

# COMM-ENTARY

media. rhetoric. interpersonal. 2012-2013



UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



# Comm-Entary 2013



*Photo by Arly Maulana*

University of New Hampshire  
Undergraduate Research Journal of Communication

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*Comm-entary would like to extend many thanks to the Student Activity Fee Committee and the Organizational Resource Office for providing the funds necessary to print this journal. We also give our most sincerest thanks to UNH Printing and Mailing Services. A special thank you to the Department of Communication for their continued support of our endeavors. Finally, we would like to thank all the students who submitted and the faculty who encouraged them, especially Kevin Healey, without his help this would have been impossible.*

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# Analysis of Women in Education

ELIZABETH GRIFFITH

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*“The pathetic impossibility of improving those poor little, hard, thin, wiry, one-stringed instruments which they call their minds.” –Henry Adams, 1885*

Today, women make up more than 66% of the population at universities across the nation. Women also acquire more master’s degrees nationwide than men. Not only are women’s successes in quantity, but also, in quality. Women are seen to be taking more than 75% of the honor degrees and 79% of the highest honor degrees over males at most universities (Lewin). Although they are taking over the world of academia, women are still limited in degree options based strictly on their sex. Women are directed toward particular professions like nursing, teaching, childcare, writing, and art, while men dominate the engineering, business, and science departments of colleges. In this essay, I address the progression of women’s role in education and the passing of equal opportunity laws for women in education. I will compare the issue with the portrayal of women in higher education in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* and how Title IX helped progress equality in education and its effect today.

Since the United States was settled, women’s opportunities for education have been limited, especially in comparison with those offered to men. Dating back to the 1700s the U.S. restricted almost all girls from attending schools. The only exception was in New England where both girls and boys attended Dame Schools, the equivalency of elementary school. There, female students were taught how to sew and knit and male students were taught basic skills as prep for higher education. Boys were given the opportunity to continue their education, while girls were not. In general, women’s only reason for education was to gain knowledge of household labor in order to find a proper husband (NWHM).

Judith Sargent Murray, said to be the first “radical” femi-

nist, believed there were more uses for the intellect of a woman than household chores. In 1779, she wrote an essay titled, "On the Equality of the Sexes," that was not officially published until 1790. The essay challenged the idea that men had greater intellectual capacities than women. She argued that whatever differences existed between the intelligence of men and women were the result of discrimination that prevented women from gaining education. Murray's support on this idea of equality was largely met with disapproval and shock, but progressed women's belief in their own intelligence. Murray's radical standpoint brought forth a turn of events that occurred after the Revolutionary War when Americans realized the success of the nation relied highly on intelligent citizens (USHistory). The term 'Republican Motherhood' was formed to educate mothers of every household, not for the benefit of the women themselves, but so these women could educate their children to become good citizens, and eventually, good leaders (NWHM). This was the first opportunity for women to gain a substantial amount of information outside of home economics.

In the mid-1800's, the most significant changes for women in education occurred, the U.S. made coeducation more of an option to single-gender institutions. Affiliations with universities such as Harvard, Columbia, and Brown allowed women limited participation. Although women had become more integrated into the school systems, educational differences existed from classroom to classroom. With the "Separate but equal" term, more women addressed the inequalities of segregation in curriculum. In 1848, the Women's Right Convention was held in Seneca Falls, NY to address the issue of women's limited access to proper education.

Women's enrollment in college rose persistently, but slowly. In 1870 only 0.7% of the female population went to college, about 70% to coeducational schools. This percentage rose slowly, by 1900 the rate was 2.8% and it was only 7.6% by 1920. As admittance of women into coeducational institutions grew, women faced many critics who argued they should not be educated. Even some medical personals like Dr. Edward Clark in his widely re-

spected Sex and Education published in 1873 stated, “A girl could study and learn, but she could not do all this and retain uninjured health, and a future secure from neuralgia, uterine disease, hysteria, and other derangements of the nervous system” (Clark).

For African Americans, the discrimination was just as profound. Most African American men attended predominantly black colleges, many established by states as segregated institutions. By 1954, about one percent of entering freshman were black in predominantly white colleges. African American women were restricted entrance to all white male and white coeducational colleges and even many of the African American colleges. The first significant wave of progress in enhancing employment opportunities for African Americans and women came after the labor shortages of World War II (Whitehousestaff).

In 1939, the involvement of the United States in World War II caused women to take over men’s positions in jobs while men were deployed. Many students had to drop out of school in order to fill the jobs of their husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles, or grandfathers. For the first time for many women, they were able to pursue a job outside of their homes. When the war ended in 1945, many women refused to give up their jobs. Women had proven they were capable, and began to challenge the societal notions of restrictions on women’s education and work.

Although coeducation became more prevalent in school districts, it did not mean equal opportunity in education. In mid 1960’s women were channeled into occupational choices limited to four categories: secretarial, nursing, teaching, or motherhood (Sadker & Sadker). Women were told that intelligence was something not positively looked at in a woman, and a woman who is interested in a career rather than raising a family would not be wed (Torr).

In 1964 the Civil Rights Act was written to end discrimination based off of religion, race, and national origin but had little



influence on the equity in gender. In 1966 the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded partially off frustration with sex bias in the Civil Rights Act. In 1967, NOW persuaded President Lyndon B. Johnson to include women in his executive orders. Executive order number 11375 required all corporations receiving federal contracts to end discrimination on the basis of sex. Affirmative Action was used in the Executive Order 10925, which was originally signed by President John F. Kennedy on March 6th 1961. It promoted the achievement of non-discrimination. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted Executive Order 11246, which required government employers to take Affirmative Action in the hiring process (Whitehousestaff).

The Higher Education Act of 1965, an act to give funding to universities so they could provide scholarships to individuals who could not afford college on their own, was ready for reauthorization on February 28, 1972 and Birch Bayh, Senator of Indiana and advocate for women's rights, introduced Title IX ERA's provision of the amendment by stating,

While the impact of this amendment would be far-reaching, it is not a panacea. It is, however, an important first step in the effort to provide for the women of America something that is rightfully theirs—an equal chance to attend the schools of their choice, to develop the skills they want, and to apply those skills with the knowledge that they will have a fair chance to secure the jobs of their choice with equal pay for equal work (Congress Record).

This was a victory for Senator Bayh, the ERA, and women everywhere; in 1972, with the passage of The Education Amendment and Title IX, it became illegal to discriminate in public schools on the basis of gender in school athletics, financial aid, career counseling, admission practices, and the treatment of students.

On October 11, 1974, representative Patsy T. Mink introduced the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA), an act that provided federal funds to support women's educational equity in

the classroom, to congress. The Program promoted education for women and girls through grants, training for teachers to encourage gender equality in the classroom, school-to-work transition programs, and guidance and counseling activities to increase opportunities for women. With the passage of the WEEA in 1974, support was provided to assist schools in the recruitment of girls for math, science, and athletic programs ([www2.ed.gov](http://www2.ed.gov)). The program provided financial assistance to education agencies to meet the requirements of Title IX.

In 1975 U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) took over the implementation of regulation and clarification of Title IX under the request of President Nixon ([now.org](http://now.org)). In June 1975, HEW published the final regulations detailing how Title IX would be enforced. Universities receiving Federal financial assistance were given three years to meet the terms with the Title IX regulations. It was not until this step was completed that many people truly understood the ramifications of Title IX as it applied to college athletics. The NCAA claimed that the implementation of Title IX was illegal and in 1976, unsuccessfully filed a lawsuit challenging the regulations of Title IX athletic regulations. A revised Tower Amendment was proposed and many debates occurred but Title IX remained (Welsh).

Today, gender biases impacts fields of interest. From a young age, girls are directed away from math and science due to what The National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education call, the “stereotype threat” which is defined as the feeling of being judged by a negative stereotype or fear of reinforcing that stereotype. Title IX has improved the achievement of girls in schools tremendously. The number of girls who score top 0.01% of seventh and eighth graders on the math section of their SAT’s has risen from 1 in 13 in the early 1980’s to 1 in 3 more recently (NCWGE). These statistics prove that difference in gender and education are not a biological issue but instead, a societal issue.

In the Hollywood feature film, *Mona Lisa Smile*, Katherine

Ann Watson, played by Julia Roberts, accepted a position at the prestigious, all-white, women's college in Massachusetts as an art history professor. Originally from California, Watson's feminist foundation resisted the conformity of the conservative university and challenged her students, and the university to reach their full intellectual potential. Her students, Betty Warn, Joan Brandwyn, and Giselle Levy, resisted Watson's ideas initially, but progressed to understand the diverse point of view on a very simplistic level.

The film was successful in drawing attention to the societal role of women at that time. It addressed that even the most intelligent women in the country were unaware of the state and depth of their oppression. The four main characters of the film were seen from an interesting perspective. Betty Warn's character was the most hesitant to adapt to Watson's point of view. In the film, Betty wrote a letter to the University to complain about Watson's teaching methods and how Watson taught students to challenge the universities implication of women; Betty's words were, Wellesley girls who are married have become quite adept at balancing their obligations. One hears such comments, as - I'm able to baste the chicken with one hand and outline the paper with the other. While our mothers were called to the workforce for Lady Liberty. It is our duty- nay, obligation to reclaim our place in the home, bearing the children that will carry our traditions into the future. One must pause to consider why Miss Katherine Watson, instructor in the art history department has decided to declare war on the holy sacrament of marriage. Her subversive and political teachings encourage our Wellesley girls to reject the roles they were born to fill.

Watson responded to this article with the projection of advertisements that advertently told women of that decade; what to do, how to dress, how to act, and who to be. Watson clarified that she did not declare war on marriage; she simply introduced the idea that women can get married, while simultaneously, stand equally beside a man in the corporate world.

As a married woman, Warn believed she had everything she had ever wanted. Her education quickly took a back seat to her life as a housewife. Later in the film when she realized her husband cheated on her, a new reality set in. Professor Watson's words suddenly resonated with Warn by the end of the film when she files for divorce on the day of her graduation. She asked Watson for the address to an apartment in the city so that she could move out of her home with her husband and into a new apartment with her college enemy, Giselle Levy.

Giselle Levy, played by Maggie Gyllenhaal, was the direct opposite of Warn and a known enemy of hers. They disagreed constantly because Warn ideals were that of marriage and societal expectations, while Levy's was promiscuity and rebellion. She had a strictly sexual relationship with the Italian professor at the university even though she was well aware he had no emotional attachment to her, or she with him. Later, without guilt, she began a sexual relationship with a married man and boasted about their sexual behavior to her friends. It was then that Warn lashed out to Levy as Warn saw her husband's mistress in Levy. Levy's sexual deviance in the film makes out to be the villain. Her attitude toward sex was advanced for this time period and very post-feminist. She resonated with Professor Watson most directly because their view on sex, relationships, and marriage were very progressive and radical for this time period.

The final main character, Joan Brandwyn, played by Julia Stiles, was the most reasonable and relatable character of the group. She was at the top of her class and studied pre-law. She visited Watson to discuss her poor grade on her paper. Instead, Watson asked Brandwyn where she wanted to study law after graduation, Brandwyn, confused, stated that she planned on getting married. Watson challenged her by asking why she could not do both. When Watson handed out final exams to her students, she instead, handed Brandwyn an application to Yale Law School to guide her to her full potential. When Brandwyn was accepted, she still decided against it because she chose to get married and work

at home instead. Brandwyn later had to explain to Watson that feminism was about choice and Brandwyn wanted Watson to understand that she wanted to stay home for her husband rather than advance a career of her own.

These three women show three very different stories of three different positions on the spectrum. The most radical “un-feminist” Warn, was the woman who, in the end followed aspirations of self-reliance in a city on her own. The other radical, Levy, who was the most feminist, was made out to be the villain of the film because of her guilt-free promiscuity and sexual deviance with men. Lastly, Brandwyn was seen as the most neutral character. She was the perfect student and leader all while maintaining a relationship with a man from Harvard who seemed to genuinely love her. Many people would idolize Brandwyn as someone they would aspire to be, or lead similar lives to. However, her character remains neutral on the feminist issues throughout the film and in the end, chooses to work at home for her husband rather than attend Yale Law School. The implication the film subtly made was that women should be like Brandwyn out of all of the characters in the film, she was the most normal and she did the right thing.

In the Hollywood feature film, *Mona Lisa Smile* portrayed a very vulnerable point in time when women were able to attend elite colleges, but not exposed to proper contraceptives, opportunities, or educational values. Like Julia Roberts’ character as an art history professor, who taught her students to look “beyond the paint,” the film required an analytical perspective of the challenges these women faced in what society has always told them. However, the film showed the upper class, white individuals and their decisions between law school and other higher education options, or the option to conform to being a housewife. The film fails to show the side of middle class working families who could not afford either option and had to work outside the home but with restriction to pay wages in comparison to men. In addition, the major misconception with the film was how it ended. The group of women on their bicycles chased Watson’s car when she left the university.

Symbolically, they followed her on their bikes as they followed her beliefs on women's equity. It showed that the problem was solved with Watson's rebellion, it ignored the fact the oppression and discrimination existed far beyond that point, because the film took place far before Title IX was even introduced.

Today, I find that the progression women in education over the past century as astonishing. Just recently, in 1970, women earned only 13.3% of doctoral degrees. In 1972, women earned just 7% of all law degrees and 9% of all medical degrees. By 2001, they received 47% of law degrees and 43% of medical degrees. In the year 2000, nearly half of all doctorate degrees are awarded to women (NOW.org). Although the progression of women in education has advanced tremendously because of Title IX, women still remain underrepresented in male dominated aspects of education. As of 2001, women are only awarded 17% of all engineering and 18% of computer science doctorates (NOW.org).

Today, women believe in equal educational opportunity for themselves and their counterparts. However, they inaccurately assume that oppression of women in education is now obsolete. Women are unaware of the true struggle of the equity of women in education and how there is still much more work to be done. Film's like *Mona Lisa Smile* help bring light to the progression of women's role in education. Although they simultaneously redirect us to think women need to work in the house to support our husbands. The film *Mona Lisa Smile*, and other Hollywood films like it, do not address in detail the women's movement, Title IX, and other movements that have contributed to create equal opportunity for women in the United States; the film still reminds women of how far we have come since 1954, when the film took place. Feature films need to address the important issues that took place in that time period to rationalize the importance of the issue. It is important for Hollywood feature films to address issues like women in education to reiterate the importance of education and equal opportunity for all individuals.

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Mona Lisa Smile. Dir. Mike Newell. By Lawrence Konner and Mark Rosenthal. Perf. Julia Roberts, Kirsten Dunst, Julia Stiles. 2003. DVD.



# An Analysis of Embodiment and Emotion Display in the Context of Drinking

IAN GAUSCH

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## *Abstract*

*In this paper we look at how various types of body gestures and nonverbal or paralinguistic actions are used as a communicative resource for displays of emotional and affective stance during naturally-occurring interaction. This paper analyzes discourse in video recordings of groups of friends in two environments to investigate how the body accompanies talk in the context of alcohol consumption. We propose that participants use emphasis and gesture to index displays of emotion as having been produced “in the context of drinking (alcoholic beverages).” These practices are both sequentially organized and culturally meaningful.*

*Key words: discourse analysis, embodiment, emotion display, alcohol consumption*

Body gestures are commonly used as a form of communication in naturally-occurring talk. This paper analyzes how the body is used to display emotion alongside talk, and how such displays orient to “drinking alcohol” as an ongoing activity. Discourse in contexts of alcohol consumption is not a typical object of study in the area of language and social interaction. This project therefore seeks in part to characterize how participants might orient to this recognizable social activity as relevant to matters at hand. The next section reviews discourse approaches to nonverbal communication and emotion. Thereafter, we discuss the data and method used in this analysis. The paper ends by considering the limitations of the analysis and implications for future research.

## *Embodiment and Emotion*

There is a long tradition of studying what has been called

“nonverbal communication” in interpersonal communication research. Knapp and Hall state that gestures are directly tied to, or accompany, speech and often serve to illustrate what is being said verbally. In discourse analysis approaches, the term “embodiment” tends to be preferred, and the study of how talk, embodiment, and elements of environment are jointly used to construct meaning is sometimes referred to as “microethnographic” or “multimodal” analysis (e.g. Fox; Goodwin, 2003a-c; Streeck).

Embodiment has an important relational component. Body gestures are used to identify one’s self as well as others, and to demonstrate the relationship that group members have with each other (Carbaugh). It is part of the code through which people who know one another interact in learned and familiar ways. When people have closer relational identities, part of how they demonstrate this to one another and to others is through their body: proximity, touching practices, eye contact, etc. The body is involved in many (often subtle) ways where participants interpret and respond to one another. It is part of what makes people intelligible to each other.

The body is importantly connected to displays of emotion. Argyle, for example, states that “posture varies with emotional state, especially along the dimensions tense-relaxed” (248). In taking a discourse approach, an analysis would not separate “posture” and “emotions” as variables, but rather looks at how postures display emotions like “relaxed” or “tensed” based on how other participants in the interaction treat their actions as doing so. The display of an emotion is taken to be an action rather than a reflection or outpouring of an internal state. Such actions occur in context of the environment and the embodied production of talk; verbal actions “may be accompanied by a range of supporting actions, verbal as well as embodied, as participants engage in a temporally and sequentially unfolding process” (Kidwell).

Goodwin (1998) states that “strips of talk gain their power as social action via their placement within larger sequential structures, encompassing activities, social structural arrangements, and

participation frameworks constituted through displays of mutual orientation made by the actors' bodies" (1,492). Many resources in the environment, related to objects, relevant in talk and portrayed through the body may be taken as meaningful in an interaction. How such activities are employed and responded to comprise an important component in understanding what participants see as going on (the frame or definition of the situation, Goffman) and how they "do" their "feelings" or stances toward that.

In communication, embodiment serves an important meta-communicative function: "every communication system includes terms, symbols, and gestures that are used to comment upon that system" (Carbaugh, Beery, & Nurmikari-Berry, 3). In the following analysis, friends use terms that influence the way a gesture is portrayed in two separate environments to identify the situation occurring at that particular moment. The next section discusses the data on which the analysis is based.

### *Data and Methods*

Tracy and Mirivel state that "DA (discourse analysis) research begins in the social world" (160). The first author video-recorded small groups of college students in their early 20s in two different situations. The participants were mostly men (with one woman in each situation), had grown up in the same town, and had been friends for a long time. The video camera was placed in each setting so as to capture everyone speaking with each other, as well as showing how individual participants use their body in interaction. Both recordings take place in private settings, but in one the primary activity is watching television, in the other drinking and playing a card game. Each recording was about an hour and a half long. After going through the data, 7-10 minutes of video footage were selected for closer analysis and transcribed according to Jeffersonian conventions, with the inclusion of screen shots.

This paper analyzed the data through discourse analysis. This analysis follows the conversation analysis goal of ground

claims in empirical evidence based on participants' orientation to the sequential organization of social actions. The analysis also, however, takes account of the way in which participants treat aspects of context such as setting, relations, and identity as meaningful. This approach is therefore also "concerned with the way verbal and nonverbal signs create and reveal social codes of identity, relationships, emotions, place, and communication itself" (Carbaugh,1). The following analysis shows body gestures work with conversation to display emotion among close friends, focusing on the relationship between speech, how speech is produced, and how actions are embodied in comparative examples in the two taping environments.

*Analysis*

In the data, participants regularly used body gestures such as hand signals, eye gaze, facial expressions, and so forth as a resource for communication alongside verbal speech. When a word is said in a particular way, a body gesture often accompanies it. As an example, the first two excerpts focus on the comparison of how the word "what" is produced in similar and different ways in the two settings. The first excerpt is from a recording which can be treated as a small slice of mundane, naturally-occurring conversation which appears to be typical for the participants. The recording took place in a living room and features six people watching sports on television.

*Excerpt #1*

Pete: <Tim Tebow is one of best> quarterbacks in the league  
((Pete rubs his head and looks at Sean))



Sam: what:t:t:t (1.1) that will never be a true statement  
 ((Sam puts his hands in the air and looks up at the ceiling))



((Pete stares directly at the tv))

Pete: honestly (1.2) <I don't care> what you have to say  
 ((laughter))

In line 4 Sean says “what:t:t:t” with a slight pause after the word had been said. There is little to no emphasis put on the word “what” other than that it is dragged out. As the word “what” is said, hand motions are displayed right after in each excerpt. In excerpt two the participant saying “what” motions his hands in the air while he is sitting in a slouched, relaxed position. His production of “what” seems incredulous; that Pete interpreted it this way is indicated by his response, which dodges giving an account for his earlier opinion by stating he “doesn’t care” what his friends think (and therefore doesn’t need to explain himself). The “what” is not treated as particularly important in itself, but is embedded in

the ongoing sense of watching television and proffering stances on athletes and teams. The hand gesture in line 7 is a smooth upward sweep without much intensity. Participants also do not attend to this in general; it seems to be integrated into the scene as part of the ordinary talk and gestures associated with just “being” and hanging out together.

The next excerpt is from the other recording, which took place at a table during a drinking game. In the next excerpt the word “WHAT” is said in line 10 followed by a motion of the hands in line 11.

***Excerpt #2***

Stan: <so:o:o> (1.1) <Rick> (.8) >how are the stealers doin  
ha[ha]<

Steph: [Ian] <drink> >three< haha  
((Steph looks at Ian and raises her eyebrows))

Ike: THANKS Sara:a  
((Ike looks at Sara while he drinks))

Robbie: haha <stinks:s> for you gooch:h (1.3) and Stan eff  
off haha

Stan: big Ben is really suckin huh

Robby: WHAT

((Robby raises his hands in the air and looks down at the table))



Robby:Hh:hh don't even give me that <Stanley>

((Sam raises his eyebrows and Stan puts his hand on his head))



The participant who said “WHAT” uses hand signals to show a body gesture of how he feels emotionally about the topic in line 12. The production of “what” here is much more intense, both emphasized and raised in volume. Its accompanying gesture is also more intense, an upward open-palm gesture which is in some ways similar to the one in the prior excerpt, but is accomplished with more speed and with a sharper action culmination (with a small thrust forward of the hands for emphasis). The emotion being displayed is produced as relevant to the prior turns which may be about the game going on, or something having to do with the “big Ben” comment. That Robby’s gesture and tone are taken as “emotional” is indicated by how his friends respond: Stan puts his hand on his head, and Sam raises his eyebrows. Both gestures are not accompanied by talk, perhaps anticipating more from Robby, and Robby continues in line 15 to shrug up his shoulders, put his hands out to the side, and cringe. This displays further Robby’s displeased stance.

Though in both environments there is an ongoing activity, a group of friends, a turn of “what” and even similar gestures, they are produced differently. The emotionality is much more marked in the second excerpt than the first, and it is oriented to and treated as more meaningful. The next two excerpts focus on the use of a finger point in these two environments. Excerpt 3 a typical way of producing a finger point in an ordinary, casual setting.

*Excerpt #3*

((Everyone staring at the TV))



James: if we played you guys five vee [five]

Sean: [we] >would

absolutely dominate<

(1.0)

((laughter))

James: no what (1.0) We would kill <you:uu> (1.2) we are way more athle[tic]

Sean: [ok]ay you need to leave right now

((Sean looks out the door and points to the door))



In line 3 James initiates the conversation, and is then interrupted toward completion of his turn by Sean in line 4. Meanwhile, after Sean's challenge in line 4 all of the participants in the room



laugh at what has just been said. The “genuine”-seeming production of the laughter seems to indicate that what is being said will be taken as a joke and not a serious attack. James continues to speak in line 7, but in line 8 Sean interrupts James again. In line 8 the word “leave” is used which acts as a verbal directive for James, and is then followed by a hand gesture by Sean in line 10 pointing his finger out the door. This nonverbal action shows a visual towards James in order for him to identify what is being meant specifically by the word “leave”. Its emphasis seems to serve the opposite of upgrading the seriousness of the directive, instead performing it in a way so as not to be taken seriously, and it is not. Excerpt 4 is from the other recording environment and shows friends using a finger point in a different way.

#### *Excerpt #4*

Robby: so:00 (.8) what side is give and what side is take?

Steph: these ones are give and these are take

((Steph points to card))



Steph: got it?

Ike: OKAY (1.1) .hhhh so this side is give and this side is take (0.7) right?

((Ike points to same card as Steph))



Robby:OH MY GOD Yes.(0.8) those are give and these are take  
Robby:hhhh ((points to same card as everyone else))



((laughter))

In excerpt 4 line 1 Ricky puts emphasis behind the word “so” also dragging it out. By putting emphasis behind the word, it causes Sara in line 2 to put emphasis on the words “give” and “take” which leads to her pointing directly to the cards in line 3 so that Ricky can identify what cards are give, and what cards are take. Each word is said followed by a body gesture containing a finger point towards the side of cards being the “give” side, and the other side being the “take” side. The multiple repairs in this interaction and the emotional intensity displayed give it an observably different interactional quality. The three ways in which the card designation confirmations are sought after come across as unusual.

In ordinary conversation, it would seem that the pointing would accomplish a level of clarity that merely saying “here” or “there” would not. The deictic referent appears to be visible to all.

The act of confirming thus seems to be part of doing the sort of “confusion” or “slowness” associated with drinking. The emotional displays of uncertainty or confusion are met with displays of frustration or “losing patience” from other participants. If this were only the next turn of one participant, it could be argued that this is an instance of “teasing” someone; but two participants display frustration, indicating that doing-being-confused is not for the purpose of a tease, but part of the production of the scene being in a drinking context. This may be part of how people organize different participants as being variably “drunk” compared to one another.

