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# Climate Change

## Mission Statement

The Pepperdine Journal of Communication Research seeks to pursue truth and academic excellence in the field of communication by recognizing outstanding student scholarship that explores interpersonal, intercultural, organizational, and rhetorical communication. Through rigorous student peer-review, the annual Journal strives to contribute to ongoing discussion in communication studies by publishing student papers that investigate a variety of contemporary topics and issues.

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# Introduction

*Climate* Change. We are all familiar with these words. We hear them everywhere we go. They are in the news, in the books we read, in our classes, and in our workplaces. We hear these words from politicians, scientists, our families, and even our friends or neighbors in casual conversation. But how often do we take the time to think about what they truly mean? What are the implications of climate change?

Quite simply put, Oxford Dictionary tells us that the definition of "climate change" is: "a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels." While this is true, we wanted to dig deeper into the meaning of climate change in this year's *Journal*. As a guiding theme for this year's research, we asked students to consider the type of climate change that was relevant to *their* lives. This could mean environmental climate change, but it could also take new forms in the *political* climate, the *social* climate, or even *Pepperdine's* climate.

Pepperdine is a changing climate. We are seeing the gradual change in leadership with James Gash appointed to be the new president now that President Benton is retiring. We've seen sudden change to our campus in the scorch of the Woolsey Fire. We have seen horrifying change when we lost Alaina Housley in the Borderline Shooting. Some of these changes will have positive lasting impact and some leave a gaping wound. But with the burn came the bloom,

We are so excited to present this year's research on *climate* change. As always, the students in Pepperdine's communication division delivered incredible research on their unique and meaningful ideas. We are so proud to publish each and every piece in this year's Journal.

# From The Editors-in-Chief

We are so excited to once again have the privilege to edit this Journal. We have been so lucky to be able to work with the remarkable students and faculty of the Communication division. This year's papers are exceptionally diverse, covering climate change in the environment, politics, culture, gender, generations, and social media.

As we prepare to graduate, we want to express our gratitude for the opportunity we've had to work on this *Journal* together over the last two years. We have loved collaborating with many other amazing students and having the chance to publish and share these important ideas. We know that this Journal will only continue to get better and better in the future. Thank you!

*Emma Johnson and Kayla Elwy, Editors-in-Chief*
*Pepperdine Communication Research Journal, 2019*

# Male Gender Expression Conflict Between Baby Boomers and Millennials

Annelise Green & Caroline McClelland

*Written for COM 515: Intercultural Communication: Case Studies (Dr. Charles Choi)*

Ellen Degeneres cheerfully identifies herself as a Baby Boomer to her TV show audience, explaining that her generation was so-named because after World War II their parents said "We lived through the war, let's make whoopee!" (Degeneres, 2016). Ellen then quips that "For you Millennials, making whoopee is like Netflix and Chill… But they were married," (Degeneres, 2016). Here, Ellen has identified one of the key differences between two generations. Inasmuch as a person can be influenced by their parents, friends, or education, generations (or cohorts) can be impacted through the societal context surrounding their time of birth. Differences within cohort effects can reflect varied societal priorities and can persist throughout a person's lifetime.

Due to the unique characteristics of each cohort, occasionally cohorts can clash because of differences in values. In 2015, the U.S. Census reported 76.4 million Baby Boomers and 83.1 million Millennials. The sheer magnitude of these subpopulations results in the tension of this conflict affecting multitudes of people today. Sometimes known as the "hippie" generation, the Baby Boomers were born during the population boom after World War II, and they are currently between the ages of 54 and 72 (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). The Millennial generation, on the other hand, are between the ages of 18 and 35; their generation is widely understood as the cohort emerging before and during the late-20th century technological revolution (Kohut et. al., 2010). The conflict between Baby Boomer and Millennial cohorts has included difference in male gender expression. The differences these groups have are not only caused by their different ages but derive from the cultural climate that developed their perspectives.

Conflict has arisen between the Baby Boomer and Millennial cohorts over a multitude of topics, but this analysis will dive deep into the specific differences between generational male gender expression as it pertains to sexuality and the workplace. First, cohorts and gender will be defined before further detailing the generations of Baby Boomers and Millennials. These descriptions will be used to inform the different perspectives within the conflict regarding male gender expression before recommendations for conflict resolution are presented.

**Cohort/Generational Differences**

It is important to delineate the difference between age effects and cohort effects. A cohort is a group of people of similar age, such as a generation (Hegelson, 2017). The context of what was happening socially, politically, and globally of the time results in effects that impact the ideologies of a generation. As stated previously, due to the unique characteristics of each cohort,

occasionally cohorts can clash because of differing values. Age does not determine gender role attitudes, nor is age accompanied with traditionalism (Lynott & McCandless, 2000). Rather, these differences between people are more associated with life experiences. In particular, the male gender role produces conflicts regardless of age concerning emotional expressiveness that have negative effects on psychological health and interpersonal relationships (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995). The social context that Boomers and Millennials developed in will, therefore, be discussed at length to help understand the differences in male gender expression.

**Male Gender Expression**

Gender is the term used to refer to the social categories of male and female (Hegelson, 2017). Socially, men and women are expected to behave in accordance to their gender roles (Hegelson, 2017). As time has permitted, men can thus express their gender through traditional routes, or they can be more explorative and enact their gender in non-conforming ways.

**Baby Boomers**

The Baby Boomer generation, born between the years of 1946 and 1964, were radically
unique from prior generations because of the large societal transitions during this time. The Baby Boomers are so named because of the high surge of children born post World War II, making them the largest generation in size until the Millennial cohort. Living in post-war anxiety, the Boomers participated in anti-war movements, multiple revolutionary social movements, and, of course: "sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll," as lyricized and popularized by Ian Dury & The

Blockheads. The ages of Boomers in 2018 range from 54 to 72 (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). The Boomers' male gender expression will be examined by studying the characteristics of romance/family life and work life.

**Overall Boomer Male Gender Expression**

**Traditional masculinity.** Traditional gender ideology dictates that a man's sphere is work and, on the contrary, a woman's sphere is the home (Hegelson, 2017). These gender role expectations for men involve being strong, dominant, and autonomous in order to properly support the family (Hegelson, 2017). Traditional or hegemonic masculinity is further defined through courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, mastery, technological skill, adventure, and considerable amounts of toughness in mind and body (Donaldson, 1993). Traditional masculinity encompasses how men have largely been expected to behave throughout history. These expectations range from the aggressive demands on boys and men that society perpetuates daily such as "Don't cry," "Bros before hoes," and "Grow some balls," (The Mask You Live In, 2013). Men fight to meet these standards in an effort to be accepted and finally "Be a man." These strict expectation barriers can be harmful by making people feel like they have to be aggressive or insensitive to be masculine; this limits people's ability to be explorative emotionally (Planned Parenthood, 2019). However, many believe that these tenets of traditional masculinity are still valuable, such as independence and supporting families, and should be maintained for future generations.

Boomers express gender mostly through traditional masculinity. Boomer men tend to

hold onto traditional male roles out of lack of familiarity with where they belong in a transformed society. In the midst of an era of high change, Boomer men, as they entered the workplace and began families of their own, were afraid of adapting their masculinity and losing their place of privilege in society. Burnett (2018) commented that Luke Skywalker, the legendary hero of the Star Wars films, represents the soul of Baby Boomer men: Skywalker has complex father issues and has trouble listening to women. While a dramatic critique of Boomers, Burnett's arguments highlight the tension that Boomer men feel in appeasing the traditional expectations of the past and supporting the progressive future.

**Romance/Family Life**

The sexual revolution during Boomers' young adulthoods changed how men were expected to behave in romantic and family settings. Access to birth control reduced the pressure of getting married and enhanced the ability to have sex with multiple partners (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). A Gallup poll in 1970 found that three-quarters of college students no longer believed it was important to marry a virgin (Kutulas, 2010). The term 'relationship' was beginning to be applied to more sexual situations rather than exclusively in regards to marriage (Kutulas, 2010). These presented dramatic shifts in the expectations within dating life compared to the Boomers' parents, who were less promiscuous and more traditional in courtship. Men thereby began to have less power within relationships as society put less emphasis on pure abstinence in pursuit of a family.

The wave of feminism changed the man's role in heterosexual relationships. Fresh out of

World War II, women increased in the workforce dramatically, which started to shift the traditional male breadwinner family structure (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). Women's empowerment lead to a reorganization in the expectations within the model of masculinity. Women were traditionally in charge of the relationship domain, but with sexual and economic independence, women started expecting further effort from men. For instance, men were encouraged to be more active in housework; however, men found these new demands unexpected and challenging, resulting in men remaining only modestly involved in these duties (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). These changes put high strains on the family structure, as society encouraged women to stay within their expected gender roles; yet, women were growing more empowered and independent from these norms. Amidst all of this social change, men were unable to keep up with how to cater to these women.

It was difficult for men to get conflicting information about what was attractive to women. Men admired rock stars like Mick Jagger, who was deemed as the epitome of masculinity; women, on the other hand, flocked to concerts of the more sensitive and woman-sympathizing, such as James Taylor. In the height of the seventies, women outnumbered men two to one at James Taylor concerts; the musician was called "intelligent and liberal and good," but men attacked him for his retreat from masculinity (Kutulas, 2010). By the time the bestseller Real Men Don't Eat Quiche was released in 1982, Taylor was criticized for being wimpy, weepy, and unattractive (Kutulas, 2010). Clearly, these confusing messages about what women wanted impacted mens' abilities to maintain their masculinity and their relationship status.

Relationships were more transient due to these conflicting expectations and the emphasis on individualism (Kutulas, 2010). The difficulty with romance and family life has been reflected in the success of their relationships; in general, Baby Boomers got married later in life and have had higher divorce rates than previous cohorts (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). As described by D'Emilio (1998), "Intimate relationships became arenas of struggle, [within] the bedroom and the kitchen battlegrounds." Through analysis of this research, it is clear that the role of men in romantic and family life was expressed with uncertainty, hesitancy, and not much success, as Baby Boomers began to enter their young adult years.

