesque, and the display of reality as seen better than it is.

The purpose of advertisements is to sell a product, a style, and a way of “being”. The workings of Pinterest sell images, recipes, crafts, and dreams of a life free of deformity. Advertisements sell the same thing. Advertisements use images of men and women who have been digitally altered, cleared of their blemishes and baby fat, and dressed to impress. These distortions cave in on us and ultimately make reality a blur. The altered images start to appear as the new normal; thus, commercial realism is at work. This work subjects us to slight alterations of real life in order to appear like reality. These alterations, however, promote a self that knows no imperfections, a self that hides behind apps like Instagram that add effects to our images in order to make our images appear sublime.

These images find their way to our personal profiles as we update our profile picture, our cover photos, and express to the world that this is us, this is me, and this is you. Yet these images are framed by terms and settings like sepia, black and white, amaro, mayfair, etc. Our zits are blurred, our images stretched to appear thinner, and yet we apply them to our profiles as if they are real and as if they are who we are in our life

offline. Many of us utilize these apps and think nothing of it. The new normal promoted by sites like Instagram and Pinterest project a higher quality of appearance. A self who has overcome the quirks of reality and appears before viewers in a light that shines of ideals rather than actuality. The very aspects of the self that are hidden are, "...the ugly, the gritty, the dark, and the complex..." and are, "...rounded into a version pleasing to the eyes" (Jurgensen). Pleasing the eyes is the work of advertisements, and now, we as Internet users are crafting our identities online like the genders crafted by gender advertisements.

Erving Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* talks about how the displays of men and women in advertisements generate the ways in which we perform our gender in the form of either masculinity or femininity. As Goffman notes in *The Presentations of Everyday Life*, identity is a performance, and as Jurgensen takes a step further, "Identity, on and offline, is a performance." We are, therefore, always constructing our identities in a "consumable" way in order to promote a presentation of self that others will view, come to know, and engage with. As performers, we are always doing work in order to maintain our identity as both charlatans and honest individuals. We are all actively creating who we are. The creation of identity is aided by advertisements and other promoted "norms". As humans, we see projected images and fads and mesh them into our lives, deeming them our own and making them part of our performances.

The interlacing of media into our lives can be seen through the work of advertisements and their effect on things like the double standard, gender, and dress. Women are often depicted in advertisements as lying on the floor or placed beneath men, suggesting to the viewer that the woman is powerless and subordinate. The man, however, is displayed as standing upright and composed, showing the viewer that the man is powerful and in control. These portrayals fade into everyday life by helping construct the double standard that women have less power or control over their own life than men do. Stereotypes arise from these images; two in particular being 1) that women must be less powerful and 2) that men must appear strong and authoritative. The stereotypes and double standards seep into our conversations and construct our views of men and women. These constructions prevail due to the commercial realism discussed previously and as Mee-Eun Kang explains, "...ads do not depict how men and women actually behave; rather, they serve the social purpose of convincing us that this is how women and men are, want to be, or should be." The "should be" is seen all around us as we partake in dressing like the people in the advertisements and using

phrases in our talk such as “you’re such a girl” or “a guy who gets with a lot of girls is a player and a woman who gets with a lot of men is a slut”. Throughout our everyday discourse, we construct the double standards as we consume the very images that create and promote gender bias. Our world is, consequently, hypersensitive to the images we digest. Now, online, we generate these images ourselves, through sites like Facebook and Instagram, glossing ourselves over so we can be consumed, promotable, and one that fits “in”.

Gender advertisement representations push people to fit molds and stay fixated in constructed identities. In real life, we do work to show people our gender versus online where we do work to show our most perfected selves. Thus, “Identity is performed not as through a transparent window but through the logic of mediated and curated imagery” (Jurgensen). The creation of imagery is also utilized in gender advertisements, however the dangers of online puppeteering, the art of masking, blurring, and deleting lends to the harsh reality of truth. One is forced to face the truth when their online altered profile picture is confronted by an in-person interaction. The bad hair day or the bloated mid-section that has been edited online is left to be experienced in broad day light. The online partying picture reality that one had been displaying is now left to the wayside as the truth is presented in front of the eyes of another. The distinction between online and offline living is where the lines get fuzzy for advertisements, as well. Advertisements promote a norm for gender that we have all helped to socially construct and continue to construct through our uploaded pictures that we have constructed by our thumbs, by us alone, and are more easily deemed fraud when we step out from behind our screen and into the offline world.

This harsh reality is hidden by the very creators themselves as seen by Mark Zuckerberg, the mind behind Facebook. Zuckerberg encourages people to use his site to tell the “story of your life” and “who you really are”. As one stalks the many profiles of Facebook, they find more Instagram-like photos and ideals than “real life”, though. The realness that Zuckerberg suggests is defied by Jurgensen when Jurgensen states, “This isn’t the case: You know that your Facebook profile is more beautiful, clever and interesting than you really are; blemishes downplayed and mistakes deleted.” As we peruse online, we find the selves we wish to become and be. These selves are moved along by the prevailing norms of perfected sites like Pinterest. We attune to their images as we conform to the genders of advertisements. Yet, the online world is only present online. Our edited identity does not make the cut in the real world where tragedies transpire, bloating happens, and cover-up only covers so

much. We become obsessed with being our pristine selves that we fail to celebrate the flaws that make humanity unique.

The obsession caresses us in a realm of uncertainty and distance. Best explained by Goffman, “Commercial realism is the same sort of realm as the one a stranger to everyone around him really lives in. The realm is full of meaningful viewings of others, but each view is truncated and abstract.” Our online construction of self sheds light on a small aspect of who we are and that aspect may not even exist offline. We build our image, but when are we building our person? When our we, as human beings, working on our inner core that houses the very emotions and workings that make us human? Instead, we invest in consumer culture. Consumer culture celebrates the body as a site of pleasure that should be displayed for devouring. We devour each other’s profiles with our eyes, we pin what we find attractive, and we get rid of what we do not. Unfortunately, real life does not have a delete button, or a Valencia effect. We are forced to face our faults in a world that commends perfection. In this perfectionist world, we are told to hide our flaws and seek beauty. This world is harmful and is pulling us into a whirlwind of trying to fit in, making the mold, and upholding to unrealistic goals.

These goals have helped shape a world filled with insecurities. We desperately work to camouflage them online but our offline selves are subject to being human. In the offline universe, we will never be “enough” in relation to the projected life we live online and witness on our screen. This set up constructs feelings of remorse and uncertainty as our online identities fail to match our offline ones. We extend ourselves online to standards that we cannot meet in reality, which can leave us in a state of failure, a state that breeds depression, eating disorders, and uncertainty.

Camouflaging online has led to the notion that we will never be good enough as we are and that our sole self-free of edits is unworthy. This unworthiness has transpired from the construction of our online selves being developed from a model that does not favor purity. We strive for the attention we receive online in our real life, but it is always coming up short in real life since a ‘like’ online may be numerous but a ‘like’ in person may come less often and be more mitigated. ‘Likes’ in real life are often the thoughts that go on in our heads that we do not express aloud, such as liking someone’s clothes, smile, or other things that we notice on a moment-to-moment basis but may not put into words. Life, unlike the Internet, puts us in the middle of the ‘liking’ where we can be dissed, ignored, or judged. ‘Liking’ online allows us to have the

safety of our screens where one can easily claim they accidentally hit the 'like' button. The real world is not a constant update or notification that boosts our positive face, and as we spend more time online doing work to receive a notification, we become less and less satisfied with the offline where the act of 'liking' may be face threatening.

Internet users do work online to attract this attention. In *SEO and The Self*, Rob Horning states, "On Facebook, our communication is assessed like online advertising — how many click-throughs did it inspire? This prompts us to make what we say on Facebook sound like advertising discourse." As our online discourse blurts advertising lingo, our profiles are glanced over and appreciated through 'likes' and comments. This type of attention makes us feel like our presentation is good enough and can be adorned. We strip ourselves of flaws online in order to attract our audience, yet this behavior leaves us stripped of who we are on the inside and we are left dazed and confused in the confines of reality, where our flaws are flaunted, our faults on display, and there is no 'like' button. We may lead an advertised life on the screen but our tangible world does not know this persona; it cannot display the images online in real fashion. Our coffee does not appear as artistic or beautiful as it does on the pages of Instagram, and the red velvet heart cupcakes you saw on Pinterest may turn out like unpleasant-looking balls rather than delicate edibles. Humanity is always in search of the very images around us, and now our world allows us to be in those images, to pose for them, and to tweak them. We consume and are consumable, creating a lackluster experience when we re-enter reality and realize we have to face the very things we work so hard to distort.

As a young woman, I partake in Pinterest, Instagram, and Facebook, and until this course had never given a second thought to the negative implications they could render. Now when I attend to my profiles, I look at them differently, eyeing the photos and wondering what aspects are untouched and what has been edited. My research on gender advertisements has opened my eyes to the struggle of gender roles and how we as people socially construct our identities based on the images portrayed by gender advertisements. Men and women alike beat themselves up over the confines of what is masculine and what is feminine. This is seen in the pain some go through when they choose an alternate path, such as wanting to lead a lesbian or gay life.

The same harsh implications are now streaming online as people become obsessed with the picturesque and do whatever it takes to appear flawless on the Internet. The daunting task of being perfect drowns us in

a need to be more than we are, and we are subject to scrutiny when we fail. This scrutiny is not only from others but also from ourselves, since our burden to be perfect is derived from both our interactions with others and our actions online in choosing what to consume. As we make ourselves more consumable online, we lose the very essence of what makes us who we are. As people we are all different, flawed, imperfect, and unique. Our online versions take away the very characteristics that make us human and that make us remarkable.

The participation of developing the online culture of perfection will lead to a society that does not accept its people as they are and as they were born. We will become a society where suicide, depression, eating disorders, and the like will be more prevalent than ever as the pressure to be perfect rises and the reality that is unfeasible sinks in. The world must take note now and realize that life online wears a mask. This mask is a clean, smoothed over version of reality similar to the genders displayed in advertisements. People need to take note that they can either engage with the online and understand it is an illusion, or the conversation needs to change to one that promotes acceptance and love for what is and as it is. The illusion may look sweet from a distance, but the values behind it fail to admire the beauty.

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# Data Mining: The Invasion of the Personal Right to Privacy in the Digital Age

## Lauren Nawfel

### Introduction and Overview

The Internet represents a boundless world where a significant amount of information is circulated and stored. This data is so abundant that its immensity is difficult to fathom. Big data is the term used to characterize the vast amount of information that occupies cyberspace. Presently, big data is useful in the competitive market for determining consumer satisfaction and habit as well as measuring the success of particular products (Bertolucci, 2013, n.p.). Cyberspace has become a paradise for big data analysts, as the Internet is presently a dominating forum for communicating and sharing information. Netizens, a term Rebecca MacKinnon uses to describe people who engage in online activity in her book *Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle For Internet Freedom*, disclose information on the Internet that is virtually stored unprotected in cyberspace. The Internet is characterized as a free and open forum; therefore, exposing information online makes that information publicly available to be collected for commercial use.

Social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are examples of Internet forums where data is collected, stored, and even sold to marketing and advertising companies. Consequently, the widespread use of social media has resulted in the opportunity to publicize individual thoughts, opinions, and preferences that subsequently can be collected and utilized for commercial and corporate gain. Today, third party eavesdroppers, or data analysts, are raiding and sifting through data stores in online forums. These eavesdroppers come from many different academic and corporate fields. They often mine data using a process known as



sentiment analysis in order to gather information and extract patterns that are useful for expanding knowledge in their field of work.

Data analysts, advertisers, and marketers are drawn to social media for its accessibility, but the Internet provides additional, and perhaps more surprising and unethical, instances where studying online data is valuable. For example, the gaming industry now treats video game users like research subjects, as it analyzes the choices that young gamers make when they play games on the Internet. Video game companies are able to monitor the behavior of children and sometimes their moods, too. The monitoring is done in real-time in an effort to influence the children to play longer and to spend money in the virtual environment (Henn, 2013a, n.p.). Game developers are spying on gamers and discreetly gathering data about the gamers' habits in what gamers assume is the privacy of their own homes. The main objective for the gaming industry is to increase profit, and monitoring young video game players is an easy strategy to achieve such a goal.

The original intent of the World Wide Web was for it to be a free and open forum. While the question of the Internet's free and open nature is a controversial topic of discussion, cyberspace remains open enough for commercial and corporate entities to effortlessly gain access to data. The online world as an uninhibited environment is beneficial for sharing ideas and creativity but it is also a liability when considering personal confidentiality. The right to privacy, as it relates to the human internal state of feeling and habit, is called into question now more than ever due to data mining strategies that enable the collection of real-time information on the Internet. The critical question becomes a matter of what sort of information should be off limits and what should be accessible to corporate entities online. This essay attempts to demonstrate that mining and analyzing data pertaining to emotion and behavior for commercial gain directly violates the personal right to privacy. Provided first is necessary background information about the topic. Following the background information is an examination of data mining in reference to two case studies. The first is in regards to the practice of sentiment analysis particularly for the commercial gain of the advertising and marketing industries. The second case study deals with data aggregation by video game companies. The subsequent section addresses problems as well as scholarly critical perspectives. Lastly, solutions that might guide our digital culture back to a more democratic end are offered in the conclusion. Privacy is an essential citizen right, and the Internet appears to have disregarded the meaning of the term as previously understood.

## The Role of Media in Democracy

According to conventional wisdom, democracy simply means that the people rule. It is the general public that holds the primary political voice and power in a true democracy. In his book *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*, communication scholar Robert McChesney (2013) argues that democracy refers to a one-class society. Thus, a society with class inequality is not truly democratic. Class division became even more prominent in the United States when the measure of wealth shifted from aggregating property to accumulating revenue. The Internet is currently contributing to the weak democracy that already exists in the country. In July of 2013, McChesney spoke on C-SPAN about his thesis in *Digital Disconnect*. He reveals that the Internet has essentially failed to fulfill many of the democratic promises that surfaced during its advent:

*My thesis is that the Internet began with extraordinary promise for democratizing society and making the world a far better place, and that some of the promises come true but much of it has been turned on its head, largely due to commercial pressures that have changed the course of the Internet dramatically, and that unless we arrest those pressures and redirect the Internet, the future is not necessarily going to be as glorious as we once thought it would be (C-SPAN, 2013).*

McChesney insists that we, as a society, must view the Internet through the political economy perspective. It is a perspective that requires us to understand the relationship between capitalism and democracy and how the Internet fits into that relationship. McChesney's overall view is that political economy should be the focus for evaluating the digital revolution (McChesney, 2013, p. 13). In an interview with C-SPAN, McChesney declares that literature of today often downplays the critical relationship between capitalism and democracy. Instead, today's literature looks at technology as possessing a superior power, whether good or bad, over society. In McChesney's view, the Internet is not the problem. The problem is capitalism's influence, which has created the present issues. McChesney's idea of understanding the Internet in terms of political economy means that society must revisit the relationship between capitalism and democracy while also considering where the Internet has been and where it is going (C-SPAN, 2013).

Where the Internet has been in the past and where it is going in the future are essentially the reverse of one another. The Internet was

originally meant to secure democracy, but as McChesney describes, it appears to be doing the opposite. According to Marc Andreessen, founder of Netscape, the Internet was an egalitarian cooperative environment and was seen as an equalizer of democracy in the nineties. Known as the Internet's high bar, Andreessen's vision of the Internet as the great equalizer has not yet occurred (C-SPAN, 2013). For example, the Internet was supposed to be anonymous. Anonymity online would eliminate the worry of being monitored and ensure equality among users. However, "now everything we do online is known by commercial vendors and the government at the extent it wants to know it" (C-SPAN, 2013). The traditional definition of privacy has been totally destroyed (C-SPAN, 2013). The use of sentiment analysis for commercial purposes and for gathering data from Internet video game players proves that privacy online has been reduced to the point of grave concern. The disregard of confidentiality is due, in large part, to the power of the corporate sphere and the lack of regulation on the Internet. Evgeny Morozov (2011) draws attention to the irony of the Internet situation:

*The irony of the Internet is that while it never delivered on the uber-utopian promises of a world without nationalism or extremism, it still delivered more than even the most radical optimists could have ever wished for. The risk here is that given the relative successes of this young technology, some may assume that it would be best to leave it alone rather than subject it to regulation of any kind. This is a misguided view (Morozov, 2011, n.p.).*

McChesney (2013) also addresses the issue that the Internet must not be left alone or left to the whims of the market. The myth that markets are a natural phenomenon and that regulation interferes with markets' natural processes is a common misconception. McChesney believes that some form of regulation is necessary in a capitalist market, and Morozov's argument is essentially the same in regards to regulating technology. Morozov claims that technology must not be left to its own accord without regulation simply because it has had an initial positive impact on society, like in the case of the Internet. Proper regulatory decisions must be put into place for all new technologies in the same way that appropriate guidelines must be established in a capitalist economy. Neither the capitalist market nor new technology can be left alone because it is impossible to predict how society will use it and what the effect(s) might be.

