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The Journal

The Northwest Journal of Communication is a scholarly, peer reviewed publication dedicated to understanding human and mass communication in all forms. The journal is indexed by Ebscohost. We encourage contributions related to any area of communication from all theoretical and methodological perspectives. Articles relating to any aspect of communication are welcome, as are all theoretical and methodological approaches. Manuscripts will be considered as they are received, and all submissions undergo rigorous peer review. Acceptance rates range, depending on the issue, from 15–25 percent.

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Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis, and may be submitted electronically at any time. Manuscripts should conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA). Manuscripts should not exceed 8,000 words including references (although exceptions may be made at the editor's discretion) and should not have been published in any prior form. The journal follows a policy of blind review; authors should avoid any identification in the body of the manuscript or abstract.

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1. A letter to the editor with the title and full names of author(s), affiliation, contact information, email, and telephone number sent in the body of an email to crandallm@gonzaga.edu.
2. The complete manuscript with 5–7 keywords, references, tables and figures in a word document without author information.
3. A 75–150 word abstract in a word document without author information.

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The Pleasure and Play of Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop Memes

SUSAN A. SCI AND ALEXA M. DARE

Regis University and University of Portland

This article theorizes the use of Photoshop memes as a pleasurable form of postmodern play by analyzing the replication, selfishness, circulation, and evolution of Pepper Spray Cop memes. Rather than examine Photoshop memes individually to assess the ideological meaning of singular images, we adopt a geographic materialist approach (Johnson, 2007) to map the movement and use of Pepper Spray Cop memes by focusing on the surface of this discourse. In our analysis, we identify three prominent memetic styles that evolve throughout the life span of the Pepper Spray Cop meme: political disputation, iconographic juxtaposition, and cultural absurdity. We conclude that a material impact of the collective use of Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes is evident in the patterns of association each memetic style establishes via the intertextual location of Lt. John Pike and the positioning of his behavior in relation to viewers.

KEYWORDS: Meme, play, pleasure, pepper spray cop

The contrast is striking. Lt. John Pike appears to be casually strolling along a row of nonviolent University of California (UC) Davis protesters crouch in front of him futilely attempting to shield themselves from the fierce stream of orange pepper spray he directs just inches from their faces. The juxtaposition of the violent act taken by the seemingly indifferent officer and the passionate determination

Susan A. Sci, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the Department of Communication, Regis University. She can be reached at Department of Communication, Regis University, 3333 Regis Boulevard, E-8, Denver, CO 80221 or at ssci@regis.edu. Alexa M. Dare, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the Communication Studies Department, University of Portland. She can be reached at Communication Studies Department, University of Portland, 5000 N. Willamette Boulevard, Portland, OR 97203 or at dare@up.edu.

of the nonviolent protesters punished for their civil disobedience visually and affectively encapsulates the moment. This intense contrast helped transform the photo into a scathing viral sensation exposing Lt. Pike to worldwide ridicule as a Photoshop meme.

Louise Macabitas, a UC Davis student, attended the Occupy Davis protest on November 18, 2011 and captured the now iconic image (Figure 1), which she posted on Facebook the next day. Less than 24 hours after she posted the photo, Macabitas's image had been cut, copied, and reimagined as Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes that began springing up on Reddit, Tumblr, BoingBoing, and the Facebook community "Occupy Lulz" ("Casually pepper spray," n.d., para. 6). Since that day, Pike's likeness has been Photoshopped into a dizzying array of images ranging from artistic masterpieces such as Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and Picasso's *Guernica,* to the iconic photos of Lam Van Tuc's self-immolation and the Times Square V-J Day kiss, to notable popular culture favorites such as the Beatles and the Wizard of Oz. Even a lovable baby seal gets it right in the face.

This article theorizes the use of Photoshop memes as a pleasurable form of postmodern play by analyzing the replication, selfishness, circulation, and evolution of Pepper Spray Cop memes. Photoshop memes operate intertextually by taking one part of a memorable photo and inserting it into culturally relevant images. Rather than examine these memes individually to assess the ideological meaning of singular images, we follow Johnson's (2007) call to use "geographically oriented materialist criticism" when analyzing memetic texts (p. 28). Geographic analysis is a materialist approach to critique that focuses on the surface of discourse to examine the cultural significance of a text's articulation and circulation. As Johnson explains, "In the geographical orientation, questions of causality are 'separated as a third term' in favor of a logic of articulation that attends to the combinatorial productions of discursive movements" (p. 32).

FIGURE 1. Photo by Louise Macabitas.

Given that memes are small units of cultural information that spread through a population, tracing a meme's movement and mapping the range of articulations in a specific memeplex is integral to understanding a meme's communicative significance. For instance, the alacrity with which Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes were created and went viral speaks volumes about their ability to capture attention and shift public discourse to focus on Pike's use of excessive force. Within less than a week, collections of Pepper Spray Cop memes were featured on the ABC News, Gawker, Huffington Post, YouTube, *The Washington Post*, Daily Kos, Tumblr, and Buzzfeed sites. Consequently, we examine the humorous range of Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes that vary from political satire to iconographic mockery to cultural absurdity, all of which highlight the ludicrousness of Pike's behavior.

To explicate this further, we begin by discussing the broader context of Lt. Pike's actions, specifically the Occupy Wall Street movement and the Occupy UC Davis protests. We then look at the Pepper Spray Cop meme by examining the conditions necessary

for easy replication, its selfish drive to survive, the pleasure we experience through its circulation, and the stylistic evolution of the meme. In the last part of this article, we examine three memetic styles that emerged over the life span of the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop meme: political disputation, iconographic juxtaposition, and cultural absurdity. We conclude by arguing that a material impact of the collective use of Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes is evident in the patterns of association each memetic style establishes via the intertextual location of Lt. John Pike and the positioning of his behavior in relation to viewers.

OCCUPY UC DAVIS

On September 17, 2011, protesters occupied Zuccotti Park in New York City to demonstrate against corporate greed and heed the call made in the anticonsumerist magazine *Adbusters* to "criticize a financial system that unfairly benefits corporations and the rich and undermines democracy" (Moynihan, 2011, para. 9). The movement was notable for its explicit and deliberate lack of linearity in its "demands," "focus," and refusal to identify leaders (Bellafante, 2011). Though neither a recognized nor self-proclaimed leader of the Occupy movement, Kalle Lasn, the founder of *Adbusters,* has explained his initial call to occupy Wall Street as an attempt to "remodel the mental environment, to create a new meme," about democracy and the traps of capitalism (Yardley, 2011, para. 3).

Despite (or because of) these features, the movement quickly spread, and other Occupy protests and encampments were established in cities around the country. On October 23, 2011, Judith Butler articulated a "list of demands" describing what the campaign stands for by using the "human microphone" at Washington Square Park, New York. She asserted,

> Of course, the list of our demands is long. These are demands for which there can be no arbitration. We object to the monopolization of wealth. We object to making working populations disposable. We object to the privatization of education. We believe that education must be a public good and a public value. We oppose the expanding numbers of the poor. We rage against the banks that push people from their homes, and the lack of health care for unfathomable numbers. We object to economic racism and call for its end. (Taylor, 2011)

Many protesters and commentators highlighted student loans and the rising cost of education as being both a symptom and a cause of untenable inequality, and several campuses around the country were occupied by students and student-protesters.

In California, with its fiscally challenged public education system, protesters voiced an already-existing catalogue of demands such as lowering tuition, reducing layoffs and furloughs, and addressing inequality in compensation within the University of California statewide system. On November 9, 2011, students and teachers at University of California, Berkeley participated in a campaign called Occupy Cal including a march, a series of protests, and an expansion of their existing camp (Asimov & Tucker, 2011). When UC Berkeley police officers came to dismantle the camp, protesters formed a human chain to stop them. Video footage shows the officers using batons and dragging protesters by their hair to remove them from the camp ("Occupy Cal police response," 2011).

In response to the Occupy Cal clash, protesters at UC Davis congregated on November 15, 2011 to occupy their campus in objection to the treatment of Berkeley students and faculty. This movement continuously expanded until the UC Davis chancellor mandated the removal of protesters' camp by 3 p.m. on November 18. Like those in Berkeley, protesters formed a human chain and

refused to move. Again, campus police officers were videotaped using pepper spray to try to break up the nonviolent protest. The ensuing struggle resulted in 10 arrests and left at least 11 people injured by the use of pepper spray (Locke, Sangree, & Fletcher, 2011). It also produced a striking visual souvenir.

A video posted to YouTube on November 18 shows a small group of protesters sitting on the ground with many police and bystanders standing around them (ASUCD, 2011). A single officer steps forward and walks deliberately from end to end of the small group while dousing the protesters with shockingly orange pepper spray. The video (and many others like it) shows bystanders reacting with shock and awe. Strikingly, many of the bystanders stand in witness with smartphones help upright to capture the brutality like concertgoers taping a show. Although the video was shown on local and national news over the next few days, the most enduring visual record is a photograph (see Figure 1) taken by UC Davis student Louise Macabitas, who posted it to Facebook on November 18, where it was quickly reposted to Reddit ("Casually pepper spray," n.d., para. 3).

The photo shows a police officer in blue uniform with a hefty helmet that looks menacingly oversized on his head. The plastic visor is propped open, yet his eyes are not visible under the brim of the helmet. His chin and lower face are similarly obscured by the strap of the helmet, so the viewer sees only his nose, round cheeks, and reddish mustache, which cloaks an impassive mouth. His right hand holds a pepper spray can from which an orange stream points directly at a group of seated protesters, heads down, hoods up, clearly trying to protect themselves from the noxious substance. No more than 14 seated protesters are visible in the photo, and none of their faces can be seen. Onlookers, many of whom are capturing the events with cameras and smartphones, direct their attention toward the protesters. One woman in front has her mouth agape in horrified surprise. Frozen in this stance,

the lieutenant looks completely unmoved by the impact of his act. His aggression seems unremarkable, even casual.

After debuting on Reddit, the image quickly circulated and morphed into the "Pepper Spray Cop" meme (sometimes referred to as the "Casually Pepper Spraying Everything Cop" meme). Although the officer's identity was not initially known, as the meme spread the hacktivist group Anonymous identified the Pepper Spray Cop as Lt. John Pike and posted his contact information on several sites, including Reddit. Once his identity was revealed online, Pike was inundated with more than 10,000 text messages and 17,000 e-mails. Anonymous people also ordered food and other products to be delivered to his home (Stanton, 2013).

Shortly after the incident, the University of California president and UC Davis chancellor initiated a task force to investigate Lt. Pike's actions, and their findings, published in April 2012, noted that Pike was not authorized to use pepper spray but did not recommend his suspension. However, UC Davis police chief Matthew Carmichael fired him anyway. In July 2013, Lt. Pike again made headlines when the *Sacramento Bee* reported that Pike filed for workers' compensation, "claiming the incident left him psychologically injured" (Goldman, 2013, para. 1).

The UC Davis event is just one incident within the broader Occupy movement, and Pike's brutality was by no means the only example of police aggression toward Occupy protesters (Baker, 2011). Macabitas's iconic image documented a shocking act, and yet Pike's casualness reminds us of the uncomfortable certainty that such clashes between protesters and police are all too common. Using the Pepper Spray Cop meme as an entry point, we analyze the cultural and political dimensions of Lt. Pike's actions by mapping the movement and use of the Photoshop memes featuring him. Our analysis assumes that "the meme is a concept . . . well suited to analyzing the political dimensions of popular culture, or the ways in which cultural change alters the 'micropolitical' worlds of

identity, relationships, and consumption" (Johnson, 2007, p. 38). As Lasn, the founder of *Adbusters,* explained in *The New York Times,* his vision of Occupy Wall Street was at least in part an attempt to "wage a meme war" as a means to prompt political and cultural change (Yardley, 2011, para. 5). Because the Pepper Spray Cop is one of many memes prompted by the Occupy movement, this research is driven by the question, "What, if any, political, cultural, or social impact did this meme have?" Considering that the Occupy movement was envisioned by Lasn to move "the public imagination in a very powerful way" via memetic warfare, the creation of a meme born out of police brutality against nonviolent protesters is a rich example to analyze (Yardley, 2011, para. 20).

A MEME IS BORN

In the book *The Selfish Gene,* Richard Dawkins (2006) theorized cultural transmission and evolution as analogous to their biological counterparts. Similar to genes, Dawkins introduced memes as small units of cultural information that circulate through a population, "spreading from brain to brain," enabling cultural diffusion and change (p. 192). Diffusion occurs when a meme, which begins as a thought or memetic idea, moves between individuals via texts ranging from language and behaviors to objects, images, and sounds. Examples of memetic texts include the Frog King fairy tale (Zipes, 2008), metrosexual behaviors and men's beauty products (Johnson, 2007), the Riot Kiss photo (Hahner, 2013), and a harmonic progression from Haydn's oratorio *Die Schöpfung* (Jan, 2012). "Although they spread on a micro basis," Shifman (2013) asserts, "memes' impact is on the macro: they shape the mindsets, forms of behavior, and actions of social groups" (p. 365). Consequently, the cultural impact of memes is not a consequence of their ideological and rhetorical meaning but rather an effect of their diffusion and utility.

Focusing on memes requires a materialist approach to criticism,

one that is concerned less with the ideological interpretation of one memetic text and more with the discursive mapping of a meme's movement and use. As Johnson (2007) argues, "the meme is sheer surface, and there is nothing to interpret because the meme does not mean anything, or contain anything" (p. 43). Inspired by Laclau and Mouffe's theory of articulation, Johnson suggests that subjectivity and meaning are "contingent effects" of the "discursive *arrangement*" of a meme (p. 43). In other words, the significance of a meme lies in its surface use, not the hidden ideological meaning rhetorical critics often strive to unearth. Our goal, then, is to map the development of the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop meme within the complex "spatial positioning of discursive elements" that help ensure its survival (p. 32). Given our approach, our analysis focuses on four basic memetic principles that emphasize the development, movement, and use of memes: replication, selfishness, circulation, and evolution.

The Ease of Replication

Replication is essential to a meme's survival. A successful meme will simultaneously spring into the minds of multiple people and quickly spread. As Johnson (2007) explains,

> Memes operate according to laws of selection and replication. They must gain our notice, competing with other memes for the space of our attention. . . . But attention is not enough. We cannot simply take notice of the meme; we must become conduits for its replication. (p. 42)

In other words, we must behave in a manner that actively promotes the perpetuation of a meme by using memetic texts that are striking and easy to replicate and can be rapidly disseminated.

The proliferation of digital technology and social media has helped establish a networked culture that is well suited for memetic

replication. User-generated websites such as Reddit, Tumblr, and Twitter have become fertile ground for the replication and transmission of memes via the creation of an entire genre of memetic texts: Internet memes. Shifman (2013) explains that "the unique features of the internet turned [memetic] diffusion into a ubiquitous and highly visible routine" (p. 362). For instance, on Twitter the memetic idea of "Lt. Pike's use of pepper spray" replicated and spread quickly through a variety of texts including individual tweets, the use of trending hashtags (e.g., #PepperSprayingCop), the creation of fake Twitter handles (e.g., @PepperSprayCop), Photoshopped images (e.g., Pike spraying Jesus in da Vinci's *Last Supper*), links to Harry Shearer's song "Ballad of the Pepper Spray Cop," and even pictures of a homemade Christmas sweater featuring Lt. Pike spraying baby Jesus in the manger.

Although Internet memes take several forms, Photoshopping images to humorously represent memetic ideas (i.e., Photoshop memes) has been the dominant form of the Pepper Spray Cop meme. Photoshop memes (e.g., Strutting Leo, Ridiculously Photogenic Guy) are distinct from image macros (e.g., Advice Dog, Successful Black Man). The former uses visual intertextuality to humorous effect, whereas the latter uses superimposed discursive text on a specific image to establish a joke. Typically evolving from memorable, humorous, or iconic photographs, Photoshop memes capitalize on the arresting nature of a photo by replicating the most eye-catching part as a means to retain the public's attention. Using this small part, or memetic unit, of the original photograph, Photoshop memes visually recontextualize the unit into culturally recognizable images to create what Ott and Walter (2000) call "parodic allusion" and "creative appropriation" (p. 431).

As Johnson (2007) asserts, "Replication can be approached in terms of both quantity and speed: the quicker the meme replicates, the higher its current survival rates are likely to be" (p. 40). The form of Photoshop memes enables quick replication, and their

intertextual nature, taking a visually engaging image and placing the most salient part into a notable and funny scene, can help a memeplex swiftly gain notoriety. In this case, Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes first appeared on Reddit on November 20, 2011, approximately 24 hours after Louise Macabitas posted her iconic photo to Facebook. By November 21, several news outlets and websites featured stories on the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes with galleries of eye-catching examples, including NPR (Memmott, 2011), Gawker (Chen, 2011), *Washington Post* (Judkis, 2011), Huffington Post (Friar, 2011), Buzzfeed (Stopera, 2011), and *Wired* (Watercutter, 2011). "The story of the incident itself," according to *Know Your Meme,* then "reach[ed] its peak on November 22nd in terms of Google News volume" ("Casually pepper spray," n.d., para. 5). As of October 2013, this website has catalogued 1,876 images as part of the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memeplex. Although the replication of these memes has significantly slowed since November 2011, the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop meme was listed on several "best of" and "top 10" meme lists that year, signifying its fitness and solidifying Office Pike's position as a popular culture staple (Basile, 2011).

The Survival of the Selfish

Memes are selfishly driven to survive; they replicate, circulate, and evolve in order to capture public focus and attention. Photoshop memes highlight a specific unit of an image as the surviving trace of the original that is used to capture attention. The first Photoshop meme appearing on Reddit substituted "Strutting Leo" for Lt. Pike, but the second meme established the most prominent memetic pattern. In the second Photoshop meme, Lt. Pike was recontextualized into John Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence,* nonchalantly spraying the beloved document. In this case, Lt. Pike casually walking while spraying his toxic orange cloud of pepper spray is the selfish memetic unit that survives from the original

image. The second pattern established its dominance as Pike was reimaged to spew all over an incredible range of images including the U.S. Constitution, My Little Pony, John-John Kennedy saluting his father's casket, Fergie's wet crotch, and Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* album cover.

In Photoshop memes, the visual memetic unit that gets replicated in new contexts becomes the focal point of public fascination or controversy. Distin (2005) explains that "memetic selection will depend on a meme's respective abilities to gain and retain our attention *in the current context*: fitness is always a relative concept" (p. 69). As the selfish meme, Pike's actions are marked as the most significant piece of cultural information that needs to be recognized and remembered by the public. In other words, Pike's use of excessive force has been marked as the public focal point of the Occupy UC Davis protest. Although this attention is overwhelmingly negative, expressing a seemingly universal sentiment of disgust over Pike's actions, we contend that this memetic fascination overlooks the intricate context of his actions.

As the "surface of discourse," Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes are created from a very small fraction of an iconic but also simplified representation of a complex event (Johnson, 2007, p. 32). Macabitas's photo captured one moment of one day during an entire movement. The Occupy UC Davis movement was a significant protest intricately bound within California's financial politics and linked to the larger Occupy movement. The Photoshop memes' abrupt decontextualization of Pike's actions shifts public attention from the protest in general to the specific instance of his use of force. Lt. Pike's excessive use of pepper spray on nonviolent protesters is just one small moment within this entire social movement.

Replicating Lt. Pike while discarding the rest of the photo visually, culturally, and politically reduces the Occupy UC Davis movement to the selfish memetic unit of the Pepper Spray Cop. Pike's name, the protest, even the site of the protest are all stripped from something

as essential as the meme's name itself. This memetic transferal from collective, intricate context to individual, simplified action is simultaneously a depoliticizing and disciplining movement. The stance of protesters, the goals of the movement, and the reasons prompting student demonstrations become secondary to Lt. Pike's actions, which now are the object of public satire, mockery, and ridicule.

Hariman and Lucaites (2007) argue that iconic photos "offer performative guides for public judgment and action" (p. 12). In this case, the memetic unit of Lt. Pike is a negative icon of police power, and the Photoshop memes act as a disciplining force to limit officers' use of excessive force on protesters. As a disciplining force, Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes do not promote political action (e.g., limiting officers' use of force on nonviolent protesters); rather, they shame Lt. Pike by ostracizing and vilifying his actions. This shaming behavior continued offline in threatening e-mails and texts Lt. Pike received after his identity was leaked. Golden (2013) reports on some of these threats, including e-mails exclaiming, "Take out your rage on something else, like killing yourself" and "People should find your family and make them kneel and we will pepper-spray them all" (para. 13). Thus, Lt. Pike, not the entire iconic photo, becomes a performative guide for officers by depicting unethical police behavior and some consequences one would face from the (virtual) public if these actions became widely known and circulated.

The Pleasure of Circulation

The selfish meme survives and evolves through circulation. The circulation of the Pepper Spray Cop meme occurred as both the idea and image replicated among the public. Consider how the first tweets were retweeted, favorited, and responded to by others, who in turn retweeted the retweets. "However," Shifman (2011) explains, "only memes suited to their socio-cultural environment will spread

successfully" (p. 188). The catch, of course, is that the "socio-cultural environment" is symbiotically articulated with and by the medium of Photoshop memes themselves. Thus, a meme's circulation is not an effect of its content; Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes did not replicate solely because they contained essential information the public needed to know. Instead, circulation is driven by the ironic pleasure of intertextuality produced and reproduced through surface articulations. Considering that ironic pleasure is a catalyst of memetic circulation, mapping the discursive landscape of the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memeplex should address the role humor plays in establishing cultural relations.

Photoshop memes are meant for trending; they momentarily catch and capture attention long enough to be recognized, appreciated, and reimagined as they are passed along a seemingly limitless number of media platforms. Because attention alone is not enough for a memetic unit to survive, we contend that people must also derive pleasure from the circulation of memes. Looking through the more than 1,800 Pepper Spray Cop memes posted on Know Your Meme, it quickly becomes apparent that humor and playfulness are central to the memetic process. Therefore, survival is connected to the pleasure of the creation, circulation, and consumption of Photoshopped memes. Creating humorous images one hopes will provoke a laugh and decoding intertextual connections to be in on the joke produces a desire to circulate and engage in the play of Photoshop memes within our social networks.

It is a particularly postmodern kind of pleasure that drives and is driven by the circulation of memes. Inspired by Ott's (2004) proposal for a "pleasurable turn" in media criticism, we argue that memetic survival (i.e., its replication, circulation, and evolution) necessitates a mindset of productive pleasure people feel as they recognize, pass along, or add to a specific memeplex. Drawing from Barthes's notion of *jouissance,* Ott understands pleasure to be a moment of critical production as opposed to a state of submissive

consumption. *Jouissance* is a site of possibility, in clear distinction from *plaisir,* or passive pleasure that reinforces hegemony. One of the productive pleasures of memes is that they invite playfulness, whether by creating a new Photoshopped meme or by enjoying the "ironic and irreverent sensibilities" (Soukup, 2010, p. 77) of intertextuality.

Intertextuality is a key component of how Photoshop memes form and function. According to Ott (2004), reading a text intertextually requires that we "disperse rather than . . . decipher its meaning" (p. 203). Because Photoshop memes do not use discursive text to clarify the joke, they rely exclusively on the intertextuality of the meme's recontextualization to be recognized and enjoyed. The strictly image-based humor of Photoshop memes uses intertextuality as both a textual strategy and an interpretive practice (Ott & Walter, 2000, p. 440). As a wink to viewers, the intertextuality of Photoshop memes invites people to derive pleasure from recognizing the joke. Photoshop memes where Lt. Pike is positioned so that he is spraying celebrities (e.g., Fergie's crotch), other memes (e.g., Honey Badger), fictional characters (e.g., Edward from *Twilight*), childhood icons (e.g., Mister Rogers), album covers (e.g., Nirvana's *Nevermind*), or movie stills (e.g., *Singing in the Rain*) can be read in multiple ways depending on the audience's cultural knowledge.

As an interpretive practice, intertextuality can be pleasurable for audiences when "they possess sufficient cultural knowledge to recognize the popular references" (Ott & Walter, 2000, p. 436). The quantity of references (both in the text and in a viewer's cultural repertoire) can affect the intensity of pleasure experienced from a text; the more intertextual allusions one identifies, the more pleasurable the experience. Yet the relationship between intertextuality and pleasure in the memetic process is flipped (or at least twisted) compared with how intertextuality has been understood in more complex symbolic terrain, such as the TV show *I Love the 80s* (Soukup, 2010). Whereas Soukup (2010) and Ott and Walter

(2000) treat intertextuality as a process of sense-making where the audience strives to understand the references, decode the textual "wink," or rack up correct answers on the popular culture quiz, memes seem to resist this sense-making in important ways. The pleasure is in the non-sense of the meme.