**Work**

As Baby Boomer men entered the workforce, they struggled economically. Boomers experienced the stress of shifting expectations from blue-collar work toward high-end white-collar work, requiring postsecondary credentials (Hughes & O'Rand, 2004). At the time, Boomer men lacked economic security, which harmed their ability to support a family and put further strain on their relationships. This is reflected in the Boomers reporting the most family-work conflicts of any other generation, including ranking highest in family centrality (Bennett, Beehr, & Ivanistkaya, 2017). Clearly, this indicates that while family was a high priority, Boomer men felt enough pressure from work that it affected and still affects their family life. Middle-aged men reported feeling more conflicted between work and family responsibilities than college-aged men (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995).

Today, Boomer men value high organization, timeliness, and work integrity.

Research has shown that, at work, Boomers value extrinsic and status values in addition to person-organization (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). They also have high expectations for reaching goals and are less likely to switch employers throughout the years (Gordon, 2016). Overall, this culminates to Boomers being largely independent, goal-oriented, and competitive within the workforce (Kane, 2017). It is important to keep all of these characteristics in mind to fully grasp Boomers in juxtaposition to Millennials.

**Millennials**

Millennials are a cohort that consist of many children of Baby Boomers. Millennials are not clearly defined in their birth years. However, many of them were born anywhere between the early 1980s to the early 2000s, and they currently range approximately from 18 to 35 (Hegelson, 2017 & Kohut et. al., 2010).

Millennials are tied to the 20th-century transformations of society associated with their large addition to the population. The main characteristic that defines this cohort is the fact that this generation directly experienced the international surge in mass media. Media channels began to emerge in the 1980s, and this technology boom has increased dramatically and drastically since its early beginnings. Moreover, many individuals who belong to this cohort tend to be more liberal in their approach to economic affairs as well as politics (Kohut et. al., 2010). This is due to the increase in and acceptance of social issues, such as the rise in LGBTQ relationships and vast changes in gender expression. Additionally, these views are also influenced by the Great Recession (2007-2012), or the great economical decline that impacted many countries in the

world (Blair, Miller, Ong, & Zastavker, 2017; Hegelson, 2017). The Recession, in particular, has caused many Millennial young individuals to struggle financially, as this period introduced record high levels of unemployment. Though it is still be determined, this event may have lasting, long-term economic and social implications (Hegelson, 2017). The rapidly changing environment greatly influenced how millennials approach male gender expression.

### Male Gender Expression Amongst Millennials
#### Transforming the gender climate.

Society has started to identify the harm of maintaining the traditional male gender role. The American Psychological Association (APA) has now acknowledged the unique trials men can experience out of a desire to not appear unmasculine. In 2018, the APA published guidelines for best psychological practice with male patients who statistically suffer more often from negative quality-of-life outcomes like suicide and cardiovascular disease (American Psychological Association, 2018). The APA has already published guidelines as far back as 2007 for females, ethnicity, and sexuality--making male gender challenges a recent development as a topic of interest. Millennial spokespeople for gender equality directly connect the feminist movements of the 1970s/1980s to the way men are similarly oppressed by gender roles. Emma Watson in a United Nations speech in 2014, argued that "men do not have the benefits of equality," and that everyone should feel free to be both sensitive and strong. Millennials have consistently used their voices now that they are adults to challenge the traditional male role.

There was a great need for nontraditional male gender expression in media when millennials were still growing. Initially millennials were exposed to media in the 1990s that reaffirmed traditional male gender roles by showing men in a positive light if they were averse to anything feminine or treated women chauvinistically (Friends, Cheers, or That 70's Show). While the decade contained some triumphs for females (such as switching Disney princess narratives from Snow White or Sleeping Beauty to Mulan and Pocahontas), the 1990s still showed a need for progression of demonstrating the male gender role untraditionally.

Millennials have now utilized their positions as adults in media production to challenge the male gender role. Millennials have created shows like Glee (2009-2015) that feature multiple non-gender-conforming characters like Kurt or Sue Sylvester. Even more revolutionarily, Glee frequently positioned the football quarterback, Finn, in scenarios that exposed his challenges with gender. Originally Finn is attacked by the football team for his friendship with Kurt, a gay boy, and Finn struggles with putting aside his homophobic biases. Over time, Finn is able to triumph over damaging male expectations by first taking Kurt's advice and dancing to Beyonce's "Single Ladies" on the football field, then later openly singing Bruno Mars' song "Just the Way You Are," to Kurt while they dance at their parents' wedding. Finn also breaks male gender expectations on screen by struggling with negative body image, auditioning to be a cheerleader, and applying makeup for a tribute to the rock band Kiss. This character was so impactful because Finn was always portrayed as masculine despite these nontraditional behaviors. By redefining what it means to be masculine, Glee was able to show that men can be leaders without having to sacrifice sensitivity. Millennials have

supported many other popular shows that also demonstrate nontraditional male representation within the 2000s/2010s, such as Scrubs, RuPaul's Drag Race, and This is Us. Millennials create a high demand for media material that demonstrates non- traditional masculinity. Nonconforming gender ideology poses in direct opposition to traditional masculinity. Nonconformity is simply the expression or behavioral demonstration of gender that steers from traditionally-accepted masculine and feminine gender norms (Hegelson, 2017). Evidently, those that value traditionalism can be at odds with those promoting progression in the category of the male gender, particularly within the arenas of sexuality and the workplace.

With the rise and progression of liberal tendencies and thoughts, the way in which males express their gender within the Millennial cohort dimension is vastly different than the Baby Boomers. In a article by the Washington Post, many young males have affirmed that, "They don't completely identify with the brand of masculinity their fathers or grandfathers might have projected," (Paquette, 2016). One aspect that has emerged and given rise to this change in male gender expression amongst the Millennial generation is the introduction of gender fluidity (Hegelson, 2017). Gender fluidity is characterized by the fact that one can be both masculine and feminine; there is a spectrum on which an individual can find him or herself. Men who demonstrate more effeminate qualities may be more partial to feminine expression, even though they position themselves as heterosexual males (Hegelson, 2017). This notion of gender fluidity has led to an increase in individualism amongst the Millennial cohort as well as the rise in

metrosexual and gay expression amongst males (Hegelson, 2017). Moreover, the notion of the "tough-guy" persona is slowly dying (Weinberg, Tronick, Cohn, & Olson, 1999). Part of this is due to the increase of acceptance for men to openly express their emotions. Millennial men are being nudged to look beyond the previous stereotypes that have been assigned to them, thus forming new identities previously not socially and societally accepted. The male psyche is not necessarily changing, but is being more widely accepted by society at large.

Research supports that young boys demonstrate behaviors contrary to the traditional male role, indicating that this is based more on social construct rather than actual difference. A Harvard study even suggests that perhaps men are born with more emotive qualities than women. In the study, the researchers observed six-month-old baby girls and boys. They observed that six-month-old boys were more likely to show "facial expression of anger, to fuss, to gesture to be picked up" than the little girls (Weinberg, Tronick, Cohn, & Olson, 1999). Moreover, it was shown that these young baby boys were more likely to cry than their female counterparts. Thus, through these young children, it is determined that men do have emotion. As children grow older, gender expression constructs begin to form; little boys are encouraged to refrain from showing emotion, while girls are encouraged to express their feelings (Hegelson, 2017). Nonetheless, boys are capable of showing emotion, but they have not been given the liberty in society to express this emotion fully until recently (Weinberg, Tronick, Cohn, & Olson, 1999). Millennials challenge the strict male gender role in reaction to the knowledge that men share the same emotional

range as women and can even strive to benefit from emotional expression.

Thus, the way that Millennial men express gender expression is vastly different from Baby Boomers. Male gender expression for a Millennial man is more often not rigid or succinct. The diminishing walls and societal expectations of what a "man" should be and act like is being largely redefined, as this cohort is resisting traditional gender roles (Hegelson, 2017).

### Romance/Family Life

The advance of technology has caused Millennial men to approach romantic life much differently than Baby Boomers. An aspect that has come to define this generation's approach to dating is the increase in the "hook up" culture (Kohut et. al., 2010). Millennial dating has become less concerned with the prolonged effects of such a romantic relationship, and rather the immediate effects of relationships (Kohut et. al., 2010). For example, though the rise in online dating and dating applications has created a platform through which individuals can easily meet one another, many individuals are more apt to simply meet and hang out with another individual for a short period of time. Additionally, the Millennial generation is more inclined to date multiple people at once, rather than simply devoting time to one individual. The "swipe right" culture is very pervasive, or the term most associated with the popular dating application known as "Tinder" (Levine, 2015). This has created a false reality of intimacy amongst Millennials, and, instead, has created a culture of immediacy and instant romantic rewards without the long-term commitment or work; men, in particular, do not feel the need to have a long-term serious relationship (Levine, 2015).

This is further supported by dating apps that put the responsibility of initial courtship in the hands of the woman, like the application Bumble. As a whole, Millennial men in dating life have less expectations than previous generations, and that they "have much more egalitarian attitudes about family, career and gender roles inside marriage than generations before them," (Miller, 2015). Technology has reflected these changes in cultural attitudes toward Dating.

The way in which Millennial men approach what is expected of them within romance and family life is quite different from the Baby Boomer cohort. Millennials are more accepting towards gay and lesbian relationships, interracial relationships, and they are in support of equal roles for all within society; this establishes more male support than any other generational cohort before, especially Baby Boomers (Blair, Miller, Ong, & Zastavker, 2017). As previously mentioned, Millennials are becoming more individualistic, as they do not feel the need to necessarily be in a romantic relationship or develop a family dynamic (Kohut et. al., 2010). Millennials, as a whole, are feeling less pressure to have successful marriages, as only 30% believe that it should be a priority (Kohut et. al., 2010). Because of this, they feel less inclined to marry young or even at all (McGuire, 2015). Moreover, men feel less pressure to be an involved parent (Parker, Horowitz, & Stepler, 2017). It is worth noting that stay-at-home fathers has largely increased, as it is becoming more acceptable for women to be the breadwinners of the family. Therefore, the lifting of societal pressures on what it means to be a man within the scope of relationships and family has allowed Millennials to more freely explore these dynamics.