Unfortunately, the Internet is presently ahead of the rules, particu-

larly when it comes to privacy of online content. Certain rules that apply in society are not necessarily enforced on the Internet. For example, a customer shopping in a store is required to pay sales tax, but that same customer shopping online is exempt from paying any tax. It should make no difference how or through what medium one purchases a product. The rules should be the same, and this concept should be applied to privacy. Morozov's argument suggests that there is a misunderstanding of this newest form of technology and that people must not forget what history has taught us about the importance of managing and regulating new technologies (Morozov, 2011, n.p.).

The fact that the Internet is virtually unregulated not only affects society as a whole, but as data mining has indicated, individual citizens are also affected. The Internet is presently utilized as a means to infringe on consumers' privacy, which is a direct indication that the medium has turned away from democracy. The Internet is progressively becoming more heavily commercialized, and this is likely the most significant threat to its democratic potential (Campbell, 2013, p. 66). The commercial market represents an interesting area to explore when considering democracy and the personal right to privacy of one's own emotional sentiment and behavioral patterns, as data mining is a prominent strategy for increasing profit.

### **Examining Sentiment and Habit: Sentiment Analysis and Data Aggregation**

Sentiment analysis is a developing field dedicated to translating human emotion into accessible data (Wright, 2009, n.p.). It is a particular type of data mining that involves gathering information in social media and other Internet forums to determine the sentiments expressed about particular topics, products, or ideas (Kennedy, 2012, p. 435). Helen Kennedy (2012) explains in her article *Perspectives on Sentiment Analysis* that sentiment analysis utilizes technological tools to gather information on certain topics shared in social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, to determine general sentiment on public opinion (Kennedy, 2012, p. 435). Sentiment analysis uses Natural Language Processing to analyze how words are used, how they are ordered, and how they are joined. Sentiments can be organized into three categories: positive, negative, and neutral (Syracuse University, n.d.). The three categories help analysts make assumptions about a person's mood.

According to Kennedy, sentiment analysts consider "sentiment" and "opinion" as interchangeable terms (Kennedy, 2012, p. 438). While

dictionary definitions suggest that the term “sentiment” is emotionally based and that the term “opinion” is factually based, Kennedy proposes that two important elements that the terms share are that they are both individual and private (Kennedy, 2012, p. 438). The Internet has allowed direct access to public opinion, making universal information that was once individual and private. Sentiment analysis companies take advantage of this available public opinion by collecting and selling sentiment information to branding, marketing, and advertising companies who find the data beneficial for targeting advertisements to specific consumer interests.

One example of sentiment analysis at work is mining tweets on Twitter. Twitter has become a hot spot for gathering information, specifically in the academic fields of linguistics, sociology, and psychology (Zimmer, 2011, n.p.). Analysts are drawn to the social medium because it offers an immense supply of real-time tweets that are valuable for research purposes. It is the immediacy and immensity of Twitter’s stream that social scientists find too enticing to disregard. With that said, social scientists spy on the limitless, instantaneous communication forum that Twitter provides and then use the data to draw academic and marketable conclusions (Zimmer, 2011, n.p.).

To consider a more specific example of mining and analyzing data, the gaming industry has recently jumped on the bandwagon by adopting data aggregation as a strategy for profit gain. National Public Radio (NPR) recently aired a few stories detailing how gaming companies are assembling data on video game users who engage in online play. Gaming companies report that data analysis combined with research on how gamers play has become a huge part of the gaming industry thanks to the Internet (Henn, 2013b). Game designer Trip Hawkins discusses the value of this type of research to the gaming industry:

*It’s incredibly important and it’s one of these things where in the past you couldn’t do it at all because the customer was playing a game in the basement on a machine that’s not hooked up to the Internet. Once you bring the Internet into the equation, you get these metrics on every little twist and turn. And then it’s much, much easier to figure out what your problem is and how to improve the product (Henn, 2013b).*

Popular games such as Minecraft, Call of Duty, and Need for Speed are different from traditional video games like Pong and Pac-Man because they are connected to the Internet. Hawkins confesses that this makes

it more convenient to find out what people do and do not like about the product and to fix those existing issues. According to NPR's Steve Henn, "Almost every game is connected to the net. So, game designers are tracking every click, and collecting data about all of us, while we play" (Henn, 2013a). Game developers not only gather data to improve their product, but also to run tests on children while they play in order to gain insight into how to keep them engaged. Most video games are deliberately developed to be addicting. According to a parent featured in the NPR report, gamers commonly lose points or money if they stop playing a game (Henn, 2013a). Young gamers, as a result, become addicted for fear of losing what they have accomplished inside the virtual reality. To further entice participation, many online games let users purchase virtual goods. John Davison, an employee at Red Robot Labs video game company, says even free iPhone games, like Candy Crush, have become proficient at developing ways "to get people to spend their money" on such virtual products (Henn, 2013a). Many of the people spending money in the virtual world are children who are doing so without their parents' permission, and Apple is a company that was recently sued in regards to this (Henn, 2013a). Essentially, the gaming industry infringes on gamers' privacy to extract information on gaming habits to further their business cause.

## **Problems and Concerns**

Although the corporate, commercial sphere places great value on mining and analyzing data, many ethical concerns exist regarding how data is collected and whom it is collected from. For instance, while sentiment analysis can be helpful to researchers and businesspersons, many scholars discuss the apprehension they have concerning the individuals whose data is mined. Alison Hearn is one scholar who offers a critical perspective on sentiment analysis. Hearn's argument resonates with Robert McChesney's concerns about market influence. Both scholars recognize the disturbing reality of capitalism's continuous intrusion into various parts of people's daily lives, which greatly contributes to problems with privacy. Hearn also argues that the "economic valuation of affect through sentiment analysis leads to the monetization of intimacy, feeling, and friendship" (Kennedy, 2012, p. 439). Hearn labels the people who gather sentiments online as "feeling-intermediaries," or people who transform feelings into commodities. Sentiment analysis concerns Hearn because of the potential for feelings to be marketed and sold. Marketing and selling feelings ultimately allows advertisers and market researchers to manipulate people to feel a certain way. Hearn argues that the only people who can benefit from this process are those who control

the mechanisms of extraction and the gathering of data (Kennedy, 2012, p. 439).

Hearn's critique questions the ethics behind sentiment analysis. The apparent failure of sentiment analysis to exhibit any advantage for the actual individuals expressing the sentiment content is troubling to Hearn. The further capitalism creeps into private parts of people's daily lives, the less our thoughts, opinions, and feelings seem to remain private. In the end, sentiment analysis puts citizens' personal emotions and feelings in danger of being commoditized by the competitive marketplace without consent.

Another scholar who criticizes sentiment analysis is Joseph Turow. Turow states that sentiment analysis can lead to social discrimination because the process transforms "individual profiles into individual evaluations" (Kennedy, 2012, p. 440). According to Turow, creating profiles based on behavioral data is a way for advertisers to make suppositions about the things that people like and the things that they care about. Advertisers are even able to look at where consumers make their purchases as well as the costs associated with those purchases to make distinctions about social class. Not only is this an invasion of privacy, but Turow also feels that categorizing people in this way often presents inaccuracy. Summing up Turow's argument, advertisers and marketers practicing sentiment analysis are not only spying on people, but they are using the data to create potentially false images and stereotypes of online users.

Perhaps the most interesting and relevant perspective to consider is how netizens feel about sentiment analysis. Many social media users are unaware that their comments are subject to sentiment analysis. Helen Kennedy introduces a report conducted in 2005 by Joseph Turow and colleagues that revealed that people tend to reject digital data tracking. According to Turow's study, "75% of 1500 adults agreed with the statement 'I am nervous about websites having information about me'" (Kennedy, 2012, p. 446). However, Turow found that social media users were actually more ignorant than they were concerned. Turow's 2005 study demonstrated that about half of the respondents were unaware that websites have the authority to distribute information to associates. Another of Turow's studies done in 2009 found that "62% falsely believed that if a web site has a privacy policy it means that the site cannot share information about them with other companies" (Kennedy, 2012, p. 446). Overall, it seems clear that the terms and conditions of sentiment analysis are not well known among the online community.



In specific regard to the gaming industry, data mining is problematic because a) gamers are unaware that their moves and habits are being monitored and b) many of these gamers are children. Data mining allows researchers to conveniently generate demographic and behavioral profiles of children engaged in online games. The process involves collecting raw material from actions conducted online and uses algorithms to sift through the aggregated information (Chung, 2005, p. 533). A specific research practice deemed “cool hunting” is a common strategy marketers utilize to “document contemporary trends in youth markets” (Chung, 2005, p. 528). Gaming companies engage in cool hunting in an attempt to ensure that games stay up to date on the ever-changing idea of what young people consider cool or in style.

NPR recently aired a story about a third grade teacher named Mary Beth James. James shared an NPR report with her students that explain how gaming companies are watching gamers’ habits while they are playing video games online. The students were shocked, frightened, and curious about why the gaming industry would do this. James asked her students to write letters to video game designers expressing their concerns. James then submitted the letters to NPR (Pearson, 2013). A letter written by one of James’ students is provided in Figure 1:

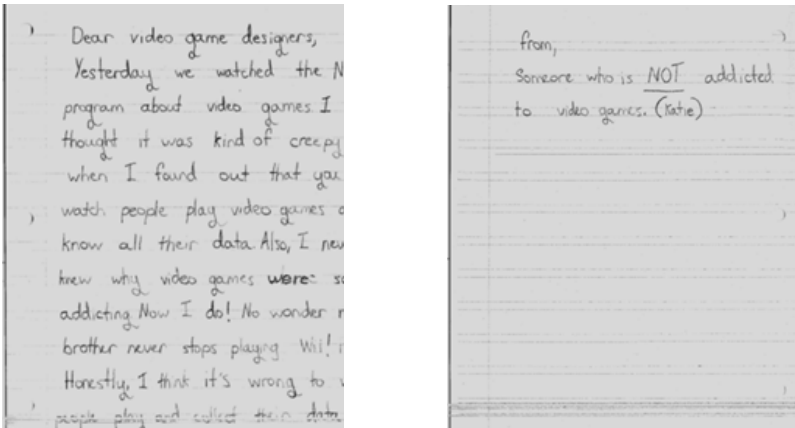


Figure 1. A Third Grader’s Letter to Video Game Designers. Students in Mary Beth James’ third grade class were surprised to find out that game designers monitor gamers’ play and gather data about them.

To paraphrase in one word the concerns of James’ students is to say that video game surveillance is creepy. In his book *Who Owns the Future?*, Jaron Lanier defines creepiness as “when information systems undermine individual human agency” (Lanier, 2013, p. 305). Creepi-



ness happens, Lanier insists, “when you feel violated because the flow of information disregards your reasonable attempts to control your own information life” (Lanier, 2013, pp.305-306). Violated is essentially how James’ students felt upon hearing that video game designers are watching them. The children thought that they were in control when playing their video games, and discovering that someone or something continually monitors their every move in an attempt to influence their decisions was unnerving to them.

It is interesting to consider data collection through video games as a broader form of sentiment analysis. Recall Kennedy’s definition of sentiment analysis: the mining of social media forums for the purpose of gathering sentiment data and classifying the information into the categories of positive, negative, and neutral (Kennedy, 2012, p. 435). Internet video games are certainly social media forums due to the fact that gamers can both visually and verbally communicate with one another. As people play and engage in the games, game designers watch them and record their choices to then make improvements to maximize profit and increase the desire to participate. Sentiment analysis is often used for product advancement, as well, and game designers are essentially engaging in the same process when aggregating data on gamers’ playing habits. Many supporters of data mining, including sentiment analysts and gaming companies, view it as a means to ensure consumer pleasure and to stay informed about what is being said about their products or ideas via social media.

## **Conclusion**

Data mining brings forth ethical concerns and calls into question the issue of a netizen’s right to privacy. Solutions are often challenging to execute, but various scholars have offered potential fixes. One rather obvious solution that could help ensure privacy and steer society in a more democratic direction would be to implement some sort of regulation preventing personal sentiment and behavioral data from being collected without signed authorization. While this solution might not be practical in our society, it would give users the option of allowing their data to be collected while simultaneously reducing “creepiness”.

Changing current laws is often a difficult task, but Rebecca MacKinnon asserts that corporate transparency is fundamental to prevent the abuse of citizens’ rights (MacKinnon, 2012, n.p.). MacKinnon argues that “companies should be required to report regularly and systematically to the public on how content is policed, and under what circumstance it

gets removed or blocked and at whose behest” (MacKinnon, 2012, n.p.). In 2010, Google created a website called [the Transparency Report?] which records requests from governments “to take down content or hand over user information” (MacKinnon, 2012, n.p.). MacKinnon argues that this is a step in the right direction, claiming that all companies must publicize the kinds of data they prioritize and publicize the way in which they gather and share information with the government and with corporations (MacKinnon, 2012, n.p.). Such a solution, if achieved, would best lead society to a more democratic end.

MacKinnon also argues that building a more “citizen-centric and citizen-driven information environment” is important to the issue of privacy. According to David “Doc” Searls, the current relationship that consumers have with Internet services is submissive. Searls asserts that individuals must not be dependents but instead must control their own digital lives. Searls is working with software developers on a project called Vendor Relation Management (VRM) which aims to “empower netizens in shaping the terms of our relationships with companies” (MacKinnon, 2012, n.p.). Five specific goals that are associated with VRM are as follows (MacKinnon, 2012, n.p.):

1. Provide tools for individuals to manage relationships with organizations
2. Make individuals the collection centers for their own data
3. Give individuals the ability to share data selectively
4. Give individuals the ability to control how their data is used by others
5. Give individuals the ability to assert their own terms of service

Empowering netizens would take much of the control away from corporate organizations and would help to solve the issue of privacy infringement. MacKinnon asserts that as netizens, we must demand that companies and governments support the development of VRM to achieve a more netizen-centric, netizen-driven information environment (MacKinnon, 2012, n.p.). If such proposals were put in place, data mining would be almost impossible without individual consent. Vedder (1999) assumes a stance similar to MacKinnon, arguing that an individual ought to possess “the right to consent to how data is abstracted from the digital traces of their activities” (Chung, 2005, 538). Vedder points out that the absence of consent “constitutes an infringement of privacy norms”, paralleling MacKinnon’s proposals for privacy protection (Chung, 2005,

Acknowledging that implementing new laws can be a long and grueling mission, perhaps a more realistic way to steer the ship of digital culture toward a more democratic end would be to consider what Evgeny Morozov (2013) discusses as the “adversarial design approach” (Morozov, 2013, p. 329). Adversarial design constitutes a new way to model products that involves antagonizing social norms. The intent is to deliberately disrupt daily routine, encouraging people to both consider and reflect on the consequences of their actions (Morozov, 2013, p. 329). ToneCheck is a free program that can automatically flag negative tone in e-mail messages. Its goal is to prevent miscommunication before it happens by providing an “emotional spell check” to ensure that people do not send out an e-mail that they might later regret (Lymbix, 2011). The program does not tell people to change what they have typed. ToneCheck only invites them to ponder whether they want to continue without editing.

To help bring to light the privacy issue concerning data mining, perhaps a program similar to ToneCheck could be downloaded to computers and gaming consoles. The hypothetical program could simply ask users if they want to continue using a site or forum that is collecting their data. This solution would not stop data miners and researchers from gathering information on Internet users, but it would make users more aware that it is happening. In addition, if pop-ups used as public service announcements continually remind netizens that their actions and habits online are being recorded, maybe netizens would be more likely to demand the implementation and support of initiatives such as Doc Searl’s VRM.

