Ohio Communication Journal
A publication of the Ohio Communication Association

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Editorial Board (continued)

Ohio Communication Association

2017-2018 Executive Committee

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- Book reviews

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Ohio Communication Journal

Volume 55 – February 2017

Click the hyperlink to go directly to the article

Ohio Communication Journal

Volume 55 – February 2017

Click the hyperlink to go directly to the article

Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 1-15

Perceptions of Workplace Bullying Narratives: Exploring Attributions

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Working adults (N = 210) read five workplace bullying narratives that varied in level of coherence and emotionality. Participants then completed a survey exploring the relationship between the way bullied targets tell their story and attributions made about the situation and involved parties. Results show coherent stories with little reference to emotion were viewed more positively than non-linear stories where the narrator discussed strong emotion. Finally, when the narrator discussed having strong emotional reactions they were perceived to be more at fault in the situation. This study advances our understanding of narrative telling and attributions in workplace bullying situations.

Workplace bullying is defined as a repetitive cycle of verbal and/or nonverbal acts that are directed at one or more employees over an extended period of time with the goal of causing harm and humiliation (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2009). Roughly 30% of U.S. employees are targeted by a bully at some point in their working lives (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2014). Given the prevalence of bullying in the workplace and the organizational and human costs associated with it (Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Rayner & Cooper, 1997) it is not surprising that research in this area has grown significantly over the past twenty years (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2009). Workplace bullying is largely a communicative process (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008) as such it is important to understand communication strategies that can remediate bullying. The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how narrative telling impacts attributions people make about targets and bullies in stories about workplace bullying.

If believed, stories have the power to bring about action. According to Frank (2010), "Stories animate human life; that is their work. Stories work with people, for people, and always stories work on people, affecting what people are able to see as real, as possible, and as worth doing or best avoided" (p. 3). In order for targets of workplace bullying to get the support and help they need it is important to examine the narrative elements that help others see their experiences as reflective of workplace bullying and/or abuse. For example, targets are often advised to tell clear, largely unemotional stories to others (Tracy, Alberts, & Rivera, 2007). This study extends past research by examining narrative coherence, emotionality, and attributions to better understand the communicative elements that lead hearers to label target experiences as bullying. Ultimately, "once stories animate, they instigate" (Frank, 2010, p. 3) making it so that change can occur and targets and organizations can be helped and healed. However, the mere telling of one's story does not necessarily bring about action. Instead, sometimes stories of abuse are ignored or discounted. It is important to examine communicative elements of narratives to determine how to tell one's story in a way that maximizes the hearer's willingness to validate painful work experiences such as workplace bullying and intervene. What follows is a discussion of how stories of workplace bullying are reported and responded to.

Responses to Reports of Workplace Bullying

It is incredibly difficult for targets to report instances of bullying in part because they fear others will make negative judgments about the type of worker or person they are. When targets do try to report it, organizational authorities are often unwilling to listen these reports or listen with high levels of skepticism (Keashly & Neuman, 2013; Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2011). Put another way, organizations often take a "see no evil, hear no evil,

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speak no evil" approach when it comes to dealing with bullying (Ferris, 2004). Intervention can occur if targets share their story with someone in the organization. However, bullying often goes unreported because targets fear that they will be subject to additional abuse or that they won't be believed (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015).

Bullying also goes unrecognized and unchallenged in organizations with high turnover rates. When targets leave the organization, bullies often remain and enact their abusive behavior on new employees thus perpetuating a cycle of abuse in organizations (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003). If left unaddressed bullying can thrive in organizations with very real consequences for targets and organizations. For targets these consequences include but are not limited to anxiety, clinical depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, hypertension, stroke, and (in some instances) suicide (Namie, 2014). Bullying is also costly to organizations as a result of absenteeism, turnover, and reduced efficiency (Hoel & Cooper, 2001).

In order to break the cycle of abuse it is important to understand how organizations can better respond to reports of bullying and also how targets can better communicate about their experience. Targets are often advised to report bullying to organizational authorities and to file formal complaints and grievances even though these actions do not usually help and can even make the situation worse (Keashly & Neuman, 2013). In a study on organizational responses to employee complaints of bullying, organizations responded in one of three ways; (a) the behavior was deemed acceptable; (b) the behavior was attributed to both parties involved; or (c) the behavior was deemed harmful and inappropriate but this was found to be a rare response (Ferris, 2004). A central element of the reporting process is narrative. In order for a target to report their mistreatment to organizational authorities they have to tell their story. Understanding how targets tell stories that contribute to being believed is an important step toward helping targets navigate the difficult process of reporting their story to organizational authorities. What follows is a discussion of the linkages between narrative and workplace bullying.

Narrative Approach to Workplace Bullying

Telling narratives is an important part of everyday life. According to Riessman (1993), we make sense of events by casting them into narrative form. Fisher (1987) defines stories as arguments that involve rationality or consistency between how one acts and their reasons for doing so. Coherence, the extent to which a story makes sense, and fidelity, the extent to which a story rings true to the listener, are central elements in traditional notions of narrative. Other approaches to narrative suggest that a strict focus on narrative coherence and the formation of good stories leads to situations where narrators can be discounted or even silenced because their stories do not adhere to the principles of what makes a "good" story (Frank, 1995).

Many experiences, like workplace bullying, are ongoing making it difficult to tell narratives about these experiences that include a tidy beginning, middle, and end. Additionally, it is difficult to cast irrational events into rational narrative form. Adding to this complexity is the fact that narrative construction is not a solitary process, or according to MacIntyre (1984) our narratives are co-authored with various others. Targets of bullying may edit their narrative so it rings true to the listener with the hope that their story will be believed. However, workplace bullying is seldom reported in organizations in part for this reason; individuals fear they will not be believed. This scenario is further complicated when the individual to whom the target would report their abuse, for example a supervisor, is the bully. Narratives have the potential to provide insight into this complex phenomenon. According to Gabriel (2004),

> "Stories could reveal how people make sense of organizational events or fail to do so;
> they can give useful insights into organizational politics and culture, where they reveal hidden agendas, taboos, and lacunae; very often they can disclose not what happened, but something equally important: what people believe or want to believe happened" (p. 23).

Workplace bullying narratives have been explored in previous research. Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, and Alberts (2006) used metaphor analysis on data gathered from focus groups, narrative interviews, and target drawings to uncover the costs and feelings associated with workplace bullying and found that targets likened their experience to battle, water torture, nightmares, and noxious substances. Additionally, Lutgen-Sandvik (2006) examined narratives of targets and witnesses of workplace bullying to better understand the resistance strategies used to combat bullying

and concluded that "organizational authorities must learn to "read the traces" of resistance to bullying, diagnose the problem early, and construct effective interventions" (p. 429).

In terms of constructing their stories, targets have largely been advised to tell convincing stories that adhere to traditional notions of storytelling (Tracy, Alberts, & Rivera, 2007). However, recent research found that not all workplace bullying narratives adhere to the traditional elements of good storytelling (Fisher, 1987) and instead often represent stories that are disjointed and lack coherence and fidelity (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015). Ultimately, workplace bullying narratives take the form of chaos, quest, and report narratives (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015). Chaos narratives are non-linear narratives where targets had difficulty constructing narratives that fit traditional conventions of "good" story telling. These narratives were often emotional in nature in that targets frequently discussed the emotional impact bullying had on them. Quest narratives were linear and coherent with moderate levels of emotion discussed. Report narratives were linear in nature but were brief, largely unemotional accounts of bullying. Although chaos narratives are often discounted, research suggests that an inability to put emotional and painful experiences in appropriate narrative form provides insight into the serious impact bullying is having on the target (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015). This study extends previous narrative research on bullying by exploring if the way a narrative is told and the amount of emotion discussed in the narrative impacts how others perceive the teller, the bully, and whether or not the situation is perceived as being bullying or not. Because we are interested in how narrative elements impact how listeners attribute fault and blame to parties discussed in workplace bullying narratives attribution theory was used as the guiding theoretical framework.

Attribution Theory

Targets often avoid telling their story in part because they are concerned about how others will view them. The fear of being labeled a cry baby or a whiner and being accused of over reacting often leads targets to keep their stories to themselves (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015). Similarly, targets fear their story will be discounted by co-workers and organizational authorities and even friends and family members. Attribution theory focuses on how people view and understand events and the impact these views have on causation (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1985). These causal attributions play a central role in human behavior (Kelley & Michela, 1980). According to attribution theory, we draw conclusions about why people act in particular ways along with the type of person who would act in such a way. In the model of attribution theory there are antecedents (information, beliefs, and motivation), attributions (perceived causes) and consequences (behavior, affect, expectancy) (Kelley & Michela, 1980). For example, if a target tells his or her story to someone they are providing that person with information about what is occurring. The listener will take that information and attempt to determine the cause. The consequence is the listener may believe the target and do something about it or may instead sympathize with the bully and do nothing or worse contribute to escalating the situation. Of particular interest is if how targets tell their story impacts whether or not the listener will attribute fault to the target or to the bully. Additionally it is important to examine whether the story communicates that bullying has occurred or if it is an example of a simple misunderstanding or clash or personalities. Some research has applied attribution theory to our understanding of workplace bullying. For example, Cowan (2013) examined attributions human resource professionals make about why bullying happens in organizations and found that HR professionals attribute aggressive management styles, organizational culture, deficient communication skills, personality clashes, and contemporary society for why bullying occurs. The present study used attribution theory to explore how working adults perceive narratives of workplace bullying to get a better sense of how targets can effectively communicate about their experiences to aid them in eliciting help from organizational authorities and witnessing co-workers. The review of literature led to the following research questions:

RQ1: How do attributions about targets of workplace bullying differ based on the way a narrative is told?

RQ2: How do attributions about supervisors differ based on the way a narrative is told about a workplace bullying situation?

RQ3: Are there differences in perceptions of what counts as workplace bullying based on the way a narrative is told?

Method

Participants

Participants were 210 working adults in the US recruited through the researchers' email and social networking contacts, through snowball sampling methods, and through Amazon's Mechanical Turk service (MTurk). MTurk provides a platform for workers to complete online tasks in exchange for compensation including, but not limited to, participation in academic research projects. Past research has shown MTurk to be a useful and valid tool for recruiting from diverse populations (e.g., Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Burhmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Mason & Suri, 2011).

Specifically, 108 males (51.4%) and 102 females (48.6%) were included in this study (*M* age = 32.94, *SD* = 10.46, range: 20 – 69). In response to an open-ended question about their race/ethnicity, 160 participants identified as White/Caucasian (76.2%), 14 participants as Hispanic/Latino (8.8%), 13 as African American/Black (6.2%), 10 as Asian American (4.7%), and 9 as another unique race/ethnicity (4.2%). All participants identified as US citizens. Most participants had at least some college experience (high school diploma or high school equivalent, n = 15, 7.1%; some college, n = 71, 33.8%; bachelor's degree, n = 87, 41.4%; master's degree, n = 29, 13.8%; PhD or other advanced graduate/professional degree, n = 7, 3.3%).

Participants worked in a wide range of fields such as accounting, administration/clerical, customer service/hospitality, computer programming/IT, construction, education, management, and sales. On average, participants had worked in their current positions for 4.80 years (*SD* = 4.90, range: 2 months – 38 years). When asked if they had experienced or knew someone who had experienced workplace bullying, 101 (48.1%) said "yes" and 109 (51.9%) said "no."

Procedures

Study procedures were given IRB approval prior to data collection. Participants completed an online survey hosted on Qualtrics.com. Specifically, they were presented with 5 narratives in randomized order and asked to report their perceptions of each narrative.

Narratives. As part of a different study, bullying narratives were gleaned from in-depth interviews with 48 working adults who had been bullied in the workplace. Each of the five narratives are real-life experiences shared by targets of workplace bullying. The initial study explored the types of narratives targets told about their experiences. This study extends this research by examining how working adults react to these different narrative types. For consistency, the person who is portrayed in the narrative as the bully was described as the narrator's male supervisor. Narratives were shortened to a relatively similar length (276 to 369 words) without removing key details or changing the style of the narrative. In order extend previous research (Tracy, Alberts, & Rivera, 2007 & Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015) the narratives used in this study were selected based on level of clarity (i.e., coherent narrative style vs. incoherent narrative style) and level of emotionality (i.e., rational description of events vs. mention of emotions felt and/or expressed as a result of the bullying).

In order to test the level of emotionality and coherence in the narratives 15 working adults read them and provided verbal feedback about perceived differences between the narratives. Based on participant responses we were able to proceed with the survey component of the study. To further confirm that participants perceived differences in the narratives, participants were presented with each narrative in random order. They then responded to 7-point likert-scale single item measures regarding the clarity of the narrative and the emotionality of the narrator (i.e., "The narrator in this scenario is emotional" and "The scenario is described in a clear way.") See Appendix A for complete narratives.

First, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in perceptions of clarity across five narratives of workplace bullying. The assumption of sphericity was violated, as assessed by Mauchly's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(9) = 110.89$, $p < .001$. Therefore, a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied ($\varepsilon = .76$; Maxwell & Delaney, 2004). There were overall significant differences in perceptions of the clarity among the five workplace bullying narratives, $F(3.05, 625.56) = 147.49$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta 2 = .42$. Post hoc analyses using bonferonni adjustment showed that Narrative 3 was seen as significantly less

clear than the other four narratives. Narrative 1 was the second least clear. Narrative 2 and 4 were perceived to be similar in levels of clarity. Narrative 5 was rated highest in level of clarity (See Table 1).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Clarity Across Narratives

Narrative	Clarity	
	M	*SD*
1: Lunch Hour	5.09_a	1.52
2: Critical Shadow	5.46_b	1.26
3: Alienated and Afraid	3.13_c	1.87
4: Crying Shame	5.45_b	1.36
5: I am your God	5.77_d	1.25

Note. Means that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ by bonferonni adjustment.

To assess perceptions of the level of emotion expressed, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in perceptions of the narrator's emotionality. The assumption of sphericity was violated, as assessed by Mauchly's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(9) = 29.26$, $p < .001$. Therefore, a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied ($\varepsilon = .93$; Maxwell & Delaney, 2004). There were overall significant differences in perceptions of the emotionality among the five workplace bullying narratives, $F(3.70, 765.54) = 72.56$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta 2 = .26$. Overall, the narrator was seen to be more emotional than not. Post hoc analyses using bonferonni adjustment showed that narrators who talked about multiple emotions (i.e., Narrative 3: "I felt isolated and afraid…victimized" and Narrative 4: "I was so furious…went outside and cried") were perceived to be significantly more emotional than those who did not make any reference to emotion (i.e., Narrative 1), referenced only the supervisor's emotion (i.e., Narrative 2, "he got so angry…"), or referenced a single emotion (i.e., Narrative 5, "I was upset"; See Table 2).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Narrator Emotionality Across Narratives

Narrative	Emotionality	
	M	*SD*
1: Lunch Hour	4.01_a	1.60
2: Critical Shadow	4.40_b	1.54
3: Alienated and Afraid	5.42_c	1.28
4: Crying Shame	5.72_c	1.37
5: I am your God	4.56_b	1.53

Note. Means that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ by bonferonni adjustment.

Positive attributions of narrator and supervisor. In order to test the dependent variables, participants were asked to respond to measures regarding their positive attributions of the narrator, positive attributions of the supervisor, and perceptions of whether workplace bullying had occurred for each randomly presented narrative. Specifically, participants completed three 7-point likert scale items regarding positive attributions made about the narrator (e.g., "The narrator's behavior in the scenario was justifiable"; "The narrator behaved appropriately in this scenario"; "The narrator was at fault in this scenario" (reverse-coded). These items were repeated regarding positive attributions of the supervisor (e.g., "The supervisor's behavior in the scenario was justifiable," etc.). Each set of three items were summed and averaged for an overall score for the positive attributions toward the narrator and bully for each narrative (Cronbach's alpha: range .76 - .86). Participants were also asked a single-item 7-point likert scale item regarding the extent to which workplace bullying had occurred in the scenario (e.g, "This scenario is an example of workplace bullying").

Finally, participants were asked to provide an open-ended response to the following prompt following each narrative, "Please explain your reactions to this scenario. Specifically, explain whether or not you believe this to be an example of workplace bullying and why you feel this way." Open-ended responses for each narrative were compiled and analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of how participants made sense of the narratives.

Results and Interpretations

Initial analyses tested whether there were gender differences or differences in responses based on whether participants had experienced workplace bullying prior to testing the research questions. No significant differences were found for these groups.

To answer RQ1, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in attributions made about the narrator across five narratives of workplace bullying. The assumption of sphericity was violated, as assessed by Mauchly's test of sphericity, $\chi 2(9) = 24.98$, $p < .01$. Therefore, a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied ($\varepsilon = .94$; Maxwell & Delaney, 2004). There were overall significant differences in perceptions of the narrator among the five workplace bullying narratives, $F(3.74, 755.60) = 55.83$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta 2 = .22$. Of note, the means for each narrative were above the midpoint (means range from 4.54 to 5.80 on a 7 point likert scale), showing that overall participants viewed the narrators' behaviors as relatively positive in each narrative (See Table 3).

Post hoc analyses using bonferonni adjustment showed there were differences in the extent to which the participants made positive attributions about the narrator when the level of clarity and emotionality is taken into account. Specifically, in Narrative 5 which included a moderate level of negative emotion and high levels of clarity, the narrator was perceived significantly more positively than in the other narratives. Similarly, in Narratives 1 and 2, which made no reference to emotion but were relatively clear, the narrators were viewed more positively than in Narratives 3 and 4, which contained multiple references to emotional reactions (see Table 3). Of note, Narrative 4 was considered relatively clear; however, participants viewed the narrator to be highly emotional. Therefore, in this case, it appears as though emotionality may have had a stronger influence on perceptions of the narrator's role in the narrative than did clarity, but further exploration would allow for more understanding of the relationship between clarity and emotionality and possible interaction between the two in informing our perceptions of targets who tell their stories of being bullied.

Responses to open-ended questions support these findings. Specifically, in response to Narrative 3, some participants sympathized with the narrator, however most participant comments made attributions regarding the narrator's level of sensitivity regarding the situation, e.g., "The only thing I can really tell is that the narrator is way too emotionally invested in whatever is going on," "I think that the problem may lie with the narrator's perception of the way her boss perceives her," and "I can't really understand what kind of attacks they were or if this person was just overly introverted and sensitive and clammed up at every tiny bit of resistance…like a turtle." Similarly, some participants sympathized with the narrator in Narrative 4 (e.g., "His actions had her working in fear") but other participants indicated that they felt the narrator was, at least in part, responsible for the situation (e.g., "They (the supervisor and narrator) both behave fairly inappropriately towards one and other," and "While the supervisor's behavior was inappropriate and manipulative, the narrator should have made her situation clear to him"). In

comparison, nearly all participants responded in support of the narrator in Narrative 5 (e.g., "The narrator had every right to make the statement that he's not her husband, boyfriend, or father," and "The narrator's standing up for herself, and the supervisor is still being a jerk").

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Positive Attributions of Narrator Across Narratives

Narrative	Positive Attributions of Narrator	
	M	*SD*
1: Lunch Hour	5.31_a	1.25
2: Critical Shadow	5.28_a	1.15
3: Alienated and Afraid	4.54_b	1.10
4: Crying Shame	4.75_b	1.35
5: I am your God	5.80_c	1.09

Note. Means that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ by bonferonni adjustment.

To answer RQ2, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in positive attributions made about the supervisor across five narratives of workplace bullying. The assumption of sphericity was violated, as assessed by Mauchly's test of sphericity, $\chi 2(9) = 35.03$, $p < .01$. Therefore, a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied ($\varepsilon = .92$; Maxwell & Delaney, 2004). There were overall significant differences in perceptions of the supervisor among the five workplace bullying narratives, $F(3.69, 763.22) = 60.43$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta 2 = .23$. Of note, the means for each narrative were below the midpoint (means range from 1.61 to 3.00 on a 7 point likert scale) showing that overall participants perceived supervisors' behaviors negatively in each narrative (See Table 4).

Post-hoc analyses using the bonferonni adjustment showed that there were differences among positive attributions made about the supervisors described in the five narratives. Specifically, the supervisor was seen most negatively in Narrative 5, which participants perceived to be high in clarity and moderate in narrator emotionality. The supervisor was given the most positive attributions in Narrative 3, which was lowest in clarity and highest in narrator emotionality. Narratives 1, 2, and 4, which were relatively moderate in levels of clarity, did not differ greatly in perceptions of the supervisor. That is, participants saw the supervisor as being at fault for the situation in these narratives, but not to as strong of a degree as they did with Narrative 5. In this case, clarity appeared to impact the participant's willingness to assign fault for bullying to the supervisor and emotionality of the narrator played a lesser role, however further research is needed to understand the relationship between clarity and emotionality in how we understand a bully's role in a target's telling of his/her story of being bullied.

Overall, open ended-responses indicate that participants viewed the supervisors' behaviors as problematic and unprofessional. However, participants were often hesitant to label the behaviors as bullying. Responses to the more coherent narratives were stronger in terms of assigning negative attributions to the supervisor. For example, the supervisor in Narrative 5 was given a variety of negative labels, (e.g., "bully," "complete jerk," "control freak," "complete lunatic," etc. In Narratives 1, 2 and 4, participants saw the supervisor's behavior as inappropriate. However, many participants thought the problem may be better attributed to poor management skills or personality rather than bullying (e.g., Narrative 1: "It just seems like he is an unpleasant person, not necessarily a bully"; Narrative 2: "I don't think the boss should have followed them or gotten as angry as he did but I can understand why he would be correcting and writing up the worker"). Finally, participants expressed difficulty in making judgments about the supervisor in Narrative 3 due to lack of clarity (e.g., "It seems probable to me that the supervisor

acted in an appropriate way and the narrator had personal issues that affected his/her judgment of what was really going on)."

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Positive Attributions of Supervisor Across Narratives

Narrative	Positive Attributions of Supervisor	
	M	*SD*
1: Lunch Hour	2.61_a	1.29
2: Critical Shadow	2.34_a	1.20
3: Alienated and Afraid	3.15_b	1.18
4: Crying Shame	2.33_a	1.29
5: I am your God	1.71_c	1.09

Note: Means that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ by bonferonni adjustment.

Finally, RQ3 explored if there were differences in what counts as bullying based on the way a narrative is told. This was answered using a repeated measures ANOVA. The assumption of sphericity was violated, as assessed by Mauchly's test of sphericity, $\chi 2(9) = 36.26$, $p < .001$. Therefore, a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied ($\varepsilon = .92$; Maxwell & Delaney, 2004). There were significant differences overall in perceptions of the supervisor among the five workplace bullying narratives, $F(3.68, 764.91) = 38.00$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta 2 = .15$. All narratives were clearly perceived to be examples of workplace bullying (means range from 4.82 to 6.29 on a 7 point likert scale; See Table 5).

Post hoc analyses using bonferonni adjustment found that all of the narratives were relatively equal in terms of perceptions of whether bullying had occurred except for Narrative 5. Specifically, Narrative 5 was perceived to be a stronger example of workplace bullying than the other four narratives (See Table 5). Thus, the narrative that was perceived to be highest in clarity and moderate in levels of emotionality was seen to be the best example of workplace bullying.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of Perceptions of Bullying Across Narratives

Narrative	Example of Bullying	
	M	*SD*
1: Lunch Hour	5.09_a	1.64
2: Critical Shadow	5.17_a	1.60
3: Alienated and Afraid	4.82_a	1.58
4: Crying Shame	5.02_a	1.78
5: I am your God	6.29_b	1.20

Note: Means that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ by bonferonni adjustment.

Specifically, participants reported that they believed Narrative 5 to be a clear example of workplace bullying because of the clarity of examples provided. For example participants said things such as, "Ok. Now *THAT* I can see as workplace bullying, since it involves public humiliation along with playing favorites." Many participants noted that the supervisor's claim that he was the narrator's "God" was a clear sign of bullying (e.g., "A person who thinks he is above treating his employees with anything less than respect, and thinks he is God should absolutely be reprimanded"). These open-ended responses reveal the importance of including clear examples to enhance the clarity of the narrative.

With the exception of Narrative 5, which participants viewed nearly universally to be an example of workplace bullying, statements of whether or not the narratives were examples of workplace bullying varied. Some participants felt that there was sufficient information to label the narratives as bullying, but others were more hesitant to label them as such. This hesitance to label the narratives as examples of workplace bullying was often due to insufficient information (e.g., Narrative 3, "I can't tell whether this is workplace bullying…The narrator should give more concrete examples"). Participants also at times expressed a desire to provide a different label for the situation (e.g., Narrative 4, "This not an example of workplace bullying because the other guy was just trying to help"; Narrative 1, "It just seems like he is an unpleasant person, not necessarily a bully"; Narrative 2: "This is not bullying. This is overreacting to confrontation."). Finally, some participants were hesitant to label the narratives as workplace bullying because they felt they didn't have a clear enough understanding of what workplace bullying is (e.g., Narrative 2: "Frankly, I am not sure what 'workplace bullying' is, so I can only apply the 'I know it if I see it standard', and this isn't it").

Discussion

This study found differences in perceptions of the narrator/target, supervisor/bully, and whether or not a situation was perceived as bullying depending on narrative type. Negative attributions were impacted by the degrees of clarity and emotionality expressed in the narratives. When narratives were communicated in ways reflective of clear and coherent narrative structure participants attributed more positive evaluations to the target and more negative evaluations to the bully. Participants were also more likely to label target experiences as workplace bullying when they were told clear narratives. This finding is in keeping with advice given to targets about telling clear and convincing stories when sharing their experience with others (Tracy, Alberts, & Riveras, 2007).

We also found that participants who expressed moderate emotion when relating their experiences were perceived more positively than those who included a discussion of how the experience negatively impacted them emotionally. For example, when participants discussed crying or feeling victimized, they were seen to be more at fault than targets who largely left emotion out of their narratives. This is problematic given that bullying experiences are traumatic and emotional in nature (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Stogstad, 1998; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004; Tehrani, 2004; Vartia, 1996). However, in organizations rationality is typically privileged over emotionality. The difficulty targets might have in tempering the emotions they experience make it so their experience is more likely to be discounted. In short, participants in this study felt it was acceptable for targets to be upset and frustrated, however not to the point where one would cry or engage in other outward displays of emotion. Given the level of abuse targets experience, a completely normal and natural response might be to cry and get angry. From the results of this study, targets who want to be viewed as acting appropriately in a professional context should limit the types of emotion disclosed to those considered appropriate in professional contexts, presenting a potential disconnect between the real and felt experience for targets. This study sheds light on the problematic of rationality and emotionality inherent in organizational life (Mumby & Putnam, 1992).

Implications

The focus of this study is on communication and how targets can communicate in ways that allow their stories to be heard and taken seriously. Findings show that for targets, constructing stories according to traditional narrative conventions of clarity and coherence is important to potentially resolve issues of workplace bullying and get organizational intervention. Telling clear and convincing stories with specific, concrete examples may best

allow practitioners to understand and respond in helpful ways. Although emotion is inherently tied to the experience of workplace bullying, targets able to talk about their experiences in more rational ways without overly emphasizing emotions may lead to more successful outcomes. Telling one's story in this way is helpful for organizational members responsible for intervening in bullying situations. Clear stories with concrete examples help human resource professionals and various others move forward in sanctioning bullies because a clear case can be made for intervention. Without clarity it makes it difficult for those with intervention power to know how to intervene.

Based on our results it is clear that targets who tell coherent narratives with moderate levels of emotion elicit more support from participants. However, targets who have experienced the trauma of repeated abuse may find it difficult if not impossible to put their experiences into traditional narrative form (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015). Targets may also find it quite challenging to avoid crying or discussing strong emotional reactions such as anger, hurt, or frustration they feel as a result of their mistreatment. "In stories told out of the deepest chaos, no sense of sequence redeems suffering as orderly, and no one finds purpose in suffering" (Frank, 1995, pp. 105).

Targets can be helped to tell more convincing stories. But this is only one part of the equation. Practitioners must recognize that not all stories are neatly told. Learning to hear stories of trauma and abuse differently is important so that experiences of extreme suffering in the workplace are recognized in all of their forms. In this way, targets struggling to put their suffering into words can be helped and organizations can create healthier environments for all employees. Additionally, when targets share incoherent stories, practitioners could ask questions that aid in understanding the situation instead of discounting the story and person telling it because they did not communicate about their experience well. Since stories are co-constructed approaching narratives of bullying as a joint communication process is a useful strategy to help organizations more effectively address it. If something about the experience is unclear, practitioners need to pose questions that help uncover whether the lack of clarity is due to a misunderstanding, something other than workplace bullying, or if the traumatic nature of bullying is causing the narrative to be poorly constructed. Ultimately, recognizing that all stories deserve to be heard is an important step toward helping to resolve issues of bullying in the workplace.

Limitations

Although this study provides important insights into telling convincing stories of workplace bullying it is not without its limitations. First off, the narratives were altered so the target reported on bullying originating from a supervisor in all cases. While this is reflective of the nature of bullying (Namie & Namie, 2009) where more people are bullied by a supervisor than a co-worker, perceptions of fault may differ based on power status. Participants may find the behavior of a bully even less appropriate if it comes from a co-worker rather than a supervisor. In order to better understand the influence of power dynamics on perceptions of fault, future research should examine the relationship between the hierarchical position of targets and bullies and perceptions of bullying.

Results show a potential interaction between emotionality and clarity in narrative structure so that moderate levels of emotional expression and high levels of clarity are ideal for targets of bullying to be believed in their telling of their stories of bullying. The current study design does not allow for an interaction effect to be tested statistically, however. Future research should examine the ways that these two narrative characteristics may work together in forming perceptions of workplace bullying.

Another limitation pertains to our use of Mturk to recruit participants. Although research supports the use of Mturk for soliciting and gathering diverse populations (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Burhmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Mason & Suri, 2011) the overall results of the study may be limited given that not everyone has access to a computer nor has worker status through Amazon.

A final limitation of this study is that participants were explicitly asked whether or not they felt these were examples of workplace bullying. While this was important to our study, it may have led participants to answer in what they deemed socially desirable ways. However, this question was asked last to help guard against leading participant responses. Despite these limitations, this study makes important contributions to the body of research on communication and workplace bullying.

Future Research

Future research should continue to examine narrative elements that impact perceptions of fault. While it is clear that clarity and emotionality impact perceptions of targets and bullies other factors may also impact these perceptions as well. For example, future research could examine the perceived heinousness of a particular act in addition to clarity and emotionality in order to gain greater insight into the communicative power of narrative in workplace bullying situations. A better understanding of what makes workplace bullying stories believable will help targets construct narratives that are more likely to resonate with listeners and change oppressive work situations.

Because all participants were U.S. citizens working in the United States, the implications of this research in differing cultural contexts is unknown. Examining how working adults from differing cultural perspectives perceive these narratives also represents a potentially fruitful area of inquiry. Specifically, including additional cultural level variables would allow for an understanding of how perceptions of workplace bullying may differ across cultures. Investigating cultural differences is an important research endeavor given the increasingly global nature of organizations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that the ways stories of workplace bullying are told impacts perceptions of targets and bullies as well as the degree to which we label experiences as bullying. Results revealed that targets who told coherent narratives were perceived most favorably. Bullies in coherent narratives were perceived most negatively. Conversely, sharing high levels of negative emotion led to less favorable perceptions of the target and more positive perceptions of the bully. This study advances our understanding of narrative telling and negative attributions in workplace bullying situations. The results have valuable implications for helping targets better communicate about their experiences. Understanding the nuances of communicating about painful work experiences is a vital step toward addressing and resolving instances of bullying in the workplace.

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Appendix A: Narratives

Narrative 1: Coherent Without Emotion

My supervisor was a person who I think was bullied and it was his turn to be the bully. He seemed to come from a certain background and didn't like himself. So, he tried to pretend like he was someone else. He was just mean. I had another coworker describe him as the angriest and nastiest person she had ever encountered. The person who was responsible for causing him problems on the job was still there and verbally attacked him. One time he got into it with me trying to enforce a half hour break for lunch. I said, "No, I've checked that with HR and they told me I had an hour.' And he said, "Well, they were wrong." I ended up going back over his head to HR and they said I had an hour. I showed our supervisor, the director of the department an e-mail saying I had an hour for lunch while we were in the negotiating stage of hiring me. She just wanted to push the e-mail aside. So, she seemed very much on my supervisor's side about a lot of things that went on. He was just a very nasty person. He gave me a chart he wanted me to start filling out documenting my break time and I just looked at it strangely. I said, 'Well, I'll try.' And he snapped at me and said, "You have to, you have to." It was so bad that there was someone who worked with us only a short amount of time and she even said, "You know, I think if you get a different job they'll treat you nicer than they do here."

Narrative 2: Coherent with Emotional Bully

When the company restructured I started working for a new boss. It started with him literally following me around. If I got up to go to the bathroom, he was on my heels. Everything I did he was following me. And people would mention to me that they noticed him following me. I didn't think anything of it at first because I was a new employee so I just figured that was the way he was. Then shortly after the company restructured I was given a new job. So, I was new to the position and there were some mistakes in my work, admittedly, but I was never trained on how to do my job. He would pull me into the office and tell me about the mistakes. I just thought it was because I was still new and that it was just regular feedback because he didn't indicate that the things I was doing were going to lead me to get fired. So, I took his criticism like a normal person would. But then he wrote me up instead of giving me a review and from that point forward everything I did was wrong even though I know that it wasn't. There was one specific incident where he was accusing me of doing something that I didn't do and so I defended myself. He got so angry with me that he started shaking. I thought he was going to hit me and so I left the room because it was just me and him in the room. He went into his boss's office and totally turned the story around on me, like it was my fault.

Narrative 3: Non-Linear with Emotional Narrator

I started buying my own property and was able to step back from the relationship because I could see that he would harm other people. I then realized that slowly but surely, because I had distanced myself from it because I wasn't that type of person. I didn't realize that I had become a victim, but I was. The friendship would be on his terms. He would move in and out of the friendship when it suited him. I realized in the end that it was only to gain more access to my weaknesses or to exacerbate my weaknesses so he could attack me. He enjoyed making me insecure and vulnerable. From then on it over an eighteen month period it gradually got worse and worse and I became alienated from the team. At team meetings I would feel that I couldn't speak. I felt isolated and afraid. Then other times I would gain my strength and pick myself up for a while. Then something would happen that would make me feel victimized all over again. In my job there was a lot of report writing. They could always pull your reports to patients and then it went from my senior to the manager. Then he developed alliances against me with several more people. I felt I was becoming more and more in this light and then it was impacting my health slowly, and it just went on from there, really.

Narrative 4: Coherent with Emotional Narrator and Bully

It wasn't every single day but at least once a week I would go home and cry. I'll share the worst thing he did to me. I developed a health problem. I was very sick so I would go home a lot. I had been gone so much that he just decided that I was quitting. One morning I walked in and said, "Good morning," and he ignored me. I thought, 'What did I do now?' I started working. I asked about a couple of things and he ignored me or gave one word answers. I thought, 'Ok, he is going to say something I just wish he would say it.' Finally, he turned to me and said, "I think that you have been very horrible the last few weeks. I don't need to be treated like that and I don't think you have the right to treat me like that. You act like you don't even care about the organization anymore. You act like you don't want to be here. If you don't want to be here, then get the fuck out! Just go ahead and leave! You don't want to be here, I sure as hell don't want you here." I just looked at him stunned and he said, "Oh now I pissed you off didn't I? Go ahead and say it." I just sat there because I was trying so hard not to let my emotions get the best of me. I just said I was sorry. I was so furious that I didn't know what to say. I excused myself and went outside and cried. I was out there trying to calm myself down when he came out and said, "Well I didn't mean to upset you. I just thought you were going to leave us and I just needed to know you weren't going to leave." He came up patted me on the back. He expected everything to be fine after that. I calmed myself down, went back inside, and tried to work. Then he was happy. He was laughing and telling jokes because he had gotten it off his chest. That is how it always worked with him.

Narrative 5: Coherent with Moderate Emotion of Narrator and Bully

If you were good at what you did he made you part of what he called the core team of people he relied on. There were benefits but there were also costs. You belonged to him. You were subject to whatever he decided to throw at you for whatever reason. If you did something bad you and everyone around you were going to know it because you were publicly criticized on a regular basis. He said he only did it because he cared about you. It's also hard to believe that someone cares about you when they're loudly screaming that you are fucking stupid. You spend so much of your time just trying to maintain some type of self-respect. You never know what's going to happen. It's hard to describe. Don was the owner of the company and something as simple as lunch was a big deal. He would insist that his core team sit down and have lunch together every day. But sixty percent of the time he would tear into me and rip me open about something I had supposedly done wrong right before lunch got there. He publicly screamed at me and humiliated me so by the time the food got there I was not in the mood to eat. I just wanted to get back to work and do what I needed to do to fix the problem. What I would usually do was take my lunch and put it in the refrigerator. Well, to him that wouldn't do. I had to eat with everybody else. I didn't want to eat when I was upset but if Don bought you lunch you had to go and eat with everyone else. You had to eat because he told you to. It got to one point where I said, "Don, you're not my father. You're not my husband. You're not my boyfriend. If I don't want to eat I'm not going to eat." And his response to me was "When you're here, I am your God. When you're in this building I am your God and you will do what I say." I never had anyone tell me they were my God before but that's really how he viewed himself.

Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 16-28

Squid or Chalkie? The Role of Self-identity and Selective Perception in Processing Tendentious "Hillbilly" Humor

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The current study used selective perception as a conceptual framework to examine how one's socio-cultural identification ("Hillbilly" or "Yuppie") guides interpretations and enjoyment of tendentious comedy. Two episodes of Squidbillies were screened- selected based on existing narrative analysis (Bowman & Groskopf, 2010) coupled with show writer interviews suggesting the target episodes to offer targeted-yet-humorous critiques on the "banality and absurdity of the [Yuppie] status quo." A theoretically causal model connecting viewer identification, character identification, character liking, perceived humorous intent, and enjoyment demonstrate that as one's "Yuppie" identification increases, enjoyment suffers due to the fact that they perceive the humor as more tendentious towards their own peer group. Results suggest that audiences might not be as open to humorous self-critique as assumed by past research.

Keywords: Identification, selective perception, Hillbillies, Yuppies, Squidbillies, tendentious humor

In 1974, Vidmar and Rokeach offered empirical evidence of the Archie Bunker effect – the notion that one's own worldview could influence one's selective perception of tendentious humor. In examining Norman Lear's critically acclaimed sitcom *All in the Family*, the researchers found that viewers' own bigotries had a significant impact regarding identification with the lead character Archie (the lovable bigot), or with supporting character Mike (the idealistic youth; Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974). While both high prejudice and low prejudice people reported high levels of enjoyment when watching *All in the Family*, their reasons for enjoying the show differed drastically. While respondents who identified as less bigoted enjoyed the show's constant portrayal of Archie as a boor, respondents identified as more bigoted enjoyed the show's portrayal of Archie 'telling it like it is.' As Vidmar and Rokeach explained:

> People who disliked Archie indicated that he is a bigot, domineering, rigid, loud, and that he mistreats his wife. Persons who liked Archie reported that he is down-to-earth, honest, hard-working, predictable, and kind enough to allow his son-in-law and daughter to live with him (1974, pp. 43-44).

These differential paths to enjoyment of the show – also supported by the show's five straight years on top of the Nielsen television ratings from 1971 to 1983 (Museum of Broadcast Communications, 2011) – led the researchers to conclude that audience members' selective perception of the characters was what allowed both groups of people to enjoy the program. The selective perception hypothesis (cf. Hastorf & Cantril, 1954) explains that when viewing an event, audiences' own cognitive biases cause them to perceive the situation according to their own beliefs. In the case of *All in the Family*, it is explained simply that high prejudice viewers did not see the ironic prejudice in Archie's demeanor as Lear likely intended, but rather they saw Archie as 'telling it like it is.' Likewise, those low prejudice viewers were more likely to enjoy the program because it made Archie – like many of their own contemporaries – look foolish for his bigoted and blundered views on the civil rights movement.

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Our research expands on this selective perception explanation for the enormous popularity of otherwise divisive programming by focusing on another widely stereotyped group: the (pejorative) Hillbilly. Selective perception is a useful theoretical perspective that offers background on audience perceptions of social groups and the subsequent effects of those biases.

Selective Perception

The selective perception hypothesis (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954) explains how audiences differentially process invariant media messages, explaining simply that an individual's own cognitive and affective biases color how one processes and responds to a given media portrayal. Selective perception effects have been studied extensively in relation to news media, including research on the hostile media bias (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985) – that audiences' prejudices of various social issues (cognitive and affective biases) predict their perceptions of media messages that make mention of those issues; even an innocuous message can be perceived as biased, even hostile towards one's personal views. These effects can be particularly intense when audiences have no control over the messages provided (Arceneaux, Johnson, & Murphy, 2012).

While a number of selective perception studies tend to focus on news media (see Feldman, 2014 for an overview), the basic tenets of the perspective have also been applied to entertainment programming. For example, research on news satire – programs such as *The Colbert Report* use the premise of a faux conservative news commentator in order to ridicule conservative politics – find that while conservatives and liberals both appreciate the show's humor, the former group perceives Colbert as having much stronger conservative values than the latter. In essence, conservatives view Colbert as merely teasing them, while liberals view Colbert as offering serious social commentary in a humorous format (LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009).

Many of the mechanics of Vidmar and Rokeach (1974) have been applied to entertainment programs with social commentaries purposefully embedded in their humor. For example, the early 1990s program *In Living Color* was created by African-American comedian Keenen Ivory Wayans and was described as a program on "black themes, in a Saturday Night Live-ish format' (Bunce, 1990, p. 14). As outlined by Cooks and Orme (1993), these themes portrayed extreme negative stereotypes of Black characters as an act of satire - with skits such as "The Home Boy Shopping Channel" (a place for petty criminals to sell their loot on television; a satire of Black crime), "Anton Jackson" (a drunken vagabond who shares his views on urban life; a satire of Black poverty), and "Homey D. Clown" (an ex-convict turned clown for hire who interlaces his performances with rants about social racism; a satire of Black pride). In their research, Cooks and Orme (1993) found that only the African-American respondents reported having any sense of identification with the show's characters (40% of the sample, compared to less than 1% of the non-Black respondents), which hindered the ability of non-Black audiences to understand the satirical nature of the show's stereotypes.

Hillbillies in the Media

Hillbilly stereotypes – the Appalachian-native country bumpkin often found "sitting on his front porch, barefoot, unkempt, unemployed, and unencumbered by the trappings of the modern world" (Bowman & Groskopf, 2010, para 2; also see Cooke-Jackson & Hansen, 2008; Frierson, 1998) – have been popular subjects of entertainment media for most of its modern history. Early silent films, comic strips, radio serials, television sitcoms, and cartoons have prominently featured the image of the Hillbilly as a target of tendentious humor, usually designed to show the ineptitude of the backcountry folk and/or the superiority of 'city living.' Specific examples of this include the television shows *Beverly Hillbillies* and *Kentucky Feud*, the comic strip "L'il Abner," and various Hillbilly portrayals in 1930s through 1950s Warner Bros. animated shorts (cf. Frierson, 1998). One is hard-pressed to find portrayals of Hillbilly characters as anything but the butt of social commentary. Although Magoc (1991) does offer that these portrayals could be construed as subversive critiques, for example juxtaposing the Hillbilly's appreciation for the environment with urbanization and socio-technological progress as an inherently virtuous development (an important note for the current study). Indeed, appropriation of the Hillbilly pejorative has seeped into environments beyond entertainment media – when it became known that then-U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld commonly referred to members of U.S. Congress as hillbillies, Georgia Senator Zell Miller, born and raised in the Georgia Appalachian region, wrote to express that such terminology from a man in Rumsfeld's authoritative position "disturbs me greatly" (as cited by Shipp, 2001).

Squids v. Chalkies. The recent portrayal of Hillbilly humor in *Squidbillies* is the focus of the current study, as it both represents the classic appropriation of the Hillbilly stereotypes outlined above (also see Whitaker, 2015), as well as the use of these same stereotypes as a way to critique modern culture. *Squidbillies* is an animated serial that is part of the regular line-up on The Cartoon Network; specifically their Adult Swim brand of cartoons. Adult Swim is a major brand for The Cartoon Network, regularly drawing in high ratings in late night timeslots, and consistently earning some of the largest cable television audience numbers for adults 18-34, 18-24, and men 18-34 and 18-24 (Seidman, 2010), with *Squidbillies* itself ranking as one of the 10 most popular telecasts for each of these audience segments (Gorman, 2009). The show follows the lives of the Cuyler family, a group of endangered land squids that inhabit the Appalachian region of northern Georgia. According to creators Jim Fortier and Dave Willis, squidbillies are "rednecks…they huff and they scratch lottery tickets; they're Hillbilly squids" whose diet consists largely of "mud pies and turpentine" (Fortier & Willis, 2008; Willis, 2010).

While the majority of episodes focus almost exclusively on the Cuyler family dynamic as it unfolds in the Appalachia region of north Georgia, two episodes in particular – "Reunited, and it Feels No Good" (Episode 49; Fortier, Willis, & Kelly, 2009) and "Not Without My Cash Cow!" (Episode 50; Fortier & Willis, 2009) – provide an opportunity to examine the selective perception hypothesis because they call attention to two distinct groups of people: Squids (Hillbillies) and Chalkies (Yuppies). Because of the salience of these two groups relative to each other in these episodes, viewers may find themselves self-identifying with one or the other group. That identification encourages viewers to understand the episodes and events therein through the lens of that identification, and to perceive the humor as either funny at best or offensive at worst.

In the aforementioned episodes, family patriarch Early is reunited with his cousin Durwood, a fellow land squid who has since married a suburban white woman and moved to the Atlanta metropolitan area. Early is the stereotypical "country bumpkin" (Bowman & Groskopf, 2010, para. 2) relegated to a life of dirt pies, alcoholism, and broken grammar. In contrast, Durwood is presented by the show's writers to be the representation of Yuppie culture, with his Bluetooth earpiece, cargo shorts, polo shirt, large SUV, and bottled water (Bowman & Groskopf, 2010). What makes these specific episodes unique is the manner in which the Hillbilly v. Yuppie comedy showoff develops. While Episode 49 is largely an exercise in Hillbilly derision (Fortier et al., 2009), Episode 50 shifts its tendentious focus to chiding the Yuppies for their inherent banality (Fortier & Willis, 2009; also see Bowman & Groskopf, 2010, for a more detailed recap of both episodes). In the context of selective perception based on self-identification, these particular episodes allow us to look both at how those identifying as Hillbillies might interpret the "Chalkie scourge" invading the mountains as the city encroaches on the simple life of the country, as well as how those identifying as Yuppies might enjoy the oft-ridiculous actions of the Squidbillies as the hilarious antics of backwoods mountain folk.

Middle-brow hillbilly humor. The program *Squidbillies* relies on a specific stereotype of the hillbilly within the context of a "middle-brow" comedy program to elicit audience response. The nature of a "middle-brow" context may also influence audience reactions to media content, as Gans (1977) explained that audience taste cultures influence different aesthetics to different audiences. Gans explored the notion of taste cultures to attempt to distinguish mass media audiences in terms of their content preference, with "low-brow" audiences preferring more basic and simple media fare (such as Hollywood action movies) and "high-brow" audiences preferring the aesthetics of high culture (such as literary classics and opera). For Gans, this audience preference distinction was rooted in more systematic socio-cultural differences between "low-brow" and "high-brow" audiences, suggesting that both audiences likely see great entertainment value in culturally proximal programming but very little value in culturally distal programming. Essentially, each audience segment is quick to write off the others' content as comparatively worthless.

In this low-brow/high-brow dichotomy, Gans (1977) also highlights the emergence of "middle-brow" content: content that contains many of the aesthetic devices of low-brow programming but includes the socio-cultural lessons of high-brow content. A contemporary example of this can be found in the Disney animated film *Wall-E* (2008), in which Disney essentially packages a larger critique of consumerism and environmentalism into a critically and commercially successful film widely marketed as a comparatively basic narrative about robots aimed and children and families (Murray & Heumann, 2009). As "middle-brow" content, the writers of *Wall-E* were able to successfully introduce larger cultural critiques in an unexpected fashion by wrapping the critical messages in a more "low-brow" animated fare. Similarly, we argue that the two focal episodes of *Squidbillies* for this study are

well-poised to offer social commentary along the same lines of *All in the* Family in that both can be considered as accessible-yet-innovative middle-brow content. In particular, these two episodes contain lewd jokes, violence, and a variety of other markers of (here, Hillbilly) disparagement typical low-brow comedy (Gans, 1977), yet they also introduce an unexpected juxtaposition of this group with the Yuppie audience assumed to comprise the viewing audience of the show - as explained by Fortier (personal communication, January 7, 2010), "the only difference between Durwood [the Yuppie character] and Early [the Hillbilly character] is that Durwood wears a suit and tie."

***Dispositions and stereotype*.** As alluded to in the work of both Vidmar and Rokeach (1974) and Cooks and Orme (1993), one mechanism behind the so-called Archie Bunker effect is that audiences develop dispositions towards the on-screen characters, often relying on their own set of attitudes and beliefs to form opinions of each character: in the case of Archie Bunker, an individual with a more conservative mind-set would be most likely to view the bigoted Archie as the show's protagonist; in the case of a character such as Homey D. Clown, an African-American audience member might feel a greater sense of identification with the character and thus, report increased liking. These predispositions are likely to impact the reactions that audiences have towards the consequences befalling these characters, as explained by disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976). Put simply, audiences who have a strong positive disposition towards a media character are most likely to enjoy programs in which those characters are rewarded or celebrated, and least likely to enjoy programs in which those characters are punished or maligned. Likewise, audiences should celebrate the punishment of hated characters, and loathe it when hated characters are reward. Although beyond the score of the current manuscript the basic tenets of disposition theory are well-supported in extant literature (see Raney, 2004, for an overview). In the context of the Archie Bunker, enjoyment of a program might be contingent on the extent to which an audience member can identify with the caricatured on-screen identity – for example, Cooks and Orme (1993) found that as African-American audiences were more likely to identify with on-screen characters in *In Living Color*, they also were able to interpret the humor as satirical (rather than disparaging) and as such, enjoy the programming more. By contrast, non-Black audiences tended to find humor (and by proxy, enjoyment) from the disparaging African-American stereotypes in the program.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

As Vidmar and Rokeach (1974) were most interested in how one's own views affected the selective perception process, the central question to our study is whether or not individuals perceive themselves as being particularly Hillbilly or Yuppie. Assuming these identifications can be recognized, the selective perception process (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954) can then be applied to make predictions regarding how both populations will interpret the show's humor. First, we expect self-identification to drive identification with either of the episode's two character sets. Related to this, we expect that identification with a character will drive favorable opinions of that character and his group. To the extent that one can self-identify as a Hillbilly or Yuppie, this self-perception should bias perceptions of in-group members (in the form of one of the show's two main characters) as being more similar and more attractive, and out-group members (in the form of the second of the show's two main characters) as being less similar and less attractive.

> H1: Individuals who self-identify more with a particular social group (e.g., Hillbilly or Yuppie) should identify more strongly with the relevant character from that social group than the relevant character from the other social group.
>
> H2: Individuals who identify with a character from one social group (e.g. Hillbilly or Yuppie) should have more favorable opinions of that character than the character from the other social group.

Then, we wonder how this identification will influence selective perception of the humor, and therefore enjoyment of the program. From their Burkeian analysis of the episodes' narratives combined with interviews with the show's writers, Bowman & Groskopf (2010) concluded that while on its surface *Squidbillies* seems to be "yet another satire about hillbillies and rednecks" (para. 1), further investigation shows that the show – or at least, these two episodes – is in fact directed at "[challenging] the superiority of the upper-middle class lifestyle" (para. 34). In other words, just as Lear intended *All in the Family* to be a commentary on the absurdity of racism in the civil rights era, Fortier and Willis intended *Squidbillies* to be a commentary on the absurdity of the hegemonic assertion that yuppies are

inherently better than hillbillies – a commentary notably initiated in similar programs (which often used hillbillies as an oppositional force to modernization; cf. Magoc, 1991). Thus, simple logic from disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976) would lead us to believe that individuals self-identifying as Hillbillies should enjoy the show more so than those self-identifying as Yuppies, as the target of the show's tendentious humor is the Yuppies. Disposition theory explains enjoyment as a function of our feelings about a show's characters and the events that befall those characters; to the extent that identification with characters positively influences disposition towards them (as evidenced most clearly in research on sports fandom, e.g. Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976), we expect Hillbillies to enjoy the show significantly more than Yuppies.

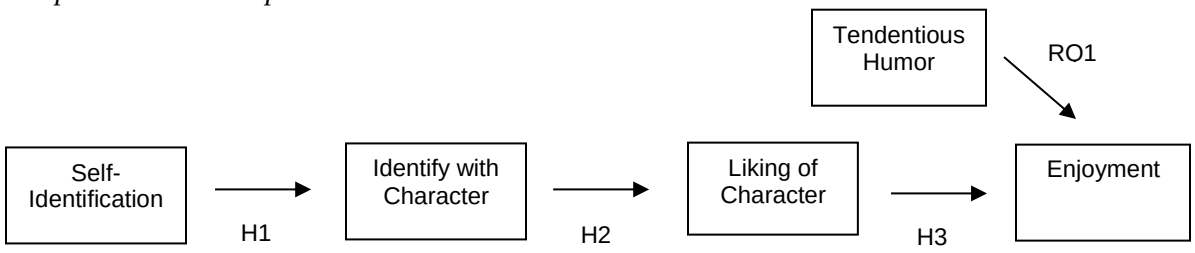
> H3: Individuals who report favorable opinions of Hillbilly characters should enjoy the show more so than those with favorable opinions of Yuppie characters.

At the same time, Vidmar and Rokeach (1974) did not find significant differences in enjoyment of *All in the Family* between individuals self-identified as low-prejudice or high-prejudice. In fact, their intent was not to identify differential reactions to the program, as anecdotal and industry data consistently showed the program to be among the most popular of the 1970s. Rather, their focus was to identify the mechanisms as to how these disparate populations came to enjoy the show; that is, what elements of the show were these populations selectively attending to in order to arrive at enjoyment? In terms of selective perception, it was argued that both audiences enjoyed the show because they chose to perceive it as being in line with their own world view – bigots saw Archie Bunker as "telling it like it is" and liberals saw his son-in-law Mike as a voice of reason. However, and in line with our own understanding of disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976), it makes sense that one's subjective interpretation of the show's humor as tendentious or not would play a role in enjoyment outcomes, as suggested by Zillmann and Bryant (1980). Recall that disposition theory predicts enjoyment to be highest when liked characters are rewarded and disliked characters are punished; in the case of humor, enjoyment should be highest when tendentious humor is directed at characters with whom one least identifies with. More specifically, one's interpretation of the show's humor as well as the show's characters should moderate the relationship between self-identification and enjoyment.

> RQ1: Will an individual's interpretation of the tendentious nature of the show's humor moderate the relationship between favorable opinions of show characters and enjoyment?

Our hypotheses and research questions are presented in a path model specified below (Figure 1):

Figure 1. *Proposed theoretical path model.*



Method

Participants

Participants were $N = 80$ student respondents from a small, private Southeastern college in the southern Appalachians. Sixty-six percent ($n = 53$ were female) and 34 percent ($n = 27$) were male, with an average age of 20.7, $SD = 1.52$. Average hours spent watching television (both traditional and Internet or mobile television) was $M = 15.4$ hours, $SD = 21.3$; the modal response for viewing was 4.00, and more than 75 percent of the sample watched television at or under the sample average. Reality television (17.5 percent), sitcoms (17.5 percent), and

police dramas (15 percent) were listed as the favorite genres of study respondents, with westerns (28.8 percent) and soap operas (18.8) listed as the least favorite.

Procedure

Participants were invited to a screening of "a popular animated series" in exchange for class credit or a raffle for a $10 gift card to their college bookstore. Screenings were held in a typical lecture-style classroom with a maximum seating capacity of about 100 people. After all participants signed an informed consent form, a survey was distributed asking basic demographic information and questions assessing their identification as a Hillbilly or Yuppie. Both episodes of *Squidbillies* were shown (total runtime of approximately 23 minutes), and following the screening participants completed a survey packet with questions about character identification (of the central characters of both episodes, the hillbilly Early and the yuppie Durwood), enjoyment of the shows, and general opinions of Hillbillies and Yuppies (the general opinions questions were used as scale validations, and were not included in further analysis) .

Measures

Self-identification. Self-identification was measured using an 18-item, six-response semantic differential scale that asked respondents to indicate which of two polar options they preferred related to a variety of statements. To create this scale, individuals were solicited via Facebook and in undergraduate interpersonal communication courses at the host institution to respond to prompts asking them to report "the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word (Hillbilly, Yuppie)." These responses were aggregated and thematic analysis was used to find emergent concepts. Word clouds using the raw list of responses for both prompts were created to give a visual example of the most-prominent words listed. Sample concepts from these analyses included speech patterns (i.e., accents, rate of speech, formality of communication), location (i.e., living in the North or South, country or city, and rural or urban areas), and economic status (i.e., clothing, money, vehicles driven).

These words were transformed into phrases, with sample items including "Do people think that you speak (with a heavy Southern accent; with a heavy Northern accent)," "If you had the option, would you choose to live (in a small rural area; in a large urban area)," "Do people perceived you as "being dirt poor; being filthy rich)." The six response options were presented with no value affixed to them; that is, respondents circled one of six "x" marks between each set of responses. Higher scores indicated that respondents identified more as Yuppies, and lower scores indicated that respondents identified more as Hillbillies. The 18-item measure had a scale reliability of α = .825, with a sample mean of M = 3.69, SD = .70 and was normally distributed (skewness = -.534, kurtosis = .589).

Identify with character. Borrowing from Vidmar and Rokeach (1974), respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they felt the values of Early or Durwood (or neither) were closer to their own. The variable was dummy-coded "0" for identification with Early and "1" for identification with Durwood. Of the n = 76 who identified with one of the two characters, 92 percent felt that Durwood's Yuppie values were more like their own (M = .92, SD = .27) and the variable was heavily skewed negative with a tight peak (skewness = -3.19, kurtosis = 8.37). Other potential identifications were addressed, including whether or not respondents admired one character over another, liked one character over another, or thought that one character made more sense than the other; these questions were used in a parallel study and are not reported in this paper.

Liking of character. Measuring the liking of characters was done in two steps. First, participants were asked to complete the 15-item McCroskey and McCain (1974) interpersonal attractiveness scale for both Early and Durwood. The response options were modified to a six-response option of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." While all three dimensions of the scale were employed – social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, and task attractiveness – only the social attractiveness dimension was used in the current study. Reliability for this five-item subdimension was acceptable for both implementations of the scale (α_{Early} = .754, $\alpha_{Durwood}$ = .722). Respondents appeared to like Durwood (M = 3.21, SD = 1.16) more so than Early (M = 2.87, SD = 1.31), $t(79)$ = -2.57, $p < .05$, and both variables were normally distributed (Early: skewness = .205, kurtosis = -.877; Durwood: skewness = -.289, kurtosis = -.703).

To create one continuous measure of social attractiveness for our path analysis, three steps were taken. First, scores for Durwood were subtracted from scores for Early. Then, five scale points were added to the outcome

measure. Finally, all scores were multiplied by -1 so that more negative scores would mean that one likes Early more than Durwood, with scale limits of -10 (maximum liking of Early, minimum liking of Durwood).

[(Early SA score – Durwood SA score) + 5] * -1

Average score for liking was M = -4.66, SD = 1.17, suggesting that participants slightly favored Durwood over Early; the measure was normally distributed (skewness = .029, kurtosis = 1.67).

Tendentious humor. Tendentious humor was measured by creating an eight-item, six-response Likert-style scale created by the researchers to assess the extent to which the humor in the show was perceived as harmful or victimizing toward one character and the social class that he represents. Sample items included "The humor in the show intended to demean one group of people at the expense of another" and "It was clear to me that the humor was meant to victimize people." Higher scores indicate that respondents felt the humor was increasingly tendentious. The scale reliability was α = .859 with a mean of M = 4.13, SD = 1.14, and the composite score was normally distributed (skewness = -.482, kurtosis = -.167).

Enjoyment. Enjoyment was assessed using five items culled from Raney and Bryant's (2002) film enjoyment scale, adapted for assessing enjoyment of a television comedy. The scale used six-response Likert-style items with higher scores indicating higher enjoyment levels. Sample items included "The jokes in this show were hilarious," "Overall, how much did you enjoy watching the show?" and "How much would you like to see more cartoons from this series?" The scale reliability was α = .957, with a mean of M = 3.41, SD = 1.53, and the composite score was normally distributed with a slightly flat distribution (skewness = -.079, kurtosis = -1.31).

Results

To examine the questions as presented in Figure 1, path analysis was performed using AMOS 18.0 modeling software. Path analysis allows us to test both the individual hypotheses (the different links in the model) as well as the overall relationship of the links in terms of model fit. Significance tests with a critical p-value of .05 are used to assess the individual beta-weights in the model, and overall model fit is assessed using chi-square goodness-of-fit test (a test of the null hypothesis that the observed model fits perfectly with the theoretical model) and several fit indices, including CMIN/df (a minimum discrepancy statistic, which should be less than 2 according to Byrne, 1989), CFI (comparative fit index, which should be close to 1 according to Bentler, 1990), and RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation, recommended to be lower than .08 according to Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

As the brunt of our literature review focuses specifically on the nature of Hillbilly stereotyping, it is curious to note that respondents in our study – while living in the southern Appalachian region of the U.S. – did not identify as Hillbillies as was expected *a priori*. Rather, the modal score from our identification composite measure was 4 and the median score was 3.78 (on a six-point scale); in other words, our sample identified more so as Yuppies than as Hillbillies (reasons for this surprising skew are presented in the Discussion section). We note this because for the balance of our results and discussion, we frame our data in terms of how Yuppies responded to *Squidbillies*, as this is in effect the population we (unintentionally) over-sampled.

The first hypothesis predicted that individual's self-identification with either Hillbillies or Yuppies would be associated with which character (Early or Durwood) they identified more strongly. The beta-weight between these two indices was significant and positive, as predicted (r = .529, p < .001), indicating that respondents who identified more as Yuppies were significantly more likely to identify with Durwood, the Yuppie character, and those tending to identify as Hillbillies were more likely to identify with Early, the Hillbilly character (though as mentioned earlier, that number was too small for meaningful analysis). These results offer evidence in support of H1.

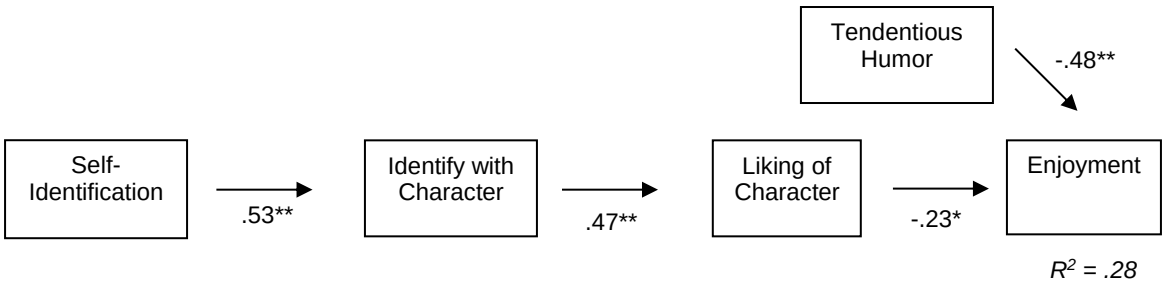
The second hypothesis predicted that identification with a character would lead to more favorable opinions of that character. The beta-weight between these two indices was significant and positive, as predicted (r = .371, p < .001). Respondents who liked Durwood better felt that Durwood was more socially attractive than Early (as those who liked Early better felt that he was more socially attractive), offering support for H2.

The third hypothesis predicted that individuals who had more favorable opinions of the Hillbilly character should enjoy the show more than individuals who had more favorable opinions of the Yuppie character. As our data suggested that far more favorable opinions of Yuppie characters were present, we tested the inverse of this

hypothesis – that individuals who reported favorable opinions of the Yuppie character (i.e., Durwood) would enjoy the show less than individuals who report favorable opinions of the Hillbilly character (i.e., Early). The beta-weight between these measures was significant and negative, as predicted (r = -.230, p < .05). Interpreted, respondents who had more favorable opinions of Durwood were less likely to enjoy the show. Our data provide evidence to support H3.

Our lone research question examined the role of tendentious humor in moderating the relationship specified in H3. A direct relationship between the tendentious humor composite and enjoyment composite was observed (β = -.484, p < .001). However, in order to test for moderation, regression analysis was employed looking at (a) the direct relationship between character liking and enjoyment, (b) the direct relationship between tendentious humor and enjoyment, and (c) the interaction of tendentious humor and character liking on enjoyment. For evidence of moderation, all three would need to be significant in a stepwise regression. While (a) and (b) were found, (c) was not significant (β = -.168, p = .460). Thus, while interpretations of humor as tendentious have a direct negative impact on enjoyment, this effect does not interact with one's opinions of the show's characters.

Figure 2. *Observed path model, with coefficients and goodness-of-fit indices.*



χ^2 = 8.72, p = .190; CMIN/*df* = 1.45; CFI = .939; RMSEA = .076
* = p < .05; ** = p < .01

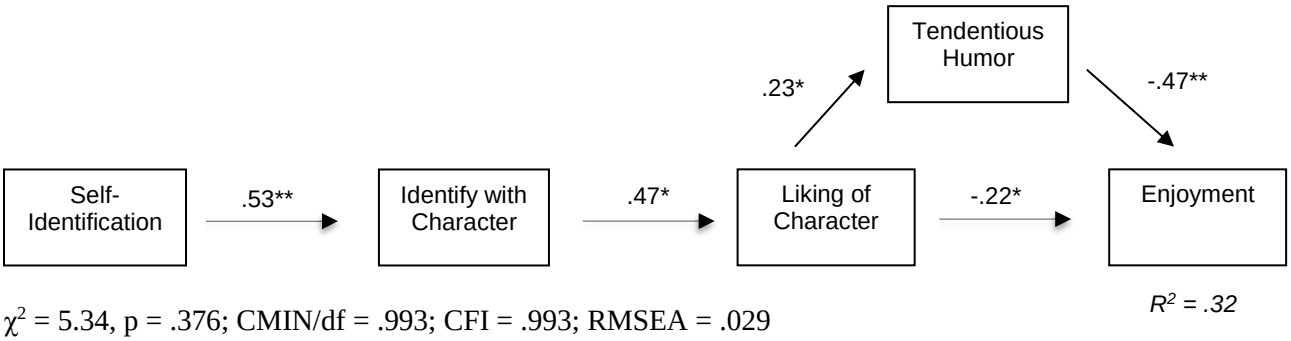
While our hypotheses are supported individually, perhaps more compelling is their ability to form a coherent and logical path model that delineates how self-identification as a Hillbilly or a Yuppie influences enjoyment. For this, overall model fit was assessed using goodness-of-fit indices from AMOS 18.0. Data failed to reject the null assumption that the data fits perfectly with the theoretical model (χ2 = 8.74, p = .189) and all fit indices were within acceptable ranges (CMIN/df = 1.46; CFI = .942; RMSEA = .076). Thus, we conclude that the observed data fits our proposed theoretical model. In other words, the degree to which one self-identifies as a Yuppie drives his or her identification with Durwood (the Yuppie character), which leads to increased liking of Durwood. However, Bowman & Groskopf (2010) demonstrated that because the show's humor is disparaging toward Yuppies, enjoyment for those who identify as Yuppies suffers; this contention is supported in part by the strong negative correlation between tendentious humor and enjoyment, see Figure 2. The overall model explained 28 percent of the variance in enjoyment.