**Work**

Millennials have experienced a wide array of social movements, as free sexual expression has become more widely accepted and encouraged than in any other generation before, and this is especially true for males. When it comes to the workforce, men are less likely to feel a financial pressure to support themselves and their families (Kohut et. al., 2010). Because of this, men are increasingly choosing professions that are more suited towards their own individual needs, having a more "loving what I do" attitude towards their profession (Schawbel, 2012). More men today do not feel the pressure to pursue prestigious jobs such as medical doctors, lawyers, etc., and rather choose a profession that befits their skills and talents. Within college, men do not feel as pressured to obtain a degree in STEM topics, and rather are inclined to choose a major that befits their skills and talents (Blair, Miller, Ong, & Zastavker, 2017; Hegelson, 2017). Within the actual workplace, many Millennials "have little interest in hierarchy and are not particularly impressed by the titles and positions within the traditional pyramid structure" (Schawbel, 2012). Additionally, within the workforce, men have felt "increased confidence and esteem, social acceptance, and reduced anxiety about manhood" (Trauth et al., 2010, p. 1). Thus, they do not feel the need to maintain rigid conformity or have workplace structure that denotes hierarchical differences; men do not feel the need to assert their dominance in this sphere, like in previous generations. Additionally, Millennials view work as a team effort, rather than an uneven playing field; men are increasingly viewing women within work as counterparts, rather than employees are lesser status (Blair, Miller, Ong, & Zastavker,

2017 & Hegelson, 2017). Another factor that has largely impacted the way in which Millennials approach the workforce has been the direct result of the economic collapse in 2007. Many Millennials enter society post- graduation, and they find themselves facing a dire situation: unemployment. Many Millennial men have resulted to living with their parents post college, as unemployment rates are incredibly high amongst this group (Hegelson, 2017). Therefore, males have been positioned both socially and economically where their worth as a man relies less on their occupation.

Additionally, when it comes to work, more Millennials prefer the ability to have more flexible schedules and increased personal time. Millennials have been predisposed to a culture of instantaneous gratification, as a result of the technological revolution (Kohut et. al., 2010). Thus, they are more apt to want instantaneous feedback from their boss and succinct career advice. Furthermore, because Millennials appreciate transparency in their relationships, they also are more opt to desire transparency in their work relationships (Schawbel, 2012). Millennial men do not feel the pressure to get married and thus support a family, which has allowed the Millennial cohort to pursue careers within many fields, opening up the door for creative expression and the diminishing of traditional gender roles and gender expression within the workplace (Hegelson, 2017 & Schawbel, 2012).

**Conflict of Male Gender Expression Boomer Perspective**

Boomers have many qualms with the younger cohort of Millennials because of undesirous characteristics of the younger cohort. In a study with data from 1.4 million people

collected between the 1930s and the present, Millennials (or, as frequently titled by Boomers, "Generation Me") have demonstrated higher self-esteem, narcissism, anxiety, and depression than Boomers (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). "Generation Me" are further described as having inflated egos, self-esteem, and higher future expectations (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). Millennials are also more sheltered, having been smothered with safety rules and devices (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Clearly, Boomers do not appreciate these traits of Millennials, especially coming from a standpoint of tumultuous social and economic change that required hard work and personal action. Boomer men who reflect traditional masculinity would take particular fault with Millennials not having the strength to be autonomous and productive as is traditionally expected of them.

Boomers take particular issue with Millennial characteristics in the workplace, and this is evident in the way that Baby Boomer men view Millennial men. Boomer men believe that Millennial men are lazy at their jobs; these beliefs are actually largely supported by extensive research. Millennials value work less, leisure more, express a weaker work ethic and a higher extrinsic work values (e.g. salary) than older generations (Twenge, 2010). Another study warns employers about millennials, saying they, "Should expect to see more employees with unrealistically high expectations, a high need for praise, difficulty with criticism, an increase in creativity demands, job-hopping, ethics scandals, [and] casual dress" (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). These suggestions are supported in a study with a sample of over 115,000 people collected over 18 years which determined that Millennials have a higher need for social approval than Boomers and that Millennials

expect inordinate amounts of praise at work (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010). As all of these studies controlled for age, the differences cannot be attributed to different life stages, but are rather emphasized in cohort differences. For people like the Boomers, Millennial entitlement in the workplace highlights the youths' privilege in expecting general economic security. Nonetheless, Millennials have higher job satisfaction, job security, recognition, and career development than the Boomers, and this is especially true for males (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010). Obviously, this inequity in job security would be a sore subject for men who struggled to find higher-paying jobs in a time when their salaries reflected their masculinity.

Boomers also believe that Millennials place too much importance in areas of life that lack substance. Stein (2013) argues that Millennials are entitled, self-centered, and purely driven by money. While bragging that Boomers have more money, experience, and drive than Millennials, Miller (2017) critiques Millennial obsession with the entertainment industry. As mentioned above, Boomers are highest in family centrality while Millennials are highest in work centrality (Bennett, Beehr, & Ivanistkaya, 2017). Growing up in an era defined by fighting for equality, Boomers could view the superficiality of Millennials to be meaningless and trivial. Traditional masculinity would also judge these Millennial values because truly masculine men are not expected to be up-to-date on entertainment trends or be motivated beyond providing for a family.

**Millennial Perspective**

On the other hand, Millennial male experiences place their opinions in opposition to Boomers. In viewing Baby Boomers, many Millennials view this cohort as "beset with egotism, impulsivity and a shocking lack of empathy" (Gregoire, 2017). Millennial men pose the notion that if they are defined as egoistic and narcissistic by Boomers, they learned these qualities and traits from Baby Boomers. Thus, Millennials wonder if Baby Boomers are actually the generation to blame, instead of being deemed the problem themselves. Moreover, many Millennials see the Baby Boomer cohort as being the one that incurred the economic debt, leading to depression that lasted from 2007-2012, and from which society is still recovering (Gregoire, 2017; Schawbel, 2012; Stein, 2013). This, as many Millennials have determined, has contributed to their lack of resources and the higher levels of unemployment amongst this cohort that Boomers frequently find fault with. On the flip side, Baby Boomers experienced a surge of prosperity post World War II, and they did not have struggle in the same manner that Millennials are now facing as they enter the workplace and begin to start families (Schawbel, 2012). This is especially true for men, given that many of Boomers did not have to struggle to obtain high-end jobs; however, men today have not struggled in finding a job, but they also are dealing with the ramifications of positioning themselves in jobs that were once not entirely traditionally suited for men due to more women dominating male roles. Nonetheless, Millennial men in the workplace often report feeling as though Baby Boomer men unfairly frown upon their cohort, deeming them to be lazy, self-centered, and a plethora of other characteristics. Millennial men rather note their

dedication to personal goals instead of the traditional goals Boomers expect them to have.

Furthermore, Millennial men view Baby Boomer men as being rigid and unable to accept new gender expression orientations (Stein, 2013). This is largely, in part, due to the fact that Baby Boomers have remained largely homogeneous, even though the cohort experienced similar sexual revolutions and shifts in social societal expectations during their youth. However, these revolutions looked starkly different from one another. Millennials have witnessed a plethora of shifts, primarily in regards to the rights of women within society. The further casualization of dating applications relieves men from taking responsibility for all of the courtship duties, leaving men more free to sexually express themselves while still maintaining the kind of relationships they want. These circumstances have had major impacts on the way that Millennials thus form their gender expressions within relationships. For example, Millennials are encouraging more open sexual expression. More people are in support of gay marriage—74% of Millennials condone gay marriage, in opposition to the mere 56% of Baby Boomers who agree (Pew Research Center, 2017). Additionally, in the same research trends, many Millennials support a less rigid expression of gender, allowing men the freedom to express themselves in previously untoward ways, like not always paying for the entire first date. Men are also able to be more effeminate with less judgement, while still positioning themselves as a hetereosexual male (Stein, 2013). Additionally, because of the increased drive for and shift in gender expression, more Millennial males feel more comfortable expressing their emotions, thus adopting more

liberal social tendencies. However, Millennials view Baby Boomers, especially Baby Boomer men, as being more rigid, strictly adhering to their traditional gender constructs (Stein, 2013). Millennials advance male gender expression toward a more liberal philosophy. Nonetheless, these apparent differences in approach do not have to determine eternal conflict between the cohorts.

**Conclusion/Suggestions/Recommendations**

If one looks at each cohort—Baby Boomer and Millennial men—one can acknowledge that these two groups are actually very similar to one another. Both cohorts were the largest generation of their time and developed in tumultuous sexual and economic scenarios. Both had to renegotiate what it meant to be a man in response to these new circumstances. Despite these similarities, Baby Boomer and Millennial male gender expression has caused plenty of tension within these already tense groups. However, in order to bridge this gap, it is important for both to highlight affinities between the two, as this will not only help bridge the gaps between them, but also shed some light on the fact that these two cohorts emerged from very similar economical and societal circumstances.

Both Boomer and Millennial men grew up during a time of very progressive social movements that changed the trajectory of human rights in the United States. The feminist movement parallels with the Women's March of modern day, as well as the Civil Rights Movement paralleling with Black Lives Matter. Advancing technology in addition to these new progressive expectations within dating (for Boomers, the birth control pill; for Millennials, online dating) completely transformed the expectations of a man within a relationship.

Moreover, many of them have experienced major shifts in the workplace. The Boomers experienced major workplace shifts with the introduction of women and people of color and the Millennials experienced the Internet and technological advancements that drastically changed how people work. These workplace shifts also largely compromised male job security because suddenly new expectations and skill-sets were placed due to the increase of competition (by either actual people or advancing computer ability).

Using the accumulated research knowledge, the researchers recommend both increasing familiarity and finding areas of commonality between Boomer and Millennial men in order to alleviate the conflict. Research has shown that increasing empathy toward stigmatized groups can improve attitudes toward the group as a whole (Batson et al., 1997). Further, perspective taking can decrease stereotypic biases and reduce ingroup bias by increasing evaluations of outgroups (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Therefore, increasing familiarity of an outgroup can help limit negative impressions and hopefully foster better relationships between the two antagonistic groups.

Ultimately, Baby Boomers and Millennials have a very tense relationship, and this is especially true of the males within these cohorts and how they utilize gender expression. These differences will not easily evaporate, especially because Millennials are now an even larger generation than the Baby Boomers and conflict will persist. As Ellen mentions, she knows recent

Census results now demonstrate these populations "because a 20-year old staffer read it to me from the Internet," (Degeneres, 2016). However, by examining the different perspectives of each cohort, it is evident that there are more areas of similarity rather than differences. Perhaps if Ellen used her segment on Baby Boomers and Millennials to see what the groups have in common instead of highlighting their different cultural knowledge, the cohorts could be closer to harmony. We believe that conflict resolution will be accomplished if each cohort chooses to promote similarity and increase the level of productive dialogue.