All in all, the main issue is that people appear more concerned with their expressive privacy than their information privacy. Expressive privacy is defined as protecting the ability to express oneself without ramifications while informational privacy constitutes the limitation of the spread of information about an individual (Meeler, 2008, p. 153). It seems as though Internet users worry so much about their expressive privacy that they tend to neglect the importance of protecting their information privacy. Sentiment analysis and data aggregation via online video games exemplifies issues that continue to develop in society concerning the spread of information about individuals’ feelings and habits. Data mining remains an emerging and controversial practice in the digital age and it is time for netizens to step forward and aggressively address privacy infringement.

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# Apple: The Forbidden Fruit of Cult & Capitalism

## Max Post

### Overview – Modern Day Corporate Rhetoric

Since the twentieth century, many corporations have extended themselves past their basic meaning and have progressed towards marketing themselves more as a brand. A strong brand for example, whether it is through product quality or continued customer satisfaction, in many respects creates a stronger link between the company and the customer; therefore establishing (brand) loyalty. If a customer is loyal to the brand, there is a strong chance that he/she will continue to purchase goods/services through that company. It is not inane by any means to then refer to these brand loyal customers as “followers.” Just as in the case of organized religions, companies are starting to shape their “followers” into practicing norming activities. Examples of this similarity in norming include: attendance (regularly going to stores), congregate with other followers (associate oneself with others who buy into the brand), and worshipping or admiring idols (high-level and/or numinous corporate personalities like Steve Jobs or Steve Ballmer). To further strengthen a person’s brand loyalty, companies like Google and Microsoft emphasize on having a strong connection to their followers based on their product and service quality; however, there is no greater bond between individual and company like the one established by Apple Inc.

Apple has always been known to have a “cult” following since its rise to popularity in the early 1980’s. The word cult is a rather caustic word in the English language usually used to denote an organization whether religious or otherwise. The purpose of this essay is not to shun Apple as a brand in the context of being a “cult” but is to emphasize and illustrate the more macro concept(s) and similarities of corporate brands as parallel to organized religions.

Organized religions all have their prophet(s) to further solidify the bond between the follower and the religions, thus why in the case of Apple, former Apple CEO Steve Jobs was a major part of why the brand was so successful. He was the prophet of the company, and exhibited such rhetoric traits like spectacle and preaching. This being said, Jobs in his earlier years (not excluding some of his later years though) was more of a nontraditional American CEO. This in one part is because his religious and spiritual background was Buddhist and he also had repeatedly admitted to experimenting with psychedelic drugs (DAILY MAIL REPORTER). Despite his unconventional ways in approaching his company (whether it be Apple's foreign manufacturing policies or marketing his company now solely as a luxury brand), his savvy marketing skills and crafty sales rhetoric, conjured up an ever-growing following of the Apple brand. Whether it was the launch of a new Apple product or the opening of a new Apple store, Apple was able to attract a mass following through the rhetoric of spectacle.

These spectacles were cunning displays of grandeur that only glorified the Apple brand and its products. Many rival companies have even tried to mimic Apple's business model. For instance Microsoft, one of Apple's rival companies, opened up their own retail stores with similarities paralleling to Apple's. That being said, this is in large, the reason why Apple still exists as a company today. Even with the recent death of Jobs, Apple only strengthened the legacy of their brand. Many followers of Apple see Jobs as a tech "messiah" and everlasting figurehead of their brand. He is essentially what Jesus Christ is to Christianity. Apple is now setting the tone for a much broader turn in American culture, and as a result we are starting to see consumerist culture fused with spiritual and/or religious discourse.

### **Historical Background – The Roots of the Tree**

Founded on April 1st, 1976, Apple Computer Inc. was one of the many Silicon Valley tech firms that had the potential to rise to power in the near future. With 406 retail stores across the world, Apple has since established itself as a major power player in the tech world. Early evidence of "cult" success came from their 1984 commercial representing novelist George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, which generated widespread popularity of the Apple brand from a pool of audiences due to the commercial's unique perspective on future technology. Unique commercial advertising was just one way in which Apple reached their early me-

diums. While Apple struggled financially in the late 1980s to mid-1990s due to its release of Steve Jobs and poor product innovation with such flops like the Newton PDA (Kuehl, Martellaro), they soon rebounded as a stronger brand when Steve Jobs re-took the position of CEO after former CEO Gil Amelio was fired in 1997 (Kuehl, Martellaro). The year 1998 was when Apple really started to take off as a successful company with the launch of the first iPod and the all-in-one computer, iMac. It is also around this time when the evolution of the Apple brand was transformed with the launch of a new (and current) corporate logo consisting of the same shape of their former logo, but black and more minimalistic.

With Apple being once again a profitable company at the dawn of the 21st century (Kuehl, Martellaro), they then were able to maximize their resources to further extend themselves as a brand. One of the unique features that stood out about Apple was how they presented their products to their customers. When Apple presented a new product, they would turn to Steve Jobs to promote it. Steve Jobs had a unique cult of personality that made him stand out from other marketers of his day. When he was at a keynote event or a technology related conference, he would create a grand spectacle display that made the unveiled product to seem like the next greatest thing to ever exist. It is in this context that I think it is appropriate to juxtapose the tech “guru” Jobs with the seventeenth century evangelist preacher, George Whitefield for the following reasons. While Whitefield, according to Daniel Stout was, “the first in a long line of public figures whose claims to influence would rest on celebrity and popularity rather than birth breeding, or institutional fiat” (Stout xiv), it gave Jobs a model to build his own “preaching” on.

It’s not implied that Jobs was even aware of Whitefield’s existence, and/or preaching style, but whoever Jobs modeled himself after was probably somehow, somewhere influenced by Whitefield. Whitefield, and so many future evangelist preachers, all acted in a very similar way that eventually transferred over to the corporate world of marketing and advertising. Stout then explains how Whitefield, “applied the methods and ethos of acting to preaching with revolutionary results” (Stout xix). Jobs did exactly the same thing with his promoting of a new Apple product. Appealing to the audiences’ ethos through acting is one trait, which both Whitefield and Jobs shared. Jobs wanted his audience to think of the unveiled product as much of a spectacle as Whitefield wanted his congregation to think view his preaching as a spectacle. Through the use of both verbal and visual displays, Jobs was able to rhetorically convey



his message of consuming to his audience. Whitefield was not selling a physical product per se, but was selling his faith to existing followers and new followers alike. So while these two leaders may have been “selling” different ideas, they both wanted to captivate and amaze their audience(s). Whitefield in a way influenced the marketing and consuming of religion, while Jobs influenced the marketing and consuming of Apple’s (his) products. Therefore it can be said that while the two are both selling different goods/services, Jobs continues a long line of “evangelist” style marketing over nearly four centuries.

### **Case Study – Attending Sunday Mass**

The design and aesthetics of the Apple brand are other important factors that attract such a large following of consumers. Starting with the logo of the company, the classic “Apple” has always been a signature trademark of the company. Logos are just as rhetorical as the product the company sells. Though the logo may have changed in color, the overall shape has stayed the same over the years. The new minimalist appearance of the logo can be found on all of their products, even the Apple Store itself. Organized religions have their share of logos or “icons” as well. These icons help reinforce the meaning of the religion and help signify meaning. Brands today are very careful to put an added emphasis on their corporate logo; not only is it a large part of their identity, but it consists of a rhetorical message as well.

What is interesting about Apple is that they generally do not express their company through words. The logo speaks for the company; consumers and followers alike can recognize the familiar logo as “Apple Inc.” without having to second guess what it means. The genius in this is how we can pick out an Apple product exclusively from the logo. The logo is on every Apple product produced, and it is made sure to stand out to the user and onlookers alike. Success generates from the conservative stance Apple has taken with their logo. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and many other popular, organized religions have logos or icons and have not changed or tampered with them since their creation. If they were to alter them, the identity factor would be lost or skewed and as a result, the religion could lose followers.

In addition to their logo’s aesthetics, Apple also has a successful design for laying out their retail stores. It is fair to say that no other company in the IT industry has as innovative a design for attracting in customers as Apple does. All 406 retail stores are unique (yet similar

in some respects) from one another, and are designed to stand out from other shops around them. I have ventured into a few Apple stores around my area of residence in the greater Washington DC metro area and have noticed several common traits which they all share, despite some minor aesthetic details. One feature that stands out is the premise around the entrance. On the top of the store lies the all familiar Apple logo, emitting a faint glow which can be seen from afar; similar to that of a lighthouse to lead boats into a harbor. Many churches in the protestant faith share this trait in that they would illuminate the symbol of Christ, the cross.

The structure's entrance is made entirely out of glass, giving the customer an all access view into the store; seeing a room full of customers and staff conversing amongst one another. Upon entering the store, it is important to take note that the entire store is one room (this is the case in most Apple stores), and the walls are painted a calming white. The entrance to the end of the store is cleared like an aisle in a church. Like the hierarchy in the church being down the aisle, the "geniuses" are indeed located in that same respect. Throughout the store are many different tables set up to give the customer a hands-on experience with the products, while youthful employees dressed in matching blue shirts offer friendly and willing assistance. A corner in the back of the store reveals an open screening room that provides further instructional aid in using Apple's products. The store itself gives consumers a variety of resources that extends the basic notion of consuming to making the experience feel more than simply buying a product. In other words, consumers today seek a total experience in their consumer practices like how church services and/or spiritual gatherings offer not only a sense of communalism, but also a well-rounded array of services provided and displayed.

It is important to note that these employees are referred to as "geniuses." Identifying a person as a genius would indicate that they are an expert in a certain field, this field being Apple products. Like a priest, a rabbi, or a sheikh, the geniuses are trained in aiding you through your experience in the "place of worship." The geniuses are present to give positive reinforcement of Apple and its products. I noted that many customers took praise in what the geniuses offered in conversation; whether it was deciding on what product to buy, or simply having a face to face conversation not necessarily regarding Apple and/or its products. The point taken from this observation is how Apple wishes for their employees to form good, interpersonal customer relations in order to establish brand loyalty and positive reinforcement of Apple products. Apple's ap-

proach has inspired other companies to change their consumer process as well. Microsoft now feels the need to guide consumers to make economic decisions through verbal aid and visual support, much like organized religions do the same process, but done with a purely spiritual/religious context.

### **Discussion and Analysis – The Shift in Values**

Apple's products in particular are a large part of the company as a brand. While I do not use any Apple products, I can understand why so many people do. For one, they are all compatible with one another; using similar software and hardware on both mobile and desktop platforms. This is an important feature because it creates simplicity for the consumer and removes the burden of learning a new piece of software or hardware for every product they buy. However, to go deeper into the macro concepts that lay ahead, I turn to Martin Lindstrom's piece *Buyology*. Like many religions as Lindstrom claims, "almost every leading religion has ten common pillars underlying its foundation: a sense of belonging, a clear vision, power over enemies, sensory appeal, storytelling, grandeur, evangelism, symbols, mystery, and rituals" (Lindstrom 111). All of these pillars can be applied to Apple, and further to American corporate culture at large. What also makes Apple largely appealing as a brand is they strive for quality over quantity in their product design. Many of their products are considerably more expensive than the average price in their category, but this is actually a unique and innovative approach towards creating a loyal following of consumers.

As a result of having such a loyal customer following in the technology market, Apple is able to create new standards for the functionality and design norms that will influence the rest of the market. Apple products have gained the reputation in the last decade that they work considerably well and that customers get a copious amount of value out of the products. If something is simple to use, aesthetically pleasing, and innovative, consumers are more likely to stay loyal and continue to buy the brand. The unveiling of new products only adds to the innovative quality that each product is supposed to possess according to Apple. The spectacle amplifies effect to which the product will sell given the hype surrounding it. Apple tries to make their products seem exclusive and revolutionary to the tech field in which they compete in.

It is also important to reaffirm and to note that besides sensory appeal, Apple has its evangelist-styled spokesperson Steve Jobs advocate

products and influence the grandeur of Apple as a brand. A prominent writer for Time Magazine, Walter Isaacson wrote, “using an Apple product could be as sublime as walking in one of the Zen gardens of Kyoto that Jobs loved, and neither experience was the result of worshipping at the altar of openness or letting a thousand flowers bloom. Sometimes it’s nice to be in the hands of a control freak” (Hart 2). Using the word “sublime” indicates just how powerful Steve Jobs was as a marketer. To be in a state of sublime would be to become lofted, or in a period of awe, which is a common response to a corporate figurehead. It is not just Isaacson that is put into such a state; many loyal followers of Apple would willingly do the same. The rhetorical influence that jobs had on the company and consumer culture as a whole can extend even past the initial influence of major organized religions.

Another aspect that contributes to a successful religion is, “having a clear vision” (Lindstrom 112). Apple’s vision is clear; they want people to buy their products. Through the spectacles and displays that Steve Jobs puts on for existing and potential consumers alike reinforces that vision. Just as organized religions feel that their main goal is to “spread the faith” of their religion, Apple feels similar in that they want to spread the popularity and use of their brand. It is therefore necessary to say that religions equal brands. Brands have rivals, as do religions. Apple has always been in a bitter war with Microsoft for gaining popularity and users towards their brand. Lindstrom states, “Having an identifiable enemy gives us the chance not only to articulate and showcase our faith, but also to unite ourselves with our fellow believers” (Lindstrom 113). Whether it was the crusades or holy wars fought between religions in a more primitive time, the new modern time allows for brands to clash between one another.

A final, but important detail surrounding Apple’s success in brand loyalty exists in how they appeal to a wide variety of demographics. While Apple’s products are often regarded as expensive, they appeal to a diverse set of consumers. Apple has established itself as a luxury brand worth purchasing by many. Part of our consumer culture is about “having nice things.” Which “Things” is a key word here in that which we value. According to John Dewey, “anthropologically speaking, we are living in a money culture. Its cult and rites dominate.” We can apply what Dewey is stating to how Apple sees modern day consumerism. We strive for the best things/products which are often expensive. So in a way Apple fits perfectly into the money culture that Dewey describes. Apple

is similar to an organized religion in that it is seen as popular in the eyes of many consumers. These consumers are displaying the “rites” of the religion by continuously buying into the brand.

### **Conclusion – Religion 2.0**

Apple is one of many trending companies to display similarities in early evangelist rhetoric on both a visual and verbal scale. Through various methods of marketing and sales rhetoric, Apple has established itself as a reliable luxury brand which many consumers desire. The culture which America is in now is very much based on consumerism. Consumerism itself is like a religion because it provides identification of one’s self to a product and/or brand. Whether it is by creating elaborate displays of their products, unique design aesthetics in their brand or appealing to a wide array of consumers alike, Apple is a successful company that has certainly framed an image for itself. Within his speeches, Steve Jobs often regarded Apple’s products as “revolutionary” or the “next greatest thing” which worked in a rhetorical sense as consumers and followers of Apple continue to buy his products.

In regards to American advertising, Quentin Schultze had an interesting perspective in that he stated, “If we listen to American advertisers, the great evangelists of our age, practically every new product and service is revolutionary” (Schultze 313). Apple may have a large grip of the tech world in terms of a cult following, but it is very likely that we will continue to see innovative companies like Apple follow similar business models by appealing to mass audiences of consumers and unite them as followers of a brand. Part of the problem we see with corporations and consumers alike is integrity. Scholar and Professor Kevin Healey suggests in regards to integrity, “The pursuit of integrity in one’s practice, however, is not inherently an act of self-deception. Rather, it is a pursuit that must be conducted ethically – that is, with integrity” (Healy, 1). So while Apple and other similar companies will gather and direct their followers to continue to purchase their products, the innovativeness of Apple is nothing more than modern day consumerism. It is very possible that this pattern of corporate and consumer behavior will become a trend of spiritual/religious fulfillment in the eyes of many, by means of products, rather than the traditional forms of worship and self-identification. Our products and physical goods of leisure are starting to become the icons which symbolize who we are.

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## **Foreigners as “Other”: Stereotyping and Categorizing in Everyday Discourse**

# Taylor Purcell

### **Abstract**

This paper uses Critical Discourse Analysis to explore how the use of membership categories in discourse can encourage and promote stereotyping. The transcription data analyzed is of a conversation between two young American women who place Italian people into a distinct and separate group from themselves in order to uphold their own status as being superior Americans. This analysis shows implications for how using race and gender-linked membership categories in conversation functions to reinforce as well as create stereotypical racial and gender roles in society, and that a simple conversation can have a large impact on forming realities.