Post-hoc analysis

While not hypothesized in our initial study logic, it seems logical that a direct relationship might exist between character liking and tendentious humor. That is, as one begins to like one character over another, this association might cause one to reinterpret the humor of a show toward a given character and his group as tendentious or not – similar to the hostile media bias effects discussed in Feldman (2014). Specifically we might expect that as one begins to like Durwood (due to one's self-identification as a Yuppie and subsequent identification with Durwood as a fellow Yuppie) one might reinterpret the show's humor as more tendentious toward that social group (as the show has been interpreted to be rather damning toward Yuppies, as intended by Fortier, personal communication, January 7, 2010; see also Bowman & Groskopf, 2010). To account for this potential relationship, a path was specified between character liking and tendentious humor, and both the individual path significance and overall model fit were re-assessed.

With the revised model, we see a signifiant positive association between character liking and tendentious humor (r = .230, p < .05). This suggests that as liking towards a character increases (in this case, the Yuppie character), the humor in the show was interpreted as increasingly tendentious towards that character (again, in this case the Yuppie character). This finding is particularly applicable to the current study, as prior research (Bowman & Groskopf, 2010) suggests the two episodes of *Squidbillies* viewed in this study are particularly disparaging toward Yuppies; recall that higher liking scores indicate more liking of Durwood (the Yuppie character). As with the original proposed model, data again fail to reject the null assumption that the data fits perfectly with the theoretical model (χ2 = 5.34, p = .376) and all fit indices were well within acceptable ranges (CMIN/df = 1.07; CFI = .993; RMSEA = .029). The revised model explained 32 percent of the variance in enjoyment, see Figure 3.

Figure 3. *Observed path models of revised model, with coefficients and goodness-of-fit indices.*



χ^2 = 5.34, p = .376; CMIN/df = .993; CFI = .993; RMSEA = .029
* = p < .05; ** = p < .01

Discussion

Data in our study supported the hypothesized relationships between self-identification, character identification and liking, perceived humorous intent, and enjoyment. Using logic from the selective perception hypothesis, we found that viewers who self-identified as Yuppies were more likely to identify with and like the Yuppie character Durwood in our two episodes of *Squidbillies*. In turn, this increased identification and liking resulted in significantly lower enjoyment scores, as the show's humor was interpreted as being particularly tendentious towards Durwood and Yuppies. This data is particularly compelling in light of Bowman & Groskopf's (2010) analysis, which used the dramatistic pentad (Burke, 1945; 1950) paired with personal interviews with the show's writers to determine that indeed these two episodes of Squidbillies were particularly crafted to invite a largely Yuppie audience along for a critique of themselves and their own culture – and perhaps, to learn something about themselves in the critique. Unfortunately for producers, data from our study suggests that Yuppies – or at least, those Yuppies identified herein – did not enjoy being the targets of derision, and in fact enjoyment suffered as identification with Yuppies characters increased. This negative relationship suggests perhaps that the eventual goal of the tendentious humor is potentially lost on the very audience for whom it was intended. Put simply, Yuppies perceived the show (rightfully) as being targeted at them, and their perception of the show's humor as tendentious had a negative effect on their enjoyment. This seems to be somewhat in contrast to Vidmar and Rokeach's (1974) results which showed that members of both salient groups enjoyed the show equally, based on individuals' selective perception that the target of tendentiousness was the outgroup, not their ingroup. Here, those who identified as Yuppies correctly identified the target of tendentious humor as the ingroup, rather than selectively perceiving the humor to be making fun of the Hillbillies (outgroup). Notably, this could also be the result of a boomerang effect due to having been immediately primed to think about their ingroup membership at the start of the study, which might have resulted in a more defensive position towards this temporarily salient identity.

Beyond finding support for the hypothesized model, our data made two additional contributions to the literature on audience responses to entertainment media. First, we developed a stable, reliable and seemingly valid metric to assess one's identification as Hillbilly or Yuppie. While this might seem to be a rather niche contribution, we know of no other research that has attempted to identify these strata of social identification. While the scale

needs to be replicated and further developed in future research – most notably, confirmatory factory analysis should be employed to further test for the scale's validity and stability – any work examining the portrayal of these two groups could benefit from an understanding of how audience members identify with each. Second, our study used concepts from Zillmann and Bryant's (1980) work on tendentious humor (Freud, 1908, 2008 trans.) to develop a reliable measure of one's interpretations of show humor as more or less tendentious, which might aid researchers focusing on how humorous intent is processed by audience members. For example, one of the central tenets of disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976) involves judgments of the righteousness of outcomes befalling show characters. In sitcoms, outcomes are often tied to what results from the witty banter between liked and disliked characters. To this end, more careful focus on tendentiousness should strengthen theoretical models that aim to understand enjoyment of situational comedies and other similar programming.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

A natural extension of this research would be to replicate the revised model with populations that might have stronger identification towards Early – the Hillbilly character in our study. Such a replication should find that increased Hillbilly humor should increase identification with and liking of Early (the Hillbilly character), which should have a positive effect on enjoyment as these individuals should delight in the derision of the Yuppie character Durwood; an effect that should intensify as Hillbilly viewers interpret the show's humor as increasingly tendentious. We can offer several anecdotal reasons why our participants did not identify with Early, most salient being the fact that students in our sample tended to be from wealthier communities in Georgia (both suburban and rural), and are of a socio-economic status that affords them attendance at small, private college – unlikely students that would see a lot in common with the hillbilly Early character (notably, the host institution does have students from all over the state). In addition, it may be the case that participants did not want to express identification towards a Hillbilly character in a social setting (a college theater, and on a survey being collected by researchers who are not from the region) – thus, social desirability effects could have been at work here. Future research might also consider looking at Yuppie groups from more distal populations, such as folks who do not live in Appalachia. One could argue that a more distal population may stronger or weaker conceptions of a Hillbilly through their lack of real-world exposure to the stereotype. One cannot overlook the fact that the Hillbilly portrayals in *Squidbillies* are likely far more salient to individuals from Appalachia (and surrounding regions) than Northerners. In fact, the fictitious setting of *Squidbillies* is a small, isolated Appalachian county in the same geographic location as the host institution (one of the key inspirations for conducting the study in the first place). By contrast, individuals from Appalachia might be expected to have more experience encountering and processing so-called Hillbilly stereotypes and might possess more sophisticated heuristics regarding the stereotypes that influence enjoyment.

While our data were found to be a strong fit to the theoretical model, we recognize the potential for perceived humorous intent – the measure of tendentious humor in our study – to be explaining a large portion of variance in its own right. This being said, our revised model more clearly demonstrates how selective perception fuels one's perceptions of humor as tendentious or not, but future research should continue to replicate and extend this model to more fully understand the relationship between self-identification, character identification, and perceptions of humor as they affect enjoyment. Related to this, we might also consider the relative length of exposure to these programs. In the short-term, our two episodes of *Squidbillies* were only about 30 minutes in total length, which might suggest that any identification effects could be rather temporary; notably, this would be representative of a normal viewing period for the program. In the long-term, we note that the content of these two episodes is unique as compared to the show's larger themes (usually focused more singularly on Hillbilly humor), and thus we might wonder how the identification and perception effects in the current study might replicate with increased exposure to the program's other episodes.

Notably, all show screenings were done en masse, with anywhere between 30 and 50 people in each session. Past work on audience presence in general (Zajonc, 1965; 1980) and how being in an audience can affect enjoyment of a spectator event (Hocking, 1982; Hocking, Margreiter, & Hylton, 1977) has suggested audience presence to serve as a significant predictor of arousal and enjoyment. To control and quantify this effect, future research should consider the addition of an isolated viewing experimental condition.

Finally, we recognize that our measure of identification was restricted only to examining the social attractiveness dimension of interpersonal attractiveness (McCroskey & McCain, 1974) – which might have made

the assumption that both Hillbillies and Yuppies are social groups with similarly valenced social connotations. For example, socio-economic status is the variable that most clearly distinguishes both social groups, with Yuppies often being viewed as being of a higher SES and thus, more desirable – for example, Eckes (2002) suggested that the pejorative Yuppie stereotype is often associated with being envious of the other. While the measure was adequate enough in terms of face validity and variance to help us understand character identification, other measures of parasocial interaction in passive media (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985) and character attachment and relationships in interactive media (Banks & Bowman, 2016) should be considered in replication.

Conclusion

Our study proposes a fusion between the selective perception hypothesis (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954) and disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976) to demonstrate how one's self-identification drives interpretations of humor as tendentiousness, and the eventual effect of this process on enjoyment. Specifically, our study examined how individuals identifying as one group – in this case, Yuppies – were negatively affected by perceptions of show humor as being increasingly tendentious toward that group. Ironically, the show was written specifically for this audience as a way for them to safely critique themselves (as is the role of tendentious humor, cf. Freud, 2008:1905), yet that critique seems to have fallen on selectively deaf ears – or at least, unentertained ones.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 29-42

Crafting a Culture of Patient Safety: Structuring Physicians' Medical Error Disclosure and Apology

Heather J. Carmack

Hospitals across the country are embracing a new medical culture that privileges patient safety. Part of this ideological shift is an imperative for physicians to offer explanation and apology when a medical error occurs. Relying on structuration theory and organizational culture, this article examines a hospital's medical error disclosure and apology program, exploring how the program ultimately structures not only how doctors and the hospital communicate about medical errors, but also creates an organizational culture of patient safety. Specifically, the disclosure and apology program structures a culture of patient safety by crafting a shared discourse, establishing order and control, and legitimizing organizational ideologies.

Keywords: medical errors, structuration, organizational culture, disclosure, apology

Physicians practice medicine in the space between two statements in the Hippocratic Oath: "Do no harm" and "Whatever I see and hear, professionally or privately, which ought not to be divulged, I will keep secret and tell no one" (Strathern, 2005, p. 11). Medical errors are examples of instances which physicians may see, hear, or be involved in that often demand silence. Practicing medicine in the space between those two statements has led to a medical culture of "naming, shaming, and blaming" (Nordenberg, 2000, para. 28), where physicians are often too concerned about malpractice litigation and being labeled "bad" doctors to talk about their mistakes. In their landmark study on medical errors, the Institute of Medicine proposed that health practitioners and hospitals move away from a culture of secrecy to a culture of patient safety (Kohn, Corrigen, & Donaldson, 1999). In a culture of secrecy, physicians and hospital administrators offered patients and their families "cheap grace," where they ask for forgiveness without disclosing, apologizing, or making amends for their error (Berlinger & Wu, 2005). Conversely, a culture of patient safety strives for "true grace" by moving toward a culture that openly communicates errors. By openly communicating about errors, hospitals may be able to reduce medical error instances (The Joint Commission, 2005).

Over the past twenty years, communication scholars have slowly explored the communicative nature of medical error experiences, with research becoming more abundant over the past decade. This line of research focuses on how physicians construct and enact responses to mistakes (Mizrahi, 1984), how they disclose medical errors (Allman, 1998; Hannawa, 2009; Petronio, 2006), how physicians negotiate the aftermath of errors (Carmack, 2010, 2014; Noland & Carl, 2006), and how practitioners are socialized to communicate errors (Noland & Carmack, 2015a, 2015b; Noland & Rickles, 2009). This line of research emphasizes informally disclosing medical mistakes, but has yet to explore how health providers and administration make sense of and talk about disclosing and apologizing for medical errors as a result of organizational policy and hospital culture. The study of organizational culture is not a new phenomenon (e.g., Eisenberg & Riley, 2001; Schein, 2010; Schrodt, 2002; Witmer, 1997), although its use in studying communication in health care settings is almost non-existent (Apker, 2011, Groves, Meisenbach, & Scott-Cawiezell, 2011). Scholars have studied how, theoretically and practically, organizational culture is created and maintained in organizations, focusing on emotion management (Carmack, 2008; Scott & Meyers, 2005; Waldron & Krone, 1991), organizational change (Scott, 1997), and customer interactions (Larkin, 1990), but these investigations primarily focused on non-health based organizations. Scholars have yet to explore the communicative micropractices in large bureaucratic health organizations that must balance the business and care elements of health and healing.

This study spotlights one hospital, known as MidSouth Hospital, which crafts a culture of patient safety through the hospital's disclosure and apology program. I begin with a theoretical discussion of how organizational policies structure, create, shift, and maintain organizational culture, theoretically tying together organizational culture and structuration theory. This marriage of organizational culture and structuration theory allows scholars to focus on how the micropractices of the organization impact the macropractices of care (Groves et al., 2011). After

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an explanation of my research practices, I explore how MidSouth Hospital providers and administrators make sense of the program. Finally, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this program.

Structuring Patient Safety through Organizational Policy

Organizational realities and actions are crucial to understand because they "draw attention to webs of interwoven social forces—market patterns, institutional practices, lived experiences of individuals—the locus of observation expands to include the hegemonic and material constraints that often lie beyond the awareness of the individual" (Harter, 2005, p. 191). These organizational realities must be constituted and maintained by the organization in order to create rules and resources for organizational members (Giddens, 1984). To understand the MidSouth Hospital disclosure and apology program, we must investigate how organizational policies shape, enable, and constrain the construction of organizational discourses.

Organizational policies, procedures, and other organizational discourses communicate organizational rules to organizational members (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). Organizational discourses are used specifically for the purpose of perpetuating hierarchies, structuring identities, and constructing identifications or divisions among individuals in an attempt to (re)create an organization's ideology. Not only do policies and procedures provide the rules of the system, they also provide the knowledge needed to negotiate resources (Kirby & Krone, 2002). Organizational structures, then, coincide with organizational policies, procedures, and documents, which serve the purpose of communicating organizational behaviors to individuals (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). Organizational discourses, often with the assistance of structures, display the patterned behavior required by the organization.

These organizational policies, procedures, and discourses culminate in the creation and maintenance of an organizational culture. Broadly, organizational culture is the process of patterning human behavior and meaning (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001). Organizational culture focuses on how the symbolic nature of communication is presented in organizations, providing organizational members scripts for how to enact the roles, rules, and values of the organization (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001; Trujillo, 1985). Rather than seen as a static concept, organizational culture is an interactive, socially constructed experience where multiple organizational stakeholders participate in the creation and maintenance of culture (Ford & Etienne, 1994). Culture is communicated through a variety of discourses and material symbols, with everything from logos and slogans to the physical layout of offices communicating an organization's culture (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). Scholars studying organizational culture focus on how organizational micropractices become ingrained in an individual as well as how the individual fosters the organization's culture through the performance of organizational roles and values (Trujillo, 1985).

For many hospitals, that translates into a "culture of patient safety." This specific organizational culture emphasizes:

> designing systems that prevent, detect, and minimize hazards and focus on system errors and remedies within a "blame-free" environment. Blame-free does not mean individuals are never subject to corrective action. The emphasis is on structuring programs so that jobs and working conditions are designed for safety, that processes, equipment, and supplies are standardized, and that reliance on memory is discouraged. (Cornett, 2006, p. 83)

In order to create and maintain a culture of patient safety in hospitals, practitioners and administrators must find a way to structure policies, procedures, rules, and rituals that encourage organizational members to practice medicine in a "blame-free" environment. Reduction of errors and increases in safety are important outcomes in this culture.

Structuration Theory

Knowing and understanding the structuring of a particular organization is central to understanding the ways in which discourses, norms, and power are (re)produced and negotiated. Giddens' (1979, 1984) structuration theory provided a theoretical vocabulary through which to understanding how the apology program bureaucratizes experiences. It is in the spaces where discourses, norms, and power relations intersect where we can begin to explore how the duality of structure, agency and structures, are (re)produced or challenged (Giddens, 1979, 1984).

Duality of structure is enacted and embodied differently depending on the structural form of an organization. By focusing on how individuals make sense of organizational meanings and normative sanctions, we can see duality of structure in action (Giddens, 1984).

Structuration theory negotiates the inherent tension between social structures and human agency, acknowledging the inter-relationship between them. Awareness of actions and structures is a crucial part of the duality of structure (Banks & Riley, 1993; Browning & Beyer, 1998). Humans are knowledgeable actors, aware in some form or fashion of their actions and the subsequent consequences, but, at the same time, are constrained by the structural conditions that control their actions (Giddens, 1979). This is one of the reasons structuration theory provides a useful vocabulary to understand organizational policies; the focus on awareness means that individuals not only monitor their own action, but also monitor contexts (Browning & Beyer, 1998), which highlights how structure is embedded in interactions as well as how it perpetuates or challenges a social world (Howard & Geist, 1995).

How patterned human behavior is enacted depends on interpretive schemes, "standardized elements of stocks of knowledge, applied by actors in the production of interaction" (Giddens, 1979, p. 83). Individuals' stocks of knowledge are based on the continuous (re)production of organizational rules and resources, allowing them to make sense of specific experiences, make decisions, take action, and justify those actions (Weick, 1995). Focusing on three key aspects of the organization-- signification, domination, and legitimation—helps to examine how organizational members make sense of issues of control, agency, and knowledge (re)production. These three elements create an institutional analysis specific for the organization by placing in suspension the skills and awareness of actors, treating institutions as chronically reproduced rules and resources (Giddens, 1984).

Structures of signification highlight the codes and discourses used in interaction. This is where mutual knowledge is central; individuals must understand the codes, rules, and discourses used in a particular structure in order to create shared meaning (Riley, 1983). Structures of domination depend on the mobilization and use of allocative and authoritative resources. These resources emphasize power over and within certain interactions. Domination is inherently connected to power in an interaction; however, power and domination do not simply mean control over individuals (Giddens, 1984). Rather, it is important to position domination as power relationships *among* individuals. Domination, then, exists in and through knowledge and the control of knowledge.

Finally, the structure of legitimation is concerned with normative regulation of individual value standards and organizational interests. This interplay could result in tension between the individual and the organization when the individual value standards and organizational interests do not complement each other. The structure of legitimation creates sectional norms, controlled by sanctions. Instrumental to legitimation is the notion that "legitimate orders must be embodied as structural conditions of action by some members for them to have binding force" (Riley, 1983, p. 417). Individual values and organizational or sectional interests do not need to agree, because in the structure, the sectional interests are considered universal.

Paramount to understanding the disclosure and apology program is exploring how the program came into being and how a culture of patient safety is reified in the program (Riley, 1983). Thus, the following research question guided this analysis:

RQ: How does the MidSouth Hospital disclosure and apology program craft a culture of patient safety?

Research Design

Settings and Participants

MidSouth Hospital is a fully accredited medical center that provides general medicine and surgical treatments to veterans. Located in a mid-sized Southern city, MidSouth Hospital consists of two different facilities: a facility that focuses on emergency care, medical-surgical care, acute psychiatry, intensive and progressive care, internal medicine, outpatient care, and ambulatory surgery and one for acute medical, neurological, surgical, and psychiatric inpatient services. I was on-site at both facilities, but primarily spent time at the first facility.

MidSouth Hospital is comprised of two divisions: the medical division, which includes all medical staff, and the administrative division of the hospital. The administrative division is comprised primarily of the Chief of Staff's office, billing, medical records, patient advocacy, and the in-house legal department. I observed members

of the Chief of Staff's office and the legal department. The administrative departments, especially the Chief of Staff's office and the legal department, play an integral role in negotiating the aftermath of medical errors by handling the medico-legal ramifications of medical malpractice and the disclosure and apology program.

In 1987, after dealing with two high-profile medical mistake cases, MidSouth Hospital created a disclosure and apology program. This program is a mandatory hospital policy that requires physicians disclose medical errors to patients and families as well as offer an organizational apology for the error (Kraman, Cranfill, Hamm, & Woodard, 2002). The program established a policy that allowed physicians, patients, and families to come together at a meeting and talk about mistake events. At the meeting, the hospital offers an apology, answers questions, and offers a monetary settlement. Since 1987, the MidSouth Hospital program has seen a decrease in lawsuits, settlement costs, and defense costs, with only three cases going to trial ("Why Sorry Works! works," 2005).

The disclosure and apology program involves several stages. When a potential error is identified, physicians perform a *clinical disclosure*, an informal process that provides factual information to patients and families. Physicians explain what has happened but do not acknowledge fault of the potential mistake. The case is then passed on to a group of legal and hospital administrators called the Clearinghouse, who use medical and legal standards to determine if an error has occurred. If the Clearinghouse determines that a mistake has not occurred or the event was a known complication, the Chief of Staff performs a *closure*, where patients and families are informed of the decision. If an error has occurred, the Chief of Staff performs an *institutional disclosure*, offering explanation, an apology, and compensation.

Data Collection

In order to understand how the disclosure and apology program came into being and how MidSouth Hospital stakeholders make sense of the program, I relied on two qualitative methods: (1) in-depth interviews and (2) organizational document analysis. Data collection began after I received university and hospital Institutional Review Board approvals.

In-depth interviews. Researchers that rely on in-depth interviewing techniques are often concerned with seeking "deep" information about personal matters such as an individual's self, lived experiences, values and decisions, or perspective (Johnson, 2002). A total of seven physicians and four administrative staff interviews were used for this study, with interviews ranging from 45 to 120 minutes.[1] These interviews were used because of the participants' involvement with the disclosure and apology program. Of the seven physicians interviewed, four physicians were attending physicians, practicing medicine for more than seven years, and three were residents, practicing medicine for less than seven years. The physicians' specialties included ambulatory care/outpatient care (n=2), anesthesiology (n=2), general surgery (n=1), ophthalmology (n=1), and urology (n=1). All the physicians were male. I interviewed all three of the disclosure and apology program co-creators and the MidSouth Hospital then-Chief of Staff (he has since retired). These four interviews comprise the administrative staff interviews.

The interview protocols were semi-structured to allow participants to talk about their individual experiences and insights, recognizing that the interview is a co-constructed event (Heyl, 2001). The tentative interview protocol used in these interviews focused on questions about medical error experiences, disclosing and apologizing for medical mistakes, and the enactment of medical error hospital policies and procedures. All of the interviews, with individual's consent, were audio-recorded on a digital voice recorder. All of the interviews were then transcribed in their entirety. The transcription resulted in 126 pages of physician interview text and 51 pages of administration interview text, resulting in a total of 177 pages of single-spaced typed interview text. To protect the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were used.

Organizational documents. Additional materials are often needed to make sense of organizations. Organizational documents offer additional insight by using the language and expressions of the organization, highlighting the social rules of the organization (Hodder, 2000). Organizational documents allow researchers insight into how stakeholders talk about a topic, how past events (re)create organizational narratives, and the rationality and reasoning of organizational decision-making (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Documents for this particular analysis included, but were not limited to, MidSouth Hospital's original policy, the national roll-out

[1] A total of 30 physician interviews were originally conducted, resulting in 330 pages of interview text.

policy, additional MidSouth Hospital policies created in response to the disclosure and apology program, and MidSouth Hospital literature regarding patient safety.

Data Analysis

As I collected data, I was engaged in a constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A constant comparative method, as a part of grounded theory, requires researchers to "take control of their data collection and analysis, and in turn these methods give researchers more analytic control over their material" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 676). I made initial notes of theoretical and practical connections throughout the data collection process. I also transcribed in order to completely immerse myself in the data, enabling me to see potential connections as I worked through the data. I made note of emerging patterns in the data, paying particular attention to converging and diverging discourses.

Once data collection was complete, I began the "reduction" and "interpretation" stages of data, characteristic of the constant comparative method. After reading all the transcripts and documents and gaining a holistic sense of the discourses, analysis of all of the data began. The constant comparative method allows researchers to identify recurring patterns of behavior and meaning in the participants' accounts and performances. The analysis process begins by manually coding the data of the transcripts and documents. Constant comparison of these data was continued until "theoretical saturation" was achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 110). The themes presented emerged from the constant comparison of data. Structuration theory and organizational culture emerged during data analysis as salient ways to make sense of the themes.

Below is an analysis of the how the MidSouth Hospital's disclosure and apology program structures error experiences to create a culture of patient safety. This analysis highlights how hospital policy shapes and is shaped by medical mistake experiences. This analysis also shines a light on the ways in which personal action and organizational reaction become interwoven.

Analysis

MidSouth Hospital represents Weber's (1946) conceptualization of the modern day bureaucracy. The emphasis in bureaucracy is on categorization and clear organization. The rules and norms of bureaucracy are specific enough to apply to individual cases, but vague enough to leave room for some interpretation. Organizations structured in a bureaucratic fashion emphasize the rules and norms of the organization and use those rules and norms to control individuals in the organization (Weber, 1946). Discourses in a bureaucratic organization will also be structured in a bureaucratic fashion, highlighting the structuring of authority, rules, and responsibilities of all organizational members (Philips, 1987). Interestingly, the bureaucratization of organizations is designed to shine a light on the mystery associated with hierarchy, making "readily visible what was previously dim and obscure" about the organization and its actions (Merton, 1957, p. 104).

The MidSouth Hospital program is designed to break down the mystery traditionally associated with medical errors by creating a clear and organized policy with detailed rules and identifiable authority. The disclosure and apology program bureaucratizes medical mistake experiences by interlacing medical mistake, disclosure, and apology meaning and action, and normative elements of MidSouth Hospital and medical practice. Bureaucratization is accomplished through (1) the crafting of a shared program discourse, (2) establishing order and control, and (3) legitimizing organizational ideologies.

Crafting a Shared Program Discourse

In order for the MidSouth Hospital disclosure and apology program to be enacted, how MidSouth Hospital stakeholders make sense of the discourses and communicative meanings behind organizational actions is key. This sense-making serves as an attempt to justify maintenance or changes in the organization (Weick, 1995). The MidSouth Hospital stakeholders, particularly the co-creators and the Chief of Staff, use the program's genesis narratives and clearly defining medical mistakes to create a justificational discourse for the program. Storying the creation of the program and providing clear definitions highlights the bureaucratization of the program by identifying the reason for the policy.

In order to justify the creation of the program, the program co-creators turn to the stories of the first mistakes as a need for the program. All three program co-creators were involved with the first medical mistake case, and although their re-tellings provide different perspectives and layers of the story, each highlight the ways in which they see this case as the impetus for the program. Patricia, a program co-creator, recounts the error narrative which led to the program's creation:

> It looked like we had ordered an IV infusion of potassium for an alcoholic female who was here getting what we call rally packs. She was dehydrated, she was malnourished. What should happen is over the course of a few hours, you decrease the amount of IV fluids. That didn't happen. We went and pulled the telemetry record. …Those EKGs showed changes in her heart rhythm related to an overdose of potassium. We said, okay, ethically we have an obligation to notify the patient that a medical error has occurred…And that was the point where we had to figure out, okay, how do we do this?...Up the line people are going to get really pissed because we are going to admit liability for a medical error…But, we aren't asking permission to do it. We are going to do it because it's the right thing to do…So, there was never a discussion of not doing; only *how* would we do it.

Patricia's narrative points out how she, as a co-creator, begins the justification for a different way of thinking about medical errors. Her comment also highlights the need for accountability, not only for the mistake, but also for how the hospital negotiated the aftermath of the mistake. Accountability is an important part of making sense of organizational discourses (Giddens, 1984) and provides the normative grounds for justification. Accountability becomes an important part of MidSouth Hospital's discourse, and, as will be discussed later, serves as a unifying value for practitioners.

The genesis narrative is important because it provides all MidSouth Hospital practitioners a common justification discourse. Dr. Pope, another co-creator, uses the genesis narrative as a way to highlight how the potassium overdose case forced some of the hospital administrators to rethink the hospital's approach to medical mistakes.

> We said… how does a reasonable honest person deal with something like this… So, we just told them the whole thing that had happened. I apologized on behalf of the hospital because a situation like that, it seemed like the right thing to do.

Dr. Pope's comment calls attention to the ideological underpinning of the program: "the right thing to do." This ideological underpinning is the start of the bureaucratization of the medical mistake experience because the program attempts to highlight what was once invisible or silenced. Moreover, "it was the right thing to do" as a recurring justification associated with the genesis narrative also serves as a re-envisioning of traditional approaches to medical mistakes. Dr. Earhart, an ambulatory care attending, echoes Dr. Pope's evaluative positioning of the program: "When we make a mistake, there is no question about it. We made a mistake. We have the opportunity to tell people that we have and we get on with whatever needs to be done." "Doing the right thing" privileges a shared value to guide the MidSouth Hospital program discourse.

A second way in which the program crafts a shared discourse is by providing definitions of what counts as a medical mistake. How physicians and hospitals make sense of medical mistakes is often very different from how the general public defines medical mistakes (Leape, 1994). As Gina, a co-creator explains, what counts as a medical mistake and how stakeholders make sense of those definitions is key to making sense of the program. The disclosure and apology program policy bureaucratizes the terminology by clearly outlining the rules and responsibilities associated with the program's definition of the mistakes. Article 2, section F of the policy provides the definitions of the program. "An adverse event is any untoward incident, therapeutic misadventure, iatrogenic injury, or other undesirable occurrence directly associated with care or services provided within the jurisdiction of a medical center, outpatient clinic, or other [MidSouth] facility" (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2005)." The defining of terminology serves as one of the first major ways in which the program is bureaucratized.

Although individuals in the medical profession may understand the nuanced difference between an "adverse event" (a medical mistake) and a "known complication," patients and their families often have a difficult time

understanding the difference. Dr. Lee, an anesthesiology resident, discusses the frustration associated with the difference between complications and mistakes.

> There is a difference between a bad outcome and a mistake. This patient had a bad outcome, but there wasn't an error. No medical error. It might look like there was. You can have a bad outcome. And one of the frustration[s] with medicine is that malpractice decisions are typically based on outcomes, not on whether or not there was an error.

In order to alleviate the uncertainty associated with definitions, the policy provides a clear definition of what adverse events warrant initial disclosures. Defining key terms bureaucratizes medical mistake experiences by shining a light on what actions physicians can expect to be involved in at MidSouth Hospital. The definitional aspects of the policy are so clear that the policy even explains the rules and responsibilities physicians have in the case of "close calls" or almost mistakes. This ensures that MidSouth physicians learn about and from *all* adverse events.

Establishing Order and Control

An important element of bureaucracy is that of control and authority. To implement and maintain a change to a system, individuals have to exert power in order to establish organizational control. Domination relies upon the mobilization of two different forms of power: allocative and authoritative resources (Giddens, 1984). Allocative resources refer to the ability of individuals to mobilize material and corporeal resources needed to make changes. Authoritative resources focus on how to convince individuals to make changes (Giddens, 1984). The MidSouth Hospital program bureaucratizes medical mistake experiences by ordering how physicians and administrators deal with the aftermath of mistakes. The program establishes order and control by "reallocating" who has control of medical mistake experiences.

The program bureaucratized medical mistake experiences by identifying who is responsible for types of disclosures and closures and by repositioning the fault of medical mistakes. As discussed earlier, the program openly outlines different types of closures and disclosures based on the clear definitions of medical mistakes and bad outcomes. The first step is the *clinical* disclosure, which takes places when potential mistakes happen. Dr. Sampson, a urology attending, explains how the clinical disclosure is enacted.

> An example, say you lacerate a bladder during a surgical procedure, which is a common thing. And it may indicate that there is an error and it may be one of those things that happen because of the patient's anatomy. So, per our policy, the physician goes in and saying, "M'am, we lacerated your bladder during this procedure. We are going to look into it and we will get back to you." We don't acknowledge that it is our fault or that it's not our fault.

The clinical disclosure begins to "pull back the veil" by including the patient and family in the medical mistake experience. Although clinical disclosure is meant to include the patient or family, Dr. Sampson's comment underscores an important tension in clinical discourse: the clinical disclosure does not acknowledge fault. MidSouth Hospital maintains control over the medical mistake experience by not acknowledging fault or admitting blame.

The Clearinghouse, as another element of the bureaucratization process, determines whether or not a mistake has been made or if the adverse event is the result of a known complication. The creation and use of the Clearinghouse points out an important element of the re-envisioned organizational medical mistake approach by identifying all potential sides of the mistake experience. The analysis, known as the Swiss cheese analysis, merges the medical and legal realms to determine if an adverse event is a mistake or a complication. If the "holes" match up, then a disclosure is in order. Gina explains how the Swiss cheese analysis works.

> When it comes down to deciding has there been a medical mistake that has impacted a patient, then the legal, it's sort of like a template, or a transparency. You lay the legal criteria over the medical criteria and if it adds up to a medical mistake, it requires disclosure.

The Swiss cheese analysis highlights the bureaucratic nature of the program because it provides clear rules and instances that require a disclosure, simultaneously highlighting how the program works and disciplining physicians and families by determining what counts as a mistake.

An important element of the disclosure and apology program is that, up to this point, the physician or the medical practitioner involved in the adverse event is part of the process. This, however, will be the last time that the physician or other medical personnel are actively involved in the disclosure process. A major part of bureaucracy is the use of management or administration to construct and enact important decisions in the organization. The systematic streamlining of individuals involved in the process stresses the role of control and domination the administration maintains in the process and further reinforces the control of the situation and of the information presented to patients and families. Gina reports how the intimate setting for disclosures and closures work to maintain control by following the rules set forth by the policy.

> It's not a bunch of shirts sitting around the table with these poor people. Dr. Wright [the Chief of Staff] will go through the clinical occurrence, give all the clinical facts. He tells what went wrong, he doesn't name names. We try not to point fingers. It's not because Dr. X screwed up. It's because [MidSouth] failed.

The physician or medical practitioner involved in the case is intentionally excluded from the actual disclosure and apology in order to frame the situation as an organizational failure, rather than an individual failure.

The program also controls medical mistake authority by passing on control to individuals who are on the frontlines of the medical mistake experience. In traditional approaches to medical mistakes, authority regarding medical mistakes is relegated to the hospital legal staff. The clinical disclosure places control of the process, initially, in the hands of practicing MidSouth physicians, giving authority to caregivers. Gina's earlier comment about how the point of the disclosure is to identify the organizational failure, rather than the individual's failure, is tied to the program's desire to place authority of the disclosure with the organization. The disclosure and apology program exerts domination by repositioning the authority and control of the program in the hands of the heads of the medical and legal departments, controlling medical mistake knowledge.

Legitimizing Organizational Ideologies

In order for a program to be enacted and embraced by organizational members, it must be legitimized. Legitimization centers on the relationship between the rights and the obligations "expected" of organizational members (Giddens, 1984). Not only do these norms aid individuals in the sense-making process, but they also serve to reinforce the authority and control promoted through the program. The program legitimizes MidSouth Hospital values as well as reinforces a "culture of patient safety", encouraging open communication about mistakes.

The MidSouth Hospital program attempts to foster the MidSouth Hospital values of trust, respect, excellence, commitment, and compassion. The MidSouth Hospital program directive demonstrates how the hospital's values underlie the program's approach to medical errors:

> Disclosure of adverse events to patients or their representatives is consistent with [MidSouth Hospital] core values of trust, respect, excellence, commitment, and compassion. Providers have an ethical obligation to be honest with their patients. Honestly discussing the difficult truth that an adverse event has occurred demonstrates respect for the patient, professionalism, and a commitment to improving care. Clinicians and organizational leaders must work together and ensure that appropriate disclosure to patients or their representatives is a routine part of the response to a harmful or potentially harmful adverse event. (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2005)

All of these values are embodied in the program's desire "to do the right thing." Patricia reflects that the main goal of the program is to "do the right thing" for all parties involved in the medical mistake experience.

> To do the right thing for the patient. The right thing for the physician. The right thing for the family… One of the big goals of the program is to maintain the physician-patient relationship. We have gone away from blaming.

This desire to "do the right thing" is predicated on MidSouth Hospital's desire to foster and maintain healthy relationships between patients, physicians, and MidSouth Hospital. At MidSouth Hospital, the physician-patient relationship is paramount. As Dr. Ferris, an ambulatory care attending, stated: "It's every day, building and maintaining good relationships." In order to build and maintain good relationships, MidSouth Hospital, and by extension, the disclosure and apology program, must rely on that trusting relationship in the face of an adverse outcome or mistake. This de-shrouding of mistakes helps to build trust between physicians and patients, as Patricia elucidates. Trust is multifaceted in the medical mistake experience, and thus, is multifaceted in the disclosure and apology program. The hospital has an obligation to be open and honest with patients and, at the same time, created the right to do so. By appreciating both the obligation of "doing the right thing" and the right afforded to individuals through the program, the program is legitimized.

The desire to "do the right thing" also clearly embodies the hospital's ideological commitment to patient safety. This ideological commitment is unique to MidSouth Hospital because it was one of the first hospitals in the country to fully embrace the ideas of patient safety by implementing a facility -wide policy to address medical errors. "'Ideology' refers only those asymmetries of domination which connect signification to the legitimation of sectional interests" (Giddens, 1984, p. 33). Ideological beliefs rely on the organizational discourses and expressions of domination to legitimate the belief. The MidSouth Hospital disclosure and apology program serves as a way through which MidSouth Hospital stakeholders can further the culture of patient safety. As Dr. Wright, the Chief of Staff, succinctly states, "This is all about patient safety."

The desire to structure medical mistake experiences is equally about the practitioner and the patient. Dr. Xavier, an ophthalmology resident, clarifies that although patient safety is a patient-centered approach to health care, "one of the underlying assumptions of patient safety is that it is meant to benefit the physician by clarifying the practice of medicine." The disclosure and apology program is meant to not only de-shroud the mystery of mistakes to patients but also to help de-shroud the mystery of dealing with mistakes for physicians. As Gina asserts, "We wanted to be able to sleep at night. It's not a good idea to hide these things, stick them in the closet. They may come back years later and bite you." Gina's comment again draws attention to one of the aims of the program: to change the mentality associated with medical mistakes.

Discussion

This study explored the ways in which multiple MidSouth Hospital physicians and administrators were actively involved with the disclosure and apology program's creation, enactment, and legitimation. Appreciating how MidSouth Hospital structures and rationalizes the disclosure and apology program is central to understanding how MidSouth Hospital physicians and administrators create and maintain a culture of patient safety. As this study indicates, MidSouth Hospital stakeholders use the organizational structures provided in order to structure their own knowledge and discourses regarding medical errors.

The disclosure and apology program both enables and constrains physicians in their practice of medicine. First, the program enables physicians by creating opportunities for physicians to be open with patients. This openness is not relegated just to discussions of medical mistakes; rather, it includes being able to be open with patients about every aspect of their care. The program, through the crafting of a patient safety culture, reveals some of what was previously hidden about medical mistake experiences and how hospitals dealt with mistakes. The program created a clear policy that outlines a clear hierarchy and rules for stakeholders. This benefits patients and families as well, as they are able to have a well-defined set of guidelines for how the hospital will deal with their case. More importantly, patients and families know that communication about the potential mistake *will* happen.

Conversely, the program constrains physicians in their practice of medicine by determining *who* makes decisions in the practice of medicine. As mentioned above, the structuring of a culture of patient safety enables physicians by revealing information that was previously invisible. Interestingly, it is this structuring that constrains physicians, as well. The bureaucratic nature of the program dictates who gets to make decisions about medical

mistakes and how the hospital handles mistakes. Moreover, the program places all the decisions in the hands of a small number of administrators, not physicians. Finally, connected to the constraining elements of the program, the program ultimately takes the decision-making of medical mistakes and medicine out of the medical arena and places the control in the legal arena. Interestingly, it is the multi-disciplinary nature of the program, the connection between the medical and legal worlds, which creates this constraint for physicians.

Reframing MidSouth Hospital medical error experiences as an organizational failure rather than an individual physician's misdeed potentially controls physicians by taking away their ownership of the mistake. This disciplining raises an interesting question: Who has the right and obligation to apologize for errors? Moreover, who has the authority to make those decisions? Often, organizational or societal apologies are in response to a social legitimacy crisis (Hearit, 1995), and are designed to demonstrate that the organization and its organizational members are caring and decent (Rowland & Jerome, 2004). Social legitimacy cannot be controlled by law or government, and thus, must be regulated by organizations and the general public. In this case, the MidSouth Hospital program is responding to a larger medical error epidemic and seeks to affirm that all of its organizational members are dedicated to patient safety and care. This is inherent in the program's foundation to "do the right thing." However, because the program places the act of the apology in the hands of administration, not physicians, problematizes issues of physician emancipation and domination when dealing with medical errors. Moreover, it does not take into account physicians' interpretation of the policy and the experience. It is possible that physicians do not agree that disclosure and apology is the "right thing" to do in medical error situations.

The heavy involvement of the administration in the disclosure and apology process underscores the importance of questioning a top-down policy approach as an attempt to change organizational culture. At the heart of this question is bureaucratic and ideological control (Apker, 2011), where organizations attempt to control action, identity, and values through policies, rules, and structures. Although these forms of control create pathways for productive organizational practice, they also can be oppressive to organizational members, especially if it asks them to change practice *and* belief (Mumby, 2013). The disclosure and apology program, created and implemented by the hospital's administration, seeks to mandate not only communicative action, but also providers' systems of values and beliefs about the practice of medicine. At its core, the disclosure and apology policy assumes that providers and administrators hold the same ideological beliefs about medical practice and error; errors are inevitable and providers are fallible. But what if providers do not believe this? As Carmack (2014) previously argued, disclosure and apology programs serve as a way to seek redemption and assume that everyone involved with an error wants redemption. By mandating disclosure and apology, MidSouth administrators control organizational practice, but complete by-in to the program requires providers to hold the same ideological beliefs about error, apology, and redemption. Or is it possible that health providers could ideologically disagree with a policy and still practice medicine under the gaze of the administrative policy?

Limitations and Future Research

The in-depth interviews and observations I conducted at MidSouth Hospital were fruitful in terms of understanding how the multiple stakeholders in the facility make sense of the medical error, disclosure, and apology experience. This article relies primarily on the co-creators of the program and the then-current Chief of Staff as the gatekeepers to structuring the experience. Of the 30 physicians who were interviewed, only seven openly discussed their personal knowledge and experience with the disclosure and apology program. Thus, this analysis showcases the difficulty in exploring organizational decision-making when only one group of stakeholders is actively or constantly involved in the process. More research is needed, however, on how physicians make sense of policies related to medical error disclosure and apology. Additionally, it is unclear if providers at MidSouth Hospital have competing ideological beliefs about error and believe the program is successful. Future researchers must examine complementary and competing providers' ideological beliefs about disclosure, apology, and medical error and how that impacts how organizational members view the success of a top-down program which mandates organizational action and belief.

Finally, this analysis focuses on the individuals who create and enact organizational policy, be it practitioner or administrator. Missing from this analysis is the voice and experience of patients. Exploring patients' views regarding medical errors, their understanding of the program, and how these policies impacts patients'

communication with providers are important elements of the complex medical error experience. Future research is needed on patients' understanding of medical mistakes, disclosure, and apology.

Understanding the structure of a disclosure and apology program is beneficial for applied health and organizational communication scholars and practitioners interested in creating and implementing organizational policies regarding errors. Although other hospitals will have different justifications for disclosure and apology programs, the MidSouth Hospital program underscores the hospital's commitment to changing the nature of health care and enacting a culture of patient safety.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 43-53

Avowal is Not Enough: Foucault and Public Shaming in a Socially Mediated World

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Foucault described avowal as a performance in which individuals confess their sins and reveal a truth, allowing society to assess, forgive, and move on. Traditional structures of avowal have become ineffective due to the rising culture of secondary orality on social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter. When combined with omniscient surveillance enabled by the same social media, individuals who come under fire for wrong-doing become victims of a public shaming cycle that cannot be escaped through traditional methods of avowal. This essay explores how citizens are turned into individual cyberpanopticons and made complicit in this punitive shaming cycle, and how a social turn can be made back to avowal.

When Fargo, North Dakota mom Cindy Bjerke became fed up with her 18-year-old daughter's spoiled behavior, she performed an increasingly common punitive parenting maneuver: public shaming via social media (Mazza, 2014). Bjerke posted to a local online garage sale Facebook page, informing the entire community that she was selling the Katy Perry tickets she had purchased for her daughter (at a $20 loss, no less) because she found her child's recent behavior too childish to merit attending the event. The choice to publicly shame individuals whose behavior we deem out-of-line – whether those individuals be our own offspring or complete strangers – is increasingly enabled by the rapidly expanding capabilities of social media. Ronson's 2015 bestseller *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* chronicled some of the most infamously crucified individuals in recent popular culture history. Lindsey Stone, for example, was photographed mocking the sign requesting "Silence and Respect" posted in Arlington National Cemetery. The one-off, tasteless joke photo of a crude gesture cost Lindsey her job and forced her into reclusive hiding for more than a year, as death threats, rape threats, emotional flaming, and abuse continually flowed in her direction via the Internet. Even after finding new employment, she lives in constant fear that her one-time indiscretion will resurface to rob her of her livelihood (Ronson, 2015, p. 205-209).

Despite possessing little knowledge of such individuals' biases, political leanings, or personal attributes, we as a mass public feel entitled to attack them on a lasting, vindictive, and deeply hurtful level. And in the current socially mediated news and entertainment climate, when Twitter claims 316 million active users and Facebook has 1.13 billion, drawing a crowd to shame perceived wrong-doers is easier than ever before (Twitter, 2016; Facebook, 2016). In this essay, the author uses Foucault's description of the Panopticon and performances of avowal in conjunction with the divergent effects of social media on surveillance, compliance, and belonging to assess the current shaming epidemic, ultimately seeking to understand why using social media as a court of public opinion to persistently humiliate wrong-doers subverts their inner processing of shame and guilt and drastically undermines the traditional process of apology and redemption.

Foucault (1975) conceptualized the Panopticon as a means of top-down surveillance authorized by the state or an otherwise legitimized institution; contemporary social media capabilities have shifted the power inherent in the Panopticon and dispersed across a broad citizenry completely willing to monitor the misdeeds of their fellow individuals. In order to tear down the current public shaming epidemic and allow a new form of avowal to flourish, we must divest ourselves of the cyberpanopticon functions we have assumed and resume a view of our fellow citizens characterized by empathy, rather than suspicion. This essay proposes that the culture of public shaming has strengthened because traditional discussions of avowal are no longer enough to compensate for shifts in agency enabled by social media and digital technology. By humanizing wrongdoers rather than policing each other, we as digitally mediated culture may arrive at a more fitting view of the Panopticon not as a state sponsored monolith, but as a widely dispersed individual function that swiftly overwhelms individuals without constant reflexivity and awareness.

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Origins of a Shaming Epidemic

Avowal in the 20th Century

More dogged examples of public shaming and persistent humiliation can easily be found by turning toward figures of (inter)national notoriety. Monica Lewinsky, the put-upon mistress of President Bill Clinton, hid from public scrutiny for more than a decade after the 1998 scandal consumed political and gossip media alike. When the now-43-year-old Lewinsky finally broke her public silence in a *Vanity Fair* editorial, she opined the cold, disaffected attitude the nation seemed to display as a result of the distanced perspective electronic devices can provide to us. "Having lived humiliation in the most intimate possible way, I marvel at how willingly we have all signed on to this new way of being" (Lewinsky, 2014, n.p.). Lewinsky's forlorn narrative explained that her story rises and falls in popularity as a late-night/satire punchline throughout political cycles; those cycles of attention have decimated her personal romantic life and her chances of steady professional employment. This is a person who, despite one degree from a prestigious liberal arts college and another from the London School of Economics, has never been able to escape the dehumanizing labels of That Woman or the Blow Job Queen. Her experience happened just on the cusp of the current hypermediated news and entertainment climate, and 20 years of paranoia and anxiety have closely followed at her heels.

The practice of shaming a social wrongdoer is longstanding, vastly predating the United States and our particular political dramas. Two things have changed in the past decade: the relationship between the wrongdoer and a misdeed, and the public's willingness to grant forgiveness via a process called avowal. Foucault (1981/2014) defined avowal as "a verbal act through which the subject affirms who he is, binds himself to this truth, places himself in a relationship with regards to another, and modifies at the same time his relationship to himself" (p. 17). In other words, avowal is an embodied performance, requiring full physical and verbal commitment to convincing the audience that one is worthy of forgiveness. Foucault traces the term throughout history, beginning with a parable about chariot racing in ancient Greece, progressing through early Christian rituals of penance and monasticism, and finally arriving at the modern social role of the penitent, describing repeatedly the recurring patterns of avowal as a means to find the truth in a situation and reconcile with it. His central query regards the place and role of truth-telling in the judicial system; however, in the era of social media, globalization, and online disinhibition, the emphasis has shifted from the perpetrator's truth-telling to the accuser's placement of blame. Foucault maintained that avowal, or the "verbal act through which the subject affirms who he is, binds himself to this truth, places himself in a role of dependence with regards to another, and modifies at the same time his relationship to himself" is a key facet of the punitive or judicial process (p. 17). We could verbally disclose wrong-doings to be absolved of their weight and impact through a process called *exagoreusis*, which necessitates an external expression of the internal thought processes that reveal a relationship of obedience to someone or something else (Foucault, 1988). Foucault further emphasized that the performance of *exagoreusis* displays the permanence of such total obedience, completely subjugating one's own will and self before what- or whoever is deemed as a worthy master, whether that be God, a confessor, family, or society at large. Historically, to make an avowal a person would contemplate her actions and submit her own will before prostrating herself in front of another in order to be made back into a person seen as acceptable by society (Foucault, 1988). Performing the renunciation of misdeeds always required a strong degree of verbal self-disclosure, but the social contract affirmed that in exchange for such self-flagellation forgiveness would be offered – or if not forgiveness, then at least forgetfulness. Putting oneself beside one's mistake carries the expectation that the power of the self-disclosure should be enough to neutralize the misdeed. President Richard Nixon's apology for his actions during the Watergate scandal exemplifies avowal in the 20th century. As Nixon explained to interviewer David Frost,

> I had let down my friends, I let down the country, I let down our system of government and the dreams of all those young people that ought to get into government but will think it is all too corrupt and the rest. Most of all I let down an opportunity I would have had for two and a half more years to proceed on great projects and programs for building a lasting peace. . . . Yep, I let the American people down. And I have to carry that burden with me for the rest of my life. My political life is over. (Nixon, 1977)

Despite the heaviness of Nixon's statement that his political life was over, he went on to publish multiple memoirs and maintained good-natured connections with other Presidents and political or media professionals. In fact, over the ensuing decades, Nixon's previous accomplishments, particularly as a foreign affairs authority, have received increasing amounts of coverage (Cyr, 2014; Miller Center, 2015). His apology functioned as a way for both the President and the public to examine Nixon the man side-by-side with the Watergate scandal and consider how each proportionately relates to the other. To complete his act of *exagoreusis,* Nixon avowed his misdeeds in front of the power of the American people, allowing both parties to move forward with a modified set of information and opinions regarding the scandal before firmly relegating it to the past. The literature on image repair is extensive and can be referenced here for more detail on how public apologies such as Nixon's are intended to ameliorate the relationship between the self and others once trust and goodwill have been damaged (see Benoit, 2015 or Ware & Linkugel, 1973). However, because these strategies are focused on ways to evade or circumvent blame rather than openly admitting to wrong-doing, they have not been extensively considered here.

Avowal in the 21st Century

In the Twittersphere (and other social media forms), an avowal of wrong-doing like Nixon's is no longer enough to exonerate the sinner. To understand, let us examine the case of Jonah Lehrer. Lehrer is a journalist and author who was discovered to have fabricated a significant portion of the quotations and stories in his work, leading to two of his books being pulled from retail shelves and his dismissal from his position as a staff writer at Wired.com and *The New Yorker*. As an apology, Lehrer delivered a public speech in which he blatantly admitted his transgressions and apologized to anyone who had purchased his books and subsequently felt cheated or betrayed – all while standing in front of a giant screen scrolling reactionary tweets from the public in real time. While a few users pointed out that this particular punishment seemed "cruel and unusual" and was "basically a 21st century town square flogging" (Ronson, 2015, p. 48), most tweeters gleefully lambasted Lehrer for the inadequacy of that apology, believing him to be unrepentant for his actions or merely up to old tricks to regain popularity. A significant portion of Ronson's book chronicling the effects of public shaming revolves around Lehrer, who reports that his regrets are all-consuming. Not even time is healing the effects of the shame, he explained, calling the loss of career, status, and respect "miserable and haunting" (Ronson, 2015, p. 59). Even today, more than two years after the scandal broke, a Google search for Jonah Lehrer returns pages full of results about his shame, his mistakes, and his supposed lack of conscience, not his attempts at telling the truth and apologizing. Lehrer has yet to experience a Nixonian reclamation of any of his achievements. Akin to Lewinsky's experience, his public shaming has caused him to retreat deeply into fear and paranoia rather than re-emerge as a stronger, wiser individual.

The contrast between Lehrer and Nixon (men who each made choices considered egregious in their respective professions) raises the question: was Foucault wrong about the place of avowal? In the hypermediated 21st century world of instant, transnational digital connections, the answer is frequently and unfortunately yes. Despite Foucault's assurance that avowal will bring freedom or transformation, Lehrer and others like him find themselves bound more strongly than ever to their misdeeds with no hope of verbally modifying that relationship to lessen the transgression. When Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* was first published in 1975, the total number of homes in the U.S. receiving a daily paid newspaper subscription was just 60 million (Communications Management, 2011). Foucault had no way of predicting how social media would radically alter the implications of his theories. Further, contemporary social media scholars struggle to keep pace with the emergence of new forms of online communication. In explanation, Herbig and Hess (2012) said that "developing ways of studying audiences should not only account for both what and how people consume but also should involve them in the production" (p. 272). Because social media is participatory by nature, these platforms cannot be studied comprehensively without paying attention to the needs, preferences, and misgivings of both original authors and readers or responders. The researcher's task of defining and delineating the functionality of social media is further complicated when we consider that e-mails, Internet chat forums and discussion boards, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter are not just distinct from more traditional forms of written or mediated communication due to their participatory nature; they each have specific utilities, structural constraints, and user bases that set them apart from other platforms.

We can see clear differences between platforms at even the most basic structural level. Blogs and discussion boards rely on long, content-heavy posts arranged on a website in reverse-chronological order, showing the most recent first and progressing back through time in an orderly fashion. Audiences depend on this order and structure

to build a friendly, trusting relationship with the author. This stands in contrast to microblogs like Twitter, with each post set to 140-character limit and a non-chronologically ordered stream or feed that prioritizes what other viewers found favorable. Because scholars recommend focusing on mediated identities in context, contingent upon user history, experiences, and local digital situations, the portability of apps and the mobility of the average social media user introduces one more layer of complexity into understanding how digital media alters our relationship to ourselves and each other (Bjork-James, 2015; Wilson & Peterson, 2002). Therefore, distinct considerations are necessary to analyze patterns of communication across multiple social media platforms (including the newly emerging outlets such as Snapchat, Unseen, YikYak, and Whisper that compound the complexity of the social media landscape), and to define how our online and offline selves function in this networked web.

The Effects of Digital Shaming

The problems addressed above arise not within Foucault's carefully elucidated discussion of avowal, but rather when we attempt to uncritically transpose ideas created in a pre-Internet society straight into the morass of digital culture. Once we accept the altered landscape of shaming and avowal, the question now becomes whether social media moved Foucault's theory into the future or regressed it into the past. The Twitter user who likened Lehrer's treatment to town square floggings was fairly close to the truth. Foucault described the trials of a woman adulterer performing penance: "she stood among the ranks of the penitents, the bishop, the priests, and the weeping populace crying with her, her hair disheveled, deathly pale, her hands soiled, her head sullied with ashes, and she humbly bowed" (Foucault, 1981/2014, p. 109). In this ritual, termed *exomologesis*, the public wants to see the sinner's awareness of sin manifested. The focus herein lies not on repentance or forgiveness, but on the sense of being tarnished, cast out, full of everlasting remorse. Foucault is careful to call attention to the fact that *exomologesis* entails not an avowal of sin, but a grandiose display of awareness of the state of being a sinner, the sin committed, and the all-consuming remorse resulting from the sin that leads to the will to cease committing objectionable acts. Note that Christianity is inextricable from this concept, but yet the sinner's desperate desire to be free from sin does not guarantee the forgiveness of the observers. Correspondingly, when we collectively lambast an individual for plagiarism, a tasteless joke, or a racist comment online, the motivation behind the act is not to convince the wrong-doer that he is redeemable or that he has learned and improved as a person, but rather that he is now and forever fallen. Lehrer has not been active in social media since the scandal erupted: the last post from @jonahlehrer, dated February 13, 2013, reads "Here is the text of my speech. I'm deeply sorry for what I've done." Psychologists widely consider the ability to forget a vital part of creativity and mental acuity (Storm & Patel, 2014). How are we harming ourselves by disabling the ability to forget unfavorable action and move on? Considering an answer to that query requires exploring the similarities of social observation and civil obligations that are resurging in the contemporary age of secondary orality and observability.

The early Christian societies Foucault described in his texts were characterized partially by a collective sense of guilt, and certainly a prioritized sense of social order enabled by the close-knit social structures in smaller communities. As society enlarges, such bonds become difficult to sustain, and old orders of discipline are replaced via necessity. As previously discussed, Foucault's discussion of modern disciplinary tactics revolves around the Panopticon, an architectural feature of prisons and institutions that grants the commanding or enforcing entity total view of the enforced population at all times. The observed have no way of knowing when they are being watched, but must live under the knowledge that they are able to be observed at literally any moment (Foucault, 1975). Foucault (1975) further explained that the major effect of the Panopticon is to render prisoners permanently, vividly aware of their own visibility, thus guaranteeing the continued function of authoritarian power. Broadly speaking, the Panopticon has come to stand in for the idea of a society under constant observation, and the corresponding effects that type of totally visibility has on a society and social power dynamics. The norms of digital consumers in 21st century America make it abundantly evident that when a population is told that an ever-watchful eye is always turned upon them, the need to exercise legitimate physical authority wanes. Even from childhood, we are told that we must be good children or else we might not receive any holiday bounty, because the watchful eye of Santa Claus can always see us, wherever we go. As adults, we receive a less fanciful but hardly different story. We must be careful about what we do and say: the National Security Administration is tracking phone records, there are cameras on every street corner, and more and more professions are acquiring the status of mandatory reporters. Performing

the role of good citizen becomes a full-time job, and the Panopticon becomes not an external force, but rather an automated internal impulse – and furthermore, an impulse that urges us to turn against each other rather than resist legitimate external mechanisms of power.

Power and Agency in the Cyberpanopticon

Popular logic might seem to suggest that an increase in overbearing external forces of regulation and observation would lead to rebellion, à la the American Revolutionary War, the French Rebellion, or the Arab Spring. Most recently, we have seen isolated cases of protest against police brutality and institutional abuse in New York City, Baltimore, and Ferguson, Missouri. But, in an increasingly mediated society, knowing whom to rebel against is less and less obvious. Gandy (2006) warned that digital records of our lives constitute a permanent, ever-expanding archive – and unlike memories, which can shift and mutate with the experiences of the memory owner, archives are locked into a frozen representation of an expired state of being. With such an endless source of knowledge available exterior to ourselves, trusting our own experiences and knowledge is rendered increasingly difficult. Considering, as Bossewitch and Sinnreich (2012) explained, that social power is constituted by what is alternately concealed and revealed, the methods we use to accumulate and distribute that knowledge matter a lot. When the balance of social power shifts outside of memory and experience into the hands of whomever controls the digital archives and cyberspace, rebelling against surveillance power suddenly becomes a battle against the Hydra. Power, as Foucault (1976) defined it, then becomes omnipresent, because "insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, it is simply the overall effect that emerges from all of these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement" (p. 93). Now these concatenations are multiplied not only by what we are currently doing or engaged in, but by the archive of everything we have done before – every call or message we have ever sent, every person we have pretended to be, every decision that left a trail of keystrokes like breadcrumbs that may easily be traced back to us.

Additionally, Campbell and Carlson (2002) suggested that these surveying powers are so difficult to identify in cyberspace because the capitalist system has effectively convinced the mass public that being linked into the system is a necessary part of living comfortably within the social system. We may hesitate to turn over our daily routine, habits, preferences, and desires to a government agent in person – but online, we happily input all of that data as soon as we perceive that it might make our purchasing decisions or daily tasks slightly simpler. Poster (1990) warned of the damage privacy would incur in the aftermath of the Internet long before social media emerged on the scene:

> The population participates in its own self-constitution as subjects of the normalizing gaze of the Superpanopticon. We see databases not as an invasion of privacy, as a threat to a centered individual, but as the multiplication of the individual, the constitution of an additional self, one that may be acted upon to the detriment of the "real" self without that "real" self ever being aware of what is happening. (p. 97)

Poster's warning about the ubiquitous presence of databases storing our purchasing preferences, credit scores, addresses, phone calls, and more has only become stronger as multiple accounts are linked together across devices and platforms.

Consider, for example, the commonplace nature of storing personal information in a prolific array of digital locations. Campbell and Carlson (2002) succinctly pointed out that despite cultural fears of spying and government intervention or manipulation, the majority of us still willingly sign up to be monitored and manipulated by corporate interests. Google and online retailers save bank account numbers, credit cards and household bills run on autopay settings, and the advertisements seen on a Facebook profile sneakily mimic the users' recent Amazon searches. Bossewitch and Sinnreich (2012) added that the younger generation is disproportionately influenced by the internalization of these transparent data norms, and since corporations frequently adjust or update their privacy and disclosure policies without overtly notifying the user, individuals have even more of a tenuous grasp on the control of their information than they might presume. From every angle – personal, economic, professional – loosened privacy standards, permanent data recollection, and constant watchfulness change our relationship to our knowledge of ourselves and our actions. Our social identities are caught up in a plethora of online media outlets (e.g., Twitter,

Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Instagram) just as much or more than our financial identities, and victims learn the hard way that if even one social avatar misbehaves, the entire fractured digital persona comes rapidly under fire.

Having been thus convinced by the corporate sector that the monitoring of our financial or leisure pursuits is for our own good, effectively rendering each of us a Panoptic tower surveilling our own and others' activity, it becomes easier to agree with Ronson's (2015) argument that we publicly shame strangers out of a twisted sense of moral obligation or greater good. Avowal has strong roots within religion and morality; Foucault explained that regardless of the society in which it is found, avowal is a way of verbally cleansing the self, finding a way back to the truth and subjectifying oneself in relationship to said truth. With instant access to the wrong-doings of a significant percent of the global population through Twitter and similar media, the citizen can now consider him/herself a watchdog. Hacking and doxxing (the practice of disseminating someone's identifiable personal information without permission with the intent to cause harm) all radically shift the balance of social power: now, the truth waiting to be discovered via avowal is that a black mark created by one person tarnishes the whole group. Simply put, it will never be erased from the archive; you are stuck with it, and we are stuck with you. An apology is not enough to cleanse the digital record.

The omnipotence of personal data is a threat to even the most average citizen/social media user, but a demonstrable and constant danger to individuals who already tend to come up shorthanded in traditional relations of power: the underpaid, the poverty classes, the racial and gender minorities who face daily discrimination. Foucault's work has always faced criticism from feminist theorists for andocentrism, and when those criticisms are compounded by the history of misogyny on the Internet, trouble erupts. See the case of Zoe Quinn, independent video game developer whose sexual choices managed to launch an entire spiteful online movement now known as #Gamergate. Opponents in the industry discovered that Quinn had engaged in a sexual relationship with a journalist who had favorably reviewed one of her games. Quinn then became the center of a maelstrom of hate targeted at women in the gaming industry, replete with death threats, rape threats, and attacks on her personal information that became so severe she was forced to leave her home and take judicial action (Van Der Werff, 2014). For social actors like Quinn who have had all of their agency forcibly stripped due to factors outside of their control (such as gender, race, and age), avowing their actions and reconstituting themselves in light of the new experiences would be so completely demoralizing it is completely outside the bounds of possibility.

Women also feel the deathlock of public shame when they attempt to point the finger of blame, particularly at men. Adria Richards became briefly infamous when she took a picture and shamed two men at a game developers' conference for making irreverent jokes in the crowd while a speaker was trying to discuss gender equality. Her tactics were successful, in the sense that one of the men she targeted was fired. But, Richards was so swiftly inundated with an array of violent misogynistic threats – targeted not just at her, but at her employer as well – that she also lost her job and was forced to hide at a friend's home for months (Zandt, 2013). The victim of her shaming quickly found employment elsewhere. Richards did not. Lehrer found a publisher willing to publish another book – this time about redemption. Lindsey Stone still lives in petrifying fear of what might happen if she is found out again. Clearly, the path to re-subjectification is not on equal terrain for all. How can the one attempting avowal bind herself to "the truth" when the public and the victim fundamentally cannot agree on what that truth is?

Another alarming implication of this broken system of avowal concerns public privacy and identity management. In describing the methods used to maintain order and righteousness in civilization, Foucault (1981/2014) introduced the concept of alethurgy: a ritual procedure for bringing forth that which we already know, the truth. What seems at first blush to be a relatively straightforward concept becomes ethically complex in the contemporary climate of information flux. We have already established that individuals in cyberspace might actually have considerably less power than they are aware of, due to digital archives and opaque privacy policies. Information flux (closely related to the ideas of Poster) posits that the total flow of knowledge between an individual and a network is equally relevant to power dynamics as the nature of volume of information. Taken in light of circumstances like Zoe Quinn's, the modern alethurgy takes on the capability of being not just a staged performance, but a vindictive witch hunt conducted by anonymous networked strangers with digital archives on their side. Public humiliation has been out of favor in the formalized American legal system for two centuries; reviving the practice on social media senselessly forces individuals to perform avowals over and over with little to no hope of redemption.

In his public apology, Jonah Lehrer said to his worldwide audience,

> A confession is not a solution… these flaws that led to my failure - are a basic part of me. They are as fundamental to myself as those other parts I'm not ashamed of. This is the phase that comes next, the phase I'm in now. It is the slow realization that all the apologies and regrets are just the beginning. That my harshest words will not fix me, that I cannot quickly become the person I need to be. It is finally understanding how hard it is to change. (Lehrer, 2013)

Lehrer's dour outlook is indicative of exactly how difficult avowal and reconstruction are in our hyper-mediated society, and this assessment is coming from a privileged white man who was lucky to suffer nothing more than verbal backlash from his transgressions – transgressions more serious than many other victims of more harmful shaming. The system of avowal that Foucault laid out in the late 20th century has been subtly but irrevocably shifted by emergent technologies; cyberspace renders everyday citizens both knowingly and unknowingly complicit in the observation and manipulation of everyday activity. The easy access to and relatively low literacy requirement of social media is rapidly facilitating a strong resurgence of secondary orality in public life. When personal information is willing shared, publicized, and put on display, personal facts become shared narrative and the idea of private personal information begins to break down. After all, the very concept of private information was enabled and perpetuated by a literate society: books are easier to lock away than whispers or stories, and the oral society has a far longer history on this world than the literate one. In that sense, the trend we have discussed is not new, but rather very old. Today's Twitter shaming is yesterday's stoning. A Facebook photo of a shamed, spoiled daughter echoes the fallen woman locked in the stocks in the town square.

Rethinking Contemporary Shaming

Schadenfreude, the feeling or enjoyment or happiness at the misfortune of others, was originally considered to belie mental health; however, Gao et al. (2014) pointed out that far from being a sign of insanity, schadenfreude might be a universal response to another's misfortune. And, while in the pre-Internet era we all might have gotten some self-indulgent satisfaction out of other people's misfortune, we now have the unique ability to weigh in on the outcome of trials, serving as a communal jury and firing squad in a way that has not been possible since communities were small enough for all-inclusive town hall meetings. Computer-mediated communication theorists are full of ideas about this cycle is possible, ranging from the simply explained cycle of intensified feedback we enter into online (Walther, 1996) to the toxic disinhibition enabled by anonymity and invisibility (Suler, 2004) to plain mimicking of social preferences. The specifics in this case are not relevant; to some degree, all of these concepts are applicable here. Regardless of why we flock to jump on the public-shaming bandwagon, the sense of schadenfreude we gain from criticizing strangers' accidents and missteps provides some form of positive aid in self-evaluation: at least I am not stupid enough to make a mistake like that, we tell ourselves – at least, until we find ourselves on the wrong end of the gun sight.