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# Undemocratic and Liable

## Noel Kildiszew

*Written for COM 301: Rhetoric and Social Influence (Prof. Justin Kirk)*

The tragedy of World War II left the world in rubble. In 1945, a continent once controlled by fascist and communist dictators found itself in the process of rehabilitation not only of cities but also of government systems. With Hitler and Mussolini literally out of the equation, the world could seemingly recover peacefully. However, seventy-four years later in 2019, similar problems are beginning to rise out of the ashes of WWII. Under the presidency of Donald Trump, the United States government is beginning to align itself with fascist ideology. Traditionally, fascism creates social and government systems that support a centralized government, national and racial purity, and militarism. In her article "Will We Stop Trump Before It's Too Late?" former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright explores the danger of this new trend, pointing to the ways in which President Trump's undemocratic decision-making in the Oval Office perpetuates this ideology. U.S. citizens on either side of the political spectrum should pay attention to Albright's argument while testing for manipulative rhetoric. A resurrection of this political ideology could have negative implications both at home and abroad. Thus, by examining the impact of certain presidential actions, the following rhetorical analysis allows for an apolitical look into Albright's claims, evidence, and reasoning.

Albright forms her argument on one central claim. She asserts that Donald Trump encourages the spread of fascism, "…the possibility that fascism will be accorded a fresh chance to strut around the world stage is enhanced by the volatile presidency of Donald Trump." This major claim is supported throughout the article with several sub-claims. First, Albright expands on how leaders throughout the world are contributing to this new wave of fascism, "The raw anger that feeds fascism is evident across the Atlantic…" Next, she claims that America's leadership is particularly necessary to stunt the spread of this ideology, "If freedom is to prevail over the many challenges to it, American leadership is urgently required." She concludes with claiming that a *great* nation such as America does not "merit that label by aligning itself with dictators and autocrats, ignoring human rights, declaring open season on the environment, and disdaining the use of diplomacy at a time when virtually every serious problem requires international cooperation…" Overall, Albright challenges the current administration, providing her interpretations and alluding to her predictions of Trump's presidential engagements both foreign and domestic.

Throughout this rhetoric, Albright uses strong evidence and reasoning which strengthen her central argument. To demonstrate the potential resurrection of fascism, she first presents examples of oppressive power across the globe, "The danger of despotism is on display…Putin has just been re-elected to a new six-year term…In China, Xi Jinping has persuaded a docile National People's Congress to lift the constitutional limit

on his tenure in power." Putin's reelection sparked conversation globally. According to interviews with Russian constituents, Cable News Network (CNN) reporter Angela Dewan found that many citizens chose to abstain from voting because they neither wanted to support Putin's ever tightening grip on Russia nor vote for an inexperienced third-party candidate (2018). Further east in China, Xi has ensured his presidency for life, enforcing a consolidation of power. *Time*'s Charlie Campbell writes "China's burgeoning influence, augmented by Washington's retreat into nativist languor, further normalizes autocratic political systems that have been on the rise since the 2008 financial crisis" (2018). Campbell suggests that autocratic political systems are trending and becoming seemingly acceptable at the fault of both Xi and Trump. According to the 2019 U.S. News & World Report, the U.S., Russia, and China are ranked as the world's top three most powerful countries. Albright's evidence and reasoning highlights the influence these countries have on the world's stage.

Historically, these abuses of power abroad would oblige the U.S. to intervene in some way, spreading the ideology of a healthy democracy. As Albright states, "If freedom is to prevail over the many challenges to it, American leadership is urgently required. This was among the indelible lessons of the 20th century." However, the media suggests Trump has instead built comraderies with these leaders. In Asia for example, Trump made a visit to Beijing to meet with Xi towards the end of 2017. Nick Frisch of *The New Yorker* expands on this visit and explains how popular Trump was among the Chinese public. He states, "[Trump's] brash artifice, transactional worldview, and blood-and-soil nativism are all

familiar archetypes in China...Trump's election neatly fit the Chinese-propaganda narrative that American democracy, while it may have had its moment, is a fluke, and will ultimately end in corruption and dysfunction" (2017). Unlike past U.S. presidential visits, Trump's did not come with a plea to the Chinese government for moral and democratic change. Rather, Trump fit nicely into their autocratic ideology. Albright reasons that "instead of standing up for the values of a free society, Mr. Trump, with his oft-vented scorn for democracy's building blocks, has strengthened the hands of dictators."

In his campaign, Trump's stance on immigration veered farther to the Right than most Republicans running in the race. Now under Trump's presidency, there has been a growing target on the issue of immigration. In the *New York Times,* Clyde Haberman explains that Trump has turned anti-foreigner, seen in both his lukewarm efforts to help the refugee crisis and his passionate pursuit of a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. In conclusion, Haberman suggests that this stems from xenophobia, a fear fueling Trump's "America First" policies. Albright's central argument is supported by her reasoning of Trump's relationship with immigrants, "He libels immigrants and the countries from which they come. His words are so often at odds with the truth that they can appear ignorant, yet they are in fact calculated to exacerbate religious, social and racial divisions." Albright's reasoning concludes that Trump is seeking to divide the people of our nation, pushing out those who are politically, racially, or even religiously different. These xenophobic actions display America as a nation who supports oppressive ideology to our enemies and allies abroad. Albright reasons that "Mr. Trump

appears to like bullies, and they are delighted to have him represent the American brand."

In 2018, president Trump named John Bolton as the new United States National Security Adviser (NSA). As a result, Albright questioned the quality of Trump's future security decisions: "The recent purge of his national security team raises new questions about the quality of advice he will receive. John Bolton starts work in the White House on Monday." According to CNN's David Rothkopf, Bolton "is known as an architect of the Iraq War, an enemy of multilateralism and foe of the United Nations...He is also a harsh critic of the Iran nuclear deal and of North Korea, and is seen as someone who might promote conflict in both cases" (2018). Siding with Albright's concern, Rothkopf explores the major apprehensions and potential consequences surrounding Bolton's new position as NSA. His ideology discourages international alliances and has proven to be unpredictable in nature. Given his reputation, using Bolton as an example strengthens Albright's argument because it forces the audience to question the leadership of Trump regarding international affairs.

Albright's strongest conclusion in her article paints Trump as an undemocratic leader. She explains, "At one time or another, Mr. Trump has attacked the judiciary, ridiculed the media, defended torture, condones police brutality, urged supporters to rough up hecklers and—jokingly or not—equated mere policy disagreements with treason." In these examples, Trump is shown to lack moral leadership and encourage conflict among fellow Americans. Regarding Trump's critique of the media, Richard Cohen with the *Washington Post* presents how Trump refers to any news source with an adverse opinion to the Trump

Administration as "fake news." The freedom of the press established in the First Amendment protects democracy and liberty. Without it, the presidency seemingly loses one of its checks and balances. Who will keep them accountable? According to Cohen, Trump wants a "servile press, one that offers praise, withholds criticism and refrains from reporting awkward truths" (2018). Ultimately, undemocratic actions provide the catalyst to a fascist revival.

Albright's rhetoric makes lofty claims, calling the audience to action. Thus, it is necessary for a critic to test her article for manipulation. First, a critic should consider if the rhetoric intentionally silences other groups or people. Albright's article does not violate this standard. Rather, she states, "... we should each do our part to energize the democratic process by registering new voters, listening respectfully to those with whom we disagree, knocking on doors for favored candidates, and ignoring the cynical counsel..." Second, a critic should test if the rhetoric attempts to overwhelm the audience's reason. Rather than build up the audience to a powerful emotional response, she presents solid evidence to support her claims. For example, she states, "His policy toward North Korea changes by the day and might quickly return to saber-rattling should Pyongyang prove stubborn before or during talks." Lastly, a critic should check if the rhetoric targets groups or individual people, not their ideas or actions. Although she addresses Trump often, she never attacks his character. Critiquing his actions and ideology, she states, "Instead of engaging in creative diplomacy, he has insulted United States neighbors and allies, walked away from key international agreements, mocked multilateral organizations and stripped the State

Department of its resources and role." Overall, Albright meets the standard for ethical rhetoric.

Contemporary politics have caused historical turbulence in the United States. Though the WWII era has concluded, remnants of fascist ideology that propelled the war continue to guide political leaders today. Given the current state of U.S. foreign relation and domestic policy issues, Albright's arguments are crucial to consider. As an informed citizen, constituents from either political party should consider Albright's argument earnestly as this issue is impartial to entire political spectrum. Guided by the actions of an American political leader, the threat of a fascist renaissance impacts individuals on a global scale due to U.S. influence abroad. Albright allows her audience to question for themselves whether Trump is acting undemocratically or not. Provided with the necessary evidence to consider, readers are urged to create a dialogue around this issue, stopping its polarizing influences. Though her major claim seems unimaginable, the evidence is factual and her reasoning is consistent. Ultimately, her rhetoric is effective and does not attempt to deceive or manipulate the audience.

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# $16.7 Million To Save One Reputation: How Starbucks Responded Amidst a Racial Sensitivity Crisis

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*Written for COM 492: Public Relations Case Studies and Insights (Dr. Klive Oh)*

### Organization Profile

**Overview of Case**

In April of 2016, two black men were sitting in a Starbucks store (Gayle, 2018) when an employee claimed they had to leave since they had not made a purchase. The two men refused to leave the store, which prompted the Starbucks barista to call the Philadelphia Police, claiming that the two men were trespassing. A viral video showed the two men being arrested and caused a public out roar. After the public started several protests at multiple Starbucks locations, the chain decided to take serious action and closed over 8,000 stores for a day to run a racial bias training for their employees on May 29, 2018 (Rusche, 2018).

Starbucks racial bias training is relevant to worldwide publics, as this global brand interacts with different social classes and races every second of everyday. Awareness of race and the fight for social justice are analyzed and considered within company communication more than ever before in today's America. It is important that Starbucks, being a global company with a diverse racial customer base, consider and develop a sense of cultural sensitivity.