### **Foreigners as “Other”: Stereotyping and Categorizing in Everyday Discourse**

In the following paper I analyze transcription data of discourse between two middle-class Caucasian American young women, to show how average Americans’ speech about Europeans exposes prejudices Americans hold regarding Europeans in terms of race and gender biases. I analyze the data according to Critical Discourse Analysis, an approach which explores the social and political domination reproduced in talk and that primarily focuses on social problems and political issues. I will demonstrate this process on a micro-scale, referring to the specifics of the discourse itself, and a macro-scale, referring to the contribution of this discourse to overall prejudices that Americans have about Europeans (van Dijk, 2001).

## Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is defined by van Dijk (2001) as a form of analytical research which aims to study how “social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 352). The purpose of CDA is to expose and consequently resist social inequality. CDA splits analysis between micro and macro approaches. The micro level deals in language used in discourse in normal interactions, whereas the macro level deals in power struggles and dominance between social groups. This paper’s analysis explores both levels of analysis, using CDA and drawing on the concept of Membership Categorization.

In sociologist Harvey Sacks’ (2006) essay, “The baby cried, the mommy picked it up”, he explains in detail the nuts and bolts of the Membership Categorization Device, which is defined as “collections of categories for referring to persons with some rules of application” (Tracy, 2002, p. 57). Tracy explains that MCDs include collections like sex, in which male and female would be members. At the same time, MCDs include “groupings of people we think of as going together” (p. 57), or as Butler (2006) explains, MCDs serve as an “explanatory apparatus” that allows for people to hear categories as sets. In Sacks’ famous example sentence, “The baby cried, the mommy picked it up”, “baby” and “mommy” are heard as being together under the categorization device “family” (Butler, 2006). The person who reads this sentence draws the conclusion that the “mommy” is therefore the mommy of the baby.

In his essay, Sacks applies several rules of application to the Membership Categorization Device including the economy rule, the consistency rule, the hearer’s maxim, and the concept of category-bound activities (Sacks, 2006). All of these are important to explaining how membership categorization yields sometimes very specific assumptions about people based upon grouping them in consideration of these rules of application. Butler and Weatherall (2006) define Sacks’ economy rule as being that the application of one category is sufficient in making a description. The example they use is that someone does not need to be defined as a mother, a lawyer, and a woman—usually only one of these labels is sufficient enough.

The consistency rule proposes that when “one device has been used to describe a person, other members of a population may be described using the same categorization device” (Butler, 2006, p. 444). Butler (2006) also mentions the importance of the hearer’s maxim, which ex-



plains how members of different devices may be heard as going together. Standardized Relational Pairs are a specific type of membership device, which position two groups as being heard together in terms of their relational responsibilities such as mother-child, or friend-friend. Lastly, the assumption, that members of a device can be linked to certain activities is named “category bound activities”, and this is especially important in assuming that if one performs a certain activity deemed as belonging to one group, they will often be categorized into this group. All together the rules of application form very specific guidelines of how membership categorization is organized, viewed, and applied in discourse.

Not only does Butler and Weatherall’s (2006) case study aid in defining the structure of membership categorization, but its study of children’s use of MCDs in play also provides a real example of its importance in structuring interactions. Specifically Butler and Weatherall show how the children in the study used pronouns such as “we” to define who were members their game or collectivity, and “they” to define who was an outsider not belonging to their group (p. 456).

Housley (2009) further delves into the concept of pronouns, especially in the use of the ‘us-them’ dichotomy, which refers to anyone outside of the “us” category as “others” and also as morally unequal. Similarly Tileaga (2005) discusses using the us-versus-them idea to define the “others” as being out of place. Housley (2009) refers to this us-them dichotomy- pronouns as a form of contrast, as exemplifying something called a “status-degradation account”, where “them” becomes the looked down upon group out of the two. Housley’s example involving the us-them dichotomy in interaction, where the contrasted membership is heterosexuality versus homosexuality, is essential in showing how pronoun usage in membership categorization leads to homophobic and socially damaging conclusions in discourse.

Stokoe (2001) analyzes category bound activities in relation to one’s gender. She brings the concept of gender dualism to the table, and the idea that the categories of male and female are juxtaposed in discourse, leaving little room for alternative category-bound actions that do not fit under “female” or “male” definitions. In this case if one is male for instance but his activities are deemed category bound to female activities, he is likely to be placed in the “other” category because he doesn’t fit in with the norms of categorization. Sheldon’s (1997) work is consistent with Housley’s and Stokoe’s, in her belief that as people we have expectations for how someone under a specific category is meant to act, and when they don’t fit this category bound activity, they are considered

immoral, inappropriate, and even impolite.

Housley (2009) also brings up the importance of relational pairings in producing norms, which can result in prejudice when these norms aren't met. Housley emphasizes the relational pairings by describing a situation in which relating two normally unpaired devices in discourse is often seen as a breach in conversation because it disrupts the membership categorization rule of standardized relational pairs. Housley concludes that in a situation such as this the initiator of this breach often "plays dumb" in order to avoid negative association for not abiding by the rules of application. Lakoff (1990) specifically defines this type of narrow categorization and relational pairing in verbal interaction as a way to stereotype people, which can lead to greater negative results in society because of how discourse influences society.

### **Data and Methods**

For the following paper, I transcribed a four minute segment of talk from a 50 minute video recording, which occurred between two roommates whom I will refer to as "T" and "M". The recording is set in T's room in the girls' apartment, where they are sitting on a large futon, eating and talking casually. The conversation was filmed using a Cannon Mini-Camcorder and tripod and was set up about 7 feet away from the futon, so that T and M's bodies were seen from the torso up while sitting. The transcription on which this paper's analysis is based begins at the 25:00 minute mark in the recording and ends at 29:00 minutes. The conversation between T and M from the recording was transcribed based on Jeffersonian transcription format, including documentation of details such as rising of pitch or lowering of pitch and overlapping speech.

T and M are both young Caucasian women age 21 and 20, who attend the moderately sized, New England University (NEU). Most NEU students are Caucasian native English speakers, and are local to the New England area. Although NEU takes in travel abroad students, the majority primarily English-speaking students are essentially separated from them via international dorms versus the more popular, mainstream on-campus housing. T and M are from middle class backgrounds, and are both from small towns in Massachusetts, which are in close proximity to Boston. They are close friends, having lived together previously. The cultural and economic backgrounds of the participants are important to understanding the frame of discourse in the following transcript, and to properly analyze the conversation in a cultural context.

In the transcribed portion of the fifty minute video recording, T and M are discussing what it is like to study abroad in Italy and more specifically what the Italian people are like. Because T had previously studied abroad in Italy, the semester before the recorded discussion, she leads the conversation in terms of her experience with and opinions of the Italian people. In doing so, certain stereotypes arise from her word choice and the way in which she groups certain words and phrases to identify Italians, and classify them by gender, and by specific groups of Italians. Because M has never been to Italy, many of the ways in which M describes Italians, and makes assumptions of their culture, corresponds and builds on what T says about them and how she says it. The girls use the membership categorization device, “the apparatus through which categories are understood to ‘belong’ to a collective category”, in combination with category bound activities, the activities that are linked to categories, in order to classify and juxtapose themselves to “others” (Stokoe, 2012, p. 281). By analyzing the use of these two methods of communication in combination, through CDA, T and M form stances which affect their ideas about the Italian culture as a whole, and which enhance their identities as being powerful and righteous Americans.

## Analysis

In the transcript T and M use categorizations in language to construct stereotypes. The young women start off by using membership categorization to develop and reinforce preexisting gender binaries. Lines 80-85 in the transcript represent what happens when two unlike categories are linked within a speech act, making conversation confusing and creating unfounded assumptions regarding gender and meaning. The next three examples feature segments of talk that show speech acts where membership categorization is used form stereotypical stances that put T and M in a position of power. The main examples of this are seen in lines 1-12 where they talk about Armenians, and also in lines 72-76 where T and M frame their speech around Italian girls, and then eventually lines 102-110 where generalizations are made about Italian males. The girls start off by forming narrow ideas of gendered sexuality through speech, and then move specifically towards framing Italians in a negative light. This section analyzes these four transcript excerpts in detail, which will later be evaluated for their importance in forming and perpetuating greater stereotypes in the United States.

Membership categorization is used in lines 80-86 of the script to define cultural norms and to promote stereotypes. T uses ill-fitting language to describe the plan to get her friend Ashley and M to meet up

when M travels abroad to Italy.

- 80 T: = yeah yeah, they all do um:: (1.5) if you meet them? actually  
 ((inhaling)) I could
- 81 hook you up Ashley? Ashley would- oh my god::  
 [°Ashley's the best°]
- 82 M: . . . [who is that is it  
 a guy?
- 83 T: =no Ashley is a girl um (1.0) she stayed in Italy-
- 84 M: =hook me up with her?
- 85 T: No I mean she's [like] engaged to a guy over there
- 86 M: [hh]

The following excerpt from the transcript shows the problematic nature of confusing the relationship categorization device with sex categorization device in talk. The phrase “hooking up” in line 81 fits under the relationship categorization device. The relationship categorization device could be seen to be made up of categories, one being sexual relationships and another being platonic relationships, or “friendships”. The issue lies within the fact that “hooking up” fits under the category of a “sexual relationship” not under the category of a “platonic relationship” that two girls, “Ashley” and M would belong under. As Harvey Sacks states, “An instance of a categorization device is the one called ‘sex’: its collection is the two categories (male, female). It is important to observe that a collection consists of two categories ‘that go together’” (Sacks, 1992, pg. 241). The category of a sexual relationship can’t fit in the category of gender, when two females are the subjects at hand, and the nature of heterosexuality is known prior. Given M’s history of being a straight female, something both T and M are aware of in their frame of discourse, these two members of the female category, Ashley and M, don’t properly overlap with “hooking up”. Hooking up belongs to a sexual relationship category versus a platonic or friendly category of relationships.

Although Ashley is, in the current time predominately a girl’s name, and M is not yet certain of her actual gender, M assumes Ashley may be a boy, because in order for M and Ashley to fit under the “hooking up” term from the sexual relationship category, Ashley would have to be a boy for the term to make sense. To M the only pair which would fit under the “hooking up” sexual category of relationships would be a heterosexual pair, based upon the fact that T and M are both interested in the opposite genders. M clarifies her assumption in line 82, when she says “who is that is it a guy”. This instance proves how culturally based

membership categorization is, because between a more sexually diverse crowd there wouldn't have been a following clarification about gender from M. The terminology "hook up," and the fact that Ashley, is a name which fits under the female category, creates a rift between the membership categorizations M has made for each, and so by checking in to ask if Ashley is a guy, M is making sure that her categorizations aren't thrown off.

A breach occurs due to improperly used relational devices. In line 84, "me" and "her" are put together, creating a morally problematic association. Because the man-woman relational pair is heard to be the only one containing the category bound activity of a sexual relationship, relational pairs such as woman-woman are seen as having only the category bound activity of engaging in friendship. If the activity of having a sexual relationship is applied to woman-woman, this is considered a breach of what people normally hear as a relational pair, and so subjects in discourse such as homosexuality are often portrayed as being in the category "other", or are known as being morally reprehensible.

When T responds in line 83, that Ashley is indeed a girl, M shows her discomfort of the association of the words "hookup" and the gender M associates with the name Ashley, repeating what T has said so that T can hear the oddity of it for herself. In doing so, T clarifies her statement, suggesting that she misspoke. T "plays dumb" as a way of avoiding inclusion in the problematic contrastive device (Housley, 2009). In line 85, she re-clarifies with "no, I mean", but doesn't acknowledge the wrongness of her standardized relational pairing. M's response to T is a form of reproach, a speech act that is used to threaten face. M points out her mistaken combination of categories. This shows in general how as two heterosexual females, both T and M share basic ideas of what constitutes a romantic relationship, and that it must be heterosexual. This is proof of how discourse shapes rigid attitudes of acceptable behavior and therefore also acceptable categorization pairings in speech. In this instance, T and M form acceptable behaviors in regards to sexual orientation and gender through the relational categorization device. The evidence of this in the transcript ties together the idea that language reinforces culture and culture in turn reinforces the way that we speak. In the following examples, larger stereotypes regarding cultural differences in terms of ethnicity and race are formed through the way T and M categorize Italians in their conversation.

In lines 1-12 of the video recording transcript T begins to explain a confrontation she had with one Armenian man in Italy. She prefaces the event description with generalized statements, building up to the climax of the story, which position Armenians negatively as a group.

- 1 T: We had this one guy behind us once who just like? al  
right this sounds really bad
- 2 but there was like a bunch of sketchy ass armenian  
people? and they just are like
- 3 very very sketchballs like stay away [anyways so]
- 4 M: [wait] wait so  
theres a crew of Armenians
- 5 that just like chill in [italy]
- 6 T: [it th]ey like a bunch of arme  
nians like um immigrated to
- 7 Italy and they're just like: they either sell shit on the  
streets or they're wicked
- 8 sketchy=<sup>o</sup>it's weird<sup>o</sup> anyway
- 9 M: =Do you think they like traffic women
- 10 T: =<sup>o</sup>I don't know<sup>o</sup>
- 11 M: SHIT like in Taken?
- 12 T: fuckin Hostel? have you seen that movie? [fucked] up
- 13 M: [no] I  
don't wanna see that movie

T's discourse shows evidence of several stereotyping practices here, including the grouping of Armenians relative to negative category-bound activities, and the juxtaposition of herself as an American to the Armenians via pronouns which enforce the us-them dichotomy defined by Housley (2009) and Lakoff (1990) as evidence of discrimination in discourse. In the segment T uses naming and pre-modifiers; pre-modified nouns present varying views of a topic which perpetuate stereotypes. The way T labels Armenians in line 2, as "sketchy ass Armenian people" creates a very different connotation than simply labeling someone as an Armenian. The pre-modifier, "sketchy-ass" presents Armenians as a whole group which fits under this description. "Armenian" is a term, which already binds all Armenian people under one nationality group, but adding the pre-modifier further binds them under a negative qualifier. This is an example of the negativity of discourse in perpetuating stereotypes.

Greenberg (1988) identifies what he calls DELs or Deroga-

tory Ethnic Labels. He identifies ethnic labels as having a large impact on face-to-face interactions up to the point where their usage can spark violence between different ethnic groups. Although the usage of the word “Armenian” isn’t itself a derogatory term, the way T connects it to category-bound activities such as being “sketchy”, reflects negatively upon the group of people. This makes the word “Armenian” a criticism similar to a DEL instead of just a grouping. Greenberg emphasizes that the use of DELs is common in the United States from the micro-level of everyday discourse, such as that between T and M, to the macro level of appearing with “disturbing frequency in the United States in... books, television, and films” (1988, p. 74). T and M tie these stereotypes to the macro-level with reference to popular movies such as *Taken* and *Hostel* in lines 11 and 12. In these movies Europeans act as villains and American’s become the targets of dangerous behavior, showing how American media, among other larger forces, influences how Americans categorize other nationalities.

In *Taken*, Albanians capture an American man’s daughter upon her arrival in Paris. In *Hostel*, two Americans backpacking through Amsterdam are tricked into staying in a hostel where they are held captive and tortured to death by a group of Europeans. *Hostel* and *Taken* show Europeans tricking Americans into risky situations under false pretenses. Both movies cast a negative light on European men, but more specifically minority groups within Europe. The Europeans in these movies fit into T’s category bound label of “sketchy”, predatory, and not to be trusted. On a macro-level of CDA the movies represent how media uses its power of discourse to create villains out of Europeans. On a micro-level, T and M represent American’s who are influenced by the discourses of media. The young women adhere to some of the same prejudices put forth in the movies and ironically tie these stereotypes into the micro-level of conversation. These popular social references reinforce stereotypes, which T and M as members of American society reproduce and intertwine with their own experiences. T and M enhance the circulation of stereotypes through verbally associating Armenians with these references to “shady” Europeans seen in broader media.

In the same utterance in which T pre-modifies Armenians as “sketchy ass”, she also performs a directive speech act, by warning M to “stay away” (line 3). Together, her negative pre-modifier of Armenians as a general group being “sketchy” in the same sentence relates the subject, Armenians, with the warning and preferred action of avoidance from



such people.