Because of their reliance on small memetic units, the form of Photoshop memes makes it difficult to craft complex, nuanced political and cultural arguments. To playfully engage with Photoshop memes, people need only a superficial understanding of the original context from which the selfish memetic unit (e.g., Lt. Pike spraying pepper spray) survived. "The pleasure of recognition," Ott and Walter (2000) assert, "is often directly proportional to the difficulty of identifying the [intertextual] allusion" rather than not having thorough knowledge of the cultural and political context from which the text arose (p. 436). In Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes, we are reminded again and again of Pike's actions but not the Occupy UC Davis protest or larger Occupy movement. So we assert that viewers derive pleasure from being able to identify the inappropriateness or wrongness of his actions in a fairly simply way (i.e., police should not casually cause physical harm to nonviolent protesters) without having to account for any specific knowledge about the larger context.

Johnson's (2007) geographic approach to memes can help make sense of the relationship between pleasure and the circulation of memes. Johnson explains that the "meme does not fold meaning into its body but attaches to and detaches from various discursive configurations, entering into diverse relationships with other memes and 'memeplexes'" (p. 38). It is precisely within these diverse relationships that pleasure can be found. Neither the viewer nor the producer of a Photoshop meme engages with (or is captivated by) the meme in a singular way. Photoshop memes are promiscuous and mobile. They draw on a seemingly endless array of discursive formations to create an irreducible plurality of meaning. We argue

that this intertextual plurality encourages circulation. This happens through a logic of possibility where the meme can be articulated into any and all possible articulations.

The pleasure here comes from unstructured and unrestricted play made possible by the infinite number of possible configurations to satirize, mock, or ridicule Pike or something or someone else equally repugnant. The pleasure, here, is the pleasure of irreverence (Soukup, 2010, p. 87). Such irreverence can be pleasurable in part because it absolves producers and audiences of the responsibility of making a complex and nuanced statement about police brutality, the Occupy movement, or any other number of related issues. Photoshop memes are pleasurable precisely because they enable people to feel simultaneously knowledgeable and culturally connected by playfully recognizing intertextual allusions about timely subjects, without the obligation to thoroughly understand the context from which the text arose. In this way, Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes lay bare the superficiality not only of these types of Internet memes but also of the culture that created them.

The Styles of Evolution

What becomes clear as we flesh out the principles of selfishness, repetition, and circulation is that memes evolve in a nonlinear manner. The chronology of memes as postmodern play is notoriously difficult to trace. Although Photoshop memes are "birthed" through specific conditions, they simultaneously replicate and circulate across the discursive surface of culture recontextualizing Lt. Pike in an incredibly wide array of images. Therefore, the evolution of Photoshop memes is best described as fundamentally spatial. The Pepper Spray Cop meme is particularly well suited for examining the spatiality of memetic evolution. We can imagine the Pepper Spray Cop stepping across a diverse and incommensurate range of worlds, real and virtual, contemporary and historical, all the while casually and disaffectedly spraying his noxious spray. Here

he is stomping on the Declaration of Independence. Now he is in a frame of Pokemon. Look, there he is in 1971 spraying the "Crying Indian," Iron Eyes Cody, his iconic tear exploding with layers of signification. The evolution does not deepen or complicate the meanings or symbols within any single image. Rather, as the meme's popularity and prominence grow, it succeeds in using us as conduits for its replication, increasing the number of existing and possible future significations and ultimately occupying more and more discursive space.

Memetic evolution should not be traced as progressive change; instead it should be mapped as trends in style and form. After analyzing approximately 325 Photoshopped memes, we identified three prominent styles of memetic evolution. We contend that the evolution of the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memeplex corresponds with specific material and relational effects. As Johnson (2007) explains, "a memetic analysis exhibits a different approach to political effects. . . . Effects are defined here not in terms of bringing about a predetermined desired end (for instance, a law), but in terms of being materially impactful" (p. 43). Material impact is evident to the extent that memes influence social behavior such as consumption, language use, and, in this case, "patterns of association" (p. 43). We assert that each memetic style establishes a discursive assemblage that uses Lt. Pike to articulate a variety of social positions suggesting particular relational patterns. These patterns are based on the use of specific forms of humor—satire, mockery, and absurdity—to position Pike, which, in turn, forms our association to him and similar people.

Over the life span of the Pepper Spray Cop meme, the three styles that emerge are political disputation, iconographic juxtaposition, and cultural absurdity. Although we must list the memetic style trends in a linear fashion, our placement and discussion of them do not suggest a progressive evolution. Instead, the meme's spatial evolution is intimately tied to pleasure and postmodern

play. These styles are guided and nurtured by the development of an ironic sensibility, which Ott and Walter (2000) describe as an "awareness of the way texts inflect generically, culturally, and politically upon other texts" (p. 441). This sensibility does not just produce intertextual references but is an example of the way in which memes use humans as conduits and in so doing influence "how people behave" (Johnson, 2007, p. 43). Within each style, the Pepper Spray Cop attaches with other cultural texts in ongoing, repetitive, and similar ways. Each style, then, makes possible a particular (and distinct) discursive assemblage establishing patterns of association between the viewer and Lt. Pike, the Occupy movement, and police brutality.

Political disputation. Some Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes have a strikingly satirical style that humorously objects to Lt. Pike's actions by having him spray politically significant (and sacred) U.S. figures and icons. We identify this memetic style as political disputation. Some examples depict Lt. Pike spraying a bystander in Archibald Willard's *The Spirit of '76,* Thomas Jefferson on Mount Rushmore, the line "freedom of speech" on the U.S. Bill of Rights, and nonviolent Civil Rights protesters. This type of intertextual satirical play is deeply political, critiquing Pike's excessive use of force as an abuse of his policing power. Gray, Jones, and Thompson (2009) explain,

> Satire's lessons often enable people—as an audience, a community, a polity—to recognize the naked emperor and, through their laughter, begin to see realities that have been obscured. In that regard, satire provides a valuable means through which citizens can analyse and interrogate power and the realm of politics rather than remain simple subjects of it. (pp. 16–17)

Taken at surface level, Pike spraying people such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and sacred documents such as the

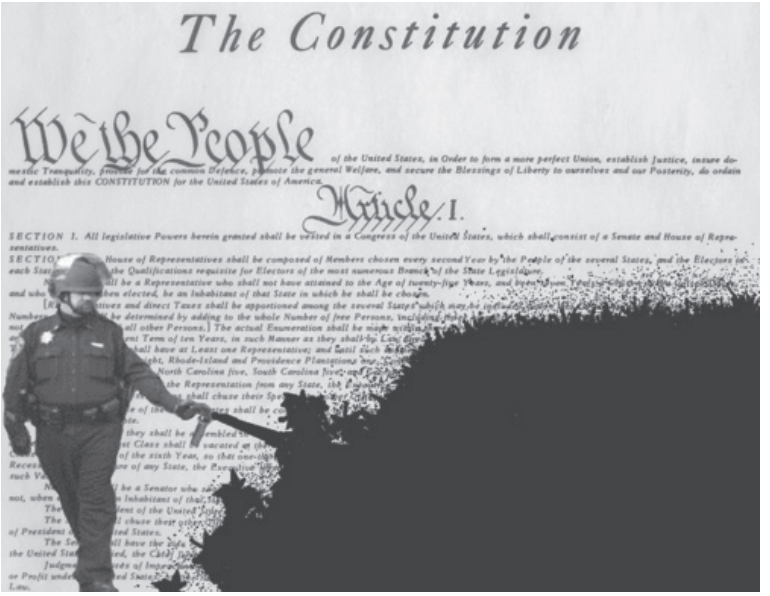

FIGURE 2. Example of political disputation style.

Constitution (Figure 2) and the Declaration of Independence shows how his actions are not only disrespectful but also un-American. By playfully circulating this style of meme, people take pleasure in shunning Lt. Pike and casting him as the outsider of U.S. political culture. Therefore, this stylistic evolution of Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes creates an assemblage of relations that position Pike, and people like him who abuse their power, as a persona non grata whose licentious behavior places him or her outside the bounds of a democratic society.

Iconographic juxtaposition. Lt. Pike hates Mother Teresa. Well, probably not, but this mocking style of Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes showcases Lt. Pike dousing beloved icons of peace, innocence, courage, and goodness such as Mother Teresa (Figure 3). We call this memetic style iconographic juxtaposition, as it uses symbolic contrast to humorously suggest the depravity of Pike's character. For example, Pike has been recontextualized to casually

FIGURE 3. Example of iconographic juxtaposition style.

spray icons of peace (e.g., Gandhi, John Lennon, Jesus), innocence (e.g., sleeping kittens, disabled children, Bambi), courage (e.g., "Tank Man," Rosa Parks), and tragedy (e.g., Phan Thị Kim Phúc, aka "Napalm Girl," or Jeffrey Miller, the victim in the Kent State shooting photo).

This type of intertextual play engages in mockery as ad hominem attacks that, Everts (2003) asserts, "essentially amount to negative evaluation of the targeted party's character or performance" (p. 377). As one of the "most aggressive forms of humor," mocking jeopardizes the subject's reputation "by attacking his or her competence—picking on some mistake in performance, whether spoken, acted, or even merely imagined" (Everts, 2003, p. 374). On its surface, this memetic style assumes that only morally corrupt people would harm the beloved, respected, and helpless members of society and positions Lt. Pike as just this type of degenerate. The pleasure one feels playfully circulating this style of meme stems from a sense of

righteous certitude; there is no question about Pike's guilt and no need to know detailed information about the original incident. In the relational assemblage established by this memetic style, Lt. Pike is a social villain deserving of the public's scorn, and the viewer is the moral judge doling out mockery as punishment.

Cultural absurdity. In contrast to the satirical and mocking humorous styles, culturally absurdist memes are intertextual and superficial. Whereas the iconographic style functions at the level of the symbolic, the absurdist form resists deep engagement or any attempt to see beyond the surface of the meme and instead demands a superficial, networked engagement with the Photoshopped meme and its references. With echoes of Barthes's rule-less, ecstatic play of *jouissance,* there are seemingly no rules that constrain where Lt. Pike can be placed or whom (or what) he might be spraying.

The examples are dizzying in their range and include Pike spraying celebrities and musicians (e.g., Fergie's crotch, up Marilyn Monroe's skirt), memorable movie characters and moments (e.g., Sharon Stone's famous crotch shot in *Basic Instinct,* "Slimer" from *Ghostbusters,* the moment when Toht's head melts in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*), athletes and sporting moments (e.g., figure skating with Nancy Kerrigan and Tonya Harding [Figure 4], the moment when Zinedine Zidan headbutts Marco Materazzi in the 2006 World Cup), and other memes (e.g., Honey Badger, Sad Keanu, the characters from *Hyperbole and a Half*). Interestingly, there are also a number of individualized and mundane examples where Pike's head is Photoshopped onto a personal photo (e.g., a group of friends bowling) or where he is inserted into a photo that appears to have no standard cultural references (e.g., a mundane scene of two men drinking beer while leaning up against a car).

We labeled this style cultural absurdity to highlight the way in which these Photoshop memes, in the non-sense of their intertextuality, refuse to offer a coherent narrative about Lt. Pike's actions, the Occupy movement, or police brutality. Halloran (1973) draws

FIGURE 4. Example of cultural absurdity style.

from Sartre to characterize the absurd as "the perception that reality constantly overflows man's efforts to compass it in rational systems of thought" (p. 97). This perception is drenched in an awareness that the world is "*de trop*—superfluous, gratuitous, wholly without explanation—and therefore man's need to make sense of things is a joke" (p. 97). The absurdity here suggests that Lt. Pike's actions are ridiculous, but so is everyone and everything else. Pleasure is derived in part from the *jouissance* of building and recognizing intertextual allusions and from the freedom to revel in superficiality of culturally absurdist memes. This style creates an assemblage of relations that widely disperse Lt. Pike and, in turn, untether viewers from any specific association to him. The significance of Pike's actions is forever shifting, and the viewer is not able to occupy a stable position from which to judge or make sense of his behavior or, for that matter, those of the protesters or bystanders.

CONCLUSION

Through an extended analysis of the Pepper Spray Cop meme, this article shows how play and pleasure are central to the replication, selfishness, circulation and evolution of a Photoshop meme. Also, we describe how different memetic styles are associated with specific forms of playful humor. By focusing on pleasure and play, we show how memes "create culture via humans" (Johnson, 2007, p. 39). Because a meme's circulation is not an effect of its content, we have argued that circulation is driven by the pleasure, expressed humorously, that people experience while using memes as a form of postmodern play. The pleasure of memes is that they invite playfulness through creating a new Photoshopped meme or enjoying the ironic pleasure of intertextuality produced and reproduced through surface articulations. Different types of humor thrive with different memetic styles, so the circulation and subsequent cultural impact of the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop meme would be impossible without the type of rule-less, productive play that characterizes our engagement with memes.

One particularly troubling feature of the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop meme that we identify concerns the decontextualization of Lt. Pike from the complex scene of the original photograph. When Lt. Pike emerges as the selfish memetic unit, his prominence shifts our focus from the context of the originating image to the individual memetic unit that is continually replicated. Simply put, as Lt. Pike is playfully inserted into other images to create a new Photoshop meme, debating the appropriateness of his behavior becomes the focal point of public discourse, whereas the context of his actions—the UC Davis Occupy movement and, more specifically, their reasons for protesting—gets discarded as the "useless" part of the original photo. We become more interested in judging his behavior than debating and assessing the broader structural issues that the Occupy movement was trying to rework and that

were challenged in multiple instances by police aggression against nonviolent protesters. To be sure, memetic play that focuses on disciplining and ridiculing Lt. Pike indicates a cultural ability to monitor authority. But as Lt. Pike is removed from his complex context—as the protesters are literally erased—it becomes easy to lose sight of the movement and its intricate, complicated details.

Our analysis also offered a nuanced rejoinder to the potential damage caused by the memetic decontextualizing of Lt. Pike by taking the surface seriously. Although it can be tempting to resist superficiality, either by ignoring superficial rhetorical texts or by striving to engage in "deep" interpretation of a rhetorical text, following Johnson (2007) we take a geographic-material approach to analyzing the Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop meme. This approach is materialist in that it focuses on the discursive articulations among memes and other cultural texts in order to address how memes shape and are shaped by culture. When we focus on articulations rather than on depth or interpretation, we can see the cultural and material impact of the Pepper Spray Cop meme in new ways. The unabashedly superficial Pepper Spray Cop meme is slippery in a way that is impossible to ignore. He refuses to offer a coherent narrative, but the impact of this refusal is not just that it prevents a complex reading of the UC Davis incident. The plurality of surface-level meanings for the Pepper Spray Cop meme cannot be read separately from the culture with which it is intertextually aligned. The result is that as we enjoy the pleasure of this meme, we also catch a glimpse of the gap between what Ott (2004) calls "the recognition of a final signified" on one side "and an appreciation of the limitless signifier" on the other (p. 205). There is pleasure in recognizing this gap, a pleasure that offers possibilities for pushing us away from the false security of a linear narrative and toward a recognition and experimentation with new ways of thinking and acting, and ultimately, cultural change. The pleasure we derive from memetic play enables the creation of limitless narratives about

Lt. Pike and police brutality and produces multiple relations within which viewers are positioned to assess Lt. Pike and others like him who abuse their power. In this way, the Pepper Spray Cop meme prompts the transformation of one photo into what Shifman (2013) calls a "shared social phenomenon" (p. 365).

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Definitions of an Intercultural Encounter: Insights Into Internationalization at Home Efforts

ELIZABETH ROOT

Oregon State University

"Internationalization" has become a popular term in U.S. higher education. Some internationalization efforts shift the focus from enrolling students in study abroad programs to using what happens domestically, a concept called Internationalization at Home (IaH). In order to implement effective IaH efforts, considering how a specific study body conceptualizes an intercultural encounter is helpful. Through the collection of 32 narratives of U.S. students' experiences, this study investigates how participants at a largely culturally homogeneous university define themselves as culturally distinct from others during what they categorize as an intercultural encounter. The results indicate two main ways participants designate cultural difference, that of national identity and that of racial or ethnic identity. These ways of designating cultural difference indicate a master narrative of what an intercultural encounter is, typically exotic, short-term, impersonal, and often linked to travel. Identifying this master narrative of intercultural interactions provides insights for the development of IaH curriculum and training.

KEYWORDS: Internationalization at Home, narratives, intercultural interactions, intercultural training, cultural identity

Internationalization has become a popular term in U.S. higher education. A topic of interest among school administrators and researchers since the mid-1990s (Kehm & Teichler, 2007; Knight, 1997), internationalization is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions

Elizabeth Root, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of speech communication, Oregon State University. She may be reached at Speech Communication, Oregon State University, 104 Shepard Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331 or at Elizabeth.Root@oregonstate.edu.

or delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2004, p. 11). The current internationalization effort shifts the focus from enrolling students only in study abroad programs to helping students develop intercultural sensitivity by using what happens domestically, a concept called Internationalization at Home (IaH) (Turner & Robson, 2008). One of the purposes of IaH is to include the entire student body in internationalization efforts (Jon, 2009; Teekens, 2007). This IaH effort involves, but is not limited to, enrolling more students in courses related to global issues or international affairs, engaging them in cultural and diversity events at school and in the community, and better involving international students and scholars on campus (Bok, 2006; Otten, 2003). However, most studies examining aspects of IaH focus on the perspectives of international students and overlook the perspectives of domestic students involved in university-led IaH efforts (Harrison & Peacock, 2010).

I am involved in IaH efforts through teaching undergraduate courses in intercultural communication at a U.S. university. However, my concern is with the practical application of internationalization efforts. I do not want to simply integrate a global dimension in my courses; I also want students to gain practical knowledge and skills that will immediately help them interact with culturally different others. However, as a new faculty member, I have found this goal to be more challenging than I had initially anticipated. Though surprised by this fact, I have come to realize that I do not fully comprehend my domestic students' perspectives on cultural issues. Halualani (2008, 2010) specifically conducted research to assess how university students define an intercultural interaction. Her research results indicated that university students at a multicultural institute define intercultural interactions differently based on the context and the cultural group membership of their interactants. Although participants defined interactions in complex ways, there was also a depersonalized element to their definitions. Many participants described having numerous intercultural interactions on a

regular basis. At the same time, most participants were not able to share any specific memories of these encounters. Halualani (2008) described this as being on "intercultural interaction auto-pilot" (p. 13) to highlight assumptions about engagement in diversity simply because people are near diverse others.

Although these research results illuminate how important it is for researchers and teachers to examine "individuals' emergent definitions and constructions of intercultural interaction" (Halualani, 2010, p. 251), my concern is that I teach at a largely culturally homogeneous university. From a teaching standpoint, specific questions arise, such as how my students, who are predominantly White, would define an intercultural interaction. This study was designed from an interpretive and critical approach to assess how a specific student population conceptualizes intercultural communication through the collection of personal narratives. Analysis of student narratives of intercultural encounters provides an opportunity to explore how participants construct meaning and negotiate intercultural interactions. Gaining a deeper understanding of domestic student perspectives can further the development of IaH efforts in higher education. Even though the results from this study are specific to the study participants, the ways in which students define intercultural encounters and how they locate themselves within these encounters are significant for those involved in teaching intercultural communication and in IaH efforts.

Theoretical Rationale for the Research

To explore how a student population would conceptualize an intercultural encounter, the definition of intercultural communication was considered from Collier and Thomas's (1988) interpretive theory of cultural identity. This theory focuses on the actual experiences of participants in intercultural situations and describes the emerging, interactive, and negotiation process of cultural identity. In this theory, intercultural communication is

specified as "contact between persons who identify themselves as distinct from one another in cultural terms" (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 100). Therefore, an intercultural situation occurs when people consciously avow or ascribe a distinctly different identity; these differences vary in such dimensions as scope, salience, and intensity. This definition of intercultural communication provided the basis for constructing this study, with specific consideration of how students might categorize or avow themselves as being culturally distinct from others.

This process of avowal and ascription happens actively, through dialogue with others. As Thurlow (2010) explains, "We make sense of ourselves by defining ourselves in relation to different people. We are impelled to speak in order to negotiate the meanings that differentiate us" (p. 225). Other theories of cultural identity also highlight the communicative and dialogic process of identity development and negotiation. Ting-Toomey (2005), in identity negotiation theory, describes identity as "reflective self-images" that are constructed through communication (p. 217). Both group and personal identities are developed through symbolic communication (Ting-Toomey, 2005). In the communication theory of identity, Hecht, Warren, Jung, and Krieger (2005) specifically highlight how identity *is* communication, not just a result or end product of communication: "Communication externalizes identity" (p. 262). Therefore, when one is considering how students might view themselves as different or distinct from others, the context for this distinction occurs within active communication with others. This premise, of focusing on an intercultural encounter, is grounded in symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986; Charon, 2004). The main tenets of symbolic interactionism highlight how social interaction is a constructive, creative process that includes the assignment and interpretation of meaning of symbolic objects (Blumer, 1986). As Blumer specifies, "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them"

(p. 2). One of the root images of symbolic interactionism involves the nature of objects. All objects are social creations, because the entire process of defining and interpreting any object, including abstract ones, occurs through communication and interaction. Moreover, according to Blumer, "objects have no fixed status except as their meaning is sustained through indications and definitions that people make of the objects" (p. 12). In order to better understand the meaning of objects, scholars need to see the objects as participants see them (Blumer, 1986). Therefore, to tie these two theoretical threads together, symbolic interactionism allows the concept of an intercultural encounter—an interactive situation in which people identify themselves as culturally distinct from others—to be conceptualized as a symbolic object. In this study, an intercultural encounter is considered as an abstract conception that people define, interpret, and assign meaning to.

Another important element to this study is the narrative paradigm. Fisher (1978) developed his narrative paradigm as an attempt to "reaffirm the place of value as a component of knowledge" (p. 384). In Fisher's (1984, 1985, 1987) narrative paradigm, the first theoretical assumption is that people are *homo narrans,* storytellers. Furthermore, the world is a set of stories; people choose to navigate their way through these stories and therefore create and recreate their lives. Similar to Fisher's narrative paradigm, Bruner (1988) writes that "'world making' is the principal function of the mind" (p. 575). According to Bruner (2002), a story results when there is a difference between what is expected and what actually happens: "The story concerns efforts to cope or come to terms with the breach and its consequences" (Bruner, 2002, p. 17). It is through these efforts that "a narrative models not only a world but the minds seeking to give it its meaning" (p. 27). To assess how students conceptualize an intercultural encounter, the chosen vehicle to provide insight into their worldview is through the lens of narrative. Students' sharing of a personal narrative will provide

the opportunity to examine how they construct their meaning in such a situation and will also provide insight into their underlying expectations and assumptions of that situation.

One more theoretical concept that has influenced this study is based on the notion of similarities and differences with regard to cultures, as demonstrated through Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. This model is based on the concept of differentiation. As Bennett (1993) specifies, "the concept of fundamental difference in cultural worldview is the most problematic and threatening idea that many of us ever encounter. Learners (and teachers) employ a wide range of strategies to avoid confronting the implications of such difference" (p. 2). The model lists six different stages of a person's development toward intercultural sensitivity. It is a descriptive model in that it describes what people do and how they organize their experience of difference. Because a goal of IaH is raising levels of cultural sensitivity in student populations, it is crucial to be aware of these different stages and how they are focused on response to difference. Bennett (1993) states, "The importance of 'difference' is so widely accepted in the field of intercultural communication that it is sometimes overlooked as the major factor in a learner's successful acquisition of the intercultural perspective" (p. 4). The foundations of intercultural experiences are variable cultural patterns. Differences in these patterns are the critical aspect of attempts to understand across cultures. Therefore, through the collection of student narratives, the goal is to investigate how students define an intercultural encounter based on interaction with someone who is culturally different from them, which leads to these two research questions:

RQ1: Through the sharing of a personal narrative, how do participants define what an intercultural encounter is for them?

RQ2: Within an intercultural encounter, how do participants identify themselves as culturally distinct and different from others?

METHODS

Personal narratives were collected from students enrolled in an upper-level intercultural communication course at a large state university in the Pacific Northwest. The writing assignment was included in the course syllabus, with instructions to reflect on a previous experience that students would classify as an intercultural encounter and to write this experience as a narrative. The purpose of the vague story prompt was to not lead the participants in a specific direction but instead to see what personal experiences they would identify as an intercultural encounter. This prompt was not meant to mimic any type of interview research, so the function of the prompt was simply to generate a narrative. Once the narrative was generated, then it could be analyzed from the perspective of narrative criticism.

