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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, organizational, rhetoric and leadership, and intercultural communication. Through rigorous peer-review, the Journal strives to contribute to ongoing discussions in communication studies by publishing student papers that investigate a variety of contemporary topics and issues.

Submissions explore the many contexts of personal and professional communication, unveiling the shifting goals, strategies, and relationships that define interactions in our society. Papers may take the form of book reviews, research articles, or essays. We encourage application from students throughout the public relations, advertising, integrated marketing communication, journalism, communication studies, and sports administration programs.

Pepperdine Journal of Communication Research

Volume 10 Editorial Board

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Editor's Note

This volume's theme of "tension and release" unites our articles' many topics, from multiracial identity to gender expression, by posing one question: how should we hold onto or release problematic messages and communication practices? In a pandemic era that repeatedly tests our social expectations, we have been compelled to revisit what acceptable, "normal" communication means. Our authors' contributions offer a window into the competing meanings we give to race, gender, online identity, accountability, and ethics. In this volume's persuasive campaigns, our authors provide compelling cases for transforming our standards for institutional responsibility. Other works reveal how social media has brought new modes of self-expression yet also enables misinformation and bullying online. Authors studying systemic messages about identity expose how our screens and public spaces reinforce narrow images of race and gender.

Through the light shed by each contributor on these complex issues, this year's publication shows the importance of questioning the messages that drive our assumptions, no matter how deeply rooted. For the emerging undergraduates pursuing a path in this broad field, we hope this volume sparks reflection on our imperfect communication systems and our capacity to evolve.

Maggie Bennett
Editor-in-Chief
Pepperdine University Class of 2022

PEPPERDINE JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION RESEARCH
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The Narrative Paradigm in Sarah Kay's "If I Should Have a Daughter"

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Abstract

In her 2011 TED Talk debut, spoken word poet Sarah Kay presented a breathtaking performance of two of her poems, "B" and "Hiroshima." Throughout her speech, she takes the audience through the process of self-realization that transformed her into the poet she is today. From her first performance at just 14 years old, to being welcomed by New York's Bowery Poetry Club, to creating Project Voice alongside her college classmate Phil Kaye, to now teaching spoken word poetry to the teenagers she once was, Kay proves that spoken word as an art form is more than just pen on paper. Spoken word poetry is an art form that yearns to be presented live, needs to live off the page, and will thrive through performance. Through multiple literary sources, Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm theory, and ideological implications, one can further analyze Kay's spoken text.

Keywords

spoken word poetry, public speaking, TED Talk, Sarah Kay, motivational speaking, rhetoric, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, narrative paradigm, Walter Fisher, ideological implications

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Spoken word artist Sarah Kay made her TED Talk debut in 2011, presenting her story to the world through two poems and a three-step lesson on telling your own. Though her talk was beautifully crafted and executed, this paper will primarily focus on Kay's narrative through her introductory poem titled "B," with references to the lessons derived from the body of her speech. Kay's unique perspective on poetry and spoken word is a narrative in and of itself, with her own story simply

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providing structure to the art form. This text is especially significant due to the role rhetoric plays within the narrative of a spoken word poem, which will be further analyzed throughout this paper. Overall, the following text will argue the importance of telling one's narrative through multiple sources—especially spoken word poetry—and how Kay's work exemplifies her storytelling skills through both written and verbal forms.

Literature Review

The narrative paradigm by Walter Fisher claims that the best communication method for meaningful reporting of events is storytelling and has been extensively analyzed throughout the past 35 years. Rhetoricians for and against the theory have given incredible insight into the effectiveness of the narrative paradigm in many texts, from testimonials to Shakespeare to spoken word. In Fisher's elaboration of his theory a year after its initial release to the public, he expands on the efficacy of the narrative paradigm within social scientific theories, stating the need for a system that assesses "the stories one should adopt to achieve psychological equilibrium or to achieve consubstantiality in order to resolve human conflicts" (Fisher, 1985). Fisher goes on to clarify that the narrative paradigm surpasses all other sociological theories because of its tie to "the concept of narrative rationality which provides principles-- probability and fidelity-- and considerations for judging the merits of stories, whether one's own or another's" (Fisher, 1985).

Professor of Rhetoric and Communication Studies, Alan G. Gross, also studied the effects rhetoric, narrative, and the collective identity had in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. He makes sense of the shared experience between King Lear and daughter Cordelia by using the phenomenological analysis to expand on "Aristotle's well known distinction between *epistēmē* and *doxa,"* or justified belief versus popular opinion (Gross, 2010, para 23). Gross also analyzes *King Lear* through the lens of Martin Heidegger's 1927 singular work, "Being and Time," in which rhetoric can be characterized in the treatise of emotions "if we see rhetoric as the means by which the cultural, societal, and personality structures…are produced and reproduced in public forums" (Gross, 2010, para 24). In brief, rhetoricians analyzing Shakespearean plays can utilize the narrative paradigm to gain deeper insight into Elizabethan-era ideologies.

Two years after Fisher's initial elaboration on his theory, Barbara Warnick published a critique of the narrative paradigm in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, stating that "the problematic nature of Fisher's position… relates to 'narrative rationality'" and proceeds to delineate the concept to discuss further "internal contradictions and problems in the paradigm as a whole" (Warnick, 1987). Warnick argues that Fisher's narrative paradigm is one-sided and fails to acknowledge the importance of rationality. The just point she makes, however, stating that "because we are all storytellers, we are all competent to judge the stories we hear" (Warnick, 1987), is later approved in Fisher's latest installment of "Clarifying the Narrative Paradigm" in 1989. Fisher declares, "narration can be interpreted and assessed as modes of expressing good reasons, as rhetorical forms inducing conclusions about people, community, and the world" (Fisher, 1989). Therefore, the most current edition of the narrative paradigm studied and analyzed today has been expanded to include multiple forms of rhetorical and literary texts, all of which have an underlying sense of importance and story for either the author or the audience. Whether or not one chooses to focus on the author's original intent will always be up to the rhetorician's judgment, interpretation, and discretion.

Method: The Narrative Paradigm

While it is evident that Walter Fisher struggled with perfecting the narrative paradigm, the final draft of the theory seems to lend itself perfectly to the storytelling nature of spoken word poetry. Fisher's definition in his first installment of the narrative paradigm in 1984 remains that "the most basic human symbolic response to rhetorical exigencies is storytelling" (Fisher, 1984). It makes sense to use the narrative paradigm in an analysis of Kay's poem "B" because of the argument that states, "since the beginning of human history, when we have needed to make sense of the world to each other, we have told stories" (Stoner & Perkins, 2016, p. 186). Sarah Kay's talent is that she experiments with this ideal in the form of spoken word, telling audiences her own life stories from the past and future through poetic prose. Specifically, "B" focuses on an intergenerational, metaphorical story that has yet to be completed and lived to fruition.

Many elements are at play within the narrative paradigm. Just as in a children's story, the narrative at hand must present itself to the audience with storybook elements of its own. The stories told must all have a narrator, whose part in the story is simply "a character or observer of events." The difference from a traditional narrator, however, is that a narrative's storyteller would not be "telling" the story but rather "'showing' or 'recounting' the story," using each mode to "signal a different purpose on [their] part and increase or diminish [others'] interest in it." This is because, as human beings, we are naturally drawn to personal narratives and find comfort in relaying information learned through stories of others and our own. A related concept would be the characters in the narrative, described as "the people in the story or things that function like people in the story… [who] are motivated to act by others or by the context, and critics try to understand what those actions mean." The motivation of the characters should be driven by the plot, or "the underlying structure or pattern of actions and causality in the narrative." Causality in each narrative should "connect actions to reveal a rationale for them," thus furthering the story's plot. Lastly, the setting or context is the underlying factor by which all these previous elements are interwoven. In a narrative, the setting/context is "a fusion of all the details of the story external to the characters… serv[ing] as indicator of prior events, circumstances, and conditions surrounding the characters… [and] may even present themes of the story that help us interpret characters' actions" (Stoner & Perkins 2016, p. 187). Ultimately, these multiple separate elements not only combine to shape people's lives into plotlines and stories but also serve as arguments that make the stories believable.

Through this type of analysis that extends beyond simple literary terms, Fisher argues that "the primary function of the paradigm is to offer a way of interpreting and assessing human communication" (Fisher, 1985). As a critic of the narrative paradigm, one must adequately interpret and evaluate the rhetoric through an approach that takes everyday life and turns it into a discourse that "provides a reliable, trustworthy, and desirable guide to thought and action in the world" (Fisher, 1985).

Analysis: Narrative in Spoken Word

A stranger to spoken word poetry could fall in love with the art after listening to the calming rhythms of Sarah Kay's voice. A rhetorical critic, however, could fall in love with Kay's writing after analyzing the patterns in her narrative. "B" begins with a hypothetical: "If I should have a daughter…" (Kay, 2011, 0:01). This first line immediately establishes Kay as the narrator of the story, with the audience intrigued as to how the rest of her plot may look. Throughout the poem, Kay narrates her way through a could-be future life while reflecting on her past life. This intergenerational narrative establishes that the characters of her story, while not currently present, are her mother and future daughter. Kay's plot throughout "B" is one of an allegorical nature, whereby declaring the lessons she would teach her daughter in the future, she correspondingly teaches the audience lessons of her life thus far. From lines like "she's going to learn that this life will hit you hard in the face, wait for you to get back up just so it can kick you in the stomach," to "no matter how many land mines erupt in a minute, be sure your mind lands on the beauty of this funny place called life," the context Kay uses to tie all the elements of her poem together is highly metaphorical. Metaphors become ever-prevalent throughout this narrative, with Kay directly sharing her thoughts through elaborate visuals of "look[ing] at the world through the underside of a glass-bottom boat" (1:40) and "look[ing] through a microscope at the galaxies that exist on the pinpoint of a human mind" (1:45). Her vivid descriptions go on in statements like, "I want her to know that this world is made out of sugar. It can crumble so easily, but don't be afraid to stick your tongue out and taste it" (2:45). This immaculate use of colorful language and imagery-ridden metaphors paints a picture in the minds of audience members and readers everywhere, immediately transporting them to the setting of Kay's narrative in her past and metaphorical future life.

While "B" focuses on the past and future lives of Sarah Kay, she depicts her present life in the body of her speech at TED. The narrative of her speech is plotted out more carefully and clearly than her prose, taking the audience through a chronological timeline from the first time Kay discovered spoken word poetry to her current occupation as a spoken word teacher. While the narrator remains unchanged, Kay's real-life characters differ. Without realizing it, the audience becomes quickly introduced to one of the main characters in Kay's speech: a "giant girl in a hoodie sweatshirt" (Kay, 2011, 6:27). Her next few characters present themselves as the adults at New York's Bowery Poetry Club, who taught her that poetry "could be fun or painful or serious or silly" (7:11). In addition, she introduces listeners to Phil Kaye, a fellow teacher performing spoken word around the world, and Charlotte, a student who inspired Kay with her journey. The plot of Kay's speech in the body of her text can be best described as a life testimony that becomes life lessons. She promises the audience that anyone can be a storyteller because no one can tell your story—a line that could have come from Walter Fisher himself-- and provides them with a tangible plan for achieving a storyteller's status. The three-step journey Kay presents is as follows-- step one: "I can." Step two: "I will." And step three: "infusing the work you're doing with the specific things that make you 'you,' even while those things are always changing. Because step three never ends" (7:30 – 13:34). Throughout her speech, Kay creates an aura and setting of vulnerability, reminding her audience that she is only human and that anyone can do what she does. She assures the audience that spoken word is her favorite form of storytelling only “because it’s accessible” (12:14). Lastly, Kay states that “spoken-word poetry allows for immediate connection” (12:28), sharing stories that demonstrate the notable pattern of vulnerability throughout her speech.

Implications

The vulnerability and narrative found in Sarah Kay’s spoken word can be easily translated into poetry of any kind. Through an analysis of Kay’s 2011 TED talk, scholars learn about the importance of personal narratives and how each individual’s story can be told in an encouraging manner of any kind. Whether the means of communicating one’s story is through song, letters, poems, or spoken word, the significance of the narrative paradigm lies in the substance of the text. For the sake of this paper, however, the focus on Sarah Kay’s spoken word and poetry will be further analyzed for its implications for readers’ lives.

As seen in the literature review section, Shakespeare’s prose has similar storytelling elements as the narrative paradigm. While the evidence of plot may be more prominent as Shakespeare’s focus in writing are his plays, how he writes many of his works can be seen as poetry through the use of iambic pentameter. The evidence provided above proves that the narrative paradigm theory in literature can be used for more than just personal stories in spoken word. Rather, in accordance with Shakespeare’s plays, the general idea of a personal narrative can come from fiction and nonfiction characters, as long as the individual is set forth with a story to tell.

Within the world of other spoken word poems or poetry in general, the narrative paradigm can be seen in action primarily through the work of metaphors. The use of metaphors in literature is essential and significant because of their usefulness in aiding readers in understanding a storyline or narrative arc. Metaphors have been taught to scholars at an elementary level as a tool used to compare and contrast. In Kay's, or any other poet's writing, however, metaphors are more likely to be used to bring a more fantastical or subliminal thought to life by comparing it to a more tangible element with which individuals are likely to be familiar. According to Sarah Kay, almost everything in life can be a metaphor. Whether it's a joyous event or a challenging obstacle one may face in their lifetime, individuals can either choose to accept life for exactly what it is or believe that everything happens for a reason-- sometimes for something even bigger than themselves.

The lesson to be learned, especially through Kay's poem "B" is that poetry is more than just rhymes and rhythm. One must listen to every word, look through every stanza, and read between the lines of every metaphor. In future analyses of poems, prose, and spoken word pieces alike, individuals should focus on the metaphors outlined in the literary text and examine how they can be applied to everyday life. If not metaphors, scholars may also choose to read the text for more than just its face value. Instead, we must view the literature as an art form, with an awareness of how comparisons can ultimately bridge the gap between animated fantasies and present-day realities.

Overall, Sarah Kay's speech teaches the audience the importance of being in touch with your narrative and even encourages listeners to become artists of their own. Her bigger-than-herself moment was realizing that she had the power and potential to become a spoken word artist and a longing to share that discovery with many audiences. This paper chose to focus on the text that followed a storyline, encouraging readers to follow Kay's advice and become the authors of their life narratives.

Analyzing Sarah Kay's work through Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm proves to be near-perfect, as Kay's entire TED Talk proved to be the theory in action. In her final step from her lesson on how to be a storyteller, she states that anybody has the power to be a spoken word poet, as long as they write about the things about which only they can write. From the intensity of "B" in personally moving Kay's audience to her speech's success in showing the role of stories in human connection, Sarah Kay's "If I Should Have a Daughter" embodies the narrative paradigm to its fullest extent.