According to Goodwin (2003a), pointing is situated in the structure of a particular scene and is given its intelligibility by the cultural sense of the setting. Pointing seeks to establish a shared “cognitive” space, to orient participants in a particular way. It involves various aspects of a scene; in the prior excerpt, for instance, it involves various participants and their hands, how their bodies are facing each other, the card array, the table, eye gaze, and the objective of the game toward which the pointing is relevant. Goodwin’s points hold true for the raised-arm gestures which accompanied the “whats” of the previous comparison too. As with language, bodily movements acquire organized meanings and this is perhaps particularly true among people who are well known to one another. Even the repetition of the pointing seemed more to do with reproducing the sense of the situation rather than with an actual lack of comprehension.

The participants collaboratively build their gestures in the different contexts as having different imports. This is partly why the very similar gestures are treated with so much more attention in the drinking context; they are also produced to be given that attention, with more intense verbal and gestural displays. Participants

thus treat one another's bodies as relevant to what is going on. Or, rather, in the casual sober setting, gestures are not treated as standing out from the surround. In the drinking context, gestures are treated as markers of what is going on and how drunk people might be. These are then organized in such a way as to continue the framing of the event as one in which people are drinking and therefore, from a cultural standpoint, should be becoming more confused and demonstrative in their comportment.

These examples show a couple ways in which embodiment and speech can be resources for indicating emotion in the context of different ongoing activities. Embodied productions of words and gesture were presented in different emotionally-charged ways related to the context. As shown in excerpts 1 and 3, the casualness of the situation was partly accomplished through the "relaxed" gestural and bodily displays. In excerpts 2 and 4, the activity of drinking and perhaps "becoming drunk" was partly accomplished through the more intense bodily comportments and how that interacted with the speaking context.

### *Discussion*

In the analysis for this paper we presented some examples of the common ways in which friends use similar and different forms of embodiment alongside talk in the data. A noticeable difference was how gestures were used and displayed immediately following vocal and verbal emphasis. We found that in the environment involving the consumption of alcohol, words being used had a lot of emphasis put behind them, causing other participants involved in the interaction to put that same emphasis towards the same words that were being displayed in the interaction's prior turn. This may be part of how participants "do" or communicate that they have been drinking to others. In the "sober" context, participants instead communicate that they are "merely" being together in a way that is not strongly emotional (and therefore coded "relaxed" or "natural").

The analysis is limited in part because the situations analyzed were complex and varied. There is a lot going on in each and several factors may have contributed to the production of embodied speaking besides what was discussed in this paper. There are many more fascinating aspects of embodiment going on, as well as other questions to consider. The differing recording environments may not be as comparable as they seemed despite the overlap of some participants and their being in the same friendship group. However, this analysis was not aimed at “controlling” the situations in the manner of an experiment, and comparing the environments based on their differing activities emerged as potentially relevant to participants, rather than being analytical aims before the fact. According to Goffman the frame or definition of the situation—“what is going on” in the setting—organizes how participants communicate and the roles they take on. That seems to have been the case here.

This analysis is just a first step in considering the role of situated context in how participants verbally and bodily display emotions. In interaction, participants indicate what aspects of setting, identities, and context matter to the activities in which they are engaged. This work contributes to future research and specifies some points regarding (1) how embodiment is employed alongside talk, (2) how what participants take to be “emotions” are produced and treated as such, and (3) how features of the setting or activity in the situation at hand. Future research should be done to delve deeper into each of these from perspectives such as conversation analysis as well as cultural approaches to discourse.

### *Conclusion*

This paper analyzed how various body gestures and non-verbal or paralinguistic actions are used as communicative resources alongside talk to display emotional stances in different recording environments. Based on a discourse analysis of transcribed videotaped naturally-occurring interactions, we argued that participants employed gesture which attended to and constructed their situ-

ations as being ordinary/sober or taking place during a drinking activity, and that the embodied production of these activities are both sequentially organized and culturally intelligible.

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# Interracial Couples In Romance Films

NYOMI CASSANDRA GUZMAN

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## Introduction

### *Problem Statement/Definition*

The 1967 film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, starring Sidney Poitier as Dr. Wade Prentice and Katharine Houghton as Joanna, depicts a scene of deliberation. The two are newly engaged and smitten, although Dr. Prentice is not oblivious to the social implications of their engagement, Joanna brings him home to meet her parents convinced that social resistance will not be an issue. As she rushes inside the room to tell her mother about the sincerity of the love she has found, her mother is most pleased. She revels in happiness realizing her only daughter has found someone to take care of her. Joanna exclaims that he has a lovely name and urges her mother to repeat it. Her mother smiles beginning to say his name, then looks up in horror her jaw hitting the floor realizing that the man she is talking about is black.

This scene from the classic interracial romance film serves as an example of how Hollywood deals with the personal and social challenges faced by couples when one is black and the other is white. Joanna is genuinely ignorant of the social stigma around dating interracially until she brings home someone herself and it is clear that her family is unwelcoming. The intimacy between Joanna and Dr. Prentice is sincere and Joanna's naivety is honest in a way that highlights the generational gap between herself and her parents.

Cinematic portrayals of interracial heterosexual romantic relationships are one way that many Americans come to understand the relational dynamics, including the challenges and difficulties, of couples that date across racial lines. Are those portrayals in the movies accurate? Does Hollywood do a good job of depicting the social, communicative, and intimate interactions that arise between



couples of different races, and between that couple and the people in their wider social environment? This study examines twelve films about interracial romance and compares them to what social science research has discovered about real life interracial couples.

In analyzing each film I hope to answer a variety of questions concerning the depictions of the interracial couple: What does academic research tell us about the communication practices of interracial couples? What does that same research say about the social challenges faced by such couples? Do they experience racism? Do they develop strategies for coping with resistance from family and or friends? Do they communicate about their expectations in the same way same-race couples do?

It is also important to explore questions about the interracial couple's experience with racism. How do major Hollywood films deal with those challenges and depict those communication practices? Do they show a realistic portrait of interracial relationships? Do they accurately represent the social resistance that the couple encounters? Do filmmakers accurately show how the couple negotiates their differences? Do they exaggerate or romanticize racial differences? What might contribute to differences between real life experience of interracial couples and the dramatic presentation of such relationships in film? Do market forces create a difference in portrayals depending on the racial community the film is marketed to? Does the genre of romantic comedy create obstacles to accurate portrayal? This study of Hollywood interracial romance films seeks to answer these questions.

I define interracial relationships as heterosexual relationships between one white individual and one black individual. Romance films are love stories in which the focus is an emotional journey and the development of an affectionate relationship (Murray). In this analysis I am drawing on sociology and communication research that addresses the social, emotional, verbal communication, and interactional implications of being in an interracial relationship.

### ***Research Question***

In this study, I examine the following question: how do interracial relationships, as portrayed in romance films in the past twenty years, compare to the data found in social scientific studies about modern American interracial relationships?

### ***Significance***

Romance films focus on love and relationships and create a widely circulated image of how communication in such relationships works, or should work. Film research shows clearly that Hollywood films can influence the emotions and actions of people in the audience. Since film carries this social significance it is important to analyze the perceptions that Hollywood is creating, because if Hollywood is not portraying such relationships accurately it has the ability to effect the groups that are misrepresented; and change the way that others come to understand interracial relationships. In an article about interracial couples in French films, the author Jon Cowans writes that, "It makes sense to examine racial attitudes through the lens of France's film community because of its influence; its films are seen by millions, and the reviews French critics publish reach significant numbers as well" (Cowans 46). Although this article outlines the effects of films in France, parallels can be made to the American experience with film. To be clear, I will not examine the influence of films on interracial couples. Rather by comparing research to film, I can create a better understanding of how these cinematic texts might shape our perceptions and attitudes about interracial romance.

Examining films from the last twenty years offers a significant sample of culturally relevant depictions of interracial relationships, and can show if there have been changes in such depictions over time. This research is important because it identifies common cinematic representations of marginalized groups of people. If interracial romance films avoid portraying certain social realities such as public disapproval of intimacy, then the films may create

a false perception of racial attitudes in society. This research will lead to a greater understanding of whether interracial romance films realistically depict such relationships.

### *Justification for Social Science Literature*

To assess the accuracy of cinematic depictions of interracial romances, it is important to look at what social science literature reveals about what is happening in actual couples. Taken together studies in Sociology and Communication can also identify how interracial couples use communication strategies in their relationship, and how society tends to interpret and interact with interracial couples. Communication research addresses how interracial couples experience initial attraction, communicate intimately, and find commonality to strengthen their relationship. Communication research covering intimacy has gone in-depth with the struggles interracial couples deal with when being intimate, such as a decision to show public displays of affection or to only show intimacy in private. Communication research also provides an understanding of how couples negotiate intimacy and address public disapproval. This research has also shed light on how couples use a shared interest or understanding that can unite them as a strategy for responding to public scrutiny. Lastly, according to the research interracial couples have the tendency to frame their own initial mutual attraction in terms of racial difference, even as they struggle with courting and other behaviors that communicate that attraction across racial lines.

Sociology research has provided more insight into how interracial couples encounter and address conflict, acknowledge difference, and experience differences within a social hierarchy. The conflict and disapproval that interracial couples experience is very strong, not only from society on the whole, but even within their families. Sociology provides a better understanding of why families and society react negatively to interracial romances. Additionally, society has made difference so significant that the couple often must understand in an explicit way that their relationship

offers a challenge to deeply ingrained social norms. Acknowledging and communicating about this issue is essential for the couple to move forward in their relationship. Even if they are unwilling to acknowledge this difference explicitly, others in their lives will. Moreover, interracial relationships are not generally an option for all people because of social circumstances. Generally in order to be in an interracial couple it is important that the party who is black, is also somehow more socially successful or has some sort of status to make up for the perceived social disadvantage of his or her race. As a result of better understanding both the communication that occurs within the couple, as well as the societal understanding of interracial romance I am better able to address what is happening within the films. These two fields provided the context that was necessary to understand the cinematic depiction of interracial couples.

## **Literature Review**

### *History*

Before we turn to a review of the literature on communication and sociology, it is important to place interracial romance in a historical context. Historically, many things have contributed to America's current state of attitudes and impressions about interracial dating. For more than 300 years of American history, black men faced harsh discipline from white society if they were perceived as having been sexually intimate with white women. However, when slavery was legal occurrences of white men raping black women often went unnoticed, or were even encouraged in order to increase the number of slaves that the master would own if the black woman became pregnant (Childs 545). Only in June 1967 in *Loving v Virginia* did the Supreme Court rule to remove anti-miscegenation laws (preventing interracial marriages) across the United States (Harris and Trego 229). Because of America's history with slavery, segregation, and racism, interracial couples that include one black and one white person are socially stigmatized.

Since the 1990s America's collective comfort level with interracial couples and our country's demographics have changed. From 1980 to 2007 the white composition of the United States has decreased from 80% to 66%, and continues to decrease. However, the percentage of black people has stayed the same. In 1980 0.4% of marriages were black-white interracial marriages. That had increased 31% by 2000, and continues to increase (Ford-Robertson and Lewis 413). Interracial marriage has become more prevalent and because of the changes in racial composition in the past twenty-five years, attitudes towards interracial romance have become moderately more favorable (Ford-Robertson and Lewis 414).

### *Racial Attitudes towards Dating/ Romance*

Since both parties in the interracial relationship come from different backgrounds, their social communities and families have different experiences and perceptions of the situation. These perceptions play into the realities that the couple deals with.

#### I. White People

In 1991, twenty-four years after anti-miscegenation laws were removed, 45% of white Americans still did not support black and white marriages. Additionally white American undergraduate students viewed interracial relationships negatively (Bell and Hastings 242). It is clear that even though these laws were removed the social taboo remained. Since America is structured hierarchically people can feel like interracial couples are a threat to racial social order and that mixing of people ruins racial purity (Harris and Kalbfleisch 51). These attitudes express a general desire to preserve the existing racial hierarchy. In interracial relationships there is a disconnect in cultures, because it can be difficult to understand people who are not outwardly similar to each other.

Another significant reason given for resistance from the white community is the sexual history of the United States and the role it plays in race relations. In her book *Navigating Interra-*

cial Borders: Black White Couples and their Social Worlds, Erica Childs explains how being black is defined as having any 'negro blood,' as if race is more about the contamination of an impure race than an actual cultural context. She states that based on this idea, "Race in America is not a state of being; it is a matter of speculation about American sexual history." (Childs 46) Black bodies are seen as inferior, and sexually deviant. A significant concern for white people is the belief that black people want to have sex and create mixed race children with white people, more than they want any other social or political goal (Childs 49). Within the white community it has become slightly more acceptable to date interracially, but interracial marriage is still taboo (Ford-Robertson and Lewis 413). Additionally minority groups are often stereotyped in ways that make them less relatable to mainstream white culture.

## II. Black People

The focus of the sociological research is on relationships involving black men and white women, and examines the attitudes of members of the black community toward such relationships. Interracial dating between black males and white females has gendered, racial and emotional implications (Childs 545). When black men and white women decide to date, their relationship can represent to the black community that the couple views black women as inferior, seeing as a black female was not selected as a reasonable mate (Wilkins 62). As a result, black men and white women dating interracially can cause a certain amount of resentment. Dating interracially can affect black families as well because black men expect black women to love the biracial babies of their brothers and sons, while black women tend to see that baby as a reminder of their rejection (Childs 545). Black men often forget to acknowledge that choosing white women can signify rejection to black women. Then, when black women are dismissed as "bitching" and "having attitude" around interracial dating, black women are accused of stifling progress in race relations (Wilkins 57). Black partners tend to worry more about what it means to marry someone from a dominant group in terms of their racial identity, while for many

white people an interracial relationship is the first time they are thinking about their race (Leslie and Letiecq 561). These emotional implications contribute to America's current state of dealing with some aspects of interracial dating in the black community.

### III. Interracial Couples

Interracial couples are often aware of the social stigma placed on their relationship.

Involvement in an interracial relationship can be quite emotionally draining. In an interracial relationship, the emotional pressure of needing to legitimize the relationship to oneself, one's family, and society can be stressful (Harris and Kalbfleisch 50). Bell and Hastings explain that, because interracial couples are aware of the social stigma associated with their romance, they face other challenges as well. They become anxious about the image they present to society because they know their relationship is taboo (Bell and Hastings 243). According to the research on interracial dating, interracial couples in the United States noted regional differences in the expressions of overt racism they encountered. Such regional differences can also constrain how couples interact with others (Bell and Hastings 250). Couples even mentioned fear of telling their boss about their interracial spouse (Bell and Hastings 243). It is evident that interracial couples cannot escape the social reminders that their relationship is different from most others. They also generally report feeling a lack of outside support compared to intra-racial couples (Leslie and Letiecq 561). This can cause unhappiness in the relationship because of a social struggle around their love (Leslie and Letiecq 562). However, multiracial individuals are often more comfortable with interracial romance perhaps because of having grown up with a model of interracial relationships (Bonam 88).

#### *Social Implications/ Challenges*

Socially, interracial dating, especially between black and white people, is taboo because America has a history filled with

slavery and oppression of black people. Bell and Hasting write in their article that, “There is still a collective social memory of historic race relations and that remains in present day attitudes, behaviors and perceptions” (Bell and Hastings 241). The difference in privilege between the black and white parties results in black people collectively as a race still having the lowest rate of intermarriage (Walker 4). Within the small number of black people that intermarry, black men have a higher rate of intermarriage than black women (Walker 4). Harris and Kalbfleisch write in their article that, “In a racially prejudiced society, black people would have to offer more to their white counterparts in order to be in an interracial couple (Harris and Kalbfleisch 50). The difference in privilege means that in order to prove one’s worth, he or she must help fill the social gap by having other exceptional qualities. Harris and Kalbfleisch are able to take the idea of privilege and explain what the ramifications are in this context. Because of that privilege, black people who intermarry with white people are generally in occupations that are more prestigious, and have more education (Walker 4). Similarly, white women who are not educated are more likely to marry black men (Ford-Robertson and Lewis 409). Also, it is often the case that in interracial black/white couples, the black party is more physically attractive by cultural standards (Walker 4). Since the black party is expected to be very attractive socially, unrealistic perceptions of the sex life of interracial couples can arise.

American culture sexualizes interracial couples by employing stereotypes about their relationship. In general, stereotypes represent black people as sexually driven and motivated, while white women are pure. As a result, this belief presents white women as virgins and black women as whores (Childs 553). Because of this dynamic, an ideal has emerged in which white women are beautiful, the epitome of femininity, kind, and gentle, while black women are undesirable (Childs 553). This makes racial relations more difficult. Some believe that this is not the only reason some black men desire white women. As Erin Walker has explained, there is a prevailing stereotype that “Black men are violent and obsessed with the forbidden white woman: they are obsessed with obtaining



mainstream cultural standards of beauty” (Walker 9).

Managing their relationship to the outside social world is just another challenge faced by interracial couples. Bell and Hastings, Walker, and Childs all effectively explain challenging social aspects of interracial relationships and social perceptions. In my research, I take the ideas presented by these authors and evaluate the ways in which romance films represent these issues.

### *Communication*

Successful communication in an interracial relationship involves both interpersonal and intercultural skills and strategies. In interracial relationships, it is crucial to do both these things well, especially in moments of discrimination. The romance films work to emphasize the relationship dynamic in the story. In analyzing romance films, language and social interaction theory provides a great basis to explore the patterns and accounts of black and white heterosexual interracial relationships. The social, emotional, verbal, and interactional aspects of interracial relationships can be explained by language and social interaction research.

#### I. Interpersonal

The verbal and nonverbal communication that happens between people in interracial relationships can differ from that presented by people in a same race relationship; even before two people are together, race plays a role in courtship. People’s dating style changes depending on the race of the other party they are trying to attract (Harris and Kalbfleisch 50). Not only does general dating style change when the race of the other party changes, but the verbal strategies used to initiate a date differ as well (Harris and Kalbfleisch 62). Altering one’s behavior when communicating interracially demonstrates that American society instills assumptions about how courtship and communication vary with different races of people. Although individuals begin courtship differently, as the relationship progresses it is important that the couple is able

to share certain perceptions and be able to work as a team. Harris and Kalbfleisch stress that couples need a common understanding about racism in interracial relationships. "Face" is a concept in interpersonal communication that accounts for our interpersonal adjustment to social expectations. It addresses the way that one expresses oneself in a situation, nonverbally and verbally in communication, and it emphasizes that one's face must align with what is socially acceptable, or else it is face threatening. Face is used to acknowledge and stop socially taboo occurrences from happening. It is in a sense an implicit set of social guidelines. When interracial couples deal with racism, there are certain face negotiations that must occur, in order for the couple to maintain social order (Bell and Hastings 241). In terms of maintaining an acceptable face, the couple must maintain the same face and perceive the situation in a united way; although, this can be difficult because of racial differences. Interracial couples also deal with issues of discrimination in a way that same race couples do not (Walker 1). In the interracial couple, the black partner is more aware of social disapproval and discrimination (Bell and Hastings 243). Since this is the case, interracial couples must work hard to understand each other.

In order to explain how interracial couples aim to bridge varying perceptions of discrimination and social disapproval, Bell and Hastings use Foeman and Nance's four stages of interracial relational experience. The first is racial awareness; this involves acknowledging attraction to someone of another race, and wanting to understand the other person's cultural experiences. The next stage is learning to rely on each other in social circumstances that can be disapproving; this means creating a sort of emotional team. The third is redefining one's identity in the context of the relationship and learning how to deal with social struggles. The final stage is learning how to maintain the relationship and balance all of the social and personal interpretations of identity (Bell and Hastings 242). Although the interracial couple must overcome social pressures in order to be together, there is much emotionally driven opposition to interracial dating.

## II. Intercultural

Since interracial couples come from differing experiences racially it is important for them to acknowledge each party's culture. Some people in interracial couples found their partner attractive, because in comparison to those from their own racial background, they perceived a partner of a different race as exotic looking (Harris and Kalbfleisch 50). The concept of finding the other party attractive because of one's own culture sheds light on how cultural difference plays a role in interracial romance. It is clear then that even before the two parties have met, race begins to shape their relationship in unexpected ways and also poses challenges they might have in understanding each other. Because mainstream American culture is predominately white, the things that most white Americans identify with are mainstream; as a result, in an interracial couple the black party already has an understanding of his or her partner's culture. However, in order to better understand the black party, his or her partner must educate him or herself about black culture in order to better support his or her partner in interaction, especially in cases in which racism is involved (Bell and Hastings 248). Interactions with others that include racism or social disapproval play a significant role in the way that the couple perceives their relationship and works with each other despite differing backgrounds. Scholars see cultural differences and differences in each other's communities as the reason why there are not more interracial marriages (Kreager 888). As a way of coping with the intercultural aspects of their romance some couples claim that they are colorblind and do not see race. This ultimately is a contradiction when couples admit to social stigma and attraction because of racial difference. Even in couples that are trying not to 'see' race, acknowledging racial difference is inevitable (Child 46).

## III. Intimacy

In terms of intimacy, interracial couples must deal with the

additional challenge of social stigma. According to a study done by Elizabeth Vaquera and Grace Kao, across the board interracial couples are more hesitant to show intimacy in public spaces. This includes activities like holding hands, announcing themselves as a couple, going out in a group, going on a date alone or meeting their partner's parents. The study found these activities to be easier for same race couples (Kao and Vaquera 495). In general, people tend to be more comfortable with interracial relationships at lower levels of intimacy (Bonam 92). Understanding how to navigate these spaces and deal with conflict in terms of their affection is something interracial couples must face.

### *Film Criticism*

In researching interracial couples in film it is critical to examine scholarship around race dynamics in film, and scholarship on romance films as a genre.

#### I. Interracial

In analyzing the role that race relations play in film it is interesting to see how the audience can shape the film. According to a study done by Andrew Weaver, if too many minorities are in a film, white audiences will not want to see it because they will dismiss it as a minority film (Weaver 369). Additionally, when filmmakers tell tales of interracial couples, they run the risk of making the film more controversial by nature of the potential social disapproval (Weaver 369). Instead of just telling a story, this film is now making a statement, often one that filmmakers only want to make if it is relevant to the story line. Film is just another medium that presents a perception of race that can be detrimental to people being able to interracially communicate effectively (Harris and Trego 227). Harris and Trego suggest that when media present interracial romance they support the assumption that, "This is the first time they have chosen to date interracially and the characters are in different points of their lives and reflect varying stages of emotional

and relational maturity that inform how they deal with the pressures of becoming romantically involved with someone of a different race” (Harris and Trego 233). The fact that the story focuses on the first instance of interracial attraction implies perhaps that the relationship changes with time as the couple is more familiar with dating interracially.

## II. Genre

Research on the romance film genre in general, suggests that such films portray an unrealistic way of life in which people are visually attractive and physically passionate with no difficulty. They emphasize simplicity of finding and entertaining love in same- race couples. (Johnson and Holmes 354). Often, the main characters in films are white and heterosexual in order to get the greatest number of viewers (Weaver 369). Because white heterosexual people are the majority of the population, filmmakers must appeal to this demographic. The scholarship on romance films shows that Hollywood strives to make movies that represent an unrealistic ideal of romantic love.

### *Summary*

In looking at the various elements that play into the reality of interracial relationships many challenges persist and interracial dating today is still quite controversial. In a variety of ways, films depict residual racial resentments and challenges as they play out in romantic relationships. Historically, the difference in privilege influences interactions, and a difference in perception of culture changes the way that people communicate interracially. Films have also been a medium that expresses complicated race dynamics, and an idealistic perception of romance and relationships. Overall, these elements will be crucial in determining the accuracy of the portrayal of interracial relationships in film.

### **Approach and Methodology**

*Method*

Based on the literature about real world interracial dating, I have learned about the intimate contact and communication, communication patterns, relational challenges and problems, and the social hierarchical obstacles associated with interracial dating. Based on the information discussed in my literature review I intend to look for evidence of these relational, social and communicative patterns in each film.

In order to do media analysis of these films, I use six criteria to evaluate each film. The criteria I selected for evaluating each film are drawn from the scholarly literature in Sociology and Communication on interracial romance. While looking at each film, I consider six different categories to determine how accurately each film depicts the communicative and social realities of a black-white interracial couple. Specifically, my analysis shows whether each film demonstrates an understanding of the following six issues related to interracial romance:

1. Studies show that interracial couples will inevitably experience conflict about the relative status of each individual in the relationship.
2. Interracial couples must also explicitly acknowledge their racial difference. This needs to be a direct statement about race.
3. The communication strategies the couple uses to reconcile their differences or to share a common interest help make them work as a team, against the outside social world.
4. Interpersonal research shows that attraction is framed around racial difference, where an individual expresses interest in a different race or culture.
5. Sociology research emphasizes the importance of the black person in the relationship having more social status, in order to engage in this sort romance.
6. Research shows that interracial couples struggle with questions about public perceptions of their intimacy.

A film that addresses all of these criteria shows a comprehensive understanding of real life interracial couples.

One of the main themes that an accurate portrayal of interracial couples must address is conflict from being in an interracial couple. Both the history of race relations, and sociological research show that interracial couples will experience resistance and disapproval from both the white and black community. This shows that family, friends, and even strangers repeatedly see interracial couples in a negative light. Knowing that this kind of resistance is present it is necessary that an accurate cinematic depiction must show instances of that resistance and disapproval, and portray the couple dealing with such conflict in their relationship. This can be shown in terms of family and friends questioning the relationship with hostility, pointing out differences in a negative way, choosing not to engage in conversation or activity with the opposite race partner, or verbalizing racial stereotypes and judgments. In terms of strangers or a general public disapproving, this can be shown in more subtle ways, such as staring, denial of services or quality of service, unkind looks, general avoidance, or something more explicit like making negative racial comments or reaffirming racial stereotypes. A film that depicts a couple dealing with social hostility toward their interracial romance will be more accurate than one that ignores such conflict, or portrays a kind of post-racial fantasy where race is not noticed or relevant.