This cycle of blame and avowal has bizarre effects on the mind of both victims and perpetrators, alternately evoking feelings of regret and staunch conviction. When working with victims and perpetrators of public shaming, Ronson (2015) discovered repeatedly that journalists and reporters who had exposed someone else's ethical violation thought the public had gone too far towards crucifying their current victim. Michael Moynihan, who broke the Lehrer scandal, said "I'm watching people stabbing and stabbing and stabbing Lehrer, and I'm like, HE'S DEAD" (Ronson, 2015, p. 51). And, yet, just as frequently, shamers dug their heels in, utterly convinced that they were doing the right thing.

An avowal was originally constituted as an exercise of renewal – one which was used to rebuild the subject and place them into a new relationship with the world. Increasingly, though, the deadlocked grip of digital archives, in combination with the subversive omnipresence of the cyberpanopticon – complete with implicit public co-operation – renders the avowal not a one-time ritual on the path to renewal, but rather a constantly restarting, never-ending loop of penance. As Steele (2010) explained, shame, and honor, its inverse, is meant to be a deeply introspective, private evaluation of the self. When scandals blow up on social media, however, the public sphere clamors to see the evidence of that pain: to have the innermost levels of emotion dragged into the spotlight to be judged by the public and deemed wanting.

How will this Sisyphean loop constituted by practices of observation and our surrender to orality evolve in the future? Will the tendency to give our information over to websites and databases solidify, or will society see a backlash against those practices? We cannot claim to know how digital technology and social media usage will evolve in the future; regardless, the system as it currently exists allows a harmful culture of shaming. Technology and the Internet may have brought an era of free information and open access to us, but they have also opened the door for the demise of private information; without private information, reasoned and impartial judgment become vulnerable to being drowned out by the whims of impassioned public opinion. Clarifying what our expectations are for confessions received from perceived wrong-doers is a crucial first step in remedying this harmful cycle of public shame.

The first step necessary to combat this trend is a restoration of empathy to those who have committed an act we perceive as wrong. A major culprit behind the shaming access is the pure ease with which we can level criticism against another person – sending a tweet or constructing a Facebook post (unlike, say, writing a newspaper editorial) requires so little effort that we take no time to consider the humanity of the target of such attacks. Yet, clear examples of the ways in which social media facilitates kindness, generosity, and empathy abound. The "Ice Bucket Challenge" that went viral on social media in the summer of 2014 required participants to dump an icy bucket of water on their heads, ostensibly mimicking one of the symptoms of ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease), before encouraging others to donate money to research into the rare disease. While this effort was publicly derided as useless slacker-activism, the $77 million dollars raised for research recently proved vital in helping scientists discover a new gene linked to the disease (Rogers, 2016). Their breakthrough illustrates how social media, when connected to empathy for the plight of another, can bring strangers together in the service of a need just as easily as it can bring strangers together in a coordinated attack. The millions of global users on social media break down traditional barriers of communication, but without a dedicated effort to humanize these communicative others, their misdeeds become unforgivable character flaws rather than simple errors in judgment that we ourselves might have committed under different circumstances.

However, the onus of responsibility cannot be placed entirely on the audience of shamers. *Exagoreusis* hinges on the wrongdoer's willingness to accept that they are just part of a greater social whole. Once the public is willing to see the humanity of the wrongdoer and move past the misdeed, the wrongdoer must be equally willing to recognize their place in the scheme of this globally mediated culture. When a digital persona is as permanent and easy to discover as ours are on social media, the shaming audience can easily discover signs of hubris or hauteur that may derail attempts at avowal. Concerted efforts to humanize the wrongdoer and display willing humility comprise the first step in reconstituting a workable system of avowal.

A second step necessary to revising our cultural shaming epidemic is acknowledging the changed nature of the cyberpanopticon. Let us return to Jeremy Bentham's (1843) original description of the institutional panopticon: a structure that allows one watchman to simultaneously keep an eye on many subjects, without the subjects knowing when they were or were not being observed. This form of institutional state power over citizens is still present, and it is often strengthened by the existence of heavily Internet- and social media-reliant citizens (Elmer, 2013). But, of more concern, is the individual member of the cyberpanoptic, who removes the tower from the center of Bentham's prison and instead creates an institution where every individual inmate can always see and critique every other inmate. Sunil Tripathi's case exemplifies the turn toward a cyberpanoptic; Tripathi was a student at Brown University who went missing two days before the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013. When news and updates on the disaster began to be passed back and forth online, social media users mistakenly identified Tripathi as the man in a surveillance photo taken near the scene. Another individual claimed to have heard Tripathi's name on a police radio. Mainly via Twitter and Reddit (a crowdsourced news amalgamator that bills itself as the "front page of the Internet"), speculation and accusations about Tripathi's alleged involvement grew quickly; Internet users flooded social media with accusations of Tripathi's guilt and self-congratulatory statements on citizen journalism (Bidgood, 2013). Tripathi's name was cleared after the Tsarnaev brothers were found guilty of the terrorist plot, but this news did little to comfort his family members who had suffered through the onslaught of public shame directed at their loved one, only to later discover him the victim of an unrelated suicide.

This example of heady public conviction can partially be attributed to the increasing strength of *sous*veillance in contemporary America (Reilly, 2015). A *sous*veillance society, as opposed to a surveillance society, is predicted on the concept of individual citizens "watching from below" (*sous* being the French word for

"under" or "beneath"). The ability to perform *sous*veillance first emerged with camcorders and audiorecorders, technology used to hold persons with traditional positions of authority accountable when they abuse their abilities and the people suffer: the taping of the police brutalization of Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1991 is a classic example of *sous*veillance (Hoffman, 2006). However, when omnipresent cellphones put high-tech cameras and audio recorders in almost everyone's pocket, the Panoptic eye turns from justifiably correcting the misbehaviors of authority figures to hungrily policing the words and actions of any citizen. Ostensibly, first-person participant-based recordings seem more reliable; if we trust citizen journalism because of its relative lack of institutional biases and agendas, why not citizen policing?

Unfortunately, these ideals are as false in policing as they were proven to be in journalism: untrained individuals are rarely freer from bias than their institutionalized or professional counterparts. Relying on these assumptions of neutrality and power-balance in the form of *sous*veillance too frequently leads to oppressive power relations that disproportionately punish minor transgressions. Lindsey Stone, the young charity worker referenced earlier who lost her job over a crude joke photo taken at a site of national public memory, perfectly exemplifies this trend: despite being described as a good and passionate worker, 12,000 strangers deemed her crime of tasteless humor to be one that no amount of avowal or humiliation could redeem (Ronson, 2015). Stone was fired and two years passed before she found another job (Rowles, 2015). *Sous*veillance can function as an effective tool against abusive state-sanctioned power, as in the case of the Rodney King riots, but more frequently it is just a tool in the destruction of individuals who have committed no legally punishable crime. With no dependable mechanism to target methods of *sous*veillance only towards abusive institutional forces, we must work twice as hard to self-monitor and prevent this bottom-up tool for the regulation of power from becoming a tool misguided individuals use to needlessly oppress their peers. Cell phone camera technology, especially, is too valuable in the ongoing social fight against police who abuse their power to advocate against. However, left unchecked, the employment of such technology against non-state-sponsored individuals does more harm than good.

An outmoded understanding of Foucault, combined with a social media user base that too easily perpetuates a culture of public shaming, have created a social milieu that embraces *exomologesis* rather than *exagoreusis.* This culture prohibits the individual ability to move past our mistakes, further disadvantaging traditionally discriminated-against populations, but it also produces a more fractured and disjointed social whole that cannot conceptualize mistakes or wrongdoings (like President Nixon's) as beneficial lessons. In order to return to a state of *exagoreusis*, individual citizen watchdogs must beware of turning *sous*veillance power against their peers; bottom-up monitoring of power can serve as a deterrent to abuse of state-sponsored power, but inevitably only freezes individuals with no institutionalized authority in a state of unforgiven error. To further combat the dispersed nature of the cyberpanopticon, social media users must modify their expectations of wrongdoers and humanize their global peers, just as wrongdoers must admit misdeeds without hubris or superiority. These tasks are not easy; they require constant self-monitoring and reflexivity, but social media has already been proven to be a powerful empathic force. It can and must work to the public advantage, not against it. As social media evolves, further exploration must be done into both the technology itself and user norms and preferences (especially as wearable technology becomes more omnipresent) to continue managing the variable relationship between individual power and social media.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 54-63

Spiritual Intelligence, Moral Intensity, and the Intention to Help a Stranger Who Initiates Communication: A Study of Millennial College Students

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Communication with strangers is a unique process of social interaction. Prior research has suggested millennial college students put spirituality into practice through an ethic of caring and a sense of interconnectedness. The current study investigates how this active spirituality might be evident in a situation where a stranger requests help. Three hundred and thirty nine participants between the ages of 18-35 completed questionnaires including the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory and a moral intensity scale, as well as a scenario in which they were asked to evaluate the likelihood they would respond to help an elderly stranger who speaks with heavily foreign accented English. Results show the higher the level of spiritual intelligence and the higher the level of "perceived harm" to the stranger, the higher the likelihood of acting to help, controlling for gender and age. The findings suggest that spirituality indirectly influences initial interactions with strangers.

Strangers are individuals "… of different groups and are unknown to us" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 24). *Communicating with strangers* has been identified as a distinct situation for social interaction which involves individuals who are different regarding their personal values, beliefs, life styles, communication behaviors, and other cultural elements (Gudykunst, 2005; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; 2003). For many individuals, interactions with strangers "… tend to involve the highest degree of strangeness and the lowest degree of familiarity" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 24). Studies have suggested that individuals encounter unique challenges in their communication with strangers, particularly during initial interactions with them (Duronto, Nishida, & Nakyama, 2005; Gudykunst, 2005; Lin & Rancer, 2003; Neuliep, 2012; Neuliep & Ryan, 1998). This research has found that individuals' uncertainty and anxiety regarding the anticipated interactions with cultural strangers are positively related to their avoidance of such interactions.

In addition, Gudykunst and Kim (1984) have concluded that worldview has "… a direct impact on our communication with strangers" (p. 42), and is certainly a communication factor that warrants a closer examination. Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy (2013) also indicated that a reasonable predictor for individuals' behaviors and motivations is a culture's worldview, much of which can be grouped into traditional religion, secular humanism, and spirituality. Since an important form of worldview is human spirituality, which for many individuals is the foundation of values, beliefs, and morality that influence their behaviors, clearly spirituality can be expected to play a unique role in individuals' initial interactions with culturally different strangers.

According to Pew Research Center (2010), the millennial generation is defined as "those born after 1980 and the first generation to come of age in the new millennium" (para. 1). Many members of the millennial generation embrace values consistent with religious teaching and beliefs, such as goodness, kindness, and tolerance, but are skeptical about the Bible and church traditions, rules, and behaviors (barna.org, 2007). In a report based on a longitudinal study focusing on the spirituality of undergraduate students, Astin observed that spirituality has to do with the students' search for meaning and purpose, values development, and self-understanding (Pew Research Center, 2008). He also noted that since spirituality is primarily an interior quality, most spirituality measures have to do with values, attitudes, and beliefs. As American society has become increasingly diverse and mobile in the 21st century, members of the millennial generation generally, and millennial college students in particular, are more likely to engage in direct social interaction with cultural strangers in their everyday lives. Considering this generational shift, how does the spirituality, particularly moral reasoning, of members of the millennial generation influence the way they handle the situation of communicating with a stranger?

Therefore, centered on Gudykunst and Kim's (1984, 2003) conceptualization of communication with strangers, the purpose of this research is to investigate how spiritual factors influence the reasoning and decision

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making of members of the millennial generation regarding whether or not to help a stranger. Specifically, this study examines the factors influencing millennial college students' moral reasoning as they decide whether or not to help an individual who seems culturally different from them and initiates communication.

Literature review

Spirituality and spiritual intelligence

In their extensive research of the spirituality of millennials, Astin, Astin and Lindholm (2011) identified three dimensions of spirituality in practice as: interconnectedness, caring *for* other people (e.g. participating in community service, donating money to charities, and helping friends with personal problems), and caring *about* other people (e.g. feelings expressed in wanting to help those who are troubled and to alleviate suffering). They believe spirituality gives us our sense of meaning; who we are, where we come from, and why we are here. Spirituality also refers to an interdependent sense of connectedness with each other and the world around us. The characteristic of spirituality put into practice by helping others is supported by Helminiak (2001) who suggested that spirituality entails living our commitment to a set of meanings and values in everyday acts. Leak (2006) noted that social interest is linked with positive spiritual attributes, such as authenticity, a sense of universality and connectedness with others, striving to meet daily goals that are self-transcendent rather than self-focused, and having a center of value in things that transcend the self.

Identifying the characteristics of spirituality in practice has also been the focus of research into spirituality as a form of intelligence. Zohar (2005) contended that a distinctly spiritual intelligence is the ability to access higher meanings, values, abiding purposes, and unconscious aspects of the self and to embed these meanings, values, and purposes in living a richer and more creative life. Signs of high spiritual intelligence include an ability to think out of the box, an attitude of humility, and access to energies that come from something beyond the ego. Emmons (2000) identified various components of spiritual intelligence, including the ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve everyday problems and the capacity to be virtuous by engaging in effective action. Zohar and Marshall (2000) discussed spiritual intelligence as a source of ethical behavior. Building on such components, King and DeCicco (2009) developed their scale of spiritual intelligence. They believe spiritual intelligence originates in the mind of an individual and expresses itself both inwardly and outwardly, and, therefore, may be observed through both mental dispositions and physical actions.

Astin, et al. (2011) explained how an ethic of caring for others can be observed behaviorally in charitable involvement and other research confirms a connection between ethics, charitable involvement, and prosocial behavior in young adults (barna.org, 2013, 2007, 2005; Baumsteiger, Chenneville & McGuire, 2013; Brodbeck, et al., 2011; Kocabyik & Kluaksizoglu, 2014; Leak, 2006; Paciello, Fida, Tamontano, Cole, & Cerniglia, 2013; Paulin, Ferguson, Schattke, & Jost, 2015). However, much of this research emphasized more indirect ways of helping, such as contributing money to charitable causes or expressing concern for the environment, leaving unanswered the question of how an ethic of caring for others plays out in direct encounters with another person in need of assistance. Such findings raise a question about the degree of influence spirituality in the form of spiritual intelligence has upon the actual practice by millennials of an ethic of caring for or about another person. More specifically, if confronted by someone in need of help, will millennials be likely to help that person?

Moral intensity

One such factor may be found in how members of the millennial generation reason about their actions, particularly when it comes to their ethical or moral reasoning. Researchers concerned about ethical behavior and moral reasoning have studied factors that influence individuals' decisions about moral dilemmas and found the construct of perceived moral intensity helps identify when people are more or less likely to act ethically (Barnett, 2001; Jones, 1991; Singhapakdi, Vitell, & Franke, 1999). Jones (1991) suggested that if a person perceives a high level of moral intensity in a situation requiring a decision to act, that person will more likely recognize a moral component, undertake ethical reasoning, form moral intentions, and act ethically. Barnett (2001) echoed this reasoning, arguing that moral intensity relates exclusively to the way a decision maker perceives characteristics of a moral issue or dilemma. He explained that people are likely to wonder about how serious the potential consequences of an action are or how society evaluates the morality of an action before deciding whether they will

take action. Jones (1991) identified six components of moral intensity: magnitude of consequences (the degree of harm a particular action is likely to cause victims of the action); social consensus (the degree of social agreement that a proposed act is evil or good); probability of effect (the likelihood an action will take place and create harmful effects); temporal immediacy (the length of time between the present and the onset of consequences of an act); proximity (the degree of nearness or closeness the decision maker has for those affected by the issue or action in question); and, concentration of effect (the number of individuals influenced by an act).

Singhapakdi et al. (1999) suggested that intentions and behaviors come from individuals' perceptions of a moral issue rather than actual characteristics of the issue. They found perceived moral intensity was related to intentions to act unethically in a situation. Barnett (2001) presented third and fourth year undergraduate students with actions requiring consideration of ethics in two hypothetical business situations to test the four dimensions of perceived moral intensity. He found that social consensus was most important, that how society felt about issues affected respondents' ethical decision making, the only dimension that affected whether an action had an ethical component. He speculated that individuals may first need to identify an ethical component in an issue before they begin to take other dimensions of moral intensity into account. Yet another finding by Barnett implied that students were more likely to judge an action as ethical when they perceived the potential victim was similar to themselves or judge an action less harshly when they perceived it as being like a choice they had made in a similar situation. He concluded that an indirect effect on ethical judgments may be the primary influence of moral intensity on ethical behavioral intentions.

Related research in bystander intervention by Fritzsche, Finkelstein and Penner (2000) held as a central tenet that an individual weighs the costs of helping or not before deciding to intervene or not intervene to help someone in need. In their research, respondents considered several scenarios concerning helping someone in a non-emergency situation. An arousal: cost-reward model predicted that helping should increase as costs of helping decrease and the costs of not helping increase. Their findings supported this model, with the greatest amount of helping offered in response to the scenario with the lowest cost of helping and the highest costs of not helping. Like the findings from perceived moral intensity research, once again individuals stop to consider whether or not to help, and weigh factors such as cost-rewards to self and other, or the moral intensity of an action, before deciding whether or not they will act to help.

Compared with earlier generations, members of the millennial generation are less religious, more spiritual, and more tolerant (barna.org, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2015). Researchers have been intrigued with how this increased spirituality and tolerance might be observed in action. Baumsteiger, et al. (2013) found some support for links between moral reasoning and spirituality, leading to one specific line of inquiry which asks: how might millennial students' spirituality influence their decision to act, struggle with an ethical dilemma, and overcome the discomfort and anxiety of the unfamiliar to help a stranger? Might millennials' spirituality in the form of spiritual intelligence influence the hesitation indicated by the perceived moral intensity? One way to explore such a situation would be to consider an initial interaction, where the uncertainty of encountering a stranger is exacerbated by unfamiliar communicative behaviors. Therefore, we asked the following two questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between spiritual intelligence and moral intensity among millennial college students?

RQ2: How do spiritual intelligence and moral intensity influence the intention to help a stranger who initiates communication?

Method

Participants and Data Collection

Participants in this study were students at a large Midwestern university in the United States. The study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and an informed consent message was shared with students. All participants took part voluntarily. This study was part of a large scale survey which consisted of questions and statements concerning a variety of concepts/variables. Paper-and-pencil questionnaires were administered in classrooms.

Among the 376 questionnaires that were returned, 17 provided responses to less than 30% of the content of the questionnaire and three were from students younger than 18. As a result, these 20 questionnaires were not used for further analysis. In addition, since this study focused on members of the millennial generation in America (i.e. individuals who were born in 1980 or later), 17 questionnaires returned by participants who were older than 35 years of age were excluded from further analysis. The 339 participants consisted of 179 males and 160 females with ages ranging from 18 to 34 (M = 20.25, SD = 3.12). Ethnicities included: White (Caucasian) (68.4%), Hispanic American (Latino) (1.5%), African American (Black) (22.1%), Asian American (3.2%), and Other (4.4%). One participant didn't indicate ethnicity. Participants were from these academic areas: Social Sciences/Education/Humanities (37.2%), Natural Sciences/Engineering/Health Sciences (41.3%), Business (16.8%), Undecided (3.2%), and Other (1.2%). One didn't indicate a major. Participants included: 52.8 % freshman, 18.6% sophomores, 8.8% juniors, 16.5% seniors, and 3.3% were graduate students or other.

Measures

Spiritual Intelligence. The Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI) (King & DeCicco, 2009) was adapted to assess individuals' level of spirituality. The SISRI consists of 24 items in four dimensions. The first dimension, "Critical Existential Thinking" (CET), includes seven items. One of the items of CET, for instance, states, "I have often questioned or pondered the nature of reality" (King & DeCicco, 2009, p. 84). The second dimension, "Personal Meaning Production" (PMP), has five items. One of these items states, "I am able to define a purpose or reason for my life" (p. 84). The third dimension, "Transcendental Awareness" (TA), consists of seven items. One of these items states, "I am highly aware of the nonmaterial aspects of life" (p. 84). The fourth and last dimension, "Conscious State Expansion" (CSE), has five items. One of these items states, "I am able to enter higher states of consciousness or awareness" (p. 84). Responses were solicited using a 5-point scale ranging from "0" ("Not at all true of me") to "4" ("Completely true of me"). Reliability assessments of these four sub-scales for the SISRI suggested a high level of measure consistency; the Cronbach's alphas are .78 for CET (M = 24.52, SD = 5.68), .79 for PMP (M = 17.68, SD = 3.40), .71 for TA (M = 23.67, SD = 4.64), and .86 for CSE (M = 15.28, SD = 4.74). A total Spiritual Intelligence score is the sum of these four subscale scores. The final combined score would suggest the higher the score, the more spiritual a participant.

Moral intensity. The measure of moral intensity was a scale of six items adapted from Singhapakdi, Vitell, and Kraft (1996). For example, two of these items state, "The overall harm (if any) done as a result of my providing no assistance to them would be very small;" "Most people would agree that not providing any assistance to them by me is wrong" (p. 33). This measure asked the participants to respond to each item using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = agree completely, 7 = disagree completely). Previous research suggests there are two dimensions with this measure: "perceived potential harms" and "perceived social pressure" (Singhapakdi, et al., 1996, p. 250). A perception of harm meant the individual was considering the action in light of the potential consequences to the other person of being helped or not, and a perception of social pressure meant the individual was considering the action in terms of how society or someone close to them might view the morality of the considered helping action (Singhapakdi, et al., 1996; Yang & Wu, 2009). Therefore, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed on these six items. The results show an excellent fit to the data as the fit indices were the following: $\chi 2$ (8) = 7.64, p = .47; CMIN/DF = .96; GFI = .99; RMSEA = 0.00. The results thus confirmed two dimensions of moral intensity. The first dimension, perception of harm, consists of four items (Cronbach's alpha = .70, M = 15.19, SD = 4.55), while the second, perception of social pressure, includes two items (Cronbach's alpha = .69, M = 5.89, SD = 3.20).

Intention to act. A hypothetical situation, potentially familiar to college students, was presented to the participants in order to assess how they might reason to take action (or not) to help a stranger in a situation for which they have control over the course of action to take. In the hypothetical situation participants were asked to imagine the following: "[O]n a cold winter's day after class, you are walking to the remote lot where your car is parked. You look at your watch and see that if you leave in the next ten minutes, most likely you'll be on time to work. Then, an older couple approaches you and in heavily foreign accented English the man begins to talk to you. It sounds like he is asking you how to get to the Student Union, which is some distance away, out of sight." The scenario was created to mirror a likely real life situation in which both age ("older") and language ("heavily foreign accented English") were used to intensify the sense of strangeness and unfamiliarity for the participants.

Intention to provide assistance was measured by Likert-type items which asked participants to indicate the possibility that they would take an action in the described situation. A total of six possible actions were given to the

participants, and the types of these actions varied from not taking helpful action to helpful action at some inconvenience to oneself to seeking to get someone else to help the strangers. The possible responses ranged from "1" ("Very unlikely") to "5" ("Very likely"). A bivariate correlation analysis for the participants' responses indicates only two of the six action statements exhibited a significant and moderate correlation (r = .47, p < .01), and all remaining correlations among these action statements were either insignificant or very weak (r < .30). Thus, a composite score of these two action statements (items) (M = 3.36, SD = 1.72) was used to measure participants' intention. One of these two possible action statements was: "You say, "I'm sorry but I'm late," and you get in your car and drive away," and the other one was, "You say, "I'm sorry, but I don't understand what you are saying," and you get in your car and drive away." The composite score of this measure suggests the higher the score, the lower the likelihood a participant would act to help.

Results

To answer Research Questions 1 and 2, a mediation regression analysis was conducted by using PROCESS, a macro program for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). In this analysis, spiritual intelligence was entered as the independent variable; "perceived harm" and "perceived social pressure" were entered as mediators; and intention to act to help was entered as the outcome variable. In addition, since the primary purpose of this study was to examine spirituality and its relation to such variables as moral intensity (two dimensions) and intention to act to help, both gender (men coded as "1" and women coded as "0") and age were entered as covariates for controlling their effects on other variables. The bivariate correlations among these variables are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Bivariate Correlations Among Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Spirituality	---	.18**	-.02	-.12**
2. Perceived potential harm		---	-.12**	-.19**
3. Perceived social pressure			---	.14*
4. Intentions				---

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01.

Regarding the two dimensions of moral intensity, as shown in Table 2, a combination of the three variables has a significant impact on "perceived harm," F (3, 335) = 5.27, p < .01, R square = .05. Specifically, gender (b = -1.08, p < .05) and spiritual intelligence (b = 11.98, p < .01), contributed to the statistical significance of the relationship. That is, the higher the level of spiritual intelligence, the higher the level of "perceived harm", controlling for gender and age. Second, as shown in Table 3, a combination of the three variables has not demonstrated a significant impact on "perceived social pressure," F (3, 335) = 2.05, p = .11 (n.s.).

Finally, as displayed in Table 4 the five variables together significantly predicted intention, F (5, 333) = 4.52, p < .001, R square = .06. Specifically, "perceived harm" (b = -.06, p < .01) contributed significantly to the prediction of intentions. That is, the higher the level of "perceived harm", the higher the likelihood of acting to help, controlling for gender and age.

Table 2

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and t-statistics in Mediation Analysis with "Perceived harm" as Mediator

Predictor	Coeff	SE	t-value
Gender	-1.08	.49	-2.22*
Age	.03	.08	.43
Spirituality	11.98	2.12	3.33**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$. Model: $R^2 = .05$**

Table 3

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and t-statistics in Mediation Analysis with "Perceived social pressure" as a Mediator

Predictor	Coeff	SE	t-value
Gender	.39	.35	1.10
Age	-.12	.06	-2.15
Spirituality	-.01	.01	-.39

Table 4

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and t-statistics in Mediation Analysis Predicting Intentions

Predictor	Coeff	SE	t-value
Gender	.16	.18	.85
Age	-.03	.03	-1.17
Spirituality	-.01	.01	-1.71
Perceived harm	-.06	.02	-2.92**
Perceived social pressure	.06	.03	1.95

Note. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Model: $R^2 = .06$***

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between spiritual intelligence and moral intensity among millennial college students as well as how these factors relate to the intention to offer assistance to a stranger. First, regarding RQ1, the findings show that the inner characteristic of spiritual intelligence is related to the two dimensions of moral intensity differently. The results suggest that (1) students who had higher scores for spiritual intelligence tended to have higher moral intensity scores for "perceived harm;" and (2) there is no significant relationship between student scores for spiritual intelligence and those for the moral intensity score "perceived social pressure." One possible explanation for these differences is that problem solving using spiritual intelligence will reflect an individual's deeply held beliefs and values, rather than social norms. Since spiritual intelligence is about personal beliefs and worldviews, it may not be related to "perceived social pressure" which is concerned with social judgments based on the ethical standards commonly accepted by society.

Another explanation may lie in the generational differences in the student population. The previous moral intensity research studying students was published no later than 2000. We can assume the students were members of Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980. The Barna Group (barna.org, 2005), reporting on their nationwide survey of the generational differences in morals between Boomers and Busters (Generation X), note that a generational difference exists in morality. Unlike Boomers,

> [N]early half of Busters said that ethics and morals are based on "what is right for the person," compared with just one-quarter of pre-Busters. This mindset helps to explain why Busters are more likely to embrace a pragmatic, individualized form of moral decision making (barna.org, 2005).

The findings of the current study seem to be consistent with the pattern of generational difference regarding morality suggested by other research.

Second, regarding RQ2, the findings indicate that the "perceived harm" dimension of moral intensity, not the "perceived social pressure" dimension, significantly affects the intention to act to help. Given the findings for RQ1, it is evident that the influence of individuals' spiritual intelligence on the intention to act to help is indirect, mitigated by the "perceived harm." In other words, the higher the level of spiritual intelligence and the more harmful the consequences perceived in the scenario, the more likely individuals are to act to help. One explanation for this relationship is that a characteristic of spirituality in millennials beyond an ethic of caring for or caring about is the importance of interconnectedness, "a sense of connectedness to all beings" (Astin, Astin & Lindholm, 2011, p. 63), including "accepting others as they are" (p. 67). It may be that while social pressure to do the right thing is not motivating for a member of the millennial generation, the sense of being connected to another person who is in trouble and needs help may overcome the hesitation prompted by the strangeness of the other. Notably, this finding is different from those reported in previous research (e.g., Barnett, 2001) in which perceived social consensus was identified as the most important dimension of moral intensity influencing individuals' intention to act. Barnett (2001) speculates that students' ethical decision making in his study was "affected by their perceptions of how society felt about the issues" (p. 1053).

Another possible explanation for the discrepancy is that the ethical dilemma presented in this study is for an action in one brief interaction with a stranger after which one presumes there will be no further consequences, unlike some of the social and business scenarios used in previous research where there is the presumption that relationships may already be established or may be ongoing, or that there will be some documentation of the action such that there may be future consequences. In the scenario in this study there would be no further personal ramifications to the person doing the reasoning and acting than his or her own sense of ethics; the millennial individual with higher Spiritual Intelligence scores may experience uncomfortable dissonance if he or she does not act to help.

Limitations and future research

A limitation is the convenience sample drawn from students in a public university in a Midwestern state which is usually considered a conservative state with regard to the majority of its individual residents' cultural value orientations. A different sample of millennial college students, for example, from a private college/university or

from a more liberal value-oriented state, might have different spiritual characteristics and respond differently to the situation where a stranger needs help.

The explanations for discrepancies in findings discussed above suggest that future research might compare generational differences in the relationships among variables. Additional research is needed to confirm and clarify the finding that spiritual intelligence does not have a direct connection to intention to act to help a stranger who communicates in a culturally different way, but is indirectly influential over various factors involved in reasoning, such as moral intensity.

Another limitation is related to the hypothetical situation created for "communicating with strangers." In the situation, the assumed strangeness existing between individuals was largely based on differences of "age" and "foreign accented language." Future research can incorporate other personal and cultural characteristics such as ethnicity to help develop a sense of strangeness between the individuals.

Specifically, while previous research indicated other characteristics of communicators, such as intercultural communication apprehension, ethnocentrism, and intercultural willingness to communicate affect both individuals' intention to communicate and their actual communication with those strangers during their initial interactions (Lin & Rancer, 2003; Neuliep, 2012; Neuliep & Ryan, 1998), the findings of the current study suggest that individuals' spirituality also has an impact on the initial interaction with a stranger. To this end, these findings further our understanding of how worldview can play a significant role in the process of communicating with strangers.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 64-83

"Up in Smoke": Shaping Attitudes Toward Legalizing Marijuana in Ohio

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The legalization of marijuana for recreational and medicinal use has become a controversial topic in recent elections including Ohio's Proposed Constitutional Amendment "Issue 3" in November, 2015. As Ohio lawmakers continue to explore this issue, we sought to investigate how a variety of background characteristics (i.e., demographics, past exposure to and marijuana use, and media use), individual differences (i.e., locus of control and self-efficacy), and beliefs (i.e., political ideology and religious beliefs, attitudes about the benefits/harms of marijuana) and the Theory of Planned Behavior can be used to predict attitudes toward legalizing marijuana and likelihood to vote in favor of legalization (for medicinal and/or general use).

Introduction

Legalizing marijuana – for recreational and/or medicinal use – has become more than a controversial topic in this country over the past few years. In November 2015, Ohioans defeated "The Ohio Marijuana Legislative Initiative" – commonly referred to as Issue 3 – a bill that would have created a constitutional amendment to legalize recreational marijuana use, by a 2-1 margin, but still attracted the attention of Ohio lawmakers (Associated Press, 2016; Ballotpedia, 2015). Several political groups including The Ohio House of Representatives, Ohioans for Medical Marijuana and Grassroots Ohio have announced their own initiatives to move forward (Borchardt, 2016a; Sanner, 2016).

With controversial legislation coming – in some form or another -- it is important to know how Ohio voters view this issue. How have they formed their opinions? How did they vote on Issue 3, and how does this contribute to how they may vote on new ballot initiatives in 2016? Likewise, what social and psychological factors might predict their voting behavior? As we will describe, much of the research on the legalization of marijuana has been focused on its health risks and benefits and not on people's attitudes toward it. In short, the research has been policy-focused and largely atheoretical. In this study, we seek to use a popular theory in social psychology, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), to help us examine the theoretical underpinnings (e.g., locus of control, self-efficacy) that shape voters' attitudes toward the legalization of marijuana.

Review of Related Literature

It is critical for social and political scientists, communication practitioners, politicians, and the voting public that we better understand the shared public opinion toward marijuana use and legislation. Thus, in this study we focus on how attitudes toward marijuana use and legalization are formed, through which channels individuals gather and communicate information about marijuana, and how individuals' attitudes may influence their intention to vote for or against legalization of marijuana in a variety of forms. In order to conduct a thorough and theory-based investigation into this complex issue, it is important to first examine the history of marijuana use as well as its criminalization.

History of Marijuana Use, Acceptance, and Politics

Research has shown that marijuana use for medicinal purposes can be traced back to 2737 B.C. when doctors, and even emperors, in Asian and European countries were prescribing the drug as a means to relieve pain. In the early 1900s, marijuana was a main ingredient in prescription drugs and could be bought over the counter as

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Thanks to other contributors: Morgan Combs, Taylor Scott, Kayla Love, Lydia Wolcott, Katelyn Straley, Blake Carter, Dylan Sander, Lauren Brickey, Hayley Zornes, Carter Semenchuk, Kelsey Stone, Blair King, and Jamika Frazier

a means to relieve pain symptoms, and treat symptoms of rapid weight loss and loss of appetite (Clark, Capuzzi, & Fick 2011). However, marijuana was not used recreationally in the United States until the early 20th Century. It is also believed that mass immigration into the U.S. after the Mexican Revolution of 1910 introduced marijuana use in the U.S., and sparked more recreational use of marijuana (PBS Frontline, n.d.).

After the Great Depression, fear rose about marijuana being linked to violence. The Marijuana Tax Act eventually criminalized the recreational use of marijuana, and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) classified marijuana as a substance with an addictive nature (Siff, 2014). Likewise, many physicians doubted its medicinal benefits, particularly because there was no finite way to measure its dosage or potency (Clark, Capuzzi, & Fick 2011).

Coupled with increased research on the medical pervasiveness of marijuana has come some legislative changes. As of today, 25 states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana use in some form, with five permitting recreational use (Borchardt, 2016b). Within the states that have legalized marijuana for recreational use, consumers are only allowed to purchase from licensed retailers. Physicians are also limited in how they may prescribe the drug (Clark, Capuzzi, & Fick 2011).

Had Issue 3 passed in November, Ohio would have been the first state to legalize medicinal and recreational use simultaneously, and have done so via an amendment to the Ohio Constitution. Many speculated that its likely cause of defeat was because of what was deemed a "marijuana monopoly" because the state would allocate resources to particular growers. In fact, users would only have been able to purchase marijuana grown on ten predetermined parcels already owned including land owned by Cincinnati-born pop star Nick Lachey, former Cincinnati Bengals player Frostee Rucker, and descendant of former President William Howard Taft, Woody Taft (Ballotopedia, 2015; Peters, 2015). Critics of the legislation, including country music star Willie Nelson, a long-time proponent of legalizing marijuana, said the proposed monopoly was just another attempt to saturate the market with "Big Pot," or few big large corporations controlling the market (Hylton, 2015).

Marijuana's Future in Ohio

On September 8, 2016, House Bill 523, a law that legalized medical marijuana to patients with physician-approved medical conditions went into effect (The Ohio Legislature, 2016), but patients' access to medicinal marijuana will not be hashed out until late 2017, reports suggest (Borchardt, 2016c; Marijuana Policy Project, 2016). Nevertheless, it seems likely that Ohioans will encounter legislation to legalize recreational use in the future, or to make medicinal marijuana more accessible to more people. Yet it remains unclear how and when voters may face another ballot initiative. What is clearer is that the legalization of marijuana has been and remains a controversial issue, and that attitudes toward it often differ depending on its intended use.

Legalization: For, Against, and Somewhere in Between

As mentioned above, attitudes toward marijuana legalization seem to center upon three shared beliefs. Some feel that it should be legalized because it has medicinal benefits, and within that group, there is a sub-divide between those who think that it should be made legal solely for medicinal purposes. Likewise, others believe that it is a dangerous drug that is not only addictive, but may lead users to experiment with other, more dangerous drugs (e.g., cocaine, heroin).

Potential Benefits of Marijuana Legalization

Many physicians argue that medical marijuana has many benefits when used properly. Thus far, researchers have found two active channels in marijuana that have medicinal applications. Some physicians argue that it can help in the treatment of a variety of conditions including: epileptic seizures, glaucoma, muscle spasms, anxiety, arthritis, Alzheimer's, Crohn's disease, and Dravet's Syndrome (Loria, 2014). In addition to medical benefits, some scholars have begun to investigate other positive effects of marijuana use.

One of the most recent claims about the benefits of marijuana use has to do with it replacing the use of other "vice" substances. In fact, Anderson and Caumont (2014) found that since legalization in Colorado and Washington, the use of other vice substances has decreased. Nevertheless, Kleiman (2014) argues that marijuana and other substance use go hand-in-hand. Kleiman warns: "If we legalize marijuana or any other drug, either we

will have a private industry whose profits depend on creating and maintaining addicts, or we will have a public bureaucracy whose revenues depend on creating and maintaining addicts" (para. 71).

Another benefit observed is the tax benefits that result from marijuana sales. In Colorado alone, following legalization, marijuana taxes contributed nearly $66 million to the state budget (Sullum, 2016). However, this could increase black market sales among individuals who cannot afford or will not pay for the higher-priced subsidized product (Bindel, 2014). In addition to the potential benefits of marijuana usage are several claims about its dangers.

Dangers of Marijuana Use

Noguiera (2015) indicates that one of the common myths associated with marijuana use is that it is a gateway for more powerful, "hard core" drugs. In his article, he details an interview with Carl Hart, an associate professor in the departments of Psychology and Psychiatry at Columbia University as well as a research scientist in the Division of Substance Abuse at the New York Psychiatric Institute. Essentially, Hart explains that characterizing marijuana as a "gateway" drug isn't necessarily true, yet he does acknowledge that most cocaine or heroin addicts have used marijuana before they became addicted to the hard drugs. He contests that vast majority of marijuana users have never used hard core drugs and never go on to use them. As Hart argued, "The last three presidents of United States used marijuana before they became president. Therefore, marijuana is a gateway drug to the White House" (Nogueira, 2015, p. 16).

Other researchers have made similar claims. A study by Shukla (2013) asked "hard" drug users to describe their experiences with alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and any other illicit drugs in order of first exposure. Their findings suggested that 80% of participants began using "vice" substances along with either alcohol or tobacco, and about 33% of all participants reported using another drug prior to their first use of marijuana. Only 9% percent of participants reported using marijuana before any other drug including alcohol or tobacco.

As aforementioned, much of the research surrounding marijuana use and particularly specific support for its use (e.g., via legislation) has been largely atheoretical in that there is not a universally-accepted model for predicting both marijuana use and support for legalizing it.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Marijuana Use and Support for its Use

The Theory of Planned Behavior. Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, an extension of Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action (1975) in that it included volitional control, aims to explain and predict how people form and act out behaviors. The theory suggests that individuals' behaviors are guided by three influences: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. First, form attitudes toward specific behaviors, and the potential consequences of said behaviors. In addition, individuals consider the normative beliefs of others. In other words, these constitute the larger societal beliefs of others toward the behavior in question. Finally, individuals consider the amount of control they have over executing the behavior. These beliefs work in concert to form a behavioral intention, which is influenced by the actual control one as over the intended action and leads to the actual behavior.

The Theory of Planned Behavior has been used in countless social scientific studies that examine a variety of behaviors including: smoking, drinking, dieting, proper eating, safe sex practices, exercising, and healthy lifestyle maintenance (Godin & Kok, 1996). Given its relevance to examining a variety of behaviors -- including those that are health-related --, it is important to look at the theory in the context of marijuana use and attitudes toward legalization. If one were to have a more positive attitude toward the use of marijuana, if they were in a setting which would allow them easy access to the substance or they weren't likely to be caught, and being that the current social norms are in favor of marijuana legalization, then the individual would be more likely to participate in the usage in certain social contexts and circumstances (Hames, Evangeli, Harrop, di Forti, 2012).

TPB and marijuana use. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is certainly valuable to understanding why people make decisions to make behavioral choices in a variety of contexts (Conner & McMillan, 1999), and can certainly explain why people might use -- or support the use of -- marijuana despite it being illegal throughout much of the country. The majority of research using the theory to predict marijuana usage suggests that one's friends may be the most important predictor. Malmberg, Overbeek, Vermulst, Monshouwer, Vollebergh, and Engels (2012) found that positive attitudes toward marijuana and approval from one's social circle are the most important factors an individual considers when choosing to use marijuana, a finding that has been corroborated by several other

studies (Bashirian, Hidarnia, Allahverdipour, & Hajizade, 2012; Hohman, Crano, Siegel, & Alvaro, 2014; Kam, Matsunaga, Hecht, & Ndiaye, 2009). Likewise Findings by Hames, Evangeli, Harrop, and Di Forti (2012) suggest that the subjective norm may alone be the best predictor of marijuana use. In essence, it seems that one's attitude toward marijuana taken together with his or her peer group's attitude is an important predictor in determining whether an individual will use marijuana. This is important to consider given that other factors (e.g., the legal status of marijuana) may be considered. It also is important to note that an individual's decision to use the substance may differ from whether he or she would vote to support its legalization.

TPB and voting. The Theory of Planned Behavior has been used in several voting studies, and is especially relevant in investigating the voting intention and action among young people. As past research suggests, voter turnout among the 18-24 age bracket is often much lower than in other age groups (Blais, 2000; Highton & Wolfinger, 2001; Schlozman, 2002). However, there have been claims that more young people than usual turned out to vote in favor of Issue 3, despite it being an "off" year in politics (i.e., not a presidential election). In fact, college polls from taken around the state at the time suggest that the majority of college students supported legalization (Mansfield, 2015; Mullin, 2015). But the "enthusiasm gap" (i.e., the enthusiasm to go out and vote despite it being a non-presidential election year) was not enough to get the initiative passed, perhaps because of claims that college-aged students who showed up to vote were able only to cast provisional ballots (i.e., their votes did not count because of improper registration, etc.) (Nelson, 2015, para. 6). Thus, given that there may be new marijuana legislation on the ballot in the future, it is important to examine more closely how young people's decision to vote is translated into an actual vote

Previous findings indicate that voting behavior is easy to predict if the intention to vote is known because it is relatively easy to do (Netemeyer, Burton, & Johnson, 1991). Past research on voting intention and behavior among young people suggest that these individuals will vote if they believe they have the ability to vote as well as the knowledge to make a decision and the support from others in their social circle (Glasford, 2008). Thus, this suggests that the decision to actually go out and vote depends on a multitude of factors, both social and psychological.

Social and Psychological Factors

The social and psychological constructs that affect the opinions toward marijuana, in regards to the public eye and its potential legalization, are imperative to understanding the reasoning behind human behavior. Among these factors are one's belief in the power of control (locus of control) and the belief in one's ability to succeed (self-efficacy) are two constructs that elaborate on the effects of marijuana and human behavior.

Locus of Control. One important personality trait, locus of control, has been described as "the general belief that one's behavior can have an impact on the environment and that one is capable of controlling outcomes through one's own behavior" (Maddux, 1995, p. 22). In other words, locus of control describes the extent to which individuals feel they are in control of their daily lives (Rotter, 1966). Internally controlled (i.e., "internals") individuals tend to believe they control their behaviors and outcomes, while externally controlled (i.e., "externals") individuals tend to believe their lives are controlled largely by other forces such as luck and chance. Understanding how locus of control may shape behaviors associated with marijuana use and with supporting marijuana use (e.g., by voting in favor of legislation) are extremely important to this research. Here, we focus primarily on how locus of control has been used in both substance use and voting research. Locus of control has been examined in a variety of contexts, including shaping people's susceptibility to substance use.

Armitage (2003) suggested that individuals' personal health beliefs may shape their substance use. In fact, those who valued their health more -- and who thereby exhibited more internal locus of control -- were less likely to use drugs. On the contrary, individuals who attributed their health to professionals (e.g., physicians) were more likely to engage in drug related activities. Likewise, Currie, Perlman, and Walker (1977) also found a significant relationship between internal locus of control and low levels of marijuana use. Their findings suggest that internals are more goal-oriented and active, and attribute using marijuana to being passive and non-productive. By contrast, Cox and Luhrs (2002) found no significant difference between internals and externals on substance use (including alcohol and drug use).

Overall, locus of control is an important variable to consider when examining frequency levels and attitudes toward legalization of marijuana. What remains unclear is how locus of control might predict marijuana use and

support for legalization (in some form) as past research has been either contradictory or has not examined marijuana specifically.

Self-Efficacy. Another salient individual difference that was part of this study's model is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a concept that has been described as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior to produce the [favorable] outcomes" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Thus, those who believe their behaviors can produce desired outcomes are high in self-efficacy, and those who do not have much faith in their ability to behave in a way that leads to a desired outcome are low in self-efficacy. Past findings on self-efficacy suggests that those who are low in self-efficacy are more likely to be heavily reliant on marijuana, and smoke regularly (Walker, Neighbors, Rodriguez, Stephens, & Roffman, 2011), but that there may be other mediating factors including attitudes toward marijuana and its use and peer pressure (Hohman et al., 2014). This is likely because individuals who believe their behavior will lead to intended consequences opt to avoid substances that may diminish this feeling of confidence that one is in control of his or her actions.

In addition to examining how self-efficacy may contribute to substance use, it also has been an important construct for understanding voting behavior. This study suggests that, among first-time voters (e.g., traditional college-aged students), who have obviously not had experience in the electoral process, a high level of self-efficacy is a positive predictor of voter turnout (Condon & Holleque, 2013).

In this study, we examined how self-efficacy may help us to understand how self-efficacy, past marijuana use, past voting behavior, and future voting intention (specifically on marijuana legislation) may work in concert.

Sources of Attitudes Toward Marijuana [Legalization]

Also of interest to researchers and lawmakers alike are the origins of public opinion toward drug use (specifically marijuana) as well as attitudes toward its legalization (for medicinal, recreational, or both purposes). It is important to know via which channels individuals gather information that may help to shape these attitudes. In this section, we examine sources of socialization (e.g., education programs, news, and social media) of information about drug use and legalization as well as how tuning into these channels might impact public opinion formation.

Education Programs. Often the first source of formal education about substance use happens in elementary schools. More specifically, school-based drug prevention programs have become an integral part of an adolescent's education. Perhaps the most widely used is the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program. D.A.R.E. is offered to students in the last grades of elementary school to boost their knowledge about drugs and the resistance to drugs. Findings by Ennett, Tobler, Ringwalt, and Flewlling (1994) indicate that D.A.R.E. has an impact on the knowledge and social skills but lacked in education of the usage of marijuana or related substance likely because of the students' demographics (e.g., community type, age). Similar programs offered in schools and communities begin the foundation for young adolescents and students to create their own perceptions of marijuana and other related drugs. But what still remains in question today is whether these prevention techniques are effective in both the short and long term? Likewise, school education programs are not the only source of information for learning about drugs.

Mass Media. Perhaps the most popular place to learn about just about anything – including drugs and drug use – is in mainstream media, namely television news (Saad, 2013). However, with the increasing popularity of social media suggests that many adults (but especially young people) get the majority of their news from social media (Anderson & Caumont, 2014). Certainly there is no argument that social media has played a huge role in politics and in political discourse and involvement. Past research suggests that social media use contributes to greater political involvement and may make people feel less cynical towards politics because they feel their perspectives are being heard (Hanson, Haridakis, Wagstaff-Cunningham, Sharma, & Ponder, 2010). And, if people feel as if someone is listening, they are much more likely to participate in the political process.

While social media clearly serves as a place for public discourse, it is also important to examine how individuals use it to shape their perceptions. As previously mentioned, social media contributes to less cynicism toward politics as well as motivates political participation. But how effective is it (compared to traditional media sources) for disseminating messages about marijuana use and legislation? Moreover, who is receiving these messages? As Yang and DeHart (2016) argue, "political marketing campaigns might be more effective and efficient if they are designed to target social media users who have used social media as a platform to discuss any political or social issue" (p. 10).

In 2015, Issue 3 failed despite having a huge advertising budget and several celebrity backers. Because of the popularity of social media -- particularly among young people -- advertising on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram may have been a good place for disseminating information about the bill, but it is unclear where people gathered information about Issue 3, and how their media use may have helped them to form opinions. Thus, the role of [social] media in the Issue 3 campaign remains unclear.

Summary of the Review of Related Literature

In essence, the controversial nature of recreational marijuana use and legalization of that use, coupled with legalization of medicinal marijuana in 2016, puts this issue at forefront of the minds of young voters. Still, it remains unclear what form of legislation voters may see in the future (e.g., how it will be regulated). In addition, it remains unclear whether there is a difference in public opinion toward medicinal and recreational use -- and its legalization. How are voters influenced to form their opinions? Clearly, the decision to use marijuana and the decision to vote in order to legalize it are influenced by a variety of factors including general attitudes toward marijuana and the political process (e.g., its legalization), individuals' feelings about the control that they have over their lives and the outcomes of their decisions, and the sources of information from which voters obtain their information. Thus, in this study, we seek to use the Theory of Planned Behavior to better predict how young voters in particular have formed their opinions as well as how they may decide to vote for or against legalization in some form.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypotheses

Past research suggests that one's latitude of accepting marijuana use is linked to his or her past experience with marijuana in that those who use marijuana are also more likely to support its legalization (Currie, Perlman, and Walker, 1977). Thus, we posit the following:

H1: Individuals who use marijuana with greater frequency are more likely to favor its legalization.

Locus of control, an individual difference that suggests individuals are either more internally or more externally controlled, has been examined in the context of substance use, including marijuana use. Past findings indicate that those who are more internally-controlled (i.e., individual believes they have control over their life) are less likely to use substances like drugs and alcohol (Currie, Perlman and Walker, 1977). Given these findings, we predict the following:

H2: Internally-controlled individuals are less likely to engage in marijuana use.

Past research suggests that individuals who are low in self-efficacy would be more likely to be reliant on marijuana. Thus, we pose the following:

H3: Individuals who are higher in self-efficacy are less likely to use marijuana.

Previous research also suggests that individuals who are high in self-efficacy believe they are capable of controlling external influences, and are more likely to vote because they have a heightened sense of political interest and active sense of civic duty (Blais, Labbé, & Vincent, 2010). Therefore, we can assume that individuals who are high in self-efficacy are more likely to believe their actions make a difference. Thus, they would be more likely to vote in general, but also less likely to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana. Given these assumptions, we posit the following:

H4a: Individuals who are high in self-efficacy are less likely to support legalizing marijuana.

H4b: Individuals who are high in self-efficacy are less likely to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana (medicinal or general).

Past findings suggest that one's beliefs about the medical benefits of marijuana are related to his or her beliefs about its legalization. In fact, a study by Sznitman & Bretteville-Jensen (2015) indicates that the belief that cannabis has medical benefits is most closely related to support for medical cannabis legalization. Therefore, we pose the following hypothesis:

H5: Individuals who believe marijuana has beneficial medicinal purposes will be more likely to support legalization that would legalize marijuana.

Likewise, we anticipate that past vote on Issue 3 would serve as an indicator of an individual's likelihood to vote for legalizing marijuana in the future in that those who voted against Issue 3 would be less likely to vote for future legalization. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H_{6a}: Individuals who voted against Issue 3 would be less likely to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for medicinal use.

H_{6b}: Individuals who voted against Issue 3 would be less likely to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for general use.

In addition, numerous studies suggest that the Theory of Planned Behavior is a useful model for predicting specific behaviors when the attitude toward the behavior, the subjective norm, and volitional control are included (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, we posit the following:

H7: Attitude toward using marijuana, perceptions of others' attitudes toward using marijuana, and volitional control over using marijuana will positively predict frequency of marijuana use.

Finally, we predict that the model also will predict likelihood to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for both medicinal and general use:

H8a: Attitude toward voting to legalize marijuana, perceptions of others' attitudes toward voting to legalize marijuana, and volitional control over voting to legalize marijuana will positively predict the likelihood of voting in favor of legalizing marijuana for medicinal use.

H8b: Attitude toward voting to legalize marijuana, perceptions of others' attitudes toward voting to legalize marijuana, and volitional control over voting to legalize marijuana will positively predict the likelihood of voting in favor of legalizing marijuana for general use.

Research Questions

In addition to our hypotheses, we pose several research questions that we hope will help to illuminate some of the factors that help to shape individual attitudes toward marijuana legislation as well as how these attitudes might shape their voting behavior.

According to Hanson et al., (2010), research has shown that social media use contributes to greater political involvement. Many adults (especially young people) get their news from social media and opinion leaders use it to advocate issues they support (American Press Institute, 2015). Of course, Issue 3 was widely advertised and discussed via social media channels, but we are not entirely clear whether young voters accessed this information via social media channels nor how their media choices may have influenced their attitudes toward legalization. Thus, we pose the following questions:

RQ1a: Are more frequent social media users more likely to support future legislation to legalize marijuana?

RQ1b: Are more frequent social media users more likely to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana (medicinal or general)?

What also remains unknown is how individual differences and past practices may help to predict support for marijuana legislation, whether it be for medicinal or recreational purposes. Thus, we pose the following research questions:

RQ2: How do locus of control, self-efficacy, frequency of past marijuana use, frequency of media use, political ideology, and religious beliefs predict support for legislation that would legalize marijuana?

In addition, we also are interested in how the aforementioned factors, coupled with support for legalizing marijuana may predict the likelihood that an individual will actually go out and vote for (or against) this legislation. Thus, we pose the following questions:

RQ3a: How do locus of control, self-efficacy, frequency of past marijuana use, frequency of media use, political ideology, religious beliefs, and support for legislation predict the likelihood that an individual would vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes?

RQ3b: How do locus of control, self-efficacy, frequency of past marijuana use, frequency of media use, political ideology, religious beliefs, and support for legislation predict the likelihood that an individual would vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for general use?

Methodology

In order to collect information about perceptions toward marijuana use and legalization among the "new" (i.e., young) voter demographic of interest – Millennials – a survey was distributed via e-mail link to students at a private, residential college in southwest Ohio. A unique aspect of this study is that we surveyed traditional age students at a college offering one of two degrees in agriculture in the state. This demographic was particularly interesting because of the agriculture major population in that these students were divided on the issue of legalizing an illegal drug while simultaneously seeing it as a potential agricultural job opportunity. In fact, may higher education institutions offer courses about marijuana, including marijuana business (Binkley, 2015).

Students (N = 268) received the survey link via their official college e-mail address. The mean age of respondents was 20.9, and of the students who completed the survey, 59.3% were female and 37.7% were male. In terms of race, 86.9% were Caucasian, 6.3% were African American, 1.1% where Hispanic, 0.7% were Asian, 0.4% were Hawaiian Islander, and 1.1% reported being mixed race.

Measures

Locus of Control. To measure locus of control, we used an abbreviated version of Levenson's (1974) scale in which respondents indicated how much they agree with 12 statements (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) that reflect chance control ("To a great extent my life is controlled by powerful happenings"), powerful others control (e.g., "I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people."), and internal control (e.g., "I am usually able to protect my personal interests") (Lindbloom & Faw, 1982) (reliabilities ranging from .74 to .79 (Hanson & Haridakis, 2009; Haridakis & Rubin, 2005; Rubin, 1993). Responses for the index were summed and averaged to create an overall locus of control score in which higher scores indicate greater internal control (M= 3.69, SD = 0.49).

Self-Efficacy. To measure respondents' general self-efficacy, we used a measure from Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). To review, self-efficacy in essence is a concept that has been described as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior to produce the [favorable] outcomes" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). For each index, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement (e.g., "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.") using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5

(strongly agree). Responses for the general index were summed and averaged to create an overall self-efficacy index (M = 4.03, SD = 0.47) where higher scores were associated with greater feelings of self-efficacy.

Media Use Type and Frequency. To measure media use, we used a measure adapted by Primack, Kraemer, Fine, and Dalton (2009) to quantify the number of hours during a typical day that respondents use a variety of media (e.g., social media, TV, music). We measured this in a range of hours where 0 = none and 5 = 11 or more hours. Overall, respondents reported using media for average of 3-5 hours per day (M = 2.19, SD = 0.47), with the majority of their time spent on social media. See Table 1.

Table 1

Media Use Frequency by Type

Media Type	*Mean*	*SD*
Checking/updating social media accounts	2.63	0.89
Watching television	2.11	0.80
Listening to music	2.82	1.04
Watching movies	1.90	0.79
Playing video games	1.58	0.99
Reading books/newspapers/magazines	2.05	0.86
Surfing the Internet	2.22	0.91
Overall use	2.19	0.47

Means and standard deviations for various media use across media type where 0 = none and 5 = 11 or more hours.

Political Ideology. To measure political affiliation, we used a 7-item scale Conservatism adapted from Mehrabian (1996). The measure required the participants to indicate the degree to which they agree with a series of statements about where respondents stand on political topics, as well as if they lean towards either conservative or liberal beliefs (e.g., I am politically more liberal than conservative). Responses were summed and averaged so that higher scores reflected greater conservatism (M = 3.28, SD = 0.75).

Religion. To measure religion, we used the 5-item Duke University Religion Index (Koenig & Büssing, 2010) to examine individuals' beliefs and religious practices. The measure includes a series of items about frequency of church attendance and religious practices (i.e., frequency of church attendance, measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale where 1 = never and 6 = more than once a week, which were summed and averaged so higher scores reflected more frequent religious activity), (M = 3.39, SD = 1.48) and religious beliefs (i.e., feel the presence of God, measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = definitely not true and 5 = definitely true of me, which were summed and averaged in that greater scores indicated more traditional religious beliefs) (M = 2.59, SD = 1.24).

Past Experience with Marijuana. To measure past experience with marijuana, we modified an abbreviated version of a measure created by Presser, Rothgeb, Couper, Lessler, Martin, et. al. (2004). We asked a series of questions about past use, frequency of past use, and about past use by family and friends, on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = never and 5 = every day (M = 1.85, SD = 1.28). We also asked one item about the likelihood that a respondent would use marijuana in the future, regardless of its legal status, also measured on a Likert-type scale where 1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree (M =2.29, SD = 1.43).

Past Vote on Issue 3. In order to gauge support for Issue 3 as well as whether individuals voted in favor or against it, we asked two dichotomous questions about voting behavior in November 2015. Sixty-seven percent of respondents voted in favor of Issue 3 and 33% voted against it. Among those who voted against Issue 3, we also asked questions to tap why they opposed it measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = agree. Essentially, this was to get a sense of whether the "monopoly" was an important factor in opposing Issue 3.

Support for Legislation. To measure support for marijuana legislation, we combined and adapted two measures, one used by the Pew Research Center (2015) and one by Sznitman and Bretteville-Jensen. (2015),

underlined beliefs of cannabis use variables were tested. Again, to get a better sense of the nuances of opinions toward legalizing marijuana, we asked respondents to indicate the strengths of their beliefs about legalizing marijuana across several dimensions (e.g., whether it has medical benefits). A 5-point point Likert scale was used where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, and then summed and averaged to obtain an overall support for legislation score (M = 3.46, SD = 0.66). See Table 2.

Table 2

Reason Opponents of Issue 3 Did Not Support the Legislation

Reason for Opposition	*Mean*	*SD*
I was opposed to the "monopoly" part of the issue that would allow only 10 parcels for growing marijuana for resale.	3.71	1.01
I was opposed to legalizing marijuana for medicinal use.	2.36	1.22
I was opposed to legalizing marijuana for recreational use.	3.43	1.44
I am unsure of/question the benefits of medicinal marijuana.	2.57	1.14
I would not support legalizing marijuana in any form.	2.85	1.38

Means and standard deviations for various reasons why respondents were opposed to Issue 3 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Theory of Planned Behavior Measures. In this study, we were interested in two different outcomes associated with the Theory of Planned Behavior: intention to use marijuana and intention to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana because we anticipate seeing future legislation on the ballot. We adapted scales by Ajzen (1985; 1991) and Marcoux and Shope (1997) for each of these components.

TPB and Using Marijuana. To examine attitudes toward using marijuana, we asked two questions regarding beliefs about the health consequences of using marijuana (i.e., harm to others and harm to oneself if using marijuana measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree [about harmfulness] and 5 = strongly agree [about harmfulness]) (M = 2.94, SD = 1.26). In order to examine the subjective norm toward using marijuana we used a series of single-item measures asking respondents to indicate how harmful using marijuana would be from the perspective of a variety of constituent groups (i.e., peers, parents, physician, general public). (M = 3.23, SD = 0.91). Finally, to measure respondents' perceived control over using marijuana, we asked a series of questions, all measured on a 5-point Likert-type (1 = low control and 5 = high control) scale about ability to say no (recoded so that higher scores indicated greater control over saying no), and ease of access to marijuana (M = 2.62, SD = 0.80).

TPB and Voting in Favor of Legalizing Marijuana. To examine attitudes toward voting to legalize marijuana (for both medicinal and general purposes, because, at the time of the survey, the Ohio Legislature had not yet passed House Bill 523), we asked respondents the degree to which legalizing marijuana would be harmful (i.e., harm to others and harm to oneself if legalized) (M = 2.42, SD = 1.09). In order to examine the subjective norm toward voting to legalize marijuana, we used a series of single-item measures asking respondents to indicate how voting in favor for legalization of marijuana would be from the perspective of a variety of constituent groups (i.e., peers, parents, physician, general public). These were all measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (M = 2.89, SD = 0.77). Finally, to measure respondents' perceived control over voting to legalize marijuana, we asked a series of questions (all measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = low control and 5 = high control) about peer pressure to vote (recoded so that higher scores indicated greater control over saying no), and availability of voting mechanism (M = 2.47, SD = .85).

Results

Hypotheses

For the first hypothesis, we posited that individuals who use marijuana with greater frequency are more likely to favor its legalization. Results of a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis suggests that there is a

significant positive correlation between marijuana use and support for its legalization $r(232) = .61$, $p < .001$. Our hypothesis was supported.

For the second hypothesis, we suggested that internally-controlled individuals are less likely to engage in marijuana use. Results of a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis suggests that there is significant negative correlation between marijuana use and locus of control $r(232) = -.155$, $p < .05$. Our hypothesis was supported.

For the third hypothesis, we proposed that individuals with higher self-efficacy are less likely to use marijuana. Results of a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis suggests that there is no correlation between marijuana use and self-efficacy $r(226) = -0.33$, $p = .614$. Our hypothesis was not supported.

For the first part of the fourth hypothesis, we suggested that individuals who are high in self-efficacy are less likely to support legalizing marijuana (i.e., for both medicinal or general use). The results of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis suggested that there was no significance between self-efficacy and the likeliness to support the legalization of marijuana $r(226) = -.05$, $p = .451$. Our hypothesis was not supported.

For the second part of the fourth hypothesis, we posited that the individuals who are high in self-efficacy are less likely to support legalization. The results of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis suggested that there was no significance between self-efficacy and the tendency to support legalization $r(225) = .025$, $p = .71$. Our hypothesis was not supported.

For the fifth hypothesis, we proposed that individuals who believed marijuana had beneficial medicinal purposes will be more likely to support legalization. Results of a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis suggested that there was a significant positive correlation between individuals believing marijuana has beneficial medicinal purposes and support for legislation $r(232) = .72$, $p < .001$. Our hypothesis was supported.

The two-part sixth hypothesize proposed that individuals who voted against Issue 3 would be less likely to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for medicinal use and for general use. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference in the scores for reporting one would vote in favor of future legislation to legalize medicinal marijuana ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.45$) and for reporting one would vote against future legislation to legalize medicinal marijuana ($M = 4.15$ $SD = 12.1$); $t(199) = -4.32$, $p < .001$. Likewise, an independent samples t-test revealed that there also was a significant difference between likelihood to vote to legalize marijuana for general use ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.54$) and likelihood to vote against it ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.44$); $t(198) = -5.89$, $p < .001$. Our hypotheses were supported.

In addition, we tested the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine whether we were correct in hypothesizing that the model predicts marijuana use (H7). A regression analysis indicated that our model accounted for 48% of the variance in marijuana use $R^2 = .48$, $F(3, 223) = 67.71$ $p < .001$. Negative attitudes toward act of using marijuana ($\beta = -.48$, $p < .001$) and volitional control ($\beta = .54$, $p < .001$) were both significant predictors. Our hypothesis was supported.

Finally, we posited that the Theory of Planned Behavior was a predictor of likelihood to vote for legalizing marijuana for both medicinal (H8a) and general use (H7b). A regression analysis revealed that the Theory of Planned Behavior model accounted for 53% of the variance in likelihood to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes $R^2 = .53$, $F(3, 223) = 82.83$ $p < .001$. A negative attitude toward voting to legalize marijuana ($\beta = -.50$, $p < .001$), the subjective norm (i.e., perception that others did not favor voting to legalize marijuana) ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .01$), and volitional control ($\beta = .17$ $p < .001$) were all significant predictors. Likewise, a regression analysis to test whether the model would predict likelihood to vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for general purposes accounted for 68% of the variance $R^2 = .68$, $F(3, 223) = 159.44$ $p < .001$. A negative attitude toward voting to legalize marijuana ($\beta = -.64$, $p < .001$), the subjective norm (i.e., perception that others did not favor voting to legalize marijuana) ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .01$), and volitional control ($\beta = .14$ $p < .001$) were all significant predictors. Our hypothesis was partially supported. See Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Regression Analysis for Predicting Respondents' Attitudes Toward Marijuana Legislation

Variable	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*
Locus of Control	-.10	.08	-.08	-1.29
Self-Efficacy	.12	.08	.09	1.50
Marijuana Use (Frequency)	.27	.03	.54***	10.52
Media Use	-.08	.07	-.06	-1.20
Conservatism	-.21	.05	-.24***	-4.43
Religious Beliefs	.06	.03	.19*	2.17

Note: $R = .69$, $R^2 = .47$, F (6, 231) = 33.38, $p < .001$.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Research Questions

For research question 1_a, we examined whether more frequent social media users were more likely to support future legislation to legalize marijuana (medicinal or general). The results of a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis suggests that there is not a significant correlation between social media use and support towards marijuana legalization $r(232) = -.095$, $p = .146$).

For research question 1_b, we examined the relationship between social media use and likelihood to vote for legalization (medicinal and general). Results of a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis suggests that there is not a significant relationship between social media use and likelihood to vote for legalizing marijuana for medicinal use $r(232) = -.002$, $p = .982$. There is also no significant correlation between social media use and likelihood to vote for legalizing marijuana $r(232) = -.011$, $p = .867$.

For our second research question, we were interested in what role the following factors played in predicting support for legalization of marijuana: locus of control, self-efficacy, frequency of past marijuana use, frequency of media use, political ideology, and religious beliefs. Results of a regression analysis $R^2 = .47$, $F(6, 225) = 33.81$, $p < .001$ revealed that frequency of past marijuana use ($\beta = .54$, $p < .001$), conservatism ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .001$), and religious beliefs ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$) were all significant predictors. Respondents who were more frequent users were more likely to support legislation. Likewise, the more religious and more conservative the respondent was, the less likely he or she was to support legalization.

For Research Question 3_a, we considered the role that locus of control, self-efficacy, frequency of past marijuana use, frequency of media use, political ideology, religious beliefs, and support for legislation played in predicting the likelihood that an individual would vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes. For the first analysis, the model accounted for 25% of variance in likelihood to vote to legalize marijuana for medicinal purposes $R^2 = .25$, $F(6, 220) = 12.29$, $p < .001$. Past use was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$) and conservatism was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$). The inclusion of support for legislation on the second step added 20% to explained variance. The change in F was significant $R^2 = .46$, $F(6, 220) = 26.55$, $p < .001$. Support for legislation was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .62$, $p < .001$). Past use and conservatism were no longer significant. See Table 4.