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Accessibility at Pepperdine: A Persuasive Campaign

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Abstract

Through our persuasive campaign, we hope to have Pepperdine commit to doing more than the bare minimum for legal ADA compliance and genuine care for students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities through a number of measures. We aim for action in the form of physical alterations to campus, including more ramps, uniform staircases, elevators in all housing, and increased accessible parking. Furthermore, our campaign plans to affect a long-term change to campus culture and decision-making. Rather than view accessibility as an additional, peripheral standard to meet, we hope to persuade Pepperdine's leadership to make it a primary concern guiding decisions for years to come. This includes alternative classwork and programming, informing people of accessible routes on campus during tours and orientations, and listening more carefully to the voices of those with disabilities in our campus community as they raise concerns and express needs.

Keywords

accessibility, persuasion, elaboration likelihood model, ADA compliance

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Although technically compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Pepperdine has a fraught history of disability rights and accessibility practices. After March of 2022's Disability Awareness Week, the campus was buzzing with criticism and concern over the state of accessibility on campus. In particular, March 17th's Solidarity Day, which challenged students to use only accessible routes to get around campus, led to an uproar over the impracticality and inconvenience of

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Pepperdine's accommodations (Wilt, 2022). However, this is hardly a new issue. Graphic articles dating to 2019 addressed how Pepperdine's so-called ADA "compliance" was failing the nearly two hundred students with disabilities registered through the Office of Accessibility (Iturralde, 2019). Although the systems of accessibility to meet the bare minimum legal requirements exist, they often are not functional or active, and the campus community has called for more than the bare minimum regardless.

The ADA was passed in 1990, and the American with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAA) was signed into law in 2009, altering the ADA. These laws were implemented to "prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life" (ADA National Network). Pepperdine falls under Title III, which regulates public accommodations. It states, "This title sets the minimum standards of accessibility for alternations and construction of new facilities… This title directs businesses to make 'reasonable modifications' to their usual ways of doing things when serving people with disabilities" (ADA National Network). The standards set by the ADA are acknowledged as minimal and fail to center the perspectives of individuals with disabilities. While they prevent blatant neglect, meeting these standards does not equate to genuine care.

While Pepperdine's accessibility measures technically meet the requirements of the law, further action is needed to truly serve the students, faculty, and staff with disabilities. There have been reports of service vehicles parking in accessible spots, door buttons not working properly, lack of accessible routes, and accommodations being forgotten or not actively implemented (Sullivan, 2020). Even if Pepperdine's accessibility measures worked perfectly, campus community members with disabilities would still face unnecessary severe challenges. Our social action campaign aims to center the perspectives of these individuals to make Pepperdine a *truly* accessible space.

The Objective of the Accessibility at Pepperdine Campaign

Through our campaign, we hope to have Pepperdine commit to doing more than the bare minimum for legal ADA compliance and genuine care for students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities through several measures. We aim for action in the form of physical alterations to campus, including more ramps, uniform staircases, elevators in all housing, and increased accessible parking. Furthermore, our campaign plans to affect a long-term change to campus culture and decision-making. Rather than view accessibility as an additional, peripheral standard to meet, we hope to persuade Pepperdine's leadership to make it a primary concern guiding decisions for years to come. This includes alternative classwork and programming, informing people of accessible routes on campus during tours and orientations, and listening more carefully to the voices of those with disabilities in our campus community as they raise concerns and express needs.

Theoretical Framework and Theme

The Elaboration Likelihood Model provides a theoretical framework effective in persuading the general Pepperdine population and decision-making faculty toward funding and implementing a more accessible campus. Some will be influenced by the **central route** of persuasion—the facts, figures, and logic persuading us toward this cause. However, this requires intrinsic motivation, such as personal relevance or need for understanding. In the case of someone who is not persuaded by the central route, the argument rests on the **peripheral route** of persuasion—the extraneous cues such as speaker attractiveness, music, or graphics, to motivate to dive into the central route (Borchers, 2021).

In the context of our persuasive campaign, there is compelling evidence provided by the central route of persuasion. One key persuasive tactic within this movement is an emotional appeal, or emphasizing key concepts like inclusivity and increased well-being for disabled individuals is vital. As we are in an increasingly visual culture, we must rely heavily on the peripheral route. Using keywords and streamlined information allows even neutral parties to engage with the message rather than tune it out due to clutter (Borchers, 2021). Additionally, the use of bright colors and trendy design styles, in line with popular Instagram marketing of the moment, will draw in viewers from our target audience who may be less motivated to interact with the message solely.

Target Audience of Accessibility at Pep

For a Pepperdine-specific campaign, several influential groups require different methods of persuasion. One such group is the student body. Initial change should come from supportive students, such as students with disabilities and allies, in the form of activation. By establishing the first step, preexisting supporters can rally behind, such as petitioning the Student Government Association and providing easily repostable social media graphics, preexisting supporters can help spread the word. Their work would increase the issue's visibility, bringing it to the attention of neutral parties, which

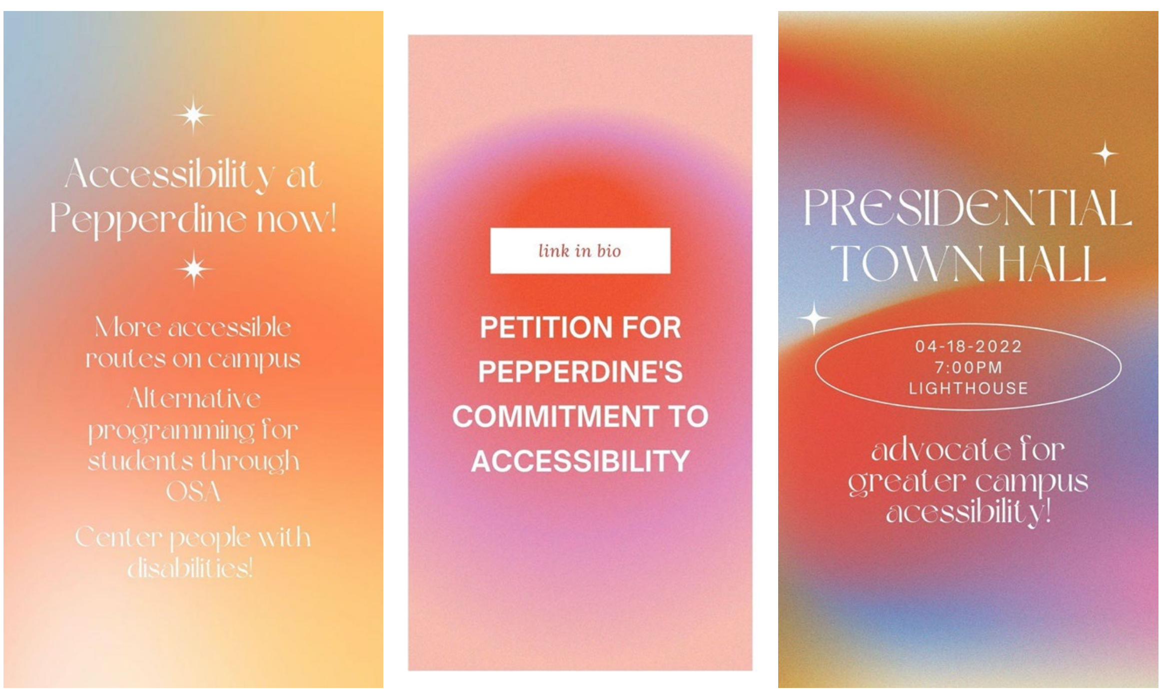

Figure 1.1-1.3: Social media graphics supporters can share, formatted for Instagram stories.

may be persuaded by our peripheral route cues to join the cause. A neutral student is uninformed or uninvolved with this movement and has the potential to become a supporter or an opponent.

Oppositional students are those who would not be in favor of changes to campus, either due to the inconvenience of construction, economic reasons, either implicit or explicit ableism, and/or other reasons. To neutralize this party, there must be a powerfully compelling central route, as those opposed altogether may completely shut out other persuasive cues. For those who may be concerned about construction, we can not only try to get most construction done over the summer when students are largely off-campus but quiet hours and locations across campus to sleep and study can also be incorporated into the plan. To the best of our ability, we can promise to relocate funds to this project rather than requesting a tuition increase. As for those who may be opposed to an increased presence of disabled individuals on campus, utilizing pathos and emotional appeal can humanize this stigmatized group (Augusto & McGraw, 1990).

Another group that overlaps with the general student body is the Student Government Association (SGA). This student body is an important group to target as they provide a communication channel between the general student body and the administration. Historically, SGA has been able to pass resolutions and influence policy in various ways, including installing water bottle stations across campus (Kunawaradisai, 2019). Furthermore, their lower power distance and close peer connections with the greater student body allow more accessible communication and understanding. This group can neutralize faculty or board directors who may be in opposition due to their closer personal connection with SGA.

Platforms and Timing for Accessibility at Pep

Regarding student organizing, social media is the most effective and viable option for platforming a message. As research has shown consistently in the past several years, social media has allowed the proliferation of stories from marginalized groups to move to the forefront (Smith et al., 2020). While social media algorithms tend to highlight content in line with one's preexisting beliefs, connections with peers and acquaintances can bring visibility to content that may not be as algorithmically relevant to an individual (Thorson et al., 2019).

Several significant events—the Russia and Ukraine conflict being one—gained prominence in cultural consciousness, especially in younger generations, through exposure to repeated Instagram posts and infographics concerning the matter. Creating graphics highlighting specific changes requested from Pepperdine and providing reasoning as to why further accessibility is necessary is essential to mobilize students and increase awareness campus-wide. In line with the Elaboration Likelihood model discussed earlier, an attractive or eye-catching graphic can function as the peripheral route toward the actual content of the message.

The next steps in our campaign are petitioning the Board of Directors to make a commitment to accessibility and to hold a town hall with President Jim Gash and other faculty to express the importance of these measures and provide specific requests. Research proves that petitions can effectively mobilize support and create a shared group identity (Matthews, 2021). However, face-to-face interaction with leaders is proven to be more effective, as online petitions can tend to depersonalize the impact of the issue (Koenig & McLaughlin, 2018). Personal testimony, as a part of this town hall, can emphasize urgency and foster empathy among leaders (Rizzo Parse, 2008).

Measures of Campaign Success

To measure the success of our campaign, we will use the criteria of Pepperdine policy and the implementation of accessibility measures. The campaign will be considered successful when Pepperdine leadership issues a statement of commitment to accessibility for disabled individuals and expressly acknowledges our movement's message in the process. We hope to be invited to the table to address the issues we are raising and collaboratively plan steps forward, similar to how Pepperdine-Disability-Rights Activist Mackenzie Maden was recognized by the administration and invited into conversation with President Gash and DPS (Sullivan, 2020).

Furthermore, to ensure that their statement was not solely for public appearance, another marker of success will be the initiation of tangible accessibility measures, for example, beginning construction on ramps around campus. Measuring the campaign's success will be a long-standing, ongoing process in which we ensure Pepperdine leadership is consistently moving forward with concrete measures and centering concerns of accessibility in their decision-making process.

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Pepperdine Climate Action Initiative: Persuasive Campaign

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Abstract

What does it do to a university's credibility if they do not believe in science? 97% or more climate scientists agree that climate warming over the last century is due to anthropogenic activity (NASA, 2022). However, Pepperdine University is a climate denier in the face of a scientific consensus (Levens, 2022). The Pepperdine administration has refused to admit that anthropogenic climate change is real with the reasoning of "encouraging debate" on the topic (Levens, 2022). Students are upset at this claim due to the implication that climate change is negatively affecting vulnerable populations around the globe, and Christians are biblically prompted to serve these communities (Pepperdine YECA Fellows). While Pepperdine has a Center for Sustainability, the center's website includes no acknowledgment of anthropogenic climate change (Pepperdine University). This campaign aims to mobilize the student population on environmentalism and push the administration to formally and effectively address anthropogenic climate change in university policies.

Keywords

persuasive campaign, social action, climate change, environmentalism

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change is real with the reasoning of "encouraging debate" on the topic (Levens, 2022). Students are upset at this claim due to the implication that climate change is negatively affecting vulnerable populations around the globe, and Christians are biblically prompted to serve these groups of people (Pepperdine YECA Fellows). While Pepperdine has a Center for Sustainability, the center's website includes no acknowledgment of anthropogenic climate change (Pepperdine University). This persuasive campaign aims to mobilize the student population on environmentalism and push the Pepperdine administration to formally and effectively address anthropogenic climate change in university policies.

In the past, Pepperdine students have utilized social media and the Pepperdine Freedom Wall to influence administration decisions. In 2020, students created an Instagram account, @blackatpepeprdine, that documents stories of racism at Pepperdine. This account had significant agenda-setting effects in that President Gash released a statement that Pepperdine would add a Chief Diversity Officer position to the steering committee to address racial inequalities within the university (Levens & Shaw, 2020). This campaign will utilize an Instagram account similar to @blackatpepperdine to showcase student support for climate change mitigation at Pepperdine. The Freedom Wall was also utilized in the past to spark administrators' discussion of racial inequalities that urged then-President Benton to acknowledge racial-profiling issues (Levens & Shaw, 2020). We will encourage student participation in posting climate testimonies to the Freedom Wall to showcase overwhelming student support for the issue so that the administration can no longer ignore it. Our campaign aims to utilize the agenda-setting technique of this environmental and social movement at Pepperdine.

The campaign's objectives are to garner student support for climate change mitigation efforts on campus and, in turn, get the Pepperdine administration to take a public stance in favor of anthropogenic climate change mitigation. Student support would take the form of at least 20% of Seaver College students following the @pepperdineclimateaction Instagram campaign account. This is 692 students (*Pepperdine University - profile, rankings and data*). Additionally, at least 50 student climate testimonies would be posted on the Pepperdine Freedom Wall. For the Pepperdine administration to issue a formal stance on climate change, the Pepperdine Center for Sustainability website would include the importance of mitigation efforts for "anthropogenic climate change" as a core value for Pepperdine sustainability practices. Furthermore, all university investments in fossil fuels would be released, and future donors would be vetted for their support of climate change mitigation policies.

The campaign takes the form of a social reform movement. A social movement is defined as "struggles on behalf of a cause by groups whose core organizations, modes of action, and/or guiding ideas are not fully legitimated by the larger society" (Borchers, 2022, p. 337). More specifically, a reform movement seeks to change the policy of the current system in place (Borchers, 2022, p. 339). The student's "guiding ideas" are that anthropogenic climate change is significant and must be recognized by our institution to remain consistent with the Christian ideals of Pepperdine. The "larger society" not legitimizing said guiding ideas is climate-denying Pepperdine administration and donors.