The second criteria examines whether the couple explicitly acknowledge their racial difference. Research shows that having an opposite race partner, and being able to explicitly acknowledge their race and its serious social implications is part of being in an interracial couple. If the couple is unable to acknowledge racial difference, it is not possible for them to actually deal with their identity as an interracial couple, because they are not dealing with race. Having the couple, as well as friends, family and general public explicitly acknowledge the couple's racial difference is crucial to dealing with their racial difference.

In communication research, once the couple explicitly acknowledges racial difference, they must be able to navigate social spaces through a common understanding; a realistic cinematic depiction would then require a common face or interest. In the process of understanding each other, couples must show a common 'face' or interest as they progress. The interpersonal communication idea of 'face' looks at the general behavior, mannerism, language, delivery and expressions and how they indicate feelings, and can afford the interracial couple a way of dealing with conflict. Research shows 'Face work' is important because having a united outlook in terms of understanding their situation is necessary in order to deal with the challenges the interracial couple might come up against. Research also shows that another way of creating a shared perspective is through a common interest where the couple is better able to understand their differences through this interest. For example, if two people are together and both love to cook, cooking could be that common interest that brings them together. Additionally understanding the different kinds of food they love to cook provides them with a new way to understand their cultural and racial differences through something they love. This sort of common interest can be part of attraction and is as part of a realistic cinematic portrayal.

Attraction with interracial couples emphasizes racial difference. Literature shows the prevalence of partners finding themselves attracted to their opposite race partner because of their racial differences. An example of what this could look like in a realistic cinematic portrayal, would be a couple pointing out racial differences and then talking about attraction, or coding them as different, and what that difference means in terms of attraction. This could also look like voicing a dislike or frustration with intra-racial dating and needing something else. Another way in which this could be portrayed is to show a character relying on a friend of the same race as the person they hope to date to arrange the date for the couple. Generally in order for someone to date interracially either they or their partner must find themselves in the opposite racial community, either through work, class, education or socially. These



various contexts and circumstances are indicators of potential interracial attraction and situations.

Social hierarchy also plays an important role in interracial attraction. Since there is a divide in privilege in the United States, in order to be able to interracial date the partner who is black generally has more social status than the party who is white. Accurate cinematic portrayals of interracial romance will show the black party as belonging to a higher socio-economic class, for example. The black party could also be better looking (for example, a film could show this by emphasizing competition for this person as a mate), more educated, or stronger in some other socially accepted way. Another example might be popularity in a high school setting, which would function as a sort of social hierarchy. Being more popular provides more social power. This social hierarchy is important to balance the stigma of dating someone who is black. It generally does not happen that someone who does not have higher social status is able to be in this kind of relationship.

This same stigma translates over to how the couple deals with intimacy. According to the scholarly literature, real-life interracial couples must deal with a set of intimacy issues and conflicts not faced by same race couples. An accurate film portrayal, then, must show couples confronting and negotiating those intimacy issues. Each film's intimacy should then address some general concepts. Since the genre that I look at is romance films, it is expected that there will be some physical intimacy to show that they are a couple. This could come in the form of kissing, holding, touching or other implied sexual activities. Showing physical intimacy is imperative to show both parties as a couple. However, since they are an interracial couple, they generally deal with a lot of disapproval from both the black and white community. This means that their intimacy should emphasize the different social implications of public and private intimacy. This can be shown in two main ways. First, the film can depict the couple's awareness and acknowledgment of social disapproval. Second, the film could portray the couple's deliberate choice to refrain from showing affection in

public spaces in order to avoid anticipated disapproval. Making sure a film shows one of these challenges is essential to an accurate portrayal of the intimacy of many interracial couples.

Films that are accurate portrayals of interracial romance will meet all or most of these criteria. They will consistently show couples explicitly dealing with the conflicts and social constraints that real-life interracial couples face. Being in an interracial couple it is almost inevitable that there will be some sort of conflict because of social realities. As these struggles happen addressing the idea of racial difference will be necessary to give the couple a context with which they can discuss it and cope with the adversity. A common interest works to bring the couple together despite differences. There has to be a certain level of attraction and interest in interracial dating to bring the couple together initially, but it does not fall outside of the constraints of social hierarchy. Lastly, in order to affirm their status it is important that they do show intimacy and affection, but are aware of how others will respond to this. All of these criteria work together to complete an accurate cinematic representation of an interracial couple and give a solid framework for my analysis of the films.

### *Justification for Films*

The films that I have selected to analyze have been chosen based on a combination of release dates, content (if there is a heterosexual interracial couple as the main characters), and popularity of the film in mainstream culture. These three elements ensured that the films selected would show cinematic portrayals of interracial couples over the span of twenty years, that the films are relevant to mainstream culture, and that there is enough of a focus on the interracial couple to comment on their interactions. I selected films that would address the struggles and perspectives of interracial couples. I examine films made between 1992 and 2012 to see how accurately they portrayed the real-life challenges faced by interracial couples. I was interested in whether there was any change in how well such films portrayed the social conflicts and

constraints that challenged such couples. I was aided in my selection of films by movie reviews in the New York Times. For example, the Times reviewer noted that the 1992 film *the Bodyguard* failed “Even to notice that this is an interracial romance.” (Maslin 1992) Since the New York Times is a strong part of popular culture that does not address racial dynamics as a priority, the fact that it is able to acknowledge that interracial dynamics should be addressed in this kind of film and are not, is significant. Conversely, in movies like *Guess Who*, reviewers were able to see the dynamics of interracial relationships in the movie’s main plot. One reviewer noted that the, “Suspicious father who must overcome his prejudices is black, while his daughter’s fiancé is white.” (Scott 2005) Not only do some films address the idea of a racial tensions and dynamics, but they are significant enough that they are introduced as an idea into the average American’s understanding of race. Historically films like *Guess Who* and *Jungle Fever* have had the ability to comment on interracial couples in America through their widespread consumption and impact.

The films I selected in this study represent the genre of interracial romance films over two decades. All of these are films that focus on the relational dynamics of interracial couples. Additionally, I selected films to represent a variety of black female-white male dynamics as well as white female-black male relationships. Looking at these two types of couples ensured that gender, as a variable was not overlooked. Lastly, these films were popular enough to be relevant to both black and white audiences, ensuring that they would work as a reasonable representative sample of popular culture.

### *Analysis and Results*

The results of my analysis demonstrate how each film portrays an interracial romance, and whether each of my various criteria is met. In the end, I want to offer an assessment of how accurate each film was in portraying the social and communicative realities of interracial relationships. Although I reviewed each of the dozen

films, the analysis below offers examples of those films that clearly meet or fail to meet each of the criteria. I have analyzed each film in light of the criteria drawn from the academic literature on interracial relationships. Where possible, I have applied those criteria in estimating how accurately the film depicts real-life interracial relationships. When any film does not explicitly address the issue for any of the criteria, I have noted that missing dimension, and considered the film only in light of the remaining criteria.

### *Intimacy*

Most films in the genre show intimacy but do not really address the elements that make interracial dating and intimacy different in terms of social struggle for interracial couples. Films that were able to do this well, were movies like, *One Night Stand*, *Save the Last Dance*, and *Wonderful World*. These films depict intimacy in realistic ways and use it as a tool to advance the relationship and express the social dynamics. In the film *Save the Last Dance*, Sara a white female and Derek a black male are both high school students on the south side of Chicago . They are on a date and while they are sitting on the bus, they notice a middle-aged woman staring at them and giving them a disgusted look. She does not say anything but she watches them to the point that Sara turns around and can see the woman staring. As Sara indicates to Derek through a series of looks that they are being watched, the couple is able to acknowledge the social resistance and as a result, they decide to combat it using intimacy to show they are not afraid of social disapproval from the outside world. In general, this scene sets the framework for how the couple has decided to deal with intimacy in terms of public and private, and although they are intimate in public, they are able to acknowledge social disapproval and find a way to navigate it. In other films with realistic depictions, intimacy is dealt with in other ways as well. In the movie *Wonderful World*, several scenes show the couple together in intimate ways. The film *Wonderful World* features a relationship between Khadi a black woman and Ben a white man . Due to unexpected circumstances, Khadi and Ben are living in the same apartment and start

to fall in love. The scene between Khadi and Ben features them in the doorway of their apartment, hugging and kissing passionately. Soon after they start kissing, they end up having sex and after they lay in bed and talk. Khadi then shows Ben exactly how and where she wants him to touch her. This is just one representation from the film of when Khadi and Ben are intimate. Ben and Khadi are only intimate when they are alone, in a safe place, which happens to be their home. Additionally, Khadi goes out of her way to help Ben understand her difference in terms of physical intimacy and cooking food together. Although this differs from the other depiction, which is much more explicit about race, the subtle patterns they show allow for an accurate depiction of intimacy.

Just as some films are able to depict realistic portrayals of interracial intimacy, films such as *The Bodyguard*, *Made in America*, *Waiting to Exhale*, *Guess Who* and *I'm Through with White Girls*, do not deal with the issue of interracial intimacy at all. An example of this is in the *Made in America* when Hal and Sarah are having their first date. Hal and Sara are walking around outside after a date at a Japanese restaurant. While they are walking, Hal leans in and puts his hands on Sarah's waist, smells her neck, and tries to hold her hand. Once they finally reach Sara's house, Hal walks her to the front door, spins her around and kisses her outside where people could see them. In this film both parties are able to acknowledge and have internalized to some degree, the prejudices around interracial dating. Based on Sarah's negative reaction to learning her sperm donor is a white man it is clear that Sarah is uncomfortable with the idea of interracial romance. Another example is Hal's disinterested response to Zara's (his child he has never met) desire to talk to him by saying, "I'm not really into this whole black white thing." With this sort of context, it makes no sense that they would show public affection. Even more so, the music and the general attitudes show that these scenes are not taken seriously and ignore the issues previously mentioned. There is no consistency from private to public. This film's omission of the interracial aspects of intimacy in the relationship is similar to the majority of films in this study.

*Explicit Acknowledgement of Difference*

Only half the films have characters who explicitly acknowledge racial difference by verbalizing that one party is white and the other is black. On the other hand, other films do not mention this crucial dynamic within the relationship or in the context of other social groups. However, it seems that films are better at dealing with an idea like calling out race, instead of something more complex like figuring out behavioral patterns based on real struggles. As mentioned previously in the literature, films of this genre are characteristically known for addressing racial difference; because interracial couples are not the norm, having an interracial couple in the film introduces controversy and makes majority white viewers uncomfortable without addressing why. In films like *Zebrahead*, *The Brothers*, *Save the Last Dance*, *Guess Who* and *I'm Through with White Girls*, racial difference is acknowledged. For example, in one scene from *Guess Who*, the character Simon freaks out when he finds out his girlfriend did not tell her parents that he is white.

Theresa: Cute? Clean-shaven? What?

Simon: Pigment-challenged? Did you tell them that I'm white?

Theresa: You're white? You're white? Stop the car!  
(taxi cab driver slams on the breaks and almost causes a car crash, simon bumps his head)

Theresa: Oh, my God! Look at what you...Oh, my God.

Simon, I'm so sorry. It was a joke, sir. I was kidding.

Cab Driver: Yeah, sister. You're funny.

Theresa: Simon, are you okay?

Simon: Who are you?

Theresa: Are you serious?

Simon: Why am I in Jersey?

Theresa: Don't worry. It's gonna be great, okay?

Simon: All right.

Theresa: I'm very sorry. It was a bad joke.

Simon: So, did you tell them?

Theresa: No. I only told them the important things. That I love you. That you're an amazing man. That you have a very cute birthmark on your left butt cheek.

Simon: You just didn't feel the need to mention it's a Caucasian butt cheek. That was...

Theresa: Simon, look. I didn't mention it because I don't think it's gonna matter.

Cab Driver: It's gonna matter.

Theresa: We're fine, sir.

Theresa is making a joke when she pretends not to know what Simon is talking about but as they discuss it they are able to acknowledge the potential for social resistance. Simon's concern is a legitimate issue, and the fact that as a couple they are able to acknowledge their difference means that the outside world is also able to acknowledge their difference as well. In other films this exchange does not always happen, and it is unrealistic because even couples who take a color-blind approach to interracial dating are aware and to some degree acknowledge their partner's racial differences, even if just in terms of attraction. Films that do not address this are, *The Bodyguard*, *One Night Stand*, *Wonderful World*, and *Think Like a Man*. In *The Bodyguard* Frank takes Rachel out on a date to a small restaurant he likes to visit in an obscure place and they are talking. Rachel is a successful black female pop star, and Frank's job is to keep her safe.

Rachel: Your kind of place? Your kind of music?

Frank: Absolutely.

Rachel: You figure no one can get by you here.

Frank: If someone's willing to swap his life for a kill, nothing can stop him.

Rachel: What do I need you for?

Frank: He might get me instead.

Rachel: You're ready to die for me?

Frank: That's the job.

This point in the movie is the closest the couple comes to

acknowledging any kind of racial difference or even hinting at a kind of cultural difference. This is a problem in films in terms of accuracy because if a film does not address racial difference at all it becomes harder for the film to deal with other racial issues. Additionally, it also makes it hard to see the distinction between interracial relationships and intra-racial relationships.

### *Conflict*

Conflict is closely linked to acknowledgement of difference, and it is characteristic of the genre that interracial romance films have some kind of racial conflict. It makes sense that films that deal with difference would also address that difference as a potential conflict in the film, as most films that address race show how it can be a problem or illuminate inequities. However, sometimes films marketed at racial minorities will casually bring up the idea of race, since concern about race is more common, especially in the black community. Movies that accurately address race as being a source of conflict are *Zebrahead*, *Waiting to Exhale*, *The Brothers*, *Save the Last Dance*, *O, Guess Who*, and *I'm Through with White Girls*. These movies work to point out race as a point of conversation, and acknowledge the potential for disapproval. In the movie *I'm Through with White Girls* the black male lead is sitting down to dinner with his black friend's family discussing his dating history.

Jerri: so Jay are you bringing anyone special to the wedding?

Jay: ah no

Drake: Jay just pulled a disappearing act on some girl he was dating, Beth

Sam: Beth is she a sister?

Jay: she's mixed

Drake: mixed with what Jay

Jay: English and German

(everyone groans)

Jay: what you think that's easy think about the food she had



to grow up with.

Sam: she you couldn't get away with that with a sister Jay.  
You've been playing around with too many of them white  
girls that's why you can't settle down

Hester: mmhmm

Sam: you color struck

Jay: no. the first woman I ever kissed was a sister.

Sam: boy your mama don't count

It is evident that there is a certain amount of comfort Drake's family feels with the idea of Jay dating a black woman, and discomfort with a white woman. The understanding that Drake's family has in terms of Jay's ex-girlfriend Beth shows a general disapproval. This scene is a great example of how questions and expressing disapproval can be linked closely to race relations and the way that the film addresses this is accurate. Conversely, films like *The Bodyguard*, *One Night Stand*, *Wonderful World*, and *Think Like a Man*, do not bring up race in a way that it can be a point of conflict in the film. Instead of addressing racial difference these films are more likely to simplify it to cultural difference. However, racial differences have social implications that an interracial relationship cannot ignore. In the film *Wonderful World* one can see this conflict in terms of difference in culture and background but not race. Ibu is Khadi's brother and Ben's roommate. Ibu is talking with Khadi about trying to get Ben to propose so she can get her green card. Ben overhears them talking and feels betrayed.

Ibu: do you think he'll marry you?

Khadi: yes I think he will marry me

Ibu: you get green card then you get green card there is  
more opportunity for you

Khadi: are you feeling okay?

(nurse comes in)

In this scene Ben and Khadi are dealing with the fact that Khadi is not from the United States and needs citizenship to stay in

the country. This is an issue that is unique to her culture and situation, but ultimately it does not change the fact that her functional identity is a black woman. The differences in culture and way of life that can happen in an interracial couple sometimes still do not get at the problems that interracial couples face.

*Common Face or Interest*

Most movies did not show either the development of communication strategies toward a common 'face' or an attempt to cultivate a common interest. This leaves the characters without a united attitude towards racial conflict or even a common interest to bond them together. Generally having one partner in denial or unaware of the social stigma makes it difficult to have a dialogue where these skills are developed, or to have something that brings them together and helps develop this united perspective. Some films that do this well are *Made in America*, and *Save the Last Dance*. In *Save the last dance* Derek is teaching Sarah how to dance hip-hop. This leads to them bonding and spending more time together learning how to combat their social differences through dance and common interest .

Derek: All right, lesson one. See, hip-hop is more than just like a dance, it's more like--like an attitude, you know. You gotta loosen up so you can feel them and let them flow through you. Now, what is this ?

Bring your feet out like this. Put your feet forward. Right, spread 'em, spread 'em.

Sarah: okay

Derek: You all right, then ?

Sarah: Yes.

Derek: Just hang loose. Be strong, a tree, right ? Left, right, left, right, left, right, left, right. Make that sound with me.

Uhhh !

Sarah: Uhhh !

Derek is aware that Sarah has some background in dance, and Sarah and Derek are using their ability to dance as a way to relate and develop their relationship and understanding. At other points in the film Derek attends Sarah's ballet classes and works on a routine for a tryout that combines both styles. Dance is truly a way that they can reconcile their differences and feel closer despite adversity. In the film *Made in America* Hal and Sara are brought together because of the daughter they share; she inspires them. Common interest or face gives the couple a new lens with which to see their unique relationship, and these films are able to portray the emotions that come with those developments. However, the vast majority of films do not even attempt to address this issue.

Films like *Zebrahead*, *The Bodyguard*, *Waiting to Exhale*, *The Brothers*, *O*, and *I'm Through with White Girls* do not adequately portray common interest or face. In the film *O*, both the black male lead Odin and his partner Desi work together, but when it comes down to it they are not able to really support or defend each other. They do not even trust each other to stand up for each other. When Odin and Desi are having sex Desi tells Odin to stop but Odin keeps going regardless. This is just one simple example of how lack of communication can play into a lack of ability to show the complexities of the couple.

### *Attraction*

Attraction is generally touched upon in most of the films, but not fully developed and explicitly talked about or shown. According to the literature, it would make sense if the individuals demonstrated interest in a different cultural community, enabling interracial attraction. Although the idea of attraction is generally present, fewer of the films explicitly deal with it as an interracial phenomenon, or because of race. In such cases the character can be led to understand difference on a larger social scale as well. About half of films on my list found a way to address the interracial aspects of attraction in the relationship. *Zebrahead*, *Made in America*, *One Night Stand*, and *Save the Last Dance* are all films that

really address elements of attraction. In the film *One Night Stand* Max and Karen are drawn to each other and this is evident in their first moment of interaction. Max is black and Karen is white. Max and Karen both find themselves at an upscale restaurant in a hotel where Karen and Max are both with colleagues. They begin to notice each other but just look at each other from across the room. A day or so later they both find themselves in the lobby of the hotel again noticing each other once again. Karen looks in Max's direction and smiles, he finally walks over and says hello. This social situation gives Karen and Max the opportunity to see each other and express some sort of interest. Max and Karen's seemingly inexplicable attraction would not be able to happen without them being in a common social setting. These interactions address the idea of attraction because of difference. However, only about half the films address attraction through the lens of difference. *Waiting to Exhale*, *O*, and *I'm Through with White Girls* are all films that omit attraction dynamics all together. For example in *Waiting to Exhale*, the story never shows how John and his assistant started dating. When this is the case it is difficult to understand how the dynamics of dating initially happened. Therefore, it is more difficult for films to address attraction if it is not done through the initial courting.

### *Social Hierarchy*

Issues related to social hierarchy are more accurately portrayed than any other criterion in the films. These films show that couples who date interracially must in some fashion enter into an opposite race community. In other words it is unlikely that we might find a scene where a white person who has a lot of social status goes into an urban community and "saves" their black partner from poverty. As a result of needing to show communities that have both races, both races need to be in the same economic class or social category, or have some other factor like education to tie them together. *The Bodyguard*, *Waiting to Exhale*, *The Brothers*, *Save the Last Dance*, *O*, and *Think Like a Man* are all accurate portrayals of social hierarchy. In the film *Think Like a Man*, Kris-

ten is black and her partner Jeremy is white. Kristen's success falls in line with the idea of social hierarchy. She works as a real-estate agent, wears expensive looking clothing, and sells big houses . Kristen is very successful, while her partner Jeremy is less successful for most of the film.

Kristen and Jeremy met and attended the same college; they also split rent and are able to afford nice things. Even though Jeremy works, Kristen has always been in a position of power in the social hierarchy over Jeremy; even when they went to college Kristen's family had more money than Jeremy's. This sort of social hierarchy explains how and why the couple is able to interracially date. These dynamics are present in the literature. On the other hand, films such as *Made in America*, *Guess Who* and *I'm Through with White Girls* do not align in terms of social hierarchy. In the film *Made in America* Hal is white and Sarah is black but very in touch with her African heritage. Hal lives in a giant house and owns his own car dealership making a lot of money. Conversely, Sarah lives in a smaller home, sells African artifacts and does not own her own car . In *Made in America* it is clear that Hal has a lot more money than Sara does. Hal may not present as educated, but there is no category in which Sarah has more social status than Hal does. This dynamic is entirely flawed, and showing social reversal creates a fantasy of economic rescue. Portraying it in this way also does not make sense because there would be nothing that would call the white partner to date interracially or feel comfortable bringing home their different race partner.

### *Discussion*

My analysis reveals a few patterns about films in this genre. First, the accuracy of the portrayal of interracial romance seems to depend significantly on whether the story is told from a first person perspective or a third person perspective. A third person perspective in films like *Waiting to Exhale* and *The Brothers* allows for a social understanding of how others perceive the relationship, but does not address the interpersonal relationship the couple has.

Films that do not focus on the dramatic interaction of interracial couples directly and rather have a bunch of different people talking about them, cannot really delve into the issues at the interpersonal level. Such as films cannot move beyond societal issues, because they are not showing the couple directly. However even when the couple is shown directly and racial differences are acknowledged, most films either only address half of the criteria, or addresses all criteria at a very surface level. This indicates that most films are not accurately depicting real life interracial couples.

Looking at the progression of time from 1992 to 2012 there are a few interesting conclusions based on the year the films are made. It seems that in general a film's release date is not a significant factor in how accurate it is in portraying interracial romance. Films can be more or less accurate regardless of when they were produced within the twenty-year span. Films like the *Bodyguard*, and *Think Like a Man* are both are fairly inaccurate portrayals of interracial romances, but one was made in 1993 and the other was made in 2012. However, films made in 2001 seem to address several of the criteria. *Save the Last Dance*, for example, portrays all of the criteria accurately. These are just a few examples of the way that this genre of film is depicted over a period of time.

The community the film was marketed to, however, did make a significant difference in the accuracy. In my study, I found films watched by primarily by black audiences were more likely to deal with issues of racial difference and therefore are more likely to be accurate. Even if a film marketed to this community skims over some of the complexities of interracial couples, they are more likely to address the social resistance, and explicit acknowledgment of race. This makes sense based on the literature because films that have black characters as leads are more likely to be movies watched by a black community, and are also more likely to deal with racial tensions. Interestingly enough, based on reviews, *The Brothers* was supposed to be the male counterpart to the film marketed to black women, *Waiting to Exhale*. Both films portray interracial relationships differently, but both emphasize a very strong societal reaction to the relationship.

Explicitly addressing race is important for a film to be accurate, but the gender dynamics are not as significant. There seems to be little to no correlation between the gender of the black person and the realism of the movie. Regardless of whether the couple is black male and white female or white male and black female, the likelihood of the film being a realistic depiction is the same. What is more important in terms of accuracy of the film is that the film acknowledges race as an issue. The film cannot be accurate if it does not look at or acknowledge race. This is because interracial conflict, when race is not acknowledged, becomes a simple relationship problem and does not make the distinction between interracial couples and intra-racial couples. On the other hand, such films might be expressing the gendered dynamics of frustrations about interracial relationships and the tendency for white women and black men to interracially date more often than black women and white men. Although the gender of each partner in the interracial couple does not make a difference in terms of accuracy, the social reaction seems to be present regardless of who is in the relationship. For example in the film *Guess Who* it was not men who wanted to date Theresa feeling frustration towards the interracial couple but rather her father. Although this is just one example, it shows how these gendered frustrations are presented differently depending on the gender of each person.

*Implications:*

This research shows how interracial romance is depicted for the general American public. Inaccurate portrayals of interracial romantic relationships may suggest falsely that America is a post-racial society dealing less and less with race as an issue and more as an anomaly. Inaccurate films perpetuate an image of interracial couples that does not portray the complexities of their social and interpersonal challenges, thus leaving audiences with a romanticized or often minimal understanding of such relationships. Future research could easily take the criteria I have used in my analysis and apply them to future films to see how depictions might change. Or, future scholarship could examine how interracial couples in

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different racial or ethnic pairings (Asian or Latino, for example), are shown in Hollywood films, asking if the portrayal of these relationships is more or less accurate than the depiction of black and white couples.



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**APPENDIX**

Movie Name and Year  
Black Gender White Gender  
Perspective  
Movie rating  
Setting  
Shade of black persons skin (light, medium, dark)

Intimacy:

Difference:

Social Hierarchy:

Communication Patterns:

Culture:

Courting:

Conflict:

Family:

Friends:

Attraction:

First moment of interaction:

Other:

**ROMANCE FILMS**

1. Zebrahead (1992)
2. The Bodyguard (1992)
3. Made in America (1993)
4. Waiting to Exhale (1995)
5. One Night Stand (1997)
6. The Brothers (2001)
7. Save the Last Dance (2001)
8. O (2001)
9. Guess Who (2005)
10. I'm Through with White Girls (2007)
11. Wonderful World (2009)
12. Think Like a Man

# Religious Symbolism in Women's Fashion

ALYSSA MELONE

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## *Introduction*

Fashion surrounds us in our everyday lives. As a society we are constantly being shown the newest trends, hottest looks, most popular styles, and what the designs are that 'everybody' is, and should be, wearing. From magazine ads, to store window displays, to billboards, we are constantly being bombarded with how we should dress. Religion, in comparison, is increasingly harder to find in media outlets and the magazine ads promoting the newest trends in religion and different teachings are scarce, mostly because this topic is overshadowed by more secular advertising. But recently, many people have noticed the growing popularity of religious content, such as symbols or icons, in fashion. The fashion world isn't just discovering religion as a creative outlet: over the years many designers have used religion as inspiration for designs and styles. The recent barrage of t-shirts with the words, "I love GOD" and the tight leggings with hundreds of crosses printed on them, has caught many people's eyes. Not only are many stores selling religion as fashion, but there are also stores that openly claim religious affiliation openly to their customers.