For Research Question 3_b, we considered the role that locus of control, self-efficacy, frequency of past marijuana use, frequency of media use, political ideology, religious beliefs, and support for legislation played in predicting the likelihood that an individual would vote in favor of legalizing marijuana for general use. For the first analysis, the model accounted for 43% of variance in likelihood to vote to legalize marijuana for general purposes $R^2 = .43$, $F(6, 219) = 26.98$, $p < .001$. Past marijuana use was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .52$, $p < .001$), and conservatism was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .001$). The inclusion of support for legislation on the second step added 29% to explained variance. The change in F was significant $R^2 = .70$, $F(6, 219) = 76.55$, $p < .001$. Support for legalization ($\beta = .73$, $p < .001$), past use ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$), and media use ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$), were all significant positive predictors. Conservatism was no longer significant. See Table 5.

Table 4

Summary of Regression Analysis for Predicting Respondents' Likelihood for Voting to Legalize Medicinal Marijuana

Variable	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*
Step 1				
Locus of Control	-.04	.19	-.01	-.20
Self-Efficacy	.19	.20	.07	.96
Marijuana Use (Frequency)	.41	.07	.38***	6.12
Media Use	.04	.17	.01	.24
Conservatism	-.41	.19	-.23***	-3.47
Religious Beliefs	.04	.07	.04	.61
Step 2				
Locus of Control	-.09	.17	.03	.55
Self-Efficacy	.05	.17	.02	.28
Marijuana Use (Frequency)	.05	.07	.05	.77
Media Use	.15	.15	.05	.98
Conservatism	-.14	.10	-.08	-1.35
Religious Beliefs	.03	.06	-.04	-.57
Support for Legislation	1.28	.14	.62***	9.18

Note: $R = .50$, $R^2 = .25$, F (6, 226) = 12.29, $p < .001$ for Step 1, $R = .68$, $R^2 = .46$, $\Delta R^2 = .44$, F (7, 226) = 26.55, $p < .001$ for Step 2.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5

Summary of Regression Analysis for Predicting Respondents' Likelihood for Voting to Legalize Marijuana for General Use

Variable	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*
Step 1				
Locus of Control	-.32	.20	-.10	-1.61
Self-Efficacy	.10	.20	.03	.51
Marijuana Use (Frequency)	.67	.07	.52***	9.73
Media Use	.16	.18	.05	.88
Conservatism	-.41	.12	-.20***	-9.38
Religious Beliefs	.08	.07	.06	1.07
Step 2				
Locus of Control	-.14	.14	-.04	-.94
Self-Efficacy	-.10	.15	-.03	-.71
Marijuana Use (Frequency)	.17	.06	.14**	2.98
Media Use	.31	.13	.09*	2.39
Conservatism	-.06	.09	-.03	-.62
Religious Beliefs	-.04	.05	-.03	-.67
Support for Legislation	1.76	.12	.73***	14.68

Note: $R = .65$, $R^2 = .43$, F (6, 225) = 26.98, $p < .001$ for Step 1, $R = .84$, $R^2 = .71$, $\Delta R^2 = .70$, F (7, 225) = 76.52, $p < .001$ for Step 2.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

In this section, we discuss the importance of our findings in helping to shed light on the factors that explain individuals' attitudes toward marijuana and its legalization. Our findings suggest that several factors contribute to one's attitudes toward both using and voting to legalize marijuana, and that the Theory of Planned Behavior offers a useful model in explaining attitude formation as well as the role that one's attitude plays in predicting subsequent behavior. Not surprisingly, the most important predictor of our respondents' planned voting behavior was their attitude toward marijuana and support for its legislation. Still, there was not a perfect relationship between support and voting likelihood, suggesting that other factors play a role and that there remains a gap between attitude and behavior, at least among some individuals. We know that these factors include locus of control, political ideology, religious beliefs, past experience with marijuana, and previous behaviors (e.g., voting in favor of Issue 3 during the November 2015 election), but others remain unknown.

The role of the aforementioned factors is important in that they help us create a more robust model to help predict how voters might approach another ballot initiative for recreational legalization or for more widespread medicinal use, given that medicinal marijuana was legalized during the fall of 2016 for patients with physician-approved medical conditions (Borchardt, 2016a). Our findings suggest that the majority of respondents not only voted in favor of Issue 3 (67%), but that they favor legalization, and would vote to legalize marijuana for medicinal use (58.2%, with 12.3% undecided) (49.8% said they would vote to legalize marijuana for general use, with 16.7% undecided). Most of them (74.7%, with 21% undecided) also believe marijuana has medical benefits, suggesting that they not only would agree with the passing of House Bill 523, but that they may support reducing the limitations of medicinal use if future legislation were to propose changes to the existing law. Moreover, our findings suggest that individuals who voted against Issue 3 are less likely to report that they would vote in favor of legalization for legalizing medicinal or general use that those in voted in favor of Issue 3. This is important in closing the attitude-behavior gap, and can be useful for those who are drafting legislation to amend House Bill 523 or to legalize marijuana beyond medicinal use. Clearly those with a vested interest in legalization share similar, strong attitudes about marijuana and are likely to behave in a way that reflects those attitudes (i.e., by not only using marijuana, but also by casting votes to legalize it).

Our findings that more conservative and religious individuals are less likely to favor legalization are certainly not surprising. Using marijuana and voting to legalize it, particularly for general use, still carries a stigma (Anderson & Caumont, 2014; Loria, 2014). We believe that this is, in part, because of the belief systems of these individuals, and conservatism and religious beliefs are inextricably linked in that more conservative people also hold more religious beliefs (Layman & Carmines, 1997) and may actually be stronger among individuals who are more politically engaged (Malka, Lelkes, Srivastava, Cohen, & Miller, 2012). While the individuals who completed the survey share polar political and religious beliefs, they are clearly interested in legislation and politics.

Also, it was not surprising that internally-controlled individuals are less likely to use marijuana as they have a tendency to wish to remain in total control of their actions and the ability to do so as well (e.g., not succumb to peer pressure), but what was surprising was that
self-efficacy did not play a significant role. Perhaps this is because of how we operationalized self-efficacy in general terms as opposed to specifically relating to marijuana use and legislation. Regardless, we feel that these two remain important psychological constructs in predicting substance use and voting behavior (about said use).

What is also interesting is the role that media use plays in predicting the likelihood that individuals would vote in favor of general legalization. Heavier media users indicate they would vote to legalize marijuana, but only when we added support for legislation to our regression model. This is interesting, and is perhaps because heavier users who are also in favor of legislation are in favor of legalizing marijuana because of the messages they see in media. This is certainly not surprising given the amount of media attention legislation has received over the past year, particularly surrounding Issue 3. In fact, we believe heavy media users were much more likely to have been bombarded by "Pro" Issue 3 advertisements, specifically because of the supporters' advertising budget, and the familiarity of proponent spokespersons (e.g., Nick Lachey). In fact, ResponsibleOhio (i.e., the group backing Issue 3) spent more than $21 million on advertising, compared to the $2.2 million opponents spent (Borchardt, 2015b). In short, heavy media users were much more likely to be exposed to advertising advocating for legalization.

Finally, we think it is worth noting the discrepancy between Issue 3 supporters and non-supporters, and the variety of reasons opponents provided for not supporting Issue 3 (e.g., the "monopoly," addiction, enforcement, health effects). This is something that should be considered among researchers and legislators, alike.

In essence, our findings are consistent with other studies using the Theory of Planned Behavior as a model for predicting the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. We also found that there are other important factors that may mediate marijuana use, and the likelihood to vote to legalize marijuana (for more widespread use), but that these deserve further investigation.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

In this section, we describe some of the limitations of our study as well as offer suggestions for areas of future inquiry.

Limitations

This study used empirical evidence and an important theoretical to predict perceptions and behaviors associated with legalizing marijuana. Nonetheless, the study does present a few limitations, and these should be considered. First, our sample consisted of traditional-age students at a small, private, liberal arts college. College-age students have been widely-criticzed for being apathetic about politics, and recent data suggests that fewer than half of them vote on a regular basis (Wexler, 2016). There are a number of unique characteristics of these students being that a number of them study agriculture and that they appear to be more politically conservative on the whole than other college students (but did struggle with seeing legalization as an agribusiness opportunity). Our sample also showed astounding support for Issue 3, a relatively high rate of past use, and a strong tendency to support legalization, suggesting that they may have had a vested interest in marijuana legislation. We felt then, that it was important to survey this population because of its distinctiveness. A simple random sample of a more general population is quite easy to do. By contrast, our sample offered data from a unique population's perceptions and planned behaviors, and was deeply rooted in an important theory in social science: Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior. Nonetheless, it is a convenient sample of college-age students.

In addition, our survey was quite lengthy, which contributed to a drop out of many respondents. Because of this, we included every response -- even partial responses -- in our analysis as respondents had the ability to skip questions. The 225 students who completed the study in its entirety offered meaningful data and a sufficient sample size for statistical power. Finally, this paper was a collaboration of students in an intermediate-level research class that produced a complex study, including several variables. This was in order for each contributor to share in the process and to have a meaningful role in this discovery.

Finally, we acknowledge that we conducted this survey after the failure of Issue 3 in November of 2015. It is important to note that while we did attempt to parse out reasons why respondents may have rejected Issue 3, the proposed Constitutional Amendment was written in a very unique way that essentially allocated growing and distribution resources to a predetermined group of investors (see above). We collected our data in the spring of 2016 while Ohio legislators were conducting their own investigation and subsequently drafting House Bill 523, which ended up legalizing medicinal marijuana, but limited it to physician-approved medical conditions. Nevertheless, we find that legalization remains a hot button issue, and that legislation is constantly evolving.

Suggestions for Future Research

Clearly, this study has contributed to helping social scientists and policymakers to better understand -- using empirical evidence -- how individual differences, social and psychological constructs, and past behaviors help to form attitudes toward and planned behaviors involving the legalization of marijuana (for medicinal and general use). Our findings also tested the veracity of the Theory of Planned Behavior in predicting both marijuana use and likelihood to support legalization, helping to add to the plethora of existing research that suggests that this is a meaningful theoretical model. We hope that future research will continue to use this theory to help explain and predict other behaviors.

Our findings suggest that there is a clear link between marijuana use and support for its legislation, and also shows that there are a few important individual differences that help to explain this relationship. Nevertheless, we

feel that there are other factors (e.g., income, career plans, personality traits, substance use) and populations (i.e., general population) that should be considered in future studies, especially now that Ohio has joined other states in legalizing medicinal marijuana (with the aforementioned constraints). In addition, our findings suggest that attitudes and behaviors are inextricably linked, but more research is needed to examine the nuances of the process through which an attitude leads to a behavior.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 84-95

Examination of the Relationship Between Fan Identification and Student Utilization of Social Media in an NCAA Division I University

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The present study examined the relationship between fan identification and the use of social media by students at a large National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I university in Ohio. Participants were 186 university students who completed the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) and a modified version of the Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey (USMSS). Respondents reported that Facebook and Twitter were the social media sites used most often to follow the athletic department. Additionally, the results demonstrated a positive relationship between fan identification and the utilization of various social media. Practical strategies are provided in relation to how athletic department staff can encourage college students to utilize social media to follow their school's athletic teams. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to utilize qualitative methodology and experimental intervention to continue to more fully understand the relationship between fan identification and the utilization of social media.

Keywords: social media, Facebook, Twitter, fan identification

Introduction

There is no doubt that social media has become a primary way in which organizations communicate their message to target audiences, and specifically, this technology is utilized as a vehicle to assist organizations in marketing products (e.g., Bingham & Conner, 2010; Safko, 2010). Not surprisingly, in the world of sport, social media has become a widespread method which allows collegiate and professional sport organizations to interact with their fans (e.g., Broughton, 2013; Spanberg, 2016).

In order to offer sport fans the most recent information, numerous social media avenues are provided by sport organizations for a wide range of marketing purposes. These networks include outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, and many other image based social media sites. According to a recent industry report, leading social media platforms for consuming sports related content include Facebook (67%) followed by YouTube (44%) and Twitter (34%) (See Katz, 2016). Research found that Facebook is still a preferred social media platform over Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest (Billings, Qiao, Conlin, & Nie, 2015). Additionally, sport organizations can capture the attention of enthusiasts with the aid of Facebook by displaying event information which provides additional methods for sport organizations to interact (Aeschbach, 2011; Clavio, 2011; Clavio & Walsh, 2014; Hodge, Pederson, & Walker, 2015; Ozsoy, 2011; Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011).

Twitter has given sport organizations the capability to rapidly communicate with their fans. Twitter is another social media platform that allows sports fans to be digitally connected with their favorite sports teams. For instance, each professional sports league in the U.S. has millions of Twitter followers; the National Basketball Association (NBA) has 4.68 million, the National Football League (NFL) has 2.34 million, the Major League Baseball (MLB) has 1.59 million, and the National Hockey League (NHL) has 1.24 million (Fisher, 2016). Sport organizations can utilize Twitter to provide target audiences with up-to-date news (e.g., Armstrong, Delia, & Girginova, 2016; Clavio & Walsh, 2014; Girginova, 2016; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Ozsoy, 2011; Wang & Zhou, 2015); thus, Twitter has helped transform the manner in which athletic departments are delivering information (Clavio & Walsh, 2014; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010).

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Additionally, YouTube affords sports organizations the opportunity to communicate with their fan base by posting video highlights of games, events, and interviews with players and coaches (Clavio, 2011; Zimmerman, Clavio, & Lim, 2011). Hence, social media helps sport organizations offer behind the scenes observations of athletes, coaches, events, and other entertaining activities.

As social media has emerged within sport organizations, inquiries have been initiated to ascertain how this technology is being utilized. Given little is known regarding the understanding of the relationship between the utilization of social media by the college students and fan identification, the present research was conducted to add to an understanding of how social media is being utilized by college students in order to follow their universities athletic teams.

Literature Review

Previous research has identified two categories of studies that analyzed social media usage in sport: content-based and audience-based investigations. Content- based social media research has evaluated the types of messages sport organizations, journalists, and athletes place on social networking sites (e.g., Clavio, 2011; Frederick & Clavio, 2015; Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhaigh, & Greenwell, 2010; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Moore, Hesson, & Jones, 2015; Pegararo, 2010; Sanderson, 2010).

In contrast to content-based studies, audience-based inquiry research explores how social media is employed by the consumer and also the associations among criterion variables and social media usage (Clavio, 2011). Researchers have recently initiated audience-based investigations which have begun to analyze how social media has been utilized by collegiate (e.g., Clavio & Walsh, 2014; Clavio, 2011) and professional sports fans (e.g., Clavio & Kian, 2010; Kang, 2015; Ozsoy, 2011; 2012; Williams, Heiser, & Chinn, 2012).

As noted in previous audience-based descriptive research, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are popular social media platforms for functional uses by sports fans. Previous research suggests that Facebook is utilized more often than Twitter or YouTube as a way for individuals to follow their favorite team (Ozsoy, 2011; Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Additionally, Clavio (2011) found Facebook and YouTube to be more popular than utilizing Twitter to follow a college football team. Similarly, Clavio and Walsh (2014) discovered that college students believed they were inclined to utilize Facebook and YouTube more readily to follow their sport organization than Twitter. Importantly, Facebook has been used for various purposes. For instance, previous research has demonstrated that Facebook has been utilized for a myriad of purposes such as relationship marketing (e.g, Pronschinske, Groza & Walker, 2013), brand management (e.g., Wallace et al., 2011), fan identity (e.g., Sanderson, 2013) or fan community (e.g., Stavros, Meng, Westberg, & Farrelly, 2014). Thus, Facebook is one of the most common social media sites used to follow sport organizations.

From a marketing perspective, an important reason to analyze the social media usage of sports fans is because of the potential positive relationship between the utilization of social media and fan identification. For example, in a study by Catalyst Public Relations a majority of baseball and football fans believed that they were more highly identified with their favorite sport team subsequent to using social media to follow their team (Broughton, 2010). Conceptually, fan identification is defined as how strongly an individual identifies with being a fan of a sport team (McDonald, Sutton, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997; Sutton, McDonald, & Milne, 1997; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and based on fan identification theory, it has been theorized that individuals utilizing social media to follow their favorite sport team are more likely to have a higher level of fan identification.

To be more specific, fan identification comes from social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), and it provides a rationale as to why a relationship may exist between fan identification and social media utilization. This theory suggested that individuals achieve a positive view of themselves when they are a constituent of a group that they appreciate interacting with (Tajfel, 1978). For instance, students matriculating at a university may initially become a fan of a team or school since they attend a specific university. However, a plausible explanation for the development of a higher level of fan identification is that as students begin to attend competitions, they encounter fellow student-athletes who participate on the university teams. Through social media, the individual that began following the team because they attended the school now begins to identify further with the team as they learn about the athletes and coaches and also interact with additional fans. Thus, online social interactions might influence

stronger affiliations and identification with university teams. Thus, it has been hypothesized that the more a fan uses social media the more identified they become with the team or organization.

The hypothesized relationship between social media utilization and level of fan identification has been examined in the past (Broughton, 2010; Phua, 2010; 2012; Williams et al., 2012). The Catalyst Public Relations organization surveyed fans from the National Football League (NFL) and Major League Baseball (MLB) and found that participants believed they were more of a fan of the leagues after they began utilizing social media sites to follow the professional sport league (Broughton, 2010). Similarly, Phua (2010) utilizing the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993) found a positive relationship between the use of social media websites and fan identification. Likewise, an investigation by Williams et al. (2012) also revealed an association between the utilization of social media and team identification and the likelihood of attending a contest. Specifically, these authors found that those who utilized social media identified more strongly with their team and were also more likely to attend sporting events.

In sport marketing literature, there is a connection to suggest some demographic variables are positively related to fan identification, and these variables are strong predictors for identification. Demographic variables such as age (e.g., Aiken, Campbell, & Sukhdial, 2010; Brown, Devlin, & Billings, 2013; Levin, Beasley, & Gamble, 2004; Sukhdial, Aiken, & Kahle, 2002) and gender (e.g., Harvard, Eddy, & Ryan, 2016; Levin et al., 2004; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001) have been shown to be strong predictors of fan identification.

Although studies have begun to assess the relationship of fan identification to the use of social media at the professional level of sport, limited investigations have assessed the relationship between fan identification and social media usage (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) of students at a large NCAA Division I university. Specifically, the present study utilized the Clavio and Walsh (2014) *Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey* (USMSS) and the SSIS to examine how college students use social media to follow their colleges' athletic teams and the relationship between social media utilization and fan identification.

Hypotheses

Based on the findings of previous studies the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Sports fans will utilize all types of social media to follow their schools sports teams.

H2: Facebook will be the most common social media site used to follow the sport organization.

H3: Age, gender, and various types of social media will be positively related to fan identification.

Thus, the main purpose of the present study is to extend the Clavio and Walsh (2014) investigation. A modified version of the Clavio and Walsh (2014) USMSS was used to gain information about how students use social media to follow the teams of their school's athletic department. Additionally, the present study extended previous studies that utilized the USMSS by analyzing the relationship of fan identification to the utilization of various types of social media.

Method

Case

The athletic department is a member of a large Midwest athletic NCAA Division I conference in Ohio. The university has a total of 17 teams (7 male and 10 female sport teams). Similar to other Division I athletic departments, this department was actively utilizes social media. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and Periscope are platforms used. Additionally, each specific university team has its own Facebook and Twitter accounts. In particular, nine head coaches (Football, Softball, Men's basketball, Women's basketball, Men's soccer, Women's soccer, Volleyball, Tennis, and Swimming and Diving) have their own Twitter pages, and one of the athletic facilities has their own Twitter account.

Participants

Students from one large NCAA Division I university in Ohio participated in the present study. One hundred eighty six students (127 males and 59 females) participated. Overall, 6 freshmen, 32 sophomores, 30 juniors, 58 seniors, 25 fifth year plus undergraduates, and 36 graduate students participated. Thirty five participants were between the ages of 18-20, 95 participants were between 21- 23, 40 were between 24–29, and 16 participants were thirty or older. Of the 186 participants, 167 (89.85%) indicated they had a Facebook account while 132 (70.9%) participants reported having a Twitter account. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and volunteered to participate.

Instruments

Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey. The survey used in the present study was modified from Clavio and Walsh's (2014) Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey (USMSS). Additionally, the polarity of the USMSS was flipped for the current study. The modified USMSS for the present study contained 66 questions that inquired about the use of various social media outlets. The survey consisted of a brief introduction section which included demographic and background questions related to the use of social media. Specifically, respondents were asked to report their gender, age, and year in school. Participants were also asked if they have a Twitter account, and a Facebook account. Additionally, participants were asked if they followed the university athletic department's official Twitter and Facebook feeds.

The USMSS also consists of 29 questions that comprise three subscales. The first two subscales of the USMSS are 7-item scales that focus on how the participant utilizes the university athletic department Twitter feed and also how the participant utilizes the university Facebook feed. The third subscale utilized 15 questions which assessed how respondents utilized social media to follow sports. Specifically, respondents were asked how likely they were to complete certain behaviors on a sport related website (e.g., use of Twitter to interact with coaches, athletes, and other fans, watch a videocast, write a comment on a published story, watch a YouTube video, download a podcast, check into a sporting event, submit a picture taken for an online contest, interact with athletes and fans on Facebook, submit audio or video, written content, or picture as part of online contest). Clavio and Walsh (2014) reported an alpha of .921 for this subscale.

In addition to these subscales, a section on how the participant utilized other social media tools to follow university teams is included. These social media tools include the athletic department web site, traditional media websites, blogs, fan websites, YouTube, sports talk radio, and podcasts. Subsequent to these sections, additional questions related to Twitter and Facebook asked the participant to provide responses to how they use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media channels to follow sports.

To assess reliability of the survey, internal consistency was calculated by analyzing how well the items on the test actually assessed the same concept. An alpha higher than .70 is sufficient as the level of reliability, according to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The present study found an alpha internal consistency of .792 for the modified USMSS, which indicates an acceptable level of reliability.

Sport Spectator Identification Scale. The Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) is a 7 item scale developed to assess the level of identification that one has with a specific sports team. The SSIS includes seven questions and uses an eight point likert scale. A total score for the instrument is calculated by summing all the responses which can range from 1-8 for each question. Scores can range from 7-56, with a higher score indicating a higher level of fan identification. The SSIS has been found to be reliable and valid (Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and Wann and Branscombe (1993) reported a cronbach's alpha for reliability of .91.

Demographic Questionnaire. A short demographic questionnaire was constructed to obtain background information about the participants. Participants reported their gender, age, and year in school.

Procedure

The first author attended various department classes on the university campus and asked students to participate in a study related to the utilization of social media in sport. University students willing to participate were provided with a survey packet, which included a cover letter, a demographic survey, the USMSS, and the SSIS. Once the packet was administered, students were given time to read the cover letter and then complete the

survey packet. The participants were recruited under the protocol reviewed and approved by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Analysis

The design of the present study was correlational since the researchers were investigating the relationship of demographic variables and the use of social media to fan identification. First, means, standard deviations and frequencies were computed for both the predictor and criterion variables. Next, point biserial correlations were computed for the relationship between fan identification and the use of various social media to follow the teams of the university athletic department. This statistical technique was used since the researchers are investigating the relationship between a continuous variable (e.g, fan identification) and a dichotomous variable (e.g., use of blogs or not). A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship of demographic and social media variables to fan identification. The predictor variables included, age, gender, year in school, and the use of various types of social media including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, athletic department website, blogs, podcasts, traditional media websites, and sports talk radio to follow their universities athletic teams. The criterion variable for the present study was fan identification. The contribution of each of the predictor variables in predicting fan identification was determined through the use of semi-partial squared correlations.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and frequencies for the main variables assessed in the study were computed for the whole sample. The means and standard deviations were computed for general fan identification and social media usage on sport related websites. The mean of the sample for the scores for fan identification utilizing the SSIS was 40.96 with a standard deviation of 13.083. See Table 1 for the means and standard deviations for general social media usage.

The type of social media that participants reported they were most likely to use to follow the teams of the university athletic department was "Watch an embedded YouTube video" (M = 2.46, SD = 1.324), followed by "Watch a live stream videocast" (M = 2.55, SD = 1.27) and "Interact with a sports organization via Twitter" (M = 2.92, SD = 1.367). The types of social media that participants reported they were least likely to use were downloading podcasts (M = 3.58, SD = 1.238) and listening to podcasts on webpages (M = 3.62, SD = 1.269). The frequencies for the use of various types of media to follow the university athletic department are reported in Table 2.

The present study, in a similar manner to the Clavio and Walsh (2014) investigation, also determined the rank order of how respondents reported utilizing the official athletic department Twitter feed and the official athletic department Facebook feed. Respondents in the present study stated that they were most likely to utilize the official athletic department Facebook webpage to read stories about the game (M = 1.92, SD = 1.461), find out about events (M = 1.93, SD = 1.441), and to gather personal information about athletes and coaches (M = 2.19, SD = 1.611). The least likely reasons to utilize the official athletic department Facebook web page was to interact with fans (M = 2.52, SD = 1.651), to interact with the athletic department as a whole (M = 2.32 , SD = 1.602), to participate in contests in giveaways (M = 2.30 , SD = 1.652), and to interact with athletes and coaches (M = 2.26, SD = 1.590).

Respondents in the present study reported they were most likely to utilize the official athletic department Twitter feed to read stories about games (M = 1.89, SD = 1.359), find out about upcoming events (M = 1.90, SD = 1.362), and to participate in contests and giveaways (M = 2.22, SD = 1.583). These were followed by the three least likely reasons to follow the official athletic department Twitter feed which included gathering personal information about athletes and coaches (M = 2.42 , SD = 1.62), to interact with athletes and coaches (M = 2.37, SD = 1.63), and to interact with the department as a whole (M = 2.37, SD = 1.59).

Significant point biserial correlations were found between fan identification and the following variables: participants that followed the athletic department on Twitter, (r_{pb}= .441, p < .01), participants that followed the athletic department on Facebook (r_{pb}= .334, p < .01), participants that utilized YouTube for coverage of the teams or organization (r_{pb}= .416, p < .01), and participants who utilized the main athletic department website for information and coverage of the teams and organization (r_{pb}= .529, p < .01). Additional significant relationships

were found between scores on the SSIS and utilizing traditional media websites (r_{pb}= .190, p < .05), podcasts (r_{pb}= .222, p < .01), sports talk radio (r_{pb}= .164, p < .05), blogs (r_{pb}= .246, p < .01) and recruiting websites, (r_{pb}= .367, p < .01) to follow the teams of the university athletic department. However, a significant relationship was not found between scores on the SSIS and the use of Newspapers (r_{pb}= .098).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for the Likelihood that the Respondent Completes the Following Tasks on a Sport Related Website

	Mean	SD
Watch an embedded YouTube video on a webpage	2.46	1.324
Watch a live stream Videocast	2.55	1.27
Interact with a sports organization Via Twitter	2.92	1.367
Interact with a sports organization via Facebook	2.96	1.329
Interact with an athlete or coach via Facebook	3.11	1.448
Interact with fellow fans via Twitter	3.15	1.48
Interact with fellow fans via Facebook	3.2	1.363
Submit a picture you have taken as part of an online contest	3.24	1.414
Interact with an athlete or coach via Twitter	3.26	1.395
Write a comment on a published story or video	3.26	1.261
Submit your own written content as part of an online contest	3.26	1.506
Check into a sporting event using a program like foursquare	3.29	1.445
Submit audio/video content that you created as part of an online contest	3.3	1.512
Download a Podcast in Itunes or another podcatching site	3.58	1.238
Listen to a podcast on a webpage	3.62	1.269

Note. Based on a 5-point Likert scale in which was 1 was labeled as very likely and 5 was labeled as very unlikely.

Table 2

Frequencies of the number of participants surveyed who use various types of media to follow the teams' of the university athletic department

	Yes	No
Official Athletic Department Website	162	24
Newspaper	99	87
Traditional Media Websites	98	88
Facebook	93	93
Twitter	87	99
YouTube	78	108
Sports Talk Radio	56	130
Recruiting Websites	40	146
Blogs	36	150
Podcasts	14	172

To analyze the bivariate relationships between various types of social media behavior and fan identification, point biserial correlations were utilized. Analysis of the data revealed significant relationships between fan

identification and how often the university athletics Twitter content is checked (r_{pb}= .502, p < .01), how often one retweets postings from the university athletics Twitter content (r_{pb}= .443, p < .01), how often one checks the university athletics Facebook page (r_{pb}=.269, p < .01), how often one likes a post on the university athletic Facebook page (r_{pb}= .293, p < .01), and how often one responds to a post or comment on the university athletic Facebook page (r_{pb}= .226, p < .001). No significant point biserial correlations were found between the criterion variable of fan identification and the predictor variables of age, gender, and year in school.

A main purpose of the present study was to determine the relationship of various predictor variables to fan identification. In order to analyze the various unique contribution of demographic variables (e.g, gender, year and school and age) and the use of various types of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Athletic Department Website, Blogs, Podcasts, Traditional Media Websites, and Sports Talk Radio) to fan identification, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Therefore, the present study used multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses that various demographic and social media variables would significantly predict fan identification. The demographic and social variables accounted for a significant amount of the variance in predicting fan identification ($R = .729$, $R^2 = .502$, $F = 17.941$, $df = 11, 174$, $p < .001$). Following the athletic department on Facebook ($\beta = .186$, $p < .01$), Twitter ($\beta = .157$, $p < .05$), YouTube ($\beta = .181$, $p < .01$), athletic department website ($\beta = .390$, $p < .001$), podcasts ($\beta = .136$, $p < .05$), and recruiting websites ($\beta = .229$, $p < .05$) were found to be significant predictors of fan identification. Thus, the demographic and social media variables were found to predict 25 percent of the unique variance of fan identification. Age, gender, year in school, traditional media websites and sports talk radio were not significant predictors of fan identification in this regression model. Thus, it appears that those that are more highly identified with a team, are more likely to follow the athletic Department on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, the athletic department website, podcasts and recruiting websites.

Squared semi-partial coefficients were utilized to determine how much of the variance the significant variables in the equation predicted. The majority of the unique variance of the regression model was explained by the significant predicators which were whether or not one followed the athletic department on the athletic department website (12.8%), recruiting websites (3.6%), Facebook (2.5%), YouTube (2.1%), Twitter (1.7%), and Podcasts (1.7%).

Discussion

The main purpose of the present study was to examine the utilization of social media by university students at a large NCAA Division I university in Ohio. Specifically, the use of Facebook and Twitter were analyzed to understand how college students use social media platforms to follow sport organizations. Additionally, the current investigations also assessed the relationship of the utilization of various social media outlets and demographic variables to fan identification.

The present study analyzed how social media was utilized to follow a university athletic organization. Specifically, most students had Facebook accounts, while it was less common for the students in the present study to have a Twitter account. In particular, results indicated that college students used the athletic department webpage most often to follow the teams of the university athletic department followed by Facebook, traditional media websites, Twitter, and YouTube. Media reported to be used less often by the present sample included podcasts, sports talk radio, blogs, and recruiting websites.

The results of the present study appear to be consistent with previous research which has found that Facebook was the most common social media platform used by fans of a sport organization (Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Also, the present study found similar results to Clavio and Walsh (2014) who reported that the official athletic department website was used most often to find information about the university athletic department's teams and that blogs, podcasts, sports talk radio and recruiting websites were utilized least often to find information about university athletic department teams.

Another purpose of the present study was to utilize the USMSS to understand how college students follow their school's athletic teams. The findings from the present study supported the results of the Clavio and Walsh (2014) investigation which found that respondents were most likely to watch an embedded YouTube video on a sport related website. Also, participants in the present study reported that they were least likely to listen to a podcast or

download a podcast from a sport related webpage. This finding is consistent with the results revealed in the Clavio and Walsh (2014)'s investigation.

The results of the present study revealed significant relationships between fan identification and the utilization of social media to follow university athletics. Specifically, the findings suggest that those with higher fan identification scores are more likely to utilize YouTube for coverage of the organization, and utilize the main athletic department website for information and coverage of the teams and organization. Additionally those with higher fan identification scores were more likely to listen podcasts, sports talk radio, blogs and recruiting websites to follow the university athletic organization. The finding that there is a relationship between one's level of fan identification and social media use are not inconsistent with past research (Phua, 2010; Williams et al., 2012).

Although the results of the present study appear to have useful practical implications, there are a few limitations that should be noted. Although 186 college students at an NCAA Division I university were sampled, the results of the present study may not be generalizable to other levels of collegiate athletics as well as to the professional sport industry. Also, because the sample only consisted of college students the results of the present study may not be generalizable to the whole sample of individuals that may identify as a fan of the athletic organization (e.g., alumni, community, faculty and staff). Another limitation of the present study was that the survey respondents were not asked if they had social media accounts. Thus, it is not known if the survey respondents had the accounts but were not actively using them.

Despite the limitations of the present research, there are a few practical implications that should be noted. Because the utilization of various social media outlets to follow a sport team appear to be related to one's level of fan identification, athletic departments should find ways to encourage and motivate college students to utilize social media outlets for the purpose of following the teams of the university athletic department. For example, the results of the present study support Clavio's (2011) practical suggestion that athletic departments should continue to educate their students and fans about how they can benefit from utilizing social media technology to follow a university sports team. Moreover, the addition of staff to focus on new and social media initiatives for the athletic department appears to be an important area of growth for university athletic departments. With the demonstrated relationship between the use of various social media outlets and fan identification, having individuals who focus on developing content and also marketing these technologies to the fan base seem imperative. The development of a staff of new and social media will allow university athletic departments the necessary resources to focus on finding ways to direct individuals to their online social media content.

Recent scholars have noted the types of practical strategies that sport organizations can use to provide ways for fans to utilize social media to follow their teams (e.g., Argon, Argon, Köse, & Gökalp, 2013; Williams & Chinn, 2010). These practical strategies include contests and giveaways, interaction with other fans and the ability to provide feedback to the athletic department as a way to encourage fans to utilize athletic department social media sites. For example, at one large NCAA Division I university, the university provided a chance for those that "like" the athletic departments' Facebook page the opportunity to win a group of tickets and on the field access for a football game. Another example of how athletic departments are utilizing social media to engage fans is having an athletic department representative tweet that they were at a local restaurant and encouraging fans to come to local restaurant to possibly win football tickets. Also, a recent strategy to increase fan identification is to display items from social networking sites on the scoreboard at a sporting event. For example a fan's tweets, pictures, and videos can be posted on athletic department social networking sites (Garrity, 2013). That way, continuous communication and interaction for relationship building (Gronroos, 2004) with fan base can be strategically executed. By doing so, strategies for increasing fan identification could be enhanced.

Future researchers should continue to understand the hypothesized relationship between the use of various types of social media and levels of fan identification. Thus, future investigators who are examining the relationship between social media use and fan identification should consider utilizing a diverse sample of students, alumni, community, and faculty and staff.

Recently, the latest social media platforms have been employed by sport organizations. For instance, several MLB teams use Snapchat to digitally interact with their fan bases. Scholars have also examined how newer social media platforms are used. Hambrick and Kang (2015) investigated how North American professional sports teams use Pinterest to engage and interact with their fan bases and found that the teams that used Pinterest actively promote group experience and offer team/game information. Individual athletes, too, take the newer social media platform

for self-presentation using Instagram (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Smith & Sanderson, 2015). Thus, in recent years many different social media platforms have been employed by sport fans, sport organizations, and sport media to more digitally connected with each other. Future research may want to examine the use of these more contemporary social media platforms. In particular, Instagram, for instance, is becoming a major source of social media and professional sports teams are starting to use Instagram to generate more revenue, promote their brand, and interact with the fan base in an original and creative manner (Ives, 2014; Sheridan, 2015). So it is necessary to observe how newer social media could be practically implemented for athletic department marketing initiatives. Therefore, future scholars may want to examine the relationship between the utilization of those social media sites and fan identification.

From a methodological standpoint, qualitative research using focus groups is needed to better understand how fans of college sports teams utilize social media. This will allow for an in-depth understanding of how using social media can increase a college student's level of fan identification. Also, experimental studies are necessary to determine if the various social media strategies that athletic departments are utilizing have the potential to increase the fan identification of college students. Another suggestion for future research is to examine how different age groups (younger generation vs older generation) use social media for sport related content consumption and how their fan identification simultaneously plays a role. Additionally, future researchers may want to conduct a factor analysis first for data reduction purposes if the investigators use the USMSS. Lastly, but most importantly, given the rapid pace of technology advancement, continuous efforts to better understand the utilization of social media in the context of sport is vital.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 96-108

"You're Doing It Wrong, Tommy": Embodied Audiencing Rituals, Cult Texts in Crisis, and the Struggle for *The Room*

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This essay considers the midnight movie cult phenomenon The Room *and its iconic in-theater audiencing ritual as an anecdotal representation of a community employing cultural performance to enter into dialogue with a text producer (here,* The Room *auteur Tommy Wiseau) and engage in struggle over the meaning of a contested cultural text. Through the lens of Victor Turner's model of social drama, the author considers discourses surrounding the controversial history of* The Room *(which represents the breach and crisis of Turner's model) and demonstrates ways in which the discourses and gestures performed by audience members during the ritual constitute redressive action and should be understood as symbolic rejection of Wiseau's public assertions of modernist authorial control.*

In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke (1937) observed that human actors respond to adverse conditions by adapting our worldviews to better comprehend, cope with, and confront challenges we encounter in our everyday lives:

> In the face of anguish, injustice, disease, and death one adopts policies. One constructs his [or her] notion of the universe of history, and shapes attitudes in keeping. Be [s/]he poet or scientist, one defines the "human situation" as amply as his [or her] imagination permits; then, with this ample definition in mind, [s/]he singles out certain functions or relationships as either friendly or unfriendly. (p. 2)

When Burke wrote *Attitudes Toward History*, it was still relatively early in Hollywood's Golden Age; the commercial motion picture was a burgeoning medium. Today, cinema has continued to grow and has become so ingrained in the minds and identities of filmgoers of the United States that film connoisseurs and fan communities, too, adopt policies with which to make sense of and, when necessary, enter into struggle over the meaning of beloved films. Such policies empower interested parties to unite in collective action to engage in shared symbolic struggle to claim a particular film for their desires.

Films are challenging texts for even fluent audiences to fully decode and interpret. Films appeal to audiences as not-not-real rhetorical texts that obscure the complexity of their arrangement and are loaded with ideologies that "impose on the audience a certain position or point of view, and the formal conventions occlude this positioning by erasing the signs of cinematic artificiality" (Ryan & Kellner 1998, p. 1). But as critics, we should not underestimate audiences' capacities not only to untangle films' sophisticated webs of meaning but also to, in Burke's vocabulary, develop and deploy attitudes with which they actively, collectively struggle overs texts in crisis.

Fan communities of cult texts (e.g., *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Twin Peaks*) have demonstrated notable degrees of creative activity formerly reserved for text producers and have employed their labors to assert stakes in control over the cultural significance of their beloved texts. A rich scholarly tradition of critical, cultural, and fan culture studies reminds us that films are serious business to U.S. audiences; despite their sanctioning as mere entertainment and escapism from "real life," films mean something very real and very worth struggling over to those who emotionally invest in them. When creative fans form communities and individually or collectively manipulate artistic conventions in an effort to privilege a particular artistic interpretation of a text over competing discourses—for example, using creative practices such as creative writing, visual art, or cosplay to tinker with characters' gender or sexual orientation, or to draw focus to ancillary characters with whom they identify—they are employing cultural performance as "a way of appropriating media texts and rereading them in a fashion that serves different interests…. to pry open space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 40).

One undertheorized genre of creative fan activity is *ritual embodied audiencing*: participatory events characterized by audience members responding to or interacting with a mediated text through conspicuous comments or gestures, often humorous, sarcastic, or informative. Audiencing rituals that feature embodied

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performance—spoken commentary, chanting, dancing, costumes, props, etc.—constitute rich sites of everyday creative activity and at times flash the tactical capacity to animate and talk back to mediated texts in discursively significant ways. From the decades-long cultural institution *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* to the interactive movie riffing ethic of today's boom of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*-inspired performance art in which performers ridicule (usually) so-called cheesy movies, audience members and fan communities are provocatively and persuasively employing embodied performance to coordinate mind, body, and text in ways that challenge outdated assumptions that commercial film is a medium too overwhelming to risk interaction.

Discovering just how audience members undertake the substantial work of making sense of mediated texts is no simple task. As Park-Fuller (2003) observed of audiencing staged performance, "we lack a simple but sophisticated language through which to interact with audience members about *their* unique and varied performances in relation to any given performance" (p. 290). The challenge of understanding film audiences is also daunting. Our challenge as critics includes not only accessing the complex, fragmented processes of intersubjective sense-making we associate with postmodern media consumption but also translating those processes in ways that honor their complexities, all while remaining reflexive to the ways our own positionalities inform our interpretations of others' interpretations.

Embodied audiencing rituals constitute special conditions in which audiences embrace conspicuous cultural performance in ways that instructively make explicit their struggles over their beloved texts. Audiencing rituals constitute a fascinating site of cultural production in part because they bring the typically opaque meaning-making process of postmodern text-reading—decoding, fragment-gathering, assembly, articulation—into the open, where signification can be both shared with fellow audience members and studied by critics. By studying ritual audiencing as a mode of creative activity that produces discourses that are meaningful, political and attitude-laden, critics may access the meaning created in the interplay between text, reader, and countless other texts which may be idiosyncratically assembled by readers. And a film need not be an action-packed spectacle, box office giant, or critical darling to evoke informatively passionate audience responses. Consider the film at the center of this essay (and near the top of many Worst Film Ever lists): *The Room* (Wiseau, 2003).

By conventional critical standards, *The Room* is historically inept and should be doomed to obscurity. Independently produced on a budget of six million dollars raised outside the Hollywood system by writer-director-actor Tommy Wiseau (Sestero & Bissell, 2013), *The Room* flopped when first released in theaters and was savaged by the few mainstream critics who deigned to acknowledge its existence. As if left for dead in the woods but determined to survive on the land, *The Room* staved off the death of obscurity by eeking out what was first a meager existence as a midnight movie curiosity in West Hollywood before its reputation of incompetence spread virally and helped Wiseau and his film gain exposure to a national, and eventually international, audience (Collis, 2008).

The public debate on the nature of *The Room* endures, with opinions ranging from appreciation for its flawed uniqueness—film professor Ross Morin called it "the Citizen Kane of bad movies" (Collis, 2008, para. 5)—to revulsion and scorn—a review on PopMatters concluded, "*The Room* may be only slightly better than a sharp stick in the eye, but the damage is equally irreparable" (Gibron, 2010, para. 8). With its sublime combination of baffling plot, awkward dialogue, daffy characters, and an earnest (though misguided) effort to be the Great American Movie, *The Room* enjoys cult status and is still screened in theaters, primarily small and/or independent theaters at midnight, year round.

What about *The Room* has kept it thriving when so many other independent films—good, bad, and everywhere in between on the subjective continuum of artistic or aesthetic value—have seen their capacity to draw live audiences expire? The lifeblood of *The Room*'s second life is audience appropriation and in-theater ritual performance. In the tradition of participation-centered audiencing of cult films such as *Rocky Horror*, seeing *The Room* in theaters is a raucous full-body experience filled with chanting, shouting, vulgarity, thinly veiled misogynistic taunts, jogging in the aisles, playing catch with a football, cosplay, and hurling plastic spoons with impunity. The ritual of audiencing *The Room* evokes the mythical communal energy of Shakespeare's groundlings or Vaudeville peanut gallery audiences of the past while interweaving humorously critical comments in the *MST3K* movie riffing tradition of audience members "who refuse a passive model of viewership, opting instead to take ownership of the programming they consume and to adapt it to their needs on the fly" (Condis, 2011, p. 76). When Schechner (1992) wrote, "American society is a riot of performances" (p. 10), he could very well have punctuated that statement by launching a fistful of plastic spoons into the air.

Yet, dismissing the appeal of *The Room*'s audiencing ritual as the simple promise of in-theater mayhem, the opportunity to act out in an environment typically characterized by enforced stillness and silence, is not enough to adequately understand the unique cultural work the ritual does. We must ask, on the level of discourse and performance, *what does the ritual say?* To whom or what does the audience respond through performance of the ritual? Though the superficial answer is the film itself, I suggest instead that the discourses typically produced during *The Room*'s audiencing ritual constitute an important dialogue between fans of *The Room* and its auteur, Wiseau. At stake in this dialogue between film, audience, and auteur is the ability to control the meaning of *The Room* and who decides its cultural and aesthetic value.

As I intend to demonstrate, the performances and utterances produced during participatory screenings of *The Room* reflect attitudes from the film's cult audience that are in opposition to Wiseau's public claims of authority over the meaning of *The Room*. The audiencing ritual of *The Room* significantly frames the film as a failed text in need of resurrection through derisive performance rather than a successful, intentional black comedy, which Wiseau has publicly asserted (e.g., Collis, 2008; Johnston, 2011; Shatkin, 2007). I argue that this attitudinal disagreement between Wiseau and the cult audience of *The Room* situates the two parties in dramatic conflict, with the acts produced during the ritual constituting the audience's collective symbolic struggle over the meaning of the film.

To structure my discussion of the interpretive significance of *The Room*'s audiencing ritual, I examine this phenomenon through Turner's (1987) theoretical model of *social drama*, which unfolds in four stages: *breach*, *crisis*, *redressive action*, and either *reintegration* or *schism*. Through an examination of existing popular discourse on *The Room*, I will demonstrate the ways in which *The Room*'s unusual path to relevancy (breach) and Wiseau's contrarian assertions of modernist authorship (crisis) represent a dramatic exigency to *The Room*'s community of fans. I will then discuss several significant activities common to participation-centered screenings of the film to demonstrate the ways in which the audiencing ritual functions as a venue for oppositional performance (redressive action) that empowers fans of *The Room* to (temporarily) re-seize control of the meaning of the film.

Breach and Crisis: *The Room* Bombs, Fans Pick Up the Pieces

> "If you've passed through Hollywood enough times, you can't have failed to notice the bizarre billboard on the West side of Highland just North of Fountain. And if you're like me, every time you pass by, you idly wonder about the man whose leonine countenance gazes benignly on weary travellers. What is that guy staring at so intently? Why have I never heard of his movie? And how the hell can he afford to keep that billboard up so freaking long?" (Shatkin, 2007, para. 1)

Turner's (1987) social drama model begins with a *breach* of "regular norm-governed social relations," (p. 4), a public infraction of a rule ordinarily held to be binding. For *The Room*, it can be said that its unorthodox emergence in the public consciousness constitutes a resonant breach of the norms of how feature films are produced and the terms on which audiences are invited to engage them. Like many independently produced films, *The Room* generated early awareness via guerilla marketing, or rather, *anti*-guerrilla in its low-tech, antiquated simplicity: a conspicuous lone billboard in West Hollywood containing little information but the film's title and website, an RSVP phone number, and the vacant stare of a man then unknown in the world of film. The billboard would remain from 2003 to 2008, well after the film's reputation had spread nationwide (Collis, 2008). Given the cost of billboards in such prime location—*Entertainment Weekly* cited an industry insider who estimated its monthly cost at around 5,000 dollars (Collis, 2008)—an unheralded independent film by a Hollywood outsider was a precocious, if not defiant, gesture. Wiseau effectively erected an idol to himself and his film near the epicenter of the U.S. film universe. In the land of countless independent filmmakers gyrating for exposure, *The Room* had forced its way into the public consciousness. We were listening, but to whom?

The Room is rarely discussed without focusing on Wiseau. Like a bizarro Hawks, Hitchcock or Coppola, the auteur and his film are discursively inextricable. A towering man with long black hair and a thick, oft-parodied

European accent,[1] the mysterious Wiseau's persona is that of a bold Hollywood outsider: self-taught in the art of film and operating outside the Hollywood money machine. And there he was, glowering down on Hollywood traffic from above and demanding attention before anyone had seen his film.

And what a film it is. On paper, *The Room* is an archetypical love triangle melodrama: Wiseau stars as Johnny, a generous and kind-hearted banker who is devoted to his young fiancée Lisa (played by Juliette Danielle). Lisa has grown tired of living with Johnny and begins a covert romance with Johnny's best friend Mark (Greg Sestero). Johnny ultimately learns of Lisa and Mark's relationship, culminating in a heated exchange at Johnny's climactic surprise birthday party, which results in Lisa leaving Johnny for Mark and Johnny committing suicide via gunshot.

But *The Room*'s infamy is derived from that which occurs *between* the introduction and resolution of this simple plot. Roughly 70 minutes of the film's 90-minute runtime is devoted to a parade of plot cul-de-sacs, repetitive and often nonsensical exposition between underdeveloped characters, excessive establishing shots of sites not otherwise featured, and four gratuitous softcore sex scenes. Many of these already confounding scenes are plagued further by continuity issues, cheap blue screen effects, and out-of-focus camerawork.

The road to cult immortality is rarely linear. On June 27, 2003, *The Room* debuted in a handful of California theaters, drawing little attention and grossing a scant $1,800 at the box office (Sestero & Bissell, 2013). Critiquing *The Room* as a conventional drama—the film was promoted as "A film with the passion of Tennessee Williams"—*Variety*'s review (Foundas, 2003) blasted Wiseau as a "narcissist nonpareil" and characterized his film as one of "extreme unpleasantness" and "overall ludicrousness" (para. 1) that had audience members demanding their money back within 30 minutes. For most independent films, this combination of financial failure and critical venom would be a swift and brutal *coup de grace* to the story of yet another Hollywood wannabe and a film that never had a chance. The film's epitaph might have been, as journalist and author Bissell told *The Atlantic* (Rosen, 2013): "Movie studios don't let people like Tommy Wiseau make them…. Someone should have just pulled the plug on it at some point, and no one did" (para. 4). Improbably, *The Room* survived.

Thanks in part to regular midnight screenings at Laemmle's Sunset 5 in West Hollywood and Wiseau's sustained promotion—he frequently attended screenings to answer questions and sign autographs, as he still does today on a national scale—*The Room* developed a cult following of fans who flocked to it *because* of its well-documented quirks and flaws (Shatkin, 2007). The film's reputation continued to spread virally through fan testimony, celebrity endorsement—e.g., Kristen Bell, David Cross, Patton Oswald, Paul Rudd (Collis, 2008)—and a recurring spot on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim as an April Fool's Day gag.

The billboard is gone but *The Room* endures. The film now enjoys nationwide distribution and is often hailed as a 21st century predecessor to *Rocky Horror* (e.g., Allen, 2009; Christopher, 2009; Johnston, n.d.; Patel, 2006; Refer, 2010; Vance, 2011). Wiseau is regularly in demand for media interviews, virtually all of which foreground the movie's flaws and demonstrative fanbase and present Wiseau's spoken English so as to portray him as being as incoherent as the tragic Johnny. Though Wiseau takes substantial abuse from critics, his willingness to represent his film directly, to serve as its avatar and discuss it both seriously and playfully but always treating it as a significant work, is vital to its delayed but sustained success. In sum, the fact that *The Room* remains in discussion today is a product of both Wiseau and a passionate cult audience.

The second stage of Turner's (1987) social drama model is *crisis*, during which the initial breach widens and concerned parties take sides and enter into struggle. This stage is characterized by what Turner calls *liminality*: "it is a threshold (*limen*) between more or less stable phases of the social process, but it is not usually a sacred limen, hedged around by taboos and thrust away from centers of public life" (p. 4). As it gained cultural visibility and ascended as a destination event for devotees of so-called "so bad, it's good" fare, *The Room* emerged as a contested text when public comments by Wiseau challenged prevailing assumptions about his artistic intentions and the intended aesthetic quality of the film, thereby perhaps unwittingly challenging the ways supporters had come to

[1] Wiseau is frequently asked to disclose his birthplace but always refuses; he is often assumed of Eastern European descent. One IFC.com article (Singer, 2009) cruelly describes Wiseau's voice as "Borat trying to do an impression of Christopher Walken playing a mental patient" (para. 2). Online film critic Allison Pregler, aka Obscurus Lupa, defined Wiseau's voice as "The French Borat, if he didn't know he was the French Borat" in a 2004 review. Wiseau's voice, hair (frequently described as "stringy"), and command of spoken English are frequent sources of ridicule and parody for fans and critics alike.

understand and engage with the film. *The Room* had secured a spot in the pantheon of cult cinema, but who deserved credit became a point of contention.

From the beginning, whether they loved it or hated it, critics and fans generally framed *The Room* as an aesthetically incompetent melodrama, a failed attempt at classic Hollywood drama. Mohan (2009) observed, "Tommy Wiseau's film oozes sincerity, which is then slathered in a thick coating of oblivious narcissism…. It's the emotional earnestness that places "The Room" squarely within Susan Sontag's famous definition of pure camp" (para. 1-2). Fox (2015) asserted, "By any normal measure, *The Room* is an abject failure. Amateurish direction, sluggish pacing, paper-thin plot, wooden acting and clunky dialogue" (para. 1) … "It aims for Shakespearean tragic drama and lands squarely in unintentional comedy" (para. 3). Klein, a professor of film studies at East Carolina University, told to *The Atlantic* (Rosen, 2013), "Tommy Wiseau doesn't just make some mistakes; he makes every mistake…. If he had just made some mistakes it'd just be an average movie, an annoying movie" (para. 1).

Among the underlying subjective assumptions of fans' and critics' terms of engagement with *The Room*: Wiseau is an incompetent filmmaker; he and his cast are undertalented, overmatched thespians; the film's oft-noted incoherent dialogue and meandering plot are unintended results of Wiseau's poor scripting and direction. We laugh *at* the film and Wiseau, not *with* them as we would intentional, well-crafted comedies. Due to the film's inability to succeed on its own hyper-earnest terms, audiences performed scorn and derision to reframe the film in ways unintended by its producers, and thus audiences' capacity to derive pleasure from audiencing *The Room* is a product of interpretive ingenuity (as well as an ample dose of schadenfreude). Creative reframing of beloved but imperfect pop culture is a hallmark of participatory fan culture, which is "more open-ended, less under the control of media producers and more under the control of media consumers" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 137).

The significant role of creativity on the audience's part in reframing a contested text must be foregrounded. On an interpretive-critical level, the act of audiencing any mediated text is always "a form of work" and "is not a parasitical act, the reactive complement of a writing which we endow with all the glamour of creation and anteriority" (Barthes, 1974, p. 10). As cultural studies scholars such as Hall and Fiske have noted, oppositional reading, when the reader understands both the denotation and connotation of the discourse but rejects the latter, requires more work because readers must re-historicize and denaturalize the dominant discourses embedded in the text while supplying their own counter-discourses for points of identification and refutation, to "retotalize the message within some alternate framework or references" (Hall, 1980, p. 173). Members of the cult of *The Room* have entered into an extant relationship with the text, with Wiseau and his fellow actors and crew members, and with a constellation of faces, symbols, and discourses they store in their own intertextual tackle boxes. Audience members employ these fragments of meaning out of necessity to make sense of the experience of the text. Unique elements of this fluid equation cannot change without changing how we make sense of the other elements.

What happens when this vital interpretive work is marginalized? The relationship between *The Room* and its cult audience was symbolically breached when, in promotional activity, Wiseau began marketing *The Room* as "an electrifying black comedy." The film's 2005 DVD release includes a full-length trailer which, after 100 seconds of dire, humorless voiceover and footage arranged in a manner that reinforces the idea that the film was intended as a serious drama, the narration tone (possibly the narrator himself) suddenly shifts, enthusiastically urging fans to: "See the best movie of the year! Experience this quirky new black comedy! It's a riot!" (Wiseau, 2005). It was obvious the film had been retroactively framed as purposefully amusing, and the implication was that Wiseau now seemed to be commandeering credit for the film's capacity for making audiences laugh.

Wiseau made his gambit more explicit in a series of interviews in which he overtly suggested his intention all along was not only to make audiences laugh but in fact to provoke them to ritualistic performance. In an *Entertainment Weekly* article that helped the film gain national exposure (Collis, 2008), Wiseau asserted the film's comedy was intentional, a claim that was in turn refuted by an anonymous cast member:

> Wiseau insists he always intended The Room [*sic*] to be partly comedic, and that the movie's perceived faults — including the out-of-focus scenes — are deliberate. "Let's assume we did everything perfect way," he hypothesizes. "You will be asking this question? No, no." However, another anonymous cast member has no doubt that Wiseau is merely making the best of an extremely bad job: "I don't have anything to say about Tommy as a person. He is a nice guy. But he is full of s---. He was trying to put together a drama. It was basically his stage to show off his acting ability. (p. 2)

Patel (2006) of National Public Radio observed that Wiseau "insists that the whole humor-from-melodrama theme was his intent — that he wanted to provoke the audience into interacting with the movie" (para. 6). Wiseau told QuickDFW.com (Johnston, 2011), "*The Room* is done in certain style [*sic*] intentionally. You have a lot of subliminal messages. It isn't pretty, et cetera" (para. 10). Wiseau's evocation of subliminal messages is telling, as his argument denies the very possibility of audience agency or creativity.

In an interview with the *LA*ist (Shatkin, 2007), Wiseau blamed critics (and, perhaps even directly, the cult of *The Room*) for not understanding *his* film as they should:

> This is the thing that people don't grasp. If they don't see something, and then they criticize…. They don't understand *The Room* was done intentionally to provoke the audience. I spent hours, 24/7, not just this year, but even before I started production. They don't realize that, because they did not do their homework. It's nonsense as far as I'm concerned. (para. 29)

Wiseau's attempts to reassert modernist authorship over *The Room*—not only the film but the phenomenon that sustains its prosperity—did not kill audiences' love of seeing *The Room* in theaters. As Patel (2006) mused:

> Is [Wiseau] deluded, or just trying to recast *The Room* as comedy and not drama? That's not really the point. In Los Angeles, a city filled with screenwriters sitting in cafes typing away at laptops, he has stumbled upon what everyone is searching for: a genuine crowd-pleaser. (para. 7)

But in claiming *The Room*'s appeal is solely the product of his authorial talents, Wiseau commandeers sole credit for its cult status.

As an audience member who invested time, money, and love in the film and the ritual, if I defer to Wiseau's authorship, I resign myself to a passive role that has been pre-scripted for me right down to when I laugh and when I reach in my pocket for a plastic spoon to throw. The audience' role in the ritual is recast as no longer *kinetic*, performance as dynamic creative action, but *mimetic*, performance as imitation of creative action (Conquergood, 1998). In-theater *action*, human symbolic exchange with purpose and motive, is reduced to *motion*, a simple reaction without motive or creativity (Burke, 1945). The creative, critical appropriation that I believed helped breathe life into *The Room* is nullified, commodified, and cashed in on by a shrewd entrepreneur with svengali-esque talents for manipulating others' bodies. Though audienceing scripts for seeing *The Room* do exist (e.g, House of Qwesi, 2009; Johnston, n.d.; Singer, 2009; "The Room: Audience Participation Guide," 2015), it is significant that its beats are gathered through observations of the ritual as it has been devised by fans, not generated top-down by a single cultural producer.

Such distinctions may seem petty or even pedantic—if people embrace and enjoy a cultural text, what does it matter if its salient features are intentional or not?—but the ways we make sense of our relationship to a text matter in terms of how we engage that text and the discourses surrounding it. That relationship is untenable if solely rendered by any party to it. Rather, such relationships and attitudes exist in a *liminal* state, ever-changing as the product of continued interaction and negotiation, "between more or less stable phases of the social process … 'be-twixt and between,' and, as such, famishes a distanced replication and critique of the events leading up to and composing the 'crisis'" (Turner, 1987, p. 4).

Wiseau's dismissal of his audience's role in contributing to the meaning of *The Room*'s cultural significance constitutes a substantial faux pas in the producer-audience relationship, a relationship that cannot be overstated in the realm of cult audiences and their texts. Wiseau's relationship to his audience was thrown into crisis, his attitude toward us problematic. Producers who subjugate their audience into submissiveness will find themselves in conflict with that audience; George Lucas and his lawyers' contentious relationship with the creative cult of *Star Wars* is well noted in this regard, as explored in the documentary *The People Vs. George Lucas* (Philippe, 2010). Fiske (1989) reminds us that pop culture cannot be forced upon an audience from above. Wiseau's public grab for sole custody of *The Room* is another example of such an impasse between text producers and text readers.

The cult needed to collectively adopt an attitude, an "organized system of meanings" with which to gaug[e] the historical situation and adopt a role with relation to it" (Burke, 1937, pp. 3-4), toward Wiseau's denial of its complicity in the unorthodox success of *The Room* as a cult phenomenon. We may conclude that Wiseau did the

same in the face of negative reactions to *The Room*. Even though *The Room* is not what Barthes (1974) would deem a *readerly* text: a classic, sovereign text that "can be read, but not written" (p. 4), Wiseau benefits from wider access to the commercial news media than the individual members of the cult of *The Room*. Even a widely ridiculed author such as Wiseau is afforded the cultural capital to speak publicly on record via mass-mediated interviews and to set the terms of the conversation.

These unbalanced terms of engagement required that the cult of *The Room* utilize alternate methods with which to render its response, one which can be understood as *redressive action* (Turner 1987, p. 4) to Wiseau's offensive pursuit of regaining modernist authorship. The third stage of Turner's model, redressive action consists of action "ranging from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery, and, to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes of resolution, to *the performance of public ritual*" [emphasis added] (p. 4). Like crisis, redress unfolds in a liminal space, be-twixt and between stable outcomes.

To Turner, the redressive phase is a prime "generative source of cultural performances" (28). Fortunately for the cult of *The Room*, utilizing pop culture in the form of popular ritual performance is powerful and conducive for such a response, for the communal nature and visible repetition of the ritual's performance rendered an otherwise ephemeral response material by way of cultural visibility and commercial media attention. Though Wiseau's power as an author lingers, the cult gains power. In the words of Fiske (1989), "Using *their* products for *our* purposes is the art of being in between production and consumption, speaking is the art of being in between *their* language system and *our* material experience" (p. 36).

It is in this liminal space, with the meaning of *The Room* in flux and Wiseau's campaign for re-claiming the meaning of his film challenging fans' roles in keeping it alive, that the cult of *The Room* utilizes embodied audiencing as a communal method of oppositional performance. In doing so, even if many members of the cult likely do not consciously recognize the text-based implications of the ritual, I suggest that *The Room*'s in-theater performance ritual produces discourses which ought to be understood as framing the text as one of incompetence through the weaving of bodily mayhem and rhetorical snark that reframes *The Room* as a failed melodrama. Read through an interpretive lens, the ritual effectively asserts that the pleasure of audiencing *The Room* is rooted in Wiseau's shortcomings as a text producer, not his talents.

Redressive Action: The Cult of *The Room* Responds to Wiseau

The audiencing ritual of *The Room* is composed of a flurry of chants and gestures that cumulatively work to mark awkward dialogue, reduce characters to their most banal, and emphasize problematic aspects of the plot in ways that portray Wiseau not as a savvy auteur interpreting a cruel universe but as a buffoon who undercuts his artistic intentions through incompetence. The following descriptions illustrate ways in which acts and discourses of the ritual can be understood as rhetorically framing *The Room* as an incompetent melodrama, discrediting Wiseau's assertions that the film is meant to be an intentional black comedy.

Denzin (2003) champions "an ethnographer, performer and social researcher who is part of, and a spokesperson for, a local moral community, a community with its own symbolism, mythology, and storytelling traditions" (p. 257). In this tradition, I claim insider status within the fan community of *The Room*, having attended five participatory midnight screenings for pleasure as well as for gathering data from 2011-2014. The descriptions of specific elements of the audiencing ritual that follow are my own observations from these screenings. The purpose of their inclusion is not to pass value judgments on the attitudes and ideologies they communicate[1] but rather to demonstrate the ways they contribute to an assertive reduction of the value of the text itself in the overall cultural significance of *The Room*.

We begin with the ritual's most iconic act: throwing plastic spoons at the screen or in the air (or other audience members or with no clear signification), which occurs at least a dozen times during the ritual. The primary textual significance of the plastic spoon stems from framed pictures of spoons in Johnny and Lisa's living room; they appear in the background in no less than nine shots but are never elaborated upon and are never the focus of

[1] For an article-length description and interpretation of the myriad of specific acts that take place during *The Room*'s audiencing ritual, see Foy (2012).

character dialogue. When the photo is visible in the background, performers cry out "spoon!" and throw handfuls of plastic spoons in the air or at the screen. Could this have been Wiseau's intentional masterstroke to ignite a participatory element for his audience, with unsuspecting audience members unwittingly falling in line?

To initially grant Wiseau the benefit of the doubt, there is precedence of cult audiences co-opting seemingly insignificant objects from the film and rendering them iconic through ritual performance. For example, one of the most iconic props in the *Rocky Horror* audiencing ritual is the newspaper, which audience members have used for decades to mimic the character Janet as she covers her head with a newspaper in a rainstorm (Austin, 1981); like Wiseau's framed spoon pictures, the newspaper in the film is never made significant through dialogue or action. This is to charitably allow it at least within the realm of possibility that Wiseau could have sought to subliminally encourage audiences to engage with his film on such a micro level.[1]

Even allowing the extremely unlikely possibility that Wiseau could foresee that audiences would mimic small pictures in the background across multiple scenes, audience members have creatively divorced the spoons from any one signification and employ them as all-purpose bodily extensions, frequently in ways that distract attention from the film's plot. Often, freestyle spoonplay serves to draw the audience's attention from on-screen points of dramatic tension or to signify rejection of the story's principle characters (namely protagonist Johnny). For example, spoons are often thrown at the screen during the sex scenes featuring Wiseau in ways that signify disgust, often accompanied by cries of "no!", anguished cries, or ridiculing of Wiseau's naked body. One performance script calls for "graphically describing the act and hurling the cruelest jokes about the actors' bodies/movements that one can conceive" (House of Qwesi, 2009, para. 23). In doing so, audiences reject the implied scopophilic pleasure of watching sex while rejecting the call to identify with Johnny as an object of desire or beacon of generous romance.

When audience members call out "You're doing it wrong, Tommy" as he acts during a sex scene—during his first sex scene with co-star Danielle, Wiseau has been noted as being ill-positioned for missionary sex and "appears to hump Danielle's navel" (Van Luling, 2016, para. 3)—they are simultaneously rejecting Johnny as a character and Tommy as an actor, writer, and director. This gesture is noteworthy for its creativity within the context of the ritual because the text provides no ready ammunition with which to reject identification with Johnny, as his every word and gesture is framed to signify his kindness and generosity. When a spoon photo is onscreen, the audience's enthusiasm for marking it frequently supersedes Johnny's most earnest, emotional dialogue. By crying "spoon!" and hurling plastic cutlery as Johnny tearfully pleads with Lisa to be honest and faithful to him, the audience engages in subversive retextualization by embracing something ostensibly trivial and ushering it to the fore of meaning in a way that resists Wiseau's depiction of Johnny's innocence, earnestness, and moral purity. Hitchcock was wise to get his on-screen cameo out of the way "in the first five minutes so as to let the people look at the rest of the movie with no further distraction" (Truffaut, 1967, p. 35). The audience's embrace of the spoon as symbol of the film's incompetence implies that in his most urgent scenes Wiseau cannot outshine stock pictures of cutlery. The audience goes out of its way to distract itself from the film's plot and characters.