The theoretical framework for the campaign is the agenda-setting theory that says problems, solutions, and political dynamics are brought together to create opportunities for altering the agenda. This phenomenon is termed a "policy window" (Goncalves & De Santo, p. 208). We will create a policy window by bringing attention to the climate-denial problem in Pepperdine administration and present the solution of robust student advocacy and participation in the campaign to push for a formal stance on anthropogenic climate change. The political dynamics of Pepperdine create a perfect opportunity for ensuring a policy window. Pepperdine faculty and staff engaged in a 2022 Graphic survey that found that about 88% of respondents of "97 students and faculty said climate change is a serious issue and 83% said addressing climate change is important to them" (Levens, 2022). The survey results highlight the potential support for our campaign, which prompts a political dynamic of the people, or faculty and students, calling for a climate change acknowledgment amidst university climate denial. In traditional agenda-setting circumstances, large media corporations employ policy windows. However, in today's media age, the agenda-setting theory has been critiqued to include consumers, or citizens, as possible agenda-setting agents due to the public participation aspect of social media (Matei et al., 2021, p. 9). The critique is essential for considering the agenda-setting effects of our campaign, as it is Pepperdine's citizens, or students, who will have the power to influence policy through the media.

One of the most crucial components of an effective persuasive campaign includes recognizing one's audience, including their beliefs and attitudes. In this campaign, aimed at raising awareness for environmental action at Pepperdine university, multiple audiences need to be targeted through different strategies. In our campaign, the audience we want to activate and encourage support from includes Pepperdine students and staff that acknowledge the dangers of climate change. The target audience for our campaign includes Pepperdine students, staff, administrators, and donors. Research conducted by Thigpen and Tyson (2021), demonstrates that, "Gen Z and Millennial social media users are more likely than older generations online to engage with climate change content on social media and to express a range of emotions when they see climate-related content there." This leads us to assume that a significant portion of the Pepperdine student body is relatively informed on climate change and more likely motivated to take action. Through our campaign, the audience that we intend to inform includes students and staff, but primarily

Pepperdine administrators persuading them to recognize anthropomorphic climate change and take action against it explicitly. Lastly, the audience that we aim to neutralize includes Pepperdine administrators and donors, who are actively against climate change and criticize environmental advocacy movements.

Research has also displayed how attitudes regarding climate change differ based on party affiliation and income status. The research shows that individuals with a higher income and a more Republican-leaning affiliation express less support for climate change initiatives and proposals. In a Pepperdine graphic article, journalist Mowreader (2021) revealed the top 10 earners that make up some of Pepperdine's administration, all receiving an income over $400,000. Based on this research, as Pepperdine was founded and established as a Christian university, influenced by politically conservative ideology, an assumption can be made about our audience of Pepperdine administrators and donors, and therefore allow us to utilize strategies aimed at neutralizing specific audiences while informing and activating others in efforts to produce an effective campaign.

The Pepperdine climate action initiative aims to utilize both digital media platforms and print media platforms to raise awareness of anthropogenic climate change. Our use of digital media will include social media platforms, including creating an Instagram account titled @PepperdineClimateAction, aimed at spreading awareness and informing the Pepperdine community. Social media proves to be a relevant platform for college students; as research by, Tighten and Tyson (2021) found, "younger adults have taken on prominent roles in efforts to stop climate change…among U.S. social media users, 45% of Gen Z adults and 40% of Millennials have interacted with content on social platforms that focuses on the need for action on climate change." In addition to our Instagram account, we intend to employ print media platforms, primarily through the placement of posters around campus to attract audiences with our message. Posters are both an efficient and affordable tool for informing audiences on a particular subject. The campaign aims to create a clear and succinct poster referencing our Instagram account to gain more support and a larger following.

Additionally, as social media is a prominent tool exercised by college students, we aspire that campaign supporters may use other platforms, such as Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and YikYak, to spread awareness across Pepperdine's campus. We plan to use the Freedom Wall to protest climate change denial once we have activated enough support by reaching a following of 346 students, 10% of the Pepperdine undergraduate population. We hope that through both our social media and print campaigns that once our Instagram account is followed by 20% of the Pepperdine Seaver College student population, which is 692 students, our campaign has gained traction across campus and caught the attention of administrators.

Through public participation, we can measure the success of our Pepperdine Climate Action Initiative campaign. Suppose we reach the desired number of followers on the @pepperidneclimateaction Instagram account and 50 participants in the Freedom Wall climate testimony demonstration. In that case, we will know that our target audience has been effectively reached. In class, we will ask the audience to follow our Instagram account and sign the petition to ensure a base following. Moreover, suppose Pepperdine takes a formal stance in favor of anthropogenic climate change mitigation. In that case, we can directly link the statement to the success of our campaign, seeing that there is currently no campaign of this magnitude at Pepperdine. The campaign will ultimately succeed if Pepperdine begins to divest from fossil fuels and refrains from climate-denying donors in the future. Our objectives will ultimately be reached when the university begins to take action to mitigate anthropogenic climate change after implementing a student-wide social movement that advocates for these specific administrative changes.

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Taking Responsibility for Systemic Failures: Rhetorical Homologies and Discourses of Sustainability, Health, and Voting

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Abstract

When considering the discourse of presidential candidates, talk show hosts discussing mental health issues, and companies advertising sustainable goods, this essay argues that they share a formal resemblance. Whenever the same formal resemblance, or the same pattern, can be found within different instances of rhetoric, this indicates that the texts are homologous. Making sense of these instances of discourse is essential if one seeks to understand the way in which the public's political engagement can be hindered by these rhetorical acts.

Keywords

rhetorical homology, sustainability, health, voting, Walter Benjamin, Kenneth Burke

When considering the discourse of presidential candidates, talk show hosts discussing mental health issues, and companies advertising sustainable goods, this essay argues that they share a formal resemblance. Whenever the same formal resemblance, or the same pattern, can be found within different instances of rhetoric, this indicates that the texts are homologous. Making sense of these instances of discourse is essential if one seeks to understand the way in which the public's political engagement can be hindered by these rhetorical acts.

Presidential candidates usually dominate all platforms, everyone being aware of their discourse as a result. In 2022, Joe Biden reminded people of how crucial every single vote is (Washington, 5:02), and his statement reflects the sentiment of the American people. Voting, of

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course, is conceived of as a civic duty, the only means by which citizens can truly enact change. Even so, some philosophers consider voting to be irrational, given the empirical work that has been performed on this topic (Brennan, 2020, para. 8). In any case, the people persuaded by the discourse which highlights the individual's importance in the instance of voting will take it upon themselves to fulfill this responsibility. Similarly, therapeutic discourses are just as widespread and persuasive as discourses relating to voting. Therapeutic discourses—a term that rhetorical critics such as Dana Cloud have used in the past—are instances in which people are encouraged to bear the responsibility of systemic failures. To illustrate, Dr. Phil's talk show features regular people who appear to reconcile conflicts with their loved ones after the host identifies the mental health issues causing their problems. Dr. Phil—or some other expert who is invited as a guest on the show—never fails to find a solution for the difficulties his guests experience. He does all this without mentioning any structural features that might be at play in some of his diagnoses, and as a result, the audience member is encouraged to believe that, were they to have similar problems to the ones that the people on the show are having, the responsibility would lay entirely on their shoulders.

The last participants in the homology, namely companies advertising sustainable goods, target their audience specifically on social media platforms. Grove Collaborative is an example of such a company, with 37% of its new customers being acquired via Instagram (Grove, 2022). Given the increased amounts of climate change-related uneasiness in younger populations, the company's success on social media platforms is not surprising. Concerned about the future, consumers believe that the climate change crisis can be avoided if they make ethical purchases. However, the change that the consumers believe themselves to enact is individual and potentially ineffective on a grander scale. Like the other two participants in the homology, the consumer seeking to make ethical purchases privatizes the blame for climate change.

Stemming from this formal resemblance, this essay will identify a homology constituted of three steps. The three steps go as follows: (1) the average American citizen is exposed daily to the platforms that the rhetor—a trusted rhetor, in the case of news stories and presidential candidates—uses to enact their discourse, (2) the rhetor makes some demands of the citizens, in light of an exigence that they mention, and (3) the viewer takes on the responsibility of fulfilling the rhetor's demands, specifically in the way that the rhetor recommends they do so. Crucial to this paper is that the person is not only convinced that the problem the rhetor addresses in his discourse must be solved, but also that it is within their power to solve complex issues by means of individual action. In this sense, the average American citizen, I will argue, privatizes the responsibility of various systemic failures, endlessly seeking to correct them by inefficient means.

Rhetoric and Climate Change Discourse

Climate change discourse is surrounded by intricacies, and critics have been trying to make sense of its various factors. As such, there have been many ways in which the discourses surrounding this topic have been characterized. Some critics maintain that uncertainty lies at the core of the instances of communication concerned with climate change, while others have pointed to the temporal appeals invoked in some speeches. Other interesting findings are revealed by scholars who are committed to the aspect of privatization of responsibility, namely with the way in which the individual is asked to bear the burden of systemic problems.

A rhetorical critic who postulates that explaining the crisis in terms of uncertainty would help us understand the disheartening lack of action is Marlia Banning. She seeks to characterize how policies do not reflect the severity of the current state of affairs by pointing out that governmental and personal uncertainty regarding the exigence of climate change is at the core of the possibility for action (Banning, 2011, p. 645). Other critics have also outlined reasons for unfounded skepticism, particularly as it concerns the persons in the United States (Paliewicz & McHendry, 2020, p. 138), which, in turn, gives rise to feelings of uncertainty amidst the public. Feelings of uncertainty cripple the public, thus erasing the possibility of action. This being the case, critics have taken an interest in other features of climate change discourse that aim to directly affect action, such as when temporality is invoked.

Chronotopes, for instance, have been discussed in their capacity to bring about change (Jack, 2006, p. 53). In their paper, Matthew Houdek and Kendall R. Phillips (2020) highlight that climate change discourse bears similarities with the discourse of protests, in the sense that they focus on temporality, stressing the importance of the present moment in order to motivate action (p. 369). Other rhetorical critics, such as Matthew P. Brigham argued that the controversies—as it applies to his analysis of whale hunting—can be explained by considering clashing notions of time (2017, p. 244). Kelly Meyers introduces the concept of kairos into the rhetorical discourse surrounding temporality, as well as this concept's relationship with metanoia, thus successfully contrasting the notions of opportunity and regret to showcase their potent persuasive status (2011, p. 2). She also argues for an expanded view of these two concepts, which help bring about a beneficial reflective state (2011, p. 11). Collin Bjork offers a comprehensive account of ethos in relation to temporality, favoring a view of ethos which emphasizes not only its kairos and fixed character but also its chronic characteristics (2022, p. 240). Since these rhetorical critics emphasize how temporality is invoked to bring about action, the question of who is capable of instantiating that action arises. Even though individuals might be confronted with a desire to enact their agency to bring about change, discussing the individual's limitations is imperative when seeking to advance successful theories. Thus, the need for a discussion of how individuals are asked to privatize responsibility for climate change surfaces, and Cloud's work prevails in light of this. Even though she discusses therapeutic discourses, her work is still relevant insofar as it shows that societal problems, such as mental health issues, are privatized rather than discussed in terms of a grander scheme.

She discusses therapy's personalized approach in relation to societal issues, arguing that therapeutic discourses privatize the individual's mental health issues instead of discussing them on the broader scale of society's ills (1998, p. xv). In other words, she identifies the mental health problems that individuals may have not as a quirk of particular individuals—as they have been discussed within therapeutic discourse—but rather as a normal reaction to the injustices and horrors of the world. A relevant issue when discussing the manner in which individuals privatize responsibility is the fact that this seems to be a reasonable response when the true entity responsible for climate change cannot be delineated. Yet another critic who has been concerned with individual action—or, more explicitly, its limitations—is Mark Fisher. In *Capitalist Realism,* he stresses the importance of individual action in the case of protests. He considers the revolutionary potential of protests and argues that protests such as Live 8, which had "exorbitant demands that politicians legislate away poverty" (2009, p. 14), perfectly explain how the logic of personal action instantiates itself. In other words, he advises against the conception that individuals can solve poverty "without the need for any kind of political solution or systemic reorganization" (2009, p. 15). His work helps bring down the conception that consumers can end climate change by further consumption, which is essential to the present analysis. A critic who offers an alternative way of tackling the crisis, a way that would prevent individuals from holding such unfounded beliefs, is Christopher Bruner. Rather than placing responsibility on individuals, he calls for reform within corporations to achieve sustainability. He emphasizes that essential features of the corporate form are unsustainable on many layers (Bruner, 2022, p. 1226). He draws attention to the form of corporations, which he maintains needs to be reformed if authentic sustainability is ever to be achieved.

Exploring the Concept of Form: Rhetorical Homologies

Rhetorical Homology as a rhetorical approach has been discussed by Barry Brummett (2004; 2006; 2013) as being linked with Kenneth's Burke works. Brummett is renowned for performing extensive research concerning this approach, defining homology as being "a formal structure that must be identified, described, and shown to be manifested in the particular content of texts and experiences" (2004, pp. 1-2). He further characterizes rhetorical homology as a "special case of formal resemblance, grounded in discursive properties, that facilitates the work of political and social rhetoric, or influence" (2004, p. 3). To go back to the incipient stages of this method, it is crucial to mention that Brummett bestows praise upon Burke for being "one of the great theoreticians of homology in the twentieth century" (2004, p. 12), although Burke does not use the term explicitly.

Brummett traces the emergence of homology to Burke's work titled *The Philosophy of Literary Form,* stating that it "points to homology, without ever using that term" (2004, p. 25). He explains that "in this work Burke is concerned [...] with the idea that a discourse has an internal structure or *form* that connects to the scene of which it is a part" (2004, p. 25). Form, for Brummett, consists of "the physical manifestation of a message" (2004, p. 4), as well as the "patterns and irregularities" (2004, p. 4) of the message. He suggests that form and content are inseparable, and this is consistent with Burke's opinion on this matter (2004, p. 5). He also argues that human capacity for form is innate and that we "create perceptions and cognitions" (2004, p. 39) based upon processes of abstraction that are socially shared (2004, p. 39). In other words, form is essential, as it explains the way in which people might make sense of their experiences in the world in socially shared ways. The role of homology, Brummett states, is "to link disparate orders of experience by way of the same form" (2004, pp. 5-6). The element of disparity is also what Brummett considers to be "theoretically interesting" (2004, pp. 40-41).