**Background**

Starbucks Coffee Company is a global coffee chain with over 28,000 locations worldwide (Starbucks). The company first opened its doors in 1971 to the city of Seattle, Washington with the goal of serving the world's best cup of coffee. Howard Schultz, past chairman and chief executive officer of Starbucks, first tasted the product in 1981 (Starbucks). Like love at first sight, he joined the company a year later with the vision of bringing an Italian twist. Inspired by the social elements of coffee drinking in Italy and Europe, Schultz sought to bring this "sense of community" culture to America through each Starbucks cup (Starbucks). Their mission statement is "to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time" (Starbucks). Starbucks values their partners and employees. Their company traits include inclusivity, transparency, courage, and accountability (Starbucks).

**Strengths**

The company has experienced a steady revenue growth over the course of multiple years, resulting in the strong financial position they encounter today. "The company's revenues increased at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.8% from US$14,866.8 million in FY 2013 to US$22,386.8 million in FY 2017" (Starbucks Corporation SWOT Analysis, 2018). Starbucks also offers a rewards program as an incentive for their customers to return with the

promise of free products in the future. Their financial position and loyalty program both contribute partially to Starbucks strong customer loyalty and brand recognition. With more than 29,000 locations worldwide, Starbucks customers come from different countries and cultures to amalgamate a diverse customer base (Statista, 2018).

**Weaknesses**

Starbucks can credit their success to the fast-paced work environment. However, through quick, impersonal interactions with consumers, the company may neglect and undermine the customer experience. This can translate to the company valuing quantity over quality. Considering racial bias, this immediate, distracting environment could allot for name misspellings or misunderstandings on coffee cups, or hasty responses when talking to a customer. Another weakness Starbucks encounters is its high prices which reduce the affordability of their products. It's "a weakness because it limits the company's market share, especially in areas with relatively lower disposable incomes" (Lombardo, 2018). It also encourages customers to try products from their more affordable competitors. There have been previous incidents of racial insensitivity within the company which were sparked by Starbucks "Race Together" campaign and other individual incidents in locations across the country. This affects customers and employee perceptions on the company.

**Opportunities**

The company has strong international presence, but expanding into developing markets could help raise the annual revenue growth to maintain a strong financial position. Another opportunity is to develop inclusive campaigns targeting minority groups to further expand their customer base. Considering unconscious bias, Starbucks has the opportunity to impact different cultures and races through their international presence. With tasteful campaigns or thoughtful corporate social responsibility motives, Starbucks has the global power to change a community through their financial resources, large customer and employee base, or vast range of products. The company launched Starbucks Reserve Roastery and Tasting Room— a series of upscale stores that offer unique coffees and a premium experience. These stores can be found in select cities, and have quickly gained popularity. The expansion of Starbucks Reserve Roastery and Tasting Room is an opportunity for the company to target a different segment of customers.

**Threats**

Competitors to the company, such as Dunkin Donuts, The Coffee Bean, fast food restaurants and smaller independent stores offer more affordable prices which might appeal to the public. Imitation of products and their business model is another threat that the company must be aware of.

Protests and boycotts from activist have been, and continue to be, a threat to the company's reputation. In 2015, activists were outraged by Starbucks superficial, "Race Together," campaign, in which, baristas were encouraged to spark conversations of race with customers and write "race together" on cups (Shah, 2015). In 2017, activists became outraged again after two black men were arrested at a Starbucks under the charge of trespassing. Following this incident, Starbucks instituted a new policy where anyone could use their restrooms without a purchase. The new policy poses a threat to the company since customers are concerned that this restroom privilege will

aggravate an unintended homelessness problem in store locations (Henninger, 2018).

**Principal Players**

There were multiple principal players involved throughout the different stages of this case. Starbucks was a principal player because one of their Philadelphia stores was the location of the arrest which eventually led to a full-on PR crisis. Additionally, many Starbucks stores closed for a day to administer racial bias training.

The *manager at the Philadelphia store* was also principal player since he had a direct impact on the arrest of the two black men. All S*tarbucks employees* can be considered principal players because their day-to-day relationships with customers were affected by the crisis. It is important to note that some of these employees were upset with the company for allowing such negative and racist behavior within the corporation. *The Philadelphia Police Department* played an important role and received backlash after one of their members arrested the two black men for sitting at a Starbucks location.

Two other very important principal players were Rashon Nelson and Donte Robinson, the two men arrested at the store. Their arrest resulted in the support and outrage of another principal player– the black community. Starbucks customers were supportive of the black community and reprimanded Starbucks for its lack of racial sensitivity. Finally, the participation of a variety of activists were also important since they gathered attention and public awareness for the situation.

**Overview of What Happened**

On Monday, April 12, 2018 two black men, Donte Robinson and Rashon Nelson, went to the Spruce Street Starbucks location in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Tornoe, 2018) to talk about real estate opportunities (Held, 2018). "They had asked to use the restroom but because they had not bought anything, an employee refused the request" (Stevens, 2018). They remained seated inside the coffee shop waiting for a third friend to arrive before ordering any items off the menu (Held, 2018). The Starbucks manager asked the two men to leave. After refusing his request, the manager proceeded to call the police. Nelson and Robinson were arrested by the Philadelphia Police Force and taken out of the store in handcuffs. However, Starbucks did not press charges and the men were released. That same day a video of the event went viral on Twitter and Starbucks began to receive backlash for racial profiling. This led to a week of protest, accusations of racial discrimination and Starbucks commitment to do better (Held, 2018).

Philadelphia's demographics consists of 41% white, 43.4% Black or African American, 12.3% Hispanic or Latino, and 6.3% Asian (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Population, 2018). Thus, it is important to note the percentages of these demographics when considering the relationship between black and white individuals in Philadelphia. With the "Black Lives Matter" movement sweeping the nation in 2015 and ongoing police brutality in the United States, many Americans took offense to Starbucks racial bias discrimination that elevated the already tense social justice climate (Nodjimbadem, 2017).

**Need for PR**

The company needed PR to control and contain the message in an effort to salvage the corporation's reputation. As an established brand with over 28,000 international locations, one incident could immensely damage their image. Furthermore, they needed to show that the corporation cared about Nelson and Robinson.

Finally, the company needed PR to produce standardized procedures to enable teaching on racial profiling.

On the other hand, activists sought to gain attention from the media through protests against Starbucks that would result in change to the issue of racism in America. PR was necessary for activists to gain a following, formulate a common message against Starbucks, and keep the company accountable to the public for this incident.

### PR Related Events and Strategies & Tactics Used
### Timeline of Key PR Related Events

*On April 12, 2018*, two black men were arrested at a Starbucks store in Philadelphia for trespassing. The same day, a video of their arrest went viral on Twitter as the public was outraged. The Philadelphia Mayor's office and police department launched separate investigations of the situation on April 14, 2018. Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross released a video on Facebook defending his officers' actions (Tornoe, 2018).

*On April 15, 2018*, Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson released a video statement apologizing. That same day, Asa Khalif, an activist for Black Lives Matter led a protest at the Starbucks store and demanded the manager be fired (Tornoe, 2018).

Protests outside the store continued on *April 16, 2018*. The crisis garnered more media attention after Johnson made an appearance on ABC's Good Morning America where he issued an apology. He later flew to Philadelphia to meet Nelson, Robinson, community leaders and government officials (Tornoe, 2018).

On *April 17, 2018*, Starbucks announced they would be closing 8,000 + locations on the afternoon of May 29 to hold racial bias training for all employees (Tornoe, 2018). Later that day the police incident report was released revealing the two men had cursed at the manager and repeatedly insulted the police.

*On April 19, 2018*, Police Commissioner Ross apologized for making the situation worse with his Facebook video defending officers and announced that the department had drawn up new guidelines on handling future calls (Tornoe, 2018). However, the public was still furious with Ross and the Philadelphia Police Force. Dozens "protested outside the police headquarters and marched to City Hall, chanting, 'Police Department, you can't hide, we can see your dirty side'" (Madej, 2018).

Nelson and Robinson reached separate agreements with the city of Philadelphia and Starbucks on May 2, 2018. The city agreed to pay each of them one dollar and set up a $200,000 program for young entrepreneurs (CBS, 2018). Meanwhile, Starbucks offered the two men free college tuition to complete bachelor's degrees at Arizona State University through an online program (CBS, 2018).

*By May 29, 2018*, 8,000 + Starbucks stores closed to train 175,000 employees on racial sensitivity.

### Strategies and Tactics with Application to PR

*Public Apologies*

Starbucks first strategy to combat the racial bias crisis and negative news media attention was to release public apologies to the general public via social media and the internet through written statements and videos. The company's initial response was posted on their website, and a shortened version was uploaded on Twitter on April 14. The simple response read, "we apologize

to the two individuals and our customers and are disappointed this led to an arrest" (Starbucks, 2018). One day later, Starbucks CEO, Kevin Johnson's public apology video to the two black men was released. Johnson expressed:

"I want to begin by offering a personal apology to the two gentlemen arrested in our store. What happened and the way that incident escalated, and the outcome was nothing but reprehensible and I'm sorry. I want to apologize to the community in Philadelphia and to all my Starbucks partners, this is not who we are and it's not who we are going to be" (Johnson, 2018).

Johnson then flew to Philadelphia to meet with Philadelphia city officials, Nelson, and Robinson to personally apologize.

Starbucks worked in the reactive phase to resolve the conflict. Their initial statement was not empathetic, especially toward the black community (McGregor, 2018). However, Johnson's video and press apology admitted fault (Johnson, 2018). He used the statement to make amends with the public and Philadelphia community. Solutions of change were presented in the apology through employee training, partner recognition and a meeting with Nelson and Robinson. Johnson did not shift blame elsewhere. Instead, he criticized and critiqued his own actions. He used the media as a tool to discuss the events that occurred and to take ownership of the crisis. Additionally, Johnson's trip to Philadelphia, to meet with city officials and the two black men, allowed for a personal, face-to-face connection between a company executive and those directly impacted by Starbucks actions (Silva, 2018).