Fashion and religion have collided, and the fashion industry has used religion as a means to create revenue and begin a trend. This idea can also be found in the concept of selling religion. From music, to television shows, to toys, religious messages are being found more often. Currently, fashion and religion are inextricably tied, and the fashion industry seems to be guilty of selling religion. This begs the questions: When has fashion gone too far? Is it appropriate to blend cropped shirts and tight pants with religious symbols and icons, all in the name of creating a new trend for the season? As a woman in college who has a passion for style and shopping, I subsequently am surrounded by other women in college and at work who are just as open to finding new trends and keeping up with the latest fashions within our budget. While men

are targets of fashion advertising, women are huge contributors to the successful revenue of the fashion industry. So this paper will be female-oriented, rather than expand to concerning men and their feelings on the relationship between fashion and religion.

This paper focuses on the connection between religion and fashion, specifically Forever 21 and GoJane.com, and the implications clothing stores, jewelry designers, and fashion moguls are facing when they choose to use religion as a way to sell their brand. I will give a brief historical background of religious consumerism which serves as the support for my following findings and final argument that numerous clothing stores, and in particular the franchises of Forever 21 and GoJane.com, are reaping monetary gains and benefits from their mass production of clothing and jewelry that are religiously related. This relationship may have a negative effect on our society's religious literacy.

### *Historical Background and Scholarly Review of Religious Consumerism*

Religious consumerism is a topic that many scholars have delved into in our modern society because of its increasing popularity. The rise of religious marketing began, according to Mara Einstein, with Mary Baker Eddy who was the founder of Christian Science and, "...arguably the most innovative promoter of religion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Einstein, 37). Promoting religion is necessary to gain followers and attract attention to your faith, resulting in a larger religious community, and possibly more revenue to be gained by your church through donations. In Eddy's case, she distributed books to both secular bookstores and religious individuals, and created reading rooms similar to libraries, where Christians could read her books in a Christian environment. Einstein cites these reading rooms as a "franchise" which is similarly what the clothing store Forever 21 is labeled as (37). Being that a franchise is defined as a type of successful business model, one would typically not associate a religion with a franchise.



Another scholar who cites religious consumerism as having a negative effect on both the Church and with society is Jeffrey MacDonald. From his chapter “A Bumper Crop of Weak Moral Character” he states, “When the Church is true to its mission, it elicits the gifts of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22)...A strong correlation has emerged between the consumer-driven religious marketplace and the decay of Christian moral character” (92). There is a difference between MacDonald’s and Einstein’s views, even though their combined research has resulted in dissatisfaction with religious consumerism. Einstein’s research and work has no religious motivation behind it, and she is focused on consumer trends, whereas MacDonald is a minister who is extremely concerned about the welfare of his church, his faith, and his religious community. The argument that MacDonald and Einstein make is that religion shouldn’t be labeled a franchise, reaping monetary benefits and more concerned with widespread marketing techniques to bring in new ‘customers’. Since the beginning with Eddy, religious consumerism has continued to grow and continued to contribute to religious illiteracy in our enormous consumer society.

This idea of religious illiteracy within the United States has been researched thoroughly by Stephen Prothero, author of *American Jesus*. In his chapter, “Superstar” he cites Jesus’ rise to fame with thousands of American people and calls it the “Jesus Movement.” Through the Beatles, Hollywood, two musicals, clothing, posters, and more, Prothero states, “The most common objection was that the Jesus People were theologically shallow—that the movement’s focus on experiencing Jesus had led it away from the truths of the Bible and the doctrines of the creeds” (142). Prothero is referencing experiencing Jesus through music, clothing, musicals, posters, and all other sorts of paraphernalia and venues outside the Church. The idea of ‘experiencing’ Jesus is different than actually understanding the religious doctrine, because no one in this religious marketplace that Prothero references is using Biblical verses or facts, merely using religion to give people an

‘experience’, such as the musical. Because these outlets such as musicals, clothing, and posters are referencing Jesus and religion in such vague ways, people begin to lose sight of the real meaning and the religious message is lost. By decreasing religious doctrine to appeal to wider audiences - through any number of outlets as stated above - Prothero is arguing that religious literacy, meaning the knowledge we have about religion, is diminishing within our consumer society. Forever 21, GoJane.com, and numerous other clothing stores are labeled as franchises and they are reaping in the benefits of mass producing clothing and jewelry with religious symbols, sayings, and icons. Just as Prothero had concluded, this relationship may have a negative effect on our society’s religious literacy.

*Attitudes towards Religious Symbolism in Fashion*

In the process of researching this paper, I read many articles online pertaining to this topic, and used class readings as a basis for the concept of selling religion and appealing to our consumer society. I also interviewed female friends, roommates, and women on the college campus and asked them their thoughts and feelings on the connection between fashion and religion, whether they agreed with the use of religious symbols on clothing and jewelry, and whether or not they felt it was appropriate. I also interviewed my father, Robert Melone, who is a photographer for a high-end shoe company based out of New York City, which sells both men’s and women’s shoes, but primarily caters to women’s designs. My target store was Forever 21, but I also used the website GoJane.com, an equally fashionable and affordable online store in the same market, to support the trend in clothing. Through these conversations and interviews with friends, my father, and a few of the women on campus, I was able to find some evidence that showed the relationship religion and fashion have on the female consumer in college, ages twenty to twenty-two. These women, and my father, were very eager to share their opinions on the connection of religion and fashion, and many of their quotes are included below.

My research is primarily based on Forever 21, but uses

images from GoJane.com to support the idea that many clothing stores/sites considered “trendy” and affordable are producing clothing that portrays a religious theme. Although I was unable to find much background information on GoJane.com, I did find that it was privately owned out of Ontario, California. Private ownership proves that the corporation is able to produce whatever they like without questioning (Manta).

One of the main things that I noticed while talking with the women I interviewed was that every person had noticed the trend of religious icons and symbols integrated with fashion. I also found it interesting that although the majority of interviewees claimed to have religious affiliation, they also don’t feel any offense towards fashion using religion as a marketing trend technique, or in contrast, religion using fashion, as in the case of Forever 21. These interviews also proved to be very successful in getting a deeper look into women’s feelings on the subject because many times people prefer to voice strong opinions anonymously. For example, the following quotes:

**Respondent 1:** “I am not a religious person, or I don’t consider myself ‘religious’ rather, but I think that religious symbols on large clothing store’s apparel can diminish the strong meaning behind the symbols. It almost seems like it’s making a certain religion mainstream or superior. I personally would not buy anything with religious symbols because I wouldn’t feel comfortable wearing it since I’m not very religious, however I would not feel offended if I saw anyone else wearing them.”

**Respondent 2:** “The trend with fashion doesn’t offend me as everyone has their right to show religious affiliation, however it does limit me from buying it” and also, “When I was in Zumiez (clothing store) I liked this shirt because of its style and the print of the Cross- it was floral design. The brand was Obey, but I mainly didn’t get it because I’m not religious and I didn’t want to deal with people saying

something about it- I also didn't want to be disrespectful for wearing it. But I seriously thought about it.”

The final quote I received comes from Robert Melone, the photographer for a high-fashion shoe company based out of New York City:

“She wanted me to capture pictures of the Cross on the boots because she felt that the Cross was an iconic image that she wanted to connect to the brand. I thought it would be tacky. I didn't like the trying to drive a Christian feel towards these boots, or brand. I don't like the idea of connecting religion a brand in general. They're trying to jump on the bandwagon of this whole popularity of Crosses on everything, like, 'Hey! We're Christian also!' Don't you think that's obnoxious? That's like me taking a symbol from Islam and putting on my shirt thinking it's cool, it's stupid.”

These quotes proved to support my research and support my findings that while people do notice religion on clothing, they personally won't buy it, but also won't be offended if someone else does because it's their prerogative. While many interviewees' opinions were somewhat split on the question of whether this branding of religion was diminishing our view on religion, the majority leaned toward “yes” and I was able to come to the conclusion that many people do think religious literacy in the U.S. is decreasing because we view religion through the lens of fashion. When religion is just a clothing trend, we also lose the real meaning and sacredness behind the symbol or ideology.

### *Discussion and Analysis*

In Mara Einstein's piece, “The Business of Religion” she discusses the effect that women have on the religious marketplace. The biggest perpetrators of religious clothing and jewelry were Forever 21 and GoJane.com, two stores that primarily sell affordable and stylish clothing to women. Forever 21 carries a men's

clothing as well, but only at certain larger locations (such as Times Square in New York City) or online. GoJane.com is a website that only sells women's clothing. The difference I've noticed between these two stores is that Forever 21 is using fashion to sell religion, and GoJane.com is using the religious trend to sell fashion.

The company Forever 21 creates clothing with religious symbols, sayings, and icons, but their investment with religion is much deeper and stems from the owners of the company, Do Won and Jin Sook Chang. As Korean immigrants, they arrived in Los Angeles in 1981. Mrs. Chang claims that God told her to open a store and that it would be successful. Mr. and Mrs. Chang are born-again Christians, and their faith is on open display in the store, most directly on the bottom of the bright yellow shopping bags.



“John 3:16” is printed on the underside of every shopping bag. This blatantly religious symbol has raised attention in the media and with customers of the store. But their religious views also dictate their clothing designs, and in the past few years more and more of their clothing has depicted religious Christian symbols - such as Bible verses, crosses, or the saying, “Count Your Blessings” (where the ‘I’ in “Blessings” is a cross) - as well as their jewelry collections. They are using fashion to sell religion to our consumer society, specifically the Christian religion. Many people shopping at Forever 21 don't know the store's religious background or owners, and don't really question what's printed on the bottom of their

bags. As a shopper at this store, when I first saw the “John 3:16,” I thought nothing of it and dismissed it as some sort of marketing tactic. Women who are frequent shoppers at this store may not care that it has religious affiliation, because they enjoy the affordable prices, ever-changing styles, and convenience of the stores many locations.

It’s clear that not only Forever 21 and GoJane.com but numerous other stores are appealing to the trend of using religious symbols. Though similarly trying to appeal to the religious trend, GoJane.com doesn’t have the same ulterior motives as the Chang’s, who are using their faith to draw in the consumer and create revenue that they believe was spiritually mandated by God through trendy fashion. GoJane.com could be critiqued as having negative motives of using religion, which they have no background affiliation with, to create revenue, which can also be seen as contributing towards a decline in religious literacy. The difference between these two companies is that Forever 21 is using fashion to sell religion, and GoJane.com is using religion to sell fashion. GoJane.com has observed the use of religious symbols to appeal to the popular rhetoric of the consumer culture, and they are jumping on board.

The quotes beneath two of GoJane.com’s many pieces of cross-themed jewelry struck me as very interesting: beneath a ring entitled “Double Finger Cross Ring” was the description, “Have faith in your great taste when you slip on this non-stretchy, two-finger cross ring.



We love how this solidly hued ring goes with everything in your

wardrobe, as well as how on trend it is ‘cause of the sideways cross.” Another example are the Dangling Cross Earrings: “These lightweight, metal earrings with dangling cross charms are the perfect way to add some pretty piety to your look” (GoJane.com, Figure 2). These descriptions made direct references to religion and the idea that it would add a touch of fashion to a woman’s wardrobe if she bought them. Differently from Forever 21, where the Chang’s are blatantly using fashion trends to sell their Christian religion, GoJane.com is using the religious trend to simply create revenue and sell fashion, without the intent to push their personal religious views on the consumer. This is the exact type of marketing that Robert Melone felt was distasteful.

A few other examples are from their clothing section. Beneath a shirt labeled “Mesh Inset Leopard Cross Top” was the description, “You can have faith that you’ll look absolutely adorable in this leopard print cross top. The mesh insets are super chic, and we love how this top looks paired with skinny jeans or a mini skirt. Top is sinfully soft and is finished oversized sleeves and a slight high-low hem”. Underneath “Graphic Leopard Print Cross Tank” was the description, “This stretchy, slightly cropped tank with deep cut arms features the Cross of St. Peter (filled in with leopard print, natch). For those not in the know, the Cross of St. Peter is often used by the Pope to represent the ultimate in holiness and piety. By the way, this cozy tank doesn’t include any closures, but has a rounded neckline and finished hems” (GoJane.com, Figure 3).



These shirts are a source for ironic confusion. In the description they use “sinfully”, which could be seen as a play on words. Their use of rhetoric inspires the question of whether GoJane.com has any religious affiliation to the Cross. The second shirt is also counterintuitive, and seemingly disrespectful, because it is clearly exploiting the Cross of St. Peter and the Pope in their efforts to draw the consumer into this trend. Equally notably, the shirt features the Cross upside down, which is sometimes known throughout the Christian community as an anti-Christ symbol. GoJane.com seems to have ulterior motives when it comes to their personal religious affiliation, in comparison to Forever 21’s blatant confirmation that they are Born-Again Christians, yet both stores seem to be equally trying hard to sell religion as a trendy fashion style.

In Martin Lindstrom’s article, “I Say a Little Prayer: Faith, Religion, and Brands”, Lindstrom finds that emotional engagement to brands shows a parallel feeling with religion. This makes sense to “faithful” female shoppers who claim they only buy bras at Victoria’s Secret, jeans from Levi’s, and shoes from Aldo, for example. This faithfulness to a certain brand shows these parallel feelings that another person has towards their religion. They wouldn’t consider leaving their religion, just like a shopper who considers themselves faithful to Levi’s jeans wouldn’t think of trying on a pair of Lee’s. The Chang’s have successfully sold religion through their stores and website, and in turn glamorizing Christianity (see Figure #4). Through the efficiency of churning out affordable, fashion-forward clothing, while integrating their own religious beliefs, the Chang’s have become billionaires, with five hundred stores worldwide and thousands of staff members, stated in the article “How Do Won Chang Has Turned Forever 21, His Cheap, Chic Chain of Massive Mall Stores, into the Fastest Name in Fast Fashion”. And according to Forbes.com, the Chang’s net worth is \$4.5 billion dollars as of September 2012. They also cite that “Born-again Christians, the two apparently attend church at 5:20 a.m. on weekdays, keep bibles in the office, and print John 3:16 on the bottom of each bag” (Forbes). This extreme revenue clearly indicates that along with the thousands of other items of clothing,



jewelry, and shoes they sell, religious merchandise is doing well enough to keep producing every season.

### *Conclusion*

Fashion is an integral part of our lives. We wake up deciding what to wear that day and we buy clothes based on a sort of marketing force aimed at us. We are continually becoming a more fashion-oriented culture, with more magazine, billboard, and television advertisements geared toward fashion appearing every day. Religious doctrine is less spoken about and less advertised for, and we seem to be becoming less literate as a society when it comes to understanding and knowing about different religions. Though fashion has used religious symbols and ideas in order to create inspiration over the years, the recent rise in fashion that is blatantly printing religious symbols - such as the Cross - is at a high. When clothing stores begin producing knit shirts with a large, floral printed Cross on them and selling them for \$12.80, the consumer begins to question whether or not this is a religious symbol, or a cheap, cute shirt. This in turn makes religious symbols seem less sacred and more profane, especially when the Cross is printed on a see-through mesh shirt and the model is only wearing a bra underneath.

Scholar Quentin J. Schultze supports this idea that the religious message and sacredness is being lost through marketing tactics in his chapter "Converting to Consumerism: Evangelical Radio Embraces the Market" from his book, *Christianity and the Mass Media in America*. Schultze argues that evangelicals took out much of their heavy religious doctrine in order to appeal to a broader audience through the selling of their messages in radio broadcasts. Though Schultze is discussing religious marketing through broadcasting, this idea of toning down doctrine in order to spread vague religious ideas widely is shown through the Chang's strategy of using clothing to sell their faith. By making religion accessible to a huge number of consumers, both the evangelicals with broadcasting and the Chang's with their clothing, have to use

marketing techniques that makes their faith accessible but not overwhelming. Schultze states, "...evangelicals began transforming the face of religious radio into a kind of chain-store model, leading both nonprofit and commercial religious radio into American consumerism" (164). This was an early version of religion using American consumerism, just as today's religious entrepreneurs adopt current trends in order to get their message across. Although GoJane.com has no religious motive, like Forever 21, they are still working to promote a trend with religion in the fashion industry and consumers: making it normal and acceptable to wear clothing or jewelry with religious symbols or sayings, which contributes to Schultze's idea of religious consumerism. It is also off-putting that the Chang's would continue printing Crosses and biblical verses on clothing that is so tight fitting, cut-up, cropped, see-through, and embellished, when religion is typically seen as sacred and not to be used to create revenue.

Personally, I will continue to shop at Forever 21 and GoJane.com because their clothing lasts and is affordable for a college student on a budget. I wouldn't consider buying any of their religious merchandise though, because as my research shows, it diminishes the meaning behind these religious symbols, merely making them a means to create a new trend and bring in revenue. Through my research, it seems the Chang's ulterior motives in using fashion to sell religious symbols, specifically the Cross, as means to create a new trend, and GoJane.com's use of religion to sell clothing and style to appeal to women in our vastly consumer society, has diminished our religious literacy as a society. Regardless of whether you claim religious affiliation, as the Chang's do, the issue of making religious doctrine seem secular and profane, effects a society as a whole. For example, we cannot begin to understand another person's perspective, culture, ideology, background, and beliefs, without having a basic understanding of the religion they believe in or if we only see religious icons as a fashion trend associated with affordable clothing chains. Stephen Prothero claims:

*“If you want to be involved, you need to know what they’re saying. We’re doomed if we don’t understand what motivates the beliefs and behaviors of the rest of the world. We can’t outsource this to demagogues, pundits and preachers with a political agenda” (Grossman).*

This quote is directly relevant to the correspondence between religious illiteracy and seeing religion as something the consumer can buy and wear to as a fashion statement, and I also think Prothero would include not outsourcing to the fashion industry. Marketing religion has been happening since the evangelicals used radio broadcasting to promote their faith. They paved the way for other religions to use different outlets, such as fashion, to give their faith a voice and appeal to our consumer society. To appeal to a consumer society and essentially sell-out religious doctrines in order to gain revenue, devalues the meaning behind the religion itself.

### CITATIONS FOR FIGURES USED

Figure #1 : <http://badvertisingblog.wordpress.com/2012/10/02/inconsistent-marketing/>

Figure #2: [www.GoJane.com](http://www.GoJane.com)

Figure #3: [www.GoJane.com](http://www.GoJane.com)

Figure #4: [www.forever21.com](http://www.forever21.com)

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# Setting Boundaries When Social Media is Used in Schools

GENNIFER DAVIDSON

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The teacher-student boundary is being blurred as technology makes advances and social media is being used as a tool to communicate in school. Teachers are presenting their private lives on social media websites, but are also using these same websites as a teaching tool. This is making the professional level of a teacher-student relationship less formal. There have been rare cases in which teachers are even misusing these social media websites as a way of growing closer with students in a sexual way. It is easy for a relationship to grow intimate when it is online. There is a debate over whether or not teachers and students should be able to use social media websites as a tool in school, or if it is crossing the professional boundary.

Social media is becoming more prominent in our world today, whether we like it or not. Trevor Timmons, the director of technology and information services at Weld Re-4 School, defines social media as “An Internet-based tool for sharing and discussing information among users” (Schachter 28). Social media is blurring the professional boundaries in schools, and some schools have responded by banning social media altogether. Our society needs to generate guidelines and values about social media, so that everyone can benefit from the opportunities social media has to offer for our youth as they develop into active citizens.

## *New Media Shifts Boundaries*

According to Joshua Meyrowitz, social media changes the way people interact with one another. He talks about different theories in his book *Shifting Worlds of Strangers: Medium Theory and Changes in “Them” versus “Us.”* When talking about medium theory, he states, “Medium theorists ask: How do the particular

characteristics of a medium make it physically, psychologically and socially different from other media and from face-to-face interaction” (Meyrowitz 61). This refers to the idea that using one medium over another can affect the appropriateness of the situation. A comment made from a teacher to a student in the classroom setting face-to face might be okay, but the same comment texted to a student late at night can be seen as highly inappropriate (61). Meyrowitz alludes to the invention of the telephone and how it has changed the role of writing a letter. Fewer letters are being sent because there is now an easier line of communication. Meyrowitz believes when new technologies become more popular they influence the nature of social interaction in general. Every time a new form of communication comes into society, it tests and pushes boundaries. With schools providing an easier and more professional level of communication like e-mails, it is questioned when other forms of communications are used to communicate between students and teachers, such as Facebook.

Nicolas Carr has a similar idea about how new technologies change boundaries. He talks about how the new technology of the Internet has rewired our mind, in his article “Is Google Making Us Stupid” Carr argues that the Internet has changed the way we think altogether. He writes about how it used to be so easy for someone to pick up a book and get fully submerged in it, but after using the Internet he found that people have started to struggle with deep reading. What used to take someone hours, if not days, to research in a library, can now be researched in minutes. This reference is similar to Meyrowitz’s example of using a telephone verses writing a letter. Once our brains have adapted to the new technology, like the telephone, it changes the role of writing a letter because our brain does not think like that anymore.

Our brain is rewiring itself to get information instantly: people now prefer to skim an article than fully read it (Carr). The brains of today’s students have changed so that they want information immediately. Students would much rather read a quick Tweet that is limited to 140 characters than a lengthy e-mail. Schools

should be more aware of how the Internet is rewiring the brain to have shorter attention spans. Schools should then restructure teaching methods accordingly, so that the students learn more efficiently. As Internet users shift towards a preference for shorter bits of information and interpersonal communication follows suit and becomes more disjointed, classroom practices should embrace this shift and expand the boundaries of traditional education. Schools should take this information, and use it to create a system that uses social media in a positive light.

Meyrowitz writes about boundaries: “communities are defined by their boundaries. And with every change in boundaries comes a new form of inclusion and exclusion, a new pattern of sharing and lack of sharing of experience” (Meyrowitz 62). As technologies are changing, we are required to make a new set of appropriate boundaries. Meyrowitz brings up the point that times are changing, our leaders are acting more like the person next door, and this is confusing to children because there are fewer professional boundaries.

With social media being used in school the issue of privacy comes into play. On social media websites like Facebook, a person’s whole life is exposed because it is hard to hide personal information. Schools also feel that it is inappropriate for students and teachers to be friends on Facebook because their “back-stage” life is exposed. Teachers in the past have set poor examples on social media websites by posting pictures with drugs and alcohol or by making comments on sexual photographs (Preston).

Schools in Michigan are now enforcing policies that punish teachers for posting inappropriate pictures of personal drug and alcohol usage on social media websites. Jon Felske, a superintendent for Muckegon’s public school says, “We wanted to have a policy that encourages interaction between our students and parents and teachers.” He later added, “That is how children learn today and interact. But we wanted to do it with the caveat: keep work work—and keep private life your personal life” (Preston). In Chicago, an



elementary school teacher took a photo of her seven-year-old student's hair, and posted in on Facebook making fun of the student (Schachter 32). This is an example of how social media sites blur the boundary between a teacher's professional life and their home life. "We try to impress on folks not to post anything you wouldn't want on the front page of The New York Times," said Vincent Mustaro, a Connecticut Association of Boards of Education member, said (33).

Social media can be misused, but it can also be a great teaching tool in school. It is all about setting proper limitations. "I think the future is fairly bright and that we'll harness and make sense out of social media," says David Jakes, coordinator of instructional technology and information services at Glenbrook South High School (Schachter 32). This relates to what Henry Jenkins discusses in his book, *Convergence Culture*. Jenkins says, "None of us really know how to live in this era of media convergence, collective intelligence, and participatory culture." This is referring to the idea that as time changes and media changes we have to adapt to it (Jenkins 176). Jenkins writes about how new changes in technology produce anxiety, and uncertainties amongst us until we know how to use it. The modern age almost fears a world without gatekeepers, in which publication power is no longer in the hands of corporate media (176). Jenkins sees how social media can be used to provide better education amongst our youth, and he talks about how young writers strengthen their voice and improve their writing by using blogs to publish their work and receive feedback (Jenkins 177).

### *How Social Media Can Be Used*

With technology use expanding and social media being used as a wonderful tool for classmates to communicate about schoolwork online, why shouldn't teachers be able to use it as well? Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest have many benefits in the school, whether it is student to student communication, teacher to parent, or teacher to student. Most students currently use social media websites like

Facebook to start a group message for projects. Facebook allows a group to talk about what needs to be done for a project and what times they can work on it next, even when they are not all together. Sara Wotton, the Assistant Principal of Oyster River High School, uses tools like Facebook to make groups for different clubs and organizations the school has to offer. By having a student make the group, Wotton can be part of it but does not have to be friends with the students so her professionalism level is never compromised (Wotton). When it comes to parent to teacher communication, Principal Michael Roe uses it to post pictures. Roe made a school Facebook page to post pictures of school events because he felt it was a great way for parents to stay connected. Roe said, “Parents could look at pictures and also know that their kids were safe” (Schachter 28).