Not only did Brummett perform an analysis of the approach itself, but he has also employed this method to reveal the formal resemblances of various instances of rhetorical interest. One example is his exploration of the way in which movies can convey values by means of form (2013, p. 61). He seeks to overturn the idea that values can only be conveyed through language by showing that artistic and formal evocation is another way in which values can be appealed to (2013, p. 63). In another of his works, he analyzes the unique/copy binary in relation to the movie The Ring, thus explaining the horrors of reproductions and their threat to individuality (2006, p. 451).

Brummett is correct to point out that critics "have an interesting, powerful, and useful homology when many disparate kinds of actions, objects, and events in human experience can be shown to be following the same pattern that underlies texts and the media that conveys texts" (2004, p. 63). Kathryn Olson's work clearly exemplifies this point when she argues that the interpretive framework shared by the discourse of sport hunters, hate criminals, and stranger rapists represent a variation of the motivational rhetoric that is to be found within contemporary American society (2002, p. 215). She also points out how the patterns discovered in rhetorical homologies are derived "socially or culturally [...] and exercised symbolically by group members making meaningful order of their experiences" (2002, p. 217). She identifies these types of violence as "impersonal violence against sensate beings" (2002, p. 216), and she highlights that the homology she identifies possesses four features. The last feature concerns the process of Othering, which allows for the violence of the dominant group to be enacted. The process of Othering has been extensively discussed in the field of rhetorical criticism, with some scholars being interested in how advertisements promote a way of thinking that encourages consumers to identify marginalized groups as Others, thus carrying out a harmful process of naturalizing and legitimizing stereotypes (Winslow, 2010, pp. 257-258).

Moreover, the injustices against people of color, more specifically against Black individuals, have also been explained in terms of the process of Othering. Stephen Underhill, for instance, engages the homology of the urban jungle to criticize the rhetoric of law enforcement institutions, arguing that the injustices against Black individuals that these institutions carry out can be exposed when considering the savage/explorer dichotomy (2016, p. 396). In other words, he demonstrates that the way in which "the white spatial imaginary" (2016, p. 397) conceives of Black neighborhoods is as though they were "a jungle for whites to explore, settle, and civilize" (2016, p. 397). To this effect, his analysis focused on racialized Othering, and he employs the savage/explorer binary to conduct his criticism of law enforcement institutions. Aside from criticizing institutions, scholars have also explored how various ideologies can generate homologies. Luke Winslow, more specifically, uncovered the homological relationship between grant writing and prosperity theology, pinpointing neoliberalism as the source of their commonalities (2015, p. 275).

In the past, critics have also used homology to uncover how artifacts affect the public's agency. A prime example of an analysis that raises the question of agency is the work performed by Diana Martínez. She points toward the formal similarities between the mechanical creation of copies of original works of art—which Walter Benjamin has analyzed in the past—and the reproduction of disaster, specifically in the case of Hurricane Katrina disaster tourism (2018, p. 267). She sheds light upon the way that people enact their agency in a manner that allows them to process tragedy symbolically, which she uncovers with the use of the method of rhetorical homologies (2018, p. 268). A different scholar whose analysis can help shed light upon the issue of agency is Thomas Salek, who argues that the ambivalent attitudes that the American people hold regarding financial excess are exemplified by the rhetorical homology between the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street* and Jordan Belfort's rhetoric (2018, p. 1). The movie depicts the rise and fall of the main character, who acquires immense amounts of wealth through illegitimate means, and Jordan Belfort is the person who wrote the memoir upon which the movie is based. These two instances of discourse—the memoir and the movie—perfectly represent the excess and greed that wealthy individuals possess that leads them to perform "illegal and unethical business practices" (Salek, 2018, p. 2). Even so, the audience might identify these distressing actions as a personal shortcoming of rich individuals instead of recognizing that they are systemic faults (Salek, 2018, p. 2). In this sense, the audience bestows responsibility on the rich individuals, which might cause them to suspend their agency instead of considering taking action against the institutions that make such excesses possible.

The articles just mentioned have shown how rhetorical homologies can bring seemingly unrelated rhetorical instances together and expose their common patterns. In my paper, I will argue that the act of voting, the discourse surrounding mental health, and the discourse surrounding climate change, share the same formal pattern. I will then argue that the pattern they share lies in their privatization of responsibility, thus deflecting persons from seeking justice through other forms. I will first examine an advertisement of sustainable goods that clearly embodies the attitude that consumers are asked to have in relation to the climate change crisis. After a description of its narrative, as well as its visual characteristics, I make a case for alternative courses of action that consumers might seek to adopt. Afterward, I will consider the present discourse on mental health issues. Finally, I will consider the rationality of voting in relation to individual persons.

Rhetorical Homologies and Unrelated Instances of Discourse

Rhetorical homologies provide critics with a way to compare seemingly unrelated texts. This section focuses on the form of climate change discourse, followed by a section discussing the recurring therapeutic discourses in Dr. Phil. The last section is dedicated to analyzing the discourse of politicians who encourage the public to vote, followed by a summary of my findings and discusses how rhetorical critics might benefit from the present analysis.

The Privatization of Responsibility Concerning Climate Change Discourse

On an average day, the average person purchases a variety of goods. Some companies advertise their products by claiming they are sustainable and, therefore, more desirable for the consumer. The instance of advertising of this sort that I will be focusing my analysis on is Grove Collaborative's introductory video, which I believe perfectly represents sustainability claims. With climate change being a pressing issue in our lives, some consumers are becoming hyper-aware of the products they acquire. This awareness is reflected by considerations within corporations, experts stating that "companies and countries that do not respond to stakeholders and address sustainability risks will encounter growing skepticism from the markets, and in turn, a higher cost of capital" (Bruner, 2022, p. 1226). In other words, the market simply reflects the desires of the consumers.

This introductory video is the first participant in the homology, and it serves as an example of the way in which the steps are brought about. First of all, (1) the average American citizen, the consumer, in this case, is exposed on a daily basis to social media platforms. As previously mentioned, 37% of Grove Collaborative's new customers are acquired as a result of advertising on Instagram (Grove, 2022). Secondly, (2) the rhetor must make some sort of demand from the consumer so that the exigence that they raise can be solved. In this case, the exigence is global warming, where the rhetor advises the consumer to solve this exigence by means of consuming the marketed goods. Lastly, (3) since they are a consumer, the viewer is going to feel responsible for their consumption habits, which, if we follow the same line of logic, have greatly contributed to climate change, and they will seek to change these habits to solve this crisis.

Though the first two steps of the homology do not require that the consumer acts in any way, step (3) is abundant in its interaction with the consumer's agency. First of all, the person must be persuaded, and second of all, they must act in such a way that they are to solve the problem that the rhetor raises in step (2). Accordingly, a discussion of the persuasiveness of the discourse is in order, as it pertains to the advertising of sustainable goods. One crucial persuasive element of the advertisement is the appeal to emotion. According to Brummett, "texts have rhetorical effects on people outside of expositional argument—indeed, outside of language per se" (2013, p. 62), and this is perfectly exemplified by the visual imagery of Grove Collaborative's introductory video. During the advertisement's one minute and twenty-four seconds, multiple emotional appeals are made, but of particular interest are the frames that depict children performing different activities, such as playing, cooking, or browsing through books showcasing different species of animals. This way of emphasizing the future of the human species is a highly personalized one, since people tend to be extremely concerned with the future of their own children, rather than with mankind as a whole.

Early in the video, the company reveals its purpose to the viewer. They depict what seems to be a modern suburban homeowner who is collecting his package from the company from his front porch. A soothing voice accompanies the visual imagery with its narration and states that Grove Collaborative "exist[s] to transform the products you use at home into a force for good" (Grove, 2022, 0:19). In addition to the soothing voice, many parallelograms are present in this frame, which, according to the rhetorical analysis of visual images, "indicate dullness, honesty, and straightness" (Borchers, 2013, p. 157). The fact that the consumer might come to perceive the narrator's statements as more truthful as a consequence of being exposed to the persuasive tactics prevalent in the visual imagery of the introductory video can aid in understanding why such advertisements are so compelling.

The feelings that a climate-conscious person might experience upon viewing the advertisement might reflect a desire for change and action, as well as a personal desire to be involved in this noble cause. This is because, throughout the video, the narrator uses words that make the consumer feel as though their purchase has the capacity to change the world. The storyteller explains that “We believe that [...] what we use to soothe our body, how we clean our homes, and what we teach our kids have the power to create a brighter, more sustainable world” (Grove, 2022, 0:30). Later in the video, an emphasis is placed on the fact that the future of the world lies in the hands of those who make sustainable choices. By stating that it is in the consumer’s capacity to end climate change, these sustainable companies offer a solution that is much easier and more convenient than its alternative. More specifically, the companies assure the consumer that consuming is the righteous choice to make, and thus successfully change the course of the desire for change and action, which would be best directed at political change.

Sustainable products thus, become the buyer’s choice, as well as the only way in which the person can express their dissatisfaction regarding climate change. The discourse that can be observed in the marketing of sustainable goods—which privatizes climate change responsibility as the consumer’s problem—serves the function of pacifying the consumers. This is because it prevents them from seeking political action that would challenge the system from which these issues stem. This observation, namely that the consumer is persuaded to make the judgment that the best way in which they can solve the exigence of climate change is by further consumption, exemplifies my claim that the consumers believe that it is in their power to solve the complex issue of climate change by means of individual action. By privatizing the responsibility for climate change, and turning it into a personal problem, the potential of correcting systemic failures fades. Cristopher Bruner, a professor specializing in Business Law, urges for reform within corporations, so that true sustainability can be achieved. More specifically, he directs his criticism on “the problems of excessive risk-taking and cost externalization, embedded as they are at the heart of the corporate form” (2022, p. 1251). His work highlights the way in which corporations fail to achieve authentic sustainability as long as their very form is not reformed, and he does not refrain from mentioning how theoretically laborious achieving this will be (2022, p. 1276). His observations also clarify the way in which the consumer might be oblivious to corporate issues that make them unsustainable, climate change issues aside. His paper calls for corporate responsibility, which is a type of responsibility that the consumers ought to call for, instead of taking that responsibility upon themselves.

Dr. Phil and Therapeutic Discourses

The next instance of discourse that partakes in the formal resemblance is brought about by rhetors who participate in talk shows and discuss health issues. More specifically, the person at the focal point of this analysis is Dr. Phil, since his discourse shows one occasion in which the form and content of the message merge. This combination of the form and content proves, once again, Brummett’s claim that “the distinction between form and content is continuous and variable rather than sharply dichotomous” (2004, p. 3). The content of the messages that Dr. Phil conveys are inextricably linked with the physical manifestations of the message, as well as the patterns and regularities of the message (Brummett, 2004, p. 4).

The *Dr. Phil* episode that I am going to analyze is an episode focusing on Fibromyalgia, also known as the invisible illness. The episode begins by depicting the life story of a woman suffering from this disease for fourteen years (Pfizer, p. 2014, 0:20). From her narration, the viewer learns that the husband is skeptical of the illness, and one of Dr. Phil’s main aims is to make the husband understand that his wife’s suffering is valid. He invites a medical expert on the show, who is affiliated with Pfizer, to give the patient advice regarding the ways in which she can cope with the illness. The tone that all of the participants use is a calm one, suited to the average viewer who is watching this episode from home. As a result, a sense of familiarity and calmness is induced in the viewer. Dr. Phil is also a rhetor who possesses high amounts of ethos, since he is such an iconic figure in the media. The important aspect to note is that Dr. Phil is a trusted rhetor, which will make his recommendations persuasive to the viewer. In this sense, (1) the platform in which he enacts his discourse is television, and he has a wide audience as a result of that, (2) he is trusted to make recommendations regarding the health issues that his patients are experiencing, and (3) not only the patient, but also the viewer might identify with some of the ills that the participants are experiencing as their own, and thus seek to implement the advice that Dr. Phil offers.

Upon examining the socio-demographic characteristics, health experts have shown that "the typical FM [Fibromyalgia] patient graduated from primary school [...] was married and was a housewife" (Turkyilmaz et. al, 2012, pp. 90-91). There is a perfect overlap between these observations and the patient's characteristics. The participant, a woman, and a housewife, wants help "on how to manage her daily life as a wife and a mother" (Pfizer, 2014, 6:53). Her husband narrates that she is "tired [and] done" (Pfizer, 2014, 0:52), which places him in "a bad mood" (Pfizer, 2014, 1:00). He starts, then, to label her illness as being an excuse—to put it simply—for laziness. In his eyes, the wife is neglecting her duties, but his ignorance is placing a toll on the patient as well, who feels that her productivity rates have gone down and that she has no way to return to her previous self. One of the suggestions that the expert on the show offers her is to reduce her stress, relax, and improve her nutrition (Pfizer, 2014, 8:17). In other words, the discourse surrounding her illness is completely individualized, and the viewer, as well as the patient, might get the sense that her issue is a completely private one. Not once does Dr. Phil or the expert invited on the show mention that this illness occurs most commonly in women who are housewives, and who are also overworked. If they were to do so, then perhaps the patriarchal structure that places women in these positions might have been challenged, but this is not the case. Women everywhere, watching this show, might come to think that they should bear responsibility for this health problem, without understanding the systemic failures that contribute to this particular illness. In this sense, the discourse that occurs in this episode of Dr. Phil is therapeutic.

Cloud is a rhetorical critic particularly concerned with the issue of responsibility, and she discusses therapy's personalized approach in relation to societal issues (1998, p. xv). She argues that therapeutic discourses—such as the one just described—make it seem as though an individual's mental health issues are completely disconnected from societal problems (1998, p. xv). In other words, she identifies the mental health problems that individuals may have not as something that just happen to occur, but rather as a normal reaction to the injustices and horrors of the world. As it applies to the Dr. Phil episode currently under examination, the therapeutic discourse consists of the experts suggesting better relaxation to the patient, rather than acknowledging the fact that the patient's material conditions might be preventing the possibility of implementing relaxation. Since therapeutic discourses are not contextualized in relation to society, they have the characteristic of appeasing individual persons, helping them cope with the status quo, rather than identifying their issues in relation to that which is externally occurring, which she argues is at the root of the problem. Cloud also points out that the nuclear family should be viewed as "a potent and disciplinary ideological fiction that produces a normative gendered division of labor and discrimination [...]" (1998, p. 57). In this sense, we might understand the patient's suffering as being related to her gender, considering the expectations that are imposed upon her by her husband as unequal.

Thus, Cloud highlights that individual desire for action is controlled and redirected by these therapeutic discourses, as they offer a way of coping instead of a way of revolting. I claim, in accordance with Cloud, that the fact that audiences choose to direct their agency toward fulfilling the recommendations that the rhetor provides them with is misguided. Instead, the audiences should seek radical change. In the case of the Dr. Phil episode, viewers should, of course, take the time to care for themselves, but they should also challenge the patriarchal constitution of society from which these seemingly individual problems emerge.