At the same time in lines 7-8, T uses a representative speech act, reporting that Armenians, “either sell shit on the streets or they’re wicked sketchy”. Her emphatic declaration of what Armenians do as a group is an example of how speech acts combined the membership categorization of Armenians, form verbal stereotyping in an unfair way. Her representative report frames her statement about Armenians as a fact, instead of an opinion open to debate, strengthening her categorization.

Also evident in this section of the transcript is how T protects her image as a non-racist person by positioning herself as a victim in the storyline of her narrative, while also using indirect speech to negatively categorizing Armenians. T’s use of indirectness in line 1, where she says, “alright this sounds really bad,” prefaces her next statement in which she refers to Armenians as “sketchy”. Indirectness is a way in which a speaker can minimize the intensity of their assertion (Tracy, 2002). By providing this disclaimer, T lessens the blow of her classification. T’s disclaimer stating that she knows how bad her next statement will sound, saves her from the likelihood of having her face threatened by M. Like van Dijk (1992) states, disclaimers are often used to maintain a positive self-presentation in “negative discourse about minorities” (p. 87). T places herself in the “the victim role and thereby justif[ies] prejudiced views” (Greenberg, 1988, p. 75).

T further enhances the association of herself as a victim by tying “Armenians” as a group to the negative category-bound activities and to the pronoun “they” in lines 2,6,7, and 9 of the transcript. The juxtaposition in line 1, of “they” to “we”, how T refers to her and her American friends as a collective, is an example of the us-them dichotomy which positions the subjects speaking about “them” as the moral people, where “them” or “they” are considered to be outsiders of the group, and therefore are portrayed as immoral (Housley, 2009). Similarly, Butler’s (2006) study of little children’s formation of game rules during recess, show that the pronoun “we” was used by girls to establish a group as members in a collectivity. Butler and Housley’s research support the idea that T uses “we” to symbolize her and her American friends, and that “they” not only becomes an interchangeable title for Armenians, but that it also associates them with immorality. In this way T and M set the stage to use racist language and connotations without tapping into the problematic results and effects of using such references.



In the next excerpt, T and M discuss the social nature of Italians, specifically Italian females, based on T's previous experiences abroad in Italy. In the following portion of the transcript T and M use membership categorization to associate Italian females with specific negative attributes.

- 73 T: [like you'll make] friends with [boys (but you  
won't make friends with  
74 girls)]
- 75 M: [why are they  
so mean?]
- 76 T: I don't know? they're just cold if you meet my group of  
friends (.) the boys? it's  
77 like I'll have to give you their names n stuff (.) umm if  
[you meet them?]

In lines 73-77, T asserts that Italian girls aren't friendly. M uses the word "mean" and T uses the word "cold" to describe their behavior. For American women, a huge communicative importance is the maintenance of a certain "niceness" or they will "risk censure from peers and adults" (Sheldon, 1997, p. 227). American girls work to construct a pleasing and non-offensive personality. According to Sheldon, being nice means not being adversarial, and it is a norm that women are supposed to adhere to. When American females breach unwritten rules of communication rules they are considered rude. Since Italian females break American gender communicative rules, the rudeness is enhanced because of their difference. The "rudeness" of their communication is thus associated with being an attribute of Italian females in general.

In line 75, when M says, "why are they so mean" she uses "they" in reference to a particular group. In Lines 73 and 74 T says, "like you'll make friends with boys but you won't make friends with girls". In M's response "they" refers not to boys and girls, but girls, and more specifically Italian girls. Within the frame of conversation, a discussion about studying abroad in Italy, T and M set up a system of membership categorization which sets them, as American young women, apart from the Italian counterparts they speak of, through the use of the pronoun "they". The categorization of Italians as being in their own sphere, distinctly separate from how T and M talk about themselves as Americans, shows how T and M maintain a social divide through discourse, and use this strategic divide to feel superior to the other culture.

The “us-them” device is a contrast device organized around the evaluation of public behavior (Housley, 2009). The “us” in the us-them dichotomy creates a status degradation account that uses the device to classify public behavior in the form of contrast membership (2009). The use of this descriptive language in discourse in reference to Italian young women, such as “mean” in line 75, and “cold” in line 76, can be seen as belonging to the category “bad behavior”. The hearer’s maxim links the category “bad behavior”, under which “mean” and “cold” fit, to “Italian girls” through the pronoun “they”. Because “they” refers to this group of girls as being separate from American girls in the us-them dichotomy, the moral contrast associates the group that “us” represents--T, M, and other American’s-- as being good.

The use of “they” and “girls” to categorize Italian young women in joint use with these descriptions shows clear generalizations made by T and M. Forming this prejudice, evident in the use of membership categorization in the conversation, allows them to speak about foreign places and people, while feeling in control and “normal” in their way of communicating through positioning the other culture as bad for being different.

T and M talk about Italian males in a similarly negatively assessing way by using membership categorization. In Lines 103- 113 of the chat between T and M, they group the words, “ugly”, “gay”, “girly” all under the category of the Italian male appearance.

- 103 M: [are there any  
guys] that you were friends
- 104 with that aren’t really ugly? (2.5)  
((laughs)) that was wa::y too [long of a pause]
- 105 T:  
[Matteo was cute] but
- 106 he >was into me.<
- 107 M: =Was that the one you showed me and i thought he  
looked wicked gay?
- 108 T: =He’s just wicked girly like
- 109 M: =[hmmm]
- 110 T: [they’re] all girly (1.0) but (2.0) he was the hottest >of  
[alla them<]
- 111 M:

[dats gon be a problem]

112 ((goofy low pitched voice))

113 T: (1.0) Yeah.

The negative quality of the words T and M associate with the appearance of Italian men forms a distasteful view of Italian men and also forms a criticism of T. Stokoe (2001) describes how appearance and the way it is defined is dependent on gender, and can become a large part of how one gauges acceptable masculinity or femininity. “Italian men” becomes a membership category that groups ugly, gay, and girly together. The word “girly” has important implications. The word “girl” typically belongs in the category “female”, however, under the category of female, “girl” is the lowest in status and relevance (Stokoe, 2001). For example, “woman” also belongs under the category “female”, but represents age and prestige, whereas a girl’s activities and ways of being can be seen as less mature or legitimate. Not only are Italian males being described as feminine, but they are being associated with the lowest of females, further emphasizing their illegitimacy. Because gender is looked at in terms of polarities-- male or female-- referencing males as having female characteristics confuses these polarities and casts Italian men into a separate, “other” group, lessening their legitimacy and validity as males.

M further demonstrates the implications of categorizing Italians by performing a face-threat against T. The face-threat occurs in line 107, in response to T’s statement in lines 105-106 that Matteo, an Italian boy, was interested in her. In line 107 M says, “was that the one you showed me and I thought he looked wicked gay?” The suggestion that Matteo appeared “gay” lessens the legitimacy of Matteo being interested in T, and even as Matteo being a reasonable suitor for T because not only does gay belong as a category of Italian male appearance (he “looked” gay), but it also in a literal way belongs to the category of “sexual orientation”. Because T is a heterosexual female, M denies Matteo’s importance as a legitimate suitor by using a word, which reinforces his negative appearance and also a less favored sexual orientation. In line 10, “they’re” is used to refer to Italian men, and shows evidence that “they” is once again being used in the form of an us-them device to contrast right and wrong. Housley (2009) talks about how the us-them device is applied to homosexuality and how “they” is used in data to contrast membership of heterosexuality to homosexuality. In that case, as with the transcript at hand, “they” is used for homosexuality to imply unfavorable public behavior or appearance. This shows how strategic use of membership categorization

can strengthen one's own position in discourse, simply by implying that the conversation partner is associated with the less favorable membership category, in this case Italian men.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout the transcript T and M construct generalizations which are racist, sexist, and homophobic, by building upon assumptions about differing communication styles and social differences in Italian and American culture. The use of contrastive devices (us-them, male-female, American-other) in categorizing is problematic on the micro and macro levels of analysis. Because contrastive devices are used to generate moral accountability, they are used to label one group as good (us), and one group as bad (them). Because of the moral-immoral dichotomy prejudices are rationalized leading to this suppressive discourse as being seen as normal and acceptable. On a micro-level of Critical Discourse Analysis, T and M voice stereotypes, which they specifically have generated and share within their own small sphere of communication. However on the macro-level, the bigger picture of communicative practice, this stereotyping in speech shows how many Caucasian Americans' views of other cultures function to build white American pride and patriotism.

This is dangerous from a CDA perspective. This same type of discourse projected into a political setting, on the macro-level, contributes to an unbalanced homophobic and internationally intolerant society. This in many ways shows the detrimental effects of misunderstanding and misconstruing other cultures and making judgments accordingly. It also shows how T and M create a hierarchical relationship to this other culture by verbally demeaning them. In the transcript T and M feed off of each other's words and build a series of strict categories in which they fit people as a whole from cultures they know little about. This presents a larger problem in communication: in attempts to maintain power and seeming control in dialogue, people often demean other cultures. This in turn can have an impact on how people are treated in society and on the lack of respect given to certain peoples. Instead of trying to understand the Italian people, T and M assert their own cultural beliefs and restrictions upon them, and therefore don't better understand them, but better judge them.

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# The “Truth”: Understanding the Media Audience of the truth® Campaign

## Jamie McDonough

The effects of media messages often go unknown to their producers. Creators make the best advertisements, television shows, or news coverage they can and trust the ratings or views to give them answers. In this paper, I attempt to explain my own research on a media audience exposed to three audio-visual advertisements from the truth® campaign in order to examine audience attitudes both before and after media exposure.

The truth® campaign is an anti-smoking movement sweeping the United States in the form of television, magazine and online advertisements. The truth® campaign started over a decade ago by The American Legacy Foundation, an independent public health organization that was founded in 1999 after the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) between U.S. states and territories and Big Tobacco. The money granted to the U.S. in the agreement went toward the movement, and since then it has revamped its campaign and uses counter-advertising techniques in order to capture its audience’s attention.

Audience understanding and measurement has long been a topic of interest as there is much uncertainty in terms of both numbers and effects. My project utilized a focus group of six participants in order to collect qualitative and quantitative data on audience reactions to media. My research allowed me to show three truth® advertisements to my focus group and observe how they interacted with the content, as well as how their attitudes changed throughout the test. The three advertisements were chosen somewhat randomly; however they adequately demonstrate the style and techniques used most frequently by the campaign.

The first ad, “More Than” is a one-minute, animated advertise-

ment, with a description that reads: “Big Tobacco’s products kill more than shark attacks, yeti attacks, fires, floods, sky diving accidents, car crashes, and murder combined.” The ad uses a cartoon to portray each accident and instance of death, as each one melts into the next. (Ex: two stick figures sitting around a bonfire that bursts into large flames is extinguished by the water that causes a flood, which is then the water under a bridge on which a car accident occurs.) The last transition changes the music and severity of the commercial and pans out to show each of the causes of death in the form of a bar graph. Each bar is a representation of the number of deaths caused by that incident, the highest by far being smoking. It is here that the quote above is used in describing the effects of smoking, followed by an orange screen bearing the text, “ugly truth.”

The second commercial is “Crawl,” a one-minute ad made to look like a video game. The ad begins as though one is starting an arcade game: it is blinking, pixelated, and the points and time are tracked. The ‘player’ is a baby, who is initially clouded in a puff of smoke from which it escapes and begins to play the game. It jumps over snapping crocodiles, lava pools, collapsing caves, skeletons and mountains to win the game, yet at the end it is again clouded by smoke. The screen changes to show a quote: “How do infants avoid secondhand smoke? ‘At some point they begin to crawl,’ Tobacco Executive, 1996.” The ad ends by flashing, “game over” and “ugly truth.”

The last commercial is called “Singing Cowboy” and is thirty seconds long. A guitar player and cowboy have planted themselves on a busy city street corner amidst traffic jams, crosswalks and throngs of pedestrians. The ad consists of a song performed in a robotic voice by the cowboy with a tracheotomy, who is on the street. His song goes, “You don’t always die from tobacco, sometimes you just lose a lung. Oh you don’t always die from tobacco, sometimes they just snip out your tongue. And you won’t sing worth a heck with a big hole in your neck, no, you don’t always die from tobacco.” During this, pedestrians are videotaping, some are gasping, and others are watching in awe as the cowboy holds a microphone to his trachea. The ad ends in the usual orange screen with the words, “ugly truth.”

These advertisements are prime examples of the counter-advertising technique mentioned earlier, which has made the campaign a success. Counter-advertising is defined in marketing as advertising that takes a position contrary to an advertising message that preceded it (Lake). As researched by Sly, Hopkins, Trapido, and Ray “the campaign



may operate at 2 levels. First, it may prevent young nonsmokers from beginning any use. Second, it may affect young people who do take up smoking by making them more conscious of how often and how much they smoke” (Sly and Hopkins et al. 233).

According to Legacy’s Chief Marketing Officer, Eric Asche, the campaign works on a peer-to-peer communication plane as opposed to the top-down structure. This allows the people who are exposed to the advertisements to do the work and the influencing. The truth® campaign uses traditional methods of communication such as television advertisements, but has been extremely successful in its online and digital platforms as well. The website has an ongoing contest entitled, “the ugliest truth,” which encourages viewers to be interactive in making and deciding on the advertisements that are aired on TV. This is a win-win for the campaign, as it is utilizing consumer ideas and attention in order to promote their own message and join the tobacco conversation. Spots air on cable channels popular with teens and young audiences, including Adult Swim, Comedy Central, MTV, MTV2, TeenNick and VH1. Truth® utilizes web and interactive methods, such as their online hub that features commercials, video games, art, contests and facts related to smoking, and has a strong presence on social networks and pages on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr and Instagram. . Their ad contest even employs the use of Twitter for voting, which encourages viewers to “#vote” on the “ugliest truth” (“Legacy For Health”). Additional information about the truth® campaign on [protectthetruth.org](http://protectthetruth.org) suggests that the campaign simply works. 75 percent of all 12- to 17-year-olds in the nation can accurately describe one or more of the truth® ads. What’s more, nearly 90 percent of youths aged 12 to 17 said that the ad they saw was convincing, resulting in 85 percent (24 million teens) saying that the ad gave them good reasons not to smoke. After the campaign’s launch in 1999, cigarette smoking among high school students fell by more than one million from 2000 to 2002 (“Truth Campaign”). The truth® strives to reach its audience through its atypical advertisements and promotional efforts over social media, making their audience a particularly intriguing one to study.

We should consider how the researcher could influence the focus group and, therefore, his or her results inadvertently through priming. Priming, according to media priming analysts David R. Roskos-Ewoldsen, Beverly Roskos-Ewoldsen and Francesca Dillmon Carpentier, refers to the effects of a preceding stimulus on our cognitions, emotions, or

behaviors (Roskos-Ewoldsen and Carpentier). In terms of media exposure, priming results in later effects on attitudes or judgments relating to the content that was processed.

There are two factors impacting priming: the first is recency, or how long ago the message was received; the second is intensity, or the frequency and duration of the prime. We must look at how a focus group could be influenced in this way: if participants have been exposed to the truth® campaign or to smoking prior to the study, they are likely to have preexisting attitudes toward the campaign (or smoking itself). The researcher may also unintentionally sway her participants' cognitions by mentioning a concept for the group to discuss. These factors play a role in the outcome of the study, and could potentially distort any results obtained by it.

Additionally, we should take a look at a psychological theory that could sway results, known as the social desirability bias. This term describes the human tendency to present oneself in a positive light, or otherwise in the best possible way. Participants are at times unable to report themselves accurately on sensitive topics, due to ego-defensive reasons or issues with acceptance. Respondents are biased toward what is socially acceptable or correct and adjust their responses accordingly on surveys or questionnaires (Fischer 303-315). Because my study utilized a questionnaire, I must take into consideration that my participants may have felt pressured to answer in a certain way that was untruthful or exaggerated to seem more "correct." This, also, could have swayed any results I gathered.