The issue of racial bias discrimination proved to be newsworthy for the media, since Starbucks and issues of race are both prominent and significant. In this case, the media acted as a watchdog. Media outlets monitored the situation for wrongdoings and injustice to keep a large corporation, like Starbucks, accountable to the public. Through sincere media relations, Starbucks was given a platform to express apologies and have healthy discourse with prominent media (McGregor, 2018). Starbucks used social media channels, like Twitter, to initially apologize. This led to greater media publicity and attention from a broad public audience to weigh into the discussion of racial bias from their personal computers.

*Restroom Policy Change and Store Closures*

The next strategy employed was to make a policy change which now allows anyone from the public to use their restrooms. This alluded to the idea that Starbucks is actively working to alleviate racial bias stigma, which may alter the judgement of employees giving access to those in need of restroom facilities (Henninger, 2018). Afterward, they closed stores nationwide and provided racial bias training as a strategy to recover their image. Closing the stores for training cost Starbucks $16.7 million in lost sales.

In order to move toward recovery and image restoration after crisis, Starbucks implementation of store closures for racial bias training was an applaudable PR move. Jeff Dickerson, a crisis communications adviser in Atlanta, stated that he "thinks Starbucks is sending a strong message in doing this … because ordinarily when large companies find themselves in this situation, they have counsel who will advise them against" admitting they had done nothing wrong (McGregor, 2018). The closure of 8,000

stores allowed for Starbucks to manage the crisis and demonstrate to the public their commitment to equip their employees with racial bias training (McGregor, 2018).

*Racial Bias Training*

Employees were given guidebooks and participated in sensitive conversations about race. They worked both individually and in groups with their coworkers. Groups proceeded to discuss the meaning of bias and reflect on the topics of identity and race. Additionally, employees ran through different scenarios that might create bias reactions. Finally, "they practiced welcoming behaviors, and committed to changing their habits for the better" (Wiener-Bronner, 2018). Over 175,000 Starbucks employees partook in this mandatory training (Wiener-Bronner, 2018). Johnson said the training "is just one step in a journey that requires dedication from every level of our company and partnerships in our local communities" (Madej, 2018).

Starbucks utilized the help from different cultural and human rights activist groups to develop a racial bias training curriculum. Though Starbucks did not utilize help from The Anti-Defamation League for their anti-bias training, they released a statement with their plan on consulting: The Anti-Defamation League, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, UnidosUS, Muslim Advocates, representatives of LGBTQ groups, religious groups, people with disabilities, and others. The purpose behind this particular statement was to prove the company wanted to remain racially sensitive (Starbucks, 2018).

Starbucks racial bias training proved to be a consumer and industry benefit. Although 8,000 stores were closed for a full business day, the

training provided growth for partners, business and consumers. This allowed for Starbucks to maintain mutually beneficial and lasting relationships with consumers and key stakeholders which translated into the effectiveness of a business's ability to survive. Starbucks devotion to rectify their behavior left an impression on many, as the company forwent profit to instill ethical training for the fair treatment of employees, consumers and the community. Moving forward, Starbucks racial bias training could be an example for many companies (Lockhart, 2018).

**Media Audit**

Following the incident in Philadelphia and many Starbucks store closures for racial bias training, Time wrote an article recounting the reactions and effectiveness of Starbucks racial bias training (Calfas, 2018). The article spans feedback from five employees coming from different backgrounds. Individuals of different ethnic and social groups commented on their desire for the program to involve an interactive dialogue between coworkers. Additionally, some mentioned the value of role play and hands on training experiences for situations with sensitive subjects such as race. Meanwhile, a few individuals expressed their concern that racial training did not make an impact on the situation at hand. These statements from different individuals helped identify whether Starbucks efforts of closing stores for training proved to be a genuine education experience for partners, or a façade for stakeholders and the general public with hopes of dissolving the issue.

## Analysis & Update
**Critical Analysis**

The strategic efforts Starbucks made to cover different facets of the racial bias crisis

resulted in mixed reviews from news media and crisis communication analysts. In reference to CEO, Johnson's public apology video and Starbucks initial statement, writers for news outlets, such as Forbes and The Washington Post found the apology aided Starbucks in a favorable outcome. According to our group's research, qualities that deem this video successful were Johnson's serious, somber mood, him taking personal responsibility for the racial issue and outwardly apologizing. Johnson admitely delivers a full apology with no deflection (Hyken, 2018). Through his use of phrases, such as "I'm sorry," "I own it," and "management issue," he works to diffuse conflict and treat the crisis with respect (Hyken, 2018). Taken from a Washington Post article written by Jena McGregor, Gabrielle Adams, a professor at the University of Virginia who studies CEO apologies, said, "in this climate, that kind of mea culpa is what's needed" (McGregor, 2018).

Unfortunately, the three-day delay to release this CEO response harmed its success. Criticisms were found in Starbucks initial statements and social media tweets, especially since they did not resonate well with some publics. Considering the black community, Starbucks was missing any mention of racial bias as a cause in the crisis (McGregor, 2018). It is understandable that Starbucks needed time to assess the situation and create unity on the issue internally, however, it would have been wise to address the issue of race in the first response to justify the initial feelings of injustice perceived at the time by Robinson, Nelson and the black community.

His trip to Philadelphia was seen as a humanizing response and interaction allowed for honest conversation among all three parties (McGregor, 2018). It was meaningful to see a high ranking official in the company take responsibility into his own hands and make efforts to discuss and apologize for events face-to-face with Robinson and Nelson. The meeting in Philadelphia would have been praised more if it happened earlier. Communications adviser Mike Paul stated he would have liked to see Johnson make the visit sooner, however, it was ultimately the kind of human response the occasion called for (McGregor, 2018).

The strategy and tactic that received the most focus was Starbucks implementation of in-store racial bias training for employees. Starbucks solution to combat racial bias in the future demonstrated the company's commitment to make things right. This action continued to align with Johnson's previous apologies and commitments to become better (Johnson, 2018). The company needed to create a solution that was able to convince customers they are committed to social justice during the challenging social climate currently in the country.

Starbucks decision to close stores for a day of business is comparable to Chipotle's store closures in 2016 for E. coli outbreaks. Careen Winters, chief strategy officer for MWW Public Relations said "what [Starbucks is] basically saying is bias is at least as dangerous a problem as food safety" (McGregor, 2018). In ensuring a legacy for Starbucks as a racially sensitive company, they were missing elements that provided proof to customers that training helped employees to become racially sensitive. In order to keep this momentum consistent with the company's efforts, Starbucks was missing detailed solutions on how they could translate these lessons into training protocol for all new hires. Starbucks should have immediately released a

press release clearly outlining the training materials and methods employed.

In a *Forbes* article, author Dan Pontefract points out that "some who work in the training profession, however, will look at the day of learning that Starbucks provided its employees and name it 'spray and pray.' Some will coin it a 'one-and-done' session. Others might refer to it as a 'sage on the stage' exercise" (Pontefract, 2018). Furthermore, Pontefract commends Starbucks for taking action but suggests it might not have been enough.

Pontefract offers multiple suggestions for the company. Sensitivity job aids for employees to refer to would allow training to continue within the company. Online videos, interviews and a podcast that can be accessed by Starbucks employees could also further the effort to foster a racially sensitive community. Another suggestion would be to incorporate gamification which would motivate employees to assess individual situations in which they could find themselves and be able to create a solution. This would be a preventive action that could reinforce Starbucks strong commitment to racial sensitivity. Finally, daily huddles before opening stores or starting shifts would serve as daily reminders of the company's values (Pontefract, 2018).

Although the act of closing stores was met with positive affirmation, Starbucks did receive some negative criticism in reference to their judgement including the Anti-Defamation League, an advocate for prevention of anti-semitism, in racial bias training day (Palmer, 2018). To encourage a multi-phase understanding of different racial bias, Starbucks enlisted the help of many racial awareness organizations to contribute with training materials. After receiving backlash, claiming that the ADL does not practice

racial inclusivity, from an activist involved in organizations, such as the Women's March and Anti Police-Terror Project, Starbucks decided to exclude the ADL and demote them to an advisory figure (Palmer, 2018). This allowed confusion, inconsistency, and outrage to spread between the black and Jewish communities. It may be that Starbucks was missing detailed research on the dynamics between these groups. With more information on each racial activist organization, Starbucks could have researched to familiarize themselves with prior controversies to mitigate this conflict in associating their racial bias training with different groups. However, it must be noted that the CEO of ADL is Jonathan Greenblatt, who previously sold his company, Ethos Water, to Starbucks (Coster, 2010). Therefore, Starbucks may have deliberately demoted the ADL since Greenblatt would most likely not engage in backlash since Starbucks was his former employer (Leibovitz, 2018). The negative press ensued by other activist organizations was a greater detriment to Starbucks.

**Outlook & Update**

Only a couple of weeks after the incident in Philadelphia, Starbucks faced further criticism after an employee wrote "beaner" instead of the customer's name on a cup. On May 17, 2018 at a company location in La Cañada Flintridge a customer named Pedro ordered a drink under his name. When he received his cup, he noticed the word "beaner" written on the cup instead of the name he told the employee. "'Beaner' is a derogatory term for Mexicans in the United States" (Williams, 2018). The Starbucks store excused the employee stating that he couldn't understand Pedro when he said he name and offered him a $50 gift card as an apology. Pedro's coworker Priscilla Hernandez was not satisfied

with the company's response and sent Starbucks a tweet to which they replied:

> "Thank you for letting us know, Priscilla. This is not the welcoming experience we aim to provide, and we have reached out to this customer to apologize and make this right. -Ryan" (Williams, 2018).

Later, Hernandez and Pedro met with the district manager and were offered an apology. This incident further proves the dire need for racial sensitivity training at Starbucks and the importance of the training that occurred on May 29.

Starbucks sacrificed $16.7 million dollars (Pontefract, 2018) to control a crisis and protect their image, however, their stock was not affected. The company has since been praised by the public for its efforts in educating employees on racial sensitivity. Andrew D. Gilman, the president of crisis management firm CommCore Consulting Group, said "this move goes far beyond the playbook. That's sending a big statement" (Abrams, 2018).

After the May incident Starbucks released the short film "Story of Access" created by Stanley Nelson, an Emmy award-winning documentary maker, on YouTube. The film was originally shown to Starbucks employees during training. Using Stanley Nelson to direct the short film was particularly important because he is widely recognized for *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution and Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Black Colleges and Universities.* "The seven-minute video puts the Philadelphia incident, and others like it, in context, with film clips depicting America's long history of civil rights abuses in public spaces" (MacLellan, 2018). The video allowed customers to become part of the conversation.