Schools can also use Facebook as a way to post upcoming events so that teachers, parents and students can all easily see the events. Approximately six hundred million people have a Facebook page and more school districts are joining all the time (Schachter 27). In Iowa, first grade school teacher Erin Schoening, made a Facebook page for her classroom. She ‘friended’ and accepted friend requests for any parents, grandparents and family members of her students. Schoening then used Facebook as a tool to communicate by posting pictures of activities they did in class or upcoming events such as, “Tomorrow we are editing our non-fiction books.” Schoening had to use a permission slip signed by all the guardians of her students for the Facebook page to work (Schachter 28).

Twitter is another social media site that can be used in school. Most schools have Twitter pages so that they can have students, faculty, and parents ‘follow’ them without having to ‘follow’ anyone back. Schools use this tool to post upcoming events. “I use Twitter primarily to share good news” says Superintendent Terry Grier (Schachter 30). Oyster River’s Athletic Director, Corey Parker, said social media is a good way to communicate with the student body about sports events. He recently made a Twitter page

where he can post information about game cancellations and time changes, as well as posting scores of the games. “The Twitter handle that we have here is strictly a one-way line of communication” says Parker. He adds, “It’s simply a way of us being able to communicate to the community of our happenings of the athletic department” (Parker). Nicholas Provenzano is an English teacher who uses social media in a positive way to communicate with his students. He will post a question on a media site like Twitter and have students respond. He notices that kids who do not always raise their hand in class willingly post a response. He uses this as a tool to make the shy students more comfortable talking about a subject (Hatmaker).

Facebook and Twitter are two popular social media sites that have been used in the classroom, and more recently Pinterest has been introduced to the school setting. Pinterest is a visual website where users can organize things they like, as well as get creative ideas. Todd Fuller, Missouri State Teacher Association Spokesman, explained how Pinterest is becoming a new tool in schools and the work place. “You can pin project ideas, or lesson plans and have peers look at them” says Fuller. It is a great way to bounce ideas off of each other (Fuller). Other websites such as, “Facebook, MySpace and Second Life are the most obvious examples of social networking sites populated by users participating in a mish-mash of cultural exchanges” (Watson 14).

As social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest are being used, schools can start to see the beneficial outcomes. Although there is a list of ways social media is misused in school settings, it is better to teach students how to use it right than try to ban it.

### *Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media*

There are many positive ways to use social media as a way to interact between teachers and students. Social media allows the message to spread rapidly. At Tahquitz High School, “Michael Roe

communicates daily with more than 5,000 parents, students, teachers and staff members via his own Facebook page” (Schachter 28). With so many users looking at his posts, the message spreads faster than if it was posted in the newspaper: the message is directly reaching the targeted audience. Superintendent at Houston Independent School District, Terry Grier says, “We have the tendency in urban settings to believe that [school information] shows up in the newspapers, but only about 8 percent of our population will see it there.” Grier later adds, “The more ways you can find to communicate the more transparent you and your district can be” (30).

Social media is an efficient way to interact. “We seek to provide our students with the opportunities that multimedia learning can provide—which is why we should allow and encourage the appropriate and accept, the use of these powerful resources,” states schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott. It reaches kids because they actually use it. Middle school kids do not check their e-mail, but instead use social media websites to socialize after school. If a teacher posts something on the website it would reach the kids at a much quicker and more effective rate (Davis).

Social media is more effective than old school communication today because kids and parents check social media websites daily. David Cawthorne the district’s technology director in Weymouth, Massachusetts said, “In our environment, we feel these communication tools are the best way to reach 99 percent of the people we’re trying to reach. Parents are coming to the evening activities, so why muddy the waters if the system is working?” (Schachter 30). Some schools pay to have software that would work the same as a social media, and kids do not check it nearly as often. “In the past, I had kept a blog to communicate with families, and I noticed that no one was reading it,” said Erin Schoening, “But there are so many people on Facebook and it is so accessible that the information is right in your face” (30). Social networks like Ning.com are used as a way to communicate without the personal information or distractions that social networks like Facebook have (Watson 14). Companies like Moodle and Blackboard

are trying to create social networks that can be focused on educational use only. The problem is if social aspects and distractions of Facebook are taken away, the students will be less interested in checking it (14).

The goal of education is not just to have the students accumulate facts, but to mold the students into proper citizens. The idea behind a democratic society is that everyone's ideas are heard and everyone's opinion matters. The Internet and social media websites gives good citizens the ability to express themselves if it is used properly. Schools should not ban social media, but instead teach it in a positive way, so students learn to express themselves appropriately.

Teachers and staff members have used social media websites in a positive way, but it has been misused time and time again. Teachers are also using social media sites negatively to grow closer to their students in an intimate way. School teacher Amy Bass Jackson used social media to become close with her 8th grade male student. After growing close she convinced this 14 year-old boy to have sexual intercourse with her. She is currently being held at the Bulloch County Jail being charged with aggravated child molestation, three counts of child molestation, one count of statutory rape, and more (Sanders). This is becoming a problem because teacher and student relationships are able to advance more online. According to The New York Times in cases where the teacher-student relationship becomes sexual, the communication started with digital or electronic conversations. Charol Shakeshaft, chairwoman of the Department of Educational Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University, expresses her thoughts about this subject: "My concern is that it makes it very easy for teachers to form intimate and boundary-crossing relationships with students"(Preston).

Weymouth school district was concerned about teachers and students being 'friends' on social media websites. They saw the contact as unprofessional, and started to question why teachers feel the need to establish online relationships with students by

‘friending’ them (Schachter 28). Maeve L Gavagan, an English teacher at the district’s High School of Art and Design, says she believes that it is not right to accept a friend request from a student, but she also thinks it is wrong to deny a friend request, because the act of denying a student can have just as big of an impact on their life (Davis).

With any new technology there are going to be positive outcomes and consequences. In order to be great educators we cannot ignore social media but instead we need to harness it so we can improve how we teach and learn. As long as we re-establish boundaries to keep everyone safe, there should be no reason not to use social media in schools.

### *Different Policies that Justify Social Media In Schools*

As social media blurs professional boundaries in the classroom, governments are taking action. Missouri wrote a bill in 2011 banning any social media relationship between teachers and students (Sehgal). Missouri Governor Jay Nixon signed legislation repealing the bill that limited online communication between students and teachers because it was infringing free-speech rights (Mo. Repeals Law Limiting Teacher-Student Messaging). The way the law was written stated that teachers should not participate in social-networking sites even for personal use. Todd Fuller, who is the Missouri State Teacher Association Spokesman, says, “there will still be districts out there that say you can’t use Facebook no matter what, or you can’t use this type of social media regardless of whether you’re using it in the classroom or outside the classroom,” (Mo. Repeals Law Limiting Teacher-Student Messaging). This law did not end up passing because it would have been infringing on teachers’ freedom (Davis).

Since the law did not pass, Congress told schools they would have to make their own policies regarding social media use in school. There have been several different approaches to solving this problem. School policies range from banning social me-

dia sites altogether to progressively allowing them, says Vincent Mustaro (Schachter 33). Mustaro would advise teachers not to ‘friend’ students; he believes that most problems relating to social media in schools start when the teacher and the student become friends on a social network. Mustaro strongly believes that banning student-teacher friending is the best policy in place (33). Teachers in a school in New York City express their feelings towards student-teacher interactions via social media on a school website. They posted, “Our policy says that faculty and students should use school-sponsored online spaces to communicate. This means e-mail, Moodle, blogs, and wikis. Creating appropriate boundaries seems reasonable to me” (Ishizuka).

The state of Texas made new rules that state the educator must “refrain from inappropriate communication with a student.” This includes phone calls, text messages, e-mails, blogging, or any other social media (Texas Ethics Code Cyberspace-Ready). In New York City new guidelines have been released that prohibit students and teachers from being ‘friends’ on social media websites like Facebook and Twitter. Instead teachers are asked to create a school e-mail account (separate from their personal account) where they can contact and talk to students, which the school can monitor (Davis). Other policies state that if teachers want to use social media for school purposes they need to seek approval from the principal or supervisor. This way the school can manage security and have clear standards of what is and is not socially acceptable in a school setting (Schachter 33).

More schools are using policies where teachers have to explain the educational value of using social media in order to get approval for use (Schachter, 28). Policies have also been implemented where teachers would be responsible for monitoring student activity and deleting posts that are inappropriate if social media was being used. It would also be up to the teacher to make sure that the media site would be safe and students would not reveal their identity or any information that could be used by a predator (33).

Students are going to use social media regardless of whether it is in the classroom. “Social networking has become part of the fabric of teen life, and online educators are starting to harness the phenomenon as a way to provide greater socialization opportunities within the educational framework” (Watson 14). No school should disregard social media because of negative outcomes. Instead schools should learn how to incorporate it into classrooms with guidelines to keep kids out of any harm.

*Social Media Is Doing More Good than Harm*

Jacob Needleman writes about how individuals have the right to express themselves on what they consider to be true. This connects to social media due to the way social media is used as a tool to express oneself. Needleman’s idea is that freedom of speech and freedom of thought are directly linked, and together their ultimate goal would be finding out the ideal truth. Needleman is saying that social media sites could be used as a tool to develop a sense of citizenship, if they are used appropriately. Social media can also be used for empty or meaningless chatter. It depends on the rules and regulations of social media in an educational setting if it can be used to achieve Needleman’s goal of using it for growth of a proper citizen or if it is simply un-beneficial (Needleman 25).

The best policies allow teachers to use social media as a way of interacting with their students, while keeping students safe. It is the school’s responsibility to teach students how to use social media appropriately. The same idea applies to sex education; if we do not teach the youth how to use proper practice correctly, how else are they going to learn? By banning social media altogether then no one is educating youth on the positive ways it can be used in society. “If we let students get all the way through high school without responsibly being able to use these tools, we’re doing them a disservice,” said Trevor Timmons (Schachter 33). The role of educators is about cultivating and creating thoughtful citizens, and social media has given educators new opportunities to allow this process to happen.



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# Shooting the Sh\*t

THEODORE BROWN

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From the ancient school of Athens, the crowded campfires of the Wild West, and to the casual couch gatherings of our current day, men have been trying to impress each other since... well, the dawn of man. Identifying with one another through means of storytelling, contradicting one another with bold (and often vulgar) statements, and using comedy and knowledge alike to entertain, all aid in the embodiment of male-specific communication. By analyzing these interactions through a cultural perspective – how background and a common past mold communication – and comparing them to the interactions of the opposite gender, scholars are given the ability to look deeper into the reasons why men talk, joke, love, and fight the way they do.

In this essay I will illuminate the ways in which the male identities to both the individual and the group as they are shaped through several discursive practices and new theories considering differences between the genders. These two concepts will be applied to a fresh, modern transcript of male-specific conversation, reveal a new take on differences between men and women, and portray the social implications these differences have. After recording, transcribing, and analyzing a casual conversation I had between my friends , I came to the conclusion that language (as many have said before) is the grand conveyer of emotion, identity, and therefore the creator of social standing.

Using scholarly sources to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity, the importance of narrative, and the performative nature of gender, data gathered from prime subjects in the field of male-to-male communication, and a detailed analysis of these (and other) concepts, it will be shown that men (and women) exist in a league of their own; they are not separated solely by genetics, but by a social division, propelled by language and the management of identity.

*Literature Review*

It is common for both men and women to use personal accounts and experiences to portray themselves and others (Shaw & Edwards), but these accounts may be interpreted differently by different genders. According to three recent studies, men present gender-typed selves in their narratives (Shaw & Edwards), they do not perform nonverbal communication skills as well as women (Briton & Hall), and they even exist within their own exclusive social class (Connell & Messerschmidt). Another study, that uses Internet communication to observe gender, suggests that it is performative and continually constructed rather than biologically inherited, that speech acts analyzed by traditional gender ideologies are oversimplified because gender can be expressed in so many ways (Rodino). Despite the fact that gender is performative (Rodino) and evolving alongside culture (Cameron), that its definition is changing over time, men still gender-type themselves when presenting face, “the view of self a person seeks to uphold in an interaction,” (Tracy,16), and because of this, they must exist within a separate social class. They see and depict themselves as fundamentally different than women.

Exercising the use of narrative to present one’s self to others is a form of communication that begins early in life. We don’t only present ourselves through narrative, but also those whom we know, our friends, family, and even our foes. The purpose of a study done by the University of Texas at Arlington (Shaw & Edwards) was to examine how one’s perception of self is communicated to others through story, in this case, to a friend. They found that the self is accurately represented through personal narrative, along with the view of other’s, which aligned with the other’s notion of self.

This concept is elaborated in another analysis done by Shaw. However, in this second article, (Shaw & Edwards) narrative and its portrayal of identity are examined by the juxtaposition of their usage by males and females. After giving 100 men and

women (44 male, 56 female) a self-description questionnaire, and comparing those questionnaires to stories about themselves “that almost everyone who knows you has heard you tell,” (Shaw & Edwards 57) the conclusion was made that both groups have similar, positive self-concepts, but their narratives display a sense of self that parallels pre-conceived attitudes toward gender.

Both men and women use nonverbal communication skills frequently. In a study of over 400 participants done by Northeastern University (Briton & Hall), women were believed to be more animated, involved, and skilled with their nonverbal behaviors than men; men were believed to be more loud, interruptive, and anxious. The study asked its participants to “rate twenty hypothetical men and women on how frequently or well they performed twenty nonverbal behaviors or skills” (79). Among the behaviors and skills men were believed to exhibit more were stammering, having restless feet and legs, and using basic mitigation markers: conversational devices used to create indirectness (Tracy 138).

Most definitions and ideas surrounding gender present it as pre-performed, assigned genetically – a perpetuator of myths concerning the stereotypes of gender. In a study comparing face-to-face to Internet mediated conversations between men and women (Rodino) these definitions are critiqued, and it is suggested that gender is something one does rather than something one is born into. The singularity and pervasiveness of language in online interaction permits outside observers to see what speech constitutes as “male” and “female,” without actually having the knowledge of the participants sex in real-life, and how those constitutions have changed over time.

Cameron provides a similar observation in reference to the fluidity of gender in today’s world. She proposes that “men and women do not live on different planets, but are members of cultures in which a large amount of discourse about gender is constantly circulating. They do not only learn, and then mechanically reproduce, ways of speaking ‘appropriate’ to their own sex; they

learn a much broader set of gendered meanings... and produce their own behavior in the light of those meanings” (429).

By applying the concept of hegemonic masculinity to an analysis of men in society, the feminist study done by Huddersfield University (Hearn) concludes that men are not just members of a gender group, but also a social category, defined by their collective and individual dominance of social practices. Consequently, women too must belong to an exclusive social category: a class defined by, according to this article, the influence of men.

The definitions and opinions centered on gender and how it is conveyed are changing, but the ways in which both men and women recognize and display their notions of gender remain stagnant. A recently transcribed recording of a group of young men will help illustrate this truth.

### *Data and Methods*

In an attempt to capture the pinnacle of male-specific communication, I videotaped over two hours of sole-male interactions set in a college dorm living room. After looking over the footage, I selected a three-minute excerpt to transcribe and analyze. The excerpt hosts six characters: James, Rob, Mac, Will, Pat, and Burt (myself) – a group of close friends doing nothing more than “shooting the shit.”

Through the application of discourse analysis to extract meaning from this transcript, the reliance on the cultural perspective to understand and examine that meaning, and the use of scholarly sources to categorize and fully develop the implications this meaning has, I will explain how male-specific language molds identity, and how identity creates social factions.

### *Analysis*

First, we must take into account three key aspects of the

cultural perspective necessary to arrange the building blocks of identity: speech community, speech codes, and interpersonal ideologies (Tracy), all of which are developed by participants in a discussion, and reveal something about themselves. A speech community is the common method of diction used by members of a specific group or community, whereas speech codes are the rules used and ways in which conversation within a certain speech community is carried out.

- 36. Mac: ((laughs))
- 37. Rob: Um [no]
- 38. Will: [How are they the same?!]
- 39. James: No dude you got the [boat]
- 40. Mac: [Why is] everyone yelling!?
- 41. ((everyone laughs))
- 42. Burt: Why are we [yelling!]
- 43. James: [Listen] to me!
- 44. ((everyone laughs))

In this particular excerpt the quality of prose doesn't exactly knock you off your chair. What it does do is categorize and bring to light the way in which this crowd talks. As the friends gradually raise their voices, begin to yell, and laugh hysterically (lines 41 and 44), they inadvertently place themselves in a speech community generally associated with young men (Briton; Hall) – rambunctious, interruptive, and often profane. The reasons why they talk in this manner, or their interpersonal ideologies, are to amuse and captivate interest.

But language isn't just something that describes the world or makes someone chuckle. Every time you say something it transmits feeling, it can even bring men to action, and has done so in both the office and the battlefield. This is the underlying philosophy of speech acts, defined as "the social meaning of a short segment of talk." (Tracy 64). However, these utterances, comments, statements, and replies also broadcast a truth about one's self.



4. Burt: I do not wanna watch Friday Night Lights.
5. Mac: [((laughs))]
6. James: Chakeev-chavvhhh
7. Burt: We've all seen every episode what's the point?=  
8. James: I haven't! (1.0)
9. ((everyone laughs))
10. Pat: [James hasn't!]
11. Mac: [James hasn't!]=
12. Pat: James hasn't!=  
13. Mac: James has not seen the episodes! You're depriving him of his natural rights.=
14. Burt: Watching anything with James is a horror show
15. James: [hoo-hoo-hah-hah]
16. Burt: Cause all it is is racist jokes and (2.0) I don't know what else.

In the passage shown above Burt argues with Mac about what they are going to watch on TV. His first remark in line 4 relies on the perlocutionary force, what a statement does, and is the catalyst for the rest of this bit of conversation. The remark is expressive for it articulates Burt's opinion, and it is declarative for it changes the state of something – before he said that, they may have very well ended up watching Friday Night Lights. This announcement shows that he is both opinionated and slightly controlling, it reveals something about his identity, and follows the guidelines of stereotypical male communication by asserting dominance (Hearn).

Another example of the male pursuit of authority can be brought to light in this analysis by stressing the significance of interaction structures: the preset rules for properly communicating in a certain setting (Tracy). In the first excerpt of transcript analyzed in this section (specifically, line 43), as well as multiple times throughout its entirety, James pleads with his friends to listen to him recall an account of an experience he had in class. However, the other five men do not pay attention to him and constantly interrupt him mid-story. Like Burt did before in line 4, the entire group

is now declaring power over James. If these male-specific traits were exhibited in a normal social setting, non-males would be confused, possibly offended, and lead to believe they were observing members of a separate social class. (Hearn)

As expressed by Shaw, narrative is an accurate account of one's perception of self. In another article, Shaw & Edwards went on to say that although these accounts match personal conceptions of self, they are gender-typed. Male's narratives "presented the characteristics of being brave, capable, tough, smart, strong, and wild," while females "told narratives that presented themselves as able, active proud and responsible." (59) Below is an example of male narrative that, despite its crude theme, aptly portrays characteristics within the genre.

69. James: [No no no] I'm talking about I'm talking about my class in class today my professor handed us out an activity we had to do and the scenario he's like do it yourself and then team up with your groups and figure out like what like differences you had and what similarities and figure out the scenario so the scenario was that there was a huge like nuclear war

70. Will: [((coughs))]

71. James And there was only like fifteen no fourteen people alive in a bomb [shelter]

72. Mac:

[((laughs))]

73. James: and you had to kill seven of [them]

74. Mac: [what?]

75. James: and they range so you had to kill seven off. And they -

76. Burt: like Noah's Ark. =

77. James: Right

78. [((everyone laughs))]

79. James: And they range they range in age and in color

and in like religion [and shit  
so] (1.0) I killed

80. Burt:

[yup yup]

81. James: The Jews, the blacks and the retards.

82. [((everyone laughs))]

In line 69 James finally gets to use the power of narrative to connect with and entertain his friends. By recounting his experience in class he establishes a common ground among the conversation participants for they can all relate to university life. The fact that none of the other participants were with James while he was in class results in the story being told through a “teller-recipient” medium – a feature of narrative where only one person recites the story while others listen (Tracy). Being incredibly vulgar and well, racist, (line 81) enables James to also be humorous. Being wild, and in his eyes possibly tough, James classifies his own tale as tailored to the gender-typed definition of male-specific narratives (Shaw & Edwards). Telling this story served two important functions: it did relational work, something that brings the narrator closer to his or her listener; and showed that men’s self-presentations, administered through personal recollections, really do abide by traditional definitions of gender.

When people communicate they use person-references, which are unavoidable. Whether you’re calling someone by a nickname – multiple times throughout the entirety of the transcript Rob is referred to as “Maxwell,” his last name – or formally addressing them using their marital name, you are using a person reference. One of the most prevalent person-references is the word “dude,” a slang term used by men from coast to coast to address each other. Although in recent years women too have been using the term, it is still recognized as a male-specific label. The magnitude of usage this small word gets in everyday conversation is both astounding and interesting; it is almost universal.

19. James: Dude!=

20. Burt: other obscenities,=
21. James: Dude oh my god! Stop! =
22. Mac: Where's my car?! =
23. James: Listen! Aghhhh! I just farted it out.

In line 19 the word “dude” is used to address an entire group rather than one specific person. It shows that, 1), the user is on a friendly basis with the other people in the group; 2), that the user is most likely a male between the ages of twelve and thirty-five, and 3), that the user may belong to a specific, male social group. The way an individual verbally labels another reveals a lot about that individual's identity, as well as their relationship with others. Men take great pride in their names, as well as the names others call them.

### *Discussion*

These short exchanges aren't just mere examples of banter, but rather windows into the realm of male-specific identity. As shown in the previous pages, men talk in a certain way. They use inside jokes and strange references to make a point. They make fun of each other for entertainment. And they argue, sometimes relentlessly. The sections of transcript cited show that identity is shaped through the things you say, whether it's yelling at the top of your lungs, calling a friend “dude,” or debating what's best to watch on TV. Furthermore, it is this identity that has borne a social rift between genders. Men and women communicate in different ways, and although these differences may be slight, they reside in century old conceptions, regardless of new gender theories.

As far as the implications this analysis has proposed, it seems as if the two genders have always existed in separate social classes, and until less than a hundred years ago, they did. From playground chases to the exchange of numbers at a bar, the sexes have been opposing and confusing each other for ages.

The limitations and difficulties of this research were raised by the task of finding appropriate sources that fit with the thesis I was trying to promote, and the accurate representation of these sources and the theories they proposed. If given more time, I would have developed a more foreign and uncharted argument instead of relying on existing theories and beliefs to form my own.

You may create your own identity, but the way you perceive yourself is often different from the perceptions of others. Identity isn't thinking you're a stoner or a jock or a joker or even a man, its displaying and conveying the traits of that stereotype through language, the great communicator. Speech communities, codes, and interpersonal ideologies set up a foundation for identity because they place people within a specific group. Discursive practices build upon this foundation, they give it walls and a roof; they are the medium for understanding self and the self of others. All of these factors determine social standing, but as long as you communicate effectively, you can convince anyone of almost anything, and subsequently exist in whatever social class you like.

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# Small Businesses and The Internet

RACHEL STRAUSS

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## *Introduction*

For some, it is hard to imagine life before the Internet's existence. It is difficult to remember a time when communicating with someone meant writing a letter or picking up the phone, when shopping meant driving to the store and trying on clothes, and when reading a book meant going to a library and sifting through hundreds of index cards. All of these activities have changed significantly since the emergence of the Internet. In this day and age, communicating with someone is now done through e-mail or social networking, shopping now means turning on your computer and buying an item with the click of a button, and reading a book has gone from navigating through torn and worn pages to pressing the "page" button on a digital hand-held device. All of these changes, which have happened in the past ten or twenty years, have drastically changed the way in which people live their daily lives. For most individuals, this transition into the online world has been easy, but for many small, locally-owned businesses, the invention of the Internet has posed some challenges in the transition to move their company online. Most small businesses have benefitted from the emergence of the Internet, as it allows them to have a bigger presence in the online market place. However, the transition into the online realm has forced many small businesses to change not only their business strategy, but also the direction of their business all together.

## *A Brief History of the Internet and Business*

Before the advent of the Internet, small businesses operated in a very different and simple manner. Businesses created their customer base from either word-of-mouth or print advertising, they connected with their customers through mail or telephone, and they expanded their market presence by establishing more brick and

mortar stores across local regions. Small businesses were a place where people could build connections and relationships by speaking with the owners or workers of the company directly. These businesses had one or two phone numbers that could be found in the phone book and the hours of operation were only posted on the storefront window. Customers would make their decision whether to purchase an item by physically going into the store and using, touching, or seeing the product for themselves. Yes, there was competition from the big companies in the industry, but even their reach was limited due to the number of stores they had and the amount of storage space on their shelves or in their warehouse. As the Internet began to explode in the 1990's, the world of business began to change significantly.

Though packet switching and e-mail had been around since the 1970's and 80's, Internet registration began for .com, .net, and .org sites in the early 1990's. In 1993, the first commercial web browser, Netscape, was created. At this time, the Internet was not nearly as accessible and easy as it is today, and only a handful of users were versed enough in the Internet lingo to be able to interpret the language of the web. However, when JavaScript was created in 1995 and the dot-com revolution began, it opened the floodgates to millions of companies and individuals. People began registering their own domains and establishing a presence in the World Wide Web (Timeline). For small businesses, though, it was not truly until the invention of Amazon.com in 1994 that businesses began to suffer because of the Internet. It started with the book industry, as Amazon.com quickly took over the market selling a wide variety of books for a cheap price. eBay was created shortly after in 1995, allowing Internet users to interact with the web and sell items using an auction-like technique. eBay's creator, Pierre Omidyar, thought that through this online auctioning website, "the Net could be used to create a perfect marketplace – where everyone was on equal footing and the marketplace set the price" (Maney). This idea of equal opportunity on the web may well have been a look into the future of the Internet. Over the years, the Internet has morphed from a more capitalistic enterprise first



dominated by true programmers and techies and then by big corporations finally becoming a platform in which anybody who has access to it has the opportunity to be a part of the World Wide Web.