Voting and Capacity for Change

The third element of the homology is represented by politicians who encourage their audience to vote. This year, President Joe Biden offered a speech to the public, following the "January 6th insurrection on the citadel of our democracy" (Washington Post, 2022, 1:07). In a tranquil tone, he reminds the citizens of the United States of the importance of voting, stating that "the right to vote, and to have that vote counted, is democracy's threshold liberty. Without it, nothing is possible. But with it, anything is possible" (Washington Post, 2022, 5:02). Joe Biden is surrounded by his audience, who is calmly listening to his speech. During the thirty minutes of speech that are being recorded, the audience barely seems to move, which signifies how entranced they are with his speech. In any case, the 2021 United States Capitol attack came as a shock to many people, which could be another reason why the audience is seeking comfort from the rhetor's discourse. Once again, we are able to see the three steps of the homology at play. (1) Firstly, Joe Biden, a rhetor with considerable amounts of access to the platforms that the average American citizen is prone to be exposed to, (2) explains to the public that voting solves undemocratic transfers of power, such as the one exemplified by the event on January 6, and therefore (3) urges the viewers that voting is the only way in which one can enact change.

While perhaps not all voters were completely satisfied with voting for Joe Biden to be POTUS, many believed that he would be a much better option than his opposition. Having to make this choice should be enough to frighten anyone who believes in democratic values. The public's demands, in this sense, take the form of negation—namely, we do not want the opposition—but the positive aspect of this election fades. Joe Biden restates the immense difference that voting can make, claiming that people have "built a broad coalition of voters [...] and [...] changed the state by bringing more people, legally, to the polls" (Washington Post, 2022, 6:12). Even so, it seems as though the change that the votes are going to make is mysterious, since "empirical work generally finds that most voters are badly informed, and further, that many of them are not voting for the purpose of promoting certain policies or platforms over others" (Brennan, 2020, para. 8). The ethics and rationality of voting have been extensively discussed in the field of philosophy, and these discussions have occurred in light of the paradox of voting.

The paradox of voting can be spelled out as follows: "Since the expected costs (including opportunity costs) of voting appear to exceed the expected benefits, and since voters could always instead perform some action with positive overall utility, it's surprising that anyone votes" (Brennan, 2020, para. 4). In light of the paradox of voting, the fact that voting does not produce the maximal amount of utility for voters is revealed. What is more, if voting does not produce the maximal amount of utility, it seems as though voting is irrational, specifically because the decisions we make about our time—especially in a capitalist society—tend to be calculated so as to maximize the utility of the actions we perform. If this is true, then it can rightfully be concluded, or at least suggested, that if the paradox of voting is true, then voting is irrational.

More than this, since voting cannot change the outcome of an election, it is generally regarded that voting is irrational unless voters might have a different goal in mind, such as expressing themselves, which would force us to conceive of voting as an activity of consumption, rather than a productive one (Brennan, 2020, para. 25). Voting thus essentially becomes an act no different from any other act of expressing one's convictions. If one identifies oneself as a peaceful or empathetic person, they might vote in favor of a candidate who does not endorse military actions. The opposite might be true of someone who identifies themselves as a "patriot and a tough guy" (Brennan, 2020, para. 26). In any case, if we are to avoid such conclusions, we must consider other ways in which we can enact social change. Just as Cloud points out, "Where people are most affected by power—in their relation to work, wages, and the material necessities of life—they are granted no decision-making faculty. We do not vote over our wages, work hours, employment status, benefits, or the accessibility of child care and health care—all in realms designated under capitalism as private" (1998, p. 164). Cloud's remarks do not focus on the irrationality of voting, but rather on the notion that even if individual votes did have the power to change the outcome of an election, this would still not affect the average person in the areas that impact his or her livelihood most.

If voting is irrational, and even if it were not, it seems as though the change that one can enact is minimal at best. Even when faced with such a discouraging inference, alternative ways of engaging on a political level, such as political activism, should prove to be more effective at challenging the oppressive structures of the current system.

Homologies and Future Research

Brummett, the leading scholar of rhetorical homologies, states that the role of homology is "to link disparate orders of experience by way of the same form" (2004, pp. 5-6). In this essay, I hope to have shown that there exists a formal resemblance between the discourse of presidential candidates, talk shows who discuss health issues, and companies that advertise sustainable goods. All of these instances provide the viewer with a similar experience, outlined by the three steps of the homology: (1) a rhetor needs to have access to a platform that the usual consumer attends to, (2) the rhetor makes some demands of the citizen, so that the exigence they identify may be solved, and (3) the viewer privatizes the responsibility for the exigence the rhetor mentions and is inspired to bring about change in the way that the rhetor suggests. These instances of discourse, other than resembling one another formally, also resemble themselves formally. Arguably, "homology is always present wherever form is, since [...] every perception is already the result of more than one unique experience brought together cognitively as the same *sort* of experience" (Brummett, 2014, p. 40). In other words, politicians often urge the public to vote, Dr. Phil often recommends personal solutions for systemic problems, and sustainable companies often make the consumer feel responsible for their consumption habits.

In light of these considerations, this essay has identified a homology between three instances of discourse. The present study can be valuable to critics whose preferred method is rhetorical homologies, as the present homology can be enriched by any other participants they discover. More than this, critics interested in the issue of the privatization of systemic failures could benefit from the paper's engagement with the three participants in the homology. This paper can also be useful to critics seeking to analyze the discourse of climate change, the rationality of voting, and therapeutic discourses, as this paper offers a critique of how rhetors discuss these issues, as well as to critics who aim to understand why the discourses are so persuasive to the audiences.

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Communication Theories in *The Office*: Relational Dialectics and Genderlect

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Abstract

The Office, known largely for its comedic brilliance and the famous romance between main characters Jim Halpert and Pam Beesly, also acts as a cultural artifact as it follows the development of their relationship. Through this essay, the interpersonal theory of Relational Dialectics and the intercultural theory of Genderlect Communication will be analyzed in the context of Jim and Pam's relationship. Relational Dialectics will be used to analyze the interpersonal relationship between Jim and Pam, and the ways in which it develops and changes throughout the seasons of the show. Genderlect will describe the reasons behind the differing communication issues Jim and Pam have throughout their relationship. Jim's communication style as a man is vastly different than Pam's as a woman, leading to confusion and occasional conflicts.

Keywords

genderlect, relationship dialectics, communication theories, *The Office*

"When you're a kid, you assume your parents are soulmates. My kids are gonna be right about that" (Lieberstein, 2009. 5.14). Two complete strangers, Jim Halpert and Pam Beesly, met in their work office, eventually becoming friends, and later husband and wife. As their relationship develops, "contradictions/tensions are constant...no matter the circumstance" (Owsley, 2008, p. 18). The pair must adjust to communicating cross-culturally, as they have very different communication styles. Additionally, they must learn how to interpret the status of their relationship as they progress from

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being friends to dating, getting engaged, and eventually marrying. From the perspective of the Relational Dialectics and Genderlect theories, this essay examines the development of Jim and Pam's relationship as they face variances within their communication styles.

Baxter and Montgomery's interpersonal communication theory, Relational Dialectics, explains the "meaning-making between relationship parties that emerges from the interplay of competing discourses" (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, p. 349). Their theory aims to interpret how different parties with opposing viewpoints can find meaning in a close relationship with each other. According to Julia T. Wood, these tensions are "what we can use to understand how relationships work, and how they grow and change over time" (Lusk, 2008, p. 4). Relational dialectics features "relationships [that] are close not because pre-formed selves are revealed but because the parties' selves are given shape through relating" (Baxter, 2004). Through this relating, individuals decide for themselves if they can work through the issues any relationship will have.

Jim and Pam's relationship is constantly moving through new stages, as their initial attraction gives way to spending time together and growing closer. As Jim begins to develop feelings for Pam despite her being engaged, their friendship displays tensions between their conflicting feelings about each other. Their journey through these changes can be understood using internal and external dialectics within the Relational Dialectics theory.

Jim and Pam's friendship reaches a shift in dynamics as Jim's feelings for Pam grow increasingly intense. After Dunder-Mifflin's Casino Night party for employees, Jim runs up to Pam and blurts out, "I'm in love with you." (Carell, 2006. 2.22). Pam sadly reminds him she is engaged and apologizes that he misinterpreted their friendship. Through Pam's sorrowful rejection, the viewer can see one internal dialectic in the relational dialectic theory, certainty, and uncertainty. Jim's certainty about his romantic feelings clashes with Pam's uncertainty of her own. While she does consider him a best friend, she remains unsure whether her feelings extend beyond this. Responding to the tensions between these conflicting feelings, Jim decides to confront the issue further and kisses Pam, who returns the gesture (Carell, 2006. 2.22). This incident displays the certainty-uncertainty internal dialectic and the connection-autonomy internal dialectic. While once again Jim is seen being certain about his feelings for Pam, Pam demonstrates her uncertainty when she kisses Jim back despite her blatant denial of feelings for him an hour before. According to Baxter, “Whenever we communicate, we are invoking--often indirectly and by implication--multiple systems of meaning. These discourses often compete, oppose, and struggle with one another, however” (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, p. 349). Pam demonstrates this pattern by communicating two different emotions to Jim through her actions. Her unrequited feelings for Jim conflict with her desire to remain autonomous and be faithful to her partner. While Jim desires a romantic connection with Pam, he recognizes he cannot overstep his bounds. With both of them struggling with multiple systems of meaning, their relationship reveals how these different meanings can compete with each other. The beginning phases of Jim and Pam’s relationship show Relational Dialectics in action through ever-present tension.

As time progresses, Pam realizes her feelings for Jim and calls off her wedding to her partner, breaking up with him entirely, leading to a series of events that display the revelation-concealment dialectic. Eventually, Jim and Pam begin dating, and they decide to keep it a secret from the rest of their co-workers. A flustered Jim blushes when his coworkers question if they’re dating, responding with a humble, “Ummm... yup. Yes, we are.” (Schur, 2007. 4.3) The effort to hide their new relationship is a significant example of the revelation-concealment external dialectic. “Public disclosure is a relational rite of passage signaling partners and others that the tie that binds them together is strong” (Griffin, Ledbetter, and Sparks, 2015). Since Jim and Pam both felt uncertainty surrounding this new relationship, they didn't want to reveal it to their co-workers until they better understood how they would work as a couple. Later, they find out Pam is pregnant and again decide to keep it a secret from their coworkers. When their boss creates a rumor that Pam is pregnant and spreads it around the office, the two of them feel forced to reveal the truth. Trying to confirm that Pam didn't tell anyone, a panicked Jim exclaims, "I didn't tell anyone! Who did you tell?" (Lieberstein, 2009. 6.1) The couple's desire to keep the pregnancy a secret is another example of the revelation-concealment external dialectic. They concealed the news; both wanted privacy and to avoid the judgment of their coworkers as long as possible. Their lack of closeness with everyone in the office explains their hesitance to inform colleagues as quickly as they told their families and close friends.

Shortly after their announcement, Jim decides they are ready for marriage and plans a surprise proposal to Pam, a characteristic of predictability-surprise dialectic. He pretends to propose many different times, stopping in random places and bending on one knee. As Pam becomes used to him joking, she predicts that it will be a joke each time he proposes to her. When he does propose by a dilapidated store sign in the pouring rain, she is shocked. This impact on the strength of their relationship is in line with Cavanaugh's findings that "surprise has been determined to be a critical necessity in social and personal relationships" (1999). Pam's positive surprised reaction makes her appreciate Jim much more, as seen through her very affectionate behavior toward him in the next couple of episodes. Through the Relational Dialectics theory, Baxter provides a logical explanation for the relationship journey that Jim and Pam are on.

Jim and Pam's interactions are influenced by relational tensions and the communication styles arising from their gender roles. Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Styles theory describes "how masculine and feminine styles of discourse are best viewed as two distinct cultural dialects" (Ledbetter, Griffin, Sparks, 2015). At its core, it describes how "different sets of linguistic features used by males and females develop through the gender acculturation process" (Johnson, 2009). While there are many communication differences between different genders, six specific examples are very common. These are private vs. public speaking, telling a story, listening, asking questions, conflict, and nonverbal communication. The six communication issues significantly shape Jim and Pam's relationship throughout their different stages.

Throughout *The Office,* Jim and Pam have one significant cultural difference in their communication styles. This cultural difference is their genders, which leads to different ways of communicating with each other. Jim identifies as a man, and Pam identifies as a woman, demonstrating stereotypical gender roles. While their respective genders have different communication norms that create tension, they begin to adapt their communication styles better to understand each other more fully. Using Genderlect Styles theory, Jim and Pam's relationship can be analyzed to see where their differing genders contributed to communication problems and the deliberate steps they took to allow them to communicate better as two individuals becoming one.

One example of this is demonstrated in the way that Jim reacts when he is upset. When Pam is engaged to her fiancé Roy, Jim becomes visibly upset at his uncaring behavior toward her. Showing this tension through non-verbal communication, he watches Roy interact with Pam, rolls his eyes, and responds coldly when Roy acknowledges him. When doing this, Jim is displaying a classic way men address conflict: assert dominance (Liebstein, 2006. 2.14). "Men hold forth with authority" (Haas, 1979). Jim tries to assert his dominance over Roy by acting in a manner that communicates he is better than him. His power display hides his jealousy of the two's relationship, a behavior that conforms to common masculine tendencies to repress difficult emotions. According to Brandau-Brown & Ragsdale, "the socialization for divergent masculine and feminine communication strategies begins in childhood, and these preferences are carried over into adulthood," causing men and women to display different language styles that lead to miscommunication (Brandau-Brown & Ragsdale, 2005). According to Genderlect, men are taught from a young age the ways to be "manly", and asserting dominance is one of them. As their relationship blooms, Jim's anger begins causing tension between them. This tension comes to a head when Jim does something that makes Pam uncomfortable, and she displays anger by avoiding him. Jim doesn't understand why she is acting different and at first is hurt, until Pam comes around to explain herself (Eisenberg & Stupnitsky, 2005. 2.6). She describes how she felt ashamed to confront him about her discontentment. Jim is confused at why she didn't address him sooner, which is an example of the communication divergence that exists between men and women. As a man, Jim would be far more likely to address anything that makes him unhappy head on and establish dominance.

Pam grows to realize the depth of the feelings she still has for Jim, deciding she needs to tell him and admitting in front of the entire office that he was the reason for calling off her wedding and she misses him terribly (Celotta & Daniels, 2007. 3.21). As she says it, she can't stop stuttering and gets choked up, running away in nervousness after she finishes her confession. From the standpoint of Genderlect theory, women typically engage in private conversations rather than public, because women are taught not to draw additional attention to themselves. Because this public conversation was out of her comfort zone, she had difficulty expressing her emotions fully.