After the assignment had been graded and returned to students, they were told about the study and given the option to volunteer to participate. For this study, 32 narratives were collected. Although this is a small number, it is still possible to conduct a narrative analysis of these stories and to consider the ways even a small number of students constitute their life experience. The participants were between 19 and 25 years old; 13 were men and 19 were women. The majority of students were communication majors. Of the 32 participants, 26 (81%) were White, 2 participants were Asian American, 2 were biracial Asian and White, 1 was Hispanic, and 1 was African American.[1] The university these students attend is composed mainly of White students, and so the demographic breakdown of these participants is somewhat representative of this particular university, which is roughly 70% White (Office of Institutional Research 2013).

The collected narratives were approached as artifacts to be rhetorically analyzed. For the study, narrative criticism was used to explore the rhetorical processes of how participants create their

interpretation of an intercultural encounter. Narrative criticism provides a way to explore how narratives operate and function as communicative symbols. Viewing stories through this analytical lens allows researchers to examine how people organize and make sense of their worlds and also provides insight into what people define as ordinary and expected and also what is perceived as not ordinary or expected. This approach to analysis allows data to be described in depth and also highlights underlying values.

The narratives were first analyzed individually. Initially, the basic narrative elements of each story were identified, such as specifying all the characters in the story, outlining each plot line, and considering elements of time communicated in the story. In this step of analysis, although all characters mentioned in each story were identified and considered, the narrator of each story was examined as the most significant character. Because the stories were interpreted as providing insight into each narrator's perspective on the experience, the cultural positioning of the narrator was identified as thoroughly as possible. Next, each narrative was examined to determine what aspects of underlying expectations students communicated in their narratives, such as assumptions made about cultural identities based on nationality, race, or other designations. The final step for analysis was to combine the individual analyses of each narrative to identify overall themes in the data. Two distinct themes emerged from this process; the majority of the narratives fit into one of these two themes. A small number of narratives did not readily fit into these two themes; the main story lines in these narratives also did not appropriately connect with others so that a third theme could be clearly articulated. However, these narratives still were included in the analysis, and the implications from these results are addressed in the following sections.

RESULTS

The data depicted how research participants perceived an intercultural encounter by identifying themselves as culturally distinct from the people with whom they were interacting. Two main themes emerged from the narratives: Intercultural encounters happen between people of different nationalities, and intercultural encounters happen between people with different racial or ethnic identities. These themes will be explained in detail using specific examples from the data.

Intercultural Encounters Happen Between Different Nationalities

The strongest theme evident in the data depicts an intercultural encounter as occurring between the participant and someone of a different national identity. For the majority of these narratives, the intercultural encounter occurred outside the United States, either during a vacation or, for a few participants, during a one-term study abroad experience. The narratives indicate that the setting was an important factor in the designation of cultural distinctness; these participants demonstrate their assumption that an intercultural encounter occurs on foreign soil. The introductions to several of these travel narratives, presented here as representatives of this category, demonstrate this assumption: "My first experience traveling outside of the United States was during spring break of my senior year in high school" (9); "It was the first time I had been to Europe" (21); "My first experience with real culture shock happened to me when I was 19 years old . . . in Victoria, Canada" (25).[2]

Although it could be argued that travel to a foreign country could easily be seen as more remarkable than an intercultural encounter at home, which is why there is a predominance of these types of stories, the way these narratives are worded shows that national identity and foreign countries are the most commonly

assumed identifiers with regard to intercultural encounters. To these participants, cultural differences occur mainly in international travel, not during daily instances in the United States. Therefore, the emphasis on national identity and location indicates that these participants use that category primarily as an assumption of cultural difference.

Although the majority of the narratives within this theme were located in a foreign country, a few narratives took place in the United States. However, these stories also emphasized someone's national identity or place of origin, such as a visiting exchange student or a new classmate who had recently arrived in the United States. One example is a story about a participant who, when in sixth grade, was assigned to help a new student: "Mrs. Jones explained that the new student was actually from Chile, a country further down the map than our country. . . . At first I didn't get it. . . . How was this girl supposed to be my friend if we were so dissimilar?" (16). This excerpt demonstrates how the narrator emphasized that her new classmate was from another country and therefore was distinctly marked as culturally different.

Language barriers. All narratives in this category included some mention of language barriers, which adds to the notion of cultural distinctness. With regard to language, not only did participants depict English as the language standard, but the narrator's specific dialect and accent of English are the standard for comparison. For example, here is one description of a narrator's reaction to her roommate on a study exchange program: "She was from Japan, so even though she spoke English, she had a thick accent. . . . Even when I could understand the words, it was still difficult to understand what the meaning was because she would use her grammar incorrectly" (4). Even a narrative about a weekend trip to Canada had mention of an accent: "At breakfast I realized that people were slightly different, too. Our waitress talked with a different accent than I had really heard and even threw in an 'eh' or two in her sentences

for good measure" (25). The accented English, or the difficulty in communicating in English with another, appears to be a surprise or an unusual experience for the narrator.

Another problem with regard to language, especially because many narratives were set in a foreign country, was the search for someone who could speak English. This often was paired with the realization that the narrator could not communicate in the host language, as one study abroad student describes: "Suddenly the fact that I don't know the language has hit me" (27). For some, it was a new experience to not understand the dominant language around them, as one participant describes in her trip to Tijuana, Mexico, when she was 12: "I didn't know how to read Spanish writing so all signs, billboards, and writing all looked foreign. This was a huge culture shock because I had never been somewhere where I couldn't read signs" (24). These narratives indicate that an immersion experience in a foreign language was not deeply considered before the travel occurred. Therefore, the actual experiential realization of being hindered in communication because of language differences was noteworthy. Only two participants mentioned that they successfully spoke another language during their intercultural encounter, so familiarity in the use of a different language is clearly a minority in these narratives.

Representatives of national identity. The results so far indicate that people are marked as being culturally distinct from the narrator through these characteristics: a different national identity, marked by originating from a foreign country, along with a possible accent or a lack of English-language ability. One consequence of this focus is the tendency to regard these culturally distinct others as representatives of an entire nationality. The strongest example of this is when one research participant was traveling to Italy to visit his girlfriend. In the airport, he met a very talkative Italian woman. His reaction was to consider her behavior as a possible cultural trait: "It made me think if all Europeans tell their life story

to someone they just met" (15). Here, he transfers this behavior not just to all Italians but to all Europeans.

When people were referred to as specific groups, such as "the Danes" (27) or the "Hispanics" (in a story told about a visit to Mexico) (24), the most common reference was to whether these entire groups were friendly or hospitable to the traveler. In a few stories, the hosts were judged to be not friendly, as demonstrated in this statement: "Italians will try and pull anything over an American's eyes" (15). However, several statements were made in which the hosts were described as being kind, as demonstrated in this statement by a participant who attended a golf tournament in Columbia: "All of the people I met were fun, happy, and extremely outgoing. Everyone there was very nice to me and happy to have me visiting the country" (11). These statements demonstrate how interactions with individuals became part of a composite picture that the narrator seemed to apply to everyone with that national identity.

To summarize, the most common theme for defining an intercultural encounter is based on distinctness in national identity, indicated specifically by location, either with the encounter happening in a foreign country or with emphasis on the foreign origin of the individual. Language difference is also strongly linked to this identification. Finally, with this identification comes the possibility of grouping all people with a specific nationality or from a specific location together and making sweeping generalizations.

Intercultural Encounters Happen Between Different Racial or Ethnic Identities

The second theme depicts an intercultural encounter as occurring between the participant and someone of a different racial or ethnic group.[3] The main plot differences between these stories and the ones in the previous category involve location, because all these narratives took place in the United States. The setting of these

narratives was the home location of the participants; they encountered these culturally different others in their neighborhoods, schools, or regional home settings.

Identification of racial or ethnic identity. A complicating factor in these narratives is the difference in approach to identification of self or other depending on the racial or ethnic background of the narrator. Because the focus of identification in these narratives is race or ethnicity, the racial or ethnic background of the narrators influences the situation and therefore the analysis. Of the six students of Color who participated in this study, five categorized cultural difference based on racial or ethnic identity; within these narratives, each participant directly labels his or her personal racial or ethnic identity. However, the other stories in this category, told by White narrators, do not include direct labels of racial or ethnic identity. Because the narratives in this category differ based on whether the narrator is White or of Color, the results of the data will be discussed based on this distinction.

Direct self-identification. Within this theme of intercultural encounters between different racial or ethnic identities, all the participants of Color directly indicate their personal racial or ethnic identity at some point in their story. For example, "I asked my parents what our heritage was and found out that I was half White and half Chinese" (3); "Because I was the only African American in the class" (13); "I was raised Catholic in a Mexican-American house" (26). For these participants, in the course of telling their stories, the overt labeling of their personal identity marker is a necessary element. Because I, as their professor, am the main audience for the narrative, the overt labeling is not necessarily for my benefit, because I am familiar with their racial or ethnic background. Therefore, the fact that it is included in the narrative is a sign of the importance of the overt identification to the actual story itself.

This declaration is usually stated as a contrast to another racial or ethnic identity. One example of this is when one participant

contrasts his being half Chinese with his not being fully White. In fact, he claims in his narrative, "In my mind I am an average White American male, I have White skin and no Chinese culture" (3). However, as he grew up, "race became more prevalent in my everyday life. I faced identity issues because I was biracial. The White kids treated me like I was Asian and the Asian kids thought I was 100% White" (3). Therefore, his labeling of himself as biracial is stated in contrast to not being monoracial and, more specifically, to not being seen or treated as 100% White by other Whites. One other example of this contrastive type of labeling is the participant who was raised Catholic in a Mexican American house. His declaration was made in contrast to a boyhood friend of his who came from a "'White' Christian middle class family" (26). These narratives indicate a strong salience of racial or ethnic identity, specifically in contrast to a monoracial White identity.

This contrastive element of identification also highlights an awareness of being in the minority. For example, one participant mentioned many times how he and his brother were the only African American students in the classroom during his elementary education. In another example, a biracial participant (self-identified as half Korean, half White) described how in kindergarten she was asked why her eyes were so small. "I sat there in the cafeteria so confused, wondering why I had to be 'different.' . . . I was the only kid in that class that looked a little different than everyone else" (32). Therefore, for the participants of Color, the contrastive aspect of racial or ethnic identity is the awareness that because of their racial or ethnic identity, they are in the minority and therefore are observably and markedly different from the majority.

To summarize briefly, within this theme of intercultural encounters happening between people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds, for the participants of Color, their direct labeling of personal identity happens in this sense: *I directly identify myself because I am different from the majority of others. Even if I do not*

want to be seen as different, this is often pointed out to me and obviously affects how others treat me. This is in direct contrast to how the White participants in this category approach their narratives, which involves subtle and indirect personal identification of racial or ethnic identity.

Indirect self-identification. Whereas the participants of Color directly label their racial or ethnic identity, the White participants rarely state their personal identification in the narratives. There are a few stories where the narrators' White identity was mentioned, but this was always approached in an indirect manner. For example, one participant set the context for her story as follows: "The demographics of my home town are primarily Caucasian individuals. . . . All I ever knew growing up and attending elementary and middle school were White individuals" (6). Instead of directly stating "I am White," this participant implies her racial background through the logic of inclusion. Because all she ever knew growing up were White people, then it must be assumed that she is White. Compare this approach with the directly stated identification of the narrators of Color; it is quite a different rhetorical process to imply an identity instead of directly claiming that identity.

Another example of an indirect statement of identity is by a narrator explaining his experiences in attending a state track meet. He was nervously anticipating competing against Black athletes: "There were only 3 to 4 Black people in all of the county that I was aware of. . . . Would they think, man, just another White kid trying to compete with us?" (34). Instead of a direct claim of identity, he projects his thoughts into an imaginary Black athlete's mind. The implication is that the narrator does not see himself as White unless he is contemplating some specific interaction with a racially different other. Although no direct labeling of personal identity happens in the narratives by White participants, these narrators do specifically label the cultural "other" in the story, such as "Black" (2), "Asian American" (6), "Hawaiian" (23), or "Mexican American" (18).

This indirect method of labeling oneself is also contrastive, although it is different from the contrast provided in narratives by the participants of Color. This difference is evidenced in the aspect of representation, with White participants demonstrating little overt awareness of the implications of being in the majority. One example of this is when participants clearly identify how they have never met or spoken to someone from a particular racial or ethnic identity. As one participant explained, she has clear memories of meeting an Asian American for the first time:

> I had no knowledge of how to interact with people who were "different" from me when I began college. . . . I remember vividly the first time I saw Brian. "Wow, he's a tall Asian," was one of my thoughts. . . . Stereotypically I expected Asians to be of shorter stock. (6)

A few participants indicated that all they knew of people from a certain racial or ethnic group was from TV or movies (6, 18, 34). For the White participants, then, the presentation of their racial or ethnic identity in their narratives happens in this sense: *I do not have to directly identify myself because I am in the majority and can assume my identity labels. However, I also can and do overtly identify others based on their perceived differences from me.*

To summarize, for the narratives in this theme, which focused on how intercultural encounters happens between people with different racial or ethnic identities, there was a significant difference of narratives based on the racial or ethnic identity of the narrators. For narrators of Color, all their stories included a direct label of their personal racial or ethnic identity, most commonly in contrast to a White identity. For White narrators, no narratives included a direct statement of their own racial or ethnic identity; the few times it was mentioned was in an indirect manner, in which their identity could be assumed from the context they provided in the narrative.

Intercultural Encounters Happen Based on Other Aspects of Identity

Although the two main themes in the data were the marking of someone as being culturally distinct through either national or racial or ethnic identity, there were several narratives based on other identities. Two narratives defined a culturally distinct other based on different religions. The other cultural categories were represented only by a single narrative. Some of the other ways cultural membership was designated was by gender, regional location within the United States, age (new university student compared with upper-division students), and associations (nonsorority vs. sorority members). Therefore, I do not want to suggest that national and racial or ethnic identities were the only two ways research participants indicated their definition of cultural differences. However, because these other group memberships were represented only by single narratives, I am going to briefly address these issues in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although this study began as a way for me to better comprehend my own student population, the results also provide important considerations for IaH programs. To answer the research question, participants define intercultural encounters based on differences in broad cultural identities such as nationality and racial or ethnic background. There seemed to be a distinction in the demographics of these results, because only White participants classified their intercultural experiences through the lens of national identity. The majority of participants of Color identified their experiences through the lens of racial or ethnic identity. The main effort in the narratives was not specifically on personal identification but on identification of the "other," meaning that the focus on difference was not on "How am I different from others?" but more on "How

are others different from me?" This distinction allows for the possibility of identifying others as cultural beings while overlooking that fact that the narrator is also a cultural being.

These ways of designating difference provide insight into IaH efforts by highlighting the perspectives students bring with them into the classroom. In order to more effectively address issues of cultural sensitivity, it is important to know how students create, negotiate, and reinforce meaning around intercultural interactions. As Halualani (2010) stated, "Understanding intercultural contact and its effect is not complete without analyzing individuals' subjective constructions of intercultural interaction in relation to their own lives. . . . Thus, intercultural contact itself may be influenced by . . . the meanings and constructions that participants bring to the interactions themselves" (p. 67). The following discussion will highlight several important considerations with regard to IaH efforts.

Possibility of a Master Narrative

A collective sense emerges from the data. Although individuals all have different experiences and will progress to different degrees of cultural sensitivity in separate ways, a classroom seeks to educate students as a group. Therefore, considering the group similarities in the narratives is useful. There is indication of a type of master narrative (based on Lawless, 2003; Lyotard, 1984; Stanley, 2007), a concept that acknowledges dominant ideologies people support to help justify their belief systems. A master narrative is directive in that it is a "script that specifies and controls how some social processes are carried out" (Stanley, 2007, p. 14). The results from these data suggest there is a master narrative at work when students consider the symbolic object of the intercultural encounter.

First, the master narrative for participants involves the perspective that an intercultural encounter usually happens during a very specific incident, often linked to travel. These encounters are

marked as being exotic or unusual; for the most part, they are short term and transitory, and few result in long-term friendships. The encounters are mostly seen as positive, often linked to constructive learning experiences where the participants enjoyed exposure to another culture. Cultural awareness is brief and short-lived in this master narrative. The language used in these interactions is English, and ease of communication is marked by ethnocentric perceptions of how fluently and unaccented the other can express information in the participant's dialect of English. However, the results from this research link this master narrative only to White participants, a finding that must be carefully considered and researched more thoroughly. If there is a different master narrative of intercultural encounters for White students than for students of Color, this is a distinction that must be directly addressed more in intercultural research and teaching. This also indicates that aspects of White privilege influence students' perceptions of intercultural encounters, which also must be addressed more in research on IaH.

There is evidence that this master narrative exists in more than just the minds of these specific research participants, as indicated by Halualani's (2010) research. Although she specifically targeted a multicultural student population at a diverse university, there were still similarities in results. Her research results show how participants "frame the notion of culture as nationality or based on the national origin of a person" (p. 255). In her study, participants described interactions with people from different nationalities as open, positive, and with a sense of the exotic. Therefore, there is evidence outside this study that supports the concept of a master narrative of intercultural interactions for U.S. university students in which aspects of culture are simply related to nation.

Implications for Internationalization at Home

This existence of a master narrative regarding intercultural encounters provides specific considerations for the implementation

of IaH curriculum and programs. First of all, it is important not to just assume that diversity and therefore intercultural interactions are common in the United States. Generalized claims are often made that diversity is a widespread experience in the United States, specifically on university and college campuses (Fluck, Clouse, & Shooshtari, 2007; Ramburuth & Welch, 2005). However, these overt assumptions simplify the complexities that exist. Halualani's (2008, 2010) research indicates that even on a multicultural campus, intercultural interactions are still exoticized in the mind of students. As indicated by the lived experiences of the students who participated in this research, not only are campuses not necessarily all diverse, but students in certain geographic areas might have few personal experiences with diversity. There still are enclaves within the United States that are predominantly White, as many participants mentioned in their narratives. The specific context of any campus must be considered in terms of how much diversity exists and whether this means that students actually engage in intercultural interactions in a personal way.

Second, awareness of a master narrative should shape what and how content is presented for IaH programs. According to Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, this master narrative exists within the ethnocentric levels of cultural sensitivity. This is important to consider so that course content can be prepared to work against simply reinforcing ethnocentric perceptions. IaH efforts could actually be counterproductive in raising levels of cultural sensitivity if they just reinforce the perception of the unusual and impersonal nature of culture. Although providing a global perspective is important, it is also vital to be aware that this type of information could continue to play into the master narrative of intercultural encounters. Instead of broadening cultural sensitivity, information about other nations could simply continue to exoticize and "other-ize" different nations. The end result could, unfortunately, be a distancing of cultural others, an inclination to

quickly generalize and stereotype, and a reinforcement of students not seeing cultural differences as valid.

The reason why simply "internationalizing" information could have these results is because of the limited perspective of students existing within this master narrative. As mentioned previously, in this study only White participants told stories that highlighted national identity. It is also noteworthy that, for the other category, no White participant directly identified his or her own personal racial or ethnic identity. The challenge in presenting aspects of culture to students who are in the majority race in the United States is that they have the most limited perspective with regard to cultural differences: "One of the characteristics of power relations is that those with less power usually understand those with more power rather than the other way around" (Martin, Flores, & Nakayama, 2002, p. 366). However, it is important to realize how this limited perspective is defined and the implications that this has. White students can have the most difficulty in overtly identifying their own cultural group memberships. This makes it more challenging for them to see "U.S. American" as a specific cultural identity or "White" as a specific racial and also cultural category. This limited view allows them, instead, to identify others as culturally different, but it restricts their understanding of culture if they cannot specify themselves as cultural beings or if they cannot articulate aspects of their culture. The danger is that their perspective is regarded as being universal instead of being culturally specific. This is an example of how White privilege makes "social positioning taken for granted, expected, and normal. Of course such privilege is not natural, but made to seem as if it were" (Warren, 2010, p. 450). One goal of IaH is to include the entire student body in the internationalization effort, but it will be challenging to meet this goal if White students are not able to see aspects of their own cultural identities because of how White privilege limits their capacity to see themselves as cultural beings.

In a similar manner, another area that needs to be further researched is whether whiteness is also operating within the overall planning and implementation of IaH efforts. Within IaH, considerations about who is implementing educational programs and from what perspective these programs are being implemented is crucial. How are cultural differences presented? Are there unspoken, assumed norms based on ethnocentric notions from which differences are then presented or marked? Although this study focuses on domestic student perspectives in an intercultural encounter, the results indicating the limited perspective from White students can cause concern about how the overall planning and implementation of IaH programs themselves might be affected by ethnocentrism and elements of White privilege.

International versus domestic concerns. Another concern is how the entire concept of IaH exists within its own narrative that important intercultural encounters exist only between people from different nationalities. In this manner, efforts at focusing on internationalization can happen at the expense of dealing with issues of domestic diversity. Unfortunately, these two issues are often separated. Of course, the term *internationalization* is a key indicator in the focus on bringing in global perspectives to the curriculum. However, if internationalization is tied to the development of cultural sensitivity, then another crucial goal should be to address aspects of cultural sensitivity in all arenas, not just international settings. Why should universities aim to prepare students for effective communication skills only in global arenas? Why must the development of cultural sensitivity be limited to interactions with "international" others? If the aim of IaH is to incorporate all aspects of the student body, then addressing issues of domestic diversity is just as important as "internationalizing" the curriculum. Otherwise, the result could be further marginalization of domestic students of Color and a large effort that ends in misunderstandings of cultural sensitivity in ways that could overlook important, local, personal settings. Instead, possibilities for IaH could begin with

challenges involved with domestic diversity and then apply those intercultural skills outward.

Instead of focusing only on exotic, extraordinary international topics, there are ways to approach intercultural communication that can be personalized by students. If students too easily connect issues of culture to national identity, it is possible to bring in topics that are closer to home. The other narratives in this study provide clues to this; students who wrote about gender, religion, age, or regional differences as culture demonstrate that there are more local and applicable ways to approach concepts of intercultural communication. These allow for ways in which intercultural skills and sensitivity could be approached that could de-exoticize content. At the same time, although it is critically important to have awareness of the master narrative of White students, this does not imply that it is acceptable to overlook other experiences. Instead, the classroom could be a place where the life perspectives of White students are addressed while also providing space for the narratives of students of Color to be heard. These different narratives coexist because of the other, and to bring this to attention could allow for different perspectives to be addressed simultaneously. This focus can also create a classroom where the life experience of all students can be voiced, which should be the ultimate goal of IaH efforts.

NOTES

1 Collectively, these non-White students are referred to as participants of Color. The choice to capitalize the word *Color* was made for consistency with the capitalization of all other racial or ethnic identities.

2 All student narratives are referenced by assigned number. This is to remove any aspects of names in order to protect the identity of participants. Accordingly, any names included within quotes have been changed.

3 For the purpose of this article, racial and ethnic identity are grouped together to accommodate the different types of labels that occur in the narratives. For example, some narrators choose to use the word *Black* and some use *African American*.

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Blogging and Textual Poaching: Resonant Appropriations of H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*

SHAUGHAN A. KEATON AND LIZ SILLS

Young Harris College and Louisiana State University

Textual poaching goes beyond uses surrounding the politics of fandom. It is used to advance social positions concerning gender, race, social class, and politics. Textual poaching—a widespread practice performed by fans of popular cultural phenomena such as *Star Trek*—is also a common method used by bloggers to advance social issues involving sensitive or controversial social issues. The examples outlined here extend beyond predominantly aesthetic appropriation to those that are more political. These blogs challenge what is plausible and socially acceptable. This article looks at specific instances of bloggers' appropriations of British science fiction author H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* to display this expanded use of textual poaching.

KEYWORDS: Textual poaching, popular culture, blog, resonance, H. G. Wells

Like many writers, bloggers can find ways to resonate with their public by addressing some rhetorical common ground. For some, this goal entails finding a popular subject matter. For others, it involves a more nuanced sort of framing that crafts resonance through word choice and character development. The idea of textual poaching comes from both of these approaches; it finds salient themes in familiar texts and reanimates them in other situations. A blogger reading H. G. Wells, for example, might come across a passage like this one:

Shaughan A. Keaton, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the Department of Communication Studies, Young Harris College. Liz Sills, M.A., is a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies, Louisiana State University. Address correspondence to her at 3033 July Street #105, Baton Rouge, LA 70803 or at liz.sills@gmail.com.