As Yochai Benkler points out in his book *The Wealth of the Networks*, because of this opportunity, individuals now have more of an ability to compete with the big industries online through cultural freedom. Cultural freedom is the idea that through peer production and social networking, individuals have more opportunities to create meaningful materials by re-interpreting, re-making, and re-using existing ideas and resources for their own personal use. Benkler explains this rise of the “participatory folk culture” against the industrial production system and points out how the traditional top-down method of capitalism is now turning into a more bottom-up, grassroots production technique. He says that with the emergence of non-market models, “Our ability to navigate the cultural environment and make it our own, both through creation and through active selection and attention, has increased to the point of making a qualitative difference (Benkler 276). This explains how the economic structures of successful businesses have changed from a centralized, market driven model to a de-centralized one where just about anybody has the chance to participate in the on-line marketplace.

### *Small Business Adapt to The Internet*

Many small businesses like Portsmouth Book and Bar in downtown Portsmouth, New Hampshire have taken the approach posed by Benkler in reaction to the emergence of the Internet. Though the advent of the Internet may not have necessarily helped their business, Benkler’s grassroots approach has helped the owners of Portsmouth Book and Bar create their very own business model. The book industry as a whole has been feeling pressure to change their business model for many years. It all started with the emergence of big corporations like Borders and Barnes and Noble. These big corporations took a huge majority of small bookstores’ customer base by offering a wider selection of books at reduced

prices. “In 1994 Americans bought \$19 billion worth of books,” says Steve Wasserman, a journalist for *The Nation*, and “Barnes & Noble and the Borders Group had by then captured a quarter of the market, with independent stores struggling to make up just over another fifth and a skein of book clubs, supermarkets and other outlets accounting for the rest” (Wasserman). Then, as small businesses were already struggling, came the creation of Amazon.com, an online bookstore that sold hundreds of thousands of books spanning across all genres that could be purchased in the comfort of one’s own home.. The effects of the Amazon.com franchise are still causing change; two decades ago there were 4,000 independently owned bookstores across America, and in 2011 that number was reduced to a mere 1,900 (Wasserman).

However, Portsmouth Book and Bar may have found the formula needed to revive independently owned bookstores and restore them to their former glory. Owners David Lovelace, John Strymish, and John Petrovato opened Portsmouth Book and Bar in November 2012 using the idea of providing local beer and used books in one place. Lovelace and his co-owners recognized the struggling book industry and made the decision to fuse two of their favorite past times together to shake up the idea of a used books store. “We’re certainly more than a musty used bookshop,” says Lovelace, “We want to create a scene with readings, music, and books, and conversation,” and they did just that (Domingos). Portsmouth Book and Bar allows its customers to come in, grab a stack of books, order a local microbrew or glass of wine, listen to live music, and enjoy the wonders of reading. It seems that in this day and age n which the Internet has replaced not only large businesses like Borders Books (forced into bankruptcy in 2011) but small ones as well, a creative and innovative business plan is necessary to keep the brick and mortar businesses alive.

Similarly, Camp Wigwam, a boys summer camp located in southwestern Maine, has seen the effects of the Internet on small businesses and has accepted and adapted to the hurdles and changes the Internet has posed. Although the traditions, the songs,

and much of the original architecture is still a part of Wigwam's presence, many things have changed since Wigwam's beginnings in 1910. Like similar small businesses, Camp Wigwam has been forced to make their presence known online. In our ever-changing and evolving tech savvy society, any business without some sort of online presence is at a huge disadvantage when it comes to marketing, advertising, and communicating with existing or new customers.

Camp Wigwam's owner and director, Bob Strauss, made the decision about eight years ago to move the business into the online realm. He established the camp's very own website that gives campers and parents the ability to get information about the upcoming summer, request camper packets, download health forms, and even apply to attend. In addition to a webpage, Wigwam has also developed a presence on many social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook. Through these sites, Wigwam is able to keep in touch with its campers and staff throughout the winter months and keep them updated on camp-related issues like regional reunions.

In addition to its own personal web pages, Camp Wigwam has also been able to expand their presence on other online platforms as well. Camp advising sites such as Choice Camps allows people to search for camps by entering in their desired criteria. Camp Ratingz is a website where campers and families can rate and post comments and opinions about particular camps, which has made the recruiting process a bit easier for directors like Bob Strauss. However, even though the advent of the Internet has allowed for small businesses to expand their customer base and presence in the market, Strauss admits that there are some associated disadvantages. He says that although the Internet does allow an expansion of customer and counselor base, you are not necessarily getting the same people you would if recruiting was solely based on word-of-mouth. He says that since there is not always a face-to-face interaction with the campers and parents, you may not know who you are getting when a camper signs up online. Strauss

says that, occasionally, he does not get the opportunity to visit the families in their home, so it can be harder to determine whether Camp Wigwam is a good fit for both the child and the parent(s). Overall, Strauss has become a huge proponent of the web, and though he realizes that the marketing techniques he uses now are much different than what his father taught him in the 1960's, he has seen the positive affects of the Internet in regards to the camping business. Strauss encourages other companies to make the move.

Both Camp Wigwam and Portsmouth Book and Bar have felt the effects of the Internet but in profoundly different ways. On the one hand, Camp Wigwam has accepted the positive changes that the Internet has brought in regards to marketing, communicating, and hiring, and has changed their business model around its emergence. Portsmouth Book and Bar has also recognized the changes the Internet has brought within the book industry by choosing to reject the notions that the book industry is controlled by big corporations and that books in the 21st century are meant to be read digitally. They have instead chosen to completely revive the struggling brick and mortar bookstores in a very creative manner to remind people of the comfort and satisfaction of turning the worn pages of an old leather bound book.

### *How to Cope With the Internet*

Although Camp Wigwam's online transition may have seemed easy, many companies have struggled to make their presence known on the web. Whether it be the company's lack of know-how or a lack of time and energy needed to maintain a website effectively, there are certainly instances in which companies may need a little help. Fortunately, there are websites and people that can help a struggling company. Move It Online (MIO) is a Washington-based non-profit organization that helps small businesses make the transition into the online realm. By connecting "tech-savvy youth" to small businesses, MIO allows for small businesses to expand to people outside of their local customer base

by gaining the knowledge needed to build and sustain an online presence (MIO).

Though this strategy may work for some companies with intangible products like Camp Wigwam, there are other instances where it does not make sense for businesses. For businesses like Portsmouth Book and Bar, who are competing against the Web in terms of their actual product, they have been forced to change their entire business strategy. This change, however, may be for the better. For Portsmouth Book and Bar owners, evading the challenges posed by the Internet allowed them to create a truly unique business, which makes a digital, corporate takeover nearly impossible. They have not only found a business that they truly stand by and care for, but have provided for the people of southern New Hampshire a place of comfort and belonging where people can forget about the Internet and truly enjoy a good read.

### *Program or Be Programmed*

As the Internet becomes more powerful and gains more significance, small businesses like Camp Wigwam and Portsmouth Book and Bar are realizing the changes that have come with the recent explosion of the Internet. They have weighed the advantages and the disadvantages of the Internet, and although it may change the company's business plan, most businesses feel that the good outweigh the bad. Author Douglas Rushkoff points out in his book, *Program or be Programmed*, the importance of learning how to program and code. He says that "if we don't learn to program, we risk being programmed ourselves," meaning that people in this day in age are at a disadvantage if they are not educated and experienced in coding literacy and the inner workings of the web (Rushkoff 139). At this point in time, with the Internet playing such a dominant role in our culture, it is very important for the success of small businesses to recognize the opportunities that the Internet possesses and to take advantage of those opportunities. For some, it may mean establishing a presence in the online realm to expand their customer base, but for others, like Portsmouth

Book and Bar, the expansion of the Internet in today's society may mean something different. It may mean recognizing and learning about the Web, but finding a different and more creative approach rather than being "programmed" by the big, capitalistic companies in the market. Although it may be time consuming and difficult at first, establishing a unique business plan or becoming fluent in the language of the Internet are ways in which small businesses can more easily succeed in our digitally dominated world.

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# Smartphones: The Freedom that Binds

KIMBERLY HEDE

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## *Introduction: The superhuman stress of smartphones*

Much like the ultra-equipped utility belt is to Batman; our multi-functional smartphones make us feel as if we were superhuman. With countless apps, 24/7 access to the Internet, music, and our friends and family, it seems that with every release of a new operating system we are quickly approaching a world of constant connectivity. Not long ago, in the days where we had to use a dial-up connection to check our e-mails or call our answering machines from a pay phone to see why a friend was running late, a world of instant accessibility seemed ideal. Smartphones have allowed us a connectivity that is unrivaled throughout the course of human history, but this accessibility has come at the cost of an ever-growing list of negative consequences.

Smartphones cause a wide range of problems, spanning from addiction to the device, to the dilution of worlds caused by integrating work and home life. These issues, along with many others, have caused some of us to wonder if smartphones have ceased to be beneficial to us, and are becoming impediments to our lives instead. The following pages will explore both the personal and professional challenges that smartphones are beginning to impose on us, and will offer insight into the root of these problems as well as possible solutions.

## *A brief history of the rapid advancement of cell phones*

Historically, humans have striven to become better connected to one another, with the cell phone being one of the most significant advancements. Although the use of cell phones dates back to the 1940s, they were not available for popular use until late in the twentieth century. The first generation (1G) network was introduced in the US in 1983, and was unable to keep up with the high volume of consumer demand despite the phone's bulk and



inefficiency.

From there, advancements in mobile phones became fairly rapid; it took less than a decade to develop the 2G network (introduced in 1991) and the 3G network was launched in 2001. However, it soon became clear that a 4G network would need to be created to withstand the increasing number of apps that demanded more bandwidth (Webdesign Depot).

Smartphones evolved alongside cellphones, but were not nearly as popular until fairly recently. The concept of combining computing and telephony was developed as early as 1973, but was not marketed to the public until 1994 (Webdesign Depot). Today there are dozens of companies offering cell phone service to the masses, with the majority of the power concentrated within a few very large companies. These service providers that are most dominant in the U.S. market are Verizon and AT&T who respectively have 104 million and 97.5 million subscribers, with Sprint Nextel in a distant third, with 51 million users (Taylor).

*Challenges with smartphones: could they be taking over our professional lives?*

As the popularity of smartphones increase, the competition among phone companies intensifies as they race to create the fastest, sleekest, coolest smartphone that will attract the most customers. As companies battle to come up with “the next big thing”, they create phones with unprecedented capabilities without considering all possible outcomes. Just as smartphones can be used to organize and access all aspects of our lives, they can consequently have negative effects on every facet of our lives as well. For instance, smartphones are impacting our professional lives as never before, extending the workday an additional seven hours per week (almost the length of another full day of work).

Smartphone users can be reached by friends via phone call, e-mail, or text message at any time and have the ability and expect-

tation to respond quickly. In the same way, smartphone users are demanded to reply to phone calls, e-mails, or text messages from an employer or client just as quickly. This has become an expectation of many employers, with many companies providing its employees with an iPhone or Blackberry so that they can always be reached. Leslie Perlow at the Families and Work Institute refers to the assumption that employees receiving e-mails or the like after hours should still feel obligated to respond instantly in what researchers refer to as the “cycle of responsiveness”. According to Perlow,

*When you, as a manager, send emails on Saturday morning. [Your] team then picks up the cues, and they are always responding. Soon, the question of urgency becomes moot, because every missive demands an immediate response (Aarons-Mele).*

The cycle of responsiveness has become commonplace in many professions. In a recent study by an e-mail security company called Good Technology, researchers found that 80% of people continue to work even after leaving the office. Extending the workday by responding to phone calls and e-mails while at home has resulted in the average American working an additional month and a half of overtime annually. Although the study did find that 60% of people do extra work at home to stay organized, 31% reported that putting in extra hours while at home, in bed, and even in the middle of the night, was a result of being unable to stop themselves from checking their smartphones for work (Lyons).

Maggie Jackson, a CNN reporter, is another person that feels that smartphones are causing us to become “over-worked.” Since smartphones eliminate the boundaries of time and space that we previously encountered, we can telecommute from home at any time of the day or night. Jackson believes that by integrating work and home life with smartphones, we risk far more than just becoming over-worked. Instead, Jackson believes that we are ultimately diluting the quality of our home life and this carries some

serious personal and professional implications for all of us (Jackson).

As Nicholas Carr indicates in his book, *The Shallows: What the Internet is doing to Our Brains*, the Internet is similar to smartphones in that it causes us to lose our ability to pay deep attention and filter out distractions. According to Carr, this will eventually result in our brains becoming rewired to better thrive in a digital environment where superficial reading and learning as well as hurried thinking are promoted (116).

Similarly to Nicholas Carr, Jackson believes that we are ultimately ruining our ability to give something our complete and undivided attention, a capacity that both Carr and Jackson believe to be a “building block of intimacy, wisdom, and cultural progress” without which a healthy society cannot hope to exist (Jackson). This is a matter of attention, intention, and depth. In courting the always-on livelihood, we’re turning our backs on rich moments of full focus and absorption, in favor of restlessly darting back and forth between two or more complex streams of life. The integrity of a moment is lost when we unthinkingly blend different parts of our life (Jackson).

In other words, we are adapting to a more fast-paced and shallow way of consuming information, which will ultimately cause us to sacrifice our ability to become totally absorbed in thought, a capability Carr believes to be essential for members of a society.

*The challenge continues: is smartphone addiction taking control of our personal lives too?*

Since smartphones offer a constant stream of some type of information and an endless social connection, it is not surprising that an addiction to a smartphone has become a legitimate condition. In a recent poll of users of Gazelle.com, 65% of respondents said they could not live without their smartphone, with 40% admit-

ting that they would sacrifice bathing rather than go without their smartphone (Gilbert).

Smartphone addiction has become so prevalent that the term “nomophobia” has been invented to describe the fear of losing one’s phone. In a 2011 study published in the journal *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing*, researchers found that people were not so much addicted to the smartphone itself, but instead became addicted to “checking habits” associated with phone use (Davis).

These habits include checking for e-mails, news and social media updates in a repetitive and rapid fashion. Furthermore, these habits are often triggered by certain environmental conditions such as boredom, anxiety, and loneliness. As a result, the average smartphone user checks his phone 35 times per day for approximately 30 seconds each time (Laird).

An article about smartphone addiction on WebMD.com names interruption and distraction as two other negative side effects that come along with smartphone addiction. The article cites Nicholas Carr’s book, *The Shallows*, to explain how computer technology is abating our ability to concentrate deeply. In Carr’s research, he concluded that our addiction to smartphones and computer technology could be traced back to the primitive human urge to know everything going on around them (Davis).

Although Carr imagines that it was an instinct that meant survival for cavemen and women thousands of years ago, this desire has become a hindrance with smartphones. Carr believes this impulse is “one of the main reasons people tend to be so compulsive in their use of smartphones...they can’t stand the idea that there may be a new bit of information out there that they haven’t seen” (Davis).

According to Carr, “the smartphone, more than any other gadget, steals us from the opportunity to maintain our attention, to engage in contemplation and reflection, or even to be alone with

our thoughts” (Davis). Smartphones are the most serious offenders mostly due to their portability. It is true for most smartphone owners that their phone is with them virtually from the moment they wake up until they go to bed at the end of the day; even after they go to bed it is likely that their smartphone is within arm’s reach. The Huffington Post reports that 50% of Americans and 80% of 18-24 year olds sleep with their smartphone next to them (Gilbert). The fact that smartphones cause us to be less aware and more distracted in general is not just a side-effect of the device; instead, it is thought by some that smartphones were actually designed with the idea of interruption in mind. According to Alistair Croll, disruption is really an important “interface” that is more or less built into an app to ensure that its users are paying attention to it. “Services that interrupt well avoid disengagement, which is the worst thing that can happen to a startup.” To illustrate his point, Croll gives the example of checking Facebook, claiming that people do not usually think to themselves that they should check their Facebook, but instead are prompted to check it when a notification pops up (Croll).

*Conclusion: smartphone culture may not be as liberating as we thought*

At first glance, a smartphone would appear to be a democratizing and liberating technology. Given its continuous Internet connection and access to a myriad of apps, smartphones allow us to do almost anything we want. Time and space are no longer an impediment when connecting with others; with the telephone, text message, and e-mail capabilities of our smartphones, we can reach and be reached by anyone at any time. Although we may no longer be trapped by time and space, we are quickly becoming prisoners of the smartphones that initially seemed so liberating.

Our Founding Fathers were certainly not thinking about iPhones or Androids when writing the Constitution, but their ideas about what a democracy is comprised of should still be considered when determining a technology’s value. According to Jacob Needleman in his book, *The American Soul: Rediscovering the Wisdom of the*

Founders, the American form of democracy “was created to allow men and women to seek their own higher principle within themselves” (Needleman 7). In other words, the function of democracy was to provide citizens with a context in which they may develop their artistic faculties. This type of cultivation is a long-term learning process that requires substantial concentration and commitment (Healey).

Furthermore, Needleman argues that all of the rights given to us in the Constitution were based on an idea about human nature that requires us to be “responsible to something within ourselves that is higher than the all-too-human desires for personal gain and satisfaction.” Without these, Needleman claims, “the ideals of independence and liberty lose their power and truth. They become mere names that mask the ever-present tendency of nations and groups and individuals to seek their own external and short-term advantages” (10).

Needleman would classify the population’s addiction to smartphones as one of these external, short-term advantages. Smartphones serve the pursuit of self-interest above all else as they ultimately fulfill the desire to be accessible, connected members of society. However, this comes at the cost of constantly checking our smartphones for new information, causing us to become more distracted from our physical environment.

Existing in such a state of constant distraction prevents one from recognizing the Founders’ understanding of democracy as a cultural way of life, and therefore hinders the cultivation of the sense of self (Healey). Needleman would suggest that smartphones be reevaluated to better serve society’s pursuit of inner freedom over external freedom. According to Needleman, inner happiness comes along with the discovery of one’s “authentic self” which can be found by serving others. Without any inner meaning, democracy then becomes a “celebration of disorder and superficiality” (9).

*Opportunities to Rehabilitate Smartphone Addicts*

Similarly to Jacob Needleman's ideas of responsibility, Cliff Christians feels that a new philosophy needs to be implemented in creating technologies. In Christians' article from *The Society of Philosophy and Technology*, "A Theory of Normative Technology", he calls for the replacement of the current "narrow" concept of efficiency with a design philosophy where principles such as justice, openness, harmony, stewardship and discovery are honored. In this way, Christians believes that scientists, engineers and educators will invent without the restraints of profit or political power (131).

In regards to smartphone addiction, Christians would likely argue in favor of all members of society becoming what he refers to as "prophetic witnesses". In Christians' view, we all should realize that smartphones are being unacceptably worshipped as if they were a kind of modern god. To remedy this, Christians would suggest encouraging a technological process that emphasizes humanity and cultural continuity above all else (129).

Less conceptual ideas about breaking the "cycle of responsiveness" and curing the nation's smartphone addiction rests in individual action. WebMD.com recommends monitoring the feelings that are triggering each impulse to check your smartphone for updates as well as becoming more self-disciplined about not using your smartphone in certain situations (i.e. at the dinner table, with friends, or while driving) or at certain times of the day (i.e. between the hours of 9 pm and 8 am). In an experiment conducted by Leslie Perlow on a group of people from a consulting firm called The Boston Group, she found that taking regular "predictable time off" from their smartphones or PDAs resulted in "increased efficiency and collaboration, heightened job satisfaction, and better work-life balance" (Davis).

Although smartphone dependence is becoming an increasingly prevalent disease in today's society, Perlow offers a simple

and seemingly simple solution: turn off your phone. While ignoring the beeps and vibrations of a smartphone is certainly something that is more easily said than done, it seems that it is an obstacle that we must overcome. If we fail to do so, Jackson's fear of a diluted home life and Carr's prediction that we will lose the ability to pay deep attention and filter out distractions will eventually become the new reality.



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# Religion, Spirituality, and So You Think You Can Dance

KAYLA DOYLE

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With the continual growth of diversity in our nation and world, it is no surprise that religion and spirituality have developed in similar ways. Americans specifically have embraced new forms of diversified religion and spirituality. This has been most apparent not in traditional religious settings, but in our contemporary consumer culture today. Americans are turning away from established places of worship like churches and temples and beginning a pursuit to find what the individuals themselves are missing. People are looking to more nontraditional outlets to fill their spiritual void. The doubt and question of religion today has led many to open towards what it means to be religious or have faith. Many are beginning to ask the questions “Who am I?” or “What is my purpose?” This development of what is quest culture is visible in pop culture forms, and surprisingly, many people are searching for and discovering the answers that they are looking for in consumer culture and media today.

In the book *Spiritual Marketplace*, Wade Clark Roof explains this search for the self as “quest culture” and its effect on religion. The book was written in 1999, so it should be noted that this trend was first noticed about thirteen years ago. *So You Think You Can Dance* is a contemporary example of Roof’s theories. People are working to find a culture that can support this self-centered search, he says, and “Contemporary spiritual quests give expression to the search for unity of mind, body, and self”. People are beginning to look inward onto the self in order to fully develop that full sense of being or peace. Quest culture is described as “a time of considerable and often subtle transformation. One such subtlety is the growing attention to personal and spiritual well-being and the ferment surrounding whatever people take to be sacred”(Roof). He explains, “Voices to this effect are heard within

congregations of many differing faith traditions and in many other, seemingly less likely places, such as in self-help groups and at retreat centers; in motivational training sessions within corporations and businesses; in hospitals and medical schools, where they attend to the power of prayer and mediation; in popular books, films, and on radio and television talk shows engaging people to talk about their lives; and on the ever-expanding number of pages on the Internet devoted to spiritual growth” (Roof). One of the largest changes that quest culture has introduced is the increased focus on the self. Quest culture is driven by the idea that a person’s spiritual fulfillment is their own; it is personal and true to them. This transition and change is causing our spiritual consumerism market to develop and prosper. Television shows, music, clothing, and other consumer goods are being produced with this type of spirituality in mind.

The popular television show *So You Think You Can Dance* has been providing dancers with the opportunity to grow, find the self, and discover through a journey of dance for ten seasons. The competitive, reality dance show works to provide dancers of all styles with a personal, spiritual experience of growth and change. While it may not be obvious, *So You Think You Can Dance* is a perfect example of how secular media is now beginning to serve as a vehicle for its contestants’ and viewers’ spiritual quests.

*“Ryan and Ashleigh: A Journey Together”*

Ryan Di Lello was a contestant on *So You Think You Can Dance* during season six. Among the other contestants was Ryan’s wife Ashleigh Di Lello. For the season finale, the couple danced a very emotional and personal contemporary piece to the song “I’m There Too” by Michelle Featherstone. Travis Wall choreographed this romantic piece, which received very positive feedback from both the judges and the audience. The dance was choreographed specifically for Ryan and Ashleigh as a couple, and the dance ended with both contestants crying quietly on stage. “Dancing the Travis Wall contemporary piece with my wife Ashleigh in the fi-

nale of season six was the most memorable moments of my whole So You Think You Can Dance experience and continues to be one of the most memorable moments of our lives” Ryan says (Di Lello). It was clear that this performance was more than just a dance for Ryan and Ashleigh; it provided spiritual growth between them as a couple.

Neither Ryan nor Ashleigh entered the competition as a contemporary dancer. They auditioned for So You Think You Can Dance together, seeking to highlight their ballroom dance expertise. As many contestants do, Ryan said that he came to love contemporary dance and the emotion that comes along with it. By the end of the season, Ryan said the contemporary style of dance had exposed him to something new, and it had changed him personally as a dancer. “Neither of us are contemporary dancers, but it couldn’t have been a more perfect way to end the season and share the deep love and chemistry Ashleigh and I have” (Di Lello). Ryan adds that he and Ashleigh “felt so blessed to share the same passion and love for dance together; the fact that we both made it to the finale of So You Think You Can Dance and finished it by dancing a very romantic contemporary piece was unforgettable” (Di Lello). Although neither Ashleigh nor Ryan won season six, they received an outpouring of reactions from their fans wishing they had. In response, Ryan said, “We tell them that we feel we did win because that moment together was worth more than anything” (Di Lello). When asked specifically if this dance and their experience changed Ryan and Ashleigh’s relationship, Ryan said, “Yes, this moment did change our relationship. It strengthened it even more and I fell even deeper in love with Ashleigh that night”( Di Lello).

*“Phillip Attmore: Grieving through Dance”*

Phillip Attmore, another contestant from So You Think You Can Dance, spoke of a similar spiritual journey on the reality television show. Phillip began the show in Los Angeles and quickly moved on to continue the show in Las Vegas as part of the Top 20. Suddenly, his father became very ill and passed away on the eve

of the Top 20 reveal episode. Phillip was back and forth between the hospital, his father's funeral, camera shoots, and rehearsals for the show. "As you can imagine, being on television and even dancing became far less of a priority for me with everything going on. But through it all, I had the support of my fellow contestants" (Attmore). He described one difficult but powerful night when he broke down in front of his fellow contestants while they were all watching the show together. He said that he would never forget them surrounding him and embracing him in that moment. "Whatever faith background everyone had, they laid their hands on me, and prayed for me. I felt so loved and comforted" (Attmore). As the competition continued, Phillip said he became less focused on wanting to please the judges and America. Dancing on So You Think You Can Dance became an outlet for him to deal with the personal issues he was facing while competing on the show. "The dancing presented itself as an opportunity for me to choose to fight off hopelessness and my fears of people not liking me with my mind, body, soul, and heart," he explains (Attmore). Phillip was eliminated from the show the week of his father's funeral. He said, "I left with peace and dignity. So You Think You Can Dance was a crazy journey for me. But it was amazing to see over half the contestants at my father's funeral. So I thank God for putting me on this stage; I thank the judges for putting me in the Top 20; and I know my father is smiling down on me from Heaven" (Attmore). For Phillip, the spiritual tie was clear. He received the outpouring of support like many would receive within a church-like community. He spoke of his journey on So You Think You Can Dance as one that changed him, one that was intended to happen, and as something he is incredibly thankful for.