Another informative, though more incendiary, motif from the ritual involves the repeated misogynistic taunting of the film's women characters. Performers' most vitriolic hatred is directed at Lisa and, to a lesser extent at her mother, Claudette (Carolyn Minnott), and Lisa's friend Michelle (Robyn Paris). Performers repeatedly call out the scripted response "because you're a woman" in response to unflattering dialogue between *The Room*'s women: for example, when Claudette urges Lisa to stay with Johnny because she cannot support herself (despite having an undefined job in "the computer business"), performers explicitly fill in the missing premise of Claudette's sexist enthymeme with "because you're a woman." One infamous scene features Claudette disclosing to Lisa that she "definitely has breast cancer," a revelation that is never revisited and never factors into the plot. Audience members, however, repeatedly taunt Claudette for her affliction. Through taunting, Claudette is reduced to nothing

[1] Sestero discredits this scant possibility in his award-winning 2013 book on the film's production *The Disaster Artist* (Sestero & Bissell, 2013), writing that the spoons were stock photos in hastily purchased frames that Wiseau refused to replace so as not to interrupt filming: "I don't think the most gifted prognosticator could have predicted the fateful impact of this impatience-born split-second decision" (p. 137).

but a husk of sexism and cancer. Cruel as this may be, the audience is also foregrounding that which Wiseau seems to have forgotten or refused to develop through narrative.

The anti-women vitriol implicitly present in the plot and dialogue is explicitly escalated through audience improvisation. At a screening I attended in Illinois, I witnessed several members of the primarily college-age, masculine, and white audience mercilessly slut-shame Lisa, who is castigated as a "whore" for "opening her beef curtains" for her desire for (and intercourse with) Mark; similar themes were present in every screening I attended. Performers stray from the film's supplied iconography to ridicule Lisa for her weight, though weight is never broached in the film and actress Juliette Danielle appears to be of commonly accepted size and the notion that Lisa has a weight problem, within even the absurd fictional universe of *The Room*, would be far-fetched. The *carnivalesque* in-theater environment, in which hierarchy and normalcy are suspended and relations are festive and ambivalent (Bakhtin, 1968), empowers audience members to openly communicate misogynistic speech in ways that are largely forbidden in everyday social settings. Though social restraints on speech are loosened during the ritual, the frame of the ritual cannot mitigate the products of speech acts produced, for as Scott (1990) observes in a critique of Bakhtin, "So long as speech occurs in any social situation it is saturated with power relations" (p. 176). Such internal and external power dynamics are salient factors to consider when interpreting audiencing rituals.

Such hatred for *The Room*'s women characters veers the ritual into dangerous ground, and out of context, such comments call into question whether the destructive rhetoric it produces deserves to be celebrated. But it is important to consider the discourses of the ritual in context of the text and the audiencing exigency, and if the audience's collective evocation of Claudette's breast cancer is frivolous and hateful, it also highlights Wiseau's flippancy and inability to develop nuanced characters through dialogue and narrative. What filmmaker, the ritual seems to demand, would be so oblivious and cruel to inflict a principal character with terminal breast cancer for 30 seconds of "black comedy"? Performers punish Wiseau for introducing an offensively underutilized plot device by magnifying it to the point it dwarfs any of the several scenes in which Claudette appears, swallowing any dialogue and potential plot or character development along the way. To suggest Wiseau intended one throwaway line to smother multiple dialogue-packed scenes stretches the boundaries of credulity. The implication: because Wiseau failed to recognize the magnitude of such an apocalyptic development in the life of one of his featured characters, the audience will do it for him, only without the grace or compassion the presence of deadly cancer ought to deserve.

As Johnston (n.d.) summarized, "The way the female characters speak and behave in the film suggests that Wiseau's understanding of the gender is, shall we say, less than progressive" (para. 7). Even a generous critique of *The Room* as a text reveals that its tone is palpably misogynistic, and these problematic elements of the ritual rhetorically magnifies Wiseau's apparently flawed ideology in a way that recalls Burke's (1937) discussion of *perspective by incongruity*: "it cherishes the lore of so-called 'error' as a *genuine aspect of the truth*, with emphases valuable for the correcting of present emphases" (p. 172). Demo (2000) suggests perspective by incongruity can be used as a tactic by which comedy can be employed for political action, noting the "highly charged nature of the symbolic alchemy produced when differing rhetorical/ideological orientations mix" (p. 139). Perspective by incongruity is contingent on the subjective positionality of the reader: what constitutes humorous political critique to one may be destructive and vulgar to another. To some observers, the hyperbolic ridicule of Lisa's sexual activity could function as "a constant juxtaposition of incongruous words, attaching to some name a qualifying epithet which had heretofore gone with a different order of names" (Burke, 1935, p. 90). Though responding to misogyny with hyper-misogyny does not contradict the film, it can be read as an oppositional response to the film's insistence that Lisa's physical beauty mobilizes her potential for evil. The film crudely and repeatedly emphasizes that Lisa is "beautiful" by having multiple characters explicitly stress that fact, including but not limited to an anonymous character who spends his only line of dialogue to tell the audience that "Lisa looks hot tonight." Through the lens of perspective by incongruity, one can read the audience's rhetoric not as earnest hatred but rather as rejection of Wiseau's sledgehammer-subtle demand that audiences frame Lisa as beautiful, which in the film's worldview justifies Johnny's devotion to her even as she abuses his love. Though the audience's performed hatred of Lisa, Claudette, and the film's women characters is offensive in isolation, it also inflates Wiseau's own screenwritten misogyny to the point where it reduces all characters involved, even those who are ostensibly our protagonists, to wreckage.

Much of the ritual's remaining activity works to mark and emphasis the film's inanities and idiosyncrasies: for example, greeting Johnny and Lisa's ever-meandering neighbor Denny (Philip Haldiman) when he enters a

scene ("hi, Denny!") and bidding him farewell when he leaves ("bye, Denny!), which is curiously frequent and often without service to the plot. Such instances are better understood as "participatory homage rather than critique" (Dean, 2011, p. 122). So are in-theater games of football soft-toss, which begin when Johnny, Mark, and friends take a break from the plot to toss a football back and forth while standing a few feet away from one another. So are tallying aloud the times someone refers to Mark and Johnny being best friends (six, seven, or eight, depending on strictness of interpretation). Though not as pointed as overtly cursing the film's characters for their gender, sexuality, or disability via life-threatening illness, such acts challenge the film in their own ways. They draw attention to the mundane rather than presumably intended plot points or invitations for identification. They point to the script's inanity and unabashed repetition in ways that suggest Wiseau almost certainly did not intend us to laugh with him—unless Wiseau improbably intended to make himself (not Johnny but Tommy) an object of ridicule by suggesting he does not understand how playing catch works or that characters usually enter scenes for a purpose. This is more circumstantial evidence that undermines the notion that Wiseau was striving for intentional black comedy. The ritualistic acts discussed above strike back at the notion that Wiseau intended audiences to understand *The Room* as an intentional comedy. These acts of creative audiencing, from the light-hearted to the vitriolic, cumulatively enforce the idea that Wiseau's comedic chops are as real as Russell's teapot: technically unfalsifiable but little more than a thought exercise.

Conclusion: Unity Through Schism

In the wake of redressive action, Turner (1987) notes two possible outcomes: *reintegration*, "a reestablishment of viable relations between the contending parties"; or a public recognition of irreparable schism" (p. 26). In her analysis of Weight Watchers and its ritual performances, Lockford (1996) troubles the notion that social drama necessarily ends with one of the two by arguing that the drama of Weight Watchers membership ends with "either the recognition of a *schism* or the perennial reversion to *breach* and *crisis*. Reintegration is largely an illusion" (p. 310). Not unlike Lockford's reading of Weight Watchers, the struggle for the meaning of *The Room* is unlikely to reach reintegration. Wiseau has not publicly admitted he failed at making an artistically successful film (which would effectively concede victory to the cult of *The Room*), and fans and critics of *The Room*'s continue to guffaw at Wiseau's version of the truth. As Bailey (2014) explained, "The fact that he's somehow convinced himself of his retroactive goal speaks even more to the deep delusion at this film's center" (para. 10).

But unlike the anguish and anxiety the false promise of reintegration creates for Weight Watchers patrons, indefinite schism exists in productive paradox for both Wiseau and *The Room* fans because their playful antagonism is at the core of what keeps one party invested in the other. Permanent resolution of the dramatic conflict would be unbeneficial to both parties, as the struggle for *The Room*'s meaning can play out night after night in theaters across the country and remain contextually productive for all parties involved.

In this case, reintegration would likely reduce the appeal the audiencing ritual, as evidence suggests the cult of *The Room* is attracted to Wiseau specifically because of the passionate earnestness he publicly denies. MacDowell (2010) argued:

> We certainly need to assume that Wiseau was not intending to make a self-parodic comedy in order to laugh at The Room *[sic]* in the way that we do, but appreciating the film for reasons other than those intended does not necessarily mean that we should automatically call Wiseau a 'bad' artist. (para. 15)

Meanwhile, though Wiseau's career as a director has veered off-course after a series of projects (a documentary, a short film, a web series, a sitcom) that failed to capture the cultural zeitgeist as *The Room* has, he remains a popular public figure regardless, parlaying his celebrity into a line of underwear bearing his name and *The Room* clothing and memorabilia such as a talking Johnny bobblehead (all available at theroommovie.com). The fascinating story of *The Room* is scheduled to take its next form in 2017 in the form of the Hollywood biographical film *The Masterpiece*, directed by James Franco, starring Franco as Wiseau, and featuring an ensemble cast including Seth Rogen, Zac Efron, Alison Brie, Sharon Stone, Bryan Cranston, and Judd Apatow—and, reportedly, a cameo from Wiseau himself (Raup, 2016). Though a career as "a beloved midnight-movie staple, a carnival barker who plays up his 'mysterious weirdo' persona for monetary gain and fan service" (McCown, 2015, para. 1) is not likely the

career Wiseau or anyone could envision in 2003 when *The Room* debuted, it is a role that Wiseau continues to play with gusto and for profit.

The Room's ritual phenomenon and other audiencing practices are salient reminders that audiences are willing and eager to passionately and creatively struggle over what a cultural text means. In spaces of embodied audiencing, the cultural significance of a text is neither fixed at first construction nor dictated top-down; the locus of meaning is with neither the text nor the reader but is situated between the two in potential conflict. Though *The Room* audiencing ritual is a celebration, it is also a rhetorical reassertion of precisely what the cult of *The Room* thinks of the film and Wiseau, what it *needs* it to be and to do for its members. While audiences are co-performing with *The Room*, it would not be accurate to say the cult is working democratically or even rationally with Wiseau. Just as Wiseau would reserve discursive power for himself by claiming modernist authorship over both *The Room* and its performance ritual, the cult's performance is a tactical strike against Wiseau's authorship. Cult members riff on the film's quirks and flaws, putting their bodies in motion in ways that warp or even reject that which the film offers on its own terms. In doing so, audience members grab hold of the film through performance and reframe it in a form that is tenable within the limits of the resources its members collectively possess, Wiseau's post hoc containment be damned.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 109-118

"The Wiz Live! and Body Rhetoric: The Complexity of Increasing Diversity in a Whitewashed Entertainment Industry"

Michelle Flood

Rhetorical scholars are continuing to turn their attention to the body as a means of argument production. This essay examines body rhetoric as an avenue of protest for marginalized groups, with specific regard to the African-American community. In the midst of controversy around racial diversity in the entertainment industry, NBC's live telecast production of The Wiz Live! proved to be wildly successful. With over 11.5 million viewers tuning in for the original airing, The Wiz Live! demonstrated that body rhetoric can express duality in purpose. This essay suggests that the telecast not only acted as a protest against diversity fiascos like #oscarssowhite, but that it also focused on celebrating a historically unrepresented and marginalized culture.

Introduction

One of the biggest problems plaguing the entertainment industry as a whole is the issue of racial diversity and the notable absence and minimization of people of color. Between the implementation of racial quotas and the disregard of actors of color during award season, the entertainment industry is struggling with how to solve this problem. But that doesn't mean that people of color are entirely absent from entertainment. NBC's recent reworking of *The Wiz*, a black retelling of *The Wizard of Oz*, demonstrates a conscious effort, problematic or not, to tell multiracial narratives. While symbolic action takes many forms, the use of the body as rhetorical protest, as demonstrated by the live staging of *The Wiz*, has the potential to disrupt societal norms and the institutions that enforce them. A fundamental understanding of how the rhetorical body affects the way we shape public policy in terms of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, etc. is useful in examining how various marginalized groups can create potent and dialogue-prompting arguments using the limited resources available to them. While the body is typically thought of as upholding or reinforcing hegemonic societal values, the body is a powerful tool that holds the potential to change those values, as is seen in various scholarly studies of body rhetoric.

Based on E. L. Baum's novel *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Wiz* retells the story in an urban setting that celebrates African American culture by including songs, dances, and a dialect characteristic of the otherwise marginalized black community. The original 1975 Broadway production of *The Wiz* received mixed reviews from Broadway critics, but ultimately became large enough of a success to pave the way for other African American shows like *Dreamgirls*, *The Color Purple*, and *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*. The revival of an old but important theatrical dialogue has forced the issue of diversity and representation back into the spotlight. With the recent Oscars controversy (#oscarssowhite), in which the Academy Awards has received criticism for its lack of non-Caucasian nominees as well as the rehashed question as to the necessity of all-black television channels and awards shows, it seems as though Broadway is one of the few, if not the only, media that is proactively trying to change the otherwise white landscape. While the broadcast is not technically Broadway, it's a new emerging medium that has grown in popularity in the last year. Live televised broadcasts of Broadway shows like *The Sound of Music*, *Peter Pan*, *Grease*, and *The Wiz Live!* are becoming increasingly popular as the ratings continue to rise. They are a hybrid of both television and theater as stage productions are adapting to soundstages, but they are not quite the same as movie musical translations because the conventions vary from stage to film and technically, a telecast is still live staged performance.

By using an all-black cast and rewriting familiar dialogue and music to better represent that specific minority group, *The Wiz Live!* creates a new experience for its audience: what it means to be black and to celebrate African American culture outside of the confines of the political and racial tensions of the United States. By interjecting black culture into a land (Oz) removed from our current reality, the text operates as an opportunity to demonstrate the richness of African American culture. For the audience, it's a chance to undergo a black cultural experience without the negative connotations, stereotypes, or familiar storylines that include black characters. In doing this, it seems as though the purpose of telecast is multifaceted; yes, it is a cultural celebration. But it's also

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the chance to tell a story of black people that is lacking prejudice and discrimination. By creating this alternate black narrative for audience members, *The Wiz Live!* pushes further onto the rhetorical persuasive continuum (Palczewski, Ice, & Fritch, 2012) into altering the audience's (most likely that of the resistive audience) perception of what it means to be black.

Racial performance as a means of protest can also act as a celebration of non-hegemonic culture. Its duality of purpose is strengthened as *The Wiz Live!* challenges the institution of a whitewashed entertainment industry, but sings the praises of a marginalized and underrepresented population by adopting and transforming a traditionally white narrative.

This study aims to examine *The Wiz Live!* as a form of racial and performance body rhetoric, which in turn acts as symbolic action to protest the overwhelmingly white nature of the entertainment industry. After introducing the live telecast as a modern and poignant adaptation of the 1975 Broadway production and subsequent 1978 film, I will perform a close reading of the bodies present in *The Wiz Live!* to determine how the use of rhetorical techniques like prosopopoeia and musical elements that uphold black tradition challenge the hegemony of an otherwise white institution. Performance as protest also has the potential to act as a celebration of non-hegemonic culture, as is exemplified by NBC's *The Wiz Live!* Its duality of purpose is formidable as it simultaneously challenges the entertainment industry, but also sings the praises of a historically unrepresented and marginalized culture.

Background

Based on L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel *The Wizard of Oz* and the 1939 film of the same name, *The Wiz* acts as a retelling of the classic narrative but instead features an all-black cast. The original Broadway staging of *The Wiz* in 1975 and the film in 1978 received critical acclaim, but NBC aired a live telecast production in December 2015. *The Wiz Live!* followed other live musical telecasts such as *The Sound of Music Live!* and *Peter Pan Live!*, but surprisingly outperformed all previous NBC telecasts in ratings, with approximately 11.5 million viewers tuning in for the original airing (Malone, 2015). Amidst conversations about racial diversity in the entertainment industry, this telecasted revival of the 1975 musical acts as mixed media – Broadway musicals meet live television programming, and in doing so, contributes to the ongoing dialogue about the diversification of American pop culture.

Between the implementation of racial quotas and the disregard of actors of color during award season, the entertainment industry is struggling with how to solve this problem. But that doesn't mean that people of color are entirely absent from entertainment. NBC's recent reworking of *The Wiz*, a black retelling of *The Wizard of Oz*, demonstrates a conscious effort, problematic or not, to tell multiracial narratives. When *The Wiz Live!* aired on December 3, 2015, it acted as a blending of media, as the live broadcast works as a black narrative in both television and musical theatre. *The Wiz Live!* performed very well, with over 11.5 million people tuning in to the original airing (Malone, 2015). However, the situation and reaction to the live broadcast speaks to the larger issue of racial tension not only in entertainment, but on a larger scale in the United States. If all-black shows like *The Wiz Live!* are still lauded for making progress, then we still have a long way to go to make meaningful progress. The telecast begs the question, "Is it good to have different stylistic and cultural approaches to storytelling when it comes to familiar American texts?" In telling classic American narratives from a racial vantage point, texts like *The Wiz Live!* challenge not only the hegemony of the source material, but also of the larger institution of entertainment as a whole and the injection of race into an otherwise white story is a form of embodied protest, known in the literature as body rhetoric, to forcibly claim visibility and recognition.

Body Rhetoric and Recognition: How to Challenge Hegemony

Palczewski et al. (2012) define body rhetoric as "rhetoric that foregrounds the body as part of the symbolic action" (p. 66). When rhetoric scholars look at the use of the body as a rhetorical tool, it is not treated as some biological or medical form but rather a socially constructed entity, unto which meaning is placed or assigned. All social institutions, including religion, gender, sexuality, age, and more, can be challenged using the body as symbolic action and groups who do not or cannot conform to the ideals of these regimented social institutions often use their bodies as a means of protest or argumentation. For some, especially the oppressed, body rhetoric is useful because it is the only available proof for an argument (Palczewski et al., 2012). Marginalized groups who often do

not have access to resources they need to make their case or further their cause will use their bodies as symbolic action to both solicit attention to an issue and construct an argument. Enactment is when the body of a person (female body for women, black body for African American, etc.) acts as the proof or reasoning in the argument that person is trying to convey. Bodies can act as part of the argument, or be the entire argument, depending on how it is used. Traditionally, the body was used as a means of capturing attention, but scholars like DeLuca (1999) and Selzer and Crowley (1999) argue that it can act alone as the central argument. By using the body as proof for the argument, as reasoning for the argument, or as the argument itself, body rhetoric demonstrates the power of mere existence and why that can be vital in creating dialogues and change.

While speeches and texts are the typical staples of rhetorical criticism, Selzer and Crowley (1999) explain why the body is worthy of analysis. They state that the body acts as a material dimension of rhetoric, and that material rhetorics "delineate ethics for a culture confronting material crises in public policy: the politics of race and ethnicity; the issues related to 'family values' that revolve around sexual and gender identities, […]" (p. 10-11). Just as texts and speeches have the power to provoke discussion, move toward progress, and incite action, the body can also; it is simply in another, less verbally or literarily explicit form. Therefore the body has the power to prompt discussion about social progress and ultimately affect attitudes surrounding the aforementioned issues, but the key to creating these dialogues is establishing a presence that is strong and formidable enough to get the attention of the social institutions which the body is challenging.

Michel Foucault (1977) explains that the body is so much more than our physical vessels, but that they also hold the potential for power and domination. His argument is similar to Kenneth Burke's (1969), who maintains that humans exist in nature but more importantly, we exist in a symbolic world. Bodily motion is natural and impersonal, action (and consequently symbolic action) is deliberate and personal. By analyzing how the body is used as a tool of empowerment, we can understand the scope of its effects on public policy. While the body is typically used as a means of reinforcing the preexisting dominant ideology, it holds the potential to challenge hegemony under certain circumstances. Examining both Foucault and feminist critical theory, Sawicki (1991) explains how the female body is used as a tool to fortify hegemonic values: "the forms of subjection that engender the feminine body [are used] to perpetuate the silence and powerlessness of those upon whom these disciplines have been imposed" (p. 49). Feminist scholars then argue that the feminine body can challenge those norms of subjugation with embodied presence that doesn't uphold patriarchal values. The same can be done in other areas of systematic oppression like race, sexuality, gender identity, etc.

Bodies act as symbolic action when their presence is notable, especially when that presence violates social norms put forth by dominant ideologies. Featherstone, Hepworth, and Turner (1991) explain the body's presence in terms of a symbol of the processes that uphold an institution's ideals. To achieve successful symbolic action, members of minority groups can place themselves in spaces that are not meant for them. "These groups are in hostile territory with little control. What they do have some control over, however, is the presentation of their bodies in the image events that attract media attention. Their bodies then, become not merely flags to attract attention for the argument but the site and substance of the argument itself" (DeLuca, 1999, p. 10). As a supplemental critical perspective, recognition also comes into play in the discussion of representation and basic human rights. Hesford (2011) describes recognition as "the incorporation of the subject into the regime of rights" (p. 284). Within the context of body rhetoric, an unwelcomed body, the person(s) fighting for acknowledgement, has not been granted the same rights as others in social institutions. "The sociopolitical process of recognition that [personhood] relies on often reiterates social hierarchies, especially when privileged groups and powerful nations are configured as the distributors of rights for those unable to claim them." (Hesford, 2011, p. 284). Therein lies the difficulty for marginalized populations to achieve actual recognition. The route to recognition, Hesford argues, is through the very channels that support hegemonic oppression. Similarly, Doxtader (2012) explains that while recognition should inspire truth and some sort of reconciliation process within the institution, the human rights institutions fall short of doing so. It is not immediately clear how best to go about creating equality and make reparations for previous trespasses, but DeLuca (1999) and Selzer and Crowley (1999) argue that the entrance of obtrusive bodies in hegemonic spaces is one potential place to start.

DeLuca explains that the body can in fact be its own argument, and that the presence of otherwise unwelcomed bodies is a powerful form of symbolic action. For DeLuca (1999) in his study of several activist groups, the body is used for creating image events, meant for media dissemination, and in doing so, the body

becomes a "pivotal resources for the crucial practice of public argumentation" (p. 10). Again, if a person or group has established an embodied presence that is an anomaly in societal values and is strong enough to constitute an argument, scholars like DeLuca and Selzer argue that the body is a powerful form of symbolic action. However, it is not simply enough to be present to disrupt social institutions, as Butterworth (2008) argues in his criticism of body rhetoric.

Butterworth's (2008) work in body rhetoric suggests that presence isn't always enough to successful disrupt and/or change institutions. As demonstrated in his case study of Katie Hnida and her feminine presence in the hypermasculine space of college football, it is difficult to change large institutions with mere presence. Butterworth (2008) maintains, "embodied arguments do not always or necessarily lead to progressive outcomes" (p. 261). These arguments can push for change but are also limited in effectiveness. As previously mentioned, an embodied argument has to be noticeable enough to prompt a dialogue about the contrasting values of the social institutions and the body that confronts it, and then that created discussion must continue until change and/or progress is made. The rhetorical limits of the body are great, but not impossible to overcome. As is the case of Katie Hnida, perhaps one body is not enough to upheave the way we think about things like gender but maybe repeated presence or the embodied presence of large groups would be more effective in overcoming the rhetorical limits of perpetuating an argument that relies on the body.

Racial Body Rhetoric and Performance

Much of the work in body rhetoric has examined the politics of gender because some of its origins stem from feminist critical studies, but the critical perspective also relates to the politics of race. Considering that the presence of conventionally unwelcomed bodies in spaces that reinforce hegemonic values is a demonstration of symbolic action, racial body rhetoric is explained as the strategic presence of a body or bodies belonging to a minority ethnic group. This concept is simple enough; minority groups have conducted protests for centuries. The sit-ins of the Civil Rights Movement and the 1970 student walkouts of the Chicano Movement are just two examples of when racial and ethnic groups used their physical presence to make a case for equality. The scope of my research examines black symbolic action, specifically looking at celebrations of blackness as a form of protest.

Reinforcing the racial hegemony of Western culture, black bodies are traditionally shown in positions of powerlessness, submission, criminality, or aggression (Doreski, 1998). That script is flipped in black narratives, in which these static portrayals are dismissed and both black culture and black bodies are given dynamic and empowering characteristics. "The epistemological moment of race manifests itself in and through performance in that performance facilitates self- and cultural reflexivity – a knowing made manifest by a 'doing'" (Johnson, 2005, p. 606). People who belong to different racial groups, specifically the African American group Johnson refers to, make use of performance as a tool to evoke social consciousness. In literary texts, blackness is created only through a complicated process of signification (Gates, 1988), but in performance, protests, or other image events, the black body is one that is explicitly present and potentially implicitly powerful. Early examples of this come from the Harlem Renaissance, during which the African-American community revaluated what it meant to be black, how that fit or did not fit within Western culture, and how best to celebrate blackness (Condit & Lucaites, 1993). But there is much contention, even to this day, as to what constitutes the parameters surrounding African American culture. It is almost impossible to pinpoint what signifies African-American embodiment, but it is almost immediately evident once present.

African-American body rhetoric, like other body rhetoric, takes many forms because all that is needed for body rhetoric is presence, embodiment and enactment (Palczewski et al., 2012). Scholars have applied body rhetoric as the critical perspective to a number of situations, ranging from the activism of different social movements to the politics of sports, but one potentially powerful form of body rhetoric can be found in performance. While rhetorical criticism of the body only spans a few decades, booming after 1999, performance stretches the basic ideals of the rhetorical body. In most studies the body is viewed as simply being, and while that is a powerful tool capable of constituting an argument by itself, the bodily functions that accompany presence can also contribute to the argument, one which Elam (2001) argues has always been linked to issues of race. "[T]he discourse on race, the definitions and meanings of blackness, have been intricately linked to issues of theater and performance. Definitions of race, like the processes of theater, fundamentally depend on the relationship between the unseen and seen," (Elam, 2001, p. 4). The sounds emitted from the body and the movement enacted by the body construct the notable

presence of an obtrusive body; it is the embodiment of what should or should not be in a space. Sound as musicality and dialogue and movement as dance directly apply to performance, which in turn is applicable to the rhetoric of race. The sounds of black voices in both song and spoken word, as well as dancing movement, act as extensions of the black body, which can occupy spaces that are traditionally white.

> "Considered within a frame that includes an immobile [white] audience, the prevalent underlying action of movement in hip hop dances, is 'j'acuse," spoken by young people of color to those in power who would ignore them. […] The body in these forms dances about unequal power relations, self-awareness, and kinetic fun" (Lepecki, 2004, p. 79).

Here we see that black body movement and dance can not only pay homage to African tradition, but also act as symbolic action to protest the unjust. The black voice functions in a similar way. While the expectations set forth concerning the black voice expect that it is a robust, rhythmic, and melodic one, the black voice can be easily distinguished from others when it is not expected. This makes it a particularly powerful tool in achieving presence because it is distinct and notable. It is entirely possible that the spoken or sung words do not matter as much as the actual sound that the body emits in constructing the argument because by using sound as an extension of embodiment and presence, the black voice can call attention to both the black body and the argument conveyed. Performance rhetoric and racial rhetoric often combine in circumstances under which hegemony creates a strong barrier to entry, but artistic performances that celebrate race are a powerful tool to break into what is typically thought of as the white space known as the entertainment industry.

How *The Wiz Live!* Achieves Recognition Through Body Rhetoric

The Wiz Live! becomes an example of body rhetoric when it employs prosopopoeia. It takes previously established characters from a well-known narrative, *The Wizard of Oz*, and slightly transforms them into a characterization more representative of the African American community. Traditional characters like the Tin Man, Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion are subtly changed in their dialect, musical sound, bodily movement, and physical appearance to assume Afrocentric qualities. The parallels between the original *The Wizard of Oz* novel and film and *The Wiz Live!* facilitate an examination of how prosopopoeia, voice, and choreography function within the telecast to achieve its purpose of creating a virtual experience of celebrating blackness and acting as an avenue to celebrate diversity in the entertainment industry.

One of the most interesting aspects of *The Wiz Live!* is its absence of mention of race. Perhaps this is because the narrative occurs in a land in which race relations are not necessarily prevalent. The land of Oz acts as a removed landscape in which the characters are able to express and celebrate African American culture. This is a noted change from the 1978 film of the same name, in which Diana Ross plays Dorothy as a 24-year-old schoolteacher living in Harlem. The political and racial tensions of the film are set up in early scenes, but also carry over into the land of Oz, unlike what the telecast does. The film's Oz is an urban jungle, a post-apocalyptic New York City and Dorothy's journey through a junkyard filled with garbage, a subway station bumping with drugs, and an evil witch's sweatshop parallels the dangers of the city in the 1970s. *The Wiz Live!* makes perhaps an intentional decision not to do this. Dorothy's few moments outside of Oz take place in a nondescript farm in Kansas. Furthermore, *The Wiz Live!* attempts to remove as many racial connotations as possible, even changing the Wicked Witch's flying monkeys to what the director referred to as "winged warriors" (Gallagher, 2015). These choices to attempt to remove most, if not all, of the racial tensions and connotations from *The Wiz Live!* signal to the audience that the show is not about drudging up the hardships of the African American community, but rather celebrating its culture in the most positive light.

One of the many ways *The Wiz Live!* celebrates race without explicitly pointing it out is by mirroring the plot points of the *The Wizard of Oz* novel and the scenes of the following film. Because race is not explicitly acknowledged in the dialogue, but instead alluded to in dialectic choices and musical lyrics, it is best to compare the 1939 *The Wizard of Oz* with *The Wiz Live!* The movie's plot more closely aligns with the live telecast than the original novel in format. It is difficult to demonstrate the distinct changes between the two narratives because only so much of it is linguistic. The rest lies in sound, voice, and bodily movement. By comparing the film and the telecast, it's easiest to see how the portrayals of familiar characters like Dorothy and the Scarecrow are adapted

using prosopopoeia. As a rhetorical device, prosopopoeia can occur when another's character is assumed, and within the context of this project, black characters assume traditional character roles with whom the audience is already familiar, and then attribute racially diverse characteristics to their portrayals. This is abundantly clear throughout the entirety of *The Wiz Live!*, but it is considerably elucidated in scenes and musical numbers that coordinate with scenes from *The Wizard of Oz* film. One such scene is the Scarecrow's introduction. Acting as a pivotal plot point, this scene introduces a central character other than the protagonist, Dorothy. In the 1939 film, the scene reads as follows:

> [*Dorothy looking at the Scarecrow as he nods his head*]
> Dorothy: Are you doing that on purpose, or can't you make up your mind?
> Scarecrow: That's the trouble. I can't make up my mind. I haven't got a brain, only straw.
> Dorothy: How can you talk if you haven't got a...brain?
> Scarecrow: I don't know. But some people without brains do an awful lot of talking, don't they?
> Dorothy: Yes, I guess you're right (LeRoy & Fleming, 1939).

In this original scene, it's established that the Scarecrow is without a brain, but he also jokes that the lack of a brain doesn't prevent mindless chatter. Below is the transcribed dialogue from *The Wiz Live!*, during the same plot point. Note how although the topic of conversation is identical, linguistics differences establish a new tone:

> Dorothy: A talkin' scarecrow.
> Scarecrow: Where?
> Dorothy: You! And if you're a scarecrow, how come they crows ain't scared?
> Scarecrow: Well that's a bevy of excellent questions which would be a pleasure to answer, if only I had a brain.
> Dorothy: How can you talk without a brain?
> Scarecrow: Well I'm not sure but since I've been up here, there's been a whole lot brainless people talkin' and it ain't stopped them. So how 'bout it, you're gonna help a brother out with some cash or what? (Zadan, Meron, Leon, & Diamond, 2015).

The dropping of consonants, especially from verbs in the gerund tense is one of the noticeable differences stemming from the African American English vernacular, but the use of the word "ain't" in place of "aren't" and "hasn't" is also characteristic of the specific dialect chosen for *The Wiz*. When Scarecrow refers to himself as a "brother," he's appealing to a sense of comradery with the audience that is unique to African American culture. And while African American English vernacular is often criticized and condescended upon for violating Standard English grammar rules, it's important to note that the use of words like "ain't" is a cultural choice. The dialogue is still complex and rich, using words like "bevy" to push back against connotation that the dialect is less intelligent or less valid than standardized English.

This linguistic pattern continues beyond the dialogue of the telecast into the musical numbers. Perhaps the most well-known song from *The Wiz*, "Ease On Down the Road" reiterates the sentiment of *The Wizard of Oz*'s "We're Off to See the Wizard," but replaces the lyrics with ones that more closely follow the African American English vernacular. Both songs are reprised several times throughout their respective texts and are fairly repetitive, but the differences are most notable in the verses:

> *We're off to see the wizard, the Wonderful Wizard of Oz*
> *We hear he is a whiz of a wiz, if ever a wiz there was*
> *If ever, oh ever a wiz there was, the Wizard of Oz is one because*
> *Because, because, because, because, because*
> *Because of the wonderful things he does*
> *We're off to see the wizard, the Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (LeRoy & Fleming, 1939).

In the overarching narrative, Dorothy and her companions sing this on their way to the Emerald City as a mantra of sorts to keep them on their journeys, both the literal one to see the Wizard/Wiz and their journey toward self-fulfillment. In the original text, the lyrics not only move the plot but propel the characters continuously forward. Note how the same is done in *The Wiz*'s "Ease On Down the Road:"

> *Come on, ease on down, ease on down, down the road.*
> *Pick your left foot up*
> *When your right foot's down*
> *Come on legs keep movin'*
> *Don't you lose no ground*
> *You just keep on keepin'*
> *On the road that you choose*
> *Don't you give up walkin'*
> *'Cause you gave up shoes,*
> *Ease on down, ease on down the road* (Zadan et al., 2015).

Similar to the aforementioned scenes, the consonants are noticeably dropped from gerunds and the word "because" is shortened to "cause." And while this style is not exclusive to African American vernacular, the dialectic changes are most noticeable in the pronunciation, specifically that of the vowels. Furthermore, the addition of "you" and the substitution of "no" for "any" in "Don't you lose no ground" are characteristic of African American vernacular. While "We're Off to See the Wizard" serves the purpose of moving the plot and pushing the characters, "Ease On Down the Road" does this to an even further extent because the lyrics maintain the sentiment throughout the verses, but the ways in which that sentiment is expressed is elaborated upon, whereas the film's song more heavily relies on alliteration and repetition of words such as "because" to carry the tune. It is in this way that by making linguistic differences and writing new lyrics for the same scenes that it can be argued that *The Wiz Live!* enriches the original text by adding cultural flair. These subtle linguistic differences, it can be argued, is an extension of body rhetoric in that it is difficult to pinpoint what exactly constitutes as African American vernacular and sound. It is rather something that is heard in the black voice, which is more easily observed audibly, but these small linguistic hints in the script and libretto suggest that the dialogue and music is exclusively meant for African American voices. Only so much of what constitutes black performance can be put into words because so much of it is experienced – you know it when you hear it and see it, just as you hear the black voice and witness black bodily movement.

Similar to black vocal intonation, *The Wiz Live!* evokes body rhetoric and recognition by using a blend of traditional African dances and more modern hip hop styles in its choreography. Styles noted in the telecast included everything from traditional tribal dances to the latest trendy moves. In an interview, choreographer Fatima Robinson, who is also responsible for choreographing numbers for black artists like Michael Jackson and Aaliyah, explained the choices in dance, "We are touching on every street dance that's out there. We're hitting the Quan and we're hitting the Nae Nae. I love the new world of discovering dance, where you can go to YouTube and find the latest dance step" (Smith-Sloman, 2015, para. 7). The blend of dance styles is notably black, as the modern dance trends originated within the African American community, but this intentional directorial decision is one made to increase both recognition in the overwhelmingly white entertainment industry and identification in the black community, which is evident in its social mediated reactions.

It is this sort of cultural celebration that makes the text so much more easily identifiable for a black audience. As previously mentioned, *The Wiz Live!* employs prosopopoeia to appeal to its target audience consisting of African Americans. Using the film as a jumping point, on which beloved characters can be differently portrayed, *The Wiz Live!* allows black actors to assume roles with which all of its audiences are already familiar. The contents of each character, their personality and their core identities are unchanged, but instead altered to reflect another culture. *The Wizard of Oz* is recognizable narrative in American pop culture, but what *The Wiz Live!* does is transform that narrative ever so slightly with linguistic changes to represent another American culture, one that might not have previously identified with the narrative for lack of visibility. Prosopopoeia works in the libretto to increase this identification with the audience, especially with the black target audience, because the characters look and sound like they do, despite the relatively unchanged plot and consistent characters. This approach, the use of

prosopopoeia, is unique in a current entertainment industry that does not prioritize telling non-white stories. The fact that *The Wiz Live!* is based on a traditionally white story and it changes the script to make it a non-white narrative makes this telecast compelling and attractive for its target audience.

Body Rhetoric at Work in Two Planes

The Wiz Live! practices body rhetoric on two separate levels: within its own narrative, and against the whitewashed landscape of today's entertainment industry. Historically and currently the entertainment industry has struggled with diversity. While characters of color are routinely portrayed by white actors and representations of racial groups are damagingly stereotypical, there are limited spaces for racial minorities like the African American community. Almost in the vein of Plessy v. Ferguson's "separate but equal," we have separate entertainment spaces for black people like BET and the barrier to entry into white entertainment spaces like primetime television or Broadway are arguably heightened due to the existence of reserved black spaces. The 1978 *Wiz* film acted within the confines of these relegated spaces, but the 2015 live telecast breaks through the barrier, true to the style of body rhetoric. When it premiered on NBC in December 2015, *The Wiz Live!* received over two and a half hours of screen time on a typically white primetime network. Unsurprisingly, the target audience responded very positively to the telecast and the intentional changes, both from the 1939 source film *The Wizard of Oz* and previous *Wiz* adaptations. The black audience took to Twitter to live-tweet their reactions to the live broadcast. Thousands of tweets like, "This is so black. I'm in love #The Wiz," (Watson, 2015, para. 24) echo the general sentiment that, for once, black people are shown in a positive light. Despite musical producers' previous arguments that diversity doesn't sell, the telecast stood as evidence that multiracial narratives are profitable in the entertainment industry. "Audience reception to #TheWizLive was yet another reminder that Black culture has mainstream appeal beyond common stereotypes and even campy musicals oozing with innocence, love, laughter and modern-themed wit are more than worthy of great investment—and will sell," (Ellis, 2016, para. 19). It is important to remember what *The Wiz* has represented for the black community in the last four decades. From its original Broadway production in 1975 and the Diana Ross film in 1978, *The Wiz* has been a classic black narrative beloved by the community it represents. Moreover, it is a family friendly narrative, meaning that it can be shared and act as a source of black pride between generations. For those who grew up in primarily black schools, *The Wiz* was one of only a few options for community theater, and perhaps this is one of the reasons it resonates so profoundly within the black community: it is one of the only available opportunities for participation in a theatrical space that has been traditionally off-limits due to lack of non-white roles. All adaptations and productions of *The Wiz* act as an invitation to both celebrate black identity and participate in theater.

Moreover, it is evident that the telecast reached its target audience and achieved its rhetorical purpose within that specific demographic: to honor African American culture by increasing black visibility in both television and musical theatre. "We're in another watershed in which there are dozens of black people, who also feel free, creating television and appearing on it. That's the version of *The Wiz* that NBC aired [in December 2015] — a balmy celebration of what should be the natural order of things: black America, unoppressed" (Morris, 2015, para. 17). Ultimately *The Wiz Live!* could not fix or change the entertainment industry, but it put black people front and center onstage and prompted a discussion about what should come next. The blending of two media, theatre and television, as well as receiving attention on a primarily white network is only the first rung on which *The Wiz Live!* successfully uses body rhetoric to argue for more opportunities to tell black stories that are lacking prejudice and discrimination; the second level is how the narrative operates itself.

In my textual analysis, I noted that one thing *The Wiz* does is honor black tradition, but that it does so by intentionally removing African-American culture from the confines of racial and political tensions in the United States. This contradicts the basic idea of body rhetoric as symbolic action because typically it is thought of as being obtrusive; a body's presence in an otherwise unwelcoming space makes an argument. However, the transformative power of translating an otherwise white narrative into a disparate ethnic performance is noteworthy and possibly expands our understanding of entering spaces. The absence and/or removal of white bodies means that *The Wiz Live!* not only enters that space, but it reshapes it into something that better fits the needs of an otherwise marginalized group of people. Furthermore, the lack of white bodies does not mean that there is a lack of white presence. The narrative itself is a white space because both the novel and 1939 film featured primarily white writers and producers, white actors, and a white audience. But the conversion of a white Wizard of Oz to a black Wiz

removes much, but not all, of the white presence and exponentially increases embodied black presence. In doing so, *The Wiz Live!* establishes itself as a black celebration, but it doubles as an embodied protest.

Conclusion

Akin to the challenges Butterworth (2008) describes in his examination of body rhetoric, it takes more than one successful body or body of work to completely challenge and overthrow a hegemonic institution. However, *The Wiz Live!* is rhetorically successful in its employment of body rhetoric for several reasons, the first of which proving that diversity and racial narratives are profitable. Between 11.5 million viewers tuning in for the live telecast, critical acclaim from theater and television critics, and thousands of positive online responses from the very community it sought to represent, *The Wiz Live!* proves that it is not risky to celebrate marginalized culture and that it is in fact welcomed. It may not be welcomed by the entertainment industry who routinely ignores the value of racial narratives, but it is instead welcomed by the millions of viewers, who in a form of their own symbolic action, choose to consume racial narratives as a way of signifying to the media that this is the type of narrative they want to see. It is clear in both the rating and the outpour of support on social media that the black community wants to see narratives that reflect what it means to be black, and not just in relegated media spaces like BET. The telecast acts as an exception into what has traditionally been a white space (that being NBC and primetime television) with extremely high barriers to entry. Does the one telecast of *The Wiz Live!* change the entire landscape of entertainment? No, that would be nearly impossible to achieve with one instance of black presence and embodiment. What it does, however, is set precedence for what successful racial media integration can look like, and it proves to media conglomerates who control programming that there needs to be a shift in entertainment that reflects what American looks like today.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 119-130

An Examination of Physician-Patient Communication in Context of a Spina Bifida Diagnosis

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As a result of pregnancy, patients have increased contact with a physician. To complicate matters, learning that an unborn child will be born with an expected disability can increase the number of medical consultations. In this qualitative study, 23 participants were interviewed to describe and explain physician-patient communication in context of learning that a child would be born with an expected disability. Findings suggest patients perceived various forms of information exchange along with experiences in relational communication. Implications for physicians and patients are discussed.

Keywords: physician-patient communication, spina bifida, information exchange, and relational communication

Pregnancy is often characterized with joy. However, pregnancy often leads to feelings of anxiety, tension, uncertainty, and stress (Dragonas & Chistodoulou, 1998; Elsenbruch, Benson, Rucke, & Dudenhausen, 2007; Sjostrom, Langius-Eklof, & Hjertberg, 2004). As a result of pregnancy, patients have increased contact with a physician. Therefore, additional information regarding the medical process should be provided to patients during pregnancy (Aaronson, Mural, & Pfoutz, 1988). As Lambert and Loiselle (2007) noted, pregnant patient's information needs vary, and can range from a basic desire to understand a physician's decision to being an active participant in the decision making process. To complicate matters, learning that an unborn child will be born with an expected disability can increase the number of medical consultations given the disability's nature. Spina bifida, which is characterized as a condition that affects the spinal cord and nerves due to a backbone malformation (Spina Bifida Association, 2015), is typically diagnosed during pregnancy. Spina bifida is commonly associated with physical and/or cognitive disabilities.

Physician-patient communication is well documented by researchers (see Bell, 2007; Cegala, 1997; Rabow & McPhee, 1999; Street & Wiemann, 1988; Thompson & Parrott, 2002). Both content and style of physician-patient communication is important in the overall medical experience (Davis, 2010). However, it's important to note that communication is bound by context, and the physician-patient relationship is no exception (Avtgis & Polack, 2007). While research has focused on physician-patient communication, to our knowledge, research has not examined specific discussions in relation to an unborn child and a spina bifida diagnosis. In accordance with Avtgis and Polack (2007), "research should continue to explain the contextual factors surrounding the medical encounter to better explain the patient/physician relationship" (p. 137). Specifically, research should expand to understand physician-patient communication during the pregnancy of an unborn child who has been diagnosed with an expected disability.

The purpose of the current study was to address physician-patient communication in the context of an initial diagnosis and discussion of a child that would be born with spina bifida. By utilizing in-depth qualitative interviews, this study describes and explains the patient's perception of the communication exchange by physicians upon learning that their unborn child had spina bifida. What follows is an examination of literature related to physician-patient communication, which provides context to the current study. Specifically, the literature is focused on informational exchange and relational communication, which are important concepts in the medical encounter for patients as they learn of a spina bifida diagnosis. The literature review is followed by a description of the qualitative methodology. The findings section provides the themes generated from data analysis. Finally, implications for physicians and patients are discussed.

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Both authors wish to thank Philip Curry, Kendrea James, and Erin Webb in regards to assistance with the manuscript. Please send all correspondence to copela03@nsuok.edu.

Physician-Patient Communication

Thompson and Parrott (2002) noted how "communication skills" rather than "communication competence" has been a focus of physician-patient communication in the medical profession. For instance, Rao, Anderson, Inui, and Frankel (2007) stated effective communication skills are the foundation of patient-centered care. Pendleton's (1983) research noted physician-patient communication requires good listening skills along with the physician clearly communicating information to the patient. Argyle (1983) noted how physicians must consistently work with patients, and "technical knowledge and skills are required, but this cannot be used unless the practitioner is able to communicate, persuade and generally deal with his clients" (p. 57). Many research articles offered by medical practitioners provide tips to train physicians and nurses in regards to best communication practices (see Argyle, 1983; Hulsman, Ros, Winnubst, & Bensing, 1999; Lechner, Sheilds, Tucker, & Bender, 2015; Rabow & McPhee, 1999). Furthermore, Lechner et al. (2016) noted upon delivering bad news related to a diagnosis, physicians should be trained to effectively communicate with a patient. However, training is lacking (Lechner et al., 2016; Rabow & McPhee, 1999).

Street and Wiemann (1988) noted the uniqueness of the physician-patient relationship, which is entrenched in personal elements of self-disclosure and access to the body while at the same time approached with professional and formal communication. Given this context, research indicates that effective physician-patient communication is critical in providing a perception of a likable, involved, and concerned physician (Bell, 2007; Pendleton, 1983). Additionally, clear communication is critical in developing greater patient satisfaction with the information received (Burgoon et al., 1987; Hoffman & Del Mar, 2014; Luff et al., 2016). Parents typically learn of a spina bifida diagnosis during pregnancy, which increases the amount of consultations with a physician. Therefore, a spina bifida diagnosis provides a unique context to explore the physician-patient communication experience. There are two aspects of physician-patient communication that has been given consistent attention by researchers: information exchange and relational communication. Both are described below.

Information Exchange

Researchers have noted the fact that the primary goal of communication during a medical consultation is the exchange of information between a physician and patient (Beisecker & Beisecker, 1990; Frederikson, 1993; Guttman, 1993; Thompson & Parrott, 2002). Cegala (1997) stated, "effective doctor-patient communication, in part, involves information exchange about such matters as medical history, symptoms, diagnosis, and prescribed treatment" (p. 170). DiMatteo, Reiter, and Gambone, (1994) stated, "in general, patients prefer far more detailed disclosure than their physicians routinely offer them, and patients want far more information than they tend to ask for" (p. 256). To emphasize the importance of information exchange in the medical encounter, research demonstrates the point that information exchange is of more importance than social support for the seriously ill (Hinds & Moyer, 1997). Furthermore, Orioles, Miller, Kersun, Ingram, and Morrison (2013) concluded that physicians should repeat information and provide opportunities for questions repeatedly with a patient during informational exchange, especially when delivering an unfavorable diagnosis. Emphasizing the importance of information exchange, Oshea et al. (2007) discovered the fact that parents appreciated when a physician took an opportunity to repeat information related to a leukemia diagnosis for a child.

Beisecker (1990) detailed a variety of factors that affect the communication exchange between the physician-patient encounter, which include patient attitudes, situations, and sociodemographic factors, such as age, gender, income, education, and cultural background. Pendleton (1983) stated the idea that physician communication is important as it is deeply connected to the level of satisfaction a patient has with the information exchanged during a medical consultation. Orioles et al. (2013) noted how the lack of thoroughness in relating information causes frustration and distrust for patients. VanDulmen and Bensing (2002) stated benefits, such as improvement in recovery and reduction of stress, is gained from gathering good information. Thompson and Parrott (2002) pointed out how interpersonal communication impacts a variety of items, from the reception of a diagnosis to following physician proscribed treatments.

One area of information exchange between physicians and patients is the medical interview. Cegala (1997) noted three components of information exchange in a medical interview: (1) information –seeking is the process of gathering information during a medical interview, (2) information-giving is focused on self-disclosing information

to another, (3) and information-verifying consists of relevant questions and restatements that help both parties to better understand the information exchanged. Furthermore, Street (1991) discovered the fact that patients ask more questions regarding treatment while physicians ask more questions to understand a diagnosis. In context to the current study, understanding the information exchange process in the medical encounter is important to understand the experience a parent goes through when learning of a spina bifida diagnosis.

Relational Communication Among the Physician-Patient Relationship

As O'Hair (1989) noted, "we define the nature of the relationship through our communication" (p. 99), and the physician-patient relationship can be viewed through a relational communication lens. Considerable attention has focused on the communication exchange between physician and patient in regards to building rapport and providing emotional support (Bensing, 1991; Orioles et al., 2013; Suchman & Matthews, 1988; VanDulmen & Bensing, 2002). VanDulmen and Bensing (2002) referred to relational communication in the physician-patient encounter as an exercise in interpersonal communication where verbal and nonverbal messages build rapport and trust, develop emotional support and empathy, and ease a patient into the experience. O'Hair (1989) pointed out three dimensions of relational communication that directly relate to the physician-patient relationship: (1) control, (2) trust, and (3) intimacy. Likewise, research describes a physician's use of empathy as critical in building trust with a patient when delivering bad news regarding a child's medical diagnosis (Bell, 2007; Orioles et al., 2013).

Kreps (1988) demonstrates how patients' satisfaction correlates to the medical encounter based on a physicians' relational communication. Dissatisfaction is linked to limited feedback, insensitivity, lack of empathy, and decision-making inputs (Kreps, 1988). In a focus on relational communication, Burgoon et al. (1987) discovered that immediacy, composure, similarity, receptivity, and formality along with less dominance by a physician yielded greater patient satisfaction. Additionally, relational communication demonstrated a connection to the compliance by a patient (Burgoon et al., 1987).

Research demonstrates the need for informational exchange and relational communication in the physician-patient experience (Bell, 2007; Cegala, 1997; Orioles et al., 2013; Thompson & Parrott, 2002). Although studies have explored these concepts, research should be expanded to incorporate the experience of communication exchange in context to a spina bifida diagnosis. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How do patients experience communication with their physician upon an initial spina bifida diagnosis of their child?

RQ2: To what extent do patients experience informational exchange during physician-patient communication upon an initial spina bifida diagnosis?

RQ3: To what extent do patients perceive relational communication from interactions with a physician upon an initial spina bifida diagnosis?

Methodology

The current qualitative study was conducted as part of a larger study exploring spina bifida diagnosis and communication. To focus the study, in-depth qualitative interviews were used to explore a real-life phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). More specifically, a qualitative interviewing approach provided insight, discovery, and interpretation into the physician-patient communication process. Qualitative interviews were helpful because the research was limited to a specific group of people who were involved in a specific spina bifida discussion during pregnancy.

Participants

Once Institutional Review Board approval was obtained, we recruited participants using a purposeful sampling technique, which allows a researcher to identify a sample that has certain characteristics that allows for in-depth, detailed information about specific cases to select participants (Patton, 1980). We recruited 23 women who were pregnant in which the unborn child was diagnosed with spina bifida. The first author interviewed all

participants. Since the purpose of this study was not to generalize the findings to other settings but to provide insight, discovery, and interpretation of the physician-patient communication in the context of learning that a child would be born with an expected disability, the 23 participants provided ample information to garner an in-depth understanding of the communication process and allowed identifiable themes to emerge from the data.

Recruitment began with connecting to participants known by the first author (n=5). These participants provided additional recruits through a snowballing technique (n=8), which was useful to find interviewees who were socially networked to the researcher's initial contact (Warren & Karner, 2010). Finally, additional recruitment of participants was aided by calls on social media outlets and through regional and state spina bifida associations (n=10). Interviews were conducted until we were able to generate major themes. Throughout the participant selection and interview process, we maintained the confidentiality of all participants by referring to participants by a pseudonym. As a result, the findings present all participants by their pseudonym.

Although the age of participants varied, the mean age of participants was 35 years old. We did not find that the descriptive data varied based on age. All participants were interviewed after the child was born. Therefore, the median age of the child that was born with spina bifida was three years. The children ranged in age from 3 months to 19 years old. The participants consisted of 15 Caucasians, two African Americans, three Native Americans, one East Indian, one Filipino, and one Hispanic.

Interview Procedure

The interview period lasted 6 months, from August 3, 2015 to January 3, 2016. Interviews were conducted in person (n=5) or over the phone with each participant (n= 18). The average interview length was 51.54 minutes, with the shortest interview ending at 36 minutes and the longest lasting 87 minutes. To capture the data, the first author utilized a digital audio recorder. Prior to beginning the interview, all participants provided informed consent. The first author followed a semi-structured protocol consisting of questions that related to physician-patient communication, initial spina bifida diagnosis, communication suggestions for physicians delivering a spina bifida diagnosis, and diagnosis disclosure with others. Additionally, the open-ended nature of the semi-structured protocol, along with the relevant conversation with each participant, allowed for additional questions and conversations regarding the pregnancy, and how spina bifida was discussed with the physician.

Data Analysis

Following the suggestions by Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2007), interviews were accurately transcribed after each interview by reviewing the audio recordings and typing sentence by sentence the responses made by participants. Data consisted of 235 pages of transcriptions. Once transcriptions were made, we began to code the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) noted coding data provides a means of categorizing narratives by themes, either by the language or general data from the interviews, which allows a comparison to evolve into an emerging property for each theme.

We analyzed the data through the constant-comparative method following two systematic steps. First, we open coded interview data by reading each transcript and making notations, comments, and notes in each transcript margins. Open coding provided us with a brief description of data that was possibly relevant or essential to the study.

During the second stage we engaged in axial coding, also known as theme construction, which allowed us to reflect on the meanings of the emergent themes. In this step, we reviewed the notations and comments from stage one of open coding and grouped comments and notations that were similar or naturally fit together. As a corollary of stage one, we generated several major themes. At the end of this stage, themes captured a pattern across all of the data that were able to answer the study's research questions.

Finally, we kept an audit trail of all the raw data collected within the study along with a detailed description of the steps followed in the analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that the audit trail allows an outside researcher to metaphorically audit both the research process and product to attest to the study's dependability. We enlisted the help of a colleague who engages in qualitative research to conduct an audit of our findings. She verified that the conclusions drawn from the coding process were accurate and reflected the themes and categories derived from the interview data.

Findings

All participants in this study explicitly described the experience of physician-patient communication as an application of information exchange. In relation to information exchange, the participants described three distinct categories: (1) open acknowledgement of the lack of information regarding spina bifida, (2) patients were information-seekers, and (3) specialists provided a thorough exchange of information. Participants also described deep experiences in relational communication during the physician-patient medical encounter. In regards to relational communication, participants identified two distinct categories: (1) insensitivity upon initial diagnosis, and (2) a variety of relational approaches. Detailed results are listed below.

Lacking Information Acknowledgement

This subcategory of informational exchange establishes that a patient's primary OBGYN physician directly told participants that he/she was not a specialist, and lacked the information necessary to provide details about the spina bifida diagnosis. In this subcategory, physicians owned up to the fact that a specialist would be better equipped to handle the remainder of the pregnancy due to the unborn child's spina bifida diagnosis. For instance, Abby stated:

> He didn't want to tell anything about it [spina bifida] that set an expectation that could not have been met. It made me realize that he is just an OBGYN. He couldn't even say whether the baby is going to live. That was outside of his specialty so he couldn't comment on it what could potentially set an expectation. He was wasn't really able to provide any information so thankfully within two hours we were able to get to a specialist who gave us more information.

Shanna reinforced this sentiment regarding her OBGYN by stating, "What I have learned since then the people that are your regular OBGYN type of person, they get maybe 30 minutes in their career or one paragraph about spina bifida, and that's it."

The data suggests that participants appreciated and desire honest information exchange, even when a diagnosis is outside of the physician's specialty. Stephanie stated, "She said, 'Well, I am going to get you the best doctor I know cause I don't know how to deal with this.'" By honestly exchanging with patients that spina bifida was not common under his/her practice, participants were provided a frame of reference for the necessity of seeing a specialist.

In contrast, six participants noted that they were given inaccurate information by their primary OBGYN upon initial diagnosis. Kristen stated:

> We were told essentially that she had the worst kind of spina bifida, and it was very severe, even in terms of what he's seen over his career. And we should expect her to be completely paralyzed from the hips down and very likely have brain damage. That's the expectation that he laid out there for us of what was going to happen. He was really wrong. I personally do appreciate the like, blunt kind of approach. But I just want the person to only say what is accurate and then, like, don't give me a spiel that you read in your medical textbook 25 years ago from one paragraph on spina bifida that you read in medical school. That is not okay.

In general, participants felt physicians should provide informational exchange within the medical encounter, but also be honest with a patient when a diagnosis is outside the boundaries of the physician, which results in the need for the patient to see a specialist.

Information-Seekers

Participants explained this subcategory of information exchange as being active participants in the medical encounter. Participants actively asked questions seeking additional information regarding spina bifida and quality of life, and the action steps needed to continue the pregnancy. Upon the initial diagnosis, Jessica said:

> I had no idea what it was. Initially my husband broke down in tears and I started asking questions. Well what is that? Is there anything to do in utero? Is he going to be able to walk? Those kind of questions. I

> asked as many questions as I could right then to get our minds around it because we did not know what it was.

Asking questions allowed participants an opportunity to allow physicians to communicate information about the diagnosis and how to proceed. As a result, information-seeking techniques allowed participants to better understand spina bifida. Isha offered, "She told me if I had any questions I was to ask her and she'd get me the answer and then I would and she would tell me. Which is exactly what I did because she's been very supportive."

In regards to taking action, Kim stated, "One of the first people I called was the specialist. I wanted to know how quickly I could come in." As a result, participants described that asking questions was the first time they began to advocate on their child's behalf.

Thorough Exchange of Information

The final subcategory of the information exchange theme related to the amount of honest, detailed information that was communicated from specialists to patients. In general, participants noted that unlike the initial diagnosis by their primary OBGYN, specialists communicated detailed information and expectancies regarding their child and spina bifida. Shanna described the first conversation with her specialist as follows:

> He sat down and he had a piece of paper on his lap. He had written down a couple of words. He walked through the different parts of her body and what he had seen and he wrote down the terms for it. Walked through here's what we are seeing with her brain. Here's what we are seeing with her spine. We're seeing spina bifida. He walked through all of that. Her feet and her hands. Her feet looked very normal. A lot of the times we do see clubbed feet with this but we don't see it with your daughter. We were like "okay." I remember we listened a lot and he was writing things down and it turned out to be incredibly helpful.

In contrast, several participants noted that specialists lacked detail in providing initial explanations or were too blunt with the descriptions upon the initial diagnosis. For instance, Kim stated, "The specialists we were referred to, they were not helpful because their discussions were very black and white." These contrary statements stress the importance of being patient-centered in terms of physician-patient communication.

Other participants described being overwhelmed with the amount of information provided by specialists. Joy offered, "The initial consultation was really overwhelming. It was 2 days, and an MRI. We met the neurosurgeon. A neurologist talked to us, and we were sent a social worker. They sent all of these people down and it was overwhelming."

Finally, participants noted the use of caseworkers, genetic counselors, and social workers that provided detailed information. Visiting with these professionals provided additional information and, in some cases, participants noted they were less intimidated to talk with them. As a result, the specialists were able to bring normalcy of the pregnancy back to participants. Molly explained:

> They had a lady kind of assigned to us that would come meet us and would explain each of the providers. She would make sure we were okay, and give us snacks. That was really nice just to kind of have someone who wasn't so intimidating. She was super familiar with the process of spina bifada, but, you know, we didn't feel so intimidated by her so we even asked her some questions that she was like "Let me call so and so" and she would call the doctor or whatever and kind of fill in some gaps and things we forgot to ask or whatever. That was really good. I felt really good about the whole day and process of that and finding out more about spina bifida.

The subcategories of acknowledging a lack of information, seeking information, and providing thorough details about spina bifida serve as information exchange purposes in the context of physician-patient communication. What follows is an explanation of the relational communication aspects of the medical encounter for pregnant women learning of a child's spina bifida diagnosis.

Insensitivity

Eleven participants described and explained how a physician relayed the initial spina bifida diagnosis with an insensitive approach. This subcategory of relational communication highlighted the different verbal and nonverbal messages sent by physicians who were received as insensitive by the patient, which addresses the need for physicians to not only consider the message said to patients upon revealing a spina bifida diagnosis, but also the delicate balance of how the diagnosis is delivered. Kim described asking questions about the diagnosis with her physician as follows: "Do you think she will be able to walk? He laughed at us, and said 'that is not something I can tell you. It is not that obvious.' I was like, oh my gosh, how insensitive." Participants frequently mentioned verbal and nonverbal messages as cold and distant, not helpful, too blunt, and that they felt as though they were just another number. For instance, Shanna shared the following encounter with her primary OBGYN:

> He basically said, "Well, I am not comfortable telling you anything else so I am just going to punt to a specialist." The words "I am going to punt to a specialist" really stood out very strongly in my head because I am like that's not helpful, and you're using a football analogy, and you're telling me there is something wrong with my kid and you're not helping us at all. There was no compassion there was no anything. It was just like hands off. I am not comfortable telling you anything other than we can't see the heart or brain very well so I am going to push you off on someone else and pretty much that is all I am going to tell you.

Brynn captured a sentiment that was repeatedly described by participants who had a negative experience in the initial diagnosis. She explained her physician as follows:

> There are the people who are medical professionals that come off as though they do this everyday. It's normal to them and they expect you to know it. The words are way to big. They do it every day, but you have never heard of these things. Some of the things they think are simple are not simple to the brand new parent or even just a first time mother in general. There's that category of doctor, they have a tendency to come off a little cold and distance.

Charlotte emphasized the above statement when she explained, "I felt like we were just a number. Like, he saw spina bifida every day it was no big deal."

A final representative example of insensitivity is about the overall perception of the medical experience in that the physician judging the patient's choice to have a baby at a given age or to not abort upon the diagnosis. Brynn commented, "'He said you are going to be 36 when you deliver. So, what did you expect.' Like I said, that was the worst experience I ever had. I was in such shock." LaTasha described her initial spina bifida diagnosis as follows:

> He's like, "Well, why did you not get that blood test that tells you if something's wrong?" and I said "Well, just because it didn't really matter to us. You know, we had a healthy pregnancy first and then if something was wrong, I don't know, we just didn't do it. It wouldn't have changed our course. And that's when he brought up abortion. But he was like "I don't know why you Oklahomans don't believe in that."

Specifically, the narratives that participants utilized to describe their physician-patient encounter indicated that physicians should consider the delicate balance of relaying a difficult diagnosis in a sensitive way. Additionally, participant's responses suggested they felt that blunt word choice, poor metaphorical comparisons, and pointed questions about participant's choices distanced them from the physician during initial diagnosis.

Relational Approach Varieties

Unlike the insensitive descriptions noted above, participants consistently described positive experiences with relational communication from physicians relaying an initial spina bifida diagnosis. More specifically, the initial encounter with the spina bifida diagnosis helped a physician build rapport and trust, develop emotional support and empathy, and eased the patient into the experience. Lailani stated that she and her physician "had a

really good bond. He was just kind of friendly, in a friend type of way." Joy described her first visit with a specialist as follows:

> When looking back, he [the physician] was kind when he presented it. His tone of voice, he was not harsh in any way. He really did not tell us what to do. And the nurses that were in the room, I remember they were compassionate in that they were not saying "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." That is what the OB and the nurse did. They kept apologizing. And I did not know what was to be sorry about. If everyone is apologizing this must be really bad. So when we go to the specialist they were just sitting there doing their job. Getting me ready. They were commenting on how cute the baby was in the ultra sound.

Participants continuously discussed a physicians' use of compassion, empathy, and support through their verbal and nonverbal messages in relaying information related to a spina bifida diagnosis. For instance, Shanna said, "I just remember him being a very calm, companionate man. Someone who was willing to just sit there and answer any questions that we had. He was pretty amazing." Molly described her experience with the entire medical staff as **"**very compassionate."

Participants also noted the importance of empathy. When asked how her physician could have approached the diagnosis differently, Charlotte said the following:

> I do wish that the doctors and the practitioners would do a better job at imagining what it's like to not know everything and not, you know, of being that family that has really no idea what this is going to look like. We're not just another family going through this. We're not just another number in the book.

Participants consistently described a variety of positive and negative experiences with their physicians regarding an initial spina bifida diagnosis. More specifically, their responses suggest that physicians can build rapport and trust, and develop emotional support by approaching the initial spina bifida diagnosis with empathy and allowing time for a patient to ask questions related to the diagnosis.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the patient perception of the communication exchange by physicians upon learning that their unborn child had spina bifida. More specifically, this study adds to our conceptual description of communication in context of a spina bifida diagnosis to provide a more holistic understanding of physician-patient communication. The findings from this study provide insight and understanding into the types and ways that information is communicated to patients. Thus, participants provided an abundance of rich, descriptive information on communication strategies employed to understand a spina bifida diagnosis during pregnancy. As a result, the following conclusions can be derived from the current study: (1) patients' perceptions of the initial spina bifida diagnosis explicitly described a variety of strategies employed by physicians to exchange information, and (2) this exchange of information was provided through various relational communication means. Understanding what strategies were employed to exchange information and provide a means of relational communication has implications for understanding best strategies for relaying difficult information during a medical encounter, which are explored below.

First, a number of factors influenced information exchange during the initial spina bifida diagnosis. One factor is taking a patient-centered approach, which has been identified as important in the medical encounter by previous research studies (Rao et al., 2007; VanDulmen & Bensing, 2002). VanDulmen and Bensing (2002) focused on physician-patient communication in regards to the amount of information provided in a medical encounter and suggested that physicians should take a patient-centered approach by allowing a patient to exert control over information exchange. Likewise, research stresses the importance of a physician repeating information along with providing opportunities for questions (Orioles et al., 2013; Oshea et al., 2007). As participants noted, there were a variety of positive and negative strategies used by physicians to provide information to patients in the current study. Strategies that were respected by participants included the honest acknowledgement about a physician's lack of knowledge of spina bifida, providing patients opportunities to ask questions, providing immediate referrals to

specialists, providing literature, and connecting patients to social workers. The data suggests that patients desire to be active participants in the diagnosis process, which allows for patients to have some control during physician-patient communication. Previous studies found information as key in the physician-patient encounter, which allows patients to be active in the communication process (Orioles et al., 2013; Oshea et al., 2007). Allowing patients to freely ask questions without judgment along with providing connections with other professionals enables patients to begin advocacy for their child. Consistent with findings by Cegala (1997), DiMatteo et al. (1994), and Orioles et al. (2013), patients preferred a setting that allowed for questions, provided detailed disclosure, and allowed the flow of information in the medical encounter, specifically in the current study's context of information exchange between a physician and patient upon an initial spina bifida diagnosis.

In contrast, negative information exchange experiences derived from physicians who provided inaccurate information, those who did not own up to the fact that spina bifida was outside of general OBGYN practice, blunt messaging, and vague descriptions. The findings from this study indicate that participants perceived physician-patient communication ineffective when a physician exerted more control of the messages during the consultation, which directly relates to previous findings relating to lack of information leading to frustration, distrust, and overall satisfaction (Hoffman & Del Mar, 2014; Luff et al., 2016; Orioles et al., 2013). Therefore, information exchange strategies underscore the importance of allowing patients to feel that information was personally tailored, thus creating a sense of a physician as patient-centered (VanDulmen & Bensing, 2002).