## Discussion & Recommendations

Starbucks did a good job in the reactive and recovery phases of the crisis, however, their efforts fell short. During the reactive phase they lacked timeliness. With the predominance of social media, the company should have known they could not afford the luxury to wait three days to respond. The video of the arrest went viral that same day and the company should have responded at that time. The timeliness of the response is somewhat understandable since Starbucks is a large corporation and needed time to recoup to create one cohesive message. However, the process should not have taken three days since there is a dominant presence of police brutality and racism in the country's current climate.

Throughout the entire crisis Starbucks shared the same message of offering a sincere apology to all stakeholders and promising to do better. However, the company should have had stronger communication with the Philadelphia Police Force because their initial responses contradict one another. Commissioner Ross initially defended the action of his police officers while Starbucks apologized. Furthermore, it took five days for Commissioner Ross to release a full apology that aligned with Starbucks consistent response throughout the incident. Although Starbucks cannot control the Philadelphia Police Force, they could have made an effort to fully discuss the incident with them and understand their stance on the controversy. By having coherent statements, stakeholders would have felt validated and the crisis would not have caused Starbucks as much damage as it did.

The crisis was substantially worsened by the presence of social media, particularly of

Twitter. The video of Nelson and Robinson being arrested went viral within hours, which gave Starbucks a small window of time to contain and manage the crisis. In this case, social media was used against Starbucks, but they had the opportunity to turn the situation around. If they had used social media to keep stakeholders constantly updated on the progress of the case, their reactive stage would have been more effective. Transparency is very important during crises and social media facilitates it. Using social media to inform stakeholders allows companies to gain the upper hand and control the story. However, Starbucks failed to do this and as a result, activists controlled the story.

Starbucks is not aware they are still in the recovery phase. Despite the incident occurring months ago, the consequences of something as sensitive as racial bias extended well into the future. The multiple apologies, employee training, and settlement began the process of healing the wound, but it is still far from being fully recovered. The company must train all incoming employees on racial sensitivity to make sure a crisis such as this does not occur again because their reputation might not be able to handle it. Furthermore, they must prove every day, to both their customers and employees, that they are continuously making efforts to positively change the racial climate and transition to a more culturally sensitive company. Starbucks can do such with a variety of campaigns highlighting the importance of being respectful and understanding of different races and cultures.

In ensuring a legacy for Starbucks as a racially sensitive company, they were missing elements that provided proof to customers that training helped employees to become racially sensitive. Starbucks could have created and published a video of employees stating and explaining how this training has changed them for the better. Our group suggests that Starbucks use material from racial bias training, and incorporate key element into training protocol for all new hires. During the holiday season, Starbucks changes the design of their cups. Our team would suggest that Starbucks diversify their cups in order to connect different cultures and coffee. Each cup could display a fun fact about a different country. For example, one cup could say, "Did you know we have ____ Starbucks locations in Mexico." Another idea would be to design cups in a way that relates to a culture. The company would have to be extremely cautious and conscious to prevent offending the culture. A cup with 200 flags of the world would make a statement that Starbucks wants their customers to feel included, and would foster a sense of community. Another recommendation would be for Starbucks to conduct a limited time "Buy One, Share One" campaign. When a customer purchases a coffee, they would receive one for free to share with a neighbor, friend, or loved one to encourage inclusivity and thoughtfulness.

**Comparison Case 1: Cadbury**

Cadbury has been a world leader in the chocolate industry, but their reputation was almost destroyed in October of 2003 after worms were found inside its Dairy Milk Bars in various locations around India. When the news broke the company used a defensive response, shifting blame to storage issues and claiming the crisis was not their fault. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA), however, stated improper packaging, a manufacturing defect or unhygienic storage conditions were to blame.

Cadbury realized their original response was not succeeding and changed their strategy.

They suspended their entire advertising campaign and overhauled the machinery and packaging of its most popular products. Furthermore, Cadbury continuously communicated with the media through press releases detailing the measures employed to correct the manufacturing and storing processes. The most important strategy used to control the crisis was Project Viswash, an educational effort in which trained quality control managers, and sale employees completed a thorough check of 50,000 retail outlets that sold their products. "The project involves building awareness amongst retailers about storage requirements for Cadbury products, and assistance in improving storage conditions at the retail end" (Economic Times, 2003).

Similar to Starbucks, Cadbury sacrificed profit (suspending advertising campaign) to protect and restore their reputation. The crisis arose in Maharashtra, India before the Diwali festival. During the festival there is a high demand for Cadbury products so the decision to suspend their advertising campaign and focus on recovery was particularly impressive. This case also related to the Starbucks case because both companies realized the importance of solving the issue internally through employee training. In the end, both were big corporations and both managed to recover their reputations. Fifteen years later, Cadbury is still a leader in the chocolate industry.

**Comparison Case 2: Japan Racial Bias**

Japan is recognized as one of the least ethnically diverse places in the world. Many Japanese people see themselves as homogeneous, which presents itself in an implicit bias against black people. Kazuo Mori, a psychologist at Matsumoto University, studied this racial phenomenon and said, "Japanese participants show an implicit preference for 'white people' over 'black people'" (Russell, 2018). Japan's culture honors hierarchy and the obedience of authority figures. Therefore, in considering this culture, large strides have not been made to dismantle racism. Those who have attempted to address racism in Japan have faced criticism, or have been ignored by Japanese media (Russell, 2018). Japanese news media receives reporting access through membership in a press (kisha) club, where information is given directly to reporters (Swann, 2014). In contrast, American news media keeps the government and individuals accountable, as reporters seek information. America has polarized Japanese views and values when considering activism efforts pertaining to the fight for social justice for black individuals.

In February 2015, members of a popular Japanese pop group called Momoiro Clover Z, posed in blackface for a photo. The girl group stood alongside another music group called Rats & Stars, a Japanese male singing group (Lee, 2015). The photo promoted the two bands, as they were set to perform together on Fuji TV, a major Japanese TV network (Lee, 2015). Although this incident of racial bias in Japan did not elicit as much outrage as Starbuck in America, elements of activism are present. Baye McNeil, a black American living in Japan, decided enough was enough (Lee, 2015). Angered by this promotional photo, McNeil used PR to shed light on Japan's racial bias. His activist efforts included organizing and posting a petition online for the removal of the blackface segment. He also posted many tweets with the hashtag "#StopBlackfaceJapan" (Lee, 2015).

McNeil's efforts initiated change, and the segment was removed from the TV network's show. Similarly, activist brought awareness to Starbucks racial bias and posed a threat to the

organization, which held the corporation accountable to their actions. Without these activist figures present in both cases, these companies and programs would not possess a desire to promote inclusivity. Sadly, the offensive issue may have been neglected or forgotten. Unfortunately, the Japanese TV network did not release a statement or apology as to why the blackface segment was canceled (Osaki, 2015). This may be due to Japanese values where one should not embarrass a supervisor or a company. Additionally, both of the Japanese bands did not make a statement expressing remorse. Meanwhile, the CEO of Starbucks was combating crisis through immediate, thoughtful apologies and developing a PR strategy to save the company's reputation. Japan could work to adopt better PR strategies to make right with black individuals. It is now where a serious question is asked. Does one neglect their own culture for the sake and consideration of a different culture? It may be asking too much for these Japanese groups to adopt Starbucks's PR tactics and strategies. In this case, I would recommend that these Japanese groups, whether it be the TV network or the music groups, work to consider the feelings of foreigners living in their country, since the issue of race and blackface has been addressed in Japan previously. Beginning to make small changes now, may impact Japan's future to shift toward a culture that accepts other races.

## Conclusion

Presently there is a climate change impacting the workplace—individuals are beginning to understand how sensitive the issue of race is when considering everyday interactions with companies such as Starbucks. Society is living in a time where respect is demanded for all groups regardless of race, class or socioeconomic level. Essentially, treating these topics with the same urgency and transparency as food safety.

Starbucks has a solid reputation with the public. It's always there. It's always the same. It's reliable. However, the company found itself in a sensitive situation that threatened the reputation they have worked to build internationally. Nelson and Robinson were wrongfully arrested at one of their stores and the public outrage was apparent. The company knew they held the blame for the incident, and although late, accepted full responsibility for their actions. Releasing a full apology statement was exactly what the company needed. Johnson delivered a heartfelt, sincere apology that resonated with stakeholders. Furthermore, having the CEO of a huge corporation fly out to personally apologize to Nelson and Robinson was a solid effort to mend their relationship with stakeholders. Starbucks was consistent and truthful with their message throughout the many steps of the crisis. Their sincere communication efforts eventually led to forgiveness from (most) stakeholders and most importantly, Nelson and Robinson.

Stealing a page from Chipotle's playbook was a smart move from Starbucks. The company witnessed the positive response Chipotle had received after closing their stores for training. Copying this strategy and adapting it to fulfill the needs of their public resulted in positive reviews from the media and stakeholders. As well, sacrificing over $16 million to train employees, demonstrated Starbucks serious commitment to doing better. The company could have apologized and hoped the crisis would eventually die off- as it probably would have since they are an incredibly prominent company. However, they saw the crisis as an opportunity to prove to their stakeholders

they are socially responsible and actually care about them. Starbucks is aware of the tremendous value corporate social responsibility holds in today's age and used it to their benefit.

In reflecting on Starbucks case, the store closures for racial bias training were enough for the public to forgive the organization and resume normal operations. Going the extra mile for principal players and consumers is what it takes for people to feel heard. Therefore, PR professionals must understand this and be willing to give their time and talents to any and all cultures, races and publics. Starbucks set an example for all companies encountering future crises. Don't just say you are sorry, prove it. Don't give excuses for your wrongful actions, be accountable. At the end of the day your reputation is more valuable than your profit because without it, there would be no profit to protect.