*Chehon Wespi-Tschopp: A Family Reconnection*

On the most recent season of So You Think You Can Dance, Chehon Wespi-Tschopp was one of the top dancers for season ten. Having grown up an adopted child, Chehon made his entire life about his passion for dance. At only fourteen years old, he attended The Royal Ballet School in London. Due to the

school's location, his adoptive parents rarely got to see him perform. Chehon's video biography (shown to the audience) served as a window into his life, as it highlighted his passion for dance and his love for his unique family. Near the end of this So You Think You Can Dance season, it was made known that Chehon's mother was sitting in the audience to watch one of Chehon's final solo performances. This was a big moment, Chehon stated, because he had been living away from his parents for so long. Although it was brief, his performance was one of his strongest. The host stated that she had "never seen him jump so high or try so hard" (Chehon-Solo). After the performance, there was a strong moment of connectedness that the mother and son shared together. This moment replicated and resembled a moment in a church-like setting filled with greater meaning and greater purpose. This connection between the two highlighted their bond while showing how So You Think You Can Dance strengthened their relationship and their spiritual connection.

### *A Portraying of Peace*

On season three of So You Think You Can Dance, the power of all of the performers was demonstrated by using the art of dance to send a political message to its viewers. The remaining contestants all performed the same solo dance to the song "Waiting On The World To Change" by John Mayer. Each dancer emerged onto the stage wearing all white with a different word painted onto their shirt. The chosen words were "peace," "honesty," "communication," "patience," etc. These words served as examples of mantras or spiritual words to live by in order to make the world a better place to inhabit together. The dance was powerful and dared the dancers to go further with their emotions than they thought they could. Each solo was a scream for change and a surge of passion. These solos did not necessarily communicate a religious message, but rather a spiritual one. In a religious setting, the community would have looked to God or a higher power for the issues the world was currently facing. Contrastingly, So You Think You Can Dance recognized similar issues but advocated that the solu-

tion was within our power as individuals of the human race.

*“A Community United”*

These particular scenarios from the show have not only come to change the contestants through their personal journeys, but also the audience members and dance community in general. So You Think You Can Dance works to find a sense of unity among dancers by promoting a national event or idea. One of the biggest examples of this would be So You Think You Can Dance’s promotion of National Dance Day alongside the support of the Dizzy Feet Foundation. In the past, So You Think You Can Dance had two popular choreographers create a simple, easy, and fun dance for contestants and audience members to learn and perform together. The choreographers spread awareness of the power and greatness of dance by creating YouTube videos to teach dancers of all levels.

On the National Dance Day, dancers from all around the country made sure to begin the dance at the same time. This created a sense of unity among dancers from all over, regardless of their talent or sophistication. So You Think You Can Dance described it as a way for “the nation to come together through their creative expression in dance”(So You Think You Can Dance, National Dance Day). “Their mission was to continue to generate national awareness for dance, a medium of expression and storytelling which, through shows like So You Think You Can Dance, has proven its value in bringing individuals from all walks of life together through a positive platform that has no boundaries and cultivates imagination and passion”. For Nigel Lythgoe, the goal was to “prove the power of dance”. National Dance Day creates a community of dance, like churches or religious organizations would. It illustrates its openness to people of all types (in this case dancers) by including and supporting them. National Dance Day serves as a holiday, just like Christmas or Easter does for those within the Catholic community. Rituals take place and everyone is united.



*So You Think You Can Dance: One Among Others*

After recognizing and understanding this theme, it is clear that it is present in other common reality television shows. The once extremely popular television show *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* exemplifies similar themes to *So You Think You Can Dance*. Although it has been taken off the air, ABC produced this show that provided home improvements for less fortunate families and communities around the United States. Each episode features a family in need of hope and help that has faced/is facing a recent or ongoing hardship. The profile of each family, individual, or organization was summarized to the viewers, illustrating how deserving and in-need they are. *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* gained the help of local builders, contractors, and volunteers to completely rebuild a home in seven days. The materials were all donated and the labor was all volunteer-based.

The Christian Broadcast Network is a “global, nonprofit ministry preparing the nations of the world for the second coming of Jesus Christ through media, prayer partnering, and humanitarian aid”. The organization recently interviewed Paige Hemmis, one of the hosts and remodelers on *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, on her faith and the view on the popular, humanitarian show. Paige stated in the interview that since attending private Catholic high school, she has gained a new outlook on community service and helping others (Goodwyn). She explained that reality television shows are often dramatic, backstabbing, and about “voting people off the island”. Hemmis stated that *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* was a show that was going “to try and do good for good people”. However, they were unsure of how the public would accept it.

Like *So You Think You Can Dance*, the show has developed strong community outreach and has inspired many to do well in their own communities. “The biggest compliment that we get is when we’ve inspired people to do something in their own community. That’s a good testament to our show,” Hemmis says. She

speaks about the power of the show saying that “It’s pretty much the same thing every week; yet people still really enjoy it because the families have just been through so much; and then the whole community comes together to make sure that they’re taken care of. We come through it with the community, and I think that inspires people to make a difference in their own homes”.

The cast and producers of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* do not discredit the spiritual presence of faith. Religiously, the show runs deeper than just helping families in need. In the interview, Paige Hemmis stated, “every family that we’ve helped, everyone since we’ve started, has been very religious”. The families are often part of prayer circles and have been praying for something to happen. She said “it’s truly amazing to me how there’s this common theme going throughout the show. It seems like every person we help has had this amazing faith that something was going to happen and something was going to change to better their lives”. It seems as though *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* has not only helped people through rebuilding their homes, but also through acting as the vehicle for a spiritual and religious experience and transformation.

### *A Drive for Higher Ratings?*

Despite all of the benefits that these shows provide, these shows have often left dancers or families in a worse state than they were before. The critiques of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* are a very strong example of this. *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* was widely known for its good nature, however the show received criticism in regards to their motives to drive up the show’s ratings. Due to the extravagance of the constructed homes, the families always had a very difficult time paying for the utilities and expenses. Many of the families that were on the show often ended up having to sell their home, or their home went into foreclosure. Other critics of the show report that the over-the-top homes were built to benefit the show more than the families. Critics say that if the show was purely looking at and listening to the needs of fam-

ily, then a beautiful home would have been built while still being practical and realistic. The show has also received critique for their search of the “most sensational stories” (Wikipedia). The program’s casting agent and producers placed an advertisement that detailed specific tragedies and rare illnesses sought after by the show. Simply put, the more problems the family had, the better. Criticisms like these have led many to accuse the show of opportunism in seeking out the most sensational stories in a push for higher ratings.

Similarly, *So You Think You Can Dance* has been known to push dancers beyond their ultimate limits. Every season, more and more dancers injure themselves, often ending their time on the show or sometimes even their dancing careers. “It comes with the territory—you don’t execute awe-inspiring lifts and ceiling-high jumps without knowing there are risks involved” (Ward). So this begs the question, is the show pushing its dancers harder with each new season? And like *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, is this merely a tactic to keep viewers interested and drive ratings?

These attempts to increase viewing can be related to the tension that mainline churches and religions once faced. Different religious groups were often concerned with issues that caused them to tone down their religious message to remain successful or popular. A specific example of this is when churches were forced to eliminate some of their religious message to remain on the radio, a source that allowed the churches to reach listeners through a new and effective media. The radio quickly proved to be very successful for mainline churches. “Broadcasting offered religious tribes a means of building their own local and national speech communities in the expanding industrial nation” (Schultze). “Radio helped these tribes to forge unified identities across geographic space in the midst of rapid urbanization and industrialization that otherwise challenged and attenuated the role of traditional religious institutions in society” (Schultze). However, the federal government soon brought industrial order to the “electronic babel”. This movement established public standards for issuing and renewing

licenses. “In one year the number of stations operated by churches and other religious organizations decreased from about seventy to fifty” (Schultze). As a result, evangelicals began learning how to produce programming that would attract audiences and garner financial support. By looking at this historic example, is it clear that a motive to drive ratings causes a shift in morals, beliefs, and ethics, sometimes sacrificing the spiritual journey.

*Closing Thoughts:*

With close examination, it is clear that the show *So You Think You Can Dance* is beginning to serve a spiritual purpose for the individual similar to that of a religious organization. Over the past ten seasons, this dance television show has created a strong community. It has become a journey for many dancers that has turned out to be more than they could have ever anticipated. As previously presented, *So You Think You Can Dance* is one among other shows. *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* is another popular television show that has displayed presence of religious or spiritual themes.

Like Wade Clark Roof first presented, the spiritual quest for the self is even more important and prevalent in our society today. If we look beyond where these participants stand after the show comes to a close, the spiritual journey that the contestants travel through is unquestionable. *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and other shows similar to these are proof that individuals are turning to more unconventional resources to find their spiritual fulfillment. Through *So You Think You Can Dance*'s promotion of National Dance Day, changing personal relationships, and the individual themselves, the similarities between the show and a religious community are undeniable. The show continues to support and illustrate the power of dance and the growth and journey you can experience by being a part of that “religion”.

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## The Rhetorical Influence of Music on Political Communication

LAURA MCGEE

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When all American media outlets were bogged down with advertisement after advertisement for the 2012 presidential election, it became difficult to distinguish one ad from the other. So many ads become tiring and repetitive, that they lose the attention of their target audience. Music has become a popular way make advertisements memorable while appealing to the audience's emotion. Music can also be used in a performative aspect. Whether a candidate decides to play a certain song as an entrance song or sing a tune himself, music can create identification from the candidate to the audience as well as portray a style or image that represents emotion and a presidential style.

Music has been studied at length for its benefits on the human and the public. An article written by Gordon C. Bruner in 1990 linked the ability of music to elicit reactions and emotion when heard. He described music as "an efficient and effective means for triggering moods" (25). He also mentioned "humans non-randomly assign meaning to music" (26). These key points help understand the reasoning behind music in political ads. When a candidate wants their audience to feel a certain emotion when him or his opponent is visible during the ad, the use of music can be coupled with the imagery to trigger mood as well as assign meaning to what they are hearing and seeing.

James Kelleris, Anthony Cox and Dena Cox wrote an article on The Effects of Background Music on Ad Processing in which they discussed the first musical property that can influence message reception: attention-gaining value. "Music's ability to engage a listener's attention can stem from objective traits, such as speed and loudness, or subjective traits, such as surprisingness and interestingness"... "In an advertising context, music may contribute to message reception by attracting and holding attention... thereby

enhancing message reception” (195). Understanding the principles behind music placed in advertising is critical to understanding the selection of music in political advertisements in the 2012 campaigns of both candidates. Music as an attention grabbing mechanism readies the audience for the messages of the candidates.

Music is employed in the use of advertisements but has many other strategic elements with campaign and political rhetoric. An article was published in 2006 by David Allen titled *Effects of Popular Music in Advertising on Attention and Memory*, where he analyzed the recall of popular songs in memory. He stated, “recall information is improved when cued with well-known song” (223). Examples of popular and well-known music appeared throughout the 2012 campaign on both sides. Both candidates used popular music selections as ‘campaign theme songs’ that were used at rallying points as well as entrance music. These songs were the background music to important moments, such as national convention speeches and final rallying entrances. The use of well-known songs enabled audiences to recall information after these moments happened, whenever they would think or hear that song. Well-known music was not only used for entrance music, but also the candidates performed songs by Al Green ‘Let’s Stay Together’ and classic traditional patriotic tunes like ‘America the Beautiful’. These songs will be recalled by the audiences and paired with their memory of the candidate performance. These performances will show their rhetorical power even after the event has passed.

The use of Aristotelian classic rhetoric was used in an article written by Sandra Zichermann called “Bush’s straight talk erases Kerry’s scholarly chalk. The US presidential debate of 2004: Who won the war?” She used the five canons of rhetoric of style and delivery when looking at candidates’ speeches. She used semiotic theory about the body posture and positioning and the effects of seated versus standing. A lean might also suggest proximity to the audience as well as the relevance of positioning of the camera and the height we view a candidate (162). Presidential style uses this body language with a sense of confidence and relatability. All



of these ideas are in play in the commercials and performances by each candidate. While these styles and deliveries shape audiences views, the music chosen to go alongside affects the viewers' ideas as well, and helps shape these two ideas of music and style and delivery.

When breaking down the rhetorical power of music in political discourse, Burke's dramatism comes into play. Dramatism is the idea of looking at human action within dramatic elements (Burke, 1969). By using Burke's pentad as a tool for looking at the elements of a situation and analyzing their rhetorical ability, we can gain insight to human motives and create an understanding of the identification present within the actions. Identify the predominant pentadic elements, agent, scene, act, agency, and purpose within the performances of the candidates singing and the purpose of the music they chose, and the effects on the audience will become clear. The pentadic elements will answer the questions of what role music plays in our impressions of a candidate. Music will also be looked at through language the songs use which candidates use as a way to identify and consubstantiate themselves with their audiences (Fischer, 1984).

While performances and rallies can be analyzed through Burke's dramatism, music within the advertisements needs to be analyzed through a classic, Aristotelian approach. The music in the advertisements and the style in which it is delivered appeals to the audiences' pathos and ethos. Style and delivery from the five canons of rhetoric should be applied to the background music of the advertisements as well at the performances of the candidates. Style is the artful expression of ideas while delivery is much like style in that it looks at the acting of the rhetoric in the speech act, which in this case is the candidate singing. Ethos is the persuasion of the audience by the use of the character of the author ("Aristotle Appeals," 2012). Both candidates use music in which appeals to a person's emotion and in turns elicits feelings of the character whom the person is viewing. Music, as discussed earlier, brings emotion to the viewer. When the music makes the viewer feel hopeful and

optimistic, they retain those feelings about that candidate. Persuasion happens when the audience respects and trusts.

Rhetorical analysis should first begin to understand the advertisements as well as the music used and performed. Mitt Romney chose the song “Born Free” by Kid Rock as his campaign theme song. This song was used as his entrance at rallies. As the lyrics “I was born free! I was born free!” echoed throughout the arenas or rooms that the rallies were held in, Mitt Romney would make a grand entrance, smiling and waving his arms at the crowd. President Obama chose a different song, not as rousing as his challenger, but still effective in its power. “City of Blinding Lights” by U2 was the theme song for his 2008 campaign and was used as well in the 2012 campaign where he entered on stage at the Democratic National Convention. “Oh, you look so beautiful tonight, in the city of blinding lights” were strong words as Obama entered with cameras flashing. Both of these songs are well known to the public, as Kid Rock and U2 have been notable artists for the last decade.

Separate from their theme songs, each candidate chose to show off their singing voices throughout the campaign. Obama on January 19, 2012 at a fundraising event in Harlem, New York, sang the lyrics, “I am so in love with you” from the song by Al Green, “Let’s Stay Together”. On January 30, 2012, Romney gave his own rendition of the patriotic tune “America the Beautiful” at a rally in Florida. Both were in front of thousands of members in the audience. Each song choice was selected for different reasons and the rhetorical influence of each song for the audiences they were in front of. Whether it was a timeless classic or a smooth popular song, both had different influence on each of the separate audiences.

As for the advertisements, on July 23, 2012, the Obama campaign released the ad called ‘The Choice’. This minute long video opens with President Obama sitting down looking into the camera, speaking about the upcoming choice citizens will face within the next couple of months. This ad appears to be filmed in a

living room with the background soft and inviting. The music that is played in the background begins mellow and quiet, with almost a reflective element to it. When the president begins to talk of his vision for the country, the music picks up, becomes a little louder and more present than before. As this music is playing images of the president appear such as meeting and shaking the hands of his fellow Americans. The music continually picks up until the president stops talking and on the screen the word “FORWARD” appears, right as the music reaches the climax in its composition. The music helps move the commercial along.

The second ad was released on August 5, 2012 from the Romney campaign. Titled, ‘It’s Just Not Getting Better’. It opens up with images of a dark red line skyrocketing up a graph along with the argument that “jobless ranks rose in 90% of U.S. Cities”, with an eerie, melancholy tone of music in the background (Associated Press, 2012). As argument after argument appears, this creepy music continues in the background. When the challenger Romney appears on the screen, the music lightens, picks up as images of Romney meeting with the public and smiling are shown. This music takes on a hopeful feel to the composition as compared to the feeling of despair and turmoil that was playing seconds earlier.

Rhetorically analyzing the performances of both candidates’ singing starts by setting up Burke’s pentad. The act is Romney singing “America the Beautiful” at a campaign rally in Florida on January 30, 2012. The agent is Romney. The agencies are the stage, the televisions, the song “America the Beautiful”. The scene is a campaign rally in Florida in front of GOP and Romney supporters, televised throughout the country. The purpose was for Romney to use this as a way of unifying through a commonly known song. Using Allen’s idea of recall, the rally will be more easily remembered with the use of the well-known song.

During the performance, Romney calls on the audience to participate with him and invites them to join in his singing of

the patriotic song. This builds on the notion of consubstantiation and the idea of being united in substance through common ideas, attitudes or properties. Romney singing a commonly known song with his audience created identification with them as they shared the moment singing together about their love for their country. This united the members of the audience with the man they look towards for leadership for their country. The language of the lyrics from the song shows the audience the loyal and nationalistic values of Romney. This builds into the credibility of Romney as a leader and develops his presidential style.

Next is the performance of Obama. The act was Obama singing a line of “Let’s Stay Together” at a fundraising event. The agent was Obama. The agencies were the stage in which he spoke, the televisions that covered the event. The scene was a fundraising event in Harlem in front of an audience of supporters. Obama sang an impromptu line out of the song at the beginning of his speech. The song came as a surprise to everyone, as no one was expecting the president to sing. The purpose behind this was to show charisma and a lack of fear at trying to sing a song that is extremely difficult to sing. This moment would resonate with people because of its popular roots as well as the surprise of the moment. The use of language comes into play, as he sang the words, “I am so in love with you”. These words can be used as identification with the audience as he is speaking to them and saying he loves them. This song brings a sense of consubstantiation with the audience and unity with them over a line from a song. Obama’s progressive value shines through in his performance of a modern song. This idea of progress creates the division of the audience through the shared feelings of the president’s style and song choice.

From a classical rhetorical analysis standpoint, looking into the delivery and style of each performance of song can bring understanding to the influence of music on the impressions of the candidates. Romney appeared rigid and tight, as well as hunching over and looking down while singing. Coupled with his age and traditional song choice, he could convey a sense of past ideology

and not looking forward to what is to come. This could play into the audience's notion of ethos, and the character of the author. His trustworthiness and credibility as a candidate could be damaged by his style and delivery of the message in the performance. Yet the opposite could happen where he is praised for his traditional song selection and his attempt at delivering the song in front of an audience was well received.

Classically analyzing Obama's singing performance would also look into the style and delivery of the song. Obama coolly belted out a high note while never showing any fear. He looked towards the audience in recognition of his performance and was received with rounds of applause. This performance played into the audience's ethos as they saw a confident, credible author of the song. He exhibited presidential style and leadership, plays into the audience's ethos and pathos. Alongside a more new and popular song, the audience is more likely to identify positive feelings about his performance due to his flawless delivery and selection of a song.

Rhetorically analyzing the advertisements of the campaign will also use Burke's pentad and notions of motives to find the influence of music. In the ad "The Choice", the act was Obama's political advertisement promoting his campaign and the upcoming election. The agent was Obama, who narrates the commercial and appears throughout the video clips. The agency was the instruments used to perform this act are the television and the Internet that the video will play on for people to see. There was no set destination of where the act was filmed, but throughout the ad different scenes portray the sense of a vast area of filming, and make one think that it did not take place in one specific location rather the entire country. The music is the purpose behind this ad. The music creates mood for the audience, which then in turn elicit emotion. The way the music makes the audience feel allows for positive or negative feelings associated with the messages. The music in this ad was uplifting, so the audience will pair these uplifting feelings with the indirect message of voting for Obama. The motive behind

this would be for the music to identify the candidate with the style of the music being played. The ratio of act to purpose becomes dominant as a tool employed to illicit behavior from the audience. Pairing the music with the images creates motive for the audience to vote and feel certain emotions with the advertisement. Because it is nonverbal, classic idea of emotion ties the audience together in consubstantiation. The audience becomes united in common ideas with their belief that Obama is good and Romney is evil because of what the music made them feel.

The second advertisement analyzed was “It’s Just Not Getting Better”. The act was a Romney campaign commercial for upcoming election. The agent was Romney. He is featured throughout the commercial in multiple clips. The agency was the instruments used to perform this act, being the television and the Internet website that will play the video. There are multiple scenes throughout the commercial. There are no distinct settings listed but scenes from factories, outside campaign meetings, and office meetings. The music again is the purpose of these advertisements. The negative arguments are coupled with low scary music that creates a feeling of fright and despair. When the music picks up, feelings of hope are felt. Bruner mentions the reactions that humans experience with music, such as the feelings from the music in these ads. Association with these emotions would be felt after viewing the ad and seeing each candidate. That is the goal of the music in advertising.

Classically looking at the music in the commercials, “The Choice” shows Obama seated in a chair, level with his audience. This conveys a sense of similarity and closeness to the audience. This style of addressing the public coupled with the music in the background as bright and optimistic creates a happy, content identification with the audience. As mentioned in Zichermann’s article, body language conveys a strong sense of leadership as well as intimacy (Zichermann, 2006). Obama was able to use music to create positive emotion while using his body language to show his presidential style.

Looking at “It’s Just Not Getting Better”, there are still shots of Obama looking down, in what could be looked at as failure and humility coupled with eerie, chilling music that convey identification with the audiences of uncertainty skepticism. When Romney enters the commercial, the music picks up and he uses opening hand gestures that invite the audience to identify openness and excitement about what is to come. This also exhibits presidential style, as he appears open and inviting. Also the fact that Obama is shown in such a negative appearance, looking down, and poor body posture paired with the negative music associates the feeling and memory of poor leadership.

When looking at the entrance songs of campaigns, Burke’s pentad is used again. Both Obama and Romney walk onto stages, whether it is their national convention or a final victory rally. The presence of music adds to their entrances. President Obama used the song “City of Blinding Lights” by U2 as his entrance song at the Democratic National Convention. Romney entered his Republican National Convention speech to “Born Free” by Kid Rock. The song “City of Blinding Lights” played during the entrance of Obama is the act. The agents are Obama and the band U2. The agency is the stage and the televisions. The scene is the Democratic National Convention. The purpose was to use music as a way to create positive feelings attached to the appearance of a candidate walking on stage. An entrance is a high emotional moment, so a popular song sung by a popular band would retain a better ability for recall such as Allen mentioned earlier on in this paper. Recall of that moment in time when the candidate you support is in front of you and you are feeling happiness emotions.

The song “Born Free” while being played as Romney enters the stage is the act. The agents are Romney, and the musician Kid Rock. The agencies are the stage and the televisions. The scene is the Republican National Convention. Again the purpose of this music is to create an emotion from the audience that they then identify with that candidate, this being Romney. “Born Free” is an upbeat, fast paced song that engages the listener’s attention (Kel-

leris et. al, 1993). The words “born free” bring the idea of freedom and what the country of America stands for. Hearing these words brings about a sense of pride in ones’ country. This language in the song allows for an identification of the audience with the sense of pride added to the song. Audiences can make the assumption that Romney is a patriotic man with American ideals and values through his song selection. People who also hold these values as important will see this as a way of identification and see the division between themselves and others who hold the same values as Romney. The language shows the audience the hierarchy of what something is, and what it is not. The language in this song shows the American dream and how Americans are free, not suppressed (Fischer, 1984).

Again a classical approach examines the way in which the music speaks to the ethos of the audience. Both songs allow the viewer to relate their feelings of positive emotion with that of the credibility of the speaker. Also the music appears to the pathos of the audience and their emotion that music creates.

Understanding the reasoning and influence of the music placed in political campaigns allows for an understanding of the power it has over the audience. Political campaigns are strategically run to persuade the public to vote for a certain candidate. Music helps create the emotional ties to a candidate from the audience that they need for persuasion. The audience is the most important aspect in rhetoric, which is why they need to be targeted. Whether it is in the background music of advertisements or the songs that play during an entrance or the songs sung on the campaign trail, music has the ability to trigger emotion within an audience and strengthen the ability of memory of that moment and change the perception of the audience. Both candidates were able to succeed in their unification of their desired audiences through their use of style and musical influence on the audience’s emotion. The triggering emotional effect of the music creates identification with the audience and the candidate. Obama and Romney were able to use music to their benefits throughout the campaign, targeting their



perspective audiences and gain their votes on Election Day. Obama used the influence of a more progressive music style in his campaign that ultimately attracted a younger audience, while Romney maintained a more traditional music style that attracted a different audience than that of Obama. This differentiation and division of audiences allows for each campaign message to be targeted at the appropriate audience. Without the division, the messages would be lost. The music attracts the audience to the candidate, and in turn the candidate persuades their message to their audience. This influential music propels the persuasion of political communication further and is a necessary part of the campaign process.

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# Setting the Stage

ARIEL OXAAL AND MEGHAN ORENCOLE

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## *Introduction*

Over the past few years, social networking sites have exploded in popularity, becoming an integral part of people's everyday lives, and changing the very nature of human interaction and communication. As social networking has increased in use and popularity, some research studies analyzing the role of social networking on society have been conducted. We decided to conduct original research on a more specific topic regarding the social networking sites Facebook and LinkedIn. Since their advent, Facebook and LinkedIn have altered the relationships between bosses and their employees. Examining one's "online identity" and behavior compared to one's in-person identity and behavior can reveal differences reflective of one's relationship with one's boss. Based upon this theory we, as media theorists, decided to conduct a study examining people's workplace behavior in relation to their social networking behavior. By looking at our gathered survey data based on Facebook and LinkedIn, we would like to see how these behaviors influence communication between an employee and his/her boss.