Second, physicians used a variety of strategies to help effectively communicate the initial spina bifida diagnosis. Simultaneously, the relational communication findings are consistent with physician-patient communication exchange research focused on the need for rapport building and providing emotional support (Bensing, 1991; Orioles et al., 2013; Suchman & Matthews, 1988; VanDulmen & Bensing, 2002). The participants in this study provided data on the challenges of coping with effective and ineffective communication messages in a physician's relational communication. Although some participants experienced effective strategies to relay the spina bifida diagnosis, others experienced tensions when learning of the diagnosis through a perception of insensitivity. A patient-centered approach has been identified as useful for a physician to build trust, which should be approached with empathy (Bell, 2007). Consistent with findings by Kreps (1988), the findings unfortunately suggest that some patients experience insensitive communication approaches during the medical encounter. Perhaps some physicians are more concerned with establishing the seriousness of the diagnosis rather than caring for the emotional needs of the patient during the diagnosis delivery. In relation to findings by O'Hair (1989), relational communication provides physicians a means to build trust, intimacy, and control with patients. In the current study, participants received mixed messages that resulted in a variety of perceptions in relation to bonding and trusting their physician. Specifically, the descriptions provided by participants indicated how physicians were able to build or continue a relational bond along with maintaining the trust of a patient by employing relational communication strategies (i.e. empathy, compassion) during the initial diagnosis. Additionally, their responses suggested that physicians should value relational communication strategies to help ease a patient into a difficult diagnosis.

On a final note, Lechner et al. (2016) and Rabow and McPhee (1999) noted that communication training related to difficult conversations about a diagnosis is lacking for physicians. Understanding what parents perceive in the communication exchange during a spina bifidia diagnosis has implications for understanding what kinds of communication training would be helpful for the future. While delivering a spina bifida diagnosis may be difficult for a physician, the way the diagnosis is approached from a communication perspective is important. The results of this study can inform the development of tools and educational trainings aimed to improve communication during a spina bifida diagnosis.

Tools and educational trainings should focus on cultivating informational-exchange experiences along with modeling and practicing empathetic communication related to the difficult conversation of diagnosing spina bifida during the medical encounter. Data from participants in this study provide some helpful tips on how this can be done, such as preparing notes or a detailed list of items to cover during the medical encounter as well as preparing thoughtful, direct words that explain the diagnosis to the patient. Furthermore, the data from this study points to the important role physicians have in providing opportunities for patients to ask questions, free of judgment, and repeating information when necessary. Additionally, another approach in educational training relates to active listening, which would teach physicians when to explore feelings and express sympathy.

Limitations and Conclusion

Although the current study provides a descriptive understanding of physician-patient communication in context to a spina bifida diagnosis, limitations exist. The first limitation is directed at participants. While the methodological choice to focus on female patients was necessary to provide an information-rich understanding of their experiences, the current study does not allow comparison across sex, and deliberately omits physicians' voices. Women were chosen for the current study since the diagnosis of spina bifida typically occurs during pregnancy. However, this may have influenced our results. It is possible that men perceive the physician-patient communication differently if present for the diagnosis. Additionally, physicians may have a different perspective of their communication during a diagnosis. A future study should include men and physicians to help give more description and understanding to the way a spina bifida diagnosis is disclosed to a patient. For instance, physicians can answer important questions related to their approach, why things are said, how they encourage and answer patient questions, and how interpersonal communication training is utilized during a spina bifida diagnosis.

A second limitation relates to information recall. Some participants were several years removed from the experience. While participants provided rich details to their experiences, at times detailed responses were unavailable by participants. This study relied on reflections of the past to understand the communication exchange of physicians and patients upon an initial spina bifida diagnosis. To circumvent these issues, a future study could incorporate ethnographic methods to explore the phenomenon as it unfolds.

This study extends the understanding of physician-patient communication by explaining and describing how information exchange and relational communication play out upon an initial spina bifida diagnosis. The current study sheds light on how patients perceive the communication of physicians during an initial spina bifida diagnosis, which allowed for a variety of strategies to relay information along with various relational communication tactics. It is very clear from this study that delivering a diagnosis about an unborn child, such as spina bifida, is very complex. Our hope is that scholars will continue to extend research focused on physician-patient communication to expand our knowledge of communication in the medical context.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 131-145

Exploring the Relationship Between Online Health Information Seeking Motivations and Patient Narratives for Orthopedic Practice Web Sites

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Online health information seeking is increasing as people search for information about symptoms, diagnosis, treatment options, physician ratings or caregiver information. As a Midwest-based orthopedic practice was rebuilding its website and updating its content, an online survey was conducted to explore relationships between motivations for online health seeking and preferences for narrative qualities in patient-centered narratives. Participants were asked whether they were experiencing orthopedic symptoms, or had received a diagnosis, and subsequently rated their preferences for certain narrative qualities in patient-centered stories. Individuals who had received an orthopedic diagnosis and were worried about it expressed a preference for narratives about diagnosis/treatment and lifeworld concerns. Those who were under a doctor's care or receiving treatment for an orthopedic condition expressed less interest in narratives about initial symptom experiences. Further research is called for to determine what kinds of content physicians can feature on their web sites in order to build patient trust, provide reliable education and broaden awareness of their practice.

Keywords: Online information seeking, patient narratives, narrative paradigm, orthopedic practice

Cyberspace is an increasingly popular destination for those seeking health information. According a Pew report (2013), 72% of Internet users reported searching online for health information in the past year. Further, 35% of U.S. adults search specifically for a medical condition that they or someone else might have (Fox & Duggan, 2013). Although self-diagnosis and seeking the input of network members have always been important "lay responses" to illness (Dean, 1986; Segall & Goldstein, 1989), "many have now added the Internet to their personal health toolbox, helping themselves and their loved ones better understand what might be ailing them" (Pew, 2013, p. 2). Fox and Duggan (2013) explored how people used the Internet as a diagnostic tool and noted that "online diagnosers" subsequently talked with a clinician about what they found online or had their condition confirmed (p. 4). In addition to diagnosis, online seekers also used the Internet as a means of social support.

Although individuals are seeking health information on the Internet, health care organizations have responded more slowly to this trend. For example, Sanchez and Sanchez (2011) found that only 31% of 208 family practices had a physician website. That same study concluded the information most desired by patients was often not represented on physician/health care organization websites, a situation also found by Perrault and Smreker (2013). Yet, 69% of patients in Hu, Bell, Kravitz, and Orrange's (2012) study of pre-appointment information seeking reported visiting a medical association's website. As health care organizations seek to be responsive to patient desires, their virtual presences will likely increase. In this expanding online environment, patient narratives offer a potentially effective means of gaining attention as well as instructing and persuading (Gray, 2009). However, information seekers' preferences when scanning patient narratives are understudied. If health care providers decide to incorporate patient stories on their websites, what aspects of patient experiences should they include? Does it depend upon the information seeker's motivations for searching the Internet? This study represents an opportunity to explore these questions. The next section examines the role of narratives in healthcare, focusing particularly upon illness management, caregiving, and physician experiences. Next, online health information seeking is reviewed, concluding that online users often seek the same categories of information and support provided in narratives. The intersection of these two areas remains understudied, leading to a research question about the aspects of patient

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A previous version of this paper was presented to the Health Communication Interest Group, Central States Communication Association, Madison, WI, April, 2015.

narratives preferred by Internet users with differing motivations. A study is then reported where a survey was linked to an orthopedic practice website; participants were asked questions about orthopedic symptoms or experiences, and then reported their preferences for different components in patient narratives.

Narratives in Health Care

The power of storytelling has been noted as an effective communication tool in the healthcare environment (Frank, 2000; Kleinman, 1988; Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). Walter Fisher's (1984, 1987, 1989) narrative paradigm acknowledges the power of storytelling and narration as the basis for human communication, arguing that the activities of *homo narrans* have "relevance to real as well as fictive worlds, to stories of living and to stories of imagination" (Fisher, 1984, p. 2). Fisher's approach is grounded in five principles: (1) people are storytellers; (2) people make decisions on the basis of "good reasons" (Fisher, 1978); (3) history, biography, culture and character can determine what people believe are good reasons; (4) the rationality of stories is determined by narrative probability and fidelity "whether the stories ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives" (Fisher, 1984, p. 8); and (5) the world is a "set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation" (p. 5). Fisher's exploration of narrative probability and fidelity point to persuasive storytelling's power; such power can serve as a foundation for building effective online communities where people are continually telling, sharing, persuading and evaluating a story's credibility.

Gray (2009) argued that narratives of patient experiences are important across a variety of healthcare settings, such as patient/physician interactions; medical school training and public education and persuasive campaigns.[1] Tang and Bie (2016) echoed this perspective, forwarding four reasons why health communication narratives are important. First, as a way of making sense of experience, narratives can explore the "lived experiences" (p. 173) of those involved in healthcare. Second, health care providers often use stories when explaining diagnosis and treatment options. Third, narratives are important components of identity construction, a particularly important feature when dealing with chronic or life-altering medical conditions. Finally, narratives provide a link between "micro-level individual experiences and macro-level cultural values and ideologies" (Tang & Bie, 2016, p. 173). That is, patients and health care personnel may draw upon both canonical and resistance narrative themes (Bochner, Ellis, & Tillman-Healy, 2000) in the often co-constructed process of crafting satisfactory versions of events. In dialectical fashion, the end results may provide both an affirmation of core cultural values (e.g., "thinking positive" as a response to cancer, Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2000) while also allowing room for some assertion of autonomy (e.g., expressing socially taboo fears of death, see Fisher & Wolf, 2015).

The persuasion context is one area where health communication researchers have examined narratives. For example, in Green and Brinn's (2003) study on tanning bed use and the risks of skin cancer, female college students were either assigned to read a narrative or a statistical text-based message on skin cancer risks. The story featured a woman named Alicia who used tanning beds and subsequently developed skin cancer. In the study, the narrative was more persuasive in decreasing an intention to tan and increasing perceptions of reality. The *keepin' it REAL* substance use prevention campaign developed by Michael Hecht and associates (Warren et al., 2006) provides another example of campaign-based narratives. One benefit of such research is that it allows for the articulation and testing of theoretical mechanisms detailing the workings of narratives. Consistent with what Fisher calls narrative rationality or "identification rather than deliberation" (Fisher, 1987, p. 66), research has confirmed that audience identification and involvement are key foci of narrative effectiveness (Hong, 2013; Lee, Hecht, Miller-Day, & Elek, 2011; Miller-Day & Hecht, 2013).

However, researcher-crafted campaign and prevention narratives are only one side of the story. As health information seekers increasingly go online for information either about their own, or a loved one's, condition, the abundance of stories on the Internet and the multitudinous opportunities for storytelling provide rich avenues for research. The stories that ill persons and patients share in online environments can involve aspects of illness management, the joys and burdens of caregiving, and physician experiences, to name just a few.

Managing illness experiences. The symptom experience often begins with perceived alterations in bodily states or sensations (Telles & Pollack, 1981). Such changes can be ambiguous (Kleinman, 1988) and because interpreting these alterations involves socially shared meanings, ill persons frequently turn to others for interpretive assistance and advice. The Internet offers an outlet that may be more expansive than one's lay network. In a study of four online communities for arthritis sufferers, Willis (2016) found sharing information about medication and

treatments, symptoms, and coping advice were especially prominent. Similar themes were uncovered in a study of support groups for rare vascular conditions (e.g., thoracic outlet syndrome) (Walker, 2015). Thus, online narratives of experiences such as symptoms, treatments, recovery, and trajectories may provide social meanings that help patients make sense of their own experiences.

Caregiving. Patients are not the only ones who turn to the Internet for information and advice about illness experiences; caregivers often have the same needs, as well as needs related to the burdens of caregiving (Boots, de Vugt, van Knippenberg, & Verhey, 2014; Marziali, Damianakis, & Donahue, 2006). Alpert and Womble (2015) argued that narratives of caregiving provide both the story-tellers and their caregiver audiences opportunities to make sense of their new roles, cope emotionally, and act more efficaciously. Their study of online narratives from the AgingCare.com website found that humor usage, positive framing of caregiver experiences, and acceptance were prominent themes in caregiver narratives.

Physician experiences. One platform that affords patients the opportunity to provide narratives of physician experiences is physician rating websites (PRWs). In a review of PRW research, Emmert, Sander, and Pisch (2013) found that overall levels of physician ratings were low, but appear to be increasing as awareness and availability of PRWs increases. They also found that, contrary to concerns of "physician bashing" by disgruntled patients, ratings were largely positive. In a section specifically devoted to addressing the role of patient narratives, they argued that information provided by patient stories might not only help other patients, but might be more informative for doctors seeking to improve care, compared to numerical rating scales. Terlutter, Bidmon, and Röttl (2014) found, in a sample of German patients, that those who had used PRWs were more likely to use the Internet for health information seeking and to trust information found on PRWs. Although certain aspects of the physician-patient relationship have always been discussed online (e.g., support groups), PRWs are becoming an additional virtual space dedicated to reports of specific physicians.

From this brief review, it is clear online health information seekers will encounter stories about healthcare experiences. It is unlikely, however, that information seekers come upon narratives haphazardly, or that they will attend to particular stories, unless those narratives are consonant with their own goals. Why individuals seek information and advice online are important considerations for health care organizations determining the efficacious use of narratives.

Health Information Seeking

Motivations for seeking information online are varied, but they are not random. People often go online to search for information on a specific condition, prior to or following a physician visit, receiving or wanting to confirm a diagnosis, desiring to learn more about their physicians and a doctor's "ratings," or seeking treatment options for themselves or others (Cline & Haynes, 2001; Hu et al., 2012; McMullan, 2006; Tustin, 2010). Search engines, web sites dedicated to diseases and symptoms such as Web MD, physician rating sites that provide anecdotal patient ratings, or online support groups are likely options for the online seeker or diagnoser.

Manierre (2016) argued for two general benefits to seeking information about health. First, individuals who seek information can become empowered to change behaviors on their own, and/or to be more active participants in medical encounters. Second, information can facilitate coping with the ambiguities of many medical conditions. These benefits accord with channel complementarity theory (Dutta-Bergman, 2004a, b), which argues individuals who are seeking information from one source (e.g., friends) are also likely seeking information from other sources (e.g., the Internet). For example, an individual looking at an orthopedic practice website may do so following a referral from a primary care physician, but may also simultaneously be looking up general information on orthopedic conditions and talking to coworkers and/or family members who have had similar conditions. Such a motivated information seeker is likely to evaluate each source differently.

Ruppel and Rains (2012) argued that four source characteristics are important to patterns of complementarity. The first factor, expertise/credibility, is of special relevance in the health information seeking context. As noted, with the proliferation of online health seeking and the virtually limitless sources of information, researchers have become increasingly concerned with the quality of information available (Keselman, Browne, & Kaufman, 2008). As Cline and Haynes (2001) argued, "much of the health information is inaccurate…and meager information-evaluation skills add to consumers' vulnerability" (p. 671). More than a decade later Karras and Rintamaki (2012) also reported "those who can access the internet may be uncertain as to the quality of health

information they find…or be unable to distinguish between reputable and questionable health information sources" (p. 194). It is reasonable to assume, however, that a physician practice website would be perceived as credible by information-seekers.

The second and third factors, convenience, and anonymity, are also high in most online environments (Ruppel & Rains, 2012, pg. 394, Table 1). The last variable, tailorability, refers to "the degree to which a source makes it possible to acquire information unique to one's situation" (p. 389). When highlighting patient narratives, tailorability presents an opportunity for physician practice web sites, insofar as individuals with different motivations should identify with different kinds of narratives. Prior research has established the general kinds of information sought online. In a study of cancer patients, Tustin (2010) found that patients used the Internet to supplement information from an oncologist, side effects of treatments and medications, treatment and medication decision-making, symptom explanation, diagnosis confirmation, and verification of physician/hospital credentials. In a study of queries posted to an orthopedics website, Shuyler and Knight (2003) found that the most common categories of questions involved seeking information about a condition, treatment, or symptoms and/or seeking advice about symptoms or treatment. Additionally, where the relation between information-seeker and patient could be established, 21% were on behalf of someone other than the asker.

The experience of symptoms, concerns about illness trajectories and available treatments, physician experiences, and aspects of caregiving are common reasons for seeking medical information online. Not surprisingly, many of these same reasons are echoed in online medical and health-related narratives. With respect to the issue of tailorability, this area of medical practice marketing is continuing to evolve as physicians build new web sites with the expectation of growing their patient base and creating awareness in their respective local communities. Determining content preferences among health seekers could provide necessary insight on content creation and its return on investment. Because there is not a large body of literature on this topic, this study is an exploration of the potential role patient stories could fill in physician practice web sites, specifically, in this case, web sites in the orthopedic specialty. This exploratory study posed the following general research question:

RQ1: What is the relationship between health information seeker motivations and preferences for narrative features in a patient story?

Method

Orthopedic conditions (including various forms of arthritis, rheumatic diseases, and musculoskeletal injuries) are a common source of pain and disability across the globe (Brooks, 2006; Peat, McCarney, & Croft, 2001; Reginster, 2002). Given the social and economic burden of these conditions, and the likelihood of their increase among aging populations, the intersection of online health information seeking and narrative approaches in an orthopedic context is timely. In 2013, a large orthopedic practice in the Midwest redesigned its website to more prominently feature patient-related stories. By featuring patients and their successful recovery from orthopedic illness or surgery, it was expected the narratives would serve several purposes, including raising awareness of the practice, contributing to the likelihood of patient-to-patient referrals, and providing an accessible way to educate patients and help them understand how orthopedic treatments and surgeries could improve their lives. The present investigation was not conducted by the practice, but was inspired by its goals. By virtue of being linked to the practice's website, the study examined information seekers' narrative preferences based on their motivations for visiting the site.

Participants

An online survey was linked to an orthopedic practice website for one week in April 2014 and one week in September 2014.[2] A total of 116 respondents provided usable data for this study. The predominantly female (n = 83, 72%; male n = 30, 26%; 3 respondents did not indicate sex) sample was heterogeneous in terms of age: 6 in 18-25 age category (5%); 16 in the 26-35 age category (14%); 22 in the 36-45 age category (19%); 36 in the 46-55 age category (31%); 23 in the 56-65 age category (20%) and 13 in the 66+ category (11%). The practice predominantly serves northwestern Illinois and eastern Iowa and this was reflected in respondent residency: 60 lived in Illinois (52%) and 46 lived in Iowa (40%); 9 respondents did not live in either state (8%). Finally, participants were asked

if they had received orthopedic care within the last six months. Eighty-nine indicated "no" (77%) and 27 indicated "yes" (23%).

Procedure

The survey, created using SurveyMonkey, was advertised in an online e-newsletter that the orthopedic practice sent to approximately 9,000 email addresses. The addresses included current patients, families and other community stakeholders with an unknown connection to the practice.

The survey was comprised of three sections: the first section on information seeking motivations determined if the respondents were experiencing orthopedic symptoms; been given an orthopedic diagnosis; were under the care of a physician or being treated for an orthopedic condition, or whether they served as a caregiver for someone else recuperating or suffering from an orthopedic condition. The second section contained items on preferences for narrative qualities specifically designed for this study. The four subscales of the measure were symptoms, diagnosis, recovery and caregiving. The final section contained demographic questions. Individuals who provided an email address were entered into a drawing for one of four $75 gift cards to a grocery store chain located in the Midwest. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university to which the investigators' were affiliated.

Measures

Information seeking motives. The first section contained questions about motivations to seek information on the orthopedic practice's web site. Symptom experience was assessed with the question "Are you currently experiencing orthopedic symptoms?" using a 5-point Likert-type scale with endpoints (1) "No Symptoms" to (5) "Many symptoms" (M = 2.16, SD = 1.32). Although this mean is low, 41 participants (35%) reported experiencing symptoms at or above the midpoint of the scale. Concern over symptoms was measured with a Likert-type question "Do these current orthopedic symptoms worry you?" with endpoints (1) "Not Worried" to (5) "Worried" (M = 1.97, SD = 1.28). In this case, 29 participants (25%) reported concern/worry at or above the midpoint of the scale.

These two questions were followed by a series of filter questions and follow-up questions regarding specific factors that may motivate information seeking. *Diagnosis* was assessed with the question "Have you been diagnosed with an orthopedic condition in the last 6 months?" For the respondents who answered "yes," a Likert-type question asked about degree of concern or worry with endpoints (1) "Not Worried" to (5) "Worried" (M = 3.13, SD = 1.14). *Physician care* was assessed with the question "Are you currently under the care of an [name of practice] physician?" For the respondents who answered "yes," a follow-up Likert-type question asked about the likelihood of returning to the website to their own or other physicians on staff with endpoints (1) "No; I won't visit to read physician info" to (5) "Yes I would visit the website for physician info" (M = 3.73, SD = 1.28). *Treatment* was assessed with the question "Are you currently under treatment at [name of practice] for an orthopedic condition?" For the respondents who answered "yes," a follow-up Likert-type question asked if they were concerned about any aspects of their treatment or procedure with endpoints (1) "No, I am not concerned" to (5) "Yes, I am concerned" (M = 2.75, SD = 1.48). Finally, *caregiving* was assessed with the question "Are you currently acting as a caregiver to someone else (such as a friend or family member) who has an orthopedic condition or is scheduled or in recovery from an orthopedic surgery?" For the respondents who answered "yes," a follow-up Likert-type question asked if they were concerned about their ability to understand the person's heath care needs or assistance they may provide with endpoints (1) "No, I am not concerned" to (5) "Yes, I am concerned" (M = 3.29, SD = 1.59).

Preferences for narrative qualities. In the survey's second section, participants were asked to rate narrative qualities. The general question was asked: "If you read about a patient, what aspects of the story would you be most interested in?" This prompt was followed by a series of 20 statements regarding narrative qualities including symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, recovery, and caregiving. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored with endpoints (1) "Strongly Disagree" to (5) "Strongly Agree." Although the initial subscales were reliable, the resulting variables were highly intercorrelated, prompting the decision to subject the items to an exploratory factor analysis. The EFA using principal axis factoring with oblique rotation yielded three factors that together accounted for 67.83% of the variance. The first factor (56.65% of variance) consisted of 7 items concerning diagnosis and treatment (e.g., "How the patient was diagnosed," "The pro's and con's of a particular treatment"). The factor was labeled *diagnosis/treatment* and was reliable (α = .94, M = 4.09, SD = .93). The second factor

(7.21% of variance) contained 7 items reflecting general concerns about dealing with a condition (e.g., "A patient's advice for others with similar symptoms," "A patient's assessment of his/her quality of life after treatment"). This factor was labeled *lifeworld concerns* and was reliable (α = .91, *M* = 3.61, *SD* = .88). The final factor (5.97% of variance) was comprised of 3 items dealing with symptoms (e.g., "When the patient first noticed something was wrong"). Given the focus on the beginning of the symptom experience, this factor was labeled *initial symptoms* and was reliable (α = .87, *M* = 3.75, *SD* = 1.00). Scale items and results of the EFA are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Factor Analysis of Narrative Preferences Scale

Item	I	II	III
1. This patient's first experience of symptoms.	.17	.00	**.77**
2. When the patient noticed something was wrong.	.16	18	**.68**
3. How the patient felt when something was wrong.	-.04	.30	**.65**
4. How a patient's pain affected their life.	-.05	**.67**	.24
5. How the patient was diagnosed.	**.74**	-.21	.39
6. How the patient felt about his/her diagnosis.	-.12	**.77**	.19
7. How the physician determined the diagnosis	**.66**	-.08	.24
8. What the chances were of recovery.	**.73**	.13	.05
9. What treatment options did the patient consider.	**.83**	.17	.00
10. Why the patient chose a particular treatment.	**.63**	.30	-.06
11. The pro's and con's of a particular treatment.	**.90**	.05	-.06
12. The outcomes of a particular treatment.	**.86**	.08	.05
13. A patient's opinion and experience with his/her condition.	.39	.49	.05
14. A patient's advice for others with similar symptoms.	.19	**.67**	.01
15. A patient's views about a particular physician.	.33	**.57**	-.14
16. A patient's assessment of his/her quality of life after treatment.	.22	**.68**	.01
17. Whether the patient needed a caregiver.	-.09	**.79**	.03
18. How the patient experienced recovery.	.19	**.67**	.02
19. Whether the patient fully recovered.	.49	.48	-.02
20. Obstacles the patient experienced in recovery.	.42	.50	-.01

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were undertaken to explore overall preferences for narrative qualities. First, correlations among the three narrative qualities were examined. Results of that analysis reveal that the subscales were positively associated with one another: diagnosis/treatment and lifeworld concerns, $r = .68$, $p < .01$, diagnosis/treatment and initial symptoms, $r = .58$, $p < .01$, and lifeworld concerns and initial symptoms, $r = .55$, $p < .01$. Second, to evaluate the salience of the information seeking dimensions, narrative preferences scores were compared against the mid-point of the scale (3 on the 5-point scale) using one-sample t-tests. Using the means reported above in the method section, results of all three analyses were significant: diagnosis/treatment, $t\ (115) = 12.68$, $p < .01$; lifeworld concerns, $t\ (115) = 7.39$, $p < .01$, and initial symptoms, $t\ (115) = 8.11$, $p < .01$. Thus, preferences for all three narrative qualities were positively related to one another and exceeded the mid-point of the scale.

RQ1: Relationships between health information seeking motivations and narrative preferences.

Experiencing Symptoms. The first motive revolved around the experience of orthopedic symptoms and its relation to preferences for narrative qualities. The question was addressed with correlations, presented in Table 2. The experience of orthopedic symptoms was not significantly correlated to any of the narrative qualities. Similarly, the degree of concern about orthopedic symptoms was not significantly related to narrative preferences.

A post hoc analysis was conducted to confirm that the experience of, and concern over, orthopedic symptoms was greater among those who had actually received a diagnosis. Independent samples t-tests found that those who reported having received a diagnosis reported more orthopedic symptoms (M = 3.29, SD = 1.32) compared to those who had not (M = 1.74, SD = 1.06), t (114) = 6.51, $p < .01$. Additionally, those who reported having received a diagnosis reported more worry about symptoms (M = 3.19, SD = 1.33) compared to those who had not (M = 1.52, SD = .92), t (41.23) = 6.45, $p < .01$.

Table 2

Correlations between Narrative Preferences and Motivations

Motivations	Diagnosis/ Treatment	Lifeworld Concerns	Initial Symptoms
1. Concern over orthopedic symptoms	.15	.07	-.03
2. Worry over orthopedic symptoms	.15	.10	-.01
3. Concern over orthopedic diagnosis	.45*	.54**	.21
4. Revisit the site to learn about physicians	.23	-.03	-.03
5. Worry about aspects of treatment	.29	.11	.25
6. Concern with caregiving	-.10	-.48	-.36

Note. n for questions 1 and 2 = 116, for question 3 = 30, for question 4 = 15, for question 5 = 16, for question 6 = 14. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Diagnosis. The second motive concerned narrative preferences based on whether or not respondents had received an orthopedic diagnosis. An independent samples t-test was utilized to compare those who had received an orthopedic diagnosis (n = 31) to those who had not (n = 85). Means for the two groups are presented in Table 3. Results of the t-test reveal no significant differences for any of the narrative elements: diagnosis/treatment, t (114) = 1.68, p = .10; lifeworld concerns, t (41.87) = -.22, p = .83; and initial symptoms, t (114) = -.66, p = .49.

For those individuals who answered "yes," correlations between worry scores and narrative preferences were examined. As evident in Table 2, worry scores were significantly positively correlated to preferences for diagnosis/treatment and lifeworld concerns in narratives.

Physician Care. The third motive concerned narrative preferences based on whether or not respondents were under the care of a physician from the practice. An independent samples t-test was utilized to compare those who were under the care of a physician from the practice (n = 15) to those who were not (n = 101). Means for the two groups are presented in Table 3. Results of the t-test reveal no significant differences for the narrative elements of diagnosis/treatment, t (114) = .19, p = .85 and lifeworld concerns, t (114) = -.12, p = .91.

However, there was a significant difference for preferences for narratives of initial symptoms, t (114) = -2.24, $p < .05$. Examination of the means suggests that those who were under a physician's care were less interested in reading narratives about the experience of initial symptoms.

For those individuals who answered "yes," correlations between plans to revisit the website for physician information and narrative preferences were examined. As evident in Table 2, revisit scores were not significantly correlated to narrative preferences.

Treatment. The fourth motive concerned narrative preferences based on whether or not respondents were currently being treated at the practice for an orthopedic condition. An independent samples t-test was utilized to compare those who were currently being treated (n = 13) to those who were not (n = 100). Means for the two groups are presented in Table 3. Results of the t-test reveal no significant differences for the narrative elements of diagnosis/treatment, t (111) = -.23, p = .82 and lifeworld concerns, t (111) = -.48, p = .63. Once again, there was a significant difference for preferences for narratives of initial symptoms, t (111) = -2.33, $p < .05$. Examination of the means suggests that those who were currently being treated for an orthopedic condition were less interested in reading narratives about the experience of initial symptoms.

For those individuals who answered "yes," correlations between concerns about treatment and narrative preferences were examined. As evident in Table 2, concern scores were not significantly correlated to narrative preferences.

Caregiving. The fifth motive concerned narrative preferences based on whether or not respondents were currently caregivers for someone else dealing with an orthopedic condition. An independent samples t-test was utilized to compare those who were caregivers (n = 14) to those who were not (n = 101). Means for the two groups are presented in Table 3. Results of the t-test reveal no significant differences for any of the narrative elements: diagnosis/treatment, t (113) = .84, p = .41; lifeworld concerns, t (113) = -.21, p = .84; and initial symptoms, t (113) = -1.39, p = .17.

For those individuals who answered "yes," correlations between concerns about understanding care recipient's needs scores and narrative preferences were examined. As evident in Table 2, concern scores were not significantly correlated to narrative preferences.

Table 3

Means for Narrative Preferences across Groups

Motivations	Diagnosis/ Treatment	Lifeworld Concerns	Initial Symptoms
Question 1: Received Diagnosis			
Yes: 31	4.33 (.83)	3.57 (1.10)	3.65 (1.09)
No: 85	4.00 (.95)	3.62 (.79)	3.79 (.97)
Question 2: Under Physician's Care			
Yes: 15	4.13 (.90)	3.58 (.94)	3.22 (.84)
No: 101	4.10 (.93)	3.61 (.88)	3.83 (1.00)*
Question 3: Receiving Treatment			
Yes: 13	4.01 (.91)	3.47 (.95)	3.13 (.87)
No: 100	4.07 (.93)	3.60 (.87)	3.80 (.98)*
Question 4: Being Caregiver			
Yes: 14	4.29 (1.07)	3.56 (1.11)	3.40 (1.05)
No: 101	4.06 (.91)	3.61 (.86)	3.80 (.99)

Note. * indicates that "Yes" and "No" groups of respondents differed at .05 level of significance.

Discussion

This study examined relationships between online health information seekers' motivations and the preferred qualities of patient stories. Results revealed three clusters of narrative information preferred by respondents: stories about diagnosis and treatment experiences, stories about lifeworld concerns (i.e., how pain affected their life, advice for others), and stories about the initial symptom experience. Preferences for all narrative elements significantly exceeded the midpoint of the scale and were positively interrelated. Regarding motivations, individuals who had received an orthopedic diagnosis and were worried about it expressed a preference for narratives about diagnosis/treatment and lifeworld concerns. Those who were under a doctor's care or receiving treatment for an orthopedic condition expressed less interest in narratives about initial symptom experiences.

Narrative Preferences

A primary goal of this study was to identify narrative themes of interest to online health information seekers. Orthopedic conditions (e.g., arthritis) are among the most common types of medical conditions and it is estimated that with the increasing age and weight of populations, the prevalence and burden of these conditions will increase (Brooks, 2006; Peat et al., 2001; Reginster, 2002). Insofar as these conditions may often begin with everyday aches and pains, they may be among the most uncertainty-provoking of symptoms. However, illness is not just ambiguous

because of the experience of symptoms, but also because illness must be performed for multiple audiences (Naidu, 2012; Reissman, 2003). As Naidu (2012) argued, illness affects "'selves' rather than just organs" (p. 71), and those selves are embedded in relationships. Though society may provide a sick role (Parsons, 1951), entry into, and occupancy of, that role involve negotiated processes of legitimation. Telles and Pollack (1981) described how others search for observable signs of illness (e.g., fever, bruising) as irrefutable evidence of "feeling sick." Accordingly, the meanings of illness are social meanings (Kleinman, 1988) and narratives provide a means of acquiring and transacting acceptable accounts. Without denying the reality of personal suffering, learning how to enact illness also involves learning how to act and talk to provide evidence of illness. There is an intersection, then, between the desires of many storytellers to help others with their tales, and the needs of ill persons to learn how to perform illness. Future research should examine whether or not patients incorporate ideas, arguments, even phrases, following exposure to illness narratives.

Given that this survey was made available to a broad audience, the results can be taken to represent a cross-section of those who visited the orthopedic practice website for a variety of reasons. The first factor focused mainly on treatment issues. The exchange of questions and experiences regarding treatment has emerged in studies of other conditions (e.g. arthritis, Willis, 2016; vascular conditions, Walker, 2015), suggesting a common component of illness experiences. Insofar as treatments are intended to "fix" or alleviate the burden of medical conditions, the search for information pertinent to decision-making may be likened to a form of problem-focused coping in the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) framework. They suggested that "defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, weighting the alternatives in terms of their costs and benefits, choosing among them, and acting" (p. 152) represent attempts to address the condition. These same ideas correspond to factor items about treatment options, why a patient chose a treatment, pro's and con's, and outcomes.

The second factor was more heterogeneous, reflecting a variety of concerns (pain, quality of life, recovery, need for caregiving, views of a particular physician). Accordingly, this factor was labeled, following Mishler (1984), lifeworld concerns. Once again, many of these concerns appear to be general across conditions, but what distinguishes this factor from the narrower focus on treatments is an emphasis on the more emotional aspects of illness. The specter of illness raises a number of questions, fears, uncertainties, and identity threats, and coping with emotional distress is a vital adaptive aspect of adjustment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The final factor concerned the initial experience of symptoms. Muscle and joint pain are expectable realities in life and that may make the initial changes in bodily perceptions problematic. Individuals may be wary about alarming spouses or family members, or afraid of being labeled "problem patients" by frequent complaining (Wright & Morgan, 1990). Online patient narratives from those with a confirmed diagnosis may provide some context for interpreting one's own symptoms, reducing uncertainty but also providing arguments and justifications for broaching the topic.

The results suggest information-seekers were interested in all three kinds of stories, but they are unlikely to desire them indiscriminately. Leydon et al. (2000), for example, found that cancer patients wanted information about diagnosis, treatment options, and side effects, but they wanted certain kinds of information at different times following their diagnosis. This study did not target individuals with an orthopedic diagnosis, but rather, was made available to a wide audience who were visiting the orthopedic practice's website for any number of reasons. This afforded us an opportunity to compare the narrative preferences of those experiencing orthopedic issues from those who were not, and, for the smaller subsample who were, to examine if different aspects of the experience were associated with different kinds of story preferences.

Information seeking Motivations and Narrative Preferences

The majority of the sample was not experiencing, nor were they worried about, orthopedic symptoms. This most likely explains the lack of significant correlations between orthopedic concerns and narrative preferences across the sample, despite interest in all three narrative elements. With respect to tailorability (Ruppel & Rains, 2012) and identification (Miller-Day & Hecht, 2013), however, what matters are the preferences of those who are experiencing the health condition. For those who had been diagnosed, the more concerned they were about their symptoms, the greater their preferences for narratives about diagnosis/treatment and impact on the lifeworld. Orthopedics is a highly specialized field and orthopedic surgeons tend to talk about surgery as a "last best resort." As Hudak, Clark, and Raymond (2013) assert, "this orientation works against patient-initiated discussions of the

possibility that their problems may not be fully resolved by surgery" (p. 544). If these concerns are not addressed in patient narratives, this particular group of information seekers (i.e., those who are concerned about their diagnosis) might discount the relevance of any health message embedded in the story.

Interestingly, respondents who were currently under care or treatment were less interested in narratives depicting the initial symptom experience. Most likely, this is because they were already familiar with symptom onset and had their experiences to reflect upon. Of course, another way to read this is to focus on the fact that those who were not under care or treatment were more interested in narratives of initial symptom experience. Either way, the result is important because there may be a natural tendency for patients to tell their stories "from the beginning." That will usually mean with the onset of symptoms such as pain or discomfort. Once again, such an approach may turn off certain segments of information seekers who may then discount the rest of the story.

Limitations

Overall, because the majority of the respondents did not report symptoms, had not been diagnosed, or who were not serving as caregivers, the study could not draw firm conclusions about the preferences of online health seekers for certain patient narrative qualities. We do not know what brought respondents to this survey or if they were online health seeking at all, since the survey was disseminated by email to a very general audience. On the other hand, health information seekers become aware of and appraise health issues in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (Karras & Rintamaki, 2012). When patient narratives enter cyberspace they become available to a wide audience, whether that space is a physician practice website, an online support group, or a personal webpage. Nevertheless, both larger and more targeted samples will help refine our understanding of seekers' preferences. Future research should also widen the questions beyond the specialty of orthopedics to those seeking health care information on a variety of medical topics.

For future studies, a clearer operational definition of the word "caregiving" is warranted. In the original survey, the motivational quality of "caregiving" was defined as "acting as a caregiver to someone else (such as a friend or family member) who has an orthopedic-related condition, is scheduled or in recovery from an orthopedic surgery." In the narrative qualities section, there was a related statement about whether the patient needed a "caregiver." Survey results suggested that in this second reference "caregiver" may have been another word for "doctor or physician" rather than a family member or friend. Those who answered "no" about caregiving, but showed a possible interest in the narrative quality of caregiving, may actually have been alluding to their interest in more information related to treatment and physician information.

Finally, a word about narratives themselves is in order. Given low levels of statistical and numerical knowledge in the general population (Joram et al., 2012), using patient stories to convey information and effect persuasion is a tempting alternative. However, narratives also have their pitfalls. Lundell, Nierdereppe, and Clarke (2013) argued that patient stories can introduce distracting details resulting in rejecting the story-teller and ultimately, the relevance of the story for the recipient's own life. Additionally, Miller-Day and Hecht (2013) suggested that excessive transportation (i.e., immersion into the storyworld) could result in reduced message attention. Additionally, storytelling is shaped by its context. Chronic illness patients, for example, who tell their stories to researchers may overemphasize certain aspects of their experience (e.g., experiencing a personal transformation, imparting lessons) in an effort to be good research participants (Miczo, 2003). Along similar lines, patients who share their stories with managed care organizations for use as promotional materials may similarly shape their tellings in particular directions. Future research should determine if stories posted on practice websites are perceived as less authentic or credible than, say, stories told on a patient support group website.

Conclusions

In summary, research has revealed that people seek health care information online, and there is a viable concern regarding information quality, as well as people's abilities to evaluate the health care information encountered. Individuals examining a healthcare organization's website are most interested in insurance plans accepted, basic contact information, and physician credentials (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2011), as well as a physician's philosophy of care and communication skills (Perrault & Smreker, 2013). The prevalence of online support groups, PRWs, and online patient sharing of personal health data (Frost & Massagli, 2008) suggests that individuals experiencing symptoms, coping with a diagnosis, or managing a condition want information and advice from those

with first-hand knowledge, but may want it selectively (Leydon et al., 2000). Physicians, especially those tied to local geographical areas, are well poised to become reliable resources for current or future patients seeking credible information about a particular health or caregiver concern. Healthcare organizations should promote patient narratives, but will need to ensure that different aspects of the illness experience are represented. At least in the case of visitors to an orthopedics website, those aspects involved initial symptoms, treatments, and lifeworld concerns. As physician practices invest marketing dollars into designing and generating content for web sites to market their practice, it is important that they provide the information desired and present it in a format that will not only build trust and credibility in the patient relationship, but that patients also get the information they need to maintain or improve their quality of life.

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Endnotes

1. It is readily acknowledged that the term *patient* is problematic, especially when examining online health information seeking. Nevertheless, the term remains a convenient gloss that minimizes the need to repeat a lengthy list of information seekers. As used here, the term includes ill persons, persons experiencing symptoms, diagnosed patients, caregivers, and those simply surfing the Internet for health information.

2. The first author had a working relationship with the orthopedic practice, and obtained permission from the CEO to conduct the study.

Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 146-164

Love, Brands, and Marriage: Audience Reception of LGBT Instagram Posts after the 2015 Supreme Court Ruling on Same-sex Marriage

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After the Supreme Court's decision to extend marriage benefits to LGBTQ couples across the country, prominent brands turned to social networks to share their support and enthusiasm. Images of same-sex couples, equality, and traditional LGBTQ symbols promoted positive brand associations with current events and the larger American culture. Social media users made sense of these politicized messages by engaging in communication with the brands, and with each other. Discursive themes centered around the opportunistic versus authentic nature of the campaign relative to personal values, civics, and religious beliefs.

Introduction

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) ruled that same-sex couples have equal right to legal marriage and marriage benefits in the eyes of the law. In the hours after the decision was released, news outlets around the country attempted to summarize what this could mean for the American public. CNN wrote, "the decision could settle one of the major civil rights fights of this era," reflecting on the abundance of pro-LGBTQ demonstrations, parades, and celebrations taking place across the country on that day (de Vogue & Diamond, 2015). While notably the country was still split regarding public opinion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) rights, many reflected that a SCOTUS decision might bridge and start to resolve this ongoing debate (Chappell, 2015). The public turned to social media to voice their reactions to the SCOTUS ruling, and posted numerous messages of support or dissent.

Brands also turned to social media, posting their own supportive or opposing interpretation of the ruling in carefully crafted corporate messages. Companies such as Budweiser, Gap, Hilton Hotels, and Coca-Cola brandished their support of the LGBTQ community in general and the newly legalized marriage rights on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr messages (Castillo, 2015). MSNBC reported that within an hour of the ruling, 3.6 million tweets used the hashtag *#LoveWins* (Castillo, 2015). Even more importantly, many of these tweets originated from corporate, rather than individual users. In an effort to show their support and backing of the SCOTUS decision, corporations posted images, messages, and videos that aligned their company interests with the LGBTQ community.

It is unclear whether these messages were authentic signs of support or carefully crafted marketing (or some combination of both). However, rainbow-themed posts quickly elicited reactions from brand followers on nearly every social network, resulting in user debates and criticism of these pro-LGBTQ posts (Thadani, 2015). Users questioned the authenticity and perhaps ulterior motives of companies perceived to suddenly demonstrate support and pride. For example, when Facebook released a new tool that would lay a rainbow gloss over user profile pictures, some users questioned its motive and suspected it was a poorly disguised strategy for the platform to track users' support or dissent (Lafferty, 2015). In short, the public was responding, but perhaps not in the way brand managers had anticipated.

This is not the first time public opinion questioned the authenticity of just-in-time social media content (Guidry, Messner, Jin, & Medina-Messner, 2015). Previous research suggests users were quick to identify posts they felt were obvious forms of *pandering* or *unwanted marketing* (Howard, Mangold, & Johnston, 2014). Furthermore, Shao, Jones, and Grace (2014) found that social media communication tends to coalesce around present or missing alignments between consumer self-expression and brand-promoted values and ideas. While social media currently offers the best tools for brands and consumers alike to communicate quickly with various groups, many users are skeptical of companies who seem too eager to take advantage of this ability (Carlson & Lee, 2015) by tying their communication to timely or topical posts.

This study investigated public reactions to seven SCOTUS-themed Instagram posts by four large American companies using narrative discourse analysis. Within the wider context of critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk,

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2007), a total of 516 user comments and responses were mapped against Hall's (1997) three categories of public reactions: operating inside the dominant code, applying a negotiable code, and substituting and oppositional code (See Appendix 1) (Novak, 2016). Given the highly controversial nature of the topic of same-sex marriage, the study examines two key questions:

RQ1. What types of consumer reactions did the brands elicit when attempting to show support for the SCOTUS decision in particular, and LGBT issues in general?

RQ2. What types of themes dominated consumer reactions to each of the brand ads?

Advertising to LGBTQ Communities

To many heterosexual consumers and communicators, LGBTQ advertising might seems to be a recent and explosive phenomenon. What is relatively recent, though, is the concept of gay *communities*, associated with the interbelic mass urbanization, mass immigration, and mass industrialization, as well as post-WWII advent of free time and disposable income for large numbers of relatively young and often single men and women (Branchik, 2002). Most importantly, however, the bulk of LGBTQ research, advertising, and social activism are irrevocably connected to gay identity polemics triggered by changes in the entertainment industry and by the AIDS pandemics in the last quarter of the twentieth century (Kates, 1999).

Early research addressing LGBTQ and advertising referenced post-1970 advertising campaigns, following the establishment of gay-owned businesses and over 150 gay magazines and newspapers (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). The newly-coined "dream market" (Kates, 1999) included the possibility of higher income, no kids, young, affluent, and educated gay men, interested in purchasing high quality products from brands perceived to be rebellious, progressive, or simply friendly toward gay issues and communities. *Inclusive* advertising, in this context, referred to mainstream brands such as Toyota, Microsoft, Levi's, Banana Republic, American Express, Miller, and Absolut, who placed ads created for mainstream media into *gay media*. *Crossover* advertising, on the other hand, referred to brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch who embedded veiled or overt gay/lesbian stereotypical messages or characters in *mainstream media* (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999). In this context, crossover advertising was a reflection of the fact that the vast majority of LGBTQ audiences are more likely to consume mainstream media, rather than gay media (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). As is the case with other groups defined by key sociodemographic characteristics, LGBTQ audiences balance precariously between the dual perspective of coveted niches and controversial minority groups. Within the broader cultural context, LGBTQ communities are represented disproportionately as either disenfranchised or predominantly affluent, while at the same time portentendly under the influence of normality-driven universal human needs and values such as happiness, comfort, and freedom to define one's life (Kates, 1999; Tsai, 2011).

In a parallel stream of research, advertising was connected to social perceptions of gender and ideal masculinity/femininity, a circular reference owed to the fact that "it is virtually impossible to speak of one without reference to the other" in an ever-evolving discourse about what is socially acceptable in terms of power, emotional expression, and presence (Jhally, 2009). In the 80s gender-fluid advertising discourse of brands such as Levi's jeans and clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch, strategic employment and role-positioning of male and female bodies enabled the audience to identify the messages they could comfortably embrace. In Sut Jhally's (2009) analysis of gender representations in advertising and promotion of strong female characters in recent action movies and competitive female athletes, homophobic groups find reassurance in the strong, healthy, and buff male bodies posing in the company of skinny, beautiful, female models. Gender nonconformists, on the other hand, can read multiple stories escaping the heteronormative discourse, despite the prevalence of some measure of stereotypical gender coding pervading these carefully composed snapshots of gender displays. While the commercial success of these brands proves their staying power in terms of appealing to various audience, the question remains the be answered about the degree to which such disguised advertising meets the aspirational needs of LGBTQ audiences who wish to express both their individuality and their shared characteristics marking their ability and right to belong to mainstream groups, ideas, and consumption patterns.

Some brands successfully confined male gay characters to trend-setter stereotypes within the fashion and decorating industry (as in the example of a 1990s IKEA campaign where same-sex couples were choosing furniture

or appliances for their homes, or the more recent TV phenomenon of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*). Other brands such as car manufacturer Volkswagen chose to air 'ambiguously gay' ads during coming-out episodes of Ellen, or to advertise on shows portraying sexually confused or vaguely out characters like the early episodes of *Will and Grace* (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). However, Buford (2005) anticipated increased resistance when brands inevitably broadened the repertoire of LGBT stereotypes portrayed in ad campaigns advocating social issues such as same-sex marriage, domestic abuse, and so on. The very characteristics that made the gay guy likeable (young, blond, and beautiful), they say, would prevent mass marketing to an increasingly diversified audience because of the narrow demographic profile of a significant market consisting primarily of white, educated, affluent, urban consumers (Skover & Testy, 2002). In Chung's (2007) words, "stereotypes reflect a culture's beliefs and values about *other* people or objects"–therefore narrowcasting LGBT characters and issues can isolate even as they attempt to include the LGBT population into mainstream media (p. 99, author's emphasis). Furthermore, Chung (2007) maintains, the media industry at large is "in the business of making profits, not in raising social consciousness" (p. 100) , therefore the rare individual professionals and media messages promoting LGBT *countertypes*, or positive stereotypes, should receive wider attention and support from researchers and educators.

Brands using this strategy, also known as *dual marketing* (Bordo, 1999), tend to select imagery that could appeal to both LGBT and heterosexual audiences, yet results depend heavily on consumer's prior knowledge and belonging of specific groups or subcultures (Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999). For example, the beautiful, strong, and toned male bodies used in fashion and cosmetics by brands such as Calvin Klein and Old Spice might ostensibly appeal to the newly defined assertive female audience, empowered to choose and purchase products for their male partners—while to gay consumers the same ads would identify and promote or criticize socio-demographic characteristics associated with the LGBT community (see Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999, for an extensive review of early research on in-group/out-group advertising and intended vs. actualized meaning).

An experimental study by Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998) emphasized the augmenting role of pre-existing values and beliefs on the ways in which majority or in-group audience members perceived minority or out-group advertising messages and imagery. Researchers created a set of parallel ads where heterosexual and gay couples were portrayed in positions that explicitly denoted affection, but were attributed contextual romantic connotations. In their findings, prior negative perceptions of homosexual status or lifestyle tended to correlate strongly with a more negative reading of LGBT-coded advertising imagery.

Gender studies literature also picked up on conflicting meanings in consumerism and advertising attempting to impose normality-centered messages such as the expectations of beauty, youth, leisure, and potential for success, as requisite gay attributes (Bordo, 1999), while excluding economically disadvantaged LGBT populations dealing with some of the same social and personal issues of the general population—such as AIDS, lack of education, or serious handicaps (Kates, 1999). Sexuality, gender, and power are essential concepts in analyzing the social role of advertising, all the more so when audiences have the means to express their opinions in forums where brands are careful to promote multi-way communication. So how do audiences perceive branding efforts to advertise across the borderlines of sexual orientation?

LGBTQ and Social Media Advocacy

While social media allows for almost-instant brand responses to events and incidents in the real world, it also allows consumers to respond to such campaigns, in honest—if not always friendly—ways. Cultural norms anchored in religion, politics, and personal preferences require careful balancing of dual marketing (Tsai, 2011), with its combination of insider jokes, sarcastic, and metaphoric approaches. When the intention of the ad is to promote the brand as well as advocate a social issue, the challenge is even more complex. Hall's (1997) model would map *inclusive advertising, crossover advertising,* and *dual advertising* relative to different types of consumer reactions, providing the opportunity to use analytical categories for analyzing audience engagement with media messaging, such as in Novak's (2016) study of Millennial engagement. Political social media communication is highly susceptible to minority/majority and outgroup/ingroup perceptions even as consumers interpret and post their reflections and reactions to various public relations campaigns, social media discourse, and corporate LGBTQ messaging (Novak, 2016).

It is important to study brand-focused communication around support for LGBTQ issues, because not all brands opted for cooperation and friendly support of social advocacy. An 1994 ad by Italian fashion brand Benetton

created a fake obituary of former US President Reagan (while he was still alive), with a picture depicting him in the final stages of AIDS, in an advocacy effort protesting the former President's position on miscommunicating about the 'gay pandemic'--a communication strategy that invited strong emotional reactions due to its *negotiation of contradictory codes and messages* (the president was neither gay, nor suffering from AIDS; however, the AIDS crisis was both real and grave). The brand intended to send a message supportive of LGBTQ issues and did so in a manner consistent with their provoking style of advertising; however, it triggered negative reactions from a variety of publics who may have been supportive of LGBT issues in general and finding effective ways to address the AIDS pandemic--but strongly disagreed with the brand's communication strategy.

More recently, the CEOs of well-known brand-companies such as Chick-fil-A and Papa John's fast-food chains issued gay-bashing messages and advertising, openly engaging in usage of *oppositional codes* regarding same-sex marriage in particular, and LGBTQ rights and values in general. Many consumers who might not have otherwise expressed support for LGBT causes were enraged by these CEOs who engaged in attention-seeking communication consistent with their brands, yet entirely disrespectful to large groups who did not subscribe to their own individual persuasions (be they sexual, religious, or of other nature).

Discourse Analysis and Brand-Focused Communication

With the advent of digital social networks in the late 2000s, marketers turned their attention to tailoring messages and visuals to specific digital spaces. Instagram (now owned by Facebook) was released in October 2010 as an iPhone-exclusive application for sharing images and brief messaging content. Smith and Sanderson (2015) described Instagram as a hybrid between Twitter and Facebook, with an emphasis on visual content and textual brevity as a social norm. Instagram quickly gained popularity and users as it expanded to other operating systems such as Android and tablets, as far away as Russian territories during the Sochi Olympic games. Howard et al. (2014) noted that Instagram is an essential part of the marketing mix due to its visual and instantaneous nature, facilitating immediate and two-way distribution of messages, campaigns, and visuals between brands and their audiences (Zolkepli, Hasno, & Mukhiar, 2015).

Posting comments, tagging friends, or using hashtags to connect with liked authors enable sharing and connections between users and brands. Bataineh and Al-Smadi (2015) proposed that user comments on specific posts represent the highest level of engagement, as a culmination of the process requiring that users follow the account, view the post, and decide to invest their attention and energy into expressing their reaction in *active forms* of brand participation (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2014) that help account managers remain current with the views of their most engaged publics by monitoring various expressions of support, dissent, and non-commitment elicited by their brand communication. Comments on Instagram posts often include actual words, visuals, and links to further augment user engagement, resulting in a type of feedback to the brand which, if properly analyzed, can yield insights into public reaction to the brand's communication strategy. Beyond brand management techniques, studying user comments is also a good way to look at the type of engagement users exhibit to politicized messages such as brands' support of same-sex civil rights. Brands need the feedback such analysis can yield, in order to determine what changes are necessary at various steps during a campaign.

Critical discourse analysis methodology examines audience engagement with branded messaging and controversial media content within a qualitative framework (Van Dijk, 2007; 2009). By categorizing audience comments according to Hall's (1997) three codes, and then qualitatively reading and analyzing the content of these comments, researchers can build understanding of how brand messages are accepted, rejected, or negotiated by their audience. Within the sample of advertising messages selected for this study, it is interesting to notice the similarities between the products advertised: they are all meant for both solitary and shared consumption, which renders them as means of expressing one's persona. Hotels and the hospitality industry are particularly sensitive to LGBT issues, because guests need to feel safe socializing and showing affection to their travel companions. Gap attire caters to the young, urban, affluent, and hip consumer, consistent with the media-proposed prototype of the gay guy. Coca-Cola encourages happiness in the form of sharing (or gifting) the beverage with friends and strangers alike. And Budweiser has a long history of promoting the idea of buddies among gay and heterosexual audiences. What could be more organic than the connection between these brands, same-sex marriage, and social networking?

Methods

This project integrates discourse analysis techniques to look at the nature of user responses to LGBTQ-supportive Instagram posts. This approach allows for insight into the marketing messages as a data set and how consumers engage with the brand through the Instagram platform. While this type of analysis could be conducted on a great number of brands, this study focused on four brands which have been previously identified as openly supportive of same-sex marriage and actively marketing to LGBTQ audiences immediately after the SCOTUS decision (Tharett, 2015) and had a topical presence on Instagram: Budweiser, Coca-Cola, Gap, and Hilton Hotels (See actual Instagram ad messages in Appendix 2).

Analysis of consumer-generated discourse considered Hall's categories within an advertising-specific context. For example, when *operating inside the dominant code*, LGBT and heterosexual audiences partake in consumption of messages from well-known brands while actively seeking ways to connect their own values and experience. On the other hand, *substitution of oppositional codes* occurs when consumers express strong negative reactions and question the very foundations of the brand, message, or context. When advertising pursues social advocacy, however, it is equally likely to trigger *application of negotiable codes*, whereby consumers agree with the message on account of free speech, but oppose its use in an advertising campaign and therefore are inclined to stop buying the product due to conflict with their personal values; or they may find the brand message irrelevant and retain their consumption habit for a particular product, completely bypassing any advertising message. Across all three coding categories, there is the potential of alignment or conflict between individual and shared consumption, beliefs, images, and attitudes.

In total, seven brand posts were collected for this analysis; of the initial yield of 754 comments, only 516 were retained after careful screening for relevance (See Table 1). The final set of comments excluded posts where some people tagged their friends in the comments section of one of the brands, an action that could signify either positive or negative emotional reactions. Also excluded were posts in a language other than English, or tagging a previous Instagram (or Twitter) message that could not be accessed.

While a more detailed visual analysis of each post could be a vital source of marketing information, this project specifically focuses on the comments posted by users to each of the brand's posts. The initial step in writing out the findings summarized the overall type and frequency of reactions to the brand advertising posts (Storcila, 2014). Although conducted with surface-level codes and in the absence of follow-up interaction with individual Instagram users, the analysis of supportive versus disagreeing messages provides insight into the range and frequency of consumer reactions likely to emerge when well-known brands decide to engage with publicly debated social issues.

> *RQ1. What types of consumer reactions did the brands elicit when attempting to show support for the SCOTUS decision in particular, and LGBT issues in general?*

For the first research question the authors used qualitative discourse analysis to delve deeper into the nuances of each comment by looking for patterns, themes, and types of user comments (Clary & Wandersee, 2014). Rather than simply noting if users agreed or disagreed with the brand's messages, discourse analysis provides greater insight into the possible users' rationale and the ways they expressed themselves through the social networking platform. This study adopts Gee's (2012) discourse analysis methodology and specifically examines how users expressed their emotional reactions to the brand's posts. In a recent study, Alper (2014) argued for the necessity of combining qualitative and quantitative methods when studying discursive patterns in consumer engagement on Instagram comment sections. Further, Schleifer (2014) noted that qualitative discourse analysis is an important methodology for digital research due to the myriad of ways users can express their opinion and values through text, emoticons, and links. Discourse analysis allows for a holistic investigation of the terms of reference, sentiment, and language used throughout user reactions. This study proposes to use Hall's (1997) set of three discursive categories to support identification of complexity and patterns (Schleifer, 2014) in user responses to brands' messages of support for the Supreme Court decision.

After carefully reading each of the seven sets of user responses to the brand advertising images, each post was coded with labels corresponding to Hall's Appendix A (see Appendix 1), based on the appearance of the

consumer/author operating inside the dominant code, substituting oppositional codes, or applying negotiable codes. An example of operating inside the dominant code reads "Good job Gap, I'm happy you support ALL your customers equally."[1] Unhappy consumers were more likely to substitute an oppositional code such as "Ugh, Gap, why don't you keep your mind out of politics. I'll never buy from you again" or "Bull s**t 😳 No more Budweiser for me I'm totally offended by this 🍺."

Marketing-savvy consumers, however, appeared to propose applying a negotiable code that supported the brand's message, but saw a need for more substantial brand communication on the issue, such as in the following post: "Good start, but make this a commercial." Other consumers reaffirmed brand loyalty to the product while completely discounting the ad's social advocacy message, in post like "lmao does the label on the bottle change the beer? Still tastes the same to me and im not gay." After using Hall's system of categories to summarize consumer reactions, the next research question explored the context around thematic groups among consumer reactions.

RQ2. What types of themes dominated consumer reactions to each of the brand ads?

While it could be argued that the four brands included in this study shared many common characteristics in terms of types of products and audiences, they chose different communication strategies to express their support for the SCOTUS decision. Breaking down Hall's (1997) discursive categories across the four brands allowed the researchers to investigate specific themes associated with each communication strategy. It seems quite obvious to anticipate that consumers would struggle to reconcile their personal views on religion, marriage, and civil rights in general, with LGBT advertising initiated by mainstream brands. In what ways, though, would consumers react to brand-generated and consumer-generated visual and text communication for each of these well-known brands?

Findings

Data Summary. Instagram comments to brands posting ads supporting the SCOTUS decision (See Figure 1) showed overall a clearly uneven distribution relative to Hall's categories of consumers responding *within the dominant code* (48.1%), in an *oppositional code* (35.9%) or *negotiated code* (11.1%). Confirming Abbott, Donaghey, Hare, and Hopkins' (2013) findings, a little over 5% (N=26) of the comments simply used the Instagram ad pages as a starting point to engage in interpersonal disputes or referencing separate threads, and even online or offline relationships. Off-topic conversations sparked sometimes from debates over the connection between homosexuality, heterosexuality, and religious beliefs, Christian and otherwise. While all four brands posted ads intended to express support for the SCOTUS decision, their communication strategies combined different textual and visual references, thus triggering a variety of consumer reactions (See Table 1).

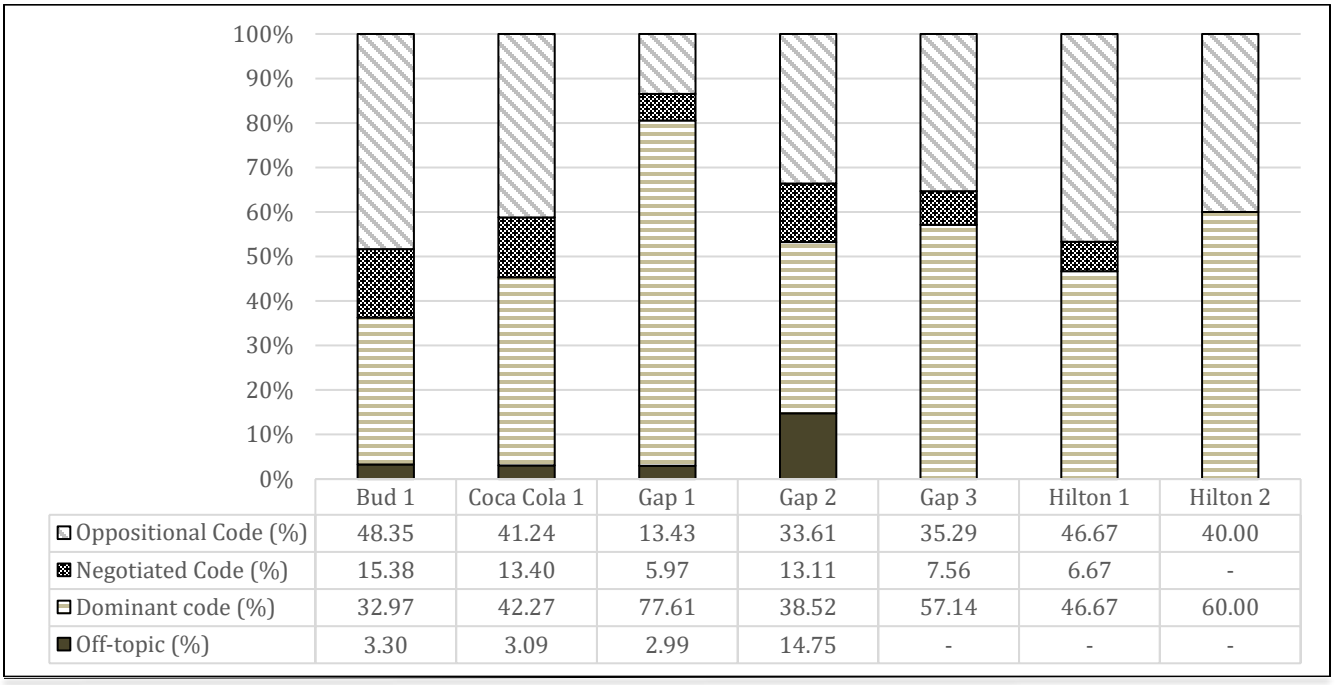
Operating Inside the Dominant Code. The images and messages in these ads celebrated the LGBT victory and simultaneously positioned their brand as sharing in the happiness, pride, and emotional context of the community--thus operating fully *inside the dominant code*. Budweiser posted an image of a rainbow-flag colored bottle; Gap posted images of the equal sign, rainbow shirts, and young people jumping with P-R-I-D-E balloons; Hilton Hotels posted an equal sign made of two room keys and an image of two men kissing behind a rainbow-flag; and Coca-Cola shared an image of rainbow bottles with *#LoveWins*.

When the communication target of the ad had in-group status, users wrote supportive and accepting messages of the brand and its post. They rationalized their own agreement with the brand by providing supporting evidence of other pro-LGBTQ companies and sometimes by critiquing non-participating brands or pro-active message detractors, thus reaffirming their support of both the message and the brand. These positive messages affirmed the legitimacy of the brand as well as of LGBTQ rights through language that supported the actions of the company and its publics. For example, one user wrote of Hilton Hotels, "@hiltonhotels you guys have my loyalty because of your stance on equality. It's wonderful!" In posts like this, users wrote that the brand's message on Instagram strengthened their relationship with the company. Other users wrote similar messages of Gap, "I want a

[1] All posts have been anonymized, but are kept in their original state, including any spelling, grammar, and typing errors. Some of the offensive terms were replaced with asterisks, though most readers will immediately guess the reference.

tee like this one!!!! Please!!!!" and "You Did The Right Thing!" Such posts encourage proactive brand communication as they continually support brand messaging, strategy, and identity.

Figure 1. Comments to brands posting ads supportive of SCOTUS decision



	Bud 1	Coca Cola 1	Gap 1	Gap 2	Gap 3	Hilton 1	Hilton 2
Oppositional Code (%)	48.35	41.24	13.43	33.61	35.29	46.67	40.00
Negotiated Code (%)	15.38	13.40	5.97	13.11	7.56	6.67	-
Dominant code (%)	32.97	42.27	77.61	38.52	57.14	46.67	60.00
Off-topic (%)	3.30	3.09	2.99	14.75	-	-	-

Table 1

Sample Summary

Brand	*# comments*
1. Budweiser Bud for you	91
2. Coca Cola bottles	97
3. Gap ice cream	67
4. Gap heart	122
5. Gap PRIDE	119
6. Hilton flag	15
7. Hilton keycard	5
Total	*516*

Emoticons were one of many ways users demonstrated support for these messages. The *thumbs-up/thumbs-down* sign, hearts, rainbows, and smiley/unhappy-face emoticons were most common (See Table 2). About 10% of

the posts consisted entirely of emoticons, such as this Gap reaction, “  .” Without words, this user demonstrated their support of LGBTQ rights through the use of people emoticons, hearts and a *worship* sign. This was common for many posts operating inside the dominant code, as users showed support for the brand and its messages.

Table 2

Usage of emoticons in consumer reactions to brand message

Emoticons relative to code	*None*	*Some*	*Exclusive*	*Total*
Off-topic	N=23 88.5%	N=2 7.7%	N=1 3.9%	*N=26* *5.04%*
Dominant	N=155 62.5%	N=55 22.2%	N=38 15.3%	*N=248* *48.1%*
Negotiated	N=53 92.9%	N=3 5.3%	N=1 1.8%	*N=57* *11.1%*
Opposed	N=154 83.2%	N=20 10.8%	N=11 6%	*N=185* *35.9%*
Total	*N=385* *74.6%*	*N=80* *15.5%*	*N=51* *9.9%*	*N=516* *100%*

Moreover, posts operating inside the dominant code also reflected on the SCOTUS decision and the larger progress of the LGBTQ community. For example, one Budweiser follower wrote, “It's about time the SCOTUS got something right!” In these reactions, the brand is connected to larger movements and changes in the American political system. Beneficial for the brand, these users acknowledged the contemporary nature of the advertising message by recognizing its genuine connection with the newly judicially legitimized changes in culture.