My research used a focus group of six students from the University of New Hampshire, all enrolled in an introductory level media studies class. Four girls and two boys participated in my research in return for extra credit in their class. I created a series of questions to ask them pertaining to smoking and my three media messages and produced a questionnaire to be filled out during their media exposure. My research objectives were stated in the form of questions, as I was unsure that my research would help me to reach any one conclusion about media audiences. Coincidentally, I hoped to get to the "truth" behind how the truth® campaign affects its audience through the following questions: Does the truth® campaign utilize successful techniques in persuading its audience? Do the truth® advertisements have noticeable effects on the group's attitude toward smoking? Which genre or style of the truth® advertisements best captures the audience's attention, and which techniques

are the most effective in the truth®'s advertising?

My focus group results provided me with useful and interesting information about how an audience may perceive the campaign. The focus group took place in the university library and lasted over 80 minutes, of which I have over 50 minutes of footage, and to which I was able to refer in order to answer my research questions. My research yielded results that were different from my expectations, and I accepted these differences with intrigue. In answering my questions, the group touched upon subjects that had previously not occurred to me, and in turn my questions evolved to fit the new discussions taking place; however, my research questions were fulfilled through both the group's conversation as well as the questionnaire that they filled out.

My first research question asked if the truth® campaign utilized successful techniques in persuading its audience, and I found that my group generally thought it did. Participants mentioned the specific ad techniques that stood out to them. In discussing the techniques that made "Crawl" successful, Male 1 said, "I thought it was interesting that even when the baby crawled across all the obstacles and finally reached the end, they added a cloud of smoke at the end as well. That showed that even when someone tries to get away from smoke that they are still going to end up in a place where there is smoke." Many of the participants enjoyed "Crawl;" however, there was opposition as to whether the commercial utilized fully effective techniques. Female 2 challenged Male 1 by stating that she was confused by "Crawl" because the advertisement's message took more time than it should have to become clear, saying, "It took too long to understand it." Additionally, Female 1 thought that the ad might persuade a parental audience to stop smoking because of the use of an infant figure. "I think it shows adults that would watch this that if they have kids then their smoking will ruin the childhood [of their kids]." Upon discussing the ad called "More Than," Female 4 brought up the commercial's credibility and shock-factor from the use of statistics, saying that producers were trying to show a "harsh reality." "The number one thing that stuck out to me was that more people die from tobacco than car accidents," she said, "and I know all the time you hear about people dying in car accidents... if more people are dying from lung cancer it's kind of a reality check."

My second research question asked if the truth® advertisements had noticeable effects on the group's attitude toward smoking. I found this answer by juxtaposing their responses from before and after their

media exposure. Before watching the three ads from the campaign, participants had pre-existing attitudes toward smoking that they felt rather strongly about. In fact, two out of six of the participants had lost family members due to tobacco use. When I asked the question, “does smoking have any reputation associated with it?” they immediately had answers. The first response was from Female 3: “I think there’s definitely a negative connotation with it. When you see someone smoking... you’re just like, ‘oh, my god, that’s so trashy.’” Her response was met with nothing but agreement from the others, as throughout the discussion participants shared their own experiences and views on why they felt smoking had an inherently bad reputation. Male 1 brought up the dichotomy that exists between views about male and female smokers, saying that there was somewhat of a double standard between the two concerning what is socially acceptable. “When I see guys smoking I’m like, ‘that’s gross,’ but if I see a girl smoking I’m just like, ‘that is straight trashy... that’s absolutely disgusting.’” He said that this was because girls have a desired reputation to uphold as “classy” people, whereas boys are known to always have their hands in trouble. Male 1 admits that this might be due to the media portrayal of male and female smokers, which he confesses is “not always true.” However, Female 1 agreed that the double standard is real: in fact many girls in her high school associated male smokers with a “bad boy” reputation and found it attractive, whereas girls who smoked were thought of as unattractive.

After media exposure, the group was asked what they thought the truth® campaign was saying about smoking. They initially came up with the condensed statement, “It’s bad,” meaning smoking, and then elaborated to say, “It has dire consequences or incredibly bad ones...it’s worse than most things,” adding, “It can affect more than just you, but the people around you.” Female 3 summed up her feelings about smoking by saying that the campaign simply reiterates “how bad smoking is and how you’re not just going to be affecting yourself or killing yourself, but you’re affecting people around you. And even people you don’t know. You can die from secondhand smoke.” These responses effectively answered my second question.

My last research question (“Which genre or style of the truth® advertisement best captures the audience’s attention?”) was broken down into various questions throughout the discussion, such as, “In which ways were the ads successful in maintaining your attention?” and “What techniques did the campaign use that were or were not effective?” This

last topic provoked the biggest response from my focus group, as the participants had much to say about how the three ads effectively captured their attention. However, much of their reasoning overlapped. The majority of participants felt that “Singing Cowboy” was the commercial that most captured their attention. Male 1 explained that the ads that best captured his attention were “Crawl” and “Singing Cowboy,” as “More Than” did not really get his attention because of the data that they used in their mortality rates. For example, yeti attacks could not have reality-based figures, “so I felt like their data was skewed based on that alone.” As for “Crawl,” he felt that the use of Super Mario Brothers was intriguing, as he remembered playing Mario as a young kid and said that the cartoon basis of it made him “chuckle a bit.” “Singing Cowboy” provoked more of an emotional response among the group because they were able to see the effects of smoking first hand through someone who had survived cancer and was living with the consequences. Male 1 said, “You hear about people dying from cancer all the time but not many people have actually seen people living with the effects after cancer... The way they present that is saying it’s a lot worse to be living.” Female 2 agreed that “Singing Cowboy” captured her attention the most out of all three ads when she said, “‘Singing Cowboy’ got to me especially when he mentioned the hole in his neck and I didn’t even know you could get your tongue snipped out but it was (something) I had not known about... He was singing with a croaked voice and it didn’t sound normal.” Male 2 went further along the same topic: “The fact that he was singing holding the hole in his neck, just seeing him singing and talking about it makes it effective.” Female 1’s reasoning was slightly different, saying that she felt it was the realness of the ad that made it stand out among the others: “I think that it was a clip out of reality, that you get people’s initial, real reactions—people on the street they’re not paid or anything—and it’s in the middle of a big city that you just get everyone’s raw reactions that really is effective.” Male 2 concurred, saying that the fact that the commercial showed the real reactions of the people watching the cowboy, such as covering their mouths in shock, made him shocked, too. Female 3 had the same opinion that the use of real people was the most effective technique, saying, “It actually showed someone that had survived after smoking but did major damage to himself.” The only opposition to the group’s consensus on “Singing Cowboy” came from Female 4, as she felt that “More Than” was the most effective ad based on its use of facts and suspense. She pointed out that she usually does not like advertisements with much text, but that “More Than” made her wonder “what they were going to say at the end since it was building up to something... It created

an emotional response for (her) and that's why (she) thinks it's influential."

My research questions were answered by these responses, yet one final statement stood out to me as telling of the truth® campaign's relation to other anti-smoking commercials. Female 4 was the only one to talk about the ads in terms of the whole campaign, noting that the truth® techniques are different from others in that they use a new approach to capturing their audience's attention. She said, "The campaign reels you in and it's definitely a different approach. And with that harsh reality it leads you in and then in the end it gives you a message, and it's not as serious, but I do think it has the same effect and still makes you question smoking."

The results of my questionnaire were equally as interesting and noteworthy. I collected data on the participants' opinions of each advertisement immediately after their exposure. The questionnaire was designed to provoke responses concerning various aspects of each commercial, such as whether it was memorable, shocking or effective. I used a scale of zero to five to rate the participants' agreements with the statements provided, zero being, "I do not agree at all" and five being, "I agree very much" with this statement. The statements were as follows: I will remember this ad; I will talk about this ad to others; this ad shocked me; this ad provoked an emotional response; this ad was effective; and this ad was the most influential ad (answered with either "yes" or "no"). Responses for "More Than" were very average, rating a collective 2.66 out of 5 for all responses and gaining the vote of one respondent who felt the ad was the most influential. This ad ranked the lowest in all fields with the exception of the statement, "this ad shocked me," which was given an average score of 2.5, coming in above "Crawl" and below "Singing Cowboy." Crawl's highest rated statement was, "I will remember this ad," with a score of 3.5 out of 5, yet it rated lowest of all three ads for shock-factor with a 1.83. This ad was not considered the most influential by any of the participants and scored an average 2.73 for all responses. "Singing Cowboy" provoked the highest scores and most powerful responses, as five out of six participants thought this ad was the most influential. This commercial received a 4.16 out of 5 for the response, "I will remember this ad;" a 3.16 for, "I will talk about this ad to others;" a 3.83 for, "this ad shocked me;" a 3.0 for, "this ad provoked an emotional response;" and a whopping 4.33 for the statement, "this ad was effective." In a section designated for additional notes about the

advertisements, four participants made comments regarding “Singing Cowboy” and its effectiveness, and two commented on “Crawl.” These results were crucial to my understanding of the focus group, though I am not certain that they translate to an understanding of the audience of the truth® campaign as a whole, due to the significantly small size of my sample.

The research has been done, the focus group conducted, and the data collected, now, what does it all mean? I found answers to my research questions through both the group discussion and the questionnaire. The focus group allowed me to observe that the advertisements did indeed utilize successful techniques in persuading its audience. Participants brought up superior techniques used in “Crawl,” such as the ending quote and the use of a video game style. The tactics used in “More Than” stuck out to the group as surprising due to the use of facts such as mortality rates - one participant referred to this as a “reality check.” Additionally, the group found that the candidness of “Singing Cowboy” persuaded them to feel a specific way about smoking and the lasting effects of tobacco use.

In addition, I observed that the effects on the group’s attitude toward smoking were minimal, as most of them already had set ideas and opinions on the topic. If anything, the truth® campaign actually reinforced their beliefs. This was exemplified through the before and after comparison I made after asking the initial question, “Does smoking have any reputation associated with it?” and the later question, “What does the campaign say about smoking?” I found that the responses were extremely similar and unanimous in stating that smoking has a negative connotation: it’s “trashy,” “low class” and “unattractive.” After their media exposure, many participants brought up the previously established idea that smoking affects more than the smoker, but those around her consuming second-hand smoke.

Finally I identified specific styles and techniques that were particularly effective in capturing my audience’s attention. The group indicated in their discussion as well as on their questionnaires that shock-factor, emotion and realness had an impact on their attention and the overall effectiveness of the ad. Participants stated multiple times that “Singing Cowboy” was overall the most effective advertisement due to its use of a real person who suffered from his smoking habits. One participant referred to the bystanders’ candid reactions, noting that they were not paid to respond in a certain way but were caught covering their mouths



group did, however, have a few comments and recommendations for the producers of the truth® campaign concerning the three commercials they viewed. One participant noted that the more subtle the advertising, the better. This technique lets the audience figure out what the message is by thinking about it in more depth. Another participant commented on the length of “Crawl” as being a detriment to its effectiveness. She claimed to be confused for too long while she was watching it, which turned her off to the ad altogether, and she also noted that if a viewer had not seen the beginning of the commercial it would not make sense. Lastly, a group member reported feeling like he was being forced to side with the truth® campaign through “propaganda.” He said the information was too biased to be effective in persuading him. As a final point, the group thought that the use of hashtags (i.e. #votecrawl, #votemorethan) was a good attempt at generating conversation on social media sites to spread awareness. With Twitter being so prominent in our society, the participants thought of the use of hashtags as current and trendy, lending to the truth® campaign’s image as the new approach to talking about smoking.

We can analyze these findings through two conceptual ideas in the study of media. We will consider how priming (as mentioned earlier) and how Stuart Hall’s Cultural Studies Model can explain why the group members responded in the ways that they did. To recall, priming is the immediate impact of a message on cognitions, emotions or behaviors. In the case of my focus group, participants had likely been exposed to both smoking and the truth® campaign prior to their media exposure, meaning many of them had preexisting notions relating to each one. Each person had a personal view on and relationship with the topic long before participating in my research, which therefore affected the way they viewed the media messages. In fact, as stated earlier, two of the group members had an extremely personal connection in which family members had died from tobacco use. In this case, the degree to which they might have been primed before viewing the ads would be dependent on how recently ads were viewed and intensity of the death of their family members. Other participants might have had relationships with smoking that impacted how they thought about, felt or behaved toward the truth® campaign. This could be why most of the group felt so strongly about smoking from the start of the discussion, saying how they thought smoking was “trashy,” “low class” and “unattractive.” Additionally, their responses to the questions immediately following media exposure were in particular agreement with the media message due to their recent and intense



exposure to the content. We can also see how Stuart Hall's decoding strategies can explain the group's attitude toward smoking in terms of the dominant ideology code. This theory involves the decoding of texts by audience members, and how they understand content that is presented to them. Hall discusses the oppositional code, when an audience member rejects the premise of the media text, the negotiated code, when an audience member alters the text to fit her preexisting worldview, and the dominant code, when an audience member accepts the underlying assumptions of a text that reinforces society's dominant view of the world. In the case of my group, I noticed that the majority of the participants decoded the media messages I showed them using dominant ideologies, in which they accepted the text in terms of the dominant worldview. Smoking is widely known as a "bad" activity, and children learn of the deadly effects of tobacco use from a young age in school and from their families. This perception of smoking as a low class and harmful act is dominant in our society. My participants answered the questions using key terms and ideas consistent with those of the dominant worldview, such as "smoking is bad," and "people who smoke are cancer sticks." Hegemonies such as those reflect the widely spread belief that smoking is harmful, a concept that came up frequently in our discussion. I received much of the same type of feedback from the members of my group, leading me to wonder whether the participants felt obligated to align with the dominant ideology in their responses, or whether this was in fact the way that they decoded the media messages.

As for my own research methods, I feel that there is a multitude of things that I could have done differently to better my focus group as well as my research. First, it might have benefitted my findings to ask different questions both in my discussion and on my questionnaire. After conducting the focus group, I realized that my group had already touched upon questions prior to me prompting them, and as a result the discussion felt redundant at times. For example, the question, "What does the ad tell you about the truth® campaign, and of the 'truth' in general?" was not particularly pertinent to my research nor did it generate much discussion. Instead, I could have used that time to separate another question into two parts, asking which of the campaign's techniques were effective and which were not, as I feel this pertained to my research much more and directly answered my third research question. Next, I would have liked a projector in order to show my group the media message. I reserved a room in the local library in which to conduct my focus group, but the room was not equipped with the proper technology for project-

ing the commercials on a large wall or screen, thus I settled with using my personal laptop as the viewing mechanism. This could have changed how well they saw the ads—as they all contained text—and how well they understood each ad’s message. My skills as a focus group leader were certainly minimal, as I have never before conducted research with participants, and I look back at my footage wishing I could have changed the way I flowed through the topics, recorded their discussion, and asked certain questions. I often lacked the confidence to ask my questions directly and struggled with phrasing my thoughts or explanations, something I might have achieved through more practice. On this note, I am uncertain of the degree to which I influenced their conversation with my phrasing, interruptions and suggestions. Several times in the video I caught myself inserting my thoughts into their sentences when they struggled for words or broaching an idea when conversation ran out of steam. In retrospect, I feel that I was unknowingly priming them to think about topics that they otherwise would not have and putting ideas into their heads (thus words in their mouths). It is important as a group leader to observe and collect the data that the participants provide one with but not to skew that data by interrupting the focus group with one’s own opinions. If I were to conduct this focus group again or any others in the future, I would focus my attention on being a more comfortable leader, flowing from question to question by having an idea of how I would phrase my thoughts and allowing each participant to say what they thought without inputting my own words or showing approval for specific answers over others.

It is the job of a researcher to learn from her findings as well as her mistakes. I intend on keeping up with the truth® campaign, and I encourage others to do the same, as the cause is worthy of attention. Should others continue along my path to audience understanding concerning the truth® campaign, I suggest focusing on other realistic, candid commercials, as I found these were most influential on my group. I also suggest giving the participants an opportunity to create their own campaign before being exposed to the truth®, therein possibly revealing some techniques that audiences find most effective. Finally, conducting the focus group in different areas of the U.S. would yield very different results than my own, further helping us to understand how the truth campaign is perceived nationally.

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# Great Pacific Garbage Patch: Can We Clean It Up?