> The balanced civilization that was at last attained must have long since passed its zenith, and was now fallen far into decay. The too-perfect security of the Upper-worlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence. (Wells, 1895, p. 56)

Although the excerpt discusses a civilization specific to *The Time Machine,* it can be reapplied to any national body that is also perceived to be decrepit and degenerate. When bloggers find a passage like this one that has usefulness beyond its original context, they pounce, attack, and in the end, poach. Like an elephant snared for its ivory, a text can be dismembered and its segments put to new uses.

De Certeau (1984) describes this practice of textual poaching as an active reading process through which readers interpret texts—which can be any auditory, printed, or digitalized media—and apply them to different, extended situations. "The operation of encoding, which is articulated on signifiers, produces the meaning, which is thus not defined by something deposited in the text, but an 'intention' or by an activity on the part of the author" (p. 171), he observes. In short, consumers of texts make their own meanings. Jenkins (1992) extends de Certeau's theory and asserts that textual poaching is a raid on the text through which the reader only borrows what is useful or pleasurable. He describes how the audience appropriates the text for their own uses as subversive. In this way, textual poaching looks beyond original authorial intent into a context with a different circumference or different scope through location (Burke, 1989).

Jenkins's analysis focuses on *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* fan cultures. These groups create new subversive subcultures based on the popular texts through which they undermine traditional or intended readings. For instance, *Star Wars* fans often place George Lucas's characters in pornographic situations in their fan fiction. Lucas has loudly voiced his opposition to this practice, but fans continue to

distribute the pornographic appropriations on the Internet and at themed conferences. The latent message conveyed through these subcultural practices asserts that texts and the characters within a particular mythos can become controlled commodities by those poaching the texts. Jenkins asserts, "Each reader is continuously re-evaluating his or her relationship to the fiction and reconstructing its meanings according to more immediate interests" (1992, pp. 34–35), and his methodological use of de Certeau's theory highlights the "fluidity of popular interpretation" (p. 34). Through textual poaching, the resultant subcultures simultaneously conform to and undermine dominant beliefs and practices, creating an ever-evolving discourse centered on the appropriated text.

Since de Certeau and then Jenkins, observations of textual poaching have spanned films, plays, television programs, books, and video games. Although perhaps newly observed through this lens, however, textual poaching is not a new phenomenon. Even though Hall (1981) had serious problems with the terms *popular* and *culture,* he long argued that the working classes and the poor have adapted popular culture for their own purposes throughout history. This observation is rooted in social class and to this point, Hall was not in favor of extricating class from popular culture, for the struggle and resistance of the working classes and the poor is linked with reappropriation. Furthermore, "one of the main difficulties standing in the way of a proper periodisation of popular culture is the profound transformation in the culture of the popular classes which occurs between the 1880s and the 1920s" (1981, p. 444). According to Hall, this period was marked by "deep structural change" and is the "matrix of factors from which our history—and our peculiar dilemmas—arise." What is regarded as traditional popular culture originated in this period, and the importance of combining social class and cultural appropriation, paired with the significance of this period between 1880 and 1930, led to increased significance for art forms produced in those years. These artifacts

are ideal for analyses of textual poaching, its beginnings, and its evolution.

Broader in scope, de Certeau's original explanation of textual poaching describes a process that goes beyond entertainment into other realms of mass culture, displaying appropriation of common utilitarian objects, customs, laws, and language. However, none of the aforementioned scholars—Hall, de Certeau, or Jenkins—could have foreseen the effects that the advent of the Internet has had on mass media and culture. Carroll (2008) points out that the Internet, although it is not "inherently democratic or exclusive" (p. 192), has become an area of great proliferation for popular textual poaching practices that begs further scholarly attention. In Jenkins's own terms, textual poaching is increasingly "'Going Digital'" (Meyer & Tucker, 2007, p. 105). Therefore, this analysis examines a highly relevant and resonant form of online communication and a rich arena of textual poaching: the blog.

Shorthand for *weblogs,* blogs are individualized websites (or parts of websites) containing regular commentary, descriptions, photographs, graphics, or videos. Blogs allow readers to comment on the authors' commentaries, and many of them are dependent on this interactive format to achieve their particular idiom. Online resources have made it easy for many people to become armchair commentators: Blogs are ideal sites for fans to dispense fan fiction or to offer criticism on any type of social issue through the practice of textual poaching. Furthermore, observing blogs in this analysis pushes the textual poaching literature beyond issues of isolated communities of pop culture fandom, where until now the literature has been almost exclusively committed (Meyer & Tucker, 2007) into a more generalized public sphere.

One of the more common texts to be poached by bloggers is, remarkably, H. G. Wells's 1895 novella *The Time Machine,* a text that carries cultural significance borne of the Victorian era and channeled in various incarnations through the present day.

More than a century later, analyses of Wells's first novel resonate alongside Hall's conflation of popular culture and class-oriented cultural struggle. Not only are Wells's social observations rooted in the era Hall found to be "[fundamentally] and qualitatively different and important" (p. 444), but Wells was a dynamic social and political figure in his own right: He was an active socialist who was not afraid to critique Britain's imperialistic foreign policy and an author who was not afraid to challenge the social and political status quo in his novels. Given Hall's observations of Wells's time period, it is not surprising that these tendencies resonate today in particular; many of the themes present in *The Time Machine* are still applicable today, making the novel's easily accessible metaphors for militaristic foreign policy, social class division, racial tension, and gender hierarchy exceptionally useful. Although Wells's commentary is rooted in Victorian England, the style and content from this important era in history and culture are still alive and well in the blogging community today, as this analysis will show, "especially," as Hall notes, "when that ideology . . . was directed as much at [the working classes] as it was at Britain's changing position in a world capitalist expansion" (p. 444). *The Time Machine* encapsulates these themes, provides opportunities to expand on them, and facilitates reappropriation of its symbols and metaphors to contemporary cultural contexts.

In the story, a time traveler narrates his journey to the year 802,701 A.D. There, he finds himself in the world of the Eloi, who are small, weak, and nonviolent. While the traveler explores, apelike creatures called Morlocks who live below ground in wells steal his time machine. The Morlocks, the traveler discovers, care for, herd, and feed upon the Eloi as if they were cattle. The traveler eventually steals back his machine and travels further into the future. Before returning to his own era the time traveler makes several more stops in which he encounters numerous other strange creatures. The next day, after a brief layover at his home, he ventures out again in

his time machine and never returns. However, a great deal of the narrative involves the Eloi and Morlocks.

With the dichotomous, parasitic relationship of the Eloi and Morlocks in mind, this article outlines specific instances in which textual poaching goes beyond Jenkins's study of fan appropriations and into the contemporary realm of Hall's more pervasive social and cultural events allowed by the types of inextricable class and popular culture appropriations that began in Wells's time period. Rather than solely creating fan-motivated subcultures to adjust what is commonly regarded as plausible and universal, these bloggers universalize as they appropriate. The bloggers' main intentions are the humanistic issues at the core of the narratives rather than aesthetic appreciation of the appropriated text. In addition, these appropriations are fluid processes of interpretation because the meaning of the symbol in each instance is often reevaluated in the interactive process allowed by blog format, creating a negotiated discourse centered on *The Time Machine*. This phenomenon is possible through Hall's (1973) nonstatic qualities of meaning, which are not fixed by the sender of a message, are never obvious, and enable the audience to be an active recipient of the sender's intended meaning. The text must communicate through signs that distort the meaningful intent of the author or creator. However, messages can acquire a status of common sense through repeated performance, through which they become plausible and even universal. H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* has reached Hall's common sense status through repeated performance (there are many adaptations) and evaluation (through a preponderance of scholarly discourse). Because of this position, the novella is an ideal medium through which to examine instances of textual poaching that go beyond fan appreciation, and this particular combination of literature and blogging is stark enough of a combination to give us a glimpse into its inner workings. This analysis will review *The Time Machine* and its popular symbolic elements and explain

what is commonly regarded as Wells's ideology and his intent. The study will then summarize some common interpretations among Wellsian scholars. From there, we examine crucial examples of textual poaching that go beyond fan appreciation of *The Time Machine* and into negotiated reimagining of sociocultural status quos, discussing their implications.

METHODS

The Time Machine was chosen for its widespread acceptance and notability. Wells scholars have noted that *The Time Machine* has been "recognized worldwide as a founding text of the science fiction genre and one of the most seminal narratives of the past hundred years" (Slusser, Parrinder, & Chatelain, 2001). Edward James, editor of the University of Reading's science fiction journal *Foundation,* called it the "great founding Text of our Field," in reference to the study of science fiction (Russell, 2001, p. 50). In the 1970s, Darko Suvin identified *The Time Machine* as a "turning point of the SF tradition" (Suvin, 1979, p. 221), and the Science Fiction Writers of America voted it the fourth best science fiction novel of all time (Bova, 1973).

Furthermore, and much more recently, Wells expert Patrick Parrinder noted that "millions of readers and viewers [have] encountered Wells's *Time Machine*" (Parrinder, 2001, p. 195). An exact count of the sales of this important book are difficult to determine, however, because there are a multitude of different editions combined with other books by Wells and a variety of scholarly essays. Indeed, a publishing history of the book has yet to be written (Parrinder, 2001, p. 199), and because of copyright limitations and licensing guidelines of the Wells estate, publication numbers are difficult to procure outside the nation of first publication (Parrinder, 2001).

So although it is difficult to compile these numbers because of the great many editions of the book printed (ranks in online

searches are for each edition, not for the book itself), we included the following metrics. For instance, a search for *The Time Machine* at BarnesandNoble.com as of March 2, 2013, resulted in no less than 44 different versions. However, there are other indicators that provide evidence of the novel's continued prominence, such as Amazon's Kindle ranks. As of March 2, 2013, *The Time Machine* ranked third in Amazon's Adventure category for free Kindle e-books and 20th in Action & Adventure.

Search terms provide more evidence of its continued popularity in the 21st century. When searching for "wells time machine" in Google, one gets approximately 20,600,000 results as of March 2, 2013. When indicating "eloi morlock," one gets about 104,000 results. When the search is narrowed to Google Blogs, which is more pertinent to this study, "wells time machine" yields about 767,000 results. A search for "eloi morlock" produces around 11,200 results.

The specific blogs examined in this study were amassed by searching relevant clusters of terms using Google Blog Search. Initial stages of the investigation looked at search results for H. G. Wells broadly and further narrowed the results into *The Time Machine* and then its central characters. The texts gathered thus immediately faced the dilemma observed by Lindlof and Taylor (2002) regarding the overlap of rhetorical criticism and media and cultural studies. That is, media and cultural studies usually directly measure audience effects, whereas rhetorical criticism is founded on philosophical speculation. Therefore, this study walks the line between asking "How?" and asking "To what effect?" by concerning itself with clear-cut parallels between Wells's fictional world and the more modern political atmosphere, areas where the resonance seems most clear. The interpretation of resonance for modern audiences was aided greatly by our examination of comments on each blog post, which provided direct feedback about whether the rhetorical influence of each piece worked for its audience or was disputed. We coded the texts of the blogs we scrutinized inductively, using

the different current social issues that came up under the auspices of Wells's story and characters to form categories of subject matter.

Authorial Intent and Scholarly Interpretation

The Time Machine was H. G. Wells's first novel, published in 1895. It has been adapted into two major film versions, two television renderings, and many more comic book adaptations. This novella is generally credited with popularizing the concept of purposeful and selective time travel, especially through the use of a vehicle specifically designed for the task. In fact, Wells himself coined the term *time machine,* and it remains an almost universal descriptor of the device. In addition to the vehicular manifestation of a time machine, he also established the idea of time as a fourth dimension and pioneered the "dying earth" subgenre to a worldwide audience. However, in some ways it was his ideology that was more pertinent than his storytelling.

H. G. Wells was an overt social critic. He was not shy of criticizing anything that was British despite being British himself. However, Wells was also immensely proud of his own nationality: The "favourite topic of all intelligent Englishmen," he wrote, is "the adverse criticism [and even the abuse] of things British" (Wells, 1916). Wells described himself after World War I as "intensely, affectionately, and profoundly British" and saw his nation as something "to be rescued, not destroyed" (Wells, 1929, p. 78). Furthermore, he criticized socialism despite being a socialist and "was skeptical of democracy and parliamentary government" (Earle, 1950, p. 183). To Wells, criticism was meant to involve constructive and emotional investments in his own ideologies. It is one of the factors that allow his texts to be read not only as critiques but as lessons.

Traditional scholarly readings of *The Time Machine* involve Wells's own socialistic critique of capitalism and its capability of facilitating exploitation of the working class; *The Time Machine* "harnesses Darwinian and Marxist thought" (Kenyon, 2009).

Wells hypothesizes a future where the human race literally takes two divergent paths: the beautiful, docile, and worthless Eloi, who exhibit no ambition while having all their needs provided for, and the repugnant, dark-loving Morlocks, who maintain the industrial mechanisms of the society. The Eloi evolved from the capitalist upper classes, becoming too dependent on the labor of the Morlocks, who run the machines and factories and are descended from the working classes. The Morlock race literally feeds on the cattle-like Eloi but must also ceaselessly labor in their dank and lightless caves for the privilege.

Like Hall, Wells did not tend to separate class and culture in his works, and *The Time Machine* captures this practice to the fullest extent. Because of the stringent division of class roles, the human race is unable to progress: The socioeconomic division displayed in the novella results in little good for either the wealthy upper class or the exploited working class. His story is a critique of capitalist aristocracy lulled into complacency by dependence on a master–servant relationship and a working class in which many believe Wells himself, despite his own modest origins, found much to "dislike and fear" (Bergonzi, 1976). Wells converts class difference into species disparity to express social outrage at class dissimilarities and to veil the way in which class actually operates (Huntington, 2001). To this end, Wells portrays his time traveler as aversive to the servants waiting on him at dinner; it is an attitude that exhibits a social conscience and displays the traveler's distaste for the master–servant relationship (Huntington, 2001). It prepares the reader to accept his parable of class difference embodied in the races of Eloi and Morlock, in which the Eloi are not capable of this type of class analysis displayed by the traveler toward his own servants. Instead, the upper classes are destined to evolve into docile cattle, preyed on by the Morlock race. However, the relationship is not without benefit to the Eloi, because the Morlock race literally produces the Eloi's means for existence, who need to do nothing

to earn it. It is a symbiotic relationship in which neither faction possesses a clear upper hand. Although in some ways both may benefit from the relationship, it is clear that much more is lost in the process than gained.

The socialist reading is not the only one advanced by scholars, however. Showalter advocates the idea that when the traveler leaves the Eloi, he is not simply leaving a feminine sphere but is actually entering the male body itself in the lair of the Morlock: "These men's novels are about the flight from marriage . . . the racial and sexual anxieties displayed in these stories . . . mask the desire to evade heterosexuality altogether" (1992, p. 72). The time machine presented in the novel can be read as a sort of "bachelor machine" meant to evade the self by fleeing into the future, representing the relation of the body to the social experience both psychologically and historically. Showalter continues, explaining how the wells (no pun intended) used to reach the Morlock lair are phallic and the smells of blood and acts of cannibalism are identified as masculine traits. In fact, she asserts that all machinery in dreams essentially represents genitals, generally the phallic. Alternative scholarly readings such as Showalter's pave the way for unconventional textual appropriations in some of our examples of textual poaching.

Appropriated Interpretations

H. G. Wells continues to be an immensely prominent author, a remarkable feat of resonance considering he wrote from a somewhat marginalized literary genre and published some of his most popular works more than a century ago. Today, there are conferences and essay anthologies dedicated to analyses of Wells's works, and he continues to be a recognizable and polarizing author in literary and popular cultural contexts, whether in terms of his texts or personal philosophy. However, none of the symbols in his texts seem to be as accessible as the Eloi–Morlock dichotomy in *The Time Machine*. Whether gender, race, class, or politics, his books continue to be

popular media through which contemporary issues are analogized, and neither commentators nor scholars shy away from using the Eloi–Morlock symbol from *The Time Machine* as a metaphor for divisions of all types, especially instances in which one group is dominant and the other is preyed on in some manner.

Some appropriations of the Eloi–Morlock symbol include gender, in which women are interpreted as the pretty and worthless Eloi, and race, in which minorities are portrayed as the predatory Morlock. Alternative readings such as these enable negotiated discourse because the interpretation involves minorities preying on the dominant group, which is counterintuitive. Other patterns include social class, where commentators cannot decide who exactly represents the underclasses, to political realms in which Democrats and Republicans are exhibited as engaged in endless, irresolvable, dichotomous political hyperbole at the expense of the middle classes. Our examination will be confined to areas in which Wells was observed as most commonly appropriated in our search: gender, race, social class, and politics. Polarizing examples were chosen to exemplify each of these popular uses.

Gender. According to Alvein, "the dating and marital scene following a culture of female indulgence has created an altogether different Eloi–Morlock phenomenon, falling along gender lines" (Alvein, 2009, para. 3). The concept of female indulgence, unlike feminism, reflects women as weak and lacking self-control, needing delicate handling. According to Alvein, some examples in this regard include inappropriate uses of *rape* as a term to describe a regrettable sexual experience, the tendency of family courts to side overwhelmingly with female parents, and the positive portrayal of female promiscuity in entertainment (e.g., in popular sitcoms such as *Friends* or *Sex in the City*). "For the extreme of anti-feminism in female indulgence," states Alvein, "consider that it is often used to humiliate low-status men—*you are even lower than a woman*—thereby tacitly assuming female inferiority" (para. 5).

Conversely then, to Alvein, men are presented in society as "violent, uncouth and dangerous" (para. 6). Traits commonly displayed as male are reinterpreted as Morlock-like: Aggressiveness is abusive, a high sex drive becomes perversion, inexperience becomes creepiness. Alvein asserts, "indulgence takes female misbehaviors and asserts them as rights, and often virtues" (para. 6), while he also presents female indulgence as stylish and empowering. Therefore, these women effectively become Eloi, psychologically shielded and protected for their beauty. In this manner, they are discouraged from developing both physically and psychologically, remaining perpetually adolescent and devoid of curiosity. Although he points out that there is little danger in biological evolutionary divergence, Alvein posits that there inevitably exist vastly different social experiences: "Women are growing more spoiled and selfish, and men are becoming increasingly resentful" (para. 12). This blogger uses the symbol to espouse a more egalitarian stance on gender relations while criticizing what he sees as increasingly unbalanced cultural roles.

Race. The Eloi–Morlock formula is commonly appropriated for issues of racial tension. On one political site called *Views From the Right,* the symbol is used to elaborate the differences between a white couple and their murderers, who were black. This incident involved a British couple on honeymoon in Antigua that was shot in an armed robbery. The wife died, and the husband spent time in intensive care. The bloggers appropriated the Eloi–Morlock symbol to describe the black criminals as predatory and the white vacationers as naïve, careless, and unwitting: "As long as there are predatory blacks roaming freely around, whites are not safe. . . . It is also evident that whites have still not understood this danger and . . . put themselves into vulnerable positions" (Auster, 2008, July 29, para. 1). Similar to the palaces of the Eloi, the island resort appeared to be a beautiful place, but the bloggers assert that, like the Eloi congregation, the palatial resort was merely a hunting ground for the Morlock-like natives.

Akin to the example concerning gender, the Eloi–Morlock formula allows the interactive audience to negotiate common ground through which to discuss the issue. "To warn whites of the hugely disproportionate danger of murder, rape and armed robbery they face from blacks would be *racist,*" writes one commentator (para. 2). "In our society racism is a worse sin than murder . . . so it's better for society to let white people be murdered by blacks than to warn them of the palpable danger they face from blacks" (para. 2). The commenter declares that because of societal and media constraints on correctness, it is not possible for a white person to comment on (presumably) factual numbers concerning high crime rates in black populations for fear of being labeled racist. "A hundred times I have mentioned H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine,*" continues the commentator, "with its story of the soft, pretty Eloi who passively allow themselves to be slaughtered nightly by the savage Morlocks" (para. 3). Another commentator comments further, "Seeing your post on this just now got me thinking that whites are . . . Dumb Eloi, bred to serve the new rulers of the globalized world order" (para. 4). The blogger continues to wonder whether whites are nothing more than prey to violent African blacks, further seeming to validate the Eloi–Morlock appropriation to the other participants. Others chime in, opining that if the murdered white couple had been approached and warned, they might even have denounced the messenger as racist, continuing ignorantly to their doom.

The bloggers' conclusions about the problem with blacks preying on whites is not debated, but the accuracy of the symbol in portraying this perceived problem is negotiated. The interactive nature of the blog allows the participants to appropriate *The Time Machine* to find common ground. A subsequent commentator asks, "Didn't the Morlocks actually maintain ancient machines, and feed and clothe the Eloi? Blacks do nothing like that; indeed it is whites who feed and clothe blacks" (para. 12). Another asserter responds that yes, "the Morlocks, though beastly and living underground,

are actually the ones in charge, and further, the Eloi are the cattle of the Morlocks, they are bred for the purpose of being slaughtered. So, yes, the analogy between Wells and our situation does not hold in all respects" (para. 14). However, another blogger counters by claiming that the formula breaks down even in *The Time Machine,* because even though the Eloi are in a sense harvested, they are not taken to a slaughterhouse; they are violently captured and torn apart. To these bloggers, the symbol still exposes the perceived problem of whites as helpless prey because they are unable to become informed in the face of political correctness and dominant ideology used by the media. However, the use of the appropriated symbol allows the participants to negotiate its application.

Also on *Views from the Right,* another blog contains posts in reference to a 19-year-old white British woman who was stabbed to death by her 21-year-old black boyfriend. The commentator advances the Eloi–Morlock symbol, with the girl representing the Eloi. However, this analogy is successfully negotiated and explained away when one respondent comments, "The girl was not an Eloi, [who] would have to be spoiled and useless and the Morlocks would have to be hard-working." In the case of the two involved in the crime, the young woman was an actress, and both she and her boyfriend lived with the young woman's parents. These facts complicate the requisite qualities possessed by the Eloi and Morlocks, whether it is in the case of the spoiled or the hard working. The symbol fails to clarify much in this instance, although its appropriation did allow context for discourse. The initial author of the post responded that he or she had used "the Eloi–Morlock analogy to [explain] contemporary race relations for many years, and [had] certainly never meant it in terms of Eloi being lazy and Morlocks being hard working and in charge." The blogger continues to explain how the symbol was meant to convey the passiveness and prettiness of the Eloi and the beastliness of the Morlock. However successful, the appropriation of the symbol allowed for negotiation.

Alternative use of social class. Other bloggers interpret situations of social class by appropriating the Eloi–Morlock symbol to explain a social dichotomy. An example of this application resides in a blog called *Unqualified Reservations* (Moldbug, 2008). In it, Moldbug uses the formula to describe American society as having an Eloi–Morlock dichotomy accompanied by a proletarian middle class. Criminals and socioeconomically underadvantaged are labeled Morlock, whereas the Eloi are the "haughty overclass" (Anonymous). Among the overclass are the political leaders, both Democrats and Republicans, and almost any educated (and, by extension, shallow or worthless) person. In addition to this dichotomy, a third variable is introduced—the middle class—who are at odds with the predatory underclass and worthless overclass.

In any event, subsequent posters negotiate the aptness of the formula: "Put me down opposing [the] *Eloi* and *Morlock* [analogy]. Not only is the valence there wrong (the Eloi only seemed to be ruling; the Morlocks were de facto rulers), but there was no third class" (Leonard). The analogy clarifies part of the commentator's explanation of a caste-like system in the United States, and the symbol's appropriation simplifies the dichotomous dimension of the proposed system that explained some variation but not to all the participants. This example again displays how blogs facilitate the use of textual poaching to bring about sociocultural negotiated discourse.

Another blogger uses the formula to explain a very different take on social classes in modern society (Reid, n.d.). In the blog, the Eloi are described as Americans living in a world where appearance is a foremost value. Thus, Reid advances the importance of television. Those falling under the Eloi type often have occupations that are interpersonal or artistic; they are not primarily motivated by financial gain. Furthermore, they do not understand machines, engineering, or anything mathematically driven and are often superstitious and naive, aversive to weapons and violence. According

to Reid, these types of Americans reinforce the current trends in American culture.

Reid continues by describing how Americans resembling the Morlocks live in a "concrete world where appearance is less important than productivity" (para. 6). Numbers and machines are of utmost importance to these types of people, as is monetary gain. They are not typically superstitious and do not understand how Eloi-like types exist without "producing anything of substance" (para. 6). Machines, mathematics, monetary resources, and strength are sources of power and means of control. Those of the Morlock type create the material that is the backbone of the *unsubstantial* society created by the Eloi types. Although this blog does not contain much in the way of negotiated response, it does exemplify sociocultural appropriation.