Other users took this a step further and wrote off the entire group of brand detractors, particularly those who disagreed with the company’s LGBTQ support. One Budweiser supporter wrote, “You better throw away your phone too then. Apple, Microsoft, Android, Google and Facebook and Instagram itself all support marriage equality. Don't dare think of drinking any of the hundreds of Coke and Pepsi products either, or eating any of the Mars candy line. Don't forget not to eat any Kellogg's or General Mills cereal either.” In this post, the user addresses those followers who were claiming they would no longer drink Budweiser beer, in light of their LGBTQ support. This user defends Budweiser’s position, and provides a list of other brands and companies who similarly support LGBTQ rights.

Substituting an Oppositional Code. In this category, some users voiced direct disagreement with the brand’s message or intent (“  I will stop visiting Gap stores after this post” and “I’m gonna start buying Miller from now on”). As users attempted to make sense of the Instagram posts and interact with other comments, many turned to critiquing the brand, its message, and strategy (“Well this country is going to hell after that... GAP = Gay And Proud!  ”). They examined or criticized the authenticity of the posts and questioned the intentions of the brand.

When the target audience of LGBT consumers was perceived to be an outgroup that threatened the legitimacy of their own values and rights, users posted vitriolic messages critiquing the brand's communication strategy as phony attempts to feign support for LGBT rights and issues, in exchange for short-term sales. Throughout such posts, the common sentiment is of indignation or despondency over a brand that is suddenly turning away from its main customer base ("Need too find a new beer too. Bad move by these guys, have they even looked at their customers lately? Not gay friendly" and "I'm highly disappointed right now") or for effecting what was perceived as a new and wrong type of marketing: "Wish there was an 'unlike' or 'unheart' button @budweiser. Don't pander to the Holiwierd elite. Stay out of it and do what you do best." Within this context, users reflected on the posted ad as a piece of marketing inconsistent with the larger brand strategy. Rather than reading the Budweiser post as a genuine sign of support, these messages were oppositional in nature, as they criticized the underlying strategic aims of the company.

Hall's (1997) work identifies these responses as a type of *substituting an oppositional code* where the reactor attempts to critically engage the message or post and, in the process, attempts to generate new meaning in their responses to brand messages, consistent with their own values and beliefs. The reactors ultimately rejected the message of the post and sometimes even distanced themselves from the brand by avowing to forego future purchases. This type of opposition to the brand's strategy is important, as it reflects the customer's feelings that the brand image and ideology no longer synchronize with their own. While finding that some customers disagree with a brand's position is not surprising, the Instagram platform allows researchers to document the language of such opposition.

Other posts called out companies like Gap through extremist language and sentiments, by engaging in polemics through the prism of brand's coexistence with or stance on social issues. In these posts, users attempt to distance themselves from the brand as a reflection of its perceived or actual connections with various issues. For example, one Gap follower wrote "And not that i would but i shall never wear gap now that i know they support a mental illness like pedophileism." This is a complete rejection of both the brand and its message. While we could easily argue that pedophilia and homosexuality are nowhere near synonymous, and furthermore that homosexuality is not a mental illness, to respond as such would simply engage a reader with strong homophobic convictions in a polemics which would not benefit the brand in any manner. The consumer expressed oppositional reaction in this case by contesting homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle, furthermore substituting it with a concept that includes socially and morally degradable meanings. By associating Gap with pedophilic crimes, the user attempts to question the ethics and morals of the company itself.

Similarly, another Gap follower wrote a post challenging the genuineness of Gap's pro-LGBTQ advertising based on the brand's own unethical practices: "How hypocritical of Gap for advocating human rights when it thrives because of the work of underpaid sweatshop workers! @gap." It appears, in this post, as if the user attempted to include unfair labor practices and LGBT/same-sex marriage rights within the broader category of human rights, which would be laudable; however, somehow the company's support of latter disingenuous, after having ignored the former. A Budweiser follower similarly commented, "You have to stop promoting the #MakoMania event as they were seen to kill a shark from an endangered specie and then take pictures of it like it was cool!! Promoting that kind of attitude towards the nature is horrible!" Although neither company referenced either issue in their posts (or anywhere in their Instagram accounts), users took this moment of seemingly activist branding behavior to address other social activism issues. In this second coding category, the advertisement again served as a conduit for consumers to rationalize and express their pre-established beliefs and values.

Applying a Negotiable Code. Many users found difficulty with completely supporting or disagreeing with the brand posts, as followers grappled with their own beliefs *and* the messages that were shared on Instagram. When applying a negotiable code, users voiced complex reactions, whereby they felt the need to disassociate themselves either with the brand message, or with the brand products. For example, one Gap follower reacted to a post of a young man and woman wearing rainbow t-shirts and eating ice cream by saying that "There should be two boys eating it"—thus questioning the authenticity of a dual-advertising message with imagery that appears to be a heterosexual couple in a pro-LGBT ad. At the same time, this finding could be seen as another instance of a priori convictions influencing insider vs. outsider perceptions of niche target advertising. Why would the reader immediately assume that, just because the ad portrayed two characters that appeared to be one male and one female, the message imagery was non-queer? Clearly, the suggestion for stronger LGBTQ-normative visuals in the post is

from someone who does not disagree with the message, but with its presentation--hence the request for same-sex couple visuals to go with the same-sex marriage message.

Similarly, a Coca-Cola follower reacted to their post by requesting changes in the imagery of marketing and advertising. One user wrote, "Show some gay POC [people of color] in your TV commercials please." Again, this consumer is requesting more images clearly presenting LGBTQ and minority individuals, while agreeing with the overall message of the post. Such requests and suggestions for marketing improvements reflect the user beliefs that the brand could do more in terms of social activism, and that advertising messages could be stronger, clearer, or more obvious.

Importantly, users also applied a negotiable code by debating the merits of the Instagram posts and their support of LGBTQ rights. Throughout the dataset, there were ongoing conversations, arguments, and debates between users regarding the connections between homosexuality and morality, legitimacy, or religion. For example, consider the back-and-forth between these two users commenting on the Coca-Cola Instagram post:

> User1: Look CC can do whatever they want. I'm sorry but I really can't stop until you understand that you can't love God if you indulge in what he calls sin
> User 2: Everyone sins so shut up and goodbye
>
> User1: 😊 aww I'm sorry did the facts make you mad??
> User2: No not really. Everyone sins and god still loves them 😂😂
> User2: My dad is a pastor and he told me that if you sin but love God, he will ALWAYS love you.
> User1: when did I ever say that God stops loving us when we sin?... there's no such thing as a gay Christian

Debates were common throughout each of the post threads, as users engaged each other in lively (and often profanity-laced) conversations about the connections between homosexuality and various religious beliefs. While User1 clearly considers LGBTQ lifestyles as sinful and irreligious, they are also suggesting that Coca-Cola's post is independent of their own beliefs. Rather than saying they disagree with Coca-Cola, they instead argue that the brand has the right to free speech (and implicitly the freedom to advertise in whatever manner they choose), and reserve the right to buy or boycott the product. This is unlike how they feel towards User2, who holds a different interpretation of God and Christianity. Once breached, the debate over God, Christianity, and homosexuality cascades downhill into a demonstration of the relativity of what users call facts and reliable information:

> User2: Actually yes there is. There is this show called survivor and a gay couple announced they were gay Christians.
> User1: And you're going to believe that sinners who ARE PROUD of their sin are telling the truth over what the Bible, inspired by God, says?

Without any information about the actual individuals, it is impossible to determine exactly how someone would make universal-truth statements based on what they had seen on a reality-TV show such as *Survivor*. While both users appear to be Christians holding strong religious convictions, their interpretation of the compatibility (or lack thereof) between their religion and homosexuality are completely opposite to each other, to the point where User 1 re-codes even the word *pride* into a negative meaning, in order to fit his views, and completely separates from the brand page hosting this conversation.

In these debates, negotiation of concept meanings ascribed different degrees of freedom: companies can decide to support or oppose various social issues and causes; and users will make their own choices on whether or not to keep following brands and purchasing their products. In such contexts, the brand's support of same-sex marriage directly affects consumers' brand loyalty:

> "I have no issue with people loving who they wish. However I don't want to support something that is against my personal morals. Therefore I no longer wish to follow this company's page nor will I give them business. I don't hate anyone for the decisions they make in life and I never spoke against anyone. So that

> being said.. You, me and everyone else has an opinion, and all you are doing is spreading the same hate as the people you are fighting which is putting you on the same level that they are. Calling people (including me) things such as "dumb hicks, inbred, wastes of oxygen." Is no way to get your point across. Just trying to be mature here."

Applying a negotiable code thus reflects a type of engagement with both the platform ("😂😂 responding to people's posts from almost 2 months ago? get a damn life!") and the brand itself ("lmao does the label on the bottle change the beer? Still tastes the same to me and im not gay"), as well as sometimes reacting to a particular ad based on the company's prior actions and within the wider environment of civic responsibility. Users demonstrated their familiarity with brand advertising by making recommendations about non-Instagram related marketing ("It should at least be Bud Light Lime or any of the fruity flavored"). This reflects a knowledge of the overall company, the history of its connection with LGBT issues, and its advertising and marketing strategies.

Unlike substituting an oppositional code or operating inside a dominant code, these posts occupy an in-between space, where users have not yet completely reconciled their own opinions with the brand's strategy. Consumers often levied criticism towards the overall social issue, though showing a modicum of agreement with the position of the company or bypassed advertising considerations altogether in order to focus on social activism ("Are you homophobic or what?? What the f*** is wrong with you???? We want equality remember?? You should accept gay couples!! They're human beings just like you idiots !!!!!!").

Comparison of Consumer Responses across Brand Ads

Budweiser. The first ad in this sample, Budweiser's "Love on your own terms. #ThisBudsForYou," presents a bottle of Budweiser beer wrapped in rainbow-colored packaging and featuring the Liberty Statue. While it would be easy to read in this ad a brand intention of supporting love and liberty for all, it triggered very strong negative reactions among consumers. In fact, almost half of the comments opposed the brand's message, with the most frequently used terms including a variety of expletives; furthermore, in the spirit of equality, some consumers requested that Budweiser also come up with a bottle of beer wrapped in the Confederate flag. Not only did homophobic consumers dislike the presence of the rainbow flag on their formerly favorite beer ("even Budweiser is turning f*ing gay"), as evidenced in their promises to unlike and stop drinking this brand of beer ("I need to find a new beer" and "I guess it's Miller time"), but they also questioned the integrity of the brand's message ("WTF has beer gotta do with same sex marriage aka being gay TF, outta here!!!!").

About one-third of the comments were positive and consumers operating within the dominant code were quick to counteract homophobic comments as well as to praise Budweiser for "bravery" and "marketing genius." Consumers familiar with the brand's ten years-old relationship with the LGBT population rejoiced ("Thank you!" and "Love it!!!") and almost renewed their brand fealty: "Budweiser family forever."

Comments negotiating the brand's meaning ranged from contesting the validity of the message ("lmao does the label on the bottle change the beer? Still tastes the same to me and im not gay") to suggesting different marketing strategies such as "It should at least be Bud Light Lime or any of the fruity flavored." For some consumers, this ad was a deal breaker because it pushed them beyond their level of comfort with the brand's alliance: "I have no issue with people loving who they wish. However I don't want to support something that is against my personal morals. Therefore I no longer wish to follow this company's page nor will I give them business."

Coca Cola's message, on the other hand, was more basic and, one might say, in line with the brand's recent initiatives of launching the popular drink in a variety of packaging colors. The ad "It's now official. Love is love is love. #LoveWins" clearly states the brand's support for the recent SCOTUS decision. Each bottle is packaged in one solid color from the rainbow flag.

Consumer comments were almost evenly split between agreement with the dominant code ("Cool rainbow Coke" and "We want equality, remember?? You should accept gay couples!! They're human beings just like you idiots!!!!!") and opposing it ("bravo I like Pepsi now" and "Team Pepsi now"). Interestingly enough, it was this ad that triggered most of the discussion over love in same-sex couples and the connection between gays, lesbians, and Christianity. This topic, due to its association with deeply held personal religious values, was most likely to trigger strong positive and negative reactions.

Re-coding messages mentioned marketing suggestions referencing the Share a Coke campaign ("Can you put Bella on bottles please?") and inquired into sponsorship opportunities ("However we can get @cocacola as a sponsor"). Most consumer posts within this category, however, attempted to integrate the #Loveislove concept within their own system of beliefs.

Gap placed three different ads to celebrate the SCOTUS decision. The first ad presented what appeared to be a heterosexual couple, or at least one male and one female who were comfortable with moderate public displays of affection (her hand on his shoulder and sitting closely together). The ad tied in with the 2015 Pride Parade and Pride Month in New York City and invited Gap customers to "join the celebration." Most comments focused on the "kyuuute" t-shirt design ("we need these" and "these are cool shirts!!") and the rainbow sprinkles on the ice cream.

The second ad presented a pink heart enclosing the equality sign, consisting of two small rainbows. Posts spanned, again, both sides of the LGBT issues. Just as in the case of rainbow-colored Coke bottles, the equal sign seems to have been heavily interpreted as an "equal rights" signifier and thus dominated the conversations, with a somewhat balanced number of posts on each side of the debate. Civil rights and religious beliefs featured prominently throughout the debate: "I'm not even gay but today I am very, very proud to be an American. I wish the very best to all you happy couples that can finally form your own perfect (and legal) union!"

The third post represented Gap's attempt to illustrate their commitment to diversity and inclusion. Again, supporters and detractors alike invoked a variety of religion-related arguments to sustain their point of view. This was the only site where issues of skin color were mentioned, in conversations that exploded in extremist posts both in support of gay rights and issues ("Proud to work for such an amazing company!" and "Thank you, Gap, you've guaranteed me as a customer for life") to outright and final opposition ("Unfollow" and "We are against the gays and lesbians").

Some of the consumers, again, expressed reticence in light of Gap's support of same-sex marriage and LGBT rights: "GAP, sell clothes, OK?" and "A place of business should stay out of politics. Sick to selling merchandise. Not all customers and employees are in agreement." Furthermore, limited agreement with both the brand and the issue was obvious in comments such as "I will love em but not support them" and observations critical of the brand's pandering efforts ("Scrape for profits wherever you can").

Hilton Hotels. On the day of the SCOTUS decision, Hilton Hotels posted two ads on Instagram. The first one is a picture from the Capital Pride Parade in DC, depicting two men appearing to be kissing atop of a float in the shape of a rainbow-colored wedding cake. The message said "Sometimes you just have to make your own rainbow @CapitalPrideDC! #EqualityAtPlay #DCPride." There are a variety of flags in the picture, including two rainbow PRIDE flags. The second ad simply presents two room cards with the message "Love is the key. #LoveIsLove." While these ads elicited only 20 comments, it was interesting to remark that they were the only pages obviously moderated by a brand manager (responsible for one-third of the posts), they did not include off-topic conversations, and they were evenly distributed between dominant and oppositional code.

Positive comments evidenced consumers' confidence in the authenticity of Hilton Hotels as a travel ally, appreciation for the beauty of the float, and suggestions for a new room card (something Hilton did design later). Negative comments were short ("Shame" and "Wtf") and negotiated codes invited Hilton "or anybody for that matter" to "do a transgender Float."

Reflection

While these Instagram posts represent only a small sample from among the brands celebrating the SCOTUS decision, they do offer insight into how the public may react. Whether operating inside the dominant code, applying a negotiable code, or substituting an oppositional code, the public participated in the larger cultural debate over the place, rights, and legal structures that impact members of the LGBTQ communities. Overall, a general observation would question why these posts elicited a relatively small number of comments, given the popularity of the brands and the amount of emotion and energy the topic generated elsewhere in the news and social media.

User reactions *operating inside the dominant code* did support the larger issue of LGBTQ marriage equality and civil rights. Often, these posts did not even acknowledge the brand or the specific message: responses were written for the larger community. For example, on Gap's first post, one user wrote "#LoveisLove." Rather than identifying the message as an extension of the brand, the user took the opportunity to address the issue behind the

post, and treated the brand as a placeholder, or a conduit for the cause. From a branding perspective, although this is a type of positive engagement with the post, the response fails to acknowledge the brand itself, thus possibly diluting the brand's presence and position.

Alternatively, for media researchers and brand managers, substituting an opposition code seems like a worst-case scenario. Where the brand's followers completely disagreed with the content and strategy of the brand, they felt prompted to take drastic action such as switching to a competitor brand ("I guess it's Miller time" or "Thats it, im team pepsi") or completely distancing from the brand ("Well. I have to donate all my GAP clothes now," a sentiment echoed by several users). However, despite this challenge, the fact that users chose to engage with the brand on the Instagram platform at all represents an important and subtle silver-lining. The choice to engage the brand by posting reflects a relatively strong connection between the brand and its follower. Users had the choice to quietly un-follow or disregard the post; however, they chose to engage and took the time to participate on the brand's forum on Instagram. This connection might actually signify a relationship of engagement—one that perhaps could be augmented through other forms of marketing or brand positioning. Their choice to engage suggests they care enough about the brand that they might, in time, accept its message, if not necessarily identify with the brand's values.

The third coding category provides the most meaningful findings, complicating the notion of digital engagement and Hall's three discursive categories: it challenges brand managers' desire to engage users within their dominant code. Substituting a negotiable code no longer simply reflects positive or negative feelings towards the brand, but rather the social issues the brand associates with, in consumers' mind. In addition, this group of comments also provides insight into the role of brands in LGBTQ advocacy.

On a superficial level, each of the ads exists as a type of brand support for LGBTQ communities through the lens of the recent SCOTUS decision. Buying a rainbow-packaged product or a rainbow-themed t-shirt is a very small gesture of consumer support in a cause that does affect supporters and detractors and standers-by, in various ways. And yet, those products are meant for consumption and usage in the company of friends, and in front of strangers. Upon further consideration, all conversation threads reveal implied expectations of gender representations, and a very limited repertoire of LGBTQ stories and imagery. It seems everyone assumed the GAP ad included a man and a woman. Furthermore, the concept of love is limited to couples consisting of people with clear and binary gender identities (male-male and female-female), completely ignoring the rainbow of other gender and sexual identities within LGBTQ communities.

These observations may be inherent to the medium: Instagram is less not exactly conducive to complex arguments built on extensively researched topics between conversation partners who know each other well and wish to build long-term interactions. Brands need imagery that follows the shortest path from product to consumer in simplified visuals and stories. Negotiated meaning posts where consumers agreed to the brand's right to support same-sex marriage on grounds of free speech while at the same time refusing to purchase its products might be interpreted as a non-hegemonic way to express bigotry, or a way for consumers to oppose same-sex marriage without actually saying negative things about homosexuality. At the end of the day, however, buying or boycotting are the actual behaviors that indicate consumer interest in a particular brand. Some degree of skepticism in the brand's sincere and deep support for LGBTQ issues, rather than simple opportunistic advertising, would enable consumers to dissociate the product and the message. With the exception of the wedding cake ad from Hilton, all other ads were rather vague and generic, relying on (and thus activating) previously established ideas and ideals.

Overall, then, where consumers' communication background included an alignment between personal beliefs and brand communication, the comments tended to be supportive of the ad and consumers contributed examples of the ways in which the brand had been consistently communicating a positive association with promotion of LGBT issues. On the contrary, negative comments revealed consumers' surprise at the apparently sudden change in brand communication relative to the LGBTQ cause: again, deeply held personal beliefs, though wrong from the perspective of LGBTQ communities and supporters, caused consumers to outright reject the message promoted in the brand advertising.

Ironically, it is in the negotiated meaning posts where the advertising message seemed to serve a central function of actually considering ways to reconcile the difference between brand message, social advocacy, and personal values. A strong positive connection with either the issue or the brand triggered an attempt to reconcile the ad in positive terms: the brand has the right to promote an issue, consumers are under no obligation to buy; or the

brand can say anything, since advertising has no bearing on the quality or taste of the product and therefore the consumer can keep using it. Discarding the advertising message is a conscious effort here, that requires some analysis and justification of why what the brand says does not matter. Conversely, a strong negative connection with the issue or the brand triggered an attempt to formulate a post or comment in negative terms: strong opposition to same-sex marriage triggered rejection of brand product; dissatisfaction with the brand's association with other issues such as unequitable labor treatment or support of controversial causes spilled into this instance and caused rejection of SCOTUS ad.

Importantly, advocacy posts seeking to convert others to consumers' own beliefs, or perhaps to reinforce the validity and value of such beliefs to themselves, produced advocacy responses, where proponents and opponents voiced and defended their opinions loudly and clearly. Because the ads were overwhelmingly visual, and in the absence of textual information from the brands, social media conversations were instead driven by comments and responses posted by consumers. Advocacy posts served as inspiration for larger and longer conversations between followers regarding the ethics, religious morals, and implications for the SCOTUS decision. The trend of advocacy causing advocacy reveals a pattern in online and digital platforms. When a brand extends their message as advocacy for a specific population, they can expect a return of advocacy responses (both affirmative and oppositional in nature).

Future Research

Future work will need to consider other types of responses featured on Instagram. For example, this study excluded responses that were written in foreign languages (including French, Spanish, Arabic, Turkish, Portuguese, and Russian). In addition, this study also excluded posts tagging other users or friends (without any comments), because it is difficult to know if this is a sign of support, dissent, or negotiation. While many previous studies interpreted sharing as a form of liking or positive reaction, without a comment, it is difficult to code it for one of Hall's three categories. More conceptual work on Instagram needs to define and interpret the act of sharing before these behaviors can be fully analyzed in advocacy posts.

For a deeper understanding of social media conversations in the context of advocacy efforts from well-known brands, future research should attempt to draw out descriptive interpretations of the ad copy and map them against consumers' own attitudes and beliefs regarding the advocacy issue--in this case, attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex marriage, as well as attitudes toward each specific brand, prior to users being exposed to the social advocacy ads. With this additional layer of information it would be possible to determine if some of the negotiated code might perhaps be a placeholder for a way to withhold judgment while allowing for bigotry--or a form of nascent advocacy within users who need more time to reconcile their viewpoints to the new reality of such issues impacting their world.

Finally, although these advertisements, as well as many of the posts and responses were primarily positive in their interpretation of the SCOTUS decision seen as an LGBTQ victory, more work on interpreting the application of a negotiable code is necessary. Many users reflected that they supported the victory, but challenged the brand's use of the topic for monetary gains. Users questioned if brands should be involved in politics and advocacy at all, and challenged brand communication strategies. Although all the brands used in this study have a long history of supporting LGBTQ rights, it is clear the public was not always convinced of the sincerity of brands' choice of imagery and message. This may relate to the history of LGBTQ presence in advertising and marketing, particularly as a group that was stigmatized, isolated, and often ignored. When users were not aware of this context, they felt that the sudden LGBTQ imagery was pandering rather than an authentic sign of support and interest, thus questioning both the intent and the content of branded communication.

Conclusion

LGBTQ presence in digital marketing is an expanding and important area of brand research and development. Through Hall's discourses and codes, it is possible to understand how a digital community reacts to advocacy posts on Instagram. Although future work is still necessary to understand how this might impact the

LGBTQ community, advocacy, and advertising, it is the ongoing growth and pattern of this type of marketing presence that make this line of research necessary.

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Appendix 1: Hall's (1997) Labels of Discourse

Operating inside dominant code	**Applying a negotiable code**	**Substituting an oppositional code**
The reactor agrees with the brand's message The reactor does not levy any criticism of the brand's message The reactor adopts some or all of the brand's language The reactor rationalizes their approval/agreement by citing examples of useful or interesting information	The reactor partially agrees with the brand's message and partially disagrees The reactor critiques the brand for its position or the presentation of the information (format, style, or type) The reactor adopts some of the brand's language Reactor may agree with the contents of this specific post, but still levies criticism against generalized brand activities Reactor attempts to explain the rationale behind the brand's post	The reactor disagrees with the brand's message and corrects it or proposes another message The reactor proposes an alternative message or corrects the brand's message The reactor doesn't adopt any of the brand's language Reactor critiques both the specific post and generalized brand activities Reactor provides examples from brand's post about specific disagreements they have with the brand's perspective, style, or format Reactor questions the ethics of the post Reactor questions and criticizes the bias, issue salience, or rationale of the post

Appendix 2: Instagram Ads

1. Budweiser: 2,862 likes. Love on your own terms. #ThisBudsForYou

2. Coca Cola: 33.9K likes. It's now official. Love is love is love. #LoveWins

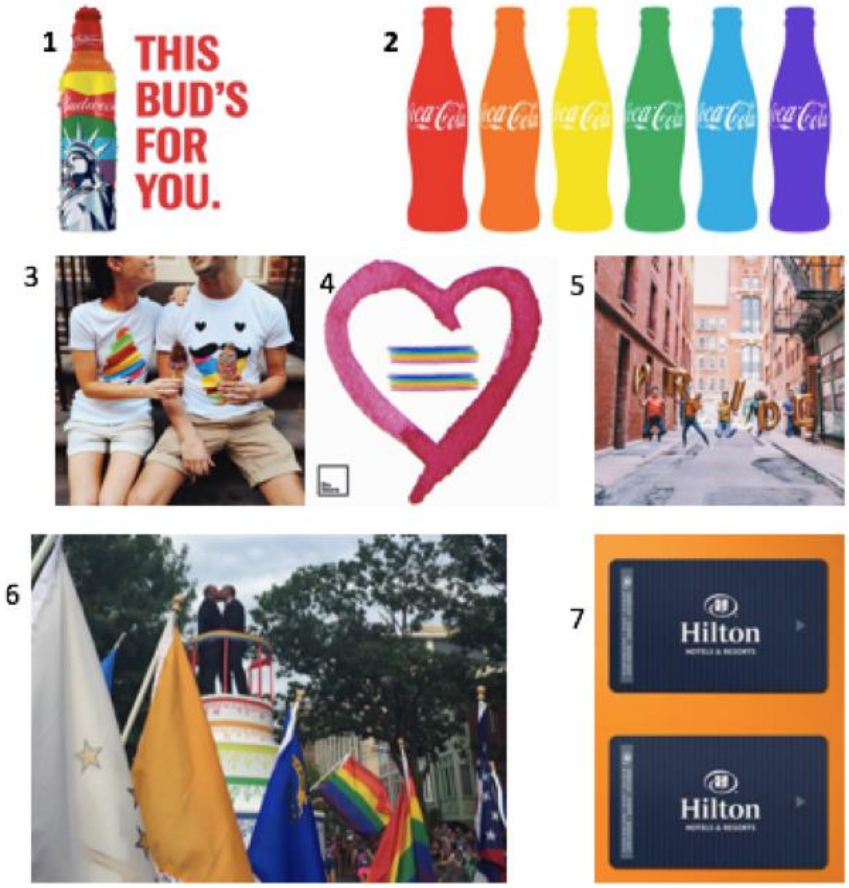
3. Gap: 19.8K likes. We are excited to celebrate Pride this month with our friends at @biggayicecream! If you're in New York City be sure to swing by our store on 5th Ave & 54th Street starting tomorrow through July 26th to join the celebration. #NYCPride2015

4. Gap: 18.6K likes. Equality is always in style. We've been proud supporters since #1969. #LoveWins #Pride2015 #LetsDoMore Read more through the link in our profile.

5. Gap: 17.8K likes. When Doris and Don Fisher opened the first Gap store on Ocean Avenue in San Francisco in 1969, they did so with a simple promise: to do more than sell clothes.

6. Hilton Hotels: 416 likes. Sometimes you just have to make your own rainbow @CapitalPrideDC! #EqualityAtPlay #DCPride

7. Hilton Hotels: 547 likes. Love is the key. #LoveIsLove



Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 165-178

"I Lived Because I Was Blessed": Coping Strategies of American Prisoners of War

Scott Church

In order to survive one of the most stressful situations humans can endure, prisoners of war must develop personal coping strategies. Through a grounded theory analysis of the memoirs of three former prisoners of war, the present study sought to discover how American former POWs articulated what coping strategies they used in their personal narratives. It found the following themes: Numbness, solidarity, faith, humor, familiarity as comfort, aggression, danger, self-discipline, and mental and physical fitness.

In the popular imagination, prisoners of war (POWs) are justifiably portrayed as heroes. However, these mediated representations are usually inaccurate in depicting the suffering the POWs truly endure (Young, 1998). POWs, instead, become a synecdoche for American freedom, as in the case of the film *Rambo* (Budra, 1990). In these portrayals, the heroic rescue of POWs functions as a cinematic trope; rather than attempting to accurately depict their survival despite living in destitute conditions, the films appropriate POWs as a means of putting matters "right" and symbolically winning conflicts like Vietnam (Sutton & Winn, 2001). However, amidst these sensationalist narratives, the true courage exhibited by these men and women through their shared coping strategies is sometimes neglected.

Coping during and after a process of being inflicted with psychological trauma is an essential aspect of survival (Gotcher & Edwards, 1990). Coping, "the processes individuals use to modify adverse aspects of their environment as well as to minimize internal threat induced by stress," may help an individual maintain a sensation of control during a crisis (Fairbank, Hansen, & Fitterling, 1991, p. 274). This feeling of control, though it may not accurately reflect the actual situation, is essentially a response to a stressful situation, in which the individual struggles to re-establish homeostasis following change (Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, & Mullan, 1981). Certainly, one's self-esteem can be negatively impacted if he or she feels that the circumstances are beyond his or her control. The Americans who were taken captive as POWs were placed in severely trying situations out of their control, and, as such, were forced by circumstance to choose their own ways to cope. Even once the war completed, incidentally, it was often necessary for the individual to cope with post-traumatic stress disorder and other physiological challenges (Ferguson & Cassaday, 2002). Although some of the coping strategies were unique, others transcended the circumstances and the individual. This analysis seeks to discover strategies from the latter category, with the ultimate objective of understanding how American former POWs articulate their coping mechanisms as they endured the extreme stress of captivity.

Though the choice of strategy may vary based on one's identity and environment, the mutual ways to cope articulated below helped these POWs survive, by their own admission. Though there is much academic literature on coping strategies and some on prisoners of war, very little was discovered that pertained to how POWs or those that suffered trauma communicated about their experiences; some touched on the topic of good communication with families and social support networks being necessary to promote posttraumatic growth over time (Pearlin et al., 1981; Sterner & Jackson-Cherry, 2015). However, these articles only addressed communication in a cursory fashion. Mindful that the themes in the present analysis were given ex post facto by the POWs, the analysis will also cautiously address the nature of narratives of traumatic experiences.

Life-Strains and their Aftermath

Coping

According to a seminal study on the topic, coping refers to an individual's personal responses that work to "prevent, avoid, or control emotional distress" (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 3). Coping behavior can occur in

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The author wishes to thank Daniel Montez, Katie Klotzer, and the anonymous reviewers for their help with the manuscript.

several ways, including the following: responding to change the situation; responding to control the meaning of the situation after it has become stressful; and responding to control the stress that results. The key to managing these consequences is through the individual's perception of available resources. When one perceives ample resources available, one is better able to cope with life strains. Indeed, the response that most directly copes with the stress of a life-strain is the one that attempts to modify the situation. In order to cope with these situations successfully, it is best if the individual has a repertoire of coping "weapons" to combat the stressors.

Individuals are able to draw from different resources in order to cope with emotional disturbances: social resources, psychological resources, and specific coping responses. The first is concerned primarily with interpersonal networks, while the second uses characteristics such as self-esteem, self-denigration, or mastery to combat threats. The latter two describe what people are and what people do to deal with life stressors. *Self-esteem* refers to the positive attitude of the sufferer, while *mastery* refers to the belief that one is largely in control of his or her situation. *Self-denigration*, on the other hand, refers to the negative attitudes of the sufferer. Ultimately, the individual's constitutive psychological resources seem to be more effective than coping mechanisms by themselves (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). However, a combination of both tends to produce the most successful results.

One of the most frequent aspects in the literature is the conceptualization of coping strategies as being either *emotion-focused* or *problem-focused*. Essentially, these terms qualify coping strategies as generally relating to psychological responses or behavioral responses. Emotion-focused coping typically occurs when the individual assesses the situation and concludes that nothing can be done to modify its challenges (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These responses are analogous to the coping that seeks to control the meaning of the experience in order to assuage the related stressful response (Pearlin & School, 1978). Emotion-focused coping includes strategies like "selective attention, positive comparisons, and wresting positive value from negative events" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 150). Though these responses occur because the situation cannot be changed, they are still useful because they help the individual change the meaning of the threat, focusing instead on maintaining hope.

Problem-focused coping is behavioral in nature. Considering the environment to be potentially alterable, these strategies aim to modify the situation by solving or removing the problem therein. These strategies, however, are not exclusively external; they can be directed internally as well, as when the sufferer chooses to make a plan of action before he or she implements it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Each of these strategies can facilitate or hinder the success of the other in the coping process as they often occur concurrently. Still, the individual who successfully copes generally does so because he or she uses both functions depending on the type of stressful situation.

Each coping function is present in the suffering of POWs. For the most part, problem-focused coping tended to result in less distress and PTSD because survivors were able to be proactive about solutions such as talking to others, positively reinterpreting past events, and actively planning how they would overcome distress (see Weinburg, 2011; Simoni & Ng, 2000). Emotion-focused strategies were more avoidant and disengaging.

POWs and PTSD

Prisoners of war and PTSD are often coupled together in the literature. Fairbank, Hansen, and Fitterling (1991) examined the differences between coping strategies employed by prisoners of war with PTSD, without PTSD, and noncombat veterans. They identified one aspect of cognitive coping that manifested itself in the form of appraisal, or the process of evaluating important facets of a stressful event through its threat potential, meaningfulness, predictability, and controllability. After they collected their data, they found that although both POW groups appraised the predictability of their WWII memories equally, the group with PTSD perceived their memories as being more uncontrollable. This supports the idea that perceived controllability is a "critical cognitive factor in human adaptation to extreme events" (p. 279). Likewise, they found that the POWs with PTSD used more coping behaviors and with more frequency than their counterparts. Some coping strategies they used were wishful thinking, self-blame, self-isolation, and seeking social support. Conversely, Fairbank et al. (1991) found that the POWs who were well adjusted, or who did not have PTSD, used the strategy of emphasizing the positive to assuage negative effects from their WWII memories. Emphasizing the positive can assist in one's capability to perceive traumatic events and memories as more controllable.

Another study on coping strategies focused on the central role humor played for POWs during captivity, as well as after they returned home. Henman (2001) found that humor was tremendously important to help them through the struggle. Indeed, they reported that several of the participants in the study would risk being tortured so

they could tell a joke to uplift the spirits of fellow prisoners. Even decades later, these POWs recalled the funny stories and jokes they shared fondly, even humorously referring to themselves and their former cellmates as "ex-cons." Henman (2001) saw humor not only as a positive emotion but also as means for resilience that allowed the soldiers to be unified.

The literature on coping contained some information on the relationship between religion and trauma. One study found that people who were devout in a faith ("intrinsically religious") were more positive in response to pending trauma compared to nonreligious people (Fischer, Greitemeyer, Kastenmüller, Jonas, & Frey, 2006). In short, intrinsically religious people exhibited more positive appraisals of traumatic situations (e.g., "it was God's will that this should happen") compared to negative appraisals (e.g., "how could God allow this to happen?"). The more intrinsically religious individuals also experienced less PTSD symptoms (Berzengi, Berzenji, Kadim, Mustafa, & Jobson, 2016; Fischer et al., 2006). Also notable was that the manner an individual followed the tenets of his or her religion previously was not as effective as what they did to practice these beliefs during the time of distress (Sterner & Jackson-Cherry, 2015).

People suffering from cancer or other terminal diseases also are in special need of coping with trauma. Weisler (2006), a cancer patient herself, disclosed that her most effective coping strategies were based upon Reality Therapy, a method for coping developed by William Glasser (Weisler, 2006). The goal of these cancer patients using Reality Therapy was to transform themselves from victim to hero by changing their ways of coping. Several of the conclusions from the study were as follows: "[S]ick patients have to control their lives and take responsibility for what is going to happen, and how to face their cancer" (p. 39). Likewise, they must "adopt a positive attitude and continue to lead a normal life while dealing with and/or recovering from a disease; to change the disease from a stressful situation to the more important project of life" and ultimately "to focus on life rather than death; to choose to contend with the challenges of life and the future; to set new goals that would help motivate and prolong life" (p. 39). Much as with self-esteem (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978), the most significant strategies in Weisler (2006) focused on maintaining a positive attitude despite severely trying circumstances.

Gotcher and Edwards (1990) conducted a similar study among cancer patients. Their research was conducted to determine how each individual diagnosed with cancer would cope with the situation and the realization that the probability of surviving was not ideal. To do so, the researchers chose to analyze the coping strategies through the afflicted's communications with others, both imagined and real. From the study, they determined that "fear reduction [among the patients] is associated with [the] amount of communication about one's illness" (p. 255). Further, communication satisfaction was achieved in the patients through "communicating about one's illness, receiving information about the disease, asking questions of the health care professionals, and using communication to deal with fears" (p. 263).

Narratives and Communication

Communication can help the individual throughout the difficult experience as well as after. Gilmore (2001) argued that the act of sharing one's personal narrative allows people to not only represent themselves as unique individuals with unique experiences, but as a sort of champion, or "one [who] may stand for many" (p. 19). This two-fold mission of an autobiography is therefore suited to explicate traumatic life experiences.

One important caveat to using autobiography as a means for telling the story of the self is its intertwining relationship with judgment. The experiential quality of trauma cannot be separated from its retelling; they are threaded together. Gilmore (2001) stated that, "In requiring testimony to take certain forms, judgment defines what cannot be said as much as what can, and, in establishing these forms as truthful, produces form as the grounds for experimentation" (p. 145). Ultimately, because judgment is required to author an autobiography (i.e., deciding on what memories and even what details from those memories to use), memoirs themselves become altered from reality. This alteration could, in turn, form coping mechanisms the POWs use to regulate both past and present trauma and frame how they reflect on their memories altogether. This is not to say that when individuals reorganize the traumatic material for the narrative that they are attempting to deceive the listener; rather, they may not yet capable of expressing "an as-yet-undefined injury" (Gilmore, 2001, p. 26).

Though inaccurate an autobiography may be, the very act of talking through traumatic experiences can be important to the survivor's healing process. In the case of trauma, there is a difference between surviving the event and being merely alive after it (Brison, 1999). Survivors of trauma may feel as if their old self is lost or even dead

after the experience, despite the fact they are still alive. Communicating the experience to others and making sense of it can help the suffering individual regain him- or herself. Thus, for a survivor to record these narratives can be tremendously therapeutic—assuming that the listener is empathetic and appreciates the story.

In light of the preceding research, the following research questions were proposed for the present study to explicate the POW memoirs:

RQ1: Which coping strategies are frequently mentioned in each of the three narratives?

RQ2: Why were the particular strategies significant or worth remembering to the former POWs?

RQ3: Did the former POWs tend to use emotion-focused coping strategies or problem-focused strategies?

Method

In order to answer these research questions, certain qualitative methods of analysis were necessary. The present study used grounded theory to interpret a thematic analysis of the memoirs of the three POWs. To effectively utilize grounded theory, Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommended that the researcher use sampling, coding, and the writing of memos in his or her analysis. The coding procedure employed in this study has resulted in an analysis of the utterances to discover common themes throughout the writings.

Regarding grounded theory as a means of research, Kulich, Berggren, and Hallberg (2003) explained that a valid theoretical model "has credibility and trustworthiness…if the identified concepts and categories emerge consistently and are illustrated and validated in the additional interviews" (p. 176). According to these criteria, the validity of each theme was indicated based upon the frequency of its occurrence. As a limitation to these particular criteria, only one "additional interview" is available: A public forum Ray Church presented in the Salt Lake City public library sixty years after returning home from captivity. The same themes he mentioned in his memoir were also reiterated in this forum (Church, 2006). Still, the writings analyzed for the present study are extremely rich with qualitative data that clearly illustrates the cognitive reasoning for the employment for each of the strategies. It was concluded that the intimate tone of these memoirs will provide ample evidence to answer the second research question.

Creswell (2007) argued that the intent of a grounded theory study is to "move beyond description and…generate or discover a theory" (p. 63). With that in mind, theories in this area should be grounded in data, or the collection of information that results from action, interactions, or the social processes of people. Grounded theory posits that situations or experiences should be its unit of analysis. There are two approaches to grounded theory: the systematic procedures of Strauss and Corbin and the constructivist approach of Charmaz (Creswell, 2007). The first approach seeks to develop a theory that explicates the process, action, or interaction of a topic. This entails that the researcher generally conduct 20-30 interviews to collect data.

With the second approach, grounded theory supports a social constructivist perspective, or a viewpoint that emphasizes the multiple realities, varying local domains, and the intricacies of thoughts, ideas, and actions. This approach accentuates the views, values, beliefs, and assumptions of individuals, rather than their exclusive actions. That being said, both approaches work to explain or create a theory based off of data collection, or an analysis of interviews, personal observations, documents, or audiovisual materials. The present study aims to use the social constructivist perspective in order to evince personal insights and beliefs from the pages of the memoirs.

The texts used for this study are the memoirs of three American former POWs. In this case, each was also a white, Christian male. Each POW autobiography is an account of his experiences from the beginning of the captivity to the end of the war when he was released from bondage. In each memoir, all of which have been published, utterances were considered significant only if they explicitly related to raising the morale of the POW or the morale of his fellow prisoners. This decision was made based upon the assumption that high morale is a manifestation of successful coping strategies (Wong & Wong, 2005). In addition to the morale qualifier, other themes emerged from the data if they were mentioned multiple times by each POW. In an effort to answer the second research question, other utterances derived from the analysis were selected to demonstrate a significant strategy to give additional insight into the cognitive processes of that particular prisoner of war.

Background of the POWs

The subjects of this study were, at the time of their respective captures, all young men at the healthiest phase of their lives thus far. Each was physically conditioned to the satisfaction of his branch of the military and each was a respected figure in his hometown. At the beginning of their captivities, each man had high expectations for his service and hoped to return home quickly (Jacobsen, 2004; Chesley, 1973; Church, 2002). For their health, possessions, and freedom to be taken away from them at this stage of their lives suggests the degree of the devastation each of them felt.

Larry Chesley was a young man from Idaho who was stationed in Thailand after he volunteered for service in the Air Force. When he was sent to Vietnam in early 1966, he anticipated returning to his wife and children in time for Christmas. However, while he was flying a mission over North Vietnam, his plane was shot down and he was transported to the notorious *Hoa Lo* or "Hanoi Hilton" for imprisonment. Ultimately, he was a prisoner of war from April of 1966 to February of 1973 (Chesley, 1973).

Ray H. Church was raised in Delta, Utah and volunteered to be a Marine shortly before World War II began. The day after the attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Japanese invaded the island of Guam, where he was stationed. Church was taken as a prisoner of war and remained in captivity in Japan from December of 1941 to August of 1945 (Church, 2002).

Gene S. Jacobsen was a 19 year-old man from Idaho stationed in the Philippines as a member of the Army Air Corps. Within five months of beginning his service, World War II began in that theater with the attacks on Pearl Harbor. He was sent to endure the brutal Bataan death march, then was imprisoned first in the Philippines and then finally in Japan. He was ultimately a prisoner of war from April of 1942 to August of 1945. Incidentally, of the 207 prisoners who accompanied him through the death march, only 65 survived to return to the United States (Jacobsen, 2004).

Findings

The thematic analysis of the memoirs yielded nine noteworthy findings: Numbness, solidarity, faith, humor, familiarity as comfort, aggression, danger as entertainment, self-discipline, and mental and physical fitness. The following examples shed light upon each of the themes.

Numbness

Through Chesley's (1973) seven years of captivity, he felt he became numb to his environment:

> The year 1969 was sort of a nondescript year. Somehow, time just passed…the best part of all was that by the end of 1969 we began to feel a little more secure. We were apparently not going to be tortured any more. Now we just had to hang on. With God's help I'd done that in the tougher conditions of the nearly four previous years. With the same help I could hang on in the less difficult times ahead. (p. 33)

This same numbness Chesley exhibited became a defense mechanism for him against his environment. He chose to downplay some of his trials: for example, when one of his cellmates had severe diarrhea for "almost the entire time [they] were there," it became an extremely unpleasant experience for Chesley. However, he chose not to dwell on the circumstance more than he needed to. It was "just another one of those more minor problems we got used to" (p. 42).

Church also vaguely noticed the passage of time, but chose not to feel despair by it: "Time went on somehow, but each day there were fewer of us to greet it. We felt out of touch with the world as a whole; one day passed much as the next" (Church, 2002, p. 50). After some time had passed, the feeling of numbness escalated into a form of bravado, because Church had already experienced his worst expectations: "We who had survived Tanagawa hadn't much fear left. What was left to fear?" (p. 52).

In his respective camp, Jacobsen offered a similar assessment of his situation: "By this time hundreds of Americans had died and had been buried at O'Donnell. Prospects of our surviving as prisoners weren't too good, so there wasn't much to be happy about except the fact that we were still alive" (Jacobsen, 2004, p. 106).

Solidarity

Solidarity emerged repeatedly from the analysis of the data. The "brotherhood" among the captured men seemed to transcend many of the horrors they had experienced. Chesley (1973) stated that many of the prisoners were able to cope because:

> We tried to be considerate of one another, not to be down on each other, or criticize each other, or say cutting things. Naturally we slipped sometimes, but I believe this negative kind of reaction was kept to an absolute minimum. On the positive side, acts of service and kindness, even at risk of punishment, were commonplace. When men were sick, roommates would give them their clothing to help them get warmer and stronger. (p. 103)

Likewise, he shared an intense degree of unity with the others held captive:

> Morale is a matter of mind and heart more than of circumstances. As prisoners we were members of a unique brotherhood; we were united against our captors; and we were loyal to the best that was in us. This unity engaged the mind and the heart on a high plane and helped us to overcome the unpleasant surroundings and overlook each other's human failings. (p. 108)

Church (2002) also correlated unity with serving each other. He said that the service conducted by some of his fellow prisoners "earned the respect of hundreds of POWs who owed their lives" to these men (p. 51).

Singing together also brought a sense of unity. Church (2002) wrote that some of his most treasured memories of his imprisonment related to singing:

> We sang and talked to ease our loneliness. Major Spicer had a good voice and loved to sing. Of course, it was like a tonic to me and, I suppose the others, too…who never missed a session. We all needed the comfort and the true pleasure that comes from singing. Our quartets began to attract large groups. What a lift that singing was to our morale, whether we were listening or singing. (p. 33)

When all of the prisoners at Church's camp discovered that the U.S. had won the war, they immediately started singing until they were exhausted.

In the Philippines, Jacobsen (2004) treasured the feeling of unity so much that he dreaded the time that he would be separated from his friends:

> I did hate to see us separated even for the day because we had become so dependent upon each other for moral support. We talked with each other a great deal and made every effort to be optimistic, even in spite of our predicament. (p. 129)

Similarly, assemblies among the POWs "caused our morale to soar…During the middle of the afternoon word was passed quietly that there would be an assembly of POWs in the northern compound…Quickly but quietly the men assembled, then just as quickly two fellows spread out before us a large American flag. Underneath was a large printed sign: 'We'll be free in '43!'" (pp. 146-147).

Faith and Worship

Chesley (1973) effectively summarized one of the dominant themes when he quoted the adage "There are no atheists in foxholes" (p. 81). Before meals and on Sundays, the prisoners would send a secret signal around the prison and then commence to recite the 23rd Psalm, offer a prayer, and then pledge allegiance to the flag. Speaking of these weekly Sunday services from which each man participated in his respective cell, Chesley explained:

> To others, each of us might have seemed alone, but to us the separating walls were insignificant for those few minutes on Sunday. We were together in spirit…There's nothing like prisoner-of-war life in a

> communist country to emphasize the importance of religion and patriotism in one's life, and we made love of God and our country the paramount theme and an anchor to our souls throughout those years. (p. 21)

Likewise, "our daily prayers and our scanty religious and patriotic services, conducted privately but simultaneously each Sunday, were strong sustainers of morale" (pp. 98-99).

Even as Chesley was falling to the earth from his burning plane, he felt of the presence of divinity in his life:

> I sincerely believed I would return home in safety if I did my best to live right. There was comfort in this thought as I floated to earth…I had tried to keep close to the Lord when I *wasn't* in trouble. I felt that he would help me now that I *was.*" (Chesley, 1973, p. 6, original emphasis)

This same belief helped sustain Chesley throughout the rest of his internment.

Church (2002) claimed that his survival was due to more than simply luck:

> I lived because I was blessed. First of all, I was the right age. Had I been thirty years older, I wouldn't have made it, and I was in fairly good shape when the war started. Second, I think I had a desire to make it. (p. 45)

Church's favorable physical condition and age were due, in part, to the belief that a higher power had provided him with it.

As Jacobsen continued to survive all of the appalling circumstances, he began to wonder how he was doing it: "I consoled myself with the feeling that the Mormons must be praying for their members because, in my case at least, someone was looking after me reasonably well under the circumstances" (Jacobsen, 2004, p. 165).

It is noteworthy that the prisoners of war mentioned their faith so frequently to comfort them; prayer and devotion seemed to dominate their thoughts.

Humor

Each POW claimed that humor was vital to his survival. One time, Chesley's (1973) cellmates went out to a pit to empty their waste buckets. They were so excited to find some hidden notes from the other prisoners that they started to return with the buckets full until they realized they had forgotten to empty them. When the others saw this through the peepholes they had made, his fellow prisoners "were convulsed in uncontrollable laughter" (p. 43). Chesley admitted that "one of the most significant things that helped us hang on over there was a sense of humor, being able to laugh at each other and ourselves…We had some riotous times laughing at some of the silly little things that happened. I think I may have laughed harder in prison than I have ever laughed at anything in my life" (p. 78).

In Japan, Church (2002) recalled that one of the prisoners was always so smug and upset that they ironically nicknamed him "Happy" (p. 48). He summed up this strategy as such: "To be able to joke, bet, and laugh is very special when one is surrounded by the enemy" (p. 62). Continuing, Church said: "We men would tease and kid each other, to take our minds off our dreary life" (p. 61). As an example, one time he and another cellmate nailed a fellow cellmate's shoes to the floor of the room. When the cellmate tried to pick them up, "he thought his strength had at last failed him. [As they watched, they] nearly choked holding back the laughs" (p. 61). Stunts like these were vitally important for the prisoners.

The humor helped the prisoners overcome the fear of their surroundings. In the Philippines, Jacobsen (2004) and his cellmates learned of their captors' humorous nicknames: "Donald Duck," "Big Speedo," "Little Speedo," "Mortimer Snerd," and "Smiley" (p. 157). As his camp was debating about which slogan to use for 1944, they decided to use "Mother's Door in '44" since their previous slogan "Free in '43" had not come to fruition. Jokingly, they decided the other option "Frisco whore in '44" did not stimulate quite as much enthusiasm as the latter (p. 163). Finding the humor in the situation was essential to providing morale to the men.

Familiarity as Comfort

When Chesley arrived in Vietnam for his internment, he discovered that the American prisoners had nicknamed the main prison compound the Hanoi Hilton. There were camps called "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Little Vegas," with the latter's rooms dubbed Las Vegas casino names like Desert Inn, Stardust, Golden Nugget, The Mint, and The Thunderbird (Chesley, 1973, p. 16). The prisoners would frequently talk about what they loved and missed about home: "We would describe in mouthwatering detail different types of dishes our wives made that we liked so much" (p. 43). He told the others that if he could have any food in the world to eat right then, it would be a hamburger and a milkshake, the most American food he could think of.

Jacobsen also spoke longingly with his fellow POWs in the Philippines: "The talk at the spare-time bull sessions always focused on either food or home, but mostly on food. The guys would tell of meals they had had at home, or were going to have, until all mouths watered" (Jacobsen, 2004, p. 159).

In the barracks in Japan on one of his first nights there, Church (2002) found a small degree of comfort in familiarity: "the nauseating smell of old horse manure reminded me of the barn and corral at home. It didn't take much to make me think of home. It's funny how dear things become when you're faced with the prospect of never seeing them again!" (p. 32). Something as mundane as the smell of manure provided Church with the comfort he needed.

Aggression

Many of the prisoners not only suffered from the adverse conditions of prison life, they suffered from hatred for the enemy. This hatred was largely motivating; on some occasions, however, it escalated into violence. One day when he was feeling "more dead than alive," Chesley could not move because of the intensity of his physical agony. His cellmate, Jim Ray, started yelling for the guard. When the guard arrived, he commenced to beat Chesley with his shoe until Ray "picked the guard up, and threw him out of the room." The guard threatened Ray, and Ray shouted back "If you hit me with that I'm going to take it away from you and beat the hell out of you" (Chesley, 1973, p. 27).

Violent responses spread across boundaries and wars as well. In particular, their anger was aimed more at corrupt or traitorous American officers than the Japanese captors. Church had a superior officer, a man named McLain who was American, and yet worked only to please the Japanese captors. At one point, Church was so infuriated by McLain's traitorous position that he went into McLain's office, jumped over his desk and beat him about the head in a severe manner. Once Church took his punishment for the carnage and returned to the camp, "[e]very man in camp welcomed me with a clap on the back and glowing admiration. I was the camp hero" (Church, 2002, pp. 38-39).

In Jacobsen's camp, there was also an American officer who catered to the Japanese by guarding his own men. This action evoked much anger among his fellow POWs. Jacobsen's wrath was also kindled by fellow prisoners who did not respect each other. When one of the prisoners stole Jacobsen's leather shoes, he felt an intense feeling of disdain for him. When Jacobsen (2004) at last encountered this same man months later at another barracks, he "almost beat him to death" and then forced the man to wear a sign around his neck for ten days afterward admitting to his thefts and admonishing all around him that he was not to be trusted (p. 169). Though their aggression and sometime violence were never specifically correlated with raising morale, they did offer a clear example of a problem-focused coping strategy for each of the POWs.

Danger

POWs were made stronger, physically and mentally, by attempting to entertain themselves through the element of danger. For example, the prisoners attempted to accomplish goals, like communication, without the guards discovering them. At Chesley's camp, the guards did not want the POWs to be able to see each other, but the men would poke holes in the tar-paper the guards would hang up to block off seeing the others. Chesley (1973) explained the entertainment of the thrilling task:

> Stimulated by the enemy's elaborate plans to the contrary, we made it a habit of watching each other going to and from the bath area, getting food, or pulling weeds in the sun on the rare occasion when we had the

> privilege. *We had a lot of fun doing this* and got a lot of information which we duly passed around from room to room. (p. 37, emphasis added)

Secret communication also provided this element of danger in the lives of the POWs. In his first cell, Chesley heard a prisoner singing the tune of "Besame Mucho" from the next cell, asking questions and giving instructions while singing the melody. Each time, Chesley would cough as a coded answer to the other prisoner's questions. Prisoners would also sing in order to communicate: "Some prisoners had a personal song—'The Yellow Rose of Texas' for example. When you heard this being whistled or hummed or sung, you knew that So-and-So was out washing his clothes, or whatever else he was doing. This told you, for instance, that he was still around, still in his particular camp" (p. 35). Chesley also offered perhaps the most important reason for this communication: "[The system of secret communication] occupied our time, kept us informed, stimulated a proper resistance to our captors, and encouraged us with the implicit reminder that each of us was part of a larger, concerned unit" (p. 98).

In order to survive, Church (2002) and many of the other prisoners in his camp used a tactic called "strafing." Strafing was actually a term the POWs used originally to describe a low-flying airplane that destroyed the cities in its path. Likewise, the POWs in Church's camp adopted the practice, but used the term instead to describe the practice of stealing incoming food supplies off the dock. The rations were scarce in Church's camp and were not enough to sustain life for more than several months. Yet the men in the camp were healthier and better nourished than at any other camp Church had seen. Church (2002) justified the practice as more than a simple thrill:

> This was war, and it was our duty to escape and foil the plans of the enemy in any way we could. Maybe this was a way to justify our conscience, but "strafing" was perfect in describing the way boxes looked after hungry POWs got through hitting them…we quickly found that the reason for the better condition of the Umeda veterans was their chance to supplement their diet by strafing from the cars along the tracks and at the docks. The men who couldn't strafe starved to death on the rations. At first there were bunglings in learning to strafe, and then beatings for getting caught, but amazingly soon the new men became excellent strafers. When their lives literally depended on their success at strafing, their cleverness became a wonder even to themselves sometimes. The strafing served as a form of entertainment to relate the various narrow escapes to the others, helping to boost the prisoner's morale in their cleverness over the captors. (p. 54)

Jacobsen (2004) had a similar experience as his group languished in the Bataan death march: "The only times we had anything to eat or drink were when we would steal a stalk of sugarcane from an adjacent field or a cup of water from one of the many flowing wells along the road we were traveling" (p. 86). As his captivity continued, he learned the utility of stealing not only to nourish themselves, but to learn the skill as a challenge: "We learned to become skilled thieves and stole from the Japanese every time the opportunity presented itself. Many times we risked getting a severe beating by smuggling items into camp to other men" (p. 148). In many cases, this acquired skill of thievery was the very thing that kept the prisoner alive.

Self-Discipline

Though the captors tried to break the men's spirits, they could not because of "the strong U.S. military discipline [the POWs] managed to maintain and the self-discipline which this encouraged" (Chesley, 1973, p. 51). Chesley gave several examples of the discipline he had learned and how it impacted his stay in Vietnam: "One thing that improved morale in the long-term when we went into the large room was the implementation of U.S. military discipline in ways previously impossible" (p. 100). His military experience also provided a much needed relief to the chaos of war: "When we moved into the large room in November 1970, we organized immediately in the military sense" (p. 101).

Church (2002) felt his personal level of self-discipline awarded him many opportunities he would have otherwise missed. At one point, the captors told the camp that "ten lucky men would have their names drawn to broadcast over short wave to their families in America" (p. 34). When Church learned that his name was not drawn, he offered a pack of cigarettes he had saved for such a situation to one of the fellow prisoners who had been chosen. The other prisoner could not pass up the opportunity for the cigarettes, offered Church his spot in return. Because

"cigarettes didn't control [him]," concluded Church, he was able to let his family know that he was still alive (p. 34). He was also able to trade cigarettes again afterwards to be able to send a letter home to the States.

Likewise, Jacobsen (2004) used cigarettes for bartering, and was able to do so because he had controlled himself to not be dependent on the tobacco. Jacobsen described one of his coping strategies in a remarkably similar fashion: "It was during this period, more than ever before in my life, that personal discipline was required" (p. 87).

Mental and Physical Fitness

Chesley was fortunate enough to have "classes" with his cellmates in which they would memorize poems, work on their singing, and would have foreign language lessons from those in the camp who spoke another language. As a result, Chesley said he learned twenty poems as a prisoner of war. For Jacobsen (2004), relief came in the form of speaking about poems with his lieutenant: "I spent hours talking with him and learning many poems that he would write down for me. I must have learned dozens, some of which I still remember" (p. 164). The prisoners all chose to participate in these classes because they recognized the importance of maintaining sharp minds. As Chesley described: "We loved each other in the Christian sense, we helped each other, we taught each other, and we tried to keep ourselves busy, especially our minds" (Chesley, 1973, p. 29).

Church (2002) said many times he was grateful he was not an officer, because they were not permitted to work in the camps. He believed that the officers were the ones who suffered the most: "Work was my salvation; it kept me too busy to think. Had I been an officer, I would not have been permitted to work. We were luckier to have something to do to relieve the monotony with physical activity and mental alertness in working" (p. 54).

Jacobsen (2004), in his respective environment, confirmed the same feeling:

> After about six weeks I was sent back to the work side of camp and was happy to go. First, I was happy that I was well enough to go, and second, on that side of the camp we were forced to work, and keeping busy helped to make the time pass much faster. There the morale of the men was much better, also. (p. 165)

Likewise, personal hygiene was just as important to the prisoners as keeping mentally and physically fit. For example, when Chesley (1973) mentioned the times he was "allowed" to bathe or to shave, he spoke of it like a privilege. One time as a reward, the Vietnamese allowed the men lye soap more frequently and to shave twice a week. Even when the POWs had to use "surface sewage water" to bathe, it was "only just better than not bathing at all" (p. 41).

Once, Church's (2002) cellmate said: "Church, this filth kills more of us than any other thing!" (p. 47). Hygiene was so important to the prisoners, that one of them had smuggled in an old razor blade, and more than forty POWs used it for more than a year—literally wearing it out. By staying busy, working hard, and maintaining their hygiene the best they could, they attempted to control their circumstances by making them appear more like the normalcy of home.

Discussion

The themes that most frequently emerged in the narratives of the POWs were numbness, solidarity, faith, humor, familiarity as comfort, aggression, danger, self-discipline, and mental and physical fitness. Each of these common themes were clustered around utterances related to raising morale for the prisoners and the camp. Though each theme can be generally categorized under the emotion-focused or problem-focused function, some of the strategies—familiarity as comfort, aggression, danger, self-discipline, and mental/physical fitness—are unique to the literature.

The strategies that received the most mention by each POW were solidarity, faith, and humor. Returning to Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) description of the structure of coping, the analysis revealed the POW narratives exhibited a combination of each of the three resources, social and psychological resources, as well as specific coping responses. The interpersonal communication exhibited between the POWs and their cellmates drew upon social resources that ultimately built their solidarity.

The faith exhibited by the POWs had a multifaceted coping function, using both the emotion-focused and problem-focused functions. The faith strategy was emotion-focused when it was psychological, in the cases when the individual determined he could not modify his situation, like when Chesley fell to the earth after being shot down from his airplane. In each of these cases, the POWs silently resigned their fate to a higher power, deriving a measure of peace of mind from the realization. However, each also participated in faith as a problem-focused coping strategy. This was apparent when they would actively worship with other prisoners of faith. When they would minister to each other through service, reciting scripture, or singing sacred hymns, they enacted behavioral responses to their situation by actively striving to change morale. Each approach to the situation appears to have been dictated depending on which individual was involved; emotion-focused coping seemed to follow an internal, psychological process of self-assessment, usually in the form of intrapersonal communication. Faith as a strategy of problem-focused coping usually appeared when it involved associating with their fellow prisoners. In these cases, this variety of coping strategy was largely related to interpersonal communication. These findings are noteworthy regarding the scholarly conversation on the topic because they suggest that faith can function as an emotion-focused strategy or a problem-focused strategy, at least in this particular case study. By envisioning the role of communication as a way to bridge both types of coping strategies, the present study reconciles conflicting literature, which argues that religion is either problem-focused (Simoni & Ng, 2000) or emotion-focused (Weinberg, 2011).

Humor also played a major role in the survival of Jacobsen, Church, and Chesley. In this case, humor was mostly behavioral and problem-focused. In each of their utterances regarding humor, the men were interacting with at least one of their peers, whether it was telling jokes or playing pranks. By so doing, they were able to directly impact the morale of the camps by lifting their spirits and exerting some level of control over their devastating circumstances. Their use of humor supports Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) assertion that the meaning of a threatening situation can be changed:

> The same experience may be highly threatening to some people and innocuous to others, depending on how they perceptually and cognitively appraise the experience…One's ability to ignore selectively is helped to trivializing the importance of that which is noxious and magnifying the importance of that which is gratifying. (pp. 6-7)

These coping strategies were not conditional upon the physical environment. Other strategies such as exercising the body, cleanliness, or danger as entertainment, for example, could be taken away by the captors, thus eliminating those strategies for the POW. Faith, solidarity, and humor, being dependent upon the sufferer's attitude, however, can exist in the most destitute of circumstances because each can "perceptually and cognitively [re]appraise the experience" (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 6). According to the qualitative comments of the POWs, these particular strategies resonated with them because the strategies counterbalanced the negative effects of the horrors and death that had become commonplace in their everyday lives.

There were more themes from the analysis that demonstrated Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) varieties of coping. The emotion-focused coping strategies included numbness, faith, solidarity, and familiarity. These strategies were attempts not at modifying the situation, but at changing the meaning of the experience. These also exhibited the same traits as one of the most common coping strategies, the positive comparisons, which focused on the positive elements of the situation.

The problem-focused coping strategies included humor, aggression, danger, self-discipline, and mental/physical fitness. These attempted to improve the situation by modifying it (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Examining the list of strategies situated in each category reveals more information about POW coping. The men used both emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies and, in some cases, both categories, depending upon the circumstance.

The structure of the memoirs also offers additional insights into the POWs' cognitive processes. In their research on the coping of child abuse survivors, Klein and Janoff-Bulman (1996) found that evidence of maladaptive coping was often demonstrated through the narrative focus of their trauma histories: other people tended to be the focus of these abuse narratives, especially the abusers. In the POW histories, on the other hand, each respective author is clearly the protagonist of the narrative with all other individuals being peripheral. The fellow prisoners

were mentioned much more frequently than the captors, and usually in the context of how they served or helped each other. Further, one of Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) coping resources, self-denigration, appeared to be missing. When describing himself, the tenor of the utterance was mostly positive, relating much more closely to the psychological resources of self-esteem and mastery. This is not to say that self-denigration did not exist in the psyches of the POWs, but, if it did, they chose to minimize or not disclose it in their narratives. Understood in the context of literature on coping and trauma narratives, then, it can reasonably be stated here that the narratives of Jacobsen, Church, and Chesley do not clearly demonstrate maladaptive responses to the stress of captivity.

Conclusion

After returning home, each POW was lauded as a hero for his determination and courage. Church, for example, received letters of commendation from two U.S. Presidents, as well as military and ecclesiastical leaders (Church, 2002). Each POW's successful efforts at coping with a difficult situation certainly played a part in his ultimate survival.

Part of the reason that these men were publicly lauded as heroes was because of their courage in handling their situations and surviving them. From examining their memoirs, it became apparent that each prisoner intuitively used coping strategies in effective ways. They used emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies with the intent to control their situation when possible or to endure it with patience when it could not be controlled. They each demonstrated a keen use of the psychological resources at their disposal, in particular *self-esteem* in an attempt to maintain a positive attitude and *mastery* to cognitively reframe each situation as being under control as opposed to being "fatalistically ruled" by circumstance (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

The present study focused only on the coping strategies that directly and positively impacted the morale of the prisoner and his camp. As such, it did not examine other psychological dimensions of coping such as self-denigration or the acquisition of a negative attitude. It also did not explore other less-affirming coping mechanisms such as those that *increase* the emotional distress of the sufferer, believing that one deserves to feel worse before one can feel better (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, despite the relatively narrow purview of the present study, the analysis reveals that it is not unprecedented that traumatic narratives can be rewritten by using all of the coping tools at one's disposal, and, in particular, gravitating toward self-esteem and mastery.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 179-190

Framing Analysis of Syria's 8/21/13 Use of Chemical Weapons

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The purpose of this paper was to examine the news source, tone of coverage, and the frames used by the New York Times and the Washington Post in reporting Syria's use of chemical weapons on August 21, 2013. Results of the study revealed that 50% of the news articles published from August 21, 2013 to October 1, 2013 were neutral on U.S. intervention in Syria's use of chemical weapons, while 24.03% and 25.97% were anti-U.S. intervention and pro-U.S. intervention, respectively. The two newspapers heavily relied on U.S. official sources, and used responsibility and conflict frames in reporting Syria's use of chemical weapons.

Keywords: Syria, Chemical Weapons, News Framing, U.S. Media

On July 1, 1968, when the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was opened for signature, Syria signed the treaty in Moscow with full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. The NPT recognizes the United Kingdom, Russia, China, France, and the United States as nuclear-weapon states. Becoming party to the NPT demanded deposition of instruments of accession, succession, or ratification to the capitals of the three designated depository states: Moscow (Russia), London (United Kingdom), and Washington, D.C. (United States). Syria deposited its instruments of ratification in Moscow on September 24, 1969. However, Syria seems to have overtly breached the agreement with the NPT.