## *What is Facebook?*

Founded in 2004, Facebook is a website that began as a database of pictures and basic information about Harvard University students. Participating students had control over their online profiles and their contents, and this site was used for social networking within the Harvard student community. Within two years, this social networking site expanded and became available to the general public over the age of 13 that had a valid e-mail address.

Facebook gives its users the opportunity to create a per-

sonalized user profile. This profile contains personal information, pictures, and messages from “friends” made through the social network site. This social networking site has since become an interest to employers and universities regarding how individuals express themselves in their digital profiles. Facebook gives its users the ability make certain aspects of their profile private or public, and one always has to “request” another in order to become “friends”.

### *What is LinkedIn?*

LinkedIn was founded in 2003 as a networking site to be used professionally. The users have the ability to display a picture, their resume, and any business connections they may have. Traditionally used strictly by those already in the professional field, in more recent years it has become a site used by college students with the hopes of gaining an internship or job.

## **Literature Review**

### *No Sense of Place*

Erving Goffman discusses a way to approach interpersonal communication in his writings from *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman’s theory regarding presentation of self is that one changes their behavior based on the situation they find themselves in. Depending on who and where the interaction takes place, one will change their behavior, or rather, their “performance.” The term “performance” in this case refers to Goffman’s ideas about social interaction being set on a stage, and the people interacting in this stage are acting in a certain way to shape their personality and behavior. Front stage behavior is how one acts in order to shape one’s self in a positive light. Back stage behavior is how one acts when they can be themselves without shaping their interactions for society. By setting the stage for certain interactions, there are certain ways that a person comes across, and this trait is based very largely on who they are talking to and how they are shaping their interactions.

Goffman also talks about expectations by those involved in interactions. When approaching an interaction there are specific expectations based on the kind of interaction. At a job interview, the interviewer has certain social expectations of the interviewee, and vice versa. These expectations are thought about before the interaction, and questions arise as to what the interaction will be like. While these questions are hard to answer before the interaction takes place, Goffman believes that front stage interactions change throughout a meeting or conversation based on how the interaction is progressing. “Impression management” is a Goffman term that refers to how people shape their interactions based on who and what is around them. People want to keep the same front stage behavior for certain settings and maintain back stage behavior specifically for back stage situations. For example, one wants to maintain front stage behaviors with one’s boss, while only exhibiting back stage behavior with their spouse. By managing these certain behaviors one also exhibits the desire to maintain a certain version of front stage behaviors.

Goffman’s ideas started the framework for many other theorists and researchers interested in interpersonal communication. In looking at this theory, Joshua Meyrowitz compares and contrasts Goffman’s research methods to medium theory, and attempts to see a way to effectively integrate the two. Goffman’s research, while very well done, is not easily integrated into other types of research. Meyrowitz found a theme that both research methods employ, “Patterns of access to each other.” The situationists suggest how our particular actions and words are shaped by our knowledge of who has access to them, and the medium theorists suggest that new media change such patterns of access (Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place*, Ch. 2, 26). While Goffman did not apply any of his theory to new media technologies, Meyrowitz is looking at how to do just that. By looking at how media change human behavior, Meyrowitz refers to Goffman’s ideas of human behavior based on who has access to it. New media give the ability for communication to go across a large distance and to a large audience simultaneously. According to Meyrowitz, new media paved the way for a new kind of

“front stage” and a new kind of “back stage.” “Goffman’s model of back and front region behaviors describes a static set of stages and is limited to face-to-face interaction, the principles implicit in it can be adapted to describe the changes in situations and behaviors brought about by new media” (Meyrowitz, NSP3, 14). By applying Goffman’s ideas to new media and the communication that occurs through new media, Meyrowitz looks at what happens to social interaction based off of these “changes in situations and behaviors brought about by new media..

New media give society the opportunity to communicate through vast distances and to many people simultaneously. With new media, there is also more access to human behaviors. The television, for example, gives viewers the opportunity not only to watch the President address the nation, but also the opportunity to watch the President get ready for the speech, and hug his family after the speech. By having access to the different behaviors of the President, viewers are able to see front stage behavior and a small amount of backstage behavior. While these “interactions” with the President’s behavior is not face-to-face, new media creates a new way to access information and communication. This, according to Meyrowitz, creates a new set of stages to add to Goffman’s theory. “If performers lose the ability to keep their back region behavior separate from their front region behavior, they not only lose aspects of their privacy, they also lose the ability to play certain parts of their front region roles” (Meyrowitz, NSP3, 14). By combining front and back stages in specific settings performers create a new stage. “Middle stage” is the view that the audience gets when they have the ability to see both onstage and back stage behaviors. Furthermore, having access to one’s middle stage creates a “deep back” stage and a “forefront” stage. These two new stages are extremes brought on by the performer, as the audience has access to a part of their front and back stages. Meyrowitz’s research lays groundwork for how to apply Goffman’s ideas and theories to those of media theorists. By looking at Goffman’s theories on social interaction and society, media theorists can create new theories on how new media affect social interaction and society.

*New Media and Society*

Danah Boyd in her article “I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately” discusses the difference between online and face-to-face interactions. Online interactions contain what boyd refers to as an ‘imagined audience,’ which is the perceived online audience that may be different from the actual readers of someone’s online interactions. Due to the new advent of online social media communication the knowledge gathered regarding types of audiences is limited. Based on individual’s online audience their online behaviors may vary. An individual’s online identity is formed as a result of these behaviors. The individual is aware of their growing audience through the concept of online ‘friends.’ “Through the process of labeling connections as ‘friends,’ social network sites require participants to publicly articulate connections, thereby enabling them to write audience into being” (boyd, 4). Allowing the researcher to differentiate between the imagined audience based on data and the actual growing audience. Online friendships as found through research have different social expectations. For example, reciprocity is often not required, people are not judged for the lack of reciprocating. These different social expectations of online ‘friends’ may be a result of the flexibility of the term ‘friend’ in online contexts. Some online users only accept ‘friend’ requests from people they knew outside the online world while other online users accepted anyone as a ‘friend.’ Based on their online audience, some online users admitted that they consider who may be able to see their online actions before they participate in any Facebook behavior. Social networking sites have made an online trend of creating ones’ self into a personal brand. “In this process, strategically appealing to followers becomes a carefully calculated way to market oneself as a commodity in response to employment uncertainty” (boyd, 7). The creation of a personal brand has encouraged the online user to experiment with multiple forms of identity. These identities over time however, do not fade away. Instead, they accumulate into an online digital profile able to be accessed by the general public. Through various forms of social networking sites users create many different identities. From

each network where these identities lie, one gains multiple audiences. These multiple audiences, according to boyd, collapse into one social networking audience referred to by boyd as a ‘context collapse’ of multiple audiences. This concept links many diverse groups of people into one collective massive online audience that all have access to an individual’s online profile. An individual is not protected from his/her multiple online identities simply through privacy settings. As boyd discusses, “even with private accounts that only certain people can read, participants must contend with groups of people they do not normally bring together, such as acquaintances, friends, co-workers, and family. To navigate these tensions, social network site users adapt a variety of tactics, such as using multiple accounts pseudonyms, and nicknames, and creating ‘fakesters’ to obscure their real identities” (boyd, 10). The use of ‘fakester’ can be applied to Facebook behavior, as the site allows individuals to use a nickname rather than their legal name. Employees often believe that without using their legal name online that others cannot discover their online behaviors—this belief is false. Regardless of what name an employee chooses, all forms of identity regarding online actions are traceable to an individual’s digital record. boyd discusses Goffman’s theory of impression management regarding ‘front-stage,’ and ‘backstage’ behaviors in different social settings. While at the workplace for example, an individual typically displays his/her ‘front-stage’ behavior while an individual may display more ‘backstage’ behavior at happy hour after work. This ‘front-stage’ and ‘backstage’ behavior have been changing as a result of the use of social networking sites. As boyd states, “networked media brings the changes Meyrowitz described to interpersonal interactions”(boyd, 18). The cultural trend of using social networking sites has affected individuals’ ‘front-stage’ and ‘backstage’ behaviors as a result of online interactions. The imagined audience affects these online actions that the individual adjusts their identity to form a personal brand of themselves. The realm of an individual’s actions online within their digital profile directly works to affect the actions of the individual outside this digital world.



*Identity Presentation, Authenticity, and Power in Social Networking Services*

In “*I’m a Lot More Interesting than a Friendster Profile*”: *Identity Presentation, Authenticity and Power in Social Networking Services*,” Alice Marwick discusses how self-presentations are shaped on social networking services, which she refers to as SNSs. Marwick looked specifically at three SNSs that were developed in the early 2000s. She looks at these websites with the intent to better see how one presents oneself, whether these self-presentations are authentic and what these presentations do to their social communities. Through the applications on these social networking sites, individuals are empowered with the ability to alter their online identities. Marwick defines a community as “a group of people linked together by some shared interest or commonality” (Marwick, 7). A social network is defined as many networks that are linked together. While communities may be social networks, this relationship is not reciprocal; social networks are not necessarily communities.

Marwick studied these three social networks using a method called social networking analysis. Social networking analysis approaches studying media by looking at the micro-level social patterns and how they can be applied to macro-level social theories. In this case, Marwick compares her findings to Erving Goffman’s theories from *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Marwick refers to Goffman’s ideas about context and audience being two primary factors that influence self-presentation (Marwick, 22). With social networking sites contextualizing information in three different ways, there is a variety not only in how one presents themselves, but who their audience is. The three ways that social networking sites are contextualized are: the design of the site, how a site encourages a certain self-presentation, and how networks within the site affect self-preservation. In creating a social networking site profile, the user has the ability to create whatever they want—within the context of the design of the site. Users have the option of ‘passing,’ that is, the choice to reveal or hide certain

aspects of their identity at any time. Within the restrictions on the social networking sites a user's self-presentation is presented in a certain way.

### *Born Digital*

*Born Digital* by John Palfrey and Urs Gasser discusses the future of the digital population in modern society. The population they focus on regarding the future of the Internet is referred to as 'Digital Natives,' or those born after the year 1980. One of the greatest struggles mentioned regarding the Internet is the concept of defining identity. Historically identity has been separated into two forms: social and personal. The personal form of identity includes special interests, personal characteristics as well as favorite activities. Socially, identity includes family, friends, and neighbors. Changing a personal identity could easily be achieved through changing your clothing style or developing new hobbies or interests. Social identity was able to change through interacting with a new crowd of people or altering already-established relationships. Individualism was a concept that was achievable before print. Prior to print, an individual could alter their personal identity and move far away so as to allow their social identity to start fresh. Printing limited these identities through tying people to their identities with the enabled process of mass distribution. As discussed in *Born Digital* the new digital world has bound individuals to their identities more than ever before. With Digital Natives constant online activities the original definition of identity itself is becoming blurry. This blurry definition is a result of Digital Natives experimenting with this personal identity online through multiple social networking media accounts. The examples described in *Born Digital* regard the online sites of 'World of Warcraft', as well as 'Second Life' in which individuals can create avatar forms of themselves. Personal identity may also be reflected in many forms of what danah boyd calls 'personal branding' to an imagined audience as discussed in "I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately" through sites such as Facebook or MySpace. "Because these forms of identity exist simultaneously and are so closely linked to

one another, Digital Natives almost never distinguish between the online and offline versions of themselves” (Palfrey & Gasser, 20). In order to create these multiple identities Digital Natives are sharing more online personal information about themselves than ever before. This amount of personal disclosure is discussed in *Born Digital* as the disclosure decision model which explains that, “the form of inputs of shared personal information—are central to a Digital Native’s emerging identity” (Palfrey & Gasser, 23). These intentional contributions regarding disclosing information online and constantly adjusting your personal identity are forever binding this information and actions to Digital Natives’ lives. This forever binding issue is often not rationally thought out by Digital Natives because the concept of “over-disclosure” online is a social norm for the Digital Native population.

The social trend of over disclosing personal information online allows for an in-depth ‘Digital Dossier’ as referred to by Palfrey and Gasser. This concept, as referred to in *Born Digital*, begins about an individual before they are even born through a sonogram picture in their mother’s womb. As years pass your Digital Dossier expands to encompass lifetime events and actions as well as online events and actions. Others may also add to your growing Digital Dossier over time through in-person as well as online events and actions. The Digital Native population has the largest growing Digital Dossier records about them. Palfrey and Gasser state that this massive database of individuals’ digital dossiers may be a result of exchange for control that is just beginning in this digital world. When asked about a Digital Dossier, many students admitted that they “know that data is being collected about them, but they doubt that much will happen to them as a result” (Palfrey & Gasser, 51). Within the digital world it is considered a cultural norm for online users to disclose large amounts information about themselves online. This digital population does not view the information they post online to be a threat when in fact this profile that is created about each individual can be sold without their consent.

In an attempt to discover the online information about

themselves online, Digital Natives often conduct Google searches about themselves. All the relevant information that appears on the Google search is not all that exists. The Internet according to Born Digital has a deep web within it that contains highly personal information about individuals such as their medical records. These digital records can be bought or exchanged as well as private information about employees or clients. Choices about what we disclose online need to be decided with more informed decisions with the consideration of consequences as well as benefits of these actions. Palfrey and Gasser are persistent in informing the public that the future of the Internet relies on their future online actions.

### *Goals of this Research*

Our goals for this research are to determine if and how one's online social interactions with their boss may lead to a change in face-to-face interaction. Also, by looking at this possible change we want to determine how a face-to-face interaction could change an online relationship with one's boss.

### *Method*

We conducted fifteen in-depth interviews with a cooperative sample of friends and friends' friends. These people included seniors in college currently maintaining an internship position, a graduate student holding a job, and postgraduates who have been employed. Using a descriptive method we observed natural behaviors by those who use Facebook and LinkedIn. More specifically, we observed how one's in-person behavior with their boss affected their behavior on Facebook or LinkedIn.

Participants in this interview included six women (40%) and nine men (60%). Of the total sample four of the participants were post-graduates, one was a graduate student, and ten were seniors in college currently holding an internship position. Of the ten seniors in college six of them have the opportunity to be employed

where they are interning full-time upon graduating.

#### Pertinent Definitions

For purposes of maintaining consistency throughout our research and interviews we defined the following terms as so:

*Boss:* The person you directly report to on a regular basis. This person is not necessarily the boss of the whole company.

*Casual Relationship:* A relationship that includes talk beyond a professional level. Can joke and discuss personal lives as well as spend time outside the work place together (at a party, restaurant, or other activity).

*Facebook Behavior:* This refers to posts made by user, pictures posted by user, and any other action done on Facebook that would be made by user.

*Connection:* Equivalent to a Facebook friend, a connection is made on LinkedIn through accepted requests.

*Active User on Facebook:* Signing onto account at least once a day, and while online posting, commenting, 'liking', or friend requesting.

*Active User on LinkedIn:* Signing into account at least once a week, while online posting or connecting.

#### Results

While going through our data, we were looking for a reoccurring theme or result. We had a variety of answers, as well as some variety in the interviews themselves. By interviewing with open-ended questions, there was room for the interviewee to answer beyond the specific question. In going back through our data, we found some correlations to our theory.

Of the fifteen people we interviewed, every person ob-

tained a Facebook account and considered themselves active users, while thirteen out of fifteen obtained LinkedIn accounts. Of the thirteen LinkedIn users, eleven of them considered themselves active users. All of these people were connected with their boss on LinkedIn while some of them were also connected to their boss' boss, or other superiors in the company. Of the thirteen LinkedIn users, every person felt that it was positive to be connected to their boss, other employees, or company on LinkedIn. They actively use LinkedIn to make more connections, find clients, and help their company. When asked if they thought LinkedIn might have helped them obtain their jobs, all thirteen people said yes. Everyone felt little to no pressure about accepting connection requests from their bosses on the social networking site LinkedIn. While some of these LinkedIn users stated it was a mutual connection request between their bosses and themselves, others stated their bosses requested them.

The Facebook results were much more staggered, as every Facebook user had a slight difference in opinion about Facebook, but there were still some common threads in the results.

Of the fifteen people, four were friends with their boss on Facebook. Two of the four changed their behavior, while the other two did not change their behavior. Of the eleven people who were not friends, three of them stated that they would never, under any circumstance, request to be friends or accept a friend request from their boss—or any other person in the workplace. Eight of the eleven users said that they would become “friends” with their boss, with five making a change in their behavior, while three said that they would not change their behavior.

Our interviews showed that three out of fifteen people use Facebook and LinkedIn profiles made specifically for the company for their jobs. One of these people also used their personal Facebook for work purposes. These data display the more subtle aspects of importance of Facebook and LinkedIn use for professional purposes. There is a rise in businesses and corporations using Face-

book and LinkedIn as a means of utilizing social networking sites to conduct growing digitally based professional relationships.

Of the fifteen in the sample study, fourteen said that they had a casual relationship with their boss. These fourteen said they felt comfortable interacting and talking with their boss in a non-professional way, and most of the sample said that they have been social with their boss outside of work.

While our gathered data relied on a small sample, there are some relevant trends seen from our data. One of the most interesting trends we found was the fact that every person felt that they had a casual relationship with their bosses, and most of these people were also connected to them online. What was also interesting about this trend was that while they felt comfortable having a personal conversation with their bosses, sometimes out of the office completely, they still felt the desire to change behaviors or block certain aspects of their personal Facebook from their bosses. Meanwhile, their LinkedIn use and behavior stayed the same no matter what.

### *Discussion*

The results from our in-depth interviews support the framework brought forth from boyd, Goffman, Meyrowitz, Palfrey and Gasser, and Marwick. More specifically, our results show that there is a connection to the probes of these theorists, especially regarding the concept of front and back stage behavior, self-presentation, identity, and audiences. These mentioned probes support our theory that Facebook and LinkedIn online interactions with one's boss change face-to-face interactions with said boss, as well as looking at the relationship between face-to-face interactions and how that corresponds to Facebook and LinkedIn online social interactions.

The most significant finding in our study was that every individual within our study felt they had a strong casual relationship

with their direct boss within the work place. These relationships were built on social activities outside the office, parties, fishing trips, and the like. Based on these accounts we found it conflicting that only two out of fifteen people who claimed they had good social relationships with their boss were Facebook friends without feeling the need to change their Facebook behavior. This finding is relevant to Goffman's theory of front stage and back stage behaviors as well as Meyrowitz's expansion on this theory through deep-back, middle region, and forefront behaviors. What we found was that every individual had a good social relationship with his or her boss, who gave their bosses access to their back stage behaviors, this access was reciprocated with access to the boss' back stage behaviors. What we found particularly interesting was that even though bosses had access to back stage behavior, the individuals did not want their bosses to have access to their Facebook. Based on our study, Facebook is also regarded as a backstage behavior. Connecting these ideas to Meyrowitz, we found that the social interactions in person have become middle region behaviors while Facebook online identity is seen as a deep back region, which most people in the study tried to keep as far away from the work place as possible. Also in accordance to Goffman's research, we found that by people letting their boss in on some "back stage" behavior (now middle region) by socially interacting with them in person, they apply impression management by only connecting with them on LinkedIn, while not becoming Facebook friends, and maintaining in person social interactions. LinkedIn in this case can be seen as forefront region—as LinkedIn is an always accessible, professional networking website that employers can access at any time. In using the situationalist approach, we saw how people may alter their behavior based on who has access to the "stage." Based on medium theorists approach we saw how the medium itself (Facebook or LinkedIn) can change the way that one socially interacts with their boss.

Palfrey and Gasser's concepts of identity as well as online records are supported by our theory through people changing privacy settings on their Facebook or LinkedIn accounts. Based



on the results of our interviews we can see that most people interviewed would in fact change their online behavior if they were to confirm a Facebook friendship with their boss. This desire for people to change their online behaviors coincides with Palfrey and Gasser's theories about Digital Native's use of multiple online identities. This change in online behavior is a result of how individuals may choose to express themselves online through utilizing the Internet to experience with the possibility of expressing themselves through multiple identities. What Digital Natives are beginning to discover through entering professional institutions is that these past online identities through sites such as Facebook are remaining digitally bound to them. In an attempt to keep their Facebook account private, an individual is essentially trying to keep their past online identities hidden from present front-stage identity. These theories brought upon by Palfrey and Gasser relate to some findings in our study. Perhaps the people who refuse any kind of Facebook interaction have a digitally bound past online identity that they do not want their bosses to get a hold of. Five people in our study said that they would become Facebook friends with their boss, but that they would change their privacy settings and behaviors significantly prior to confirming an online friendship. This again relates to the digitally bound past online identity, as well as the social trend of over sharing personal information through Facebook behaviors. This trend of over sharing on sites such a Facebook is the reason why Digital Natives prefer to not confirm friendships with their bosses and reinforces the idea that Facebook is in fact part of an individual's backstage behavior.

The concept of an online audience as discussed by danah boyd can also be applied to the results from our surveys regarding online behaviors. boyd examines the concept of an 'imagined audience,' which is the audience that users predict their social network audience to be as opposed to who their actual social network audience is. The ability for an online audience to scrutinize another's online behavior often affects how an individual will behave online. It is the possibility for scrutiny from their boss that deters some people in our study from being friends with their boss on Face-

book. By maintaining their online audience, employees are able to avoid scrutiny from their boss, as well as maintain their back stage behavior. Another reason for one to manage their online audience is to avoid their boss from having access to their confirmed audience as well the online behaviors displayed from that confirmed audience. The social network user confirms the audience, according to Marwick, because of the fact that users construct their identities based on the framework applications given by the site. Therefore, it would be clear to the boss that their employee picked their audience that would display undesirable online behaviors. Since our study shows partial lack of online friendships between boss and employee, we can apply the theories of boyd as well as Marwick to our findings.

When looking at Marshal McLuhan's probes regarding media, we found a connection to one of his better-known theories "the medium is the message." This theory focuses more on the medium itself, rather than the media content, causing a change in societal behaviors and interpretations of messages brought forth through a particular medium. This theory is evident in our research in that the medium Facebook portrayed a negative connotation to their identity while the medium LinkedIn was viewed as a beneficial attribute to their identity. Based on the evidence from our interviews stated previously in this paper, it is clear that McLuhan's "medium is the message" is applicable to how our sample feels about their online relationship with their boss, in comparison to their in-person relationship with their boss. Facebook as a medium sends a message of one's deep back behavior, which an individual would rather keep from their face-to-face front stage behavior. LinkedIn as a medium sends a message of one's front stage behavior that an individual would like to keep on the forefront, by giving their employers and coworkers access.

### *For Further Research*

While this study was conducted thoroughly and thoughtfully, there were some limits to our research. With a small sample

size, we were able to find trends that effectively built on our theory. With that said, a larger sample size would help in finding a more substantial trend. Our in-depth interviews allowed us to get a better grasp on what topics and questions would be particularly pertinent to this research topic. Building off of our interviews, a mass distributed survey could bring forth an entirely different set of data. One limit to this study was that the interviewees all obtained similar jobs, and were all of a specific demographic. Expanding the demographic past college students, graduate students, and recent postgraduates could bring up an entirely different set of data to research. By surveying a random sample, rather than a controlled sample, future researchers may be able to discover trends that apply more to a general population. Due to the newer advent of social media communication there is limited data regarding how face-to-face interactions relate to online interactions. A more significant finding could come forward if this study was conducted over a month, for example, rather than one in-depth interview. A problem that could arise in future research is the fact that online technologies are changing and growing at a rapid rate, which could make research findings outdated very quickly.

### *Conclusion*

These findings from our research topic are useful to medium theory in that they start to pave a way for more in-depth study. By understanding how in-person relationships with one's boss affects online behavior, it is seen how interrelated the two forms of interaction are. With all of those interviewed in the study claiming that they felt they had a good in person social relationship with their boss, it was interesting that most of them chose to either not be friends on Facebook, or change their behaviors significantly. Every LinkedIn user we interviewed felt extremely comfortable being connected to their boss and company on the site, but only felt comfortable with this connection after having met this boss in person. The rise in Facebook and LinkedIn use for company or business purposes also adds to the question of how Facebook and LinkedIn interactions affect employee-boss relationships.

The concept of online identity has been proven in this study to be a factor in how and if there is an online employee-boss friendship. LinkedIn creates a strictly professional, resume-like identity, which is restrained by the applications provided by the social networking site. Facebook, on the other hand, allows its users to create an online identity that may differ from the in-person or LinkedIn identity. These different identities are set on different parts of the ‘stage.’ Using these several scholarly terms in the way that best applies to our research and theory, LinkedIn is set at the forefront—employees want their boss to have access to their professional online identities. In-person relationships are set in the middle region, and Facebook is set at the deep back region. By controlling who has access to each of these stages, one is performing ‘impression management,’ according to Goffman.

In conclusion, our gathered interview data show that people who have a good in- person relationship with their boss, giving them access to middle region behavior, does not mean that one feels comfortable enough to give the boss access to their deep back behavior on Facebook. While in-person relationships were seen as positive and casual, our sample felt that Facebook would not be a positive aspect to their in-person relationship. Furthermore, being connected on LinkedIn was viewed as beneficial to their in-person relationship with their boss. By understanding Marshall McLuhan’s probe ‘the medium is the message’ one can see that the different media that are used for social interactions alter interactions. The two media we focus on in this paper show how it is the medium that changes one’s relationship with their boss, not the message.

### *Acknowledgements*

We would like to thank our friends and acquaintances for their participation in our study as well as Professor Meyrowitz’s assistance in building our theory. We would also like to thank our fellow media theorists from our seminar CMN 772-01. A final special thank you goes to the media man upstairs, Dr. Marshall McLuhan.

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