Politics. The political landscape is a fertile one for use of the Eloi–Morlock symbol to explain the dichotomous parties of the U.S. political system. One method involves applying the Eloi–Morlock symbol to explain the increasingly authoritarian nature of U.S. government (Dieckmann, 2007). In this interpretation, the populace believes that they have freedom, but this freedom is illusory, like the presumed safety of the Eloi.

If the people are the Eloi, then the Morlocks represent the government. Like the Morlocks, Dieckmann believes that the U.S. government in reality controls every aspect of U.S. citizens' lives. The Eloi-like common people have to be protected from themselves by Morlock-like politicians. Because politicians created and maintain the current system, they are outside of it. The result is that blissfully ignorant citizens of the United States have become more dependent on the federal government, reminiscent of Eloi dependency on Morlock.

Dieckmann adds another element explained by the symbol: In one popular motion picture version of *The Time Machine,* the time traveler discovers an Eloi (Eloy) named Weena drowning while her

fellow Eloi look on with disinterest (Pal, 1960). Dieckmann asserts that this symbol illustrates how U.S. citizens often fail each other in times of crisis, preferring instead to helplessly look to government authority for help. This scenario clearly calls to mind Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. The people there were complacently unprepared for disaster, and when it struck they were only in a position to enter individualistic survival mode and not to help others. Dieckmann carries the analogy further by describing how many people expected the government to help them—which it did to a limited extent—but like the Eloi no one seemed to know who was in charge. New Orleans's complacency and overdependency were liabilities.

Furthermore, Dieckmann points out that the founding fathers intended a country with limited government, with clear parameters defined by the U.S. Constitution, but today "our federal government has its hands in everything and has become the modern day Morlocks, exercising domination and power over all aspects of our lives." The symbol further elaborates how the general populace is nothing more than Eloi grown to feed and support politicians.

The symbol is again appropriated to explain differences in the U.S. political parties, which present themselves to the public as dichotomous. Because there are only two valid choices presented in U.S. politics, the Eloi–Morlock formula may be an apt one in reality. Williams (2004) uses the symbol to explain how Republicans are inherently Morlock-like and Democrats representative of Eloi. According to Williams, the Eloi's mantra of "Thou shall not offend" became what we know today as politically correct. Republicans are epitomized as savage and irrationally vicious, like the Morlock, fueled by poorly misunderstood hatreds and grudges put in place before most people were even born. These Morlock-like Republicans feed on the ineffectual Democrats, whose own reasoning ability has withered according to the effects of absolute power.

In continuing to explain the perceived gap between Democrats

and Republicans in his post titled "A Dream of Morlocks and Eloi Getting Along With Each Other," blogger Glenn Contrarian appropriates the Eloi–Morlock formula to explain the reciprocal relationship between the major U.S. political parties: "The conservatives and the liberals of the modern world have a symbiotic relationship, as dysfunctional and distasteful and contentious as that relationship may be" (2010, March 7, p. 3). Although Contrarian uses the formula to expose what are to him vicious Republican rhetorical practices, the symbol here is meant to elaborate not so much on a predator–prey relationship as an interdependent, almost parasitical relation between the major political parties.

DISCUSSION

The textual appropriation of H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* is an easily accessible method involving dichotomous relations, parasitic or symbiotic relations, and predator–prey relations. It allows easy facilitation of complex ideas because Wells is a popular author extensively embedded in Western society. For this reason, a vast number of people are familiar with the Eloi–Morlock premise, enabling it to function as a cultural catalyst. The common ground established by a popular cultural medium such as *The Time Machine* further encourages negotiated discourse, and whether readers agree or disagree with the writer to whom they respond, they understand the conflict under scrutiny with greater clarity thanks to the poached narrative.

Through the analysis of the examples outlined in this article, Jenkins's notion of textual poaching seems to be a limitation not with the theory so much as with the subject of his analysis. Because our examination does not deal with fans or fan culture, the findings—though not mutually exclusive—are not exactly the same and are more reflective of a combination of Jenkins's and Hall's analyses. Although this study does not posit that Jenkins believes pleasure

and aesthetics are the only motivations for textual poaching, the examples in this article build on Jenkins by calling back to Hall and his notion of society as an arena of struggle and contestation, a conflation of class and culture. The findings in the aforementioned blogs are consistent with Hall, and although they are a departure from Jenkins's version of textual poaching, they are not incompatible. Our findings make clear that appropriations such as these are valuable components of public conversation. The types of negotiated readings enabled by Internet culture are pertinent in terms of previous textual poaching theory because it is apparent that people still read texts in terms of dominant readings. Many appropriated *The Time Machine* in an approach that was reminiscent of Wells's original intent, which involved an exposition of skewed power relations and their corrosive effects. By appropriating Wells in this mode, the bloggers are simultaneously in conversation with both Wells and their audience.

Echoing Wells's intent over last century and then reissuing its spirit for a modern audience makes this variety of textual poaching something resonant. Although this point is an outwardly simple observation, it has vast implications for positioning textual poaching in a democratic public sphere. De Certeau (1984) saw textual poaching as populist response to a domineering elite who promoted literal meanings at the expense of polysemic interpretation, that is, at the expense of the creativity of individual readers. He envisioned the potential participation of readers as travelers through text rather than consumers on the receiving end of magic bullet or hypodermic needle–like propaganda (Miller, 2005). In our case, readers are not directly resisting the hypodermic needle. Instead, they work in an arena wherein the needle is only one voice in a sea of other opinions and agendas.

This sphere has proliferated and been popularized because it can grasp onto images and phrases with universal recognition (poaching classic literature, for example) and better enable reader

interest and discussion that way. Jenkins's (1992) interpretation of the theory allows some of the same spirit, but its roots in fan fiction keep the potential for its criticism confined. Although fans were able to use textual poaching to critique the stories whose universes they plundered, and in some cases create situations where "tensions between fans and producers erupted publicly" (p. 151), this sort of interaction is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of creating a democratic public sphere. Even when fans write social issues onto their interpretations of characters—changing their sexual orientation, for example—they make little impact on broader public dialogue beyond their fantasy niche. When Hall pushes the idea of textual poaching more overtly into the issues discussed in this article, he falls more in line with de Certeau and with a spirit of lucrative popular participation.

When the blog posts embody resonance, they embody a spirit of inclusion. Outlining the importance of the resonant nature of texts, Dimock (1997) "argues for literature as a democratic institution, vibrant and robust" (p. 1060). Audience agency means that texts can be altered beyond recognition. Meaning making regarding a text can sometimes conflict with previous meaning making, so that texts are "not timeless, not ossified, not proof against the influx of new meanings" (p. 1062). Wells was certainly not writing about Democrats and Republicans when he authored the *Time Machine,* or any of the other social groups analogized by bloggers, but through textual poaching the book has come to stand for something different—many different things, in fact.

From the perspective of a diachronic historicism, Dimock argues that this sort of phenomenon makes the case for resonant connections between ideas over time, which will lead to innovation. "Literary texts are to be cherished for the likelihood that they will arrive at new and strange junctures and yield new and strange arguments" (p. 1066). In the world of online textual poaching, these arguments are important for a population engaged in the

broader issues of its day. *The Time Machine* may be vibrating on a slightly different wavelength than it did when it debuted, but it is still vibrating, and its origins in its own crucial era as a starting point for popular culture drive home its importance. Neither the blogs nor *The Time Machine* operate at the expense of the other, and readers become more engaged in both as a result of textual poaching in public argument.

As noted earlier, the textual poaching literature has until this point focused primarily on its salience in popular cultural fandom communities. By examining the resonance of classic literature such as *The Time Machine,* this analysis has taken the principles already established for the theory and made them more transcendent through an increasingly inclusive online community. The blogs analyzed in this study cover a variety of sociocultural niches, but using *The Time Machine* helps them all channel their ideas through tropes that are accessible to members of many communities of understanding. Thanks to textual poaching, these writers achieve common ground not only with their readers but also among themselves. Their resonance is synchronic as well as diachronic, and it better enables discussion on a wide scale. The point is not that readers will take up arms against a hegemonic ideology. Rather, thanks to their newly found common ground, they will be able to essentially ignore it as they shop in a more accessible marketplace of ideas.

CONCLUSION

This article has outlined, through examples of blogs, instances in which textual poaching of a popular medium was appropriated not for its aesthetics or its ability to entertain but for discussions of ideological status quo. In the vein of Jenkins, they create subcultures of groups of people who want to entertain discussion of the dominant ideologies in their respective sociocultural environments and

reappropriate in the spirit of Hall, conflating class roles and culture. Furthermore, the use of a popular text such as *The Time Machine* allows potentially diverse people to find commonalities through a frequently regarded metaphor in the Eloi–Morlock dichotomy. Lastly, the textual poaching creates an arena for discourse through which the texts are interpreted and reinterpreted in a process that is fluid, not static.

It also points to a larger observation of the power of popular texts to speak to important issues in our culture such as gender, race, social class, and politics—not only for scholars but for any person with a medium through which to communicate those stances. The proliferation of the blog as an accessible tool for expression, paired with the ability for popular texts to enable a diverse group of people to find common ground, are popular tools to negotiate the uses of dominant cultural beliefs and practices. Although the choice of a dismal future drawn from literature as a metaphor for current social issues seems a bit ominous, it is a scenario that seems unlikely to come about given popular outlets of expression such as blogging for everyone, Eloi and Morlock alike. As a means of populist expression, textual poaching has achieved a wider arena of influence and greater capacity as catalyst for public discussion.

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"Suck it Up": The Relationship Between Willingness to Communicate and Reduced Soldier Stress

ELETRA GILCHRIST-PETTY AND ZACHARY DANIEL FOLK
University of Alabama in Huntsville

We investigated how Army soldiers communicate stress by examining the stresses military life adds to soldiers' lives, how soldiers manage stress, and the relationship between willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress. Although a few soldiers indicated that military life adds little or no stress to their lives, results via quantitative content analysis revealed that most soldiers encounter stress pertaining to their job responsibilities, scheduling conflicts, workload, mission-first mentality, possibility of death, and injuries excluding death. The soldiers cope with stress by confiding in others, working out, "sucking it up," counseling, attending local or family events, and having faith. Pearson correlation data further indicated significant relationships between communicating in small group settings and in meetings and reduced solider stress. The authors conclude by considering practical applications for pedagogy and providing soldiers with places and spaces that can facilitate open communication and the possibility of reduced soldier stress.

KEYWORDS: Soldier stress, willingness to communicate, military life, stress management, Pearson correlation, quantitative content analysis

Stress can have a negative effect on almost anyone, and soldiers are no exception. At the core of every soldier lies a welcome, albeit taxing and sometimes stressful, commitment to serve the nation's people and its enduring values (U.S. Army, 2009). Soldiers must maintain

Eletra Gilchrist-Petty, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Arts, University of Alabama in Huntsville. She can be reached at Department of Communication Arts, University of Alabama, 342 Morton Hall, Huntsville, AL 35899 or at Eletra.Gilchrist@uah.edu. Zachary Daniel Folk is a graduate student in the Department of Communication Arts, University of Alabama in Huntsville. He can be reached at zdf0001@uah.edu.

the tenets of the Warrior Ethos, which "is not just a philosophy on paper. It is a living creed that forms the very foundation of the American Soldier's spirit and total commitment to victory." These tenets are (a) always place the mission first, (b) never accept defeat, (c) never quit, and (d) never leave a fallen comrade (U.S. Army, 2009, p. 60). Although soldiers are trained to deal with stresses associated with sustaining the Warrior Ethos tenets, combat, and deployment, even highly trained soldiers can succumb to stress and fall prey to a plethora of problems, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and even suicide (Vergun, 2012). For example, in recent years the suicide rate in the Army has jumped from 6.4 per 100,000 to 20.2 per 100,000 soldiers, compared with the rate in the civilian sector, which is at 19.5 per 100,000 civilians (Cogan, 2009). There is also an average of 10 failed soldier suicide attempts for each actual loss of life, and more than 1,600 serving Army and Marine personnel tried to kill themselves in recent years (Cogan, 2009). In 2012 alone, Army suicides exceeded the combat death toll in Afghanistan (Burke, 2012).

Researchers are becoming increasingly convinced that an intimate link exists between soldier stress and suicide rates because soldiers often remain stuck in a fight-or-flight condition, which causes their stress response to remain in high gear and can result in chronic health problems and even suicides (Vergun, 2012). Army generals regard every suicide as "a tragic loss for the Army family" (Burke, 2012, para. 9). Therefore, they are committed to taking preventive actions, such as installing suicide prevention resources for troops and their families, including hotlines and links to suicide outreach organizations geared toward military personnel (Burke, 2012). In other words, increasing attention is being devoted to recognizing suicide warning signs and using available resources to help soldiers better manage stress because generals simply find it unacceptable for the Armed Forces suicide death toll to exceed the combat death toll (Burke, 2012). Given the stress soldiers are

forced to deal with, coupled with the subsequent increased suicide statistics, it is important to gain deeper insight into how soldiers communicate stress. We begin by offering a synopsis of military life, paying special attention to the stress and suicide rates associated with life in the military. Next, we offer a general overview of stress and its impact on the human body, including a discussion of stress management. We conclude the exploration of relevant literature by investigating the relationship between willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress.

MILITARY LIFE

Many features of military life make it an attractive option for young men and women graduating high school and contemplating the next step. For young adults who cannot afford the rising costs of higher education, the military may be a prime option. On top of earning a salary, qualified soldiers are eligible to receive full tuition or merit-based scholarships, along with allowances for books and stipends for living expenses (U.S. Army, 2013). As reported by Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal (2010), military service also provides professional development opportunities designed to improve human capital through training, education, and leadership exercises. In addition to the educational and financial benefits, there are also health care, life insurance, and vacation incentives (U.S. Army, 2013). By stressing discipline, responsibility, and patriotism, the military promotes personal growth, thereby helping boys and girls transition into responsible men and women (Kelty et al., 2010).

Few arguments are made against the attractiveness of military benefits; however, evidence suggests that the suite of benefits available to military personnel and their families does not completely buffer against the many stresses this population encounters (Kelty et al., 2010). Soldiers experience several stresses that escape the civilian population, including frequent relocations, separation from

social support networks of family and friends, repeated exposure to scenes of death and injury, constant threat of personal death and injury, and societal reentry following deployment (Cogan, 2009; Kelty et al., 2010). These unique circumstances make military couples inherently different from other romantic couples, and research now indicates that these events contribute to overall feelings of soldier stress and are linked to increased divorce rates among couples in which one partner is deployed (Frisby, Byrnes, Mansson, Booth-Butterfield, & Birmingham, 2011). It is also widely known that the military has a long history of hypermasculine traditions that manifest themselves in both overt and subtle ways, which can make the experiences of women in the military all the more challenging (Kelty et al., 2010). Financial worries after discharge represent another stress associated with military life. Although active duty may be lucrative, many soldiers end up unemployed when they return stateside. For example, the unemployment rate of young male veterans who served since 9/11 was at 29% in 2011 (Glynn, 2012). These striking unemployment figures speak to the challenges of soldiers transitioning from a steady paycheck, health insurance, and other benefits to sitting at home, often remembering the horrors of war. To complicate the situation even further, money woes extend to the soldiers' families, as evident from a report by Harrell, Lim, Castaneda, and Golinelli (2004), who found that military spouses have lower employment rates and lower wages than nonmilitary spouses. The confluence of these stresses can make military life a risky business.

Especially during times of war, soldiers are exposed to many potential physical and mental health disabilities. Statistics compiled in recent years indicate just how dangerous and stressful military life can be. According to the Department of Defense, as of August 2013 more than 4,000 U.S. military casualties had occurred in Iraq. More than 50,000 U.S. troops had been wounded in action during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, with the leading cause of injuries

and fatalities attributed to improvised explosive device attacks (Roberts & Knight, 2013). Although many wounds, such as limb amputations and burns, are visibly obvious, the "invisible wounds" of cognitive and psychological trauma are just as impactful, with thousands of service members suffering from debilitating brain injuries, depression, and PTSD (Kelty et al., 2010, p. 196; Roberts & Knight, 2013). For example, nearly 20% of returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans screen positive for PTSD (Glynn, 2012).

PTSD, combat injuries, and other physical and mental stresses are causing U.S. troops to take their own lives at an alarming rate. Alone in 2008, 128 Army personnel took their lives, and another 41 Marines took theirs (Cogan, 2009). An estimated 30% of soldiers who took their lives in 2008 did so while on deployment, and another 35% committed suicide after returning from a tour of duty (Cogan, 2009). An even more grueling number is the rate of suicide for Army veterans, which stands at 22.9 per 100,000 veterans (Cogan, 2009). Unfortunately, these numbers have continued to rise in recent years, with death tolls revealing that more soldiers are dying from suicides than from combat (Thompson, 2012). On the surface, these suicide rates may seem shocking, given that the military screens for mental illnesses before allowing soldiers to enlist, and extensive funding is allocated to counseling soldiers who are experiencing problems related to stress and combat (Burke, 2012). However, because soldiers are trained to be strong, fearless, and willing to die for their country, a social stigma exists that presumes soldiers who seek counseling for emotional issues or stress are weak, which has led some to conclude that military suicide prevention programs are ineffective (Thompson, 2012). Yet evidence exists to the contrary. A suicide hotline set up by Veteran Affairs has received more than 85,000 calls since 2007 (Cogan, 2009), which speaks to the usefulness of such suicide prevention measures. Still, much more is needed, as soldiers continue to report widespread failure at receiving treatment for cognitive and

psychological disorders (Kelty et al., 2010). Because the literature clearly suggests that soldiers experience a plethora of stresses not experienced by civilians, and these stresses can have devastating results on soldiers' mental and physical welfare (Cogan, 2009; Kelty et al., 2010; Thompson, 2012), it is important to acquire a deeper understanding of the specific stresses confronting Army soldiers. Therefore, we ask the following research question:

RQ1: What stresses does military life add to Army soldiers' lives that are different from what civilians experience?

STRESS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

What is stress? Is it good or bad? Does everyone experience stress? These are common questions asked about stress. Stress is an inevitable part of almost everyone's life, and it is often difficult to define because it means different things to different people. Yet a workable definition regards stress as anything that poses a challenge or threat to our well-being (Medical News Today, 2009). According to medical researchers, we often use the word *stress* to characterize times when we feel everything has become too much, we are overloaded, and we wonder whether we really can cope with the pressure (Medical News Today, 2009). Based on these notions, many people view stress as a negative feeling rather than a positive one ("Stress," 2007). However, not all stress is bad; some stress is needed to motivate and move us forward in life. According to Medical News Today (2009), without any stress our lives would be boring, and we would probably feel pointless. So stress is good to the extent that it gets us going, but it becomes destructive when it undermines our mental and physical health.

Stress is not a one-dimensional entity, but a simplistic view dichotomizes stress into the categories of mental and physical. From this perspective, physical stress is the result of doing too much,

not getting enough sleep, or not eating, whereas mental stress may come from worrying about money, loved ones, retirement, or an emotionally devastating event ("Stress," 2007). Haas (2010) advanced our understanding of the multilayeredness of stress even more by identifying seven different types of stress: *physical* (i.e., caused by intense exertion, manual labor, lack of sleep, or travel), *chemical* (i.e., resulting from the use of drugs, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and environmental pollutants such as cleaning chemicals or pesticides), *mental* (i.e., linked to perfectionism, worry, anxiety, or long work hours), *emotional* (i.e., associated with anger, guilt, loneliness, sadness, or fear), *nutritional* (i.e., resulting from food allergies and vitamin or mineral deficiencies), *traumatic* (i.e., caused by injuries or burns, surgery, illness, infections, or extreme temperatures), and *psychospiritual* (i.e., spiraling from troubled relationships, financial or career pressures, challenges with life goals, spiritual alignment, or a general state of happiness). Based on the prevailing research, it is clear that stress is a multifaceted phenomenon.

Because stress is such a complex entity, what may be stressful to one person may be motivation for another. For example, choosing a career in the military may seem stressful and overwhelming to some, but others may relish it as an opportunity to reach some point of self-actualization. The key to determining whether a person is suffering from a destructive form of stress is linked to his or her ability to cope with the pressure without jeopardizing overall mental and physical health (Medical News Today, 2009). One must be able to identify the signs and symptoms of destructive stress and discover ways to manage it (Kofoworola & Alayode, 2012). As stated by Cooper (2010), stress management is the mastery of specific skills that help reduce the negative effects of stress on the body and mind. One of the best ways to manage destructive stress is through communication ("Stress," 2007). According to Haas (2010), emotions need regular venting and evolution, and stuck, unexpressed emotions are the building blocks of pain and illness.

Communicating about military stress can be especially cathartic for soldiers and their loved ones. Research Frisby et al. (2011) found that military couples reported being less stressed when they communicated with one another. Although open communication has long been recognized as a tool for enhancing interpersonal relationships and negotiating some of life's obstacles (Wood, 2012), face-to-face communication is not always possible; this is especially true for stressed-out soldiers who are deployed or those who are merely stationed away from home. Fortunately, an increasing number of social media outlets exist that transcend geographic distances. Facebook, Twitter, online chat rooms, and virtual work groups have created new ways of communicating with others about stress, which can have both positive and negative effects on people's perception of communication satisfaction (Giffords, 2009; Gilchrist, 2010). Virtual communication mediums have been praised for bridging social distances, increasing productivity, and facilitating multitasking; however, they have also been criticized as being impersonal and somewhat inappropriate for engaging in sensitive communication topics (e.g., military stress) (Gilchrist, 2010). Therefore, social media are viewed as a double-edged sword because although they can provide users with the perception of emotional support and stronger bonds with others, users can perceive a lack of emotional support and social ties with others when using them. It is vital that stressed-out soldiers have access to social media outlets that provide them with emotional support because research has found that as perceived emotional support increases, perceived stress levels decrease (Wright, 2012).

Despite the proliferation of evidence alleging that open communication is beneficial in reducing stress, it is not always easy getting people to talk about stress. According to Frisby et al. (2011), both military and nonmilitary couples tend to avoid talking about stress and how it affects their lives. Therefore, it is important to also consider other coping mechanisms. Some popular physical stress

management techniques include exercising 20 to 30 minutes a day, choosing a hobby that one enjoys participating in (e.g., sports, fishing, cooking), and living a healthy lifestyle that includes eating a balanced diet and getting enough sleep (Haas, 2010; "Stress," 2007). Cooper (2010) adds that effective physical stress management also includes diaphragmatic breathing, mental imaging, and progressive muscle relaxation. Along with physical ways of managing stress, it is also important to mentally manage stress, which involves staying in touch with friends and family, letting loved ones know you love them, and knowing that others love you. Additionally, it is important to not cope with overwhelming stress alone and learn to be flexible, take criticism easier, and say "no" (Cooper, 2010). Counseling is also a very effective stress management option, and people should not be ashamed to seek professional help. As argued by Steele (2013), we must "stop stigmatizing the use of counseling services when we cannot sort out our thoughts and feelings on our own" (para. 1). Haas (2010) further advocates a change in perception and attitudes to help deal with mental stress. Specifically, people should step back and see the big picture, see challenges as opportunities for growth and improvement, and apply spiritual principles to sticky life situations for greater peace of mind and heart (Haas, 2010). Advice offered specifically to soldiers dealing with combat stress includes focusing on the mission, having open communication with battle buddies, debriefing after unusually stressful events, and practicing self-aid and battle buddy aid (Suicide Prevention, 2008). In sum, the literature suggests a mix of coping strategies for dealing with stress. To acquire a more concise perspective of how Army soldiers communicate stress, we advance the following research question:

RQ2: How do Army soldiers communicate stresses associated with military life?

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

Whereas communication is a two-way process that takes effort from both parties (Wood, 2012), *willingness to communicate* is a communication trait defined as "an individual's predisposition to initiate communication with others" (McCroskey & Richmond, 1998, p. 120). Willingness to communicate as a theoretical perspective was first introduced in 1985 by McCroskey and Richmond. An instrument to measure it was also constructed in 1985 by the original authors, with reliability and validity of the scale calculated 7 years later (McCroskey, 1992). Since its conception, the benefits of willingness to communicate have been widely recognized. For example, Richmond and Roach (1992) argue that willingness to communicate is the sole communication-related personality variable that affects each aspect of a person's life. In the early days of willingness to communicate, McCroskey and Richmond (1987) posited that the communication trait cuts across situations, and it has since been applied to a number of communication situations. For example, Richmond and Roach (1992) studied the influence and effects of people's willingness to communicate in an organizational setting and found negative results stemming from low willingness to communicate, on both individual and organizational levels. Menzel and Carrell (1999) studied willingness to communicate from a pedagogical perspective and found that instructors' verbal immediacy behavior was positively related to students' willingness to communicate in class. Lin and Rancer (2003) surveyed more than 300 students and found that ethnocentrism and willingness to communicate have a direct influence on students' intentions to engage in an intercultural dialogue program. Moreover, Wright, Frey, and Sopory (2007) merged willingness to communicate with health care and ultimately developed an instrument to assess people's willingness to communicate about their health. In the end, Wright et al. theorized that willingness to communicate

about health is useful for both patients and health care providers.