This study examines two U.S. newspapers' coverage of Syria's August 21, 2013 use of chemical weapons; specifically, the framing of a mass destruction that was distant only in geography but closer in heart and mind to the United States, a depository state to the NPT. News reports (i.e., editorial choices) ultimately have the capability to wield influence over the course of events (Lynch, 2001). Therefore, how Syria is portrayed in the U.S. media has implications because the American public forms perceptions of the region's stability and people based on these reports. Boyd-Barret (2004) argued that the media tends to be bias in reporting conflict by reporting it from the point of view of the country of origin (of the media) and its foreign policy elites (in this case, Russia). According to Foucault (1980), this point of view is only a repetition or mirror of a cultural code that directs the character of knowledge; the framing of a story is a reflection of ideas engrained in a culture and fully dictates which discourse is acceptable. From Foucault's argument, we infer that the unique position of the United States as a depository state to the NPT will influence the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post's* news framing of Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons. These two news outlets are considered 'first-tier' or 'prestige-press' news sources (Boykoff, 2007). Policy makers routinely rely on them for important aspects of contemporary public discourse (Doyle, 2002; McChesney, 1999). Additionally, other news outlets across the nation often consult the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* for decisional cues on what to report (Boykoff, 2007). Selecting these two news outlets for this study broadens the possibility of examining the dominant news frames associated with Syria's use of chemical weapons in the U.S. media.

It is important to fully understand Syria's involvement in the use of chemical weapons as well as the context in which the United States functions as a depository state to the NPT in order to appreciate the scope of the news coverage as examined in this paper. In the next section, we provide background information to Syria's use of chemical weapons and elaborate on attempts made by the United States as a depository state in combating the use

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of chemical weapons, to argue for why it is important to examine the frames used to represent Syria in two influential U.S. media outlets.

Background to Syria's Use of Chemical Weapons

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) 2011 report to Congress indicated that Syria had been involved in a covert nuclear program with assistance from North Korea for more than a decade (Unclassified report…, n.d.). A nuclear reactor which could have been used to produce plutonium for chemical weapons was secretly constructed at Al Kibar, Syria, but destroyed in September, 2007. According to the ODNI 2011 report to Congress, Syria is in possession of "a large ballistic missile force that includes liquid-propellant Scud SRBMs and Scud-class variants such as Scud C and D" (p. 6).

The United Kingdom (Joint Intelligence Organization, 2013) and United States (The White House, 2013) issued public intelligence assessments on August 29, 2013, and August 30, 2013, respectively, stating that the government of Syria under the presidency of President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons on August 21, 2013, against the opposition-held Damascus suburb of Ghouta. British intelligence reported at least 350 fatalities (Joint Intelligence Organization, 2013). On the other hand, the United States government preliminary assessment revealed that 1,429 people including at least 426 children were killed in the August 21 attack even though the statistics could evolve upon further investigation (The White House, 2013). This action endangered Syria's bordering countries: Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq.

Prior to the August 21 attack, there were allegations on March 19, 2013, of Syria's use of chemical weapons against civilians in the village of Khan al-Assal (near Aleppo), and on June 13, 2013, the Syrian government had used chemical weapons on multiple occasions, on a small scale against the opposition (Nikitin, Kerr, & Feickert, 2013). Russia and the United States feared that Syria's use of chemical weapons in these outbreaks could escalate chemical weapon warfare or make chemical weapons accessible to terrorist groups. In light of this fear, some attempts were made to combat the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Russia and the United States have an "overwhelming mutual interest in combating nuclear proliferation" which can be traced to their neorealist goals of foreign policy and the past they share as great powers (McAllister, 2007, p. 279). Inasmuch as some issues require mutual concern in designing a framework of intervention, others require the respect of state sovereignty. McAllister (2007) suggested that issues such as religious radicalism, WMD proliferation, border security, and export controls should be dealt with cooperatively or multilaterally. Multilateralism is contrary to the trend of hegemonic or great-power politics and can be achieved by virtue of investment in international law and institutions. U.S. invasion to further security and Russia's insistence on single handedly addressing Islamic problems can alienate the international community to the background and further weaken the powers of the international community that should rather serve as a nation's best defense in a war of nuclear proliferation and terrorism.

The United States violates P-5 obligations under the NPT as Washington has abrogated the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and circumvented the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The United States has reserved the right to experiment and develop nuclear weapons and is in a strategic nuclear partnership with India. These actions may have rather incited competing states to secretly develop and contribute to the proliferation of WMD. Therefore, the current study is designed to examine how two prominent U.S. newspapers (through the editorial choices of its newspaper outlets) despite their country's circumvention of some aspects of the NPT, frame Syria as a culprit for breaching agreements with the NPT.

Framing

Research on framing can typically be traced to Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1974). Bateson described a psychological frame as a set of messages which includes and excludes some information. Goffman, on the other hand, described a frame as a way of defining and interpreting situations. According to Entman (1993), "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, more evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p. 52). There are two components of framing: selection and salience. In the description of a given situation, the message will include a selection of some aspects of the situation and exclude others. The decision to include some information is dependent on how salient that information is to the situation under

discussion. There is a myriad of definitions of news frames. Gitlin (1980) defined frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse" (p. 7). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) referred to frames as "interpretive packages" (p. 3). All four definitions emphasize the fact that frames reflect salience and this is simply captured in de Vreese's (2005) description of a frame as "an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic" (p. 53). The concept of news framing has widely been used in mass communication research (Bryant & Miron, 2004) but there is no universally accepted definition. Generally, researchers have used operational definitions of news frames as deemed fit for a specific study (de Vreese, 2005).

Entman (2004) associated the absence of a universally accepted definition of framing to the intangible nature of news frames and the fact that frames are a part of people's cognitive schemas and discussed as part of media coverage. For the purpose of this study, Entman's (1993) definition is employed and it is also the most cited definition on news framing (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2008). Scheufele (2000) further outlined the integral components of the framing process: (a) frame-building, (b) frame-setting, and (c) individual and societal level consequences of framing. Frame-building is a process that occurs in a continuous interaction among journalists, social movements, and elites (de Vreese, 2005). This interaction influences the structural qualities of news frames. Frame-setting occurs between individual's prior knowledge and or predisposition, and media frames. According to de Vreese (2005), this interaction has widely been studied with the aim of assessing the extent to which audiences react to news frames. News frames may influence audiences' interpretation and evaluation of events and issues. The influence of news frames can be experienced either at the individual or societal level. On the former level, attitudes can be altered due to exposure to a particular news frame while on the latter level, collective actions and decision making can be shaped.

Shen (2004) reported a correlation between media frames that are consistent with individual schemas and media effect on its audience. With regard to international events, studies (e.g., Clausen, 2003) have shown that journalists target a specific national audience by localizing the news story. Clausen (2003) reported that in a quest for local cultural framework, journalists in different countries relied on different elements as news communication strategies to report the September 11 attacks in the United States in their respective media. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identified three determinants of frames: media practices, sponsor activities, and cultural resonance. Reese, Gandy, and Grant (2001) also identified political actors and their ideologies, journalistic norms and routines, reporters' individual schemas, and culturally rooted interpretations, and outlooks as strategic communication actions that can influence news frames. Having examined the cultural differences between the way America and Greece reported the reasoning for the Kosovo war, Bantimaroudis and Kampanellou (2007) identified evidence of cultural portrayals in a considerable portion of media content. The researchers postulated that culture is increasingly a significant frame mechanism in explaining what drives modern conflicts. Research on news framing (e.g., Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2008; Entman, 2004) supports the view that news framing is impacted by the national political elites.

Journalism studies are usually focused on the sole application of news frames; journalist must know and understand the logistics of writing a piece that subtly influences readers, with emphasis on the idea that only one article cannot create an overarching mentality of the issue. However, in communication studies, scholars are particularly interested in ways in which strategic framing of news stories can potentially mold public discourse and influence opinions of the masses (Altheide, 1996). Two paradigms that explain framing research are agenda setting and priming. The typologies of framing research as expounded by Scheufele (1999) are: studying research frames as (a) media frames or (b) individual frames; and as opposed to studying frames as (c) dependent variables or (d) independent variables. In this study, we are interested in examining media frames.

Rationale

Framing has conceptually been categorized into two broad foundations: psychological (Goffman, 1974) and sociological (Iyengar, 1991). The sociological foundations focus on "frames in communication" (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 106). Research on framing based on the sociological foundations are tailored towards assessing the construction of the presentational styles (which includes images, phrases, and words) of news stories. Given that frames foster the organization of what people see in everyday life, the presentational style (frames) could have significant connotations on the interpretation of news stories. Though framing effects can be measured from both

the perspective of the audiences as well as the media (Scheufele, 1999), this study rationalizes media effects from the perspective of the media. Framing research in the past decade has concentrated more on the sociological aspects by examining message design (Borah, 2011).

With reference to the news coverage of the downing of Iran Air Flight 655 by a U.S. ship, and the destruction of Flight 007 of the Korean Airlines by a Soviet fighter jet, both happening in the 1980s, Entman (2004) reported that despite the similarity in the nature of the events, the U.S. media framed the former event as a technical problem and the latter event as a moral issue; this framing can be associated with the national interest of the U.S. administration. Yang (2003) also reported that the U.S. mainstream media framed NATO's involvement in the air strikes in former Yugoslavia as "humanitarian aid" whereas two Chinese newspapers framed NATO's involvement as "intervention." Findings from the two studies (Entman, 2004; Yang, 2003) support the fact that the national political environments in which journalists operate have an influence on news framing. Given that the United States is party to the NPT and a depository state, as expected, President Barack Obama, in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, decided to curb Syria's use of chemical weapons. President Obama was convinced that it was in the national security interest for the United States to take military action against Syrian regime targets. The President, however, faced congressional and public opposition and it appeared that "the specter of another Iraq" loomed over President Obama's decision to launch a military attack (Elving, 2013, para. 8).

If news framing is indeed influenced by the political environment and the dominant public opinion, then it is expected that the news coverage of Syria's use of chemical weapons in the U.S. newspapers will be neutral in the attempt to cover both the dominant public opinion and President Obama's decision. This dual stance in the presentation of news will be as a result of the disagreement on U.S. military intervention among President Obama, Congress, and the public. Thus, the following hypothesis was posited:

> H_1: The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* will have a neutral tone in the coverage of Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons, to reflect President Obama's decision to launch a military attack against the Assad regime, and congressional and public opposition to that decision.

News source is an essential framing mechanism in news reporting. According to Tumber and Palmer (2004), news media generally depend on official sources such as government and military sources for information, when reporting on conflicts. The challenge that the media may face is governments' control of information through restriction of access to conflict zones. Brown (2003) postulated that there is interdependence among the media, government, and military establishment. Herman and Chomsky (2002) argued that in the coverage of international events in the U.S. media, *the New York Times* particularly frame news to resonate the U.S. government policy and most often than not misrepresent events to project the interests of the *dominants*, thereby marginalizing the *other*. Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2008) also posited that the U.S. journalists heavily rely on U.S. official sources, and in the absence of foreign policy disputes, the official sources set the agenda for the media. Based on Dimitrova and Strömbäck's, and Herman and Chomsky's assertions, we posited the following hypothesis:

> H_2: The *New York Times* and *the Washington Post* will heavily rely on U.S. official sources in reporting Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons.

There are basically two approaches to examining news stories. One is the inductive approach where news stories are identified with a priori new frames. This approach is criticized for its difficulty in replication (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). The other approach is deductive where frames are operationalized prior to analysis of the news stories. It is more quantitative and convenient for the analysis of a large number of articles (Bosman & d'Haenens, 2008). Gan, Teo, and Detenber (2005) and Bosman and d'Haemens (2008) used the deductive method which employs generic frames and so does this study in examining news stories on Syria's use of chemical weapons.

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identified five generic frames: the conflict, responsibility, morality, economic consequences, and human-interest. Based on President Obama's conviction and determination to intervene with a military attack on the Assad regime, and congressional and public opposition to President Obama, it is expected that the U.S. media will employ conflict and responsibility frames more frequently to report on the conflict in Syria while projecting President Obama's position on U.S. intervention. Frames provide a dominant

interpretation through placement, repetition, and reinforcement of the images and texts that it constitutes so much so that the interpretation becomes readily acceptable, perceivable, and memorable than other interpretations of the text or image (Entman, 1991). The responsibility frame will be used frequently to solicit support for President Obama's position on U.S. intervention in the show of democracy as the President sought congressional authorization.

H_3: The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* will use the conflict and responsibility frames more frequently than the human interest, morality, and economic consequences frames in reporting Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons.

Method

Data Analysis

To test the predictions forwarded in the study, we conducted a quantitative content analysis of two U.S. newspapers: the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post.* The *New York Times* has long been studied as an international elite newspaper with an influence on the local and global media (Bantimaroudis & Kampanellou, 2007). The two newspapers were chosen for their quality and quantity in coverage (Downie & Kaiser, 2000). They are also recognized for their international presence, coverage of the federal government, and nationally organized news service (Vultee, 2010). The selection of the newspapers was not meant to reflect the poles of a partisan axis nor a neutral midpoint. Rather, the selection was primarily based on audience coverage and the fact that framing researchers have long studied these newspapers.

Procedure

The period from August 20, 2013, to October 2, 2013, was chosen as the content frame for the study. August 21, marked the day of the chemical weapons attack whereas October 1, 2013, marked the day the U.S. federal government entered a shutdown due to the disagreement on the budget for the fiscal year. The shutdown curtailed most routine operations of Congress and drifted the attention of the media from the Syrian conflict to matters at home. Additionally, on September 27, 2013, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons executive council took a decision to destroy Syria's chemical weapons and began on-site inspections of Syria's declared chemical weapons-related sites on October 1, 2013 (Nikitin et. al, 2013). Therefore, August 21 to October 1 was deemed an appropriate content frame.

Files from the newspapers in the Lexis-Nexis database were searched for content containing the word "Syria" and the phrase "chemical weapons." The Lexis-Nexis database search yielded a population of 271 news articles and blog posts (93 from the *New York Times* and 178 from the *Washington Post*). From the population, blog posts were excluded because they present a range of views regardless of the papers' own views. The sample generated for the study was 168 news stories; 82 from the *New York Times* and 86 from the *Washington Post*.

The stories were content analyzed by two coders who were independently trained on the coding instrument and worked independently. Upon discussing results on the code sheet, both coders identified eight stories from the *New York Times* and five from the *Washington Post* that were deemed non applicable to the study. Those eight stories merely mentioned Syria's possession of chemical weapons and focused primarily on other issues with the president or politics in Syria. The unit of analysis for the study was individual news articles. There were 154 news articles (81 from the *Washington Post* and 73 from the *New York Times* stories) and each coder worked on all the articles. Both coders had same coding results for the *New York Times* articles, but disagreed on coding categories for eight articles from the *Washington Post*. A thorough discussion resolved the disagreement. First, each coder re-read those eight articles from the *Washington Post*. Second, the two coders elaborated on their choice of codes for the articles and came into an agreement on the coding categories. Intercoder reliability was therefore calculated using Holsti's coefficient (Holsti, 1969) and established at .95 for all categories. We used this statistic because it relies on simple agreement between coders, the formula is easily replicable, and it provides a comprehensive insight of the intercoder reliability (Mouter & Vonk Noordegraaf, 2012).

The coding categories were adopted from Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five generic news frames: conflict, human interests, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility. The conflict frame reflects

disagreement among and between individuals or groups while that of human interest presents a human angle to the presentation of the issue in order to dramatize or emotionalize the news to capture and retain audience attention. The frame of economic consequences reports an issue by placing emphasis on the outcome of an action with regard to the consequences on individuals whereas morality frame presents an issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions, emphasizing collaboration and fellowship. The responsibility frame reports an issue by attributing cause or solution to the government or an individual/ a group.

Other coding categories were ID number, date of publication, and publication name. The type of news sources cited (see Table 1) and the tone of coverage in the news articles were also recorded. The dominant tone was coded as anti-US intervention, pro-US intervention, or neutral tone (neither clearly shows support nor opposes US intervention in Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons).

Table 1

Sources Cited in the New York Times and the Washington Post in Reporting Syria's August 21, 2013, Use of Chemical Weapons

Type of source	*n*	%
Syria	2	1.3
U.S.	105	68.2
United Nations	14	9.1
Russia/USSR	8	5.2
Other	25	16.2
Total (*N*)	154	100.0

Results

H1 predicted that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* will have a neutral tone in the coverage of Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons, to reflect the disagreement among President Obama, Congress, and the public on U.S. decision to launch a military attack against the Assad regime. The dominant tone was coded as anti-US intervention, pro-US intervention, or neutral tone (neither clearly shows support nor opposes US intervention). The chi-square test (χ^2 = 41.62 (2), $p < .001$) shows support for H1. Forty of the stories in the newspapers were pro-US intervention, 37 were anti- US intervention, and 77 were neutral. As predicted, 50% of the news stories were neutral, with 24.03% and 25.97% being anti- US intervention and pro-US intervention, respectively.

H2 predicted that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* will heavily rely on U.S. official sources in reporting Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons. The chi-square test (χ^2 = 403.42 (4), $p < .001$) shows support for H2. The newspapers heavily relied on U.S. official sources (See Table 1). The type of news sources cited were coded as Syria, United States, United Nations, USSR/Russia, and "Other" (for any other source other than Syria, United States, United Nations, and USSR/Russia).

H3 predicted that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* will use the conflict and responsibility frames more frequently than the human interest, economic consequences, and morality frames. The chi-square test (χ^2 = 130.98 (4), $p < .001$) shows support for H3. The newspapers used conflict and responsibility frames more frequently than the economic consequences, human interest, and morality frames (See Table 2).

The purpose of this study was to examine the news sources, tone of coverage, and the frames used by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in reporting Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons. Results of the study revealed that 50% of the news articles were neutral (neither clearly shows support nor opposes U.S. intervention in Syria's use of chemical weapon), with 24.03% and 25.97% being anti-U.S. intervention and pro-U.S. intervention respectively. The two newspapers heavily relied on U.S. official sources, and used conflict and responsibility frames in reporting Syria's use of chemical weapons.

Table 2

Frames Used in the *New York Times and* the *Washington Post in Reporting Syria's August 21, 2013, Use of Chemical Weapons*

Frame	*n*	%
Conflict	40	26.0
Human Interest	14	9.1
Responsibility	53	34.4
Economic Consequences	31	20.1
Morality	16	10.4
Total (*N*)	154	100.0

Discussion

Results of the study supported all three hypotheses. The hypotheses were rooted in the concept of news framing that: (a) the national political environments in which journalists operate have an influence on news framing (Entman, 2004; Yang, 2003), and (b) some U.S. journalists heavily rely on U.S. official sources, and in the absence of foreign policy disputes, the official sources set the agenda for the media (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2008). Though the influence of the national political environment in which journalists operate on news framing cannot be directly tested, one could speculate from results of the study that national political elites may have contributed to the tone of news coverage.

The political and media system in the United States likely impacted the coverage of Syria's use of chemical weapons in a neutral tone. President Obama was convinced about intervening in Syria's use of chemical weapons and his conviction could not have been ignored by the media given that he is the President of the United States and the Commander-in-Chief. Tradition demands that the President be given some coverage. It is likely to seem either unpatriotic or imply that journalists are projecting the views of their political affiliation if they criticized the President for U.S. military intervention. These possible impressions may not appear as good reasons to stop some media outlets from criticizing President Obama for military intervention. However, congressional and public opposition to the President's conviction could not be ignored either and so it was more likely that the media will report the Syrian conflict with a neutral tone. With Russia's intervention (to persuade Syria to deposit its chemical weapons) rather than U.S. military intervention, the responsibility frame was predominantly employed in reporting Syria's use of chemical weapons.

Findings of the study support Dimitrova and Strömbäck's (2008) assertion that some U.S. journalists heavily rely on U.S. official sources, and in the absence of foreign policy disputes, the official sources set the agenda for the media. They are also consistent with research on conflict framing (e.g., Bennett & Manheim, 1993; Dimitrova & Strömbäck's, 2008; Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003). The implication of this finding is that the views of government elites are highlighted to form the dominant discourse, whereas all other views are relegated to the background. This dominant discourse will eventually inform the views of the American people and their perception of Syria. It may also support arguments for decisions made on related policies while preventing the public from having a complete picture of the issue at hand.

Boyd-Barret (2004) noted that the media tends to report conflict from the point of view of its country of origin foreign policy elites. The political elite and official sources have their views indexed by the U.S. media (Bennett, 2004). By implication, it only takes a consensus among elite sources to deter U.S. journalists from investigating an issue for a bit of variation in the perspectives. This inclination may have also accounted for the reliance on Russia/USSR, the United Nations, and other elite sources as news sources on the reportage on Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons. A limitation to the reliance on this pool of sources is that the American public becomes ill-informed about the issue and develops increasingly idiosyncratic perceptions of the event. *Other* sources may for instance, highlight U.S. invasion to further security and Russia's insistence on single handedly intervening in Islamic problems or examine these issues as problematic in alienating the international community and further weakening the powers of the international community (that should rather serve as a nation's best defense

in a war of nuclear proliferation and terrorism). The media can raise critical questions such as: if the United States has reserved the right to experiment and develop nuclear weapons and is in a strategic nuclear partnership with India, is that a violation of the NPT? Why should Syria deposit its nuclear weapons?

The media is a cornerstone institution in the democracy of a country by virtue of its influential ability to shape public opinion through the framing of events and issues in particular ways. The media do a disservice to its audience by organizing news frames on Syria's use of chemical weapons to reflect some aspects (e.g., U.S. military intervention) and ignore others (e.g., anti-nuclear weapon protest, conflicts of interests, repercussions for military intervention). The implication is that the media limits audience interpretation of news stories and can increase, if not reinforce, divisions on world opinion on the use of WMD. The media are expected to be watchdogs and be sensitive to public opinion. This role of the media is particularly important in the reportage of international conflicts because of the likelihood of national media to engender varied interpretations for the national audience (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005). For instance, for the national audience who perceive international conflict resolution as the U.S. military success, they may be more inclined to support President Obama's call for military intervention than the audience who are exposed to reports on war protests and war victims who will consider possible effects of military intervention. In effect, the media implies a mirage national consensus on issues by not presenting alternative and opposing perspectives. Mutz (1998) further explained that "when media emphasize who or which side of an issue or controversy is ahead or behind, they may inadvertently cue the consensus heuristic, thus altering attitudes toward a candidate or issue" (p. 210). Also, while depending solely on official sources, the media may not be able to stay independent of the notions of national interest. Empirical evidence from research on news framing is therefore important to serve as evidence and guard against skewed representation in the media.

The U.S. media system is highly commercialized (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005). McManus (1994) described it as market-driven where the market represents political elites and government officials. The media landscape is dominated by commercial newspapers and broadcast companies so the market model supersedes the public sphere model (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001) and media self-regulation is non-institutionalized in the United States. Journalists are left to adhere to the norm of objectivity even though according to Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005), objectivity in journalism is replaced with terms such as "impartial," "fair," and "non-partisan" (p. 403). Patterson (1998) further explained that among American journalists, objectivity means "expressing fairly the position of each side in the political dispute" (p. 22). This explanation to U.S. journalistic objectivity may be the reason for heavy reliance of journalists on official sources. However, in the absence of a dispute, only official sources will set the agenda of the media, under the guise of a market driven-media.

This study offers useful avenues for future research. An example of such avenues is the exploration of the degree of political parallelism (the extent to which political orientations influence the media's news and current affairs reportage) in the framing of Syria's use of chemical weapons especially because media self-regulation is non-institutionalized in the U.S. To further the understanding of news framing with respect to Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons, other media outlets in the United States should also be examined. A comparative study has the potential to contribute to our understanding of news framing, objectivity of journalism, political parallelism, and the relationship between media and political systems. We could also benefit from future research on how the news media from Russia and the United Kingdom (the two other depository states of the NPT) framed Syria's use of chemical weapons. Russia and the United States often differ in their views on chemical weapons as well as the need to intervene in other countries (McAllister, 2007).

One limitation of this study is that the content analysis of two newspapers is not a representative sample of the U.S. media even though as elite newspapers they offer an informative picture of the national press. Future research should examine and compare the extent of coverage, news source, tone of coverage, and the frame used by other U.S. media outlets, in reporting Syria's August 21, 2013, use of chemical weapons. Another limitation is the content frame as well as the search engine we used in collecting news articles on Syria's use of chemical weapons. It is possible that the news outlets we examined published articles relating to Syria's use of chemical weapons beyond our content frame which could change the results of our study. It is therefore important to consider the content frame within which news articles were collected for analysis to appropriately interpret the findings of our study. Ultimately, framing analysis provides an understanding of the media's representation of public opinion. This study contributes to research on framing as the first attempt to explore news coverage of Syria's August 21use of chemical weapons. Future studies should continue in this vein to explore the media coverage after Syria's

deposition of chemical weapons. Alternative frames and tone of coverage may have been introduced upon U.S. rescindment from military attack.

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Ohio Communication Journal
Volume 55 – February 2017, pp. 191-207

Communicating Gender in Jamaican HIV Advertisements: A Textual Analysis of Television Campaigns

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Televised advertisements form a major part of HIV prevention efforts in Jamaica. These texts provide insight into the role of mediated communication in addressing health issues. Gender representations utilized in media campaigns can help or hinder HIV prevention programs. Through textual analysis and from a critical feminist perspective, this study explores the gender representations communicated in Jamaican HIV prevention advertisements. The study found a progression from stereotypical representations of men and women in earlier advertisements to empowering gender representations in more recent advertisements. Implications for research and practice regarding HIV prevention communication campaigns are also discussed.

Key words: HIV, television advertisements, gender, textual analysis

Although Jamaica, the largest English-speaking Caribbean island, has mounted a relatively successful response to HIV, officials from the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) recently highlighted the need to address structural and social issues that increase the vulnerability of adolescent girls and women (UNAIDS, 2015). Gender inequality is a salient aspect of the social issues that underline the current conditions in Jamaica and the available literature on HIV/AIDS media campaigns highlight the need for more systematic research concerning gender representations in HIV prevention advertisements. Since mass media campaigns form a major part of the Ministry of Health's HIV prevention strategy (National HIV/STI Program [NHP], 2014), it is essential to understand the representations being shared in campaign materials. Use of media campaigns in this manner has implications for audience member's knowledge, awareness and behavior, especially concerning gender and social norms (Wood, 2007). The intent of this study is to contribute to an understanding of gender portrayals in Jamaican HIV television advertisements. In particular, this study addresses the following question: What are the different gender representations present in Jamaican HIV prevention television advertisements?

An essential aspect of addressing gender in health communication programs is a consideration of the gender inequalities and stereotypes within a society. This should be done to ensure that such stereotypes and inequalities are not reproduced through communication campaign materials (Zaman & Underwood, 2003). Despite the shift in media and communication studies which ensures inclusion of more critical qualitative research, much of the research on media health campaigns continues to employ quantitative methodologies to highlight the number of people impacted and the size of those effects (Kim, Park, Yoo, & Shen, 2010). While this is understandable since the health and development organizations must provide reports to justify the use of funds, there have been frequent reminders of the need to undertake more research that is focused on textual analysis of public health media campaigns (Sastry & Dutta, 2011; Khan, 2014). Khan (2014) confirms that textual analysis of public health advertising campaigns, such as the television advertisements used to address HIV in Jamaica, have been placed on the back burner, even by critical cultural communication scholars. This study therefore employs textual analysis to assess the likely interpretation of eleven Jamaican HIV/AIDS television advertisements aired between 1999 and 2012, with particular emphasis on the gender representations therein.

Literature Review

The literature confirms the importance of gender in the HIV epidemic, with a preponderance of articles speaking to the need to address gender issues in HIV prevention (e.g. Jesmin, Chaudhuri, & Abdullah, 2013; Wyatt et al., 2013). The intersection of gender and HIV as issues that impact each other became increasingly common in research articles beginning around the year 2000 with Geeta Rao Gupta's plenary address at the XIIIth International

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AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa (Gupta, 2000). Subsequently, there was increasing scholarly interest in gender in HIV/AIDS communication campaigns (Gupta, Ogden, & Warner, 2011; Fleming, Lee, & Dworkin, 2014). The most noteworthy findings were the dearth of women being portrayed in PSAs, and problematic portrayals of both men and women that underscored existing gender norms and contribute to health disparities.

The construction and representation of gender in HIV/AIDS discourses have some influence in social and behavior change processes (Chong & Kvasny, 2007). As early as 1996, scholars such as Sacks (1996) and Raheim (1996) began to explore how HIV/AIDS discourse impacts prevention efforts among women but there have been relatively few similar analyses, with most of them focusing on the Western world, such as the United States and Australia (Khan, 2014). A few studies have used textual analytic methods in relation to HIV/AIDS (e.g. Johnny & Mitchell, 2006; Khan, 2014). Indeed, Khan (2014) argues that this lack of attention to such interpretive techniques is not surprising, given the scarcity of articles on textual analysis found in his review of the literature. This was also previously confirmed in an analysis of 22 years of publication in *Health Communication*, the oldest journal publishing research on the field of health communication (Kim et al., 2010). Kim et al. (2010) found that over the period, there was continued dominance of quantitative research in the post-positivist paradigm, to the detriment of research in the interpretive and critical paradigms, such as textual analysis. This review confirms the relative paucity of textual analyses about HIV prevention campaigns, especially those that consider gender and/or sexual representation.

The early textual analyses conducted about AIDS discourses highlighted two main themes in relation to how women were portrayed: women as vectors (or transmitters) and women as victims. Sacks (1996) found that the negative portrayal of women in AIDS discourses helped to stigmatize some women and blamed them for their illness. This dichotomous representation of women as either victims or vectors of the disease was also highlighted by Raheim's (1996) content analysis of newspaper articles in the *New York Times*. Chong and Kvasny (2007) utilized Gupta's (2000) explication of various categories of HIV/AIDS prevention programs addressing gender as a framework for their review of the literature on the social construction of gender and sexuality in HIV/AIDS discourses. Gupta (2000) identifies five approaches ranging from damaging to empowering, namely stereotypical, gender-neutral, gender-sensitive, transformative and empowering. Through the stereotypical construction of gender in HIV/AIDS discourse, Chong & Kvasny (2007) argue that women are portrayed in narrow ways that replicate feminine moral ideals such as purity and faithfulness and repeat stereotypical views about females' roles such as wife, mother and caregiver.

Though there have been continued calls for more research into gender, sexuality, and HIV in the context of low-income countries, they remain few (e.g. Gibbs, 2010; Khan, 2014). The studies that do examine the representation of women and HIV tend to focus on African countries and present arguments that often portray women as passive receptors rather than active subjects who are able to effect change and improve their own lives (Gibbs, 2010). Additionally, when studies do focus on African women the default construction represents African women as those who need to be 'rescued' through interventions from external actors (Chong & Kvasny, 2007; Gibbs, 2010). This led one scholar from South Africa, a country ravaged by HIV/AIDS, to assert that current portrayals of the relationship between HIV and gender either pay no attention to the social context of women's lives, or portray women as passive and unable to act (Gibbs, 2010).

While the majority of research concerning communication, gender and HIV has focused on how men's oppression of women contributes to women's increased vulnerability, there are also efforts to highlight how men are 'oppressed' by their gender, thereby increasing their risk of HIV infection (e.g. Fleming et al., 2014; Mason, 2012). Scholars highlight the importance of challenging stereotypical hegemonic masculinities that support risky sexual behavior (Macia, Maharaj, & Gresh, 2011; Walcott et al., 2015) and automatically select men as primary decision makers in sexual matters (Mane & Aggleton, 2001). As in the case of women's representation in HIV prevention discourses, researchers also highlight the role of mediated communication in the production and reproduction of norms of masculinity (Gauntlett, 2008). Several studies address men's ideas of masculinity in the context of HIV/AIDS (e.g. Fleming et al., 2014; Walcott et al., 2015) but only a few articles that address media representations of masculinity and HIV/AIDS were found (e.g. Gibbs & Jobson, 2011; Newman & Persson, 2009). This highlights the need for more textual analytic research assessing the representations of women and men in HIV communication campaigns, which can shed light on this complex health communication and social change issue.

Media representations of HIV/AIDS undoubtedly influence audience members' understanding of the disease and the use of mass media campaigns has become an integral aspect of HIV/AIDS prevention strategy all over the world. Such prevention strategies seek to directly impact target audiences' assessment of their risk and their response to this disease. Much of the research on gender in HIV prevention has been published about the U.S. with a few studies in low-income countries. In one of the first articles to address gender representations in HIV campaigns, Raheim (1996) asserts that media representations of HIV/AIDS can influence "(a) perceived risk of infection, (b) knowledge of effective preventative measures and perceptions of responsibility for employing them, and (c) attitudes towards infected persons" (p. 402). This was the underlying argument used to highlight the need to examine media messages about HIV/AIDS and their possible impact on women and it remains relevant today as the need for further research into gender representations becomes even more apparent.

Raheim's (1996) critical analysis of a campaign implemented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concluded that while these messages were important at the time, they might have served to render the concerns of some women insignificant. Myrick (1999) also analyzed PSAs produced by the CDC and found that the representations had disempowering consequences due to their use of certain technical conventions, such as the 'male omniscient narrator'. Use of this type of narrator is especially disempowering for women because it locates knowledge, power and authority in the voice of the speaker whose maleness symbolizes the federal government - a male-dominated institution (Myrick, 1999). Charlesworth's (2003) feminist rhetorical analysis of brochures from several agencies found that the representations shared three harmful identities for women by positioning them as transmitters of HIV, caregivers, and 'flowerpots' or potential mothers (Charlesworth, 2003). Similar results showing women as caregivers or 'flowerpots,' were confirmed in a more recent study (Carson, 2010).

Since PSAs form such a major part of the HIV prevention media landscape, we need better understanding of the messages they provide and their possible impact on HIV prevention efforts. The earliest and only international survey of HIV/AIDS PSAs that provides a descriptive analysis of the actual PSAs was conducted almost two decades ago (Johnson, Flora, & Rimal, 1997). A noteworthy finding from this study is the fact that women were typically portrayed as 'window-dressing,' adopting a passive role in the PSAs (Johnson et al., 1997). Additionally, women were only shown making decisions about condom use in 29% of the ads (Johnson et al., 1997, p. 230). Though this analysis focused on PSAs that were produced from 1987 to 1993, it is likely that campaigns still mirror some socio-cultural norms that limit women's role in HIV prevention.

Similar results have been found in other countries such as Kenya (Mbure, 2007; Mabachi, 2008), Ghana (Faria, 2008) and Brazil (Meyer, Santos, Oliveira, & Wilhelms, 2006). Furthermore, in his analysis of Indian HIV messages, Khan (2014) argued that the way men and women are symbolically represented in televised advertisements targeting men could send an unintended message that men's bodies are 'pure' while women's bodies are 'impure' and the source of HIV infection. These representations may be detrimental to HIV prevention efforts because they do not address the gender inequalities and power relations that define the context in which men and women are being asked to engage in HIV preventative behaviors.

These studies underscore the need for improvements in how men and women are portrayed in HIV PSAs, which is dependent on more research that assesses current gender representations. There is a clear need for more systematic research concerning gender representations in HIV prevention ads, especially in developing country contexts where women and men continue to be impacted in varying degrees by HIV/AIDS. In light of the gaps in the available literature concerning gender and sexual representations in HIV advertisements, we must consider the Jamaican HIV prevention media context, with a view to understanding how these representations may work with or against HIV prevention efforts. *This study therefore sought to address the research question: What are the different gender representations present in Jamaican HIV prevention television advertisements?*

Theoretical Framework

Societal forces have always been important in molding the mindset of people through various channels. The most significant and ubiquitous of these channels has become mass media, because people experience life through the prism of media (Clarke, McLellan, & Hoffman-Goetz, 2006). Examination of the politics of media representations is a critical aspect of the work of mass communications researchers. The term 'politics' is used here in reference to the distribution of power evident in the different forms of gender and sexual representations that are

present in and absent from media texts. According to Rose (2012) researchers who examine cultural artifacts such as television PSAs are usually "interested in the ways in which social life is constructed through the ideas that people have about it, and the practices that flow from those ideas" (p. 2).

In this study culture is understood from Hall's (1997) perspective as being about 'shared meanings'. This understanding of culture is closely bound up with the concept of representation. Since participants in a culture are the ones who attach meaning to things, people and events, Hall (1997) asserts that we attach meaning by how we represent them – "the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the emotions we attach to them" (p. 3). Whether they take the form of images, sounds or signs, these constructed meanings, or representations, structure the way people behave on a day-to-day basis (Rose, 2012). Furthermore, this process of 'meaning construction' is directly impacted by the practice of interpretation, which Hall (1980) conceptualizes as the encoding/decoding model: that is, the processes by which we encode (put things into code) and decode (interpret) things in our culture.

While acknowledging the importance of quantitative media campaign evaluations, this study is based on the belief that media studies research should give greater consideration to how audience members make meaning of media campaign texts. Efforts to critically analyze such media texts provide information about how audience members might interpret public health intervention messages. As cultural agents, media help to disseminate meaning to the participants in that culture (Peirce, 2011). In order to understand the influence of televised health campaigns, research cannot only focus on surveys and other efforts to measure knowledge, attitudes and behavioral intentions. It is just as important to execute critical textual inquiry that can call attention to the norms, values and ideologies that are embedded in such media campaigns (Guttman, 2000; Khan, 2014).

One way to provide this critical inquiry is through a feminist approach. While feminist scholarship is not homogenous, scholars have outlined some general principles regarding critical feminist inquiry that are salient for this research. First, feminist scholarship "conceptualizes gender as a critical component of human life that serves as a lens or filter through which all other perceptions pass" (Charlesworth, 2003, p. 65; Crenshaw, 1996). Second, feminist research about communication is focused on the construction of gender through communication (Charlesworth, 2003). Additionally, Foss (1996) outlined three relevant principles on feminism including beliefs: that women are oppressed by patriarchy; that women and men have divergent experiences; and that women's perspectives are not usually incorporated into the wider culture. These principles help to inform this examination of gender representation in HIV prevention television advertisements.

In the context of this study, gender and sex are not seen as synonymous. According to Gupta (2000) gender refers to the shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate female and male behavior, characteristics and roles. It is a socio-cultural construct that differentiates women from men and defines the ways in which women and men interact with one another (Gupta, 2000). Gender is also a culture-specific construct as there are significant differences in the rules governing what men and women can and cannot do in various cultures. However, the difference between men's and women's assigned roles, decision-making authority and access to productive resources is fairly consistent across cultures. While the extent of inequality varies in each culture, it almost always persists.

Where HIV and other reproductive health issues are concerned, gender is intimately linked to sexuality, which is considered to be a social construction of a biological drive. Sexuality is more than just sexual behavior; it is a multi-dimensional and dynamic concept. Like gender, it is governed by explicit and implicit rules imposed by society. Failure to follow these rules can result in severe social sanctions, sometimes even leading to death. Like gender, other issues such as age, socio-economic status and ethnicity can influence an individual's sexuality. Both concepts speak to the central issue of power in our social relations. Power imbalances in gender relations, supported by gender norms in most societies, only serve to exacerbate the HIV pandemic (Gupta, 2000; Ratele, 2011; Smuts, Reijer, & Dooms, 2015). The intersection of gender, sexuality and HIV is of great consequence for women and men. Like many other low-income countries, Jamaica faces many serious challenges, including crippling levels of debt and low or negative levels of economic growth. Many would argue that a focus on issues of gender and sexuality that impact HIV is a frivolous distraction from the 'real' issues, such as poverty (Gupta, 2000). However, efforts to address gender and sexual norms in relation to HIV serve not only to help in HIV prevention but can also

have far-reaching impacts that could lead to long-term social change regarding the gender and sexual norms that currently persist.

Method

This study employs textual analysis to assess the likely interpretation of Jamaican HIV/AIDS television advertisements, with a view to understanding the gender representations used in the ads. A careful consideration of the denotative (literal) and connotative (implied) elements of the text was conducted using Frith's (1998) method of ad analysis. In this manner of analyzing the text the intent is its deconstruction, with the ultimate aim of exposing "the social and political power structures in society that combine to produce the text" (Frith, 1998, p. 3). The two main elements of Frith's (1998) method of interpreting advertisements are an analysis of its levels of meaning and an analysis of the social representations portrayed in the advertisement. Analyzing the levels of meaning is done in three stages by reading the surface meaning, the advertiser's intended meaning and, the cultural or ideological meaning in a manner comparable to peeling an onion, as the advertisement is taken apart layer by layer (Frith, 1998). In addition to Frith's (1998) method, this study employs Hall's (1980) concepts of the preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings and Gupta's (2000) continuum of gender representations in HIV/AIDS program approaches.

The texts analyzed in this study are eleven Jamaican HIV/AIDS television advertisements which were locally produced by the National HIV/STI Program (NHP) in the Ministry of Health. These eleven advertisements were the only ones available on the National HIV/STI Program website and they range in length from a thirty-second advertisement to a two-and-a-half-minute music video. A close textual analysis of these videos was conducted by the researcher in order to gain a better understanding of how audience members might make meaning of these texts. The analysis unfolded in a three-step process. First, a basic reading of the text was done to become familiar with the advertisements and record emerging themes. The basic reading involved watching each video several times and recording general observations, including the strategies and narrative devices being used as well as the different representations of men and women. This was followed by the second step of the process where the advertisements were examined in more detail to ascertain the denotative and connotative meanings, using the following analytic categories adapted from Frith (1998), Hall (1980), Gupta (2000), Johnny & Mitchell (2006), and Khan (2014): surface meaning, intended meaning, cultural/ideological meaning, oppositional reading, narrative/story, social relationships and, gender representation (See Appendix A for the instrument that was used in the analysis). The third and final step entailed a constant comparison of the ideas and strategies employed in each advertisement to understand the relationship within and across all the ads.

Though I am outlining this process in a somewhat linear fashion, the actual process was by no means linear. Instead, this process unfolded in a cyclical pattern which entailed constantly revisiting each text and each step of the process. At the same time, I remained cognizant of my positionality as a researcher. At the heart of it, this research was based on some basic premises that I hold as a researcher. First, the people who made the advertisements are operating under the assumption that media narratives can engender social and behavior change, and in this case, sexual behavior in particular. Given this initial premise, producers of the ads seek to contextualize the information that they provide with regards to relations between men and women. My analysis was therefore focused on the strategies, themes and stereotypes evident in the representations in the text, as they provide clues to the socio-cultural norms and ideologies that are embedded within the ads, whether intentionally, or otherwise. This was informed by my knowledge of the Jamaican culture, my interest in media, communication for development, women and gender studies as well as my experiences of living and working in Jamaica to address HIV and other health issues, all of which influence my positionality. The analysis process therefore entailed a careful consideration of my role in constructing data as well as understanding of the salience of writing, not only as a device in my methodological toolkit but also "as one means by which humans use symbols to inform and influence their audiences" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 284-285).

With regard to gender representation, the main issue addressed in this study, Gupta's (2000) continuum provided the basis for categorization. In her plenary address to the XIIIth International AIDS Conference, Gupta (2000) outlined a continuum of approaches in addressing gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. These approaches run from damaging/stereotypical to empowering. Chong & Kvasny (2007) applied this continuum in a review of the

literature looking at the social construction of gender and sexuality in HIV/AIDS discourses. In this continuum, Gupta (2000) highlights five categories of social constructions concerning gender, sexuality and HIV: stereotypical, neutral, sensitive, transformational and empowering.

A stereotypical representation of men and women is one where damaging stereotypes are reproduced and reinforced. Examples include the use of a macho male representation to sell condoms or the portrayal of feminine ideals such as purity and feminine roles such as wife and caregiver. The neutral categorization refers to ads that seek to target the general population with messages that are not specifically targeted to men or women, such as 'be faithful' or 'stick to one partner'. According to Gupta (2000), the aim is to do no harm, but such efforts tend to be less effective because they do not take the gender-specific needs of individuals into consideration. A gender-sensitive approach considers the gender-specific constraints and needs of individuals, typically by providing a male and female version of the advertisement. While this is better than the previous two approaches on the continuum, it still does little or nothing to challenge gendered power imbalances. Transformative representations aim to make gender relations more equitable by focusing on the redefinition of gender norms and roles. An example is the use of positive deviance as defined by Singhal & Dura (2009) to identify and reproduce positive gender norms that already exist in a community. The final approach on the continuum seeks to empower men and women by freeing them from harmful gender stereotypes. This is typically done by improving access to information and skills, as well as encourage women's participation in decision-making. Stereotypical representation is considered the most damaging while an empowering representation is considered most beneficial in HIV/AIDS discourse. Applying this continuum to the advertisements allowed for a categorization of the advertisements in accordance with the way that men and women are represented in the ads.

Results

This study sought to address the research question: What are the different gender representations present in Jamaican HIV prevention television advertisements? The gender representations found in the advertisements run the gamut from stereotypical to empowering, but there was a clear evolution from more stereotypical gender representations in older advertisements, to more transformative and empowering representations in more recent ads. Each video employs different types of representation, so they are not mutually exclusive. Gupta (2000) argues that in order to effectively tackle gender and sexuality in the context of HIV/AIDS prevention and care, interventions should aim to reduce the possibility of reinforcing damaging sexual and gender stereotypes. Since the underlying gender and sexual norms of a culture are either intentionally or unintentionally embedded within texts such as advertisements, much can be learned from the gender representations in the campaign materials that were analyzed.

Stereotypical Representations of Men

Producers of advertisements utilize stereotypes as a type of short cut that serves to provide "a very simple, striking, easily-grasped form of representation" (Dyer, 2013, p. 246) which allows audience members to quickly comprehend the meaning of messages being shared via media channels. These seemingly simplistic representations are imbued with complex information and connotations and audience members' understanding of such representations implies knowledge of the complex social structures within which the stereotypes are created (Dyer, 2013). Producers of the HIV advertisements analyzed in this study utilized some level of stereotypical gender representations in seven of the eleven advertisements.

The advertisements revealed three main themes regarding stereotypical representations of Jamaican men: promiscuity as an essential element of masculine sexuality as evinced by the Jamaican phrase 'man fi have nuff gyal' (a man should have many women); men as perpetrators of bad sex in the form of unprotected sex (Jolly, 2007); and men as initiators of sexual activity. These types of representation were evident in seven of the eleven advertisements. The sub-theme of men as initiators of sexual activity was evident in four of the eleven ads, namely *Just use it* (NHP, circa[1] 1999); *Pinch, leave an inch and roll* (NHP, 2008c); *Smart, sexy, wise* (NHP, 2009); and *Big*

[1] 'Circa' is being used here because the National HIV/STI Program website does not provide a publication date for the advertisement. Roshane Reid, a Behavior Change Communication Officer with the National HIV/STI Program, Ministry of Health and Environment, Jamaica confirmed via personal communication that *Just use it* (NHP, 1999) was produced and

man noh ride widout condom (NHP, circa 2011). The advertisement entitled *Just use it* (NHP, 1999) provides a good example of the stereotypical representations of men as promiscuous and the perpetrators of bad sex.

This ad features an unidentified man clad in black in front of a black screen. The tone is somber, as initially shown through the set-up of the video, and later underscored by the haunting monologue of the protagonist. There is only one character – a sturdy male figure seated on a chair, his face hidden by shadows. The first few words of his speech, "You see me rude boy" speaks to the intended audience of this text. A 'rude boy[1]' in Jamaica is akin to a gangster in American culture. Moreover, Jamaican Creole is used throughout the monologue as opposed to most of the other ads wherein English is used, which makes the ad more likely to reach the targeted audience. The figure also used the words 'rubbers' and 'boots' to refer to condoms, just as a rude boy would. By referring specifically to this group (rude boys) and using the parlance he calls their attention to a message that they might have otherwise ignored.

The intended meaning of the advertisement is not only to promote condom use, but to ensure that the target audience understands the importance of using a condom every time. This is evident when, in concluding the monologue, the former rude boy appeals to fellow rude boys not to take any chances, adding: "You must use your boots [condoms] every time!" Consistent condom use among rude boys is the purpose of the text, which the narrator reinforces by saying: "Just use it, every time".

These forthright surface and intended meanings are laced with subtler underlying cultural and ideological meanings as expressed in the stereotypical representation of the protagonist as a perpetrator of bad sex (not using a condom all the time) and as promiscuous. After getting the intended audience's attention the speaker explains that he was just like them: "I was a big heavy man." While literally appropriate to his height and weight, 'big man' denotes an "older boy or man who has some social standing, disposable income, or outward trappings of wealth" (Kempadoo, 2004, p. 49). His assertion of being a 'big man' is supported by the status symbols he mentions: "I had lots of clothes and hot cars. I had a woman on every street!" These are some of the things that separate the 'big men' from the 'little boys'.

In his next statement, "I never knew a thing like this could happen to me," he confronts the belief that rude boys consider themselves immune to HIV. As a rude boy, he then shatters that myth by admitting that "a thing like" that did happen to him. He admits that although he used a condom some times, he was not consistent. This is in keeping with the story of the irresponsible 'gyallis' (a man who has many women) which is a common theme in Jamaican music and culture. The story evokes a feeling of sadness for his circumstances, because the images and tone of the video are serious and depressing. The deep masculine voice and haunting tone of the protagonist is a good strategy as it elicits an emotional response that gets the audience involved with the character and increases the likelihood of them attending to the message.

Coupled with the belief that 'real men' have multiple sexual partners is the value that is placed on male strength and dominance in relationships with women. Socio-cultural taboos on expressions of tenderness insist that Jamaican men adopt hard masculinities, expressed through symbolic and actual dominance in sexual relations (Chevannes, 1999; Plummer & Simpson, 2007). One of the most common tools used to discourage subordinate forms of masculinity (such as being gentle and faithful) is the threat of being labeled a homosexual (Plummer & Simpson, 2007). Plummer (2011) further asserts that in order to comply with Caribbean norms of manliness young men are "almost require[d to engage in] sexual behavior that is associated with HIV risk" (p. 144). As a result of the social pressures that result from a constant policing of masculinity Jamaican men are encouraged to prove their prowess with women from an early age by having many partners and being dominant in those relationships (Anderson, 2012). A good example of the stereotypical representation of men as the initiators of sexual activity can be seen in *Big man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, 2011), which is shot in the form of a dancehall music video with Konshens, a popular Jamaican musician. The lyrics of the ad encourage the male target audience to: "Put you an inna di air if a yuh call di shots wid yuh sex life. Yuh in charge a dat! (Put your hands in the air if you are in control

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disseminated prior to 2003 and the date for *Big man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, circa 2011) is based on references to the ad in the *Gleaner* (Andrade, 2012).

[1] A 'rude boy' can be defined as a Jamaican gangster or a young man who may be un- or under-employed and can be seen on the street. The term 'rude' is used because of their non-conformist attitude especially towards authority figures. The term 'rude boy' was in popular use until the late 1990s.

of your sex life. You are in charge of that!).” While the underlying message of using a condom is commendable, this assumption that men are in charge of sexual relationships is highlighted throughout the song by a chorus used at the beginning and after each of the two verses and the bridge; the music reinforces this stereotypical representation of men among the target audience.

Stereotypical Representations of Women

Stereotypical gender representations are not limited to men in these advertisements. Seiter (1986) explains that stereotypical representations of women usually highlight their relationships with men and family. Just as men are presented as cultural stereotypes, women are presented in some ads as symbolic representations of femininity by showing them as caregivers and flowerpots (pregnant women), which was apparent in three of the eleven advertisements. The ad entitled *Babymother* (NHP, 2006) provides a good example of the ‘women as flowerpots’ and ‘women as caregivers’ stereotypes.

In the advertisement are two women: one who is already a mother and the other who is pregnant. The intended meaning of this ad is the promotion of HIV testing among expectant mothers in order to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The emphasis on mothers as vessels for their children is consistent with the intended message of the advertisement. Essentially, the creator of the message is telling the audience: If a woman did not see the need to get tested for HIV before getting pregnant, the responsibility of ensuring the health and well-being of her child should be sufficient to push her to get tested. Though this belief is changing, in Jamaican culture, bearing a child is considered an essential element of womanhood (Kempadoo & Taitt, 2006). This ideological value of women as flowerpots is evident in this ad, highlighting the aforementioned themes.

Stereotypical representation of women was also evident in other advertisements such as *Smart, sexy, wise* (NHP, 2009). The second scene of the advertisement shows a woman who is sitting in her bed typing on her computer. The shot shifts to her fingers (with a wedding band) typing on the computer and a picture of her family (a woman, man and girl child). Her partner comes into the bedroom, climbs into bed and kisses her on her cheek. She pushes the computer out of the way, smiles at her partner, reaches to the side of the bed and picks up a condom. The image freezes with her and her partner smiling while the words ‘smart woman’ appear on the bottom left of the screen. This scene is an example of the stereotypical representation of women as caregivers that was evident in at least one other ad. Before she is shown reaching for a condom, the camera zooms in on a picture of the family, including a child, showing that the woman is a mother and caregiver. While the idea of the strong independent Jamaican woman is the basis of the entire ad, that section of the ad focuses on the woman’s role as caregiver, based on a negotiated reading of the ad (Hall, 1980). This might have been done in an effort to highlight the need for different types of women (including women in long term relationships) to protect themselves from HIV. It is a salient and necessary representation considering the “love and trust” paradigm[1] explained by Figueroa (2014). In addition to depicting the woman as being responsible for initiating condom use, this type of representation also highlights the need for a woman to protect herself, not only for her health but also to ensure that she can continue taking care of her family.

Gender Neutrality

Advertisements classified as gender-neutral fit the criterion of targeting a general population rather than any one sex. In addition, this type of representation makes no “distinction between the needs of women or men” (Gupta, 2000, p. 5). Two of the eleven advertisements were classified as neutral as they seemed to target both men and women: *Get it, carry it, use it* (NHP, 2007) and *Take your meds* (NHP, 2012). Since gender-neutral ads seek to address a general audience, they run the risk of ignoring the needs of a specific group. Indeed, Chong & Kvasny (2007) assert that HIV/AIDS discourse that treats gender as neutral is possibly harmful since it ignores the unique risks faced by women, especially bearing in mind that the default assumptions underneath such discourse are often more applicable for men than for women. Though this is not always the result, at the heart of condom promotion

[1] According to Figueroa (2014) the “love and trust” paradigm is an important element of Caribbean culture with regards to how females conduct relationships. A common female sexual practice is the expectation that if you are in a relationship with a man who is your main partner, there is an understanding that a woman does not have to use a condom with him because she “trusts him” to either be faithful to her or use a condom with any “outside” woman (Figueroa, 2014, p. 162).

efforts is a belief that if people are made aware of the importance of condom use in HIV/AIDS prevention, and condoms are made readily available, people will use them. Unfortunately, in many contexts, including Jamaica, this kind of appeal might be more applicable to one gender than the other, people of one socio-economic status more than another, and depend on the type of relationship. However, the gender-neutral ads mentioned above seem to balance these needs in such a way as to reach men and women, as well as different age groups.

Take your meds (NHP, 2012) is an example of how this is done. This advertisement promotes the importance of taking your medication the way the doctor orders, not only for HIV, but all chronic diseases. The underlying message to both men and women is that HIV is just like any other chronic illness. To make this explicit the doctor groups HIV along with other common chronic illnesses like diabetes and high blood pressure in an obvious effort to normalize the disease. The use of a doctor as an authority figure is in keeping with the high cultural capital accorded doctors in Jamaican society, where doctors enjoy a high level of respect. The older age of the stern doctor also makes him more credible. The audience might have dismissed a younger or female physician (though they are growing in numbers).

Gender Sensitive Approaches

Recognition of the dissimilar needs of individual men and women is central to gender sensitive approaches that address the needs of each gender. The two ads entitled *Be in the know* (NHP, 2008a, 2008b) are good examples of this type of approach; they explicitly target each gender using male and female versions. In the male version of the ad there is one male character who shields his identity by hiding his features in black. He appears against a stark white background. No objects are present. In the female version appear two women whose identities are similarly protected. Both ads urge viewers is to 'be in the know' by getting tested for HIV. Disguising the identities of the performers acknowledges the possible fear of stigma and discrimination that might result from people thinking that they are HIV positive.

In the male version of the ad, no blatant cultural beliefs are highlighted, but in the female version there is a reference to implicitly male promiscuity; one of the female characters asks her friend "are you sure that your partner hasn't cheated on you?" In Jamaican culture where some men do have multiple partners, this is a valid question. Since 'love and trust' are supposed to prevail for women in a committed relationship (Figueroa, 2014), the question reflect sensitivity towards a delicate issue. Women, the ad indicates, have to be responsible for their partners' actions as well as their own. The narrator warns: "if you have doubts about your or your partner's HIV status then be in the know, get tested." By contrast, in the male version of the ad no mention is made of the man's possible sexual partner(s). Instead, the male version foregrounds the statement that an HIV test could be the most important test that men will ever take.

Transformative Representations

HIV/AIDS discourses of the transformative type aim to change gender roles and relations to ensure more gender-equitable relationships (Gupta, 2000). The main emphasis is a different conceptualization of gender norms at the personal, community and societal levels (Gupta, 2000; Chong & Kvasny, 2007). Transformative approaches to HIV prevention provide positive role models and representations that seek to transform harmful gender and cultural norms. Instead of supporting and glorifying harmful stereotypes, counter-narratives are provided which encourage men and women to consider different conceptualizations of what men and women can do within the context of sexual relationships. Gender-transformative approaches seek to challenge limited definitions of masculinity that encourage sexual risk-taking (Fleming et al., 2014). Instead, men are represented as more empathetic, reasonable and responsible and women are characterized as having agency in sexual relations. There is evidence that HIV prevention efforts of a gender-transformative nature can increase protective sexual behavior and reduce the incidence of HIV, among other benefits (Dworkin, Treves-Kagan, & Lippman, 2013). Four of the advertisements took a transformative approach to gender representation: *Big man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, 2011), *Smart, sexy, wise* (NHP, 2009), and both versions of *Stick to one partner* (NHP, 2010a, 2010b).

The ad entitled *Big man noh ride widout condom* (NHP, 2011), by Jamaican musician Konshens is an example of this type of representation. Done in the form of a dancehall music video, the ad opens with the artist clad in black and wearing black shades sitting in what appears to be the stands of a small stadium. The ad seeks to transform gender roles and norms by giving the 'big man' image used in *Just use it* (NHP, 1999) a new meaning.

Instead of presenting a man who has many women and engages in unprotected sex, the ad offers one who is selective; not a womanizer – though he may like women and engage in sex – but one looking for commitment. According to this advertisement, a *real* 'big man' will always use a condom, get tested for HIV and choose his partners carefully. This representation of men is transformative because it offers an alternative model: rather than assuming that the ideal Jamaican male is promiscuous, the ad holds up a figure that understands women and treats them appropriately. For example, the artist advises men that they should "decide when and how a girl climbs your chart." More to the point, it seeks to make condom use attractive by claiming that condoms are the new 'swag[1]'.

Though it is potentially transformative, the use of a dancehall musician to promote safe sex and committed relationships may be critiqued as a poor choice, given the actual behavior of many male dancehall stars. Images of sex, violence, and violent sex – or what Cooper (2005) calls 'vigorous sex' - permeate dancehall culture where promiscuity and male sexual dominance are essential elements. Viewers of the ad who are familiar with the dancehall culture that promotes multiple partners may be skeptical of this message coming from a dancehall musician.

Empowering Representations

In order to be classified as empowering, an HIV/AIDS message must aim to empower or free women and men from the effects of harmful gender norms. Empowerment is a crucial concept in the field of international development (Grabe, 2012). Though its main initial focus was on equitable distribution of material resources to the benefit of women who had previously been left out of economic development efforts, the concept is also applicable to improving individual strengths and a sense of personal control (Catania & Chapman, *2010).* Only one of the eleven advertisements fits the category of empowering: *Pinch, leave an inch and roll* (NHP, 2008c). In this 45 second ad, a young couple is shown making out on a bed in a dimly lit room. The couple appear to be teenagers, younger than 20. After professing their love for each other and mentioning that they have waited a long time, they continue to make out, but Charlene gently pushes the protagonist back and asks if he has a condom. On Charlene's insistence, they stop making out and the young man leaves the room in search of a condom. He goes to the living room to get one from his friend Peter who is making out with another woman. Peter, annoyed by the interruption, quickly pulls a condom from his pocket and gives it to the young man. Upon receiving the condom, he scratches his head with a confused expression on his face. He returns to Peter who then gets up off the couch so they can talk 'privately'. The young man explains to Peter that he does not know how to use a condom. Peter advises him to relax because he (Peter) is an expert; he then shows him how to use a condom by saying that all he needs to do is: "Pinch, leave an inch and roll." Peter demonstrates while speaking. The young man repeats the words and actions twice before heading back to the bedroom smiling confidently. In the final seconds of the ad the message is reinforced by a graphic representation of the recommended actions.

The assumption here is that young men are unfamiliar with condoms, and the message makes clear how unthreatening they are. Using them is easy. The advertisement might not have been designed with the aim of highlighting the roles of young men and women in condom use, but it does so anyway. An additional, if unintended message, is that young women need to insist on condom use during sexual intercourse, as indicated by the actions of Charlene. Though the ad is more empowering for men, based on a negotiated reading of the text (Hall, 1980), female viewers may also find it empowering as Charlene shows that they can have a more active role in negotiating safe sex and can share in the decision to use protection, which is usually left to men. Another part of the message centers on the role of older men in teaching younger men how to correctly use a condom. Despite the widely held view that men should be more knowledgeable about sex than women, the protagonist admits that he does not know how to use a condom. By asking for help, Charlene's partner combats the myth of male sexual sophistication. These

[1] In Jamaican dancehall culture 'swag' refers to personal style (which may include but is not limited to being on trend), personality, confidence, and/or any combination of the three that results in a person's ability to stand out and command attention. It may also make reference to a person's talent, or ability such as their athletic prowess. The term originated as a part of hip hop culture and was added to the dancehall vocabulary as a descriptor. 'Swag,' as it is understood in the dancehall, does not pre-suppose or depend on status, though possessing swag and the attention it garners may eventually lead to an increase in status for the person (C. Moore, personal communication, February 9, 2015).

elements of the ad combine to provide an empowering message to both men and women, although the main target audience is men.

This ad is somewhat unusual in that it captures very young characters prepared to learn about safer sexual practices. The setting of the PSA also adds to its novelty with Charlene and the protagonist shown on a bed in a dimly lit bedroom. *Pinch, leave an inch and roll* (NHP, 2008c) is one of only three advertisements that show people in a bedroom, the location where condom use is usually discussed and actually takes place. Of the three ads that show a bedroom setting, this is the only one in which the characters engage in kissing and caressing. This use of positive sexual representations in a realistic setting is a commendable and likely effective strategy to reach the target audience. Despite criticism from some members of the public for its explicit nature and alleged attempt to promote sexual relations among young people (Dick, 2009; Campbell, 2009; Reid, 2009), this kind of positive sexual representation not only portrays humans as sexually attractive but also appeals to a young, sexually active population, who might not have otherwise learned how to correctly use a condom.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the gender representations in Jamaican HIV television advertisements. This research aim evolved from media constructivist and critical feminist theoretical arguments which maintain that media constructions of men and women influence how audience members make sense of the information they receive. Since media form such an important part of our daily lives, and constitute a major strategy in HIV prevention efforts, this study was approached from a critical media studies perspective with particular emphasis on the gender representations and the socio-cultural context in which these representations would be received.

Eleven PSAs were analyzed using Gupta's (2000) continuum of social constructions concerning gender, sexuality and HIV; ranging from stereotypical to empowering. A key finding of this study is that there was a progression from more stereotypical representations of men and women in the older PSAs to transformative and empowering representations in more recent advertisements. Previous research also found this type of transition in HIV PSAs (Chong & Kvasny, 2007). This finding suggests that producers of the advertisements are aware of the need to replace stereotypical representations with portrayals that have the power to engender changes in attitude and behavior. When producers of HIV PSAs utilize stereotypical representations of men (such as promiscuity) and of women (such as the caregiver role), they run the risk of reinforcing behaviors that can undermine HIV prevention efforts. The progression to increasingly transformative and empowering representations in these PSAs therefore bodes well for HIV prevention efforts in Jamaica.

This study is an initial step in understanding and addressing the gender representations in Jamaican HIV television advertisements. Future studies can broaden this understanding by researching different forms of HIV media campaign materials including posters, brochures, radio PSAs, longer television content such as short and long form drama series and entertainment-education programs. Additionally, research should be done with Jamaican media producers to understand how they view gender, socio-cultural norms and how they address them in the PSAs. Those findings could then be compared with what is actually portrayed in the ads that they produce.

Audience research is also needed to understand how the audience decodes televised HIV PSA messages. That type of research would allow for intersectional analysis, which was not possible for this study. Since audience members can either assume the dominant/hegemonic position (accept the preferred reading), the negotiated position or the oppositional position (Hall, 1980), it is essential to conduct research on audience members who consume televised HIV/AIDS messages to fully grasp viewers' comprehension of the current gender representations and socio-cultural norms that inform them. Producers would undoubtedly benefit from a better understanding of audience members' negotiated and oppositional readings of these texts. Information of that nature would allow campaign planners to create messages that take such readings into consideration when preparing television content.

This analysis is not without its limitations. The main limitation is that the sample did not include all advertisements produced by the National HIV/STI Program, only those produced and aired between 1999 and 2012, and available on the program's website. This time frame and sample population excludes PSAs produced prior to 1999 and after 2012, since they were not available. Analysis of all PSAs produced by the National HIV/STI Program would have provided a more complete picture of the gender representations. Another limitation is that this study

did not analyze other televised programs about HIV such as drama series, which would also contribute to our understanding of gender portrayal in HIV/AIDS messages.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this and previous research (Hope Caribbean, 2012), it is evident that the Jamaican HIV media campaign materials can benefit from incorporating more transformative and empowering gender representations. The ads have undoubtedly increased knowledge of the disease, but there is room for improvement. In 2008, only one third of the population reported knowledge of HIV media messages; by 2012, this had increased to approximately half of the population (Hope Caribbean, 2012). Although media messages have increasingly had a positive impact on behavior, the most recent HIV knowledge, attitude and beliefs (KAB) study found that 50% of the media-using population misinterpreted campaign messages (Hope Caribbean, 2012). An overhaul of television PSAs and supporting media campaign materials should be approached from a perspective that sees media and communication as cultural representations of HIV that have significant influence in shaping perceptions of the disease (Johnson et al., 1997; Khan, 2014).

The current batch of PSAs focuses on increasing knowledge with the intent of fostering changes in attitudes and behavior. This is laudable, but it highlights a focus on the gaps in knowledge while researchers have suggested that campaign planners should instead be asking and answering the question: "How do we want the public to think about HIV?" (Johnson et al., 1997, p. 232). Such an approach would facilitate the creation of PSAs with more positive representations of sexuality that focus on the reasons why people engage in unprotected sex, such as love and trust. For instance, prior research confirms that Jamaican young women who are in cross-generational relationships defer to their older male partners concerning condom use (Darlington, Basta, & Obregon, 2012; Wood, 2007). Additionally, the Jamaican HIV KAB survey (Hope Caribbean, 2012) found that 46.9% of respondents did not use a condom the last ten times they had sex due to 'love or trust of partner'. Advertisements clearly need to address this idea that insistence on condom use is a sign that you do not love or trust your partner. Media campaign planners could therefore try to re-brand safe sex, especially condom use, as a sign of love.

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Appendix A

Analytic Categories

Video Title:_____ Year of publication: _____ Length: _____	
General observations	
Surface meaning	Who are the people in this ad? What objects are present?
Intended meaning	What message is the creator trying to share with the audience?
Cultural/Ideological meaning	What are the cultural beliefs on which this ad is based? What are the ideological values expressed in this ad?
Preferred, negotiated, Oppositional reading	What are the possible alternative interpretations of this ad? Dominant/preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings.
Narrative/Story	Is there a narrative that is associated with the images & sounds in this ad? What story is being depicted? What emotions does the story evoke?
Social relationships	Who appears to have power/control in the story? How is power expressed? Does anyone have *power over* another? If a woman is substituted for a man, is the message the same? Would the message change? Does it 'make sense'?
Gender Representation	Are the representations: 1. Stereotypical 2. Neutral 3. Sensitive 4. Transformative 5. Empowering

Note: Adapted from Frith (1998), Hall (1980), Gupta (2000), Johnny & Mitchell (2006) and Khan (2014)