Jim continues to be direct and confrontational in his communication style, as seen through his interactions with his former girlfriend, Karen. When Jim is still in love with Pam while in a relationship with co-worker Karen, it changes the dynamic of his current relationship because he cannot be as open and vulnerable as he used to be. Under the Genderlect Theory, Jim makes the most stereotypical decision for a man and decides to address the issue. From a young age, studies have found that mothers of boys tell their young sons what to do more- leading men to be more directive in their speech patterns (Ledbetter, Griffin, Sparks, 2015). By admitting his feelings for Pam, Jim subconsciously gains dominance in the relationship through displaying vulnerability, a quality many women find highly favorable. While his news may have been disconcerting, his honesty is refreshing for Karen because she appreciates Jim being upfront with her.

Once Jim and Pam marry, they both experience challenges listening effectively. When Jim finds a potential new job in his friend's company, Athlead, he decides it will be a good investment in his family's future. However, Pam decides it would be smarter if Jim stays closer to home due to the birth of their first child. She communicates this with Jim, who goes behind her back and do it instead of listening to her opinion. When Pam brings up the subject after she believes he is no longer going to take the position, Jim switches the conversation. However, all along, Jim knows his plans to avoid accepting the job and be dishonest to Pam.

Pam also begins noticing changes in Jim's nonverbal communication that occurred due to their different communication styles. He becomes more discrete, less engaged, and is spending increasingly long days in the office, supposedly working on a barrage of extra assignments he received from Dunder Mifflin. However, once Pam calls him out on his odd behavior, Jim is truthful, describing how a need to ensure future success for their family caused him to go behind Pam's back (Daniels, 2009. 9.1). While Pam is disappointed, she eventually moves on and permits him to accept a part-time position at the company. The distance causes tension within their relationship, driving them apart. As predicted in this theory, Pam avoids conflict and seeks to find an alternative that makes both her and Jim happy. She decides the best option is to try not to talk about the issues and only focus on the good things going on in their lives (Green and Miller, 2013. 9.12). On the other hand, Jim is overly eager to discuss relationship issues over the phone at work, which deeply upsets Pam.

"You can't even wait until we get home? Are you that busy?" (Green and Miller, 2013. 9.12). Once again, their communication styles manifest in the different ways they handle tension within their relationship.

Fortunately, Jim and Pam took the necessary steps to communicate more effectively. Genderlect theory asserts that "understanding each other's style and the motives behind it, is the first step in overcoming destructive responses" (Griffin, Ledbetter, and Sparks, 2015). They begin this process when they decide to go to marriage counseling together. Through counseling, they learn how to listen to each other better and see each other's point of view. Also, Jim creates a video of their memories together and describes how much he loves her. Under the Genderlect theory, males are not as likely to express their deepest emotions this way. Still, Jim now understands Pam's communication style enough to see that she and many other women appreciate outward shows of affection. Pam changes her communication style to become more expressive with her desires, demonstrating what she wants instead of prompting Jim to make an educated guess. Through their relationship's improvement, one can use Genderlect to analyze how they learn to listen to each other's needs.

The application of Relational Dialectics and Genderlect offers insight into how individuals communicate interpersonally and through cultural differences. Though the show is getting older, it will remain culturally relevant due to its focus on relationships and how individuals communicate with one another. The comedic appeal and beloved relationships of familiar television characters portray fictional events yet can reveal many fundamental communication styles relating to each other. Jim and Pam are an excellent example of a loving relationship being challenged by different styles, but eventually evolving as they strive to become closer. Their relationship highlights the different ways men and women interact with each other and how growth is ultimately possible when both parties commit to mutual understanding. The on-screen relationship offers a highly stereotypical portrayal of men and women's character and provides insight into the different ways people communicated in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, the broad themes of their communication are relatable across generations, making it a cultural artifact that will be shared and enjoyed for years to come.

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Multiracial Identity Negotiation in a "Monoracial" World

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Abstract

The constant shift of societal values and ideals has historically left multiple individuals in utter confusion over their acceptance in certain social settings. A specific minority group that has been at the brunt of this dilemma for many years, however, are those who identify as multiracial. Mixed-race individuals have struggled to be equally accepted and appreciated for their rich cultural heritages, and with the multiple unique intercultural relationships that currently exist, these individuals are constantly dealing with niched categories, labels, and microaggressions that separate them from other minority groups. Through greater research into the brief history, the modern-day problems, and the racial identity development multiracial individuals face, this paper hopes to further unearth the everyday issues that living in a "monoracial" world brings.

Keywords

multiracial, intercultural, monoracial, biracial, microaggressions, categories, labels, minority groups, acculturation, identity negotiation, prototypicality, fluidity of race

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The United States was founded on the basis of equality among all people. Ironically enough, the United States of America was already breaking their promise to the people at the time of this claim. As we have continued to progress as a society, it has become more apparent that this country was instead founded on the principle of one dominant group, and all "others." One of these "other" groups has long been overlooked because of their unique life experiences. Individuals of multiracial

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backgrounds have not only had to battle for the multiple cultures they represent, but have also had the struggle of discovering their own identities and to which other group they truly "belong." Due to the novelty of multiracialism, there is still much to discover. Within this research, we seek to understand multiracial identity and how prototypicality applies, the unique obstacles multiracial people face, their identity development, and how these individuals choose to present themselves to society. For a multiracial person, the journey to understanding one's race is not optional but necessary, as these individuals face the difficulties of racial identity negotiation.

The Facets of Multiracial Identity Negotiation

To fully understand the phenomena of multiracial identity negotiation, one must become knowledgeable of the history, theories, and concepts that have structured the modern-day experiences of multiracial individuals.

History

According to a study conducted by Lambertz-Berndt, "often times, students with a majority identity (white, heterosexual, high social class, able-bodied) find it difficult to relate to a social identity" (2020). From a young age, American children have already developed preconceived notions of a "superior" group of individuals in contrast to those they deem "powerless." The prejudices that those who grew up in the American school system innately hold should not be surprising, given the fact that African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans were all heavily discriminated against during the establishment of the U.S. From Naturalization Laws and slavery to Exclusionary Acts, each minority group that came to America in hopes of a better life struggled through incredible amounts of hate and alienation in this country (Takaki, 1993). But a minority group that has been consistently left out of social and academic discussions is the multiracial community. Up until the legalization of interracial marriage in America, which was made lawful only

53 years ago on Loving's Day in 1967 (Yancey-Bragg, 2020), multiracial people and their experiences have been overlooked or completely invalidated. Biracial sociologist and activist W.E.B Dubois, wrote,

> … Within the Negro group especially there were people of all colors. Then too, there were plenty of my colored friends who resented my ultra 'race' loyalty and ridiculed it. They pointed out that I was not a 'Negro,' but a mulatto; that I was not a Southerner but a Northerner, and my object was to be an American and not a Negro. (p. 51)

Although Dubois became one of the most well-known and recognized Black social activists and academics in American history, he struggled to identify himself with the Black community, as he happened to be the son of a White man.

Since Loving's Day, the number of interracial and multiracial couples in America has increased fivefold. As a result, "the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) estimates that minorities will be the majority by 2042," thus asserting the increasing presence of minorities, including multiracial people (Harwood & Kim 2020). Despite the increase in number of Americans identifying as multiracial, the United States continues to assign little importance to mixed-identity. A study conducted by Clayton finds that when filling out surveys such as the U.S. Census Bureau, many multiracial individuals who need to check off boxes labeled "two or more races" or "other" feel as though the maker of the survey "[Doesn't] care what race you actually are" (2020). If an "other" option is unavailable, multiracial individuals are then forced to choose between two "sides" of their beings, disallowing an extensive or accurate representation of their identities. Though just one example of how this country fails to appreciate an individual's complete cultural background and history, multiracial people have been proven to exist as a minority group through political, social, and academic discussion.

Prototypicality

When discussing individuals of multiple races, it is important to note that they have been and will continue to live their entire lives in a world "in-between." The concept of prototypicality addresses this unique issue by claiming that multiracial individuals don't necessarily fit the "prototype" expected of monoracial individuals. In fact, according to a study done by Hogg and Terry, most people are viewed as a "cognitive representation of features that describe and prescribe attributes of the group," thus allowing "one to fully assimilate into an ingroup identification and 'depersonalize' one's own self-conception" (Kanouse, 2008). Multiracial individuals, however, are not at all represented in this concept, and tend to experience exclusion as a result of not being considered prototypical. This leads to an "us" versus "them" mentality, where monoracial groups might unintentionally or intentionally exclude multiracial individuals, ultimately forcing them to negotiate their identities. This results in having to choose to identify with one racial group over the other, rather than allowing an acceptance of both.

Identity Negotiation

Because humans are social beings, we long for belonging and inclusion within an ingroup, therefore automatically creating an outgroup. When interacting with outgroup members, individuals are more inclined to feel anxious or uncertain (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b, as cited in Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019, p.268). Individuals often establish in-group inclusion through identifying similar salient characteristics while establishing outgroup-based differentiation through identifying contrasting dimensions between the self and the dissimilar other, i.e., race (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019, p. 271). As a result, the social world is separated into "us" perceived as the "ingroup" members versus "them" as the "outgroup" members; therefore, in racial terms, ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination can be translated to prejudice and racism. This tension between monoracial groups creates conflict within a multiracial person who identifies with both groups. To a multiracial individual, there is no "us" versus "them," but a "we" instead. Despite multiracial people technically belonging to both ingroups, the majority of Americans belong to monoracial groups and will not consider multiracial people part of their ingroup due to a lack of prototypicality and affiliation demonstrated in the outgroup.

According to a communication study on cultural diversity, "identity is a social construction whose meanings are derived from cultural, historical, and geopolitical contexts" (Yep, 2016). As race being tied to culture, history, and geopolitics has become a recent phenomenon, a multiracial individual's struggle to label their own racial identity is then justified. Race holds immense institutionalized power, especially in the United States, as "its naturalized existence and unique relationship to hegemonic structures and institutions" can create tensions amongst different people groups-- especially individuals who identify with multiple backgrounds (Harrison et al., 2015). Therefore, the negotiation of one's multiracial identity can differ significantly as people's classifications of race and ethnicity are "constructed by how people look, think and feel, and behave" (Harrison et al., 2015). Identity politics in the U.S. is one of the most prevalent examples of race causing tension between different racial groups and internal tension among multiracial individuals representing multiple 'opposing' races.

The Fluidity of Race

The underlying issue that causes tension between monoracial and multiracial people derives from the lack of knowledge of race and its fluidity. Although there is a clear consensus in biological and social science academia that race is purely a social construct, race is still a very real social concept to the everyday person (Chou, 2017). Aware of this controversy, Robin Andreasen suggested that biological realism (races are biologically real) and social constructivism (races are social constructs) are compatible conceptions (2000). This is because race is fluid and biracial/multiracial people are a living example of that. While society may deem a multiracial person as a certain race based on their phenotype, that same person may choose to identify however they feel best suits their racial identity. Unfortunately, there are still downsides to being a multiracial person.

Multiracial v. Monoracial

Unlike minority monoracial groups, multiracial people experience a different type of marginalization in correlation with their racial identity. Johnston and Nadal propose a taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions (as cited in Harris, 2017), made up of five themes, including "exclusion and isolation, exoticization and objectification, assumption of a monoracial identity, denial of a multiracial reality, and the pathologizing of multiracial identity and experiences" (p. 431). For a country that emphasizes racial identity, exclusion is a common experience for those who may not fit into one race. John Blake, a biracial CNN Enterprise writer/producer, shared his testimony of growing up as a child of a white mother and a black father, describing it as "racial whiplash." Blake's mother was disowned for being with a Black man, and he and his brother were rejected by their mother's family from birth. Blake also got into fights growing up because his mom was white; as a result, he grew ashamed of her and would lie to his teachers about having a black mother (2018). Multiracial people also experience exoticization and objectification in their dating and romantic relationships. Drawing from an analysis of 22 black/white biracial respondents in her interviews, Chandra Waring found that her participants "internalize[d] being described as 'exotic' and articulated their body and background as intriguing, attractive and unique" due to their romantic lives being heavily influenced by racist ideology (2013, p. 313-314).

Assumptions that a multiracial person is monoracial are often made when a person 'passes' as a prototypical monoracial person. Moreover, because race is influenced by society's perception of the individual in the United States, many multiracial people may face discrimination or privilege. Tatjana Freund, who is Nicaraguan and German, blogged about her experience as a white-passing biracial person compared to that of her brother, who is considered brown according to societal standards. When they were 16 years old, a police officer threatened to shoot her brother and his friend while Freund was let off with a warning after being pulled over (2020). This automatic assumption can often overlap with denying a multiracial person their identity and/or experience. As identity politics plays a prominent role in the United States, monoracial people may deny multiracial people the opportunity to claim their entire racial identity. A study by Harris at Midwestern University (MU) identified participants of multiracial backgrounds that had experienced microaggressions based on their physical features. Whether it was through a refusal to acknowledge an individual's true identity fully, ignorance about race, or a complete lack of respect, multiple MU students reflected on encounters with members of a racially dominant group who failed to see them for their individual and unique racial backgrounds (Harris, 2017). Even biracial Black and White public figures like Halsey and Megan Markle have faced this pattern. After the two spoke up for the Black Lives Matter movement, both received criticism for not being 'Black enough' to speak on behalf of the Black community. Despite the public's opinion, these women still choose to identify how they feel is best fit for their racial identity.

Racial Identity Development

As mentioned, multiracial people may still choose their own racial identity. During their development, many bicultural and biracial children may claim four identity forms for themselves: majority-group identifiers, minority-group identifiers, synthesizers, and disaffiliates (Crohn, 1995). Those who choose to identify with the majority-group might identify with the parent from the dominant culture (in this case, White), be 'White-passing' (look prototypically White), experience shame in their minority-group background, or want to benefit from the privileges of the majority-group experiences. Minority-group identifiers are those who choose to identify as the race that is considered a minority. They might identify more with the parent of the minority group, have experienced marginalization or discrimination themselves, feel resentful towards their dual heritage/majority-group affiliation, or even take pride in their minority status. Synthesizers choose to acknowledge both racial heritages and synchronize the two into a coherent identity (examples will be mentioned in the following topic of categories and labels). Lastly, some may want to completely disaffiliate, rebelling against any existing label that might be imposed on them. This mentality often manifests in disaffiliating with one's sociocultural identity and focusing on one's socio-relational role or personal identity. Disaffiliated multiracial people may consider themselves a 'global citizen' or part of the 'human race,' disacknowledging their racial heritage.