## Elizabeth Hobbs

It is no wonder why water, seemingly is the one thing life cannot live without. Planet earth is comprised of seventy five percent water. The human body is comprised of fifty to sixty-five percent water. Water, is what makes the world go round. For years, humans have been warned of the harmful effects climate change will have on the planet. Opinions for and against climate change have flourished over the decades but according to recent, definitive research calculated by NASA, there is absolute evidence to believe “the earth’s climate has changed throughout history and most of it is very likely human-induced” (NASA). A less well-known threat to earth’s water is an entity called the Eastern Pacific Garbage Patch, also known as the Great Pacific Garbage patch and the Pacific Trash Vortex. In the Pacific Ocean, enormous amounts of plastic debris have been located in the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre. The concern for this threat is immense and growing. The pending questions for scientists and advocacy groups now are: what are we going to do about it? And who, if anyone, is going to take responsibility for accomplishing that task?

Greenpeace is an organization dedicated to the awareness and action against environmental degradation. It was established forty years ago and has since grown into a major and well-known advocacy group. One issue they are very concerned with is the Pacific garbage patch as it reflects environmental detriment. Noted on their website they say, “The trash vortex is an area the size of Texas in the North Pacific in which an estimated six kilos of plastic for every kilo of natural plankton, along with other slow degrading garbage, swirls slowly around like a clock, choked with dead fish, marine mammals, and birds who get snared” (Greenpeace). The marine debris is chiefly plastic particles. The immense amount of micro plastics poses an enormous threat and challenge to the

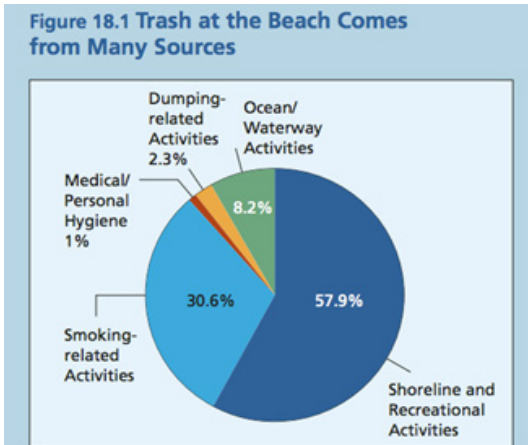
cleanup because the polymers cannot be seen by the naked eye. In the recent past, scientists have collected up to 750,000 bits of plastic in a single square kilometer (National Geographic). This reflects how an ocean gyre operates. On planet earth there are five major gyres. The North Pacific gyre, however, covers a vast amount of the Pacific Ocean and is the largest ecosystem on the planet approximating 19 million square kilometers. The nature of a gyre involves a clockwise circular pattern propelled by both wind patterns and the forces created by the rotation of the planet and water currents (National Geographic). In consequence to this circular motion, whatever is floating in the ocean gets essentially trapped in high volume at the middle of gyre.

In 1988, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the United States predicted an immense buildup of neustonic plastic in the Pacific Ocean in the years to come. They based this prediction off of research conducted by Alaskan scientists whom discovered abnormally high concentrations of marine debris starting to accumulate in the Pacific gyres (Environmental Monitoring). There are indeed other gyres with plastic debris buildup, but the North Pacific is by far the most alarming and in need of serious attention. The precise size of the garbage patch cannot be accurately measured as it is too immense and not all of the plastic floats at the surface. Heavier, thicker pieces of marine debris float in the upper to middle water column, making it impossible to calculate the total volume. It was not until 1997, when Captain Charles J. Moore was returning home from a transpacific yacht race that he discovered the floating debris in the North Pacific Gyre ([algalita.org](http://algalita.org)). There was a substantial amount of trash and since then, "Captain Moore has made numerous research voyages to the Gyre aboard the ORV Algalita, resulting in a body of authoritative research publications and data and educational programs" ([Algalita.org](http://Algalita.org)). As a little change of pace, the Algalita Foundation's mission is to focus on conducting research and collaborative studies on distribution, harmful effects and transference of toxicants of marine plastic pollution. Second to that is focusing on providing educational findings to students, scientists, the general public, and governmental agencies ([Algalita.org](http://Algalita.org)). Lastly, Algalita strives to collaborate with other ocean organizations towards restoring the aquatic environment. The facts speak for themselves. Plastic pollution in our oceans is in dire need of being acknowledged and eradicated.

With any environmental concern, a common problem people face is where to start. Knowledge and education regarding what our govern-

Robert J. Cox's book, *Environmental Communication* mentions the idea of stakeholders and their relevance to public participation, as well as, the concept of "indecorous voices". This term refers to an interpersonal standing stating that, "the legitimacy, the respect, the esteem, and the consideration that all stakeholders perspectives should be given" (Cox 255). In the case of the garbage patch, some people living near the ocean fear the potential negative health effects of both humans and animals. They feel that they deserve a voice, too. The practices and reasoning for governmental decisions are often silenced or inaccessible to the average citizen. However, with some light research that assumption can be debunked; at least in the case of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. Via government info online there is a full report on the current laws, regulations, and assessments of ocean policy. Chapter 18 focuses specifically on Ocean Marine Debris. It is outlined in a clear, concise presentation and as stated above, is completely accessible online to anyone.

First and foremost, knowledge is key when investigating issues like the ocean policies and the garbage patch. One cannot learn and make accurate assessments of why the issue is flourishing if the laws and regulations are unknown. A chief concern with environmental issues that stakeholders often experience is lack of participation. Lack of participation in public forums and unequal access to policy information is under scrutiny. Under the Freedom of Information Act, all governmental information that is not upheld by security restrictions must be available for the general public (Cox). In the case of Ocean Policy that rule has been upheld and is available, courtesy of the sponsoring by National Ocean Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The chapter covers everything from assessing the sources to covering efforts in establishing and expanding on modes for debris cleanup. Although this presentation is a blueprint, one could seriously benefit from reading the information. Sourced from another organization focused on ocean cleanup, here is a chart that outlines percentages of where the trash is coming from: (See picture next page)



To deduce what these results show, it is evident that whether the trash is coming from dumping-related activities or recreational activities, the overwhelming factor linking all these methods is carelessness and laziness. Although this chart features beach trash, it is relevant to plastic debris and how it has formed. Fortunately, most activists would argue that a careless attitude is something that can be changed with effective tactics. The proper education, awareness, and motivation to do so is crucial.

The Ocean Policy presentation also describes some of the horrible effects this marine debris has on marine animals. Ingestion and entanglement rank near the worst of outcomes because it “can wound animals, impair their mobility, or strangle them” (Govinfo). Not only that, the heavily saturated amounts of plastic disrupts food webs, especially algae and plankton. Algae and plankton are autotrophic, which means they rely on sunlight transmitted through the water column to feed them and live. With plastic rubbish in the middle of the water column, the natural process is destroyed and causes serious implications to autotrophy. Essentially a domino effect occurs and puts the ecosystems in the North Pacific Gyre in serious danger. Once such study foreshadows a species crash in lantern fish. At night, these fish live at the bottom of the ocean and during the day they feed frantically and ingest copious amounts of plastic (Water Pollution). The plastic acts as a flotation device in their stomachs as they try to reach to bottom again, which obviously amounts to a huge problem. When it comes to environmental communication and what to do about this, the most important questions to consider are these: What is already in place and what needs to be?

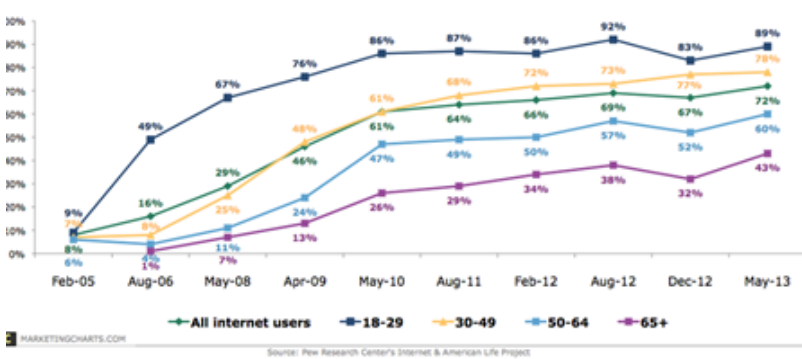
The Ocean Policy blueprint and NOAA address the programs already existing, some of which include the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, The Clean Water Act, and The Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act. Also, campaigns like the International Coastal Cleanup held each year by The Ocean Conservancy is a very productive effort that helps marine debris eradication. Not only does it capture the attention of thousands of volunteers, but also it promotes data research that links the deposits to their source. By avoiding the continuance of marine debris deposits helps researchers become one step closer to establishing total prevention techniques of plastic waste in our oceans. On behalf of the Ocean Conservancy and EPA funding, the National Marine Debris Monitoring Program has been developed to systematically assess the success of MARPOL “by identifying sources and trends of marine debris” (govinfo). The NOAA presentation is designed so that at the end of each chapter, recommendations are made as to the most efficient ways to counteract this issue of marine debris. Although there are too many to name, one key focus can be located in all of them. They suggest that the NOAA’s program for eliminating marine debris should be working together and complimenting the similar program the EPA has in place. This simple idea of collaborating may be the very solution towards action and change.

In order to expand marine debris efforts, “both NOAA and EPA will need to focus on education and outreach, working with communities and industry, and improving source identification, monitoring, and research” (govinfo). One difference between the two programs is that they do not focus on the same modes for cleanup. That is fine. However, there is reason to speculate that if these organizations were collaborating, more power to make a difference might be inspired. Greenpeace, for example, advertises on their website site that they are non-profit, much like any other organization concerned with environmental sustainability for the planet. In addition to this they do not accept funding from any governmental agencies or corporations such as the EPA, just individual supporters and foundation grants. This seems counter productive. As just explained above, the Ocean Conservancy Foundation has accepted and received funding from the EPA in order to set up a national monitoring program. It is doing great things and raising awareness. It is understandable that tax dollars are involved and this discussion could be developed into one concerning a whole realm of complexities in politics. The facts



still remain though that the pacific garbage patch is a cause worth investing in. The devastation to animals and potential threat to humans in the long run is a big gamble. If it is active change and awareness that we need, then employing our best and most efficient resources/organizations seems like the most superior route. Collaboration and awareness efforts used to their highest potential are the best courses of action.

At this point, it might be interesting to divulge where a lot of information on this topic was found: online. Not one book or traditional form of print research was used because nowadays, for science is too recent, instantaneous and broad to look up via an encyclopedia or journal. Not everything can easily and accessibly be covered in print. The graph below shows current trends in age groups and their social networking site use:



Social networking is developing into a rapidly growing phenomenon in all age groups. Being online is critical in this day and age. Even these graphs show that 65+ are in fact increasing in its social networking usage every year; it is not just young people. As indicated above, social media usage is growing because the amount of people on those sites is ever increasing, too (marketing charts). If awareness and education are the goals of most of these marine debris focused nonprofit organizations, then that information better be available through media that is popular among their target audience. In the case of advocacy, the target audience would appear to be young adults of generation X. Ocean Conservancy has a website that offers a whole range of opportunities. It encourages “other ocean advocates just like you” to connect with their network and start getting involved. Their website features a vision for a healthy ocean with opportunities to prevent further catastrophic damage to our oceans.

Recycling, proper disposal of garbage and healthy/sustainable fishing practices are all discussed in an effort to show how much of a difference they can make in the scheme of things. That being said, the Ocean Conservancy Foundation mainly focuses on getting average citizens who are interested involved. Their site is extremely crisp, interactive and appealing to fellow activists or interested community members.

The Algalita Foundation, started by Charles J. Moore, the discoverer of the Pacific Garbage Patch, also has a website and utilizes social networking communications. However, on Facebook, Ocean Conservancy has 91,000 likes compared to Algalita's 3,569. Now there is an obvious reason for this discrepancy- Ocean Conservancy has been around for almost twenty years longer. Regardless, it appears that Algalita has not reached quite as big of an audience. That seems strange seeing as Charles Moore is the one who discovered the North Pacific Garbage Patch. One reason for this could be that Algalita is not affiliated with any big government agencies or corporations. Ocean Conservancy's affiliation with the EPA undoubtedly has amounted to more awareness and interest, chiefly because it is supported by a well-known, prestigious government agency. [It has been mentioned several times but without awareness]. People can only get involved in a cause that makes its efforts and goals public.

One thing Algalita Marine Research Institute is spot on about is the reality of the garbage patch situation. It is one thing to want to clean up this garbage patch, but it is another thing to assess the feasibility of that. On its website Algalita explains that at this point in time, little can be done in the physical removal of the micro-plastic pollution. The area is just too large and the funds are not appropriated. The exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the U.S. extends "200 miles in all directions from every US coastline...this line marks the jurisdiction of US federal environmental management agencies. However, outside of this area they are not mandated to mitigate negative environmental impacts to protected species and to the environmental wealth of the country" (algalita.org). Algalita consistently goes out to the gyre once a year for data collection and samples. With these samples, the Algalita Institute hopes to better assess the impact on marine mammals, seabirds, and fish. They are further concerned with the "possible transference of toxic contaminants from plastic to marine life, and what, short-term and long-term implications there are for human health". Algalita is aware that until the consciousness of the general public is reached and the threats become obvious and

unavoidable, not much public attitude will change. The direct sampling is one way to capture the public's attention because images of what the water really looks like out there are astonishing. Images capturing the contents of seabirds stomachs are truly gut wrenching and dismal. According to the Association for Consumer Research, "Advertisers' edicts about how to create effective advertising make many implicit references to mental imagery, especially visual imagery". Images displaying mounds of plastic waste, dead animal skeletons with plastic remnants inside of them, and filthy water samples are hard to view without the massive threat to our oceans being utterly apparent.

With all that said, the necessary efforts become fairly clear. It is not the removal of the current plastic garbage that needs the most focus. Extravagant ideas such as the "Gyre Clean Up Project" are brilliant, but rather pointless if the amount of trash wasted into our oceans daily stays the same (Gyre Cleanup Plan). Instead we need to focus on not adding to it, which will ultimately make it worse and harder to clean up. The general public's interest in the matter has not been peaked to the point of total advocacy, much like most environmental concerns. Therefore organizations like the Ocean Conservancy and the Algalita Research Institute would benefit greatly by promoting the education outreach programs and utilizing social media to attract young people interested in ways to live an environmentally savvy life. Environmental communication that is most effective is one that benefits the organization with equal and visible benefits to its supporters. Algalita continues to do research in the North Pacific Gyre and is learning every year further implications about what this marine debris is having on humans as well as marine animals. The more this research is conducted by other organizations, the more the very real implications this garbage patch will have on the general public will come to light. In most instances like advertising, promotion, or public service announcements, public awareness is imperative. You cannot fear what you do not know.

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# Reality and Perception in the Digital Age

Linda Chardon

*“In this treacherous world, nothing is the truth nor a lie.  
Everything depends on the color of the crystal through which one sees it.”*  
— Pedro Calderón de la Barca

Integral to our daily lives, digital technologies are deeply interwoven into our everyday interactions. As these technologies become more and more ubiquitous, questions regarding the impact of digitally mediated communication are prescient. Many wonder what impact this shift may have on our perception and understanding of ourselves and the world around us. People of all ages are frequently updating their various social media profiles and interacting with each other and their world through their phones and digital devices. Yet it seems hard to believe that a technology could fundamentally change the way we function without our awareness of any such shift. We have been raised to believe our point of view is our own, and that we have developed our unique perspective from our own choices and life experiences. While we preference an individualistic sense of self-construction, many components merge to form our perspective on the world. We develop our sense of self within through our culture, society, values, and memories, and this process constructs the way we understand and interact with the world. As such, is it so far-fetched to believe that the tools we use to communicate shape our perceptions and our reality? Considering the fundamental shift towards digital mediated living, how might social media such as Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram, and the digital technologies we use be influencing our perceptions of reality and the world around us?

These are the types of questions that medium theory explores—the potential ways shifts from one dominant media environment to

the next encourage and/or constrain forms of human interaction, communication and social organization. Medium theorists try to understand how the form of media used to convey a message may have as much of an influence on a person as the media content itself. Taking a medium theory approach is worth a bit of caution. Though extremely compelling, many of these claims are just that, claims. With this type of analytical reasoning it is very difficult to pinpoint what exactly caused these historical cultural changes and whether they were really due to a change in the form of media. While one can provide “evidence”, so to speak, by citing historical events and relating them to media forms at the time, much of this evidence seems somewhat like speculation. Also, it is difficult to separate the influence of a message from the influence of a medium. Still, the perspective of medium theory is useful in analyzing many current transitions that are taking place in society today. In *The Medium is the Massage*, medium theorist Marshall McLuhan declares, “All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered” (26). If we follow this thinking, what ways are digital media “working us over”, or affecting aspects of our lives and our world?