The application of willingness to communicate has proven invaluable to the aforementioned instructional (Menzel & Carrell, 1999), organizational (Richmond & Roach, 1992), intercultural (Lin & Rancer, 2003), and health care (Wright et al., 2007) communication situations, just to name a few. However, the relationship between willingness to communicate and stress is most relevant to our research purposes, and former studies have addressed the vital link between these variables. For instance, Hackman and Barthel-Hackman (1993) studied the variables by sampling groups of U.S. and New Zealand college students and found that New Zealand students were significantly less willing to communicate and, consequently, experienced greater communication apprehension and stress than U.S. students, who were more willing to communicate. Their findings emphasized the importance of using communication, especially humorous communication, to cope with stress. More than a decade after Hackman and Barthel-Hackman's research, Miczo (2004) examined willingness to communicate, humor, and perceived stress and found that the tendency to openly tell jokes and stories was negatively correlated to perceived stress, implying that as one willingly communicates humor, he or she perceives less stress. Additionally, Kassing (1997) theorized that communicating with people from other cultures promotes increased levels of stress but found through a survey of nearly 400 undergraduate students that people high in intercultural willingness to communicate reported having significantly more friends from foreign countries than those unwilling to communicate. In sum, empirical evidence indicates that willingness to communicate can lessen overall stress.

Although previous research has clearly established a link between willingness to communicate and stress reduction, to our knowledge scientific inquiry has not specifically interrogated willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress. Yet there is evidence supporting a likely connection between the variables. For example,

research has found that open communication predicts the amount of stress experienced by military couples (Frisby et al., 2011). Also, military wives of deployed husbands experience less stress and more marital satisfaction when they talk about their day-to-day activities and stresses with their deployed husbands (Joseph & Afifi, 2010). Based on findings by Frisby et al. (2011) and Joseph and Afifi (2010), we can presume that a relationship between willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress exists, but it is important to note that it is more complicated for soldiers to openly communicate about their stresses compared with the civilian population, primarily because soldiers deal with classified information that they are banned from sharing with others outside the military (Dratel, 2010). Therefore, the military encourages communication to occur in small group and battle buddy situations by training soldiers to know whether something is wrong with their battle buddies. If a problem is suspected, soldiers are encouraged to report it to senior officers so that a troubled soldier can get help (Suicide Prevention, 2008). However, military leaders now wonder whether the current approach is sufficient for combatting soldier stress. In an effort to improve the existing communication system, military leaders and researchers are investigating new areas that explore individual, social, and structural levels as possible causes of stress (Bah, 2011). Although more research is needed, preliminary findings indicate that a soldier's individual, social, and structural health is affected by his or her willingness to communicate with other soldiers, their family members, and military counselors (Bah, 2011). Empirical research gives credence to a reputed intimate link between willingness to communicate and reduced solider stress, but more evidence is needed before we can draw conclusions about the relationship between willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress; therefore, we ask the following research question:

RQ3: What relationship exists between willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress?

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 40 soldiers of the 128th Military Police Company, who are currently stationed in a large city located in the southeastern part of the United States but will soon deploy to a foreign country. Of the 40 soldiers who participated in this study, there were 25 men (62.5%) and 15 women (37.5%). These soldiers had mixed demographics in terms of their age, rank, deployment experience, years of service, marital status, and command presence. For example, the soldiers' ages ranged from 25 to 55 years ($M = 28.15$, $SD = 8.66$). Ranks for enlisted soldiers ranged from E-3, private first class, which were identified as E-3 to E-8, and 1st sergeant, which were identified as E-8 for this study. In this investigation the breakdown of enlisted soldiers included 2 E-3s, 15 E-4s/specialist, 6 E-5s/sergeant, 4 E-6s/staff sergeant, and 1 E-8. The officers in this study ranged from 2nd lieutenants, which were classified as 11s, to lieutenant colonel, which was classified as 15s. The breakdown of participating officers included 9 lieutenants, 2 majors, and 1 lieutenant colonel. The years of service ranged from 1.5 to 32 years ($M = 7.86$, $SD = 7.27$), and the number of deployments ranged from 0 to 4; 15 (37.5%) soldiers have not been deployed, 15 (37.5%) soldiers had one deployment, 8 (20%) soldiers had two deployments, 1 (2.5%) had three deployments, and 1 (2.5%) had been deployed four times. There were 15 (37.5%) soldiers who stated they were not married, 18 (45%) soldiers were married, 1 (2.5%) soldier was separated, and 6 (15%) soldiers were divorced. There were 17 (42.5%) soldiers who had children ranging from expecting to 23 years of age, and 23 (57.5%) soldiers did not have any children.

Procedures

Data were collected during a monthly military training session, known as drill. Volunteer soldiers of the 128th Military Police Company first signed a consent form. Then, they completed three surveys. The first survey, Willingness to Communicate (WTC), is a closed-ended multidimensional questionnaire by McCroskey (1992) that evaluates participants' willingness to initiate communication in the four areas of group discussion, meetings, interpersonal, and public speaking. The WTC presents 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate, where each item is scored from 0 (*never*) to 100 (*always*). Sample situations vary from talking in a large meeting of acquaintances to presenting in front of a group of friends. Total alpha reliabilities for the WTC have consistently been high, ranging from .85 to well above .90 in previous studies (McCroskey, 1992). However, the scale consists of four context-type subscores, which makes it a multidimensional construct. Initial research reported acceptable reliabilities of the four context-type subscores: group discussion $\alpha = .65$, meetings $\alpha = .70$, interpersonal $\alpha = .68$, and public speaking $\alpha = .74$ (McCroskey, 1992). In this study, the scale had a high total reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$); Cronbach's alphas of each subscore were group discussion $\alpha = .73$, meetings $\alpha = .67$, interpersonal $\alpha = .60$, and public speaking $\alpha = .69$; thus, the subscales all had acceptable reliabilities in this investigation.

The second survey, a stress assessment test by the Mayo Clinic (2010), evaluated the level of stress soldiers were currently experiencing. The stress assessment measures a mix of physical, mental, emotional, and psychospiritual stresses, as defined by Haas (2010), by distinguishing certain character traits that affect stress levels such as taking on too many responsibilities, being a hard-driving person, and being competitive. This survey consists of 20 questions that evaluate a person's stress levels depending on personality type and habits exhibited in high-stress situations. Items are measured on a

5-point Likert scale and range from 5 (*always*) to 1 (*never*). Sample questions include: "Do you take on too many responsibilities?" "Do you have little time for hobbies or time by yourself?" and "Do you spread yourself 'too thin' in terms of your time?" The survey had high reliability in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$).

To complement data obtained from the first two surveys, the researchers added a third open-ended measure. Participants were instructed to first answer simple demographic questions, such as soldier rank, age, and experience. Then, participants completed a series of questions designed to identify sources of stress and coping mechanisms (see Appendix). Completion of all three surveys took a combined 15 to 20 minutes.

RESULTS

The first research question asked, "What stresses does military life add to Army soldiers' lives that are different from what civilians experience?" To answer this question, soldiers were presented with an open-ended question that asked them to explain what areas of Army life created added stress. With the open-ended written responses, the goal was to categorize occurrences of different types of stresses. Thus, quantitative content analysis was the appropriate data analysis procedure. According to Neuendorf (2002), content analysis is a "summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity–intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented" (p. 10). Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) add that content analysis involves textual analysis of a recorded or visual message, and it is used to identify and enumerate similarities and differences in messages acquired from data. Therefore, content analysis was a prime method for

quantitatively summarizing the message content of the soldiers' responses.

The soldiers' reports of stress were coded independently by two trained coders, as recommended by Frey et al. (2000) for increasing the study's reliability during content analysis. Based on their suggestions, the coders first examined the soldier's written answers and looked for repeating ideas, which are defined as concepts "expressed in relevant texts by two or more research participants" (Frey et al., 2000, p. 54). The coders then worked independently and categorized the repeating ideas into thematic constructs, which are viewed as abstract concepts (e.g., words, phrases, sentences, clauses) that categorize a group of themes by placing them into a theoretical framework (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). There was high intercoder reliability (Cohen's $\kappa = .85$). In the third step of the content analysis, the coders negotiated discrepant codings until consensus was reached. Analyzing the data was the final stage, whereby the coders counted the number of occurrences in each category to obtain an overall quantitative typology.

Thematic unitization resulted in the following seven areas that contributed to soldier stress: (a) responsibility of job ($n = 8$; 20%) (e.g., one soldier stated that "the responsibility of making sure that you are squared away [properly prepared] for a mission that ensures your battle buddies are safe can be stressful"), (b) scheduling conflicts ($n = 8$; 20%) (e.g., a soldier said, "Many soldiers miss birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, holidays, and whole years because of training, deployment, and standard work days. The Army owns that soldier while under contract"), (c) mission-first mentality ($n = 7$; 17.5%) (e.g., according to one soldier, "The Army does not always make it easy for the soldier to take care of matters that are not Army related, such as taking care of a sick parent or leaving during the day to take a child to the doctor"), (d) some indicated little or no stress ($n = 6$; 15%) (e.g., as one soldier said, "It's really no stress. [I] suck it up and drive on, it's part of the job"), (e) work

overload (n = 4; 10%) (e.g., one soldier responded, "The Army is a family, a family that requires a lot of work, time, and dedication"), (f) injuries excluding death (n = 4; 10%) (e.g., a soldier reported, "I have had 1 surgery and am on 5 different medications . . . and I still cannot function properly in the civilian world"), and (g) possibility of death (n = 3; 7.5%) (e.g., one soldier said, "I have been deployed and stared death in the face, wondering why it was them dying and not me").

The second research question asked, "How do Army soldiers communicate stresses associated with military life?" To answer this question, the soldiers responded to an open-ended question and explained how they cope with the stress military life brings. Analysis of RQ2 involved the previously described content analysis process used with RQ1 (Cohen's κ = .82). Thematic data from the content analysis resulted in six themes: (a) confiding in others (n = 9; 22.5%) (e.g., a soldier said, "Confiding/venting to friends and family members is the best way to relieve stress"), (b) working out (n = 8; 20%) (e.g., according to one soldier, "Working out is a good physical way to relieve stress and clear my thoughts"), (c) "suck it up" (n = 7; 17.5%) (e.g., one soldier proclaimed, "I just suck it up. Stress is part of the job and I knew that before I signed up"), (d) counseling (n = 6; 15%) (e.g., one soldier confessed, "I have been to counseling to manage my stress"), (e) local or family events (n = 6; 15%) (e.g., one responded, "Being able to get time off and attend things such as concerts or family reunions is beneficial to coping with stress"), and (f) faith (n = 4; 10%) (e.g., one soldier mentioned, "Faith not only in God, but in myself and my fellow soldiers is what keeps me going every day").

The third research question asked, "What relationship exists between willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress?" A series of Pearson correlations was used to answer this research question based on the four context-type subscales (i.e., group discussions, meetings, interpersonal, and public speaking) of

willingness to communicate. In terms of group discussions, such as talking with a small group of soldiers, results from the Pearson correlation revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between willingness to communicate in group discussions and solider stress, $r(38) = -.265$, $p < .05$. This finding suggests that as soldiers communicate more with their fellow soldiers in group settings, their stress level decreases. On the meeting subscale, Pearson correlation results also revealed a negative relationship between willingness to communicate in meetings and solider stress, $r(38) = -.384$, $p < .01$. This statistically significant finding implies that as soldiers increase their communication in meetings with other soldiers or their superiors, they experience less stress.

In dyadic or interpersonal settings, such as communicating one on one with another soldier, results of the Pearson correlation revealed a negative but nonsignificant relationship between willingness to communicate interpersonally and solider stress, $r(38) = -.188$, $p = .245$. A similar result was obtained from the public speaking subscale (e.g., giving presentations on the job) in that data from the Pearson correlation indicated a negative yet nonsignificant relationship between willingness to communicate in public speaking settings and solider stress, $r(38) = -114$, $p = .482$.

DISCUSSION

Through the first research question, we explored the stresses military life adds to soldiers' lives that differ from what civilians experience. Other than the few soldiers who indicated they either are not or are only minimally stressed (15%), content analysis data revealed stresses based on the soldiers' job responsibilities, scheduling conflicts, work overload, mission-first mentality, possibility of death, and injuries excluding death. These findings suggest that Army soldiers experience a mix of stresses. The sheer variety of stresses aligns with research by Kelty et al. (2010), who alleged that the

military population encounters many stresses not experienced by the civilian population. Three of the themes (job responsibilities [20%], work overload [10%], and mission-first mentality [17.5%]) relate directly to the Soldier's Creed, "which puts into words the values and mission of every Army soldier to embody high professional standards and reflect American values" (U.S. Army, 2009, p. 59). Parts of the creed include a soldier's vow to "never accept defeat," "never quit," "never leave a fallen comrade," "be disciplined," and be "a guardian of freedom and the American way of life" (U.S. Army, 2009, p. 59). In other words, the creed clearly reflects the breadth and depth of soldiers' job responsibilities, and with massive responsibilities comes the possibility of work overload; therefore, it makes sense that these themes surfaced as stresses soldiers participating in this study encounter. A specific line in the creed also states, "I will always place the mission first" (U.S. Army, 2009, p. 59). Based on this very direct vow to place the mission above all else, it is no surprise that mission-first mentality emerged as a theme in this study.

The remaining themes resulting from analysis of RQ1 (i.e., scheduling conflicts, possibility of death, and injuries excluding death) align closely with previous research findings. For example, empirical evidence provided by Cogan (2009) and Kelty et al. (2010) identified separation from social support networks of family and friends as a main source of stress for soldiers, which relates to this study's theme of scheduling conflicts (20%). If a soldier is deployed or has military responsibilities, he or she may experience many scheduling conflicts that would separate the soldier from activities with family members and friends. Cogan and Kelty et al. also recognized repeated exposure to scenes of death and injury and the constant threat of personal death and injury as major sources of stress for soldiers, which closely match possibility of death (7.5%) and injuries excluding death (10%), two themes that emerged in this study. In sum, data from RQ1 suggest that military life adds an

array of stresses to Army soldiers' lives not experienced by civilians. Although the Army cannot necessarily eliminate these stresses, because they are part of the job, military leaders are becoming more aware that stress can endanger the mission, the unit, and soldiers' lives ("Suicide Prevention," 2008). Knowing the dangers of combat and operational stress is the first step to successful stress management, which was queried via RQ2.

Results of the content analysis for RQ2 revealed that soldiers use the coping mechanisms of confiding in others, working out, "sucking it up," counseling, attending local or family events, and faith. Of all the coping mechanisms listed, soldiers mentioned confiding in others the most (22.5%). As an important side note, all soldiers who indicated that they confide in others to manage stress were married. This finding is not surprising because previous research has found that military couples experience higher willingness to communicate about stress than nonmilitary couples (Frisby et al., 2011), and military wives of deployed husbands experience more marital satisfaction when they can talk to their deployed husbands (Joseph & Afifi, 2010). Thus, this finding further validates the importance of engaging in open communication (especially with spouses, family members, and friends) to minimize stresses associated with military life. Along with venting to family and friends, soldiers mentioned that they manage stress by attending local or family events (15%). Haas (2010) greatly supports this stress management technique and encourages stressed-out people to schedule activities and events that they enjoy.

Additionally, three of the coping mechanisms emerging from this study (i.e., working out, counseling, and faith) align with stress management recommendations offered by previous scholarship (e.g., Haas, 2010; "No-Nonsense Approach to Stress Management," 2012; "Suicide Prevention," 2008). In reference to working out (20%), Haas regards it as one of the best ways to clear tension, build energy, adopt a better life perspective, and feel more in control of stressful

circumstances. Interestingly, many of the soldiers in this study stated they like to exercise with workout partners, which allows them to relieve stress both physically and mentally—physically by doing the actual workout and mentally by talking with their workout partners, suggesting that exercise is beneficial for relieving stress associated with soldiers' bodies and minds. Counseling (15%), which also surfaced in this study as a coping strategy soldiers use to manage stress, has been highly recommended by previous scholarship. As noted in Suicide Prevention (2008), "Sometimes the problems are too big to resolve after one talk or without additional outside help . . . [so] the Army deploys additional help for soldiers with such problems" (p. 24). Although some soldiers courageously take advantage of available counseling opportunities, military leaders are now charged with the challenge of removing social stigmas that presume soldiers seeking counseling for stress are weak (Thompson, 2012). Perhaps soldiers could benefit from training sessions informing them that counseling for stress management is not a sign of weakness but a sign of courage, as Steele (2013) argues. The data further revealed that some soldiers rely on their faith (10%) to manage stress, which meshes with advice advocated in Suicide Prevention (2008), encouraging soldiers to say silent prayers or consult with ministers when coping with combat injuries or death.

Finally, some of the soldiers reported using the "suck it up" mentality (17.5%) to deal with stress. This coping strategy implies that the soldiers simply handle the stress on their own without communicating with others or seeking outside assistance. On one hand, this coping strategy is not surprising given that the Soldier's Creed advocates being "physically and mentally tough" (U.S. Army, 2009, p. 59), but on the other hand, when soldiers "suck it up" and are unwilling to communicate their stress, they violate everything previous research has found regarding the benefits of open communication (Lin & Rancer, 2003; Menzel & Carrell, 1999; Richmond & Roach, 1992; Wright et al., 2007). According to Kofoworola and

Alayode (2012), trying to cope with stress by oneself has a negative effect on a person's progress. So soldiers who are less willing to communicate with others are placing themselves at a disadvantage and are at risk for a wealth of negative effects. "The day-to-day stress that comes with stability and support operations can, at worst, be as bad as that of major combat" ("Suicide Prevention," 2008, p. 12). Therefore, the well-being of soldiers could be greatly enhanced by the military implementing pedagogical opportunities that encourage soldiers to transition from the "suck it up" mentality to openly communicating about the stresses confronting them.

Because previous research has found a vital link between reduced stress and willingness to communicate (e.g., Frisby et al., 2011; Hackman & Barthel-Hackman, 1993; Kassing, 1997; Miczo, 2004; Suicide Prevention, 2008), this study's third research question asked, "What relationship exists between willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress?" Data from a series of Pearson correlations revealed statistically significant negative correlations between soldier stress and the group and meeting subscales of the WTC measurement. In other words, when soldiers are allowed to vent about their stresses in group settings, such as talking with a small group of soldiers, their stress levels decrease. The soldiers' stress levels also go down when they are provided time during scheduled meetings, such as monthly drill sessions, to address their stress. These findings are not without merit and closely align with related studies that have found a negative relationship between stress and willingness to communicate, implying that the more people talk about their problems to others, the less stressed out they feel (e.g., Hackman & Barthel-Hackman, 1993; Kassing, 1997; Miczo, 2004). Findings from RQ3 are especially valuable because they add to the limited yet growing area of research contending that increased communication minimizes soldiers' stress (Frisby et al., 2011; Suicide Prevention, 2008).

Given the findings from RQ3, the military should consider

capitalizing on meetings and small group settings. Perhaps time could be devoted during each drill session to give soldiers the opportunity to talk about problems and express their concerns with fellow soldiers and officers. It might also be useful to provide video chats for soldiers who are deployed and not allowed in-house meeting time with their family, friends, and loved ones. Virtual work is a great alternative to some in-house meetings, as Gilchrist (2010) reports, and can minimize some of the competing stresses associated with one's work. In other words, soldiers need regular venting platforms that will permit them to speak candidly about the stresses they endure. Although the hotline set up by Veterans Affairs has been reasonably successful at providing soldiers with a place and space to air their stresses (Cogan, 2009), other venues are needed to accommodate soldiers' requests for additional help (Kelty et al., 2010). Because soldiers are requesting assistance in dealing with stresses associated with military life (Kelty et al., 2010), the military should also consider using meeting times and small group settings as teaching moments in which counselors and instructional materials are provided that inform soldiers how to better manage and communicate their stress.

Limitations abound in all research endeavors, and this study is no exception. First, although the study had good internal validity, this study sampled a group of 40 soldiers from an Army National Guard unit. However, it is important to keep in mind that soldiers represent an exclusive population bound by confidentiality, making it difficult for researchers to access for survey purposes. Nonetheless, to further validate this study's findings, future research should strive to survey a larger and more diversified sample. Specifically, data in this study reflect the perceptions of Army soldiers, who represent only one military branch. Yet research affirms that stress is not confined to the U.S. Army but is found in all armed services (Burke, 2012). Therefore, future studies should survey soldiers from all military branches, such as the Navy, Marines, and Air Force.

Surveying soldiers from each military branch could provide researchers with a more complete view of how soldiers communicate stress.

CONCLUSION

Soldiers have the profound tasks of protecting and serving the country and all its citizens. Fulfilling these important yet vast responsibilities can be both mentally and physically taxing. Because one false move or mistake in combat can cost lives, the burden carried by soldiers is unrivaled by many other professions. On a daily basis, these men and women are asked to risk their own safety for the country's safety, freedom, and democracy. The possibility of death and never seeing one's family and friends again can lead to immense stress and other potential negative outcomes, including suicides (Cogan, 2009; Kelty et al., 2010). Given the gravity of soldiers' responsibilities, we fulfilled a threefold objective with this study by examining the stresses military life adds to soldiers' lives, how soldiers cope with stresses, and the relationship between willingness to communicate and reduced soldier stress. Although a few soldiers indicated that they encounter little or no stress, most soldiers reported that they confront stresses related to their job responsibilities, scheduling conflicts, work overload, mission-first mentality, possibility of death, and injuries excluding death. To adapt to the stresses, the soldiers reported using the following coping mechanisms: confiding in others, working out, "sucking it up," counseling, attending local or family events, and faith. From the significant correlations found between reduced solider stress and communicating in small group settings and meetings, data from this study affirm previous research findings that willingness to communicate is beneficial to one's overall health (Hackman & Barthel-Hackman, 1993; Kassing, 1997; McCroskey, 1992; Miczo, 2004). In sum, results from this study provide a crucial breakthrough

in elucidating sources of soldier stress and the necessity of providing open forums for soldiers to freely communicate their concerns and, consequently, achieve more effective stress management. Although soldiers are naturally at a higher risk for experiencing stress given their job responsibilities (U.S. Army, 2009), we hope that greater knowledge of stress triggers and coping mechanisms will help overcome the "suck it up" mentality and facilitate more open communication, which may ultimately help soldiers minimize stress and curb negative stress-related repercussions.

APPENDIX

Part 1. *Instructions*: Please answer the following demographic questions.

Age: Gender (circle one): M F

Rank: Years of Service:

Number of Deployments:

What is your marital status? (circle one):

Single Married Separated Divorced Widow

Do you have any children? (circle one): Yes No

If so, how many and what are their ages?

_____

Part 2. *Instructions*: Please read the questions below and indicate your answer.

1. How many soldiers are you in command of?

2. Do you look at your fellow soldiers as family and people that you can rely on and trust?

Yes No

Please explain your answer _____

_____

3. Are you currently attending college or any other schooling/training?

Yes No

If so, how many hours are you taking or how long will you be away for training?

_____

4. Have you enjoyed your experiences in the Army?

Yes No

Please explain your answer _____

_____

5. Do you live within 100 miles of your immediate family?

Yes No

If no, how many times a year do you see your family?

6. On average how many hours do you spend working on work outside of normal work hours and why?

_____

_____

7. Do you feel that military life creates an added stress to your regular life?

Yes No

If you answered yes, please list and explain the top stress military life adds to your regular life.

_____

_____

8. If you feel that military life creates added stress to your regular life, please list and explain the primary way you cope with the stress.