Acculturation

In having to negotiate their racial identity, some individuals may fall into acculturation-- the assimilating to, or merging of multiple cultures. A study done on second-generation Indian Punjabis by Sekhon & Szmigin indicated a strong self-negotiation of identity because of "problems of balancing the expectations of living between two cultures" (2011). Many individuals stated they felt "stuck in the middle" of two drastically different cultures, and the influence of each participant's upbringing led to fluid identities "with participants moving between cultures but with no discernible distinct outcomes as a result of acculturation" (Sekhon & Szmigin, 2011).

Categories & Labels

The fluid identity of many multiracial individuals has also led to embracing new categories of race (an example of multiracial individuals who fall under the category of synthesizers). New words have graced our vocabularies as the term *mestizo* now refers to Mexicans of Spanish and Indigenous descent, half black individuals have historically been referred to as *mulatto*, half Japanese individuals have been referred to as *hafu*, and so on. A study on mixed-race Japanese people was done by Oshima, where results showed that although the term *hafu*—coming from the English word "half"—has been widely used among multiracial Japanese individuals, it continues to hold uncomfortable connotations for many. Despite the range of slang terms humans have created to fit themselves into desired societal boxes of race, not every term has been widely appreciated by all multiracial individuals (2014). The labels used to describe multiracial individuals have become so niched to certain races that one may begin to feel even more of an outsider as they become minority individuals of minority groups with continuously changing perceptions of their identities (Oshima, 2014).

Multiraciality may challenge monoracial standards, but creating new and separate labels also reinforces monoracial rubrics. According to Aurora Chang, people of mixed race are challenging current racial demographics only to create a new racial rubric. While interviewing 25 multiracial college students, "it appeared that students reveled in attaching a label and/or naming their experience. This, of course, was ultimately ironic in that the students expressed disdain toward monoracial rubrics while reinforcing those very rubrics by creating their own Multiracial rubric" (2014, p. 726). This trend of creating new labels for themselves further establishes their status as a minority, but also reinforces the racial structure that originally marginalized multiracial people rather than challenging the concept of race as a whole.

Understanding the Multiracial Identity

With a great emphasis on the struggles minority groups currently face, the concept of race should be an ongoing topic of conversation when dealing with issues of privilege and discrimination. The focus on multiracial individuals in this particular case study provides insight into the unique life experiences that only certain people have the opportunity of relaying.

In terms of prototypicality, both multiracial and monoracial individuals should be well-informed of the discrepancies of assuming a society built on the foundations of race purity has progressed to the point that depersonalization is no longer relevant (Kanouse, 2008). Rather, it should be a priority to invest in the individual identities of multiracial persons as though no prototype has ever existed for a “model” racial phenotype. As a society that heavily relies on one’s physicality to make generalized assumptions and stereotypes about their background, we must strive to work toward less biased mindsets.

The most evident microaggression we came across in our research was a denial of the ability to have multiple racial identities within one individual. In refusing to believe a person’s complete identity and background, individuals knowingly or unknowingly add to the daily struggle of identity negotiation in multiracial people. When the microaggressions in the MU study focused on a majority of physical aspects of multiracial individuals, the agitators inadvertently placed “multiracial students into monoracial categories that denied their multiracial realities” (Harris, 2017). When the non-normalized identities of individuals are overlooked, social values tend to point toward a premeditated want for dominant racial category amalgamation. Some individuals are pushed toward majority-group identifiers and strive to be white-passing in order to fit into societal expectations. As the rhetoric of identity management in the US has become “power-evasive,” strategically practicing an individual form of self-preservation in outer-group settings and interactions, undocumented Latin Americans have labored communicatively to create a notion of “working to be perceived as a member of a non-stigmatized identity.” They choose to create an identity for themselves that is heavily reliant on a “performative phenomenon that illustrates the constructive nature of all identities” in order to gain the benefits of being white in America (Scranton et al., 2016).

The fluidity of race is evident and accepted when individuals choose to identify with the majority group, not so much when claiming minority-group identifiers or synthesizing their racial identity. Lambertz-Berndt (2020) encourages teachers to open the discussion on race and identity in the classroom-- students of both dominant and minority groups are challenged to reconsider social identities in homogenous and multiracial groups to understand privilege better. As privilege is taught in learning environments, so is the concept of discrimination absorbed unintentionally. When it comes to conversations about individuals with multiple racial identities, more so than denying someone a part of their racial background, inverse monoracism must be avoided altogether. Multiracial individuals have learned to acculturate their identities repeatedly due to the fluidity of race. From being told that they are "not enough" of a minority group to hearing that they are not monoracial enough to "fit in" to a societally constructed dominant group, these racially diverse people claim a struggle unique to their individual physical attributes and surrounding social values.

Becoming Inclusive

While the concept of race is a continuous struggle among multiple individuals negotiating niched identities, it will never cease to be a concept that should be challenged. It is important to note that one solution will not be comprehensive for all issues of multiracial identity negotiation. However, with every new case, new individual, and new mindset, racial identity should be seen and valued as a fluid notion.

Nevertheless, a measurable fix to the issue of multiracial identity is allowing individuals to fully indicate the races they best identify with in surveys such as the U.S. Census. While "two or more races" has been an option in the Census for the past 20 years, it fails to provide individuals the privilege of specifying their races (Clayton, 2020). Simply allowing a "two or more races" category leads to feelings of insignificance amongst the minority group of multiracial individuals and should be updated to a “check all that apply” option instead.

Likewise, the struggles of multiracial individuals may also be reduced with an overall emphasis on one’s ethnicity rather than race since multiracial people are quite diverse. Focusing on ethnicity allows for more generalized social groups to be characterized by similar cultural characteristics, nationalities, affiliations, religions, languages, and traditions rather than physical traits alone. Identity will always be a social construct with issues to confront, but the question of racial negotiation may be better answered through realizations of individual cultural concepts.

Conclusion

Multiracial identity in the United States is a continuously transforming phenomenon. Individuals with multiracial backgrounds have been placed on unique platforms where their identities have never been fully understood or accepted by societal values. Though multiracial individuals may consider themselves part of a dominant racial group, the recent shifts in cultural views have painted those of multiple backgrounds as part of a minority. The idiosyncrasies each of these individuals face demonstrate the great need to understand the experiences a merging of cultures can create. Most importantly, one should remember that, unlike monoracial beings, multiracial individuals are constantly re-evaluating their racial labels through the lens of anti-prototypicality and identity negotiation.

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One's Social Media Identity Article Review

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Abstract

In the last ten years, the impact of social media has expanded dramatically. Before phone technology, face-to-face interactions were the main factor in how one's sense of identity forms. Today, social media allows the sharing of misinformation about oneself or others. In some cases, misinformation can impose impossible standards for perfection that cause identity struggles. Misinformation not only dictates what is the ideal image but can create a negative self-view for men and women who do not fall into that minuscule category. It also allows for exploitation that threatens victims' sense of identity and mental health. The following articles reviewed herein show the consequences of interacting on unregulated social media networks, which leads to cyberbullying (electronic communication of bullying of threatening messages or implications), and social media's role in furthering the idea of a perfect exterior.

Keywords

identity, social media, perfection, body image, cyberbullying, fake news

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Article Review

Aoun Barakat, K., Dabbous, A., & Tarhini, A. (2021). An empirical approach to understanding users' fake news identification on social media. *Online Information Review, 45*(6), 1080–1096. https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-08-2020-0333

Alharbi, A., Dong, H., Yi, X., Tari, Z., & Khalil, I. (2021). Social media identity deception detection: A survey. *ACM Computing Surveys (Csur), 54*(3), 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1145/3446372

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Chatzopoulou, E., Filieri, R., & Dogruyol, S. A. (2020). Instagram and body image: Motivation to conform to the "instabod" and consequences on young male wellbeing. *Journal of Consumer Affairs, 54*(4), 1270–1297. https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12329

Holladay, J. (2011). Cyberbullying. *Education digest: Essential readings condensed for quick review, 76*(5), 4–9.

Pashang, S., Khanlou, N., & Clarke, J. (2019). The mental health impact of cyber sexual violence on youth identity. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 17*(5), 1119–1131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-0032-4

Erentaité, R. & Bergman, L. R. & Žukauskiené, R. (2012). Cross-contextual stability of bullying victimization: A person-oriented analysis of cyber and traditional bullying experiences among adolescents. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 53*(2), 181–190. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9450.2011.00935.x

Social media has become a part of day-to-day life for most people in some way. Although social media has given us the opportunity to communicate at any moment how we feel, it also makes it easy to create a persona that does not relay who we actually are. Our online identities also prompt us to interact in a space with a higher risk of cyberbullying and exploitation.

Social Media Effects

Mass communication has allowed people to pass information to a large audience in moments; however, it has raised worries about the credibility of the information in the circumstances and increased the existence of misinformation, i.e., "fake news." In "An Empirical Approach to Understanding Users' Fake News," Aoun Barakat, Dabbous, and Tarhini (2021) address the lack of studies exploring users' fake news identification behavior. Social media is not only aimed toward teens but also toward all ages under 40 who are still creating and finding their identity in life. As a result, the goal of this study was to understand better the elements that influence people's ability to identify inaccurate information on social media. This study takes a quantitative approach and provides a behavioral model to investigate the factors impacting social media users' identification of fake news, "the lack of accountability and veracity checking techniques within social media platforms make them a perfect place for the spread of spam, misinformation and rumors" (Khan et al., 2019). The trust that social media users afford to fake news not only demonstrates the risks of relying on social media for information. This confidence in social media as a gauge of reality also puts one in danger of accepting virtual profiles as real, or even as a standard for themselves.

In their article "Social Media Identity Deception Detection: A Survey," Alharbi, Dong, Yi, Tari, and Khalil (2021) examine a study on people ages 15-40 by investigating social media identity deception and how to analyze social media critically. It expands on the definition of identity deception as "attacks, which can be categorized into fake profile, identity theft and identity cloning" (Alhararbi et al., 2021, p. 1). This journal article examines many topics, such as fake profiles (malicious accounts), sybil attacks (attacker creates a large number of pseudonymous profiles (identities), and sock-puppets (one single fake online identity). User profiles are used to engage and share information. In the previous two decades, social media has proliferated and has become a vital part of many people's lives. Users on various social media platforms numbered about 3.8 billion at the start of 2020, with a total increase of 321 million worldwide in the previous year. Users spend approximately 15% of their waking hours on social media. As the previous researchers mentioned in their article, misinformation is not studied enough. As a result, when someone creates a fake profile, they create an identity that is not theirs. After pretending to be someone, the person begins to believe that they are that person- this is considered an act of "catfishing" oneself. A person changes their entire identity to become the fabricated online "perfection" that is not nearly what they look or feel like inside.

There is a lack of research studying male social media users and their body perceptions. Therefore, Chatzopoulou, Filieri, and Dogruvol (2020) not only bring awareness that men have a "hot-bod" mindset like women, but also concludes that it is crucial to investigate how exposure to this new channel affects body image perceptions and behavior, particularly the consequences on consumers' psycho-logical and physical wellbeing. The lack of research on this gender may be due to the widely held belief that body image disorders affect females primarily and that men are at little or no risk of experiencing body image issues (McCabe and Ricciardelli, 2003; Daniel and Bridges, 2010). Because males consider body image a feminine issue, they are hesitant to show emotions behind insecurity about their bodies because they do not want to appear weak or vulnerable. As a result of this stereotype, male social media users may be unaware of social media's effect on them (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2006). More evidence concerning the effects of social media on males are the facts that eating disorders have the greatest mortality rate of any mental health issue among men with 400,000 males suffering in the United Kingdom alone (Chatzopoulou, 2017) and that eating disorders will impact 10 million boys in the United States at some time in their life (Wade, Keski-Rahkonen, and Hudson, 2011). Shedding light on this topic is very important because everyone's identity is important and social media has proven to shift one's identity, whether one is female or male.

Social Media's Power Dynamics

Cyberbullying is rising as people design messages of hatred or malice directed at a single person, and this is the topic of Holladay's (2011) study. Unlike conventional bullying, cyberbullying has a large audience; for example, if a malicious note is passed in class, only the bully and the victim have seen it. Conversely, when a comment is posted online, millions of people can see it. A study shows that over "2,000 middle school children indicated that cyberbullying victims were nearly twice as likely to attempt suicide as students who were not targeted with online abuse" (Holladay, 2011). Social media has given people the opportunity to express themselves and the platform to say whatever they like without limitation, which in turn is when the line of decency can be crossed.

Additionally, cyber sexual violence (Cyber-SV) is a purposeful act to control, shame, and humiliate emerging young women (EYW). It covers all forms of online gender and sexual exploitation that can potentially jeopardize EYW's privacy and safety offline. Pashang, Khanlou, and Clarke (2019) conducted a qualitative study used an anti-oppression and gender-transformative health promotion framework to investigate the mental health effects of Cyber-SV on EYW identity reported in this paper. Being targeted by this behavior causes severe mental health impacts for young girls and women, including a loss of confidence that can damage their sense of identity. The findings indicate that the mental health impact of Cyber-SV (cyber sexual violence) intersects with identity in the form of Cyber-R (cyber revenge) as a way of regaining loss of control over the victim's life situation. Ironically, the victim uses the same method to which they were subjugated. This is proven by a study that "utilized an exploratory, qualitative method in which data is driven from in-depth interviews, art-making sessions, textual analysis, and policy analysis" (Maxwell, 2016). According to their findings, schools and academic institutions are the key areas and locations where Cyber-SV against EYW occurs. However, according to research participants, these organizations lack the information and experience needed to prevent exploitation.

In their study, researchers Erentaité, Bergman, and Žukauskiené (2012) compared traditional bullying to cyberbullying. Recent years have marked the emergence of new kinds of bullying through information and communication technology (computers, mobile phones, etc.), extending victimization experiences from school and peer-group contexts to new and unexplored cyberspace situations. The individuals targeted most often are students in middle school and high school. The remaining question evaluated in this research article was "whether bullying victimization at school continues into subsequent cyberbullying victimization. Cyberbullying is considered especially harmful due to its anonymous and omni-present character" (Li, 2007, 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006;

Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Aside from estimating the overlap of traditional and cyberbullying victimization, this paper's research attempted to pinpoint the nature of the link between distinct types of bullying victimization at school and in cyberspace. There are at least three theoretical possibilities proposed in the literature regarding the relationship between traditional peer victimization and cyberbullying: (1) traditional bullying victimization predicts perpetration of bullying and aggression in cyberspace (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004); (2) cyberbullying victimization leads to direct bullying victimization (Patchin and Hinduja, 2006); and (3) traditional bullying victimization predicts victimization in cyberspace (Katzer et al., 2009; Marsh et al., 2010; Ybarra et al., 2007). Their research tests the last premise - that traditional bullying victimization predicts cyberbullying victimization. The study's results indicated that adolescents who encountered primarily verbal and relational bullying at school had a higher chance of victimization in cyberspace a year later. However, this was not found for adolescents who suffered predominantly physical forms of traditional bullying. These findings emphasize the need for a cross-contextual approach in studies on the stability of bullying victimization.