Today, social media have become a big part of our lives, and, I would argue, almost a part of us. Recently, it seems that our social media profiles have become an extension of our “self.” This parallels McLuhan, who despite writing in 1967 argued, “all media are extensions of some human faculty—psychic or physical” (26). Building on McLuhan’s insight, we can ask how, with “twitter lips and Instagram eyes” (Jurgenon, IRL Fetish), will our interactions with each other and with the world change? Is this new human experience a consequence of living in a digital society? McLuhan provokes us further by suggesting that media, by altering the informational environment “evoke in us unique ratios of sense perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act—the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change, men change” (McLuhan, 41). What “ratios” have changed with the introduction of the Internet and social media? And if certain ratios have changed, how have people changed as a result? Nowadays, many people experience much of their lives through a cell phone, which I believe has, in some ways, become an extension of our sensory and communicative abilities. How does perceiving the world through a smart phone shape reality?

I argue that social media has changed the way we think about the things we experience both on and offline. As medium theory suggests, technological changes shift perceptions. We can see an example of this in the invention of photography. When cameras were integrated into people's lives, they began to see the world as one full of images to capture, and photography broke up life into moments that were meant to be documented. Nathan Jurgenson (*The Facebook Eye*) argues that now, instead of the "camera eye", we have developed a "Facebook eye", and that our brains are searching for moments to put on Facebook. The digital world has changed the way we think and has encouraged us to look for things in our proximity to document and post on Facebook or other social media platforms. In both scenarios, "we are being trained to view our present as always its potential documentation" (Jurgenson, *Life Becomes More Picturesque*). Following a McLuhan perspective, the camera became an extension of self and sense perception, and now, it seems, Facebook and social media have as well.

Though Facebook's features of documentation and interaction are wonderful for connecting with friends and organizing memories, a somewhat unforeseen effect has begun to manifest itself. Facebook, as an online immersive platform, and the "Facebook eye" inherently "fixates the present as always a future past" (Jurgenson, *The Facebook Eye*). Essentially, when thinking of something you would like to post on Facebook, you are consequently contemplating looking back on a current moment in the future as a past moment. If people perceive everything in this way, how is it possible for citizens of a digital society to live in the moment or fully experience each moment of their lives? We are instead consuming replications of moments. I worry that a consequence of this new perception of reality may be a loss of authenticity and an inability to completely live in the "here-and-now."

I realize that I am speaking from personal experience, and that the following statements are merely personal narrative, but as a young person living in the digital age I feel they are relevant. I have experienced the "Facebook eye" phenomenon firsthand. On family vacations, my cousins and I have been at the beach together but on our phones--taking photos, tweeting, texting, etc. My youngest cousin will take a picture of the ocean, contemplate which Instagram filter looks the best and will get the most attention, post the image, and afterward continue to check the 200 "likes" she receives within the next hour. Facebook, and social media, subconsciously teaches us to present a life that is "likeable", and



in this way we can see that technology can, in fact, change our perceptions and consciousness (Jurgenson, *The Facebook Eye*).

I have also experienced this phenomenon at friendly social gatherings. I can think of countless times when, at some sort of party, my friends have asked me to take pictures of them and then have posted those photos to Facebook or Instagram. There is so much picture-taking happening and capturing of people “having a good time,” that I wonder if people are really thinking about how fun the party is or if they are simply thinking of how fun the photos will look on social media. I am, of course, guilty of this photo-taking as well, and smart phones have made it infinitely easier to take and share photos almost instantly. What’s more, I looked up the other night at a bar and realized my friends and I were sitting at a table together, all on our phones deciding on Instagram filters or browsing our news feeds rather than socializing with one another and the people around us. Sometimes, I feel as if when I look back on nights out, I consider the most fun nights to be the nights where good pictures were taken, even if they weren’t necessarily the most fun times I had being out. Perhaps, this is because, now, in the digital world of social media, when we reflect on our lives or our “nights out,” we do so through the images we post on our social media profiles. If you go out with your friends, but don’t take pictures and post them on social media, were you ever “really” out? As often said online, “pics or it didn’t happen.”

With this in mind, what does it mean for something to be “real” or “not real”? Is social media “real life” or “not real life”? Reality is, in essence, a social and human construction, for realities shift as society and culture shifts. Plato explains this concept through his *Allegory of the Cave*. Basically, he provides a philosophic argument for the principle that reality is based on perception, and that there is not one, universal reality. In *The Republic*, Plato has Socrates explain to Glaucon a story about prisoners who are chained to the wall of a cave. They have been chained to face the cave wall for all of their lives. The prisoners can only see things as shadows on the wall in front of them created by a fire lit behind them. As people and animals pass behind them in the cave, the only reality these prisoners can see is the shadows of these objects on the cave wall. One prisoner is then freed, and, as his eyes adjust to the sun and the light of the outside world, he perceives a new reality and realizes what the objects that cast the shadows he had seen all his life “truly” look like. He now believes this outside world to be more “real” than the shadows and his life inside the cave.

However, if the freed prisoner were to return to the other prisoners, they would not be able to understand him and would most likely think him ignorant in his inability to understand their reality. The prisoners have the perception that their shadow world is more “real” because it is all they have ever known, and, to them, the world outside of the cave can never exist—they cannot conceive or perceive it. Nevertheless, both realities *do* exist and are “real” because, as the allegory shows, our sensations and perceptions construct and constitute our reality. Yet somewhere, I feel that underlying this concept of reality-as-construct, there is a deep-set belief lurking. Even if what is “real” and “not real” is a social construct and not set-in-stone, somewhere, deep down, the basic connotation of reality seems to imply truth, actuality, and authenticity. We seem to know that the face-to-face, physical-world interactions we experience are “real life” and that our social media profiles and interactions are *not* entirely “real life”—that social media is not a complete representation of reality. For one reason or another, we, as humans, have made the distinction between an original and an imitation. Will that perception also change under the influence of digital technologies?

In everyday life of digital age, we are documenting and sharing more artifacts online, but these images we are sharing are also becoming progressively more “beautiful.” This is never more evident than on Pinterest, a bulletin board style photo-sharing social media site. As it has evolved, Pinterest has created a digital environment where users scroll and share large quantities of “beautiful” and pristine images. This browsing of infinite beauty has begun shift the way we document life and perceive aesthetics. The “picturesque” is an aesthetic ideal that refers to something that is more pleasing in mediated representation. It seems that Pinterest and another social media platform, Instagram, have encouraged us to desire and search for these picturesque documentations. Jurgenson (*Life Becomes More Picturesque*) suggests that this tendency toward idealized images is reminiscent of human interaction with a 17th century invention called the Claude glass. A Claude glass is a small mirror that modifies the scene reflected in it to create an image with a more simplified and gradual tonal range of colors. The reflected image had a somewhat painted quality, and, as such, was used by artists at the time to create “picturesque” landscape paintings.

The reflections seen in Claude glasses are very similar to the way Instagram filters today modify scenes and images. Everyday images are captured on smart phones, and Instagram filters are added with the

intention of creating more “beautiful” and attractive images—but mostly with the intention of receiving more “likes.” Pinterest, Instagram, and other social media, portray the “beauty of what is constructed, modified and performed rather than given” (Jurgenson, *Picture Pluperfect*), and we grow to prefer this constructed and idealized beauty over “real,” lived beauty. In this way, social media often portrays imitations that are preferable to the original. We can see the manifestation of this perceptual shift in the contemporary goal to strive for perfection in every aspect of our lives. The quest for aesthetic perfection exists in today’s fashion/beauty industry, home décor industry, and in the glamorization of and consumerism that exists in modern American culture and society. Is “constructed beauty” authentic and original, or actually just an artificial simulation of reality? The digital age has fostered people’s desire for the consumption of a representational aesthetically pleasing reality.

Jean Baudrillard, in his piece *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), theorizes a concept called “hyperreality”—essentially, simulations of reality create a hyperreality that masks actual reality. He claims that society creates simulacrum and simulations of originals or reality, which then creates a “fake” reality. He relates these concepts to a story about an empire where a map was made that’s “size was that of the empire and coincided point for point with it” (PBS Idea Channel). The map in this situation was the hyperreality and the empire being mapped was reality. As the map continued to grow larger and more complete, the map and the empire being mapped became more and more difficult to distinguish in difference. In hyperreality, “representation and thing being represented become, confusingly, one and the same” (PBS Idea Channel), and here is the where those instinctual ideas about what is “real” and “fake” come in. Somewhere inside ourselves we know that Baudrillard’s map is “not real” and is, essentially, an imitation of the “real” thing being mapped. But if the map and the thing being mapped are, from our point of view, *exactly the same*, what does that mean for authenticity and our reality? Or what if, from our point of view, the map is actually *better* than the thing being mapped? What if we prefer the “constructed beauty,” what if we prefer the hyperreality? Following this logic, is online content a simulation and therefore a hyperreality—and, if so, are social media and the Web creating a less “authentic” reality?

These concepts can be taken forward and applied to situations we are facing in society today. Sherry Turkle explores ideas about a current loss in the importance of authenticity in her book, *Alone Together*:

*Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other.* She tells a story where she took her young daughter to the Darwin exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. As her daughter viewed the Galapagos' tortoises, the very tortoises Darwin had seen over a hundred years ago, the daughter made the observation that the museum could have used robots instead. The young girl, and other children near the exhibit, said the "aliveness" of the turtle was not worth the effort, and that a robot turtle would be more aesthetically pleasing because its water would not be dirty. The parents in her story seemed confused, for the whole point was that the turtles were "real," but the children seemed unfazed. "In the children's reactions to the inert but alive Galapagos tortoise, the idea of the original had no place" (Turkle, 4). It did not matter to the children whether the turtle was a simulation or the "real" original.

Again, this disregard for authenticity is mirrored in another story Turkle tells about Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando, Florida. When the park first opened, "populated by 'real'—that is, biological—animals, its... visitors complained that [the animals] were not as 'realistic' as the animatronic creatures in other parts of Disneyworld" (Turkle, 4). The robot animals, which presented the stereotypical, archetypal and "perfect" creature, were perceived as more of an animal reality than the living animals themselves. In this scenario, human's desire for constructed beauty outweighed natural beauty—the people did, in fact, prefer the simulacra/simulation to the original, or the hyperreality to reality. It seems, in this way, the digital age *has* begun to shift people's perceptions about reality and authenticity. Perhaps Baudrillard was right in arguing that the hyperreality of Disney World *was* reality.

Is this shifting perception of reality, and consequent promotion of the picturesque, encouraging us to attempt to construct a more "beautiful" world? Does striving to create this simulated beauty in all things cause us to step away from away from reality, and, therefore, is this "beautiful" world less authentic? Or will the "beautiful" simply become the "real"? In a "real" system, or through the system of reality we currently operate under, randomness exists, mistakes are made, and it is statistically impossible to attain repeated perfection in nature. This is the very basis of evolution—nature's "mistakes" or "imperfections" in the form of genetic mutations drive evolution forward and have brought humans to where we are today. If the digital world can continually modify lived reality, and subsequently perfectly replicate modified reality, to

provide us with an endless stream of aesthetic perfection, than this must affect human perception of authenticity and the world around us.

In consequence, through today's use of social media and digital technologies, people have begun to crave "beauty" and "likeability." We thrive off the addiction of feeling popular and of living in a world full of all things aesthetically pleasing that the online era provides us. The rush of receiving "likes" has changed the way we take in the world—we have begun to filter out things that will not add to our social profiles and seek out the images or situations that will. This is another way our perception of the world has changed in the wake of a digital age. Self-documentation has become an obsession. We continually want to construct a "better" more "beautiful" self through the online world. Yet, just as there can be no good without the bad, in this context, there can be no beautiful without the ugly. It is the dichotomies in our world that show us how to understand information, feelings and ideas. In a perfect world, the imperfect would actually become more interesting, and therefore more desirable in its rarity. If everything were constructed to be beautiful, the "beautiful" would no longer be picturesque, preferable and aesthetically pleasing. Imperfections, mistakes and failures are, in effect, where new ideas are born and where advancement begins.

Nonetheless, I'd like to stress the fact that changing perceptions are not necessarily something to fear. Through utilizing new ways of looking at the world, we have developed many wonderful things. Innovation and creativity require a change in perception and a new look at reality to progress and prosper. The phrase "thinking outside the box" means looking outside your usual ways of thinking or regular viewpoint to discover new and groundbreaking solutions. Pinterest, as a social media platform, is an incredible source of inspiration. Designers and artists around the world can share their creations and ideas and gather motivation and insight for new projects. As a designer, I know that sometimes browsing Pinterest for an hour can spark a creative idea when I am experiencing artistic block. Will this more "beautiful" world and perceptual shift perhaps create a more artistic and creative world? We have no way of predicting what direction changing human perceptions may lead culture and society. Potentially, it may be the case that we discover new ways to interact with each other and our world, or that we gain a deepened or more heightened human experience. In a more "perfect" reality, there are, consequently, fewer mistakes and we may find that we move toward a "better" reality where there are fewer problems and more

solutions. Of course, these are all speculation. However, there have been many societal paradigm shifts throughout history and we have seemingly managed to continue on just fine.

My concern with digital technology and changing perceptions, though, is that we may lose ourselves and lose what it means to interact with our world in a natural state. I worry, as seen with the earlier questions raised about hyperreality, what might happen if we entirely come to believe that the simulacra/simulation and the original are both “real” and equal, or that the simulation is, in fact, better than the original. There would be no distinction between the original and imitation—between lived beauty and the idealized documentation. In that world where authenticity means nothing, who is to say we won’t begin lying and calculating our every move, thus losing our sense of honesty and spontaneity. I also worry that we may begin to lose ourselves in a sea of digital self-documentation. Currently, the “opportunity and motivation to self-document” (Jurgenson, *Life Becomes More Picturesque*) is greater than ever before. The Internet, as described by Vincent Miller (2011), provides a perfect space to perpetuate this perceptual shift toward selfishness—he explains the Internet to be an “ego-centric network of relationships centered around one’s self” (Miller). The online world and networked society create an environment where we can immerse “ourselves in ourselves” (Jurgenson, *Picture Pluperfect*), or perhaps where we can immerse ourselves in our more “beautiful” selves. A consequence of this shifting perception may be a growing tendency toward narcissism. The younger generations, and generations of the future, could possibly become more and more self-obsessed—constantly updating and modifying their multiple social media profiles, taking “selfies,” and hunting for the best ways to improve their reputation/status and obtain more “likes.” In this way, we may lose ourselves in the “simulation” of ourselves.

I am not saying we need to find a way to disconnect to find our “true” selves, for that is a modernist way of thinking and I see no place for nostalgia or looking back in a digital age. It seems “self-discovery” and “being yourself” are fundamental concepts of modernity and as such may not fit into the new digital reality. In fact, going forward I think we’ll find there is going to be no way to truly “disconnect” anymore, and that the future is saturated with digital connection and digital technological potential. But, what I am saying is, I believe there are sometimes benefits to experiencing the world in the moment, free from digital distractions and simulations, and that we must be aware of those benefits.

It seems that social media has driven us to live more picturesque and “likeable” lives, but I don’t believe we can really try to separate from this change in perception. In fact, I am unsure if we even have a choice in the matter; it is likely inevitable that we will be caught up in this societal paradigm shift.

Thus, instead, we must consider this future, and where we would like humanity to fit within it. In this networked world, there is a new construction of self, and it evolves with online interactions. The “likes,” documentation, and constructed beauty are here to stay, but the question is, what about this change do we need to be aware of? If we foresee a tendency toward narcissism, a deficiency in the ability to live in the moment, a loss of authenticity, and a quest for perfection as some of the potential negative consequences of this technological change for humanity, we may be able to adapt instead of trying to reject the change or being unwillingly overtaken by it. Instead of viewing ourselves as passive in the face of technological change, we can work to understand how digital technologies are influencing our world. Through a greater knowledge of such changes, we can better work towards fostering the positive aspects of these technologies and finding an enhanced and even more ethical way to live in the new reality of the digital age.

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