_____

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A Fantasy Theme Analysis of Ex-Christians' Online Deconversion Narratives

BRIAN SIMMONS
University of Portland

Research consistently finds that many Americans will completely abandon their religious belief, a process that scholars have often called deconversion. However, scholars have yet to study deconversion from a specifically rhetorical perspective. This article proposes that the rhetorical dimension of deconversion is a crucial aspect of the renunciation of Christian beliefs, especially as it bears on how ex-believers enter into communities of like-minded people who have made the same choice. Relying on symbolic convergence theory as a guide, the study focuses on how the fantasy themes and rhetorical visions ex-believers craft lead to a shared reality as they encounter each other in an online community. In the accounts of religious deconversion posted to websites catering to ex-Christians, four identifiable fantasy themes were identified: "I was a victim," "I became enlightened," "Christians are hypocrites," and "God is cruel." The effect of these fantasy themes was to cast a rhetorical vision depicting ex-Christians in as favorable a light as possible while conversely portraying Christianity and its adherents in an unfavorable manner.

KEYWORDS: Rhetoric, fantasy theme analysis, deconversion narratives, religion, online

Research consistently finds that many Americans will completely abandon their religious belief, a process that scholars have often called deconversion (Smith, 2005; Streib & Keller, 2004). Indeed, Vargas (2011) notes that between 2003 and 2006, 13% of religiously affiliated Americans considered leaving religion altogether, although

Brian Simmons, Ph.D., is a lecturer in the Communication Studies Department, University of Portland. He can be reached at Communication Studies Department, University of Portland, 5000 N. Willamette Boulevard, Portland, OR 97203 or at simmonsb@up.edu.

only 40% of that number actually did so, effectively moving from theism to atheism. Because religious beliefs are a central part of the human experience, significant scholarly attention has been paid to the process of how people come to abandon them (Kosmin & Keysar, 2009; Sherkat, 2001; Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). Research has also investigated how former believers find camaraderie and support in both real and virtual communities (Avance, 2013; Fazzino, in press). However, scholars have yet to study deconversion from a specifically rhetorical perspective.

This article proposes that the rhetorical dimension of deconversion is a crucial aspect of the renunciation of Christian beliefs, especially as it bears on how ex-believers enter into communities of like-minded people who have made the same choice. Relying on symbolic convergence theory as a guide, the study focuses on how the fantasy themes and rhetorical visions ex-believers craft lead to a shared reality as they encounter each other in an online community. Such an analysis sheds light on how ex-Christians see themselves, the belief system they left, and Christians who retain their beliefs.

RENOUNCING RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Because of the psychological and social implications accompanying deconversion, people do not make such choices lightly (Loveland, 2003). This is especially true when people choose to completely abandon their religious beliefs, moving from a theistic stance to an atheistic one. There are many who still see such a religious deconversion as deviant (Cragun & Hammer, 2011), especially those who maintain their religious beliefs (Hadaway & Roof, 1988). Cragun, Kosmin, Keysar, Hammer, and Nielsen (2012) point out that nonbelievers remain negatively stigmatized. And Bourdieu (1977) observes that despite the increased secularism and pluralism in American society, Christianity remains the "default setting" for religious belief.

This often drives ex-believers to seek out connections with others who have experienced a similar renunciation of their former beliefs (Gooren, 2010; Hunsberger, 2000; Hunsberger & Altemeyer, 2006). Given the Internet's anonymity, convenience, and reach, such connections are taking place online. As Campbell (2010) observed, "The internet may be viewed as a technology for affirming one's religious community, background or theology; here the internet can be seen as helping an individual build and maintain a particular religious identity by connecting into a global networked community of believers" (p. 26). Indeed, Avance's (2013) study of ex-Mormons found that they described the Internet community that they encountered as "their sanctuary—quite literally—as they have explored and develop a new religious identity" (p. 16). As a kind of support group, these communities of ex-believers provide affirmation for their choices. One example of this is by making their decision not to adhere to Christian beliefs more plausible—to themselves and a potentially skeptical audience. Fazzino (in press) writes, "De-conversion supports the plausibility of non-belief. As a discourse, de-conversion provides examples of leaving religion, and as a cultural repertoire, de-conversion supports the plausibility of non-belief" (p. 18).

The most common communicative vehicle through which ex-believers participate in these virtual communities is by sharing the story of their deconversion. One reason is that narrative has been found to be an important part of religious experiences (Yamane, 2000). Another reason is that the act of deconversion creates the expectation for such narrative explanations. Research has found that whenever someone relinquishes his or her religious faith, it is natural to offer an explanation for such a significant life change (Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartmann, 2006). In fact, many ex-Christians report being expected to provide such an explanation (Bahr & Albrecht, 1989; Bietenholz, 2000). These expectations prompted scholars to analyze ex-Christians' deconversion narratives, initially through the study of autobiographies (Barbour, 1994) or

in-depth interviews (Downs, 2002; Heiner, 1992).With the rise of the Internet, researchers have turned to studying deconversion narratives as posted on the World Wide Web (e.g., Avance, 2013; Fazzino, in press; Harrold, 2006; McKnight & Ondrey, 2008; Simmons, 2010). This evolution in the research seems appropriate as several scholars have noted the unique opportunity that the Internet offers to study changes in religious commitment (Hadden & Cowan, 2000; Loveheim, 2004; Loveheim & Linderman, 2005; Slevin, 2000; Smith & Kollock, 1999). Smith (2011) points out that there have been no rhetorical studies of deconversion, so it seems that examining Internet accounts of deconversion is quite fitting.

SYMBOLIC CONVERGENCE THEORY

The preceding analysis points out the strong rhetorical dimension to renouncing religious beliefs, especially given how ex-believers participate in online communities. Symbolic convergence theory's (SCT's) focus on how social reality is created and shared through narrative makes it a useful framework for investigating deconversion narratives. Duffy (2003) offers a succinct description of the theory:

> SCT is a general theory of rhetoric in which groups create and share fantasies about the group and outside groups and thereby build a shared identity. The theory provides an accounting for the creation, raising and maintenance of group consciousness through communication. Through stories and rituals the members of a group create a common consciousness—a shared understanding of the group and what it means to be a member. (293)

Fantasy theme analysis (FTA) grew out of Ernest Bormann's (1972) study of group communication where he noted the propensity of group members to dramatize their experiences through

the sharing of stories. Bormann calls these stories fantasy themes and believes that they are created through symbolic interaction between group members. Often, these narratives feature the kinds of dramatic elements found in theater or literature. As group members interact with each other, aspects of what they share resonate with group members and are in turn repeated and expanded, a process that Bormann (1972) calls chaining out. Bormann (1981) notes, "The explanatory power of the fantasy chain lies in its ability to account for the development, evolution and decay of dramas that catch up groups of people and change their lives" (p. 19). Thus, the fantasy chains possess real potential for influencing the way people think and act. The composite of fantasy themes that have chained out forms a rhetorical vision, which forms symbolic realities for group members. Temple (2011) explains, "Rhetorical visions reveal what is important to a given society at a certain point in time. Fantasy themes form the basis of rhetorical visions and show what the collective public consciousness is concerned with" (p. 8).

Though originated in oral interactions, FTA is also amenable to exclusively online groups. Bormann (1972) notes that often fantasy themes are played out "in a setting removed in space and time from the here-and-now transactions of the group" (p. 397). In fact, several recent studies have successfully demonstrated the applicability of FTA to online communities (Alemán, 2005; Chalfant, 2011; Duffy, 2003; Greer, 2008; Perry & Roesch, 2004).

In explaining FTA's methods, Bormann (2000) notes,

> The . . . main task in making a fantasy theme analysis is to find evidence that symbolic convergence has taken place, that groups of people have shared a fantasy. When similar dramatizing material such as wordplay, narratives, figures, and analogies crop up in a variety of different contexts, such repetition is evidence of symbolic convergence. (6)

Therefore, FTA begins by identifying the dramatized messages evident in group members' communicative interactions, which in the case of ex-believers are the deconversion narratives. One way to do this is to look for the elements that make up the drama, such as the *dramatis personae* (characters, including heroes and villains), setting, plot, and sanctioning agent. The latter is explained by Alemán (2005) as

> the mechanism that provides the reasoning or rationale for the actions of the characters, and thus the moral order. The sanctioning agent, which is often a value system, ideal, or emotion, provides the persuasive force for acceptance of the social reality constructed in fantasy chains. (9)

Another aspect of dramatized messages is *symbolic cues*—images, labels, metaphors, inside jokes, and motifs that allow group members to symbolize and view of reality with only a brief allusion. After identifying these elements, scholars piece together the fantasy theme they create. When these themes are consistently restated, scholars conclude that a fantasy has chained out and that people have experienced symbolic convergence to a shared reality, expressed as a rhetorical vision.

FTA seems especially useful for understanding those who have renounced their religious beliefs. Kidd (1998) explains,

> Fantasy theme analysis assumes that when individuals read or hear dramatic narratives, they participate in a social reality defined by the stories being told. That reality has characters with whom they identify and others whom they oppose; it has implied values they accept when they are moved by a character's struggle. If they get fully caught up in the drama, they can be motivated to certain actions or beliefs in their own lives based on the values in the drama.

Previous research on deconversion narratives finds that this is precisely what ex-believers do when they share their stories of deconversion (Chalfant, 2011; Simmons, 2010). Duffy's (2003) FTA analysis of online hate groups found that

> Individuals who inhabit a particular rhetorical vision form a rhetorical community, and in the sharing of fantasy themes they come to identify certain activities as appropriate or improper. Members of a rhetorical community can share a world view that to them is entirely plausible, but to outsiders may seem unreasonable, unethical, and hateful. (309)

This description perfectly aligns with the dynamic present in non-rhetorical studies of online communities composed of those who have renounced their religious beliefs (Chalfant, 2011). For example, writing about ex-Mormons' use of the Internet to seek community, Avance (2013) noted, "Former Mormons engage in a ritual of sharing that binds them in a spiritual community, despite their disavowal of faith" (p. 23). In short, the assumptions and methods of FTA fit hand in glove with the analysis of online deconversion narratives.

METHOD

Several websites have appeared that cater specifically to those who have renounced their Christian beliefs, the largest of which is www.exchristian.org. It houses the most extensive collection of content for ex-Christians of all such sites and is frequently mentioned in other religious websites. The site's editor writes on the home page, "On this site I collect de-conversion stories. Stories from people who used to be professing Christians, and who now are not." Ex-Christians from a wide variety of faith traditions have joined the site. One of the largest sections of this site is a discussion board where visitors are invited to recount, through their own narrative,

their journey from Christian to ex-Christian. For many of those who have posted content, this is their first stop because it provides a point of entry to this virtual community and serves as a comfortable place for people to introduce themselves. New visitors craft their own user name and then post their initial content, which usually is their deconversion story. Posts to this section of the website can be searched according to the author's previous religious affiliation, reason for leaving, or current belief after renouncing a belief in Christianity.

All the discussion board posts to www.exchristian.org available in 2012 made by those previously affiliated with the Church of Christ were content analyzed. The analysis was limited to members of this Christian denomination for the sake of homogeneity and because the author is most familiar with that faith tradition, which allows a more insightful discussion of research findings. Also, an early application of FTA to online artifacts called for future research into "the rhetorical vision of a particular group" (Duffy, 2003, p. 310).

The Church of Christ is a theologically and socially conservative Protestant faith tradition whose roots in America trace back to the early 1800s. With an estimated 3.6 million adherents, it is one of the 10 largest Protestant denominations in America (National Council of Churches USA, 2011) and boasts several schools and colleges, book publishers, periodicals, and programs of instruction. The Church of Christ, Independent Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ are the three main branches of the American Restoration Movement, whose project was to restore the doctrines and forms of New Testament Christianity. The Church of Christ features several unique attributes that inform its members' religious experiences, including a cappella singing, the literal interpretation of the Bible, and congregational autonomy (Holloway & Foster, 2002).

During the period under review, those self-identified as being formerly affiliated with the Church of Christ made 38 posts, ranging in length from 312 to more than 2,000 words. Each post was read

with the aim of identifying the dramatizing elements (i.e., *dramatis personae,* setting, plot, and sanctioning agents), and symbolic cues present. These were discerned through the recurring words (e.g., *brainwashing, hypocrisy, freedom*) appearing in each posting, suggested by previous research on deconversion. Another point of analysis concerned user names. All those posting to the website studied select a user name to identify them during online communication. Because users have complete control over the selection of those names, their choices often reflect a desire to make some kind of statement about them (Cornetto & Nowak, 2006). User names and e-mail addresses on the Internet are not unlike vanity license plates on automobiles in that they reflect the unique interests, personalities, and worldviews of their owners.

RESULTS

Despite the demographic and experiential differences between ex-Christians posting to the website studied, there was remarkable harmony in their deconversion accounts. Perhaps that is because each of them was previously affiliated with the Church of Christ faith tradition. Or perhaps it is a function of the casting off of any variety of Christian belief. Regardless, the similarity in accounts pointed to four identifiable fantasy themes whose effect is to depict the ex-Christian in as favorable a light as possible while conversely portraying Christianity and its adherents in an unfavorable manner.

"I Was a Victim"

Of course, the notion of renouncing Christian beliefs means that one once held such beliefs in the first place. The first fantasy theme was intended to account for this fact by portraying ex-Christians as victims, powerless to prevent their original assent to Christianity. This notion makes the ex-Christian a sympathetic character and is reflected in the words of one ex-Christian who wrote, "I was

raised in the Church of Christ. But looking back on it now, I see that I was really a victim."

The setting was most often in the home in which the ex-Christians were raised, and the plot was the implied diet of religious education that accompanied it. The website studied here provides a means for ex-Christians to indicate why they joined the Christian faith. Authors were free to choose any reasons to account for their revised religious affiliations, and the open-ended structure of the question allowed them to put their thoughts in their own words. Of the 38 authors, 18 initially identified with Christianity because of familial influences, and many made reference to having had Christianity instilled in them from birth.

Symbolic cues brought to mind the idea that ex-Christians' initial assent to faith was beyond their control. For example, 18 of the 38 deconversion narratives describe their initial assent as being "born into" Christianity or being "raised Christian." One wrote, "I was born into Christianity. I had no choice." Another put it this way: "I was born into a very conservative family headed by a jaded conservative patriarch in the buckle of the Bible belt. My being a Christian was a foregone conclusion."

In fact, ex-Christians often indicated a plot in which their initial affiliation with Christianity was the product of nefarious means. The complete narratives saw the recurring use of the highly negative symbolic cues such as *indoctrination* (4 uses) or *brainwashing* (14 uses). *Brainwash* is clearly a devil term (a word eliciting intuitive contempt) in today's society. Beliefs in self-determination run strong in American culture and history, such that opposing them is seen as deviant (Schwartz, 2000). The implication is quite clear: If left to their own devices, ex-Christians would not have chosen Christian religious beliefs, so the abandonment of those beliefs can be explained as a positive thing in that it reflects self-determination. Who can argue against self-determination?

The ex-Christian in this drama was portrayed as a victim to

whom a wrong was done for no justifiable reason. Therefore, breaking with one's previously held religious commitments is communicated as being an attempt to regain control and act rationally once again. Frequent use of the term *brainwashing* has the added benefit of implying that those promulgating religious beliefs are in some way malevolent because they rely on such socialization techniques. This negative stigma casts those who shed their beliefs and affiliations with such entities in a positive light and implies that their decision was a rational, understandable one. It also clearly identifies injustice as the sanctioning agent.

As heroes, the ex-Christians in deconversion narratives sometimes mentioned their attempts to fight back against their religious conversion, and this became a common plot line. All of these imply that ex-Christians did not truly choose to be Christian in the fullest sense. Several authors went out of their way to frame themselves as never truly believing what they claimed to believe. One wrote, "The bottom line: I never really believed, though I always pretended to. However, you can only live a lie for so long before it starts to eat you." Another noted that, "I was born into Christianity. I had no choice. In the back of my mind, I didn't actually believe." This was a clever move on the ex-Christians' part, for if they never truly assented to the Christian faith, then they ought to bear less responsibility for rejecting it. It makes their abandonment of those beliefs seem less outrageous and more understandable. Also, it once again places the ex-Christian in a positive light while placing those who demand adherence to religious beliefs in a negative light. Who would champion forcing people to believe what they never truly believed in the first place? Doing so violates the cultural value of self-determination.

The villain in this drama is more complicated. None of the deconversion narratives described a conversion to Christianity during their adult years. To the contrary, each of the 30 posts where it was possible to discern some point at which they came to hold

Christian beliefs indicated that they were raised as Christians. This means that ex-Christians' families were responsible for instilling Christian beliefs in them; that is, their families were the agents of coercion. Yet none of the deconversion narratives cast their families in the role of villain. One even explained, "I was raised in the buckle of the Bible Belt, brainwashed as a Christian to believe in God. I don't blame my parents; they were victims just like I was."

"I Became Enlightened"

Perhaps the most prevalent fantasy theme was reflected in this statement from one of the deconversion narratives: "I became enlightened." Here, ex-Christians thoughtfully considered Christianity's core beliefs and found them to be rationally deficient. Fourteen authors in some way mentioned that their faith began to waver as their secular education increased, as they thought more deeply about Christian beliefs, or as they were exposed to critiques of the Christian belief system. One wrote, "I began a search on the internet for sites to disprove the Bible and that was the beginning of my personal exodus."

The sanctioning agent apparent here is logic. Ex-Christians measured Christian beliefs by the extent to which they were intellectually defensible. For example, one observed, "I was raised a Christian, but even from an early age when I didn't even have developed analytical thinking skills there were so many things about Christianity that didn't add up. When I asked adults, they couldn't explain anything to me without using circular logic or saying, 'The Lord works in mysterious ways.'" Another wrote, "The Christian doctrine is full of holes. I started to actually study the Bible, its origins and began asking questions. Questions that ministers were unable to answer simply because the answers do not exist."

The plot is that of the ex-Christian unswervingly pursuing truth—a truth consistent with logic and rationality. The more ex-Christians learned or thought, the harder it was to continue

holding their religious beliefs. The deconversion narratives cast them in the role of seekers of truth, indicating that the changes in their religious beliefs were the inevitable conclusion of an ongoing process in which higher truth was sought. In fact, eight authors called themselves "Freethinkers" or "Searchers." This is in line with Swanson's (2004) finding that ex-Christian websites justified the rejection of religious beliefs as a consequence of seeking the truth. This endows ex-Christians with nobility that, by comparison, Christians lack. This plot also portrays ex-Christians as fair-minded people. Their deconversion narratives indicate that they did not suddenly arrive at their conclusions, in a haphazard manner. In fact, they gave Christian beliefs a fair hearing; it is not the ex-believer's fault that Christianity came up short. One ex-Christian explained, "Well, after about ten years of trying 'real hard' to numb my mind to the idiosyncrasies of religious logic, I started working at a place where a fellow employee was a walking, talking atheist encyclopedia. I fought it, but it was like fighting my own mind with my heart not in it. Once I gave in and let the beautiful logic and reason wash over and through my brain cells, I felt relieved of a big burden."

Also, these comments seemed intended to place the ex-Christian in the role of rational thinker honoring rationality and logic, while casting Christians in the role of ignorant dupe. This is consistent with Avance's (2013) comment about ex-Mormons in her study finding in the online world a community whose worldview is "predicated on logic and rationality rather than emotion and faith" (p. 23). Once again we see that the ex-Christian is aligned with something generally viewed as positive (rationality) and religious beliefs with something negative (irrationality).

"Christians Are Hypocrites"

In the Western world religious beliefs typically involve identification and association with some sort of community (Payne, 2007). Therefore, other adherents play a significant role in one's

experience of religion. This was clearly evident in ex-Christians' deconversion narratives, as they chronicled the role that the lifestyles and behaviors of other Christians played in their decision to renounce Christianity. Many featured references to some sort of observed behavior that the ex-Christian perceived to be at odds with Christian teachings or simply morally indefensible. This, in turn, created a kind of dissonance that forced the ex-Christian to reevaluate his or her assent to Christianity. The result was a fantasy theme summed up in this statement from one of the deconversion narratives: "Christians are hypocrites." In fact, more than one third of the deconversion narratives noted such inconsistencies, pointedly outlining what they saw as hypocrisy, mean-spiritedness, a lack of love and forgiveness, and general harshness in how Christians or churches treated others. The symbolic cue most often used to sum up these feelings of dissonance was the word *hypocrisy,* another devil term (Schwartz, 2000).

The sanctioning agent driving this fantasy theme was the ex-Christians' innate sense of right and wrong. Ex-Christians identified numerous behaviors that violated their moral sensibilities. For example, one wrote, "I felt burdened by the arrogance, racism, and hatred that came from these people. Whenever they talked about people they considered 'lost,' they laughed. Although it was an all-black church, there was reverse racism."

The setting for this dramatization varied, matching each ex-Christian's unique experiences. One wrote, "I came across some people from the Church of Christ (conservative) and was pretty impressed—but actually I was just pretty naive and idealistic. I left Lutheranism which I viewed as irrelevant, dry, and out of touch. Within a year I was preaching for the Church of Christ. I did this for ten years. During this time, I was so miserable that I couldn't put on any weight and usually weighed 125 pounds. I also thought of committing suicide frequently, pretty much on a weekly basis. The people treated me in such a mean, contemptible fashion it was

unbelievable. Others, also, were treated poorly and made to feel not welcome. Some were doted over and treated like royalty. I moved to new churches three times, and each seemed more hypocritical than the last. Christians were the most stingy, egotistical, racist people I knew. Some were nice; just not the ones in control of the church." And, one simply said, "Basically, I stopped believing in Christianity because of other Christians."

It is readily apparent from the preceding posts that Christians were playing the role of villain. One ex-Christian noted, "The moral of the story is: Christianity isn't what it claims to be. There is nothing wrong with their highest claims (peace, love thy neighbor), the problem is they consistently do the opposite 'in the name of the Lord.'" Another wrote, "It got to the point where I wanted to kill myself in junior high because I couldn't live up to the church's expectations of me. The church couldn't live up to its expectations of itself, and many of the people in that church were doing worse things than I ever thought about doing. Some of them even intentionally hurt other people. I admit that I've hurt people unintentionally before out of spiritual pride, but the people in the church acted like vampires, living only to suck the life out of everyone else." Another described Christian behavior disdainfully, saying, "I've seen the way His people act and the way other people act, and according to God's peoples' own standards, the atheists are more likely to be saved and get to Heaven (if Heaven even exists)."

"God Is Cruel"

The foundation of any Christian belief is a belief in God, that he exists and, according to Christian doctrine, has a particular set of attributes. Although for many Christians these attributes are a source of great comfort and hope, ex-Christians could not reconcile them with their experiences of the world. In short, they struggled with the age-old problem of theodicy, which Stewart (2001) defines as "an attempt to justify the goodness of God in spite of the

presence of evil in the world" (p. 165). More specifically, ex-Christians developed a fantasy theme captured in the statement from one deconversion narrative that "God is cruel."

Here God is personified as the villain, and his villainy is all the more unconscionable because it is least expected of him; he of anyone has the power and ostensibly the desire not to be the villain. Eight authors were repelled by Christian claims of God's benevolence and power that ex-Christians saw as being at odds with their own experiences. One wrote, "There was a boy named Charlie who lived beside my Dad's church. We (the church) were constantly trying to bring Charlie from his pained life and convert him to Christianity. Charlie was diagnosed with cancer. It was all ok though, it was God's will. Charlie kept getting worse, no matter how much we prayed. Finally, Charlie died. The church accepted it quite well. God had taken Charlie from all of his pain. All of the church rejoiced, except for me. Why did God do this? Why would God put a child through all of this pain?" Others were troubled by the Bible's depictions of God. An ex-Christian said, "There are too many examples of Yahweh's barbarism and brutality to mention in the Old Testament. But Revelation depicted a catastrophic destruction of all human life perpetrated by our 'loving' creator, just to prove a point. Worse still, the vast majority were to be cast eternally into a burning pit of torture. This is certainly a contradiction in action for a loving deity. And a certain part of my identity—my homosexuality—was considered punishable by death. All of this together prompted me to leave the faith." And a particularly villainous aspect of God concerned the Christian doctrine of eternal punishment in hell, and hell itself became a sort of setting for God's villainy. One deconversion narrative reflected such sentiments when it said, "But the ultimate end of my faith was the fact that I couldn't just believe that any loving, benevolent creator would send us to hell for such minor, petty offenses. I had to believe that any god would give us clear, concise instructions pertaining to his

will when our eternal souls are on the line. The Bible, for those of you who have noticed, does not fit that description."

Many of the deconversion narratives implied a linear plot: The more the ex-Christian came to know about God and experience the world, the more the ex-Christian came to the conclusion that God was not worthy of belief. One said, "Once I began to study closely, I started noticing that 'god' was nothing like the being Christians project it to be. From condoning mass slaughters of Israel's enemies to torturing Job just to fulfill his own twisted ego, the god of the bible seemed more evil than the supposed Satan!" Another ex-Christian wrote, "As I studied the bible, I was disturbed by some of the things I was reading. Such as: how cruel God could be, how poorly the Israelites behaved, conflicts and contradictions, etc. I still held on to my faith, mostly out of fear. The final straw came with the birth of my son. My beautiful son was diagnosed with autism. I was finally crushed. When this happened, every bad and cruel event I have ever witnessed and been the object of, flooded back into my mind. I started thinking of certain Bible passages of God's cruelty."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of FTA is to discern the rhetorical visions shared by group members. Bormann (1972) holds, "The rhetorical vision helps us understand the social relationships, the motives, the qualitative impact of that symbolic world as though it were the substance of social reality or those who participated in that vision" (pp. 400–401). The four fantasy themes described in this article coalesce into one overarching rhetorical vision, the exodus to freedom. This metaphor draws on the well-known biblical account of how the ancient Israelites left centuries of slavery and oppression at the hands of the Egyptians and made their way to a better life in a different land, and it provides an organizing scheme for the

ex-Christians' deconversion experiences. In fact, one ex-Christian described his deconversion as "my personal exodus."

The metaphor suggests several ideas, each of which coincides with notions captured in the fantasy themes previously mentioned. First is the notion of some kind of incarceration against one's will. Recall that the deconversion narratives painted a picture of people whose initial acceptance of Christian beliefs was involuntary; like the Israelite slaves, they were born into captivity. One ex-Christian described his movement from belief to disbelief as "removing myself from the shackles of religion." Interestingly, it is the system of Christian belief itself that is conceived of as the oppressor; specific people were rarely mentioned as oppressing ex-Christians. Such a representation is consistent with Bormann's (1972) conceptualization of dramatic characters, as he claims that abstract concepts can also serve as characters in fantasy themes and rhetorical visions.

The exodus metaphor also suggests that those enslaved will long for freedom, and so the exodus to freedom rhetorical vision neatly captures the essence of the ex-Christian's experience: liberation. The word *freedom* or one of its synonyms was used 10 times, including individual posts titled "My Freedom and Its Price" and "Trying to Get Free." One deconversion narrative concludes the story of the departure from Christianity with these words: "The following year, I was on my own, and never felt so free." Another simply summed up his current religious state by stating, "So here I am, atheist, and free at last." By invoking a freedom metaphor, ex-Christians were able to endow their decision with nobility that is unassailable. Who can argue against freedom? It is what Richard Weaver called a "god term" that has "inherent potency in its meaning" (Young, 1995, p. 147). By associating their decision with a journey to freedom, ex-Christians seemed to intend to arouse sympathy for their previous plight and make their decision to renounce their religious beliefs more understandable.

Third, the exodus metaphor suggests a journey of some sort. In

the original story to which the metaphor refers, the Israelites' flight from slavery was an arduous one extending over a period of years and was fraught with drama and peril. Numerous deconversion narratives described how the renunciation of religious beliefs unfolded over time, implying that their exodus occurred only after the completion of a journey. In fact, the word *journey* was specifically used four times to characterize the shift in ex-Christians' religious beliefs. How long was the journey from believer to nonbeliever? Although the lengths varied, those posting outlined a process lasting from a few months to several years. A post under the user name "Run of the Mill Ex-Christian" wrote, "Over a period of months I guess I slowly lost my faith." One ex-Christian described a process that took 8 years from start to finish. Another explained that his beliefs slowly unraveled over a period of 20 years. Regardless of the length of time, ex-Christians agreed that their decision was not a quick one. Nor was it an easy one. Ironically, the deconversion narratives spoke of the difficulty of leaving their captivity. Many related a process of ruminating on religious questions while outwardly maintaining the impression of continued adherence to their Christian beliefs. One explained, "So, questions filled my head for months. And I was worried about all of these questions. I could not sleep at night. So I just kept thinking about it for three or four months." Another author characterized his 26-year slide away from Christianity as "a long, hard, disturbing transition."

The recurring mention of the psychological pain inflicted while the religious commitments were maintained suggests that the ex-Christian was a sympathetic figure and therefore helps justify the decision to cast off one's religious past. This also implies the investment of great effort and struggle, which again casts the ex-Christian in a favorable light because the decision to shift religious commitments was not made hastily. References to strained familial and friendship relations also helped convey the idea that these religious shifts came at the price of interpersonal strain, conflict,

and loss. The deconversion narratives often made it clear that family and friends did not understand the decision to abandon previously held religious commitments, and in fact they made it more difficult to break away from them. Yet despite all of this, the ex-Christian nobly pressed on following the truth wherever it led and at whatever cost. The net result is the picture of a heroic character soldiering on in the face of great trial toward a good and noble end. So ex-Christians seemed to be trying to get others to see that their decision was neither rash nor spontaneous. It was not an immature reaction, the equivalent of a child throwing a tantrum, picking up toys, and heading home to sulk. Instead it was incremental, moved along by various events and accompanied by inner angst that cumulatively led to an inevitable conclusion. This fits well with previous research noting the intense internal struggle that precedes exiting one's religious beliefs (Chalfant, 2011; Lobdell, 2011).

Interestingly, this difficulty in leaving the Christian faith illustrates that the exodus to freedom rhetorical vision crafted and shared here is somewhat unexpected, breaking with the traditional slave-to-freedom motif. The Israelites gladly left Egypt and experienced little remorse or difficulty exiting; in fact, few slaves would. So the fact that ex-Christians struggled so significantly with their exit is notable.

Fourth, the exodus to freedom metaphor vision implies a new personal conception of those who were once slaves. After their exodus, the Israelites did not see themselves as slaves but as God's chosen people, superior to all others. Similarly, the exodus to freedom rhetorical vision creates social reality where ex-Christians are superior to Christians. One aspect of this rhetorical vision paints a picture of ex-Christians as intellectually superior to those who maintain their Christian beliefs. Themes of intellectual enlightenment attest to how ex-Christians objectively weighed the evidence for Christianity and found it to be wanting. Therefore, they would have you believe that any rational person would jettison subjective,

Christian beliefs in favor of those better meshing with objective facts. The former believer can claim that previous assent to Christian beliefs was caused by brainwashing or incomplete education, and thus excusable. However, once free from contaminating influences or exposed to more accurate ones, the ex-Christian sees the light and trades fiction for fact. Such descriptions have the added advantage of implying that the abandonment of previously held religious commitments was objective because they are the conclusions to which any rational, informed thinker would come. Meanwhile, the Christian retains his or her religious beliefs, choosing to adhere to what ex-Christians believe has been proven to be intellectually inferior.

In addition, the exodus to freedom rhetorical vision depicts ex-Christians as morally superior to Christians. One way it does so is by developing the theme that God is cruel, associating God with a moral deficiency that the ex-Christian simply could not accept. Likewise, the hypocrisy theme allowed ex-Christians to claim the moral high ground over Christians because of the Christian's inconsistency between beliefs and behavior. The implication is that no one of reasonable intelligence and moral character would want to be associated with such unsavory people, so abandoning them seems to be the most prudent course of action.

Overall, it seems that applying FTA to the study of deconversion narratives is fruitful approach to advancing our understanding of the renunciation of religious beliefs. Doing so expands existing research by providing a rhetorical perspective that fills in the contours of this common phenomenon. Though effective as a first effort, this study is not without its limitations, and much work remains to be done. Because former members of only one faith tradition were studied here, the findings may not be representative of the broader Christian experience. Thus future research ought to see whether those formerly affiliated with other Christian sects or religious faith traditions create similar rhetorical communities.

Also, because the present study examined deconversion narratives, it seems logical in future research to compare deconversion narratives with conversion narratives. Avance's (2013) work suggests that there are indeed similarities, but this has not yet been studied from a rhetorical perspective. However, because the rejection of religious beliefs is bound to remain a steady part of the human condition, researchers are likely to continue to study it. FTA is a profitable means by which to do so.

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Engaged Learning, Engaged Scholarship: A Struggle for the Soul of Higher Education[1]

JAMES A. ANDERSON
University of Utah

Community engaged scholarship and research and its companion, community-engaged learning, have been promoted as shining examples of higher education's response to a crisis of relevance. This article suggests that there may be more flash than substance in these examples. Current practices have not changed the fundamental disconnect between the scholarship of the academy and the needs of the community. We continue to celebrate activities that require little expertise and produce few lasting consequences. We substitute agency agendas for community agendas and consider the job done. Most universities have not changed their review processes to permit a successful career in community engagement. In the place of authentic engagement, we continue to advance academic interests and sensibilities while extracting rather than adding value to communities. Dismal as all this sounds, we have done more in the past 10 years than in the previous 40, but success is not ensured.

KEYWORDS: Community, community engaged research, community engaged scholarship, community-engaged learning, service learning, action research

The 1990 Boyer report on scholarship in higher education did not initiate the debate but certainly focused attention on the question of what role academic research should play in the lives of the public at large. Boyer identified four types of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. In speaking of the scholarship of application, he asked, "How can knowledge be responsibly

James A. Anderson, Ph.D., F.I.C.A., is a professor and director of the Center for Communication and Community, Department of Communication, University of Utah. He can be reached at Department of Communication, University of Utah, 255 S. Central Campus Drive, LNCO 2400, Salt Lake City, UT 84112 or at james.anderson601@gmail.com.

applied to consequential problems?" (Boyer, 1990, p. 22). For Boyer, application was one of the ways that the scholarship of discovery (the top of Boyer's hierarchy) was made manifest. The Boyer model at its most effective is a technology transfer model. The power of already-developed theory, problem-solving strategies, data collection skills, analytical approaches, and the like are brought to bear on community problems deemed consequential.

Boyer did not satisfy the growing number of critics of traditional research that was appearing at the turn of the century. They saw Boyer as presenting a top-down model in which the expert researcher brings the fruits of science to the citizen within problem frameworks deemed consequential by the researcher. The problem and the solution were entirely under his or her ownership. The model did not change the character of research, only its venue. Researchers used communities to enliven the journals with real people but returned little of value to the people's real problems. Often the consequential problem addressed was the traditional problem of the success of the academy at the expense of the community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP: AN INTRODUCTION

Community engaged scholarship (CES, also known as community-based research) is a movement that both struggles with and seeks to resolve the difficulties with the scholarship of Boyer's model. The movement is fueled by a generalized discontent with how things are currently done in the academy, without any clear consensus on how to do them differently. If the details of the practice are yet to be ironed out, what seem to be clear and unifying are a set of values and a call for action.

The call for action is simple in its statement but complex in its execution. The call is to locate a substantial amount of the research activity of the academy—particularly public health and social science research but also engineering and the biological sciences—

physically, culturally, and intellectually in the communities that both support and are to benefit from that research. Furthermore, the research undertaken should be participatory, collaborative, and inclusive of the members of those communities, taking into account their interests and goals as well their insights and knowledge (see, for example, Global Alliance, 2008).

For a postmodern epistemologist (now there is an oxymoron), the call represents a marked departure from our traditional conceptualization and description of research. It not only bridges, it obliterates Hume's gap that presumably existed to separate science from value, immersing the researcher in the political aspirations of the community. It crashes through any façade of independence and objectivity, a façade that I as a postmodernist would consider to be a rhetorical stance at any rate. The call recognizes the limitations of institutionally certified knowledge and opens itself to other certifications, including local ones. And in that recognition it also redirects the goals of research from simple publication in the archive of knowledge (our peer-reviewed, flagship journals) to research with demonstrable consequences in the lives of others.

TENSIONS OF CES

Like it or not, the call creates a set of tensions within the academy. Engaged scholars often see themselves as challenging old, less productive, more insular ways of doing things. They criticize clinical and laboratory research as detached science, culturally insensitive, lacking ecological validity, and populated by lone-wolf scientists, elitist researchers, and arrogant academics. They point to the skills and strategies that are often in short supply among such academics, including language training with the majority of the professorate fluent in a single language (often academese, spoken by only a few).

Traditionals for their part see themselves as upholding well-established standards. They see CES scholars away from their office

for long stretches, out there chatting with people, with little to show on their career record. They often counsel—as I have done—that community engagement is wonderfully important, but it is risky and not a risk one should take before tenure. (The unintended consequence of that advice is that we tend to continue in what we are successful at and fail to return to the practices of community engagement.) Traditionals are also concerned that the research that is produced is—well—practical, applied, a lesser god (in the Boyer pantheon) that will not appear in traditional journals and, consequently, does not represent the institution as well. And finally, there is the issue of the presumed loss of objectivity, the political liability, the researcher gone native, the appearance of the activist, casting doubt on the research itself and invoking possible political dangers for the institution. And quite frankly, where is our return on overhead?

ATTRACTIONS OF CES

Even with the tensions and risks that surround it, there is a great attraction to community engagement. It promises publishable research that meets research intensive university standards and simultaneously creates a climate of trust and mutual support between the academy and the community. It uses the power of collaboration to achieve a more complex understanding of the circumstances the research is attempting to explain. You get better insights and implications from the research when they are developed in collaboration with those who live the life. The lives of others can validate our scholarship. It provides clear markers of accomplishment and authentic moments of satisfaction for a job well done.

There are a couple of subtexts in that paragraph. One is that traditional research does not provide these outcomes—or at least not as well. The other is that regardless of our discipline, we should be making a difference. Indeed, if our research does nothing more

than advance us—the academy—then we are just another elite living off the sweat of others. These subtexts have some bite to them. And I am not sure they are entirely defensible. On the other hand, there might be some truth to them.

Officially and in real practical terms, my home institution, the University of Utah, supports CES. Our president has called the university "a national leader" in CES, pointing to the award-winning work of the Bennion Center, with its hundreds of thousands of hours of successful projects, and of the University Neighborhood Partners, which has joined nearly 12,000 neighborhood residents to create opportunities for information exchange, leadership training, civic engagement, citizenship preparation, and college admission. The university has funded and continues to fund projects in CES. There are typically more than 100 faculty in any year who have active research projects that meet at least some part of the CES standard. There are probably as many or more graduate students.

IMPEDIMENTS TO CES

We have good top administration support and a growing grassroots movement. But we have not been particularly successful at the departmental and college level. A survey of University of Utah faculty conducted by my research associate Jennifer Hill, using long-form interviews, showed that most departments would consider engaged scholarship to be service, not research, and that colleges provided little incentive to engage the community. As one respondent put it, "That's not the kind of research that faculty get rewarded for." And another said, "I don't think people are going to engage just . . . because it's the right thing to do . . . on top of everything else that you have to do to survive."

A number of issues percolate at the department level. The strong program in CES represents an ideological sea change in the practice of research that can result in misunderstanding and competition

between faculty. CES presents an uncertain return on the time and resource investment that faculty are required to make. For example, some departments might be willing to wait 3 to 4 years for a book to appear but would not grant a community-based research project that time to develop, even though CES has to penetrate the heavy overburden of identifying communities, gaining access, networking with community members, developing consensus, and crafting a sustainable project before the traditional starting points of funding, theory, and methods can even be reached.

But the more difficult problems reside in the outcomes and product of the research as well as their evaluation. The dual promise of a contribution to knowledge and demonstrable outcomes in the community is both a difficult standard to meet and an evaluation nightmare. Evaluation is a problem even in active departments. A respondent from one such department noted, "I think a lot of people are doing community engaged scholarship in the department so it is valued, but then we have this disconnect between [its importance and its evaluation] and how to say, what's your citation count? So that's the challenge for the department, [and] I think it's the bigger challenge for community engaged scholarship." Time and again faculty respondents expressed a sense of hopelessness in changing the regulatory climate to open up the time and resources needed to conduct engaged scholarship. And they note as long as the traditionals control both the publication outlets and the ratings of those publications, the legitimation of CES will remain its biggest challenge.

CES AT THE MARGINS

From an organizational standpoint, it is pretty clear that in many institutions CES operates at the margins. Like community outreach by corporations, it is seen as an important and even necessary activity but not part of the center, not part of the revenue stream.

A past president of the University of Utah has reputedly said, "The university is not the Red Cross." I agree, and I would add that engaged scholarship is not charity. What CES needs is a good business plan. Developing this plan faces its own difficulties. To begin with, there are a number of impediments to the reciprocal engagement between the academy and the community, and they stand on both sides of this relationship. Communities have to see the academy as accessible, and faculty and graduate students need to see engagement as part of their overall mission. Furthermore, as we have seen, there is no clear consensus on what CES actually is; however, we can see some patterns that could be arranged on a continuum anchored on one end by basic or laboratory research and on the other by the strong CES program as supported by the Campus Compact (http://www.compact.org/).

Perhaps the first marker along this continuum would be in situ studies, which are traditional research conducted on a community population with no interaction or participation by community members except as respondents in the study. The study design, funding, and conclusions are all reached independently of the community itself. Another point along this continuum might be local consultancies where academic experts work with community-based institutions and organizations on common problems of interest. This form is Boyer's original model and typically does not involve "discovery" or publication except perhaps as a case study.

As we near the strong CES endpoint, research work would start with the development of a durable relationship with community members. That relationship would at least participate and better yet guide the constitution of theory as well as the design and execution of the research. The conclusions would have both immediate consequences and generalizable implications. Funding would be a community responsibility. I believe this to be the form that is true to CES and institutionally viable. But there are points beyond this one where one leaves the comfort of the organized community or

institution and ventures into community organizing itself, raising interesting and important questions about the nature of research and of community.

Having drawn this continuum, let me unequivocally say that I think that all the points along it—even the most traditional and most radical—are important activities; however, they do represent different mixtures of community engagement, research, and collaboration. The question for me is how we get to the sweet spot where we have consequential outcomes and discovery in a collaborative effort that not only returns good will to the academy but also meet its research and scholarship goals.

SOLUTIONS IN THE DEPARTMENTS

In the end I think the place we achieve this confluence of good outcomes is in the many departments of our colleges and universities. No other group knows better the negotiations across resources that have to be conducted for CES to become a regularized activity. I believe the way departments can achieve this is to create a symbol visible to the community of their commitment to the effort by institutionalizing this commitment in a departmental center of community engagement.

Every department in the field of higher education has particular expertise, skills, and knowledge that can be leveraged by community interests into positive outcomes. Microeconomics has demonstrated that it does not take a large investment to produce significant results when the community itself is the driving force. Departmental centers do not need money, do not collect money, do not disburse money. Their work is in the creation of the durable links between departmental members and the members of the multiple communities of this state and to provide the site for what will be a continuing discussion of what engaged research entails and requires.

Last year the Utah Board of Regents gave approval for the establishment of the Center for Communication and Community, a community engaged research center based on the principles described in this article (see http://www.cfcc.utah.edu). I am its inaugural director. In the few months of its existence, it has mounted four faculty-directed studies, one of which appears to have legs, and nine graduate student–directed studies, with one of those likely to make it to publication. It is something of a success story, but it is probably more of a bright spot in an unsettled field. To really understand the future of community engagement, we need to reflect on the past.

PULLING WEEDS: THE PROBLEMS OF OUR PAST

Service Projects, Engaged Learning, and Community-Based Research

If you logged into the University of Utah's website a couple of weeks ago, you would have seen a banner picture (as one of four) proclaiming Community Engagement Day. The picture showed a handsome young man and a comely young woman pitching weeds from a garden. One could imagine somewhere in the background an elderly woman, leaning on a cane, smiling, certainly, but also carefully supervising, ready to use that cane for good purpose. (The fourth picture touted sustainability and showed a young woman—visually detainable in Arizona—tending pole beans.) I have to say that we are our own worst enemy.

Pulling weeds, washing windows, fixing up, and the like are service projects and are not appropriate either to engaged learning or to the practice of research. Yet service projects remain the dominant theme of service and engagement. How many pictures have we seen of students painting houses, raking lawns, and the like, all insufferably happy doing chores that just a few years before they might have seen as a great family injustice? Community engaged

learning and research are harmed by such images—not that such images are bad press for the university but that they set the baseline for what all community engagement is about. That baseline sets the bar far too low to attract the notice of our review committees.

The consequence of these pervasive images is that when we attempt to promote engaged learning and community-based research, it is the garden, the rake, and the paintbrush that come to mind, along with the questions of what these have to do with higher education teaching and research. When we add to those questions the facts that engaged teaching requires a measurable professorial time commitment and that engaged research is not published in most mainstream journals, our listeners are left puzzling, "And why do we want to do this?" "How is this appropriate to my profession?"

Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve, and the Absent Community

If the images in our heads cause problems, so does the ubiquitous language of service. Discourse analysts would feast on the power relations that inhabit the subtexts of service. The University of Utah is uniquely positioned to express those power relations. Its symbolic white-pillared administration building sits high on the mountain bench looking down on the venal practices of politics and commerce in the valley and across the way at the plunder of extractive industries on the opposing mountain side. To serve, we leave our sanctuary to travel down to the streets.

Most definitions of service learning follow the lines of Bringle and Hatcher (2009), who define it as a

> course-based, credit bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. (p. 38)

Steinberg, Bringle, and Williams (2010) complete the thought by adding, "Students enrolled in service-learning classes do not receive academic credit for engaging in community service; rather, they receive academic credit for the learning that occurs as a result of the service experience" (p. 2). Students serve to learn and learn to serve.

So what is the problem in this language? I submit that its direction is all downhill. We "serve the community," we "meet their needs," our work is "beneficial" to them. We possess such superior skill and insight that even our youngest neophytes can accomplish much. Thank God for us. Furthermore, there is no marked benefit to the academy or its professorate. Our curriculum or research practice is not improved. As a professor I apparently have already learned to serve and have nothing more to gain. The community has nothing to offer back except as a passive location for our students to learn. Finally, no attention is paid to the quality of the outcomes for the community itself. Remember, we do not give credit for engagement; we give credit for learning. It does not matter that the community member provided time, resources, and often money to accomplish our pedagogical goals. We have no defining obligation to ensure the quality of the work done by students or to consider the success of that work for the community member. Students' grades do not depend on either one, and we often do not even inquire.

This is not community engagement. This is sending the kids to grandma's house. Community engagement should be a challenge to our expertise, the needs met should be commensurate with publishable research, and the quality of the outcomes should be a key criterion of its success. Let me spend a moment on each of these.

A challenge. I've been working in what was called service learning for about 10 years now. Initially I was supported by the university's service learning center, which paid for a graduate student to be my courses' service learning coordinator. The coordinator managed

all the activities associated with student projects. When the funding for that support went away, I simply turned the responsibility for finding and managing a project onto the students themselves. They handle this requirement without difficulty. The irony, of course, is that I do not have to engage the community at all. (I do get to report all the projects on my Faculty Activity Report, however.)

My knowledge as a communication scholar is not tested. The principles that I teach are not examined in the surveys, campaigns, design work, videographies, and the like of these projects. They certainly get reproduced in that great echo chamber we call the review of the literature, but I have no evidence that they were useful in directing the activity. Finally, I have not had to learn anything new; I have not had to demonstrate that I could actually do something of value with my advanced training. Should community engagement not have that sort of consequence?

Character of the needs met. The model of community engagement that I follow in these courses does have consequences, both intended and unintended. The deliberate and intended consequences have to do with student autonomy and personal responsibility, recognition of their abilities, and an expanded perspective of the world. These are all well and good. The less-intended consequences are that the projects are a series of one-off efforts with no history and a short future. They are also necessarily projects of little heft with no greater implications—circumstances befitting this level of expertise. The unintended consequences are that they are the product of no overarching plan, they have no trajectory of development, and they offer little of consequence to the community at large or to our body of knowledge. These are neither well nor good.

Quality of outcomes. Each of these concerns has obvious implications for the quality of the outcomes produced. The outcomes can be no greater than the significance of the work. That aphorism does not relieve us of the responsibility to ensure that a project appropriate

to our pedagogical goals produces outcomes of the expected quality in the community, however. Two questions are clearly raised: Who sets the criteria? And who makes the determination? Together they ask, At what point does community engagement mean that we let the community participate in academic procedures? And you thought student course evaluations were problematic. Do you think your community partners are evaluating your students' work? Yes, they are, and they share notes with one another. Our focus group studies show that we do not grade out well.

REVENUE STREAMS: THE RAPIDS OF OUR FUTURE

I was reflecting on this writing, thinking that I may be grossly overstating the case, and searching for some redemption, when I found the Campus Compact initiative to measure community impact (http://www.compact.org/initiatives/engaged-campus-initiative/). The website pointed to the best practices of the University of North Carolina (http://www.elon.edu/e-web/org/nccc/Init-MeasureComm.xhtml). At that site I discovered that the assessment of community impact "is critical to

- Provide evidence of benefits—student learning