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Bathroom Battlegrounds Book Review

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Abstract

Most individuals in today's day and age have come into a situation in which they find themselves excluded from society. Some have been lucky enough to find inclusion, but others still struggle to find how they fit in. A huge factor that prevents individuals from finding their footing in society is gender segregation in restrooms. Bathroom Battlegrounds by Alexander K. Davis gives a sociological view of how gender-segregated restrooms have communicated to society what we ought to understand about how bathrooms pertain to gender. He does this by exploring the history of gendered restrooms, explaining how the upper class had a hand in making gender-segregated restrooms, and giving solutions for how we can make collegiate students feel included at their institutions. I dive deep into each chapter and explain my praise and critique for how he has written and explained his arguments.

Keywords

gender, restrooms, socioeconomic class, institutional inclusion

Book Review

Davis, Alexander K. (2020). *Bathroom battlegrounds: How public restrooms shape the gender order*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Bathroom Battlegrounds provides unique insights for those studying communication, thoroughly exploring issues concerning restrooms, gender, and social class. Gender-neutral restrooms have been a popular topic of conversation, especially in businesses and institutions. The author, Alexander K. Davis, makes this apparent as he follows the events of the Obama administration debuting a new, all-

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gender restroom in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building to establish a more inclusive working environment for staff. While some saw the Obama Administration's decision as a progressive move toward a more gender-neutral environment, others, such as Assemblyman Tim Donnelly disagree. Donnelly has accused gender-neutral restrooms of a "privacy invasion," arguing that "the same politicians who want to end discrimination have discriminated against the majority of people who are uncomfortable with such provisions" (Davis, 2020, p. 5). Davis addresses the conflict through a sociological exploration of the history of gendered restrooms and efforts to establish non-gendered restrooms in civic, cultural, and institutional establishments across the United States. This topic is essential, especially at a university, as the lack of all-gender public restrooms creates an exclusionary environment for many. Davis' extensive observations provide an understanding of the messages arising from history, socioeconomic class, and public opinion about how to perceive bathrooms in the context of gender.

Chapter One, "Politicizing the Potty," provides a detailed socioeconomic history of public restrooms, spaces that originally were all-gendered. This historical background gives a clear image of public restrooms' initial purpose to maintain cleanliness in urban areas. "Public" toilets at the time were only located in areas accessible to individuals of higher class, such as hotels, train stations, and department stores. However, most public restrooms built for the entirety of the public were poorly maintained and often not connected to a sewage system, leading women to avoid them and business owners to protest for their removal. Davis introduces the idea of public restrooms becoming a method to divide the public based on their economic class. This strategy has striking relevance to today's socioeconomic divisions in public restrooms. In settings such as hotels and restaurants, restrooms are clean and well maintained. Conversely, they are often poorly maintained in locations free to the public, such as parks.

In the second chapter, Davis describes the early public outcry against these socioeconomic issues, with calls for all public restrooms to be of equal quality to those in higher class settings. In an attempt to address the public's wishes for better maintained public restrooms, the value of establishments increased dramatically. This was also the beginning of gender-segregated restrooms because of "tenacious middle – and upper class –beliefs about sexed bodies and sexual privacy" (Davis, 2020, p. 77). This chapter effectively engages the reader and elucidates the reality that a wealthier socioeconomic class has shaped society's views of gendered restrooms.

In addition to the issues of socioeconomic class affecting the segregation of restrooms, Davis also writes about issues of gender segregation in the workplace. Chapter Three, "Regulating Restrooms," offers an examination of several court cases, all of which resulted from employers strategically using bathrooms as "a ploy to not train, hire, or promote women" (Davis, 2020, p. 85). Cases such as Spees v. James Marine, Inc. assessed the conditions of the women's restroom in a welding shop that held only one female employer. The bathroom provided for her contained a portable toilet instead of a formal restroom, and there was no access to running water. Davis' use of these court cases powerfully illustrates how employers build a figurative "glass ceiling" for women. He expertly uses restrooms to convey the message of who is welcome, respected and valued in labor settings – cisgender men. Notably, Davis only highlights the essential details of these court cases, making the content engaging despite its complexity.

Davis devotes Chapter Four, "Working Against the Washroom," to explaining the construction of restrooms and how new mandates calling for restroom expansion made it difficult for institutions to include all-gender restrooms. Given that the chapter analyzes architectural issues in detail, Davis's arguments lack the clarity of the previous sections. In descriptions of specific building dimensions and details on building mandates, his points are difficult to grasp without specialized knowledge. However, Davis provides an account of state laws that mandated the expansion of women's restrooms to add extra stalls. Consequently, these laws made it difficult for underfunded public spaces to implement unisex restrooms. Expanding a bathroom to meet new mandates is already expensive, but expanding enough also to add a unisex restroom would require reconstruction of the entire building. Davis explains how "truly inclusive spaces are only available to those citizens advantaged by economic privilege" (Davis, 2020, p. 133). Although the author's argument reveals a pivotal barrier to same-sex bathrooms, the advanced terminology distracts his points.

After going into depth about restroom mandates in businesses and institutions, Davis discusses three interviews he conducted in Chapter Five, "Leveraging the Loo." Davis conducted interviews over ten years with owners of businesses and institutions, receiving their opinions on ungendered restrooms. He provides valuable emphasis on interviews with individuals who genuinely wanted to create an inclusive environment by implementing all-gender family restrooms. One woman said, "It's hard to tap into your creative energy if you need to pee and there's no safe space to do that" (Davis, 2020, p. 145). Davis adds further nuance to these accounts by interviewing individuals who installed all-gender restrooms to save money or adapt to gender neutrality as a "hot new" trend (Davis, 2020, p. 156). Davis does a brilliant job in this chapter of highlighting that the ability to casually talk about a topic as "dull" as an ungendered restroom is a powerful sign of class privilege.

Chapter Six, "Transforming the Toilet," explores plausible steps to implement more gender-neutral collegiate campus spaces. Davis suggests exemplifying institutional isomorphism, described as "the tendency of organizations to change and evolve in tandem with one another, owing to a shared cultural environment" (Davis, 2020, p. 176). Notably, Davis includes approachable ideas in creating a welcoming environment. He suggests exemplifying institutional isomorphism, which is "the tendency of organizations to change and evolve in tandem with one another, owing to a shared cultural environment" (Davis, 2020, p. 176). He highlights how expensive schools are praised for doing the bare minimum in being trans-friendly, with one example being Davis's alma mater, Princeton University. Smaller schools are accomplishing outstanding student-focused work, such as Hendrix College in Arkansas, Pitzer College in California, and Lake Forest College in Illinois, yet have not been recognized for it. Davis concludes by offering his sociological view of gender, writing, "if gender is always being done, then it could just as easily be undone" (Davis, 2020, p. 183). He exercises admirable persistence in encouraging the building of more inclusive restrooms and approaching restrooms as a public good rather than an area of discomfort. Davis's conclusion of *Bathroom Battlegrounds* leaves readers hopeful for the future of all-gender restrooms and institutional inclusion.

Overall, *Bathroom Battlegrounds* is a thoroughly researched, well-organized book that helps those studying gender and communication understand a sociological perspective of the intersections between restrooms, gender, and social class. Davis shows clear evidence that he is an expert on the subject through his years of research and the hundreds of interviews he conducted. His extensive research, however, was both his strength and his weakness. Some areas of the book appeared highly advanced for undergraduates studying communication. Davis's intensive review of construction and building mandates and other government and legal issues diminishes the importance of several crucial discoveries. Despite these downfalls, the book provides an inspiring call to establish more inclusivity, starting with public restrooms. This book would be helpful for college students studying gender and communications who want to make their campus a more inclusive place. In all university settings, where students are developing their minds and selves, it is imperative to reevaluate and resolve an issue as trivial as comfort in the bathroom.

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Legal and Ethical Considerations for Public Relations Book Review

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Abstract

Book review and analysis of the strengths and gaps in the content of Legal and Ethical Considerations for Public Relations by Karla K. Gower.

Keywords

communication, public relations, legal obligations

Book Review

Gower, K. K. (2018). *Legal and ethical considerations for public relations*. Waveland Press Inc., Long Grove, IL 60047-9580. 3rd Edition.

Ignorance of the law does not absolve an individual of the consequences of breaking the law. For public relations practitioners, a lack of awareness and understanding of the legal ramifications of their communications may result in significant legal and financial liabilities not only for the public relations practitioner but also for their organization or client. In her book, *Legal and Ethical Considerations for Public Relations*, Dr. Karla Gower (2018) discusses the moral and legal obligations individuals in public relations and communications must consider as part of their professional work environment. Gower focuses on what she considers to be the most critical legal and ethical issues affecting public relations practitioners, which include understanding the difference between morals and ethics, aspects of the law that affect public relations, and protecting creative content. Gower serves as the Behringer Distinguished Professor in the Advertising and Public Relations Department of the College of

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Communication and Information Sciences at the University of Alabama. She holds a doctorate in mass communication from the University of North Carolina, a master's degree in mass communication from Arizona State University, and a law and bachelor's degree from the University of Western Ontario, Canada. Her credentials establish her expertise in discussing the law related to public relations and communications. The book's thesis asserts that we must increase awareness of laws and issues affecting public relations practitioners and help them ask the right questions to protect themselves against the potential legal ramifications of their work.

There are five sections in the book, with the first section discussing the difference between morals and ethics and the failure of legality to predict morality. Morals are beliefs of right or wrong based on family and culture; ethics are external rules of conduct provided by groups to which you belong. Consequently, morals and ethics can conflict. An example in the book states that if a county clerk refuses to grant a same-sex marriage license to a couple because of their religious beliefs, they are being moral; however, if the law allows for the granting of a same-sex marriage license and the county clerk refuses, they are being unethical because they took an oath to uphold the law. A key takeaway is that public relations professionals serve as the conscience of an organization and play an essential role in managing its brand reputation through its stakeholder communications. Section two transitions into a definitional overview of the various types of speech typically utilized in public relations, including a historical analysis of the First Amendment and the freedom of expression at a social and individual level. The remainder of section two provides an overview of corporate and commercial speech, representing the typical communication categories for public relations professionals. Section three highlights the typical regulatory agencies regarding public communication. The discussion primarily focuses on federal agencies and governmental regulations and how it affects the development of communication materials. Section four develops the arguments related to harming others. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion on libel, privacy, and personal injury. This section is the most extensive part of the book, and the material illustrates the consequences associated with the work of public relations practitioners. The final section outlines the mechanisms of protecting creative works, including a discussion on copyrights and trademarks.

An immediate strength of the textbook is the material's layout, design, and presentation. The content is presented in simple, straightforward language and flows logically throughout the book. Each section concludes with a Discussion Section, which provides a series of thought-provoking questions that help reinforce the material presented in the section. Overall, the questions in the discussion strengthen the connection to the concepts within the section; however, the author’s presentation of the questions is better suited for group discussion. Including additional self-reflection opportunities within the discussion section would assist readers in reflecting on how the material impacts their approach to developing communication materials. The book’s purpose is to serve as an informative and pragmatic roadmap for public relations professionals to navigate the complexities of the legal environment related to communicating with stakeholders.

The author’s primary premise is that public relations practitioners unknowingly create communications that increase an organization’s legal and financial liabilities. She bases this conclusion on Kathy Fitzpatrick’s 1996 study that many public relations professionals believed they were only somewhat familiar with the law. However, Gower is relying on 26-year-old data. This outdated information may not accurately depict the current legal knowledge of public relations practitioners. Gower would be better served using more recent data or developing an empirical research project on public relations practitioners’ legal knowledge to strengthen her arguments about public relations practitioners’ lack of legal knowledge.

Gower utilizes a case study approach to present the material. The case study focuses on the Beech-Nut corporation and its challenges associated with their children's apple juice ingredients. The organization periodically experienced ethical breakdowns that resulted in fines due to their lack of transparency and honesty in their communications with stakeholders. Gower's main points are highlighted in various aspects of the case study. Using a case study approach is an appropriate methodology because Gower roots the opening discussions of morals and ethics of Beech-Nut in a theoretical framework to support the importance of morals and ethics to public relations. Gower's discussion includes an analysis of classical theories like deontology (means-based ethics), consequentialism (ends-based ethics), egoism, and virtue ethics. The discussion of classical ethics theories underscores the complexity of the constant battle between ethics and morals. The discussion highlights the difference between ethics and morals and increases understanding that they are different concepts.

While Gower's early discussion of morals and ethics is essential, she argues that obeying the law is only a starting point. For public relations practitioners, she highlights the importance of the internal battle of morality, which she believes is essential because it elevates an individual's behavior to a higher standard beyond simple legal compliance. Following the discussion of the importance of moral and ethical decisions for public relations, Gower transitions to the legal aspects of communication.

The author then focuses on freedom of speech and discusses the historical limitations of the First Amendment in the realm of corporate speech and commercial speech. Companies rarely participated in corporate speech. However, in 1978 the Supreme Court expanded corporate speech protections for organizations, which allowed them to expand communications on public issues. The broadening of the Supreme Court's First Amendment freedom of expression protections created a powerful persuasive pulpit for corporate public relations practitioners, which increases the need to educate communicators on the legal ramifications of their campaigns and the content of their materials.

Gower provides an excellent theoretical foundation to establish a morality base and an in-depth legal framework discussion regarding communications. However, the book lacks contemporary topics and current data on the legal knowledge base of public relations practitioners. The book's weakness is the lack of attention and material associated with the proliferation of social media channels and connecting with stakeholders directly. The author barely discusses the implications of the content developed for channels like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. The opportunity to connect legal requirements in the limited unregulated world of social media could add the depth of knowledge needed for public relations practitioners in the expanding digital environment.

Overall, Gower's book is an excellent resource for all public relations practitioners. Given the scarcity of material related to legal ramifications for public relations practitioners, the book provides valuable advice, clear examples, and suggestions to expand the body of knowledge related to the intersection of communication materials and the legal environment. The book provides a legal foundation grounded in the Beech-Nut case to help students and practitioners improve capabilities in balancing content development with legal requirements. It is a quick reference manual for seasoned public relations practitioners and provides access to the most critical legal considerations in developing stakeholder communications. Although the book is not an exhaustive, detailed discussion or analysis of legal implications, it provides a high-level summary of the most common legal issues to help practitioners protect brand reputation and minimize legal and financial liabilities for their organization or client.