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# Rhetorical Theory in the Age of Social Media in Dear Evan Hansen

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**Abstract**

Broadway hit musical, Dear Evan Hansen, has revolutionized the culture of theater, as the show discusses many issues facing society such as loneliness and anxiety as caused by the increasing use of social media. The musical creates a space to talk about important issues that often go unsung. In the song, "Waving Through a Window," the main character Evan details many of his anxieties and worries, as he desires to fit in at school and navigate the world around him. This paper argues that the writers of Dear Evan Hansen effectively argue that today's society is one in which teenagers are vulnerable, anxious, isolated, and lonely, which can be partially attributed to social media; this can be supported by examining "Waving Through a Window" through the lenses of the dramatist and postmodern theories, exploring the individual experiences and the realities shaped through rhetoric.

*Keywords*: dramatist theory, postmodern theory, individual experience, social media, loneliness, anxiety, Broadway, Dear Evan Hansen

Broadway has long been the stage for stories to be told—stories of culture, of heartbreak, of pain, of loss, of celebration, and of life. Nestled among the classics lies a new musical that has captured the nation's attention- Dear Evan Hansen, drawing in over 8,000 viewers a week in New York City,[1] and many more to the national tour and album on Spotify. This show tells the story of a teenage boy, Evan, in high school who struggles with loneliness and anxiety who will do just about anything to fit in, opening up a conversation for the changing social climate in the age of social media. When the school bully, Conner, commits suicide, Evan finds himself with a cast signed by Conner that was originally a joke, leaving the rest of the school to puzzle whether or not they were friends. Evan takes the opportunity and crafts a made up friendship—longing for the chance to get to know Connor's sister, Zoe, and reaching for the day where is he accepted by people at school and not paralyzed in conversation. The musical begins with the song, "Waving Through A Window," where Evan introduces himself to the audience as being someone who no one else pays attention to or sees, finding that everyone attaches themselves to their identities on social media, rather than feeling as if they are truly seen and understood. In studying "Waving Through A Window" in Dear Evan Hansen, the writers, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, effectively argue that today's society is one in which teenagers are vulnerable, lonely, anxious, and isolated, which can particularly be attributed to social media; this argument can be uncovered the lenses of dramatist and postmodern theories

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[1] "Statistics- Broadway in NYC" (The Broadway League, 2018).

by observing the individual experience and rhetorically crafted world.

The age of social media creates a complex culture. There are so many messages that are constantly being sent to all who choose to use it. According to Pew Research, 95% of teenagers have access to smartphones, 45% of whom report that they are on the internet "almost constantly."[2] With teenagers spending increasing amounts of time isolated and on the internet, the narrative changes. According to Dr. Twenge, author of iGen, teenagers are safer now than teenagers of previous generations, primarily because they are not engaging in risky behaviors to the same extent.[3] The amount of teenagers who stay home on their Friday night is a number that continues to rise and this isolation is creating a culture of loneliness. The issue of loneliness and the desire to belong in a time where connections feel hard to forge is one that is tackled in Dear Evan Hansen, creating a cultural shift in theater as the writers make space for the discussion of important issues, such as mental health. When considered in context, "Waving Through a Window" is sung by the main character, Evan, as an introduction to his struggles with loneliness and anxiety. During the previous summer, he fell out of a tree while working in the forest and realized that there was no one around to help him get up. Evan truly believes that no one cares about him, using the metaphor of tapping on the glass and no one being able to hear him. This struggle to be seen

and to be accepted is one that is prevalent throughout the show and ultimately resolved. One must first, however, examine the song through the lenses which the writers emphasized in their creation of a show that has truly changed the culture of Broadway: dramatist and postmodern theories.

The first lens which the audience can examine this issue is through the dramatist theory, a theory which seeks to understand the influence of rhetoric beyond persuasiveness.[4] Kenneth Burke, the theorist who created dramatism, explains, "we use rhetoric to navigate our way through these rhetorically created social structures and rules."[5] In Dear Evan Hansen, Evan is living in a world where the rhetoric being used around him tells him who he should be and who he should be with. He is operating in fear, wondering how he can begin to interact with his peers and how to be seen. Right from the beginning of the song, "Waving Through a Window," Evan sings, "I've learned to slam on the brake before I even turn the key- before I make the mistake...before I lead with the worst of me."[6] Evan has not even stepped out the door to go to school and he is already shutting down because of his anxiety; he does not want to even begin to enter the day because he does not want to show people a negative side of himself. In an age that is entirely focused on appearance and manicured images, Evan is terrified that people will see who he really is and then be rejected for it. He then continues in the second stanza of the song, "Give them no reason to stare. No slipping up if you slip

[2] Monica Anderson, "Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018." (Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech., 2018).

[3] Jean M. Twenge, IGen: Why Today's Super-connected Kids Are Growing up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy?: And Completely Unprepared for Adulthood: And What That Means for the Rest of Us (New York: Atria Books, 2017).

[4] Timothy Borchers and Heather Hundley, Rhetorical Theory: An Introduction (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2018), 173.

[5] Ibid., 173.

[6] Ben Platt, "Waving Through a Window," (Atlantic Records, 2018).

away…so got nothing to share. No, I got nothing to say."[7] He does not want to draw attention to himself or say anything that will embarrass himself, so he convinces himself that being quiet and not saying anything at all will be the best option. The world that Evan is trying to navigate is entirely created by the rhetoric of social media and the expectations that it brings. The lyrics are one layer of the rules, as is the set of the show. On the stage are screens hanging from all sides—showing live tweets and messages from the characters of the show. Smartphones and interactions with their peers on their smartphones consume the characters. This song in the show, in particular, focuses in on the struggle to operate within this generation and social structure.

An additional component of dramatism that is very apparent within the song is that of perfection. Burke declares that humans are "rotten with perfection."[8] The desire to live the perfect life, according to Burke, "often causes us, or our society, great sufferings in the process."[9] Humans want to be seen as fitting ideally into society, never making mistakes and always saying and doing the right thing. Burke explains that this type of behavior can lead to the creation of a society that is rotten, leaving members with feelings of guilt.[10] Evan experiences this desire for perfection, as do many of the characters within the show. In this song, Evan sings, "On the outside, always looking in, will I ever be more than I've always been? Cause I'm tap, tap, tapping on the glass; I'm waving through a window."[11] He

questions his own abilities to belong and to become who he wants to be. Evan feels figuratively trapped between the position in society that he currently holds and the position that he desires to obtain. The writers use language as a symbol—creating the world that Evan lives in and the digital world that humans dwell in today.[12] The writers of Dear Evan Hansen are able to make a commentary about the role of technology in teenagers' lives in the present day because of the symbol of Evan and the scene that they set up around him. Burke believed that the theater was a way to show the symbols of life, which is well summed up: "humans enact real roles on live stages as they attempt to impact others."[13] There are choices that humans make that shape their world; the symbolism is not accidental.[14] The writers are critical of the symbols that the modern society is made up of, as they describe a character who is unrelenting in his desire to fit in and be a part of the "crowd", even when everyone else is likely feeling lonely too.

The criticisms of modern society continue in the musical, Dear Evan Hansen, which can be viewed through a postmodern theoretical lens. Postmodernism takes language beyond that which is rational and objective and moves into a space that is subjective and influenced by personal biases.[15] It recognizes that there are multiple truths, and truths are relative to one's experience. There are not simple cause and effect relationships, rather there are many complexities that surround each rhetorical situation.[16] In Dear

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method. (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1966), 16.
[9] Borchers and Hundley, Rhetorical Theory, 177
[10] Ibid., 177.
[11] Ben Platt, "Waving Through a Window."

[12] Kathleen M. German, "Dramatism and Dramatistic Pentad." (Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 321.
[13] Ibid., 321.
[14] Ibid., 321.
[15] Borchers and Hundley, Rhetorical Theory, 320.
[16] Ibid., 321.

Evan Hansen, the individual experience and individual truth are themes that are emphasized. In the age of social media, there are many truths that are spread quickly; the focus on the individual and their own perceptions and experience is heightened. In "Waving Through a Window", Evan begins to question what he once considered to be a truth. When he broke his arm over the past summer when falling out of a tree, which was later revealed to be a potential suicide attempt, Evan waited for someone to come and no one came to help him. In the song, he repeatedly questions, "When you're falling in a forest and there's nobody around, do you ever really crash, or even make a sound?"[17] Evan is questioning reality, wondering if something is an individual truth or a universal and objective truth if it is a single individual who undergoes the experience.

The idea of the individual experience in postmodernist theory is one that can be further examined in postmodern ontology or the "nature of reality."[18] Postmodern ontology claims that there is no one unified human experience; instead, there are many experiences that are defined by "subjects speaking, listening, reading, and writing their own versions of reality."[19] Dear Evan Hansen is set apart from other musicals because it deals with more than the typical, universal narrative told by musicals, proclaiming one universal ideal. It dives into many different stories, traditions, and experiences, not one single human experience. The issue of anxiety, an increasingly individual issue, is one that is not often brought up on the Broadway stage, demonstrating a

change in the climate of Broadway. The character of Evan symbolizes this experience for many people, all while acknowledging that everyone understands their own world differently- an ethical and inclusive approach. While sharing different experiences, the writers are able to critique social media by showing how people can change their realities by only portraying the positive parts of themselves while leaving the negative parts isolated and hidden. Although the listener is unable to see the set, in the staged version of the musical, the message is particularly compelling when coupled with screens of messages that show the individual. When the audience sees the characters typing their own messages on their social media accounts, they are left to observe both the written and physical message. Rhetoric is more than just language; it is the layers of the message that create a full experience. There are many messages and symbols out there in the world, each creating a new reality when viewed through the lens of Postmodernism.

The musical, Dear Evan Hansen, changes the landscape of musicals forever. It gives attention to important topics like loneliness and anxiety that are often left out of everyday conversation, particularly in the song, "Waving Through a Window." The story of Evan Hansen has brought together people from all across the world to talk about their own experiences and the pressures to look and behave a certain way on social media. When considered through the lenses of postmodern and dramatist theories, the writers of Dear Evan Hansen were effective in their ability to communicate the importance of the individual experience and individual truth, and the realities of using rhetoric to navigate the world as we know it. With society becoming increasingly

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[17] Ben Platt, "Waving Through a Window."
[18] Christopher Joseph Westgate, "Postmodern Theory" (Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 773.
[19] Ibid, 773.

individualistic and isolated, this musical provides the space to begin hard discussions on the issues facing society and unifies the individuals who attend in pursuit of celebrating each person's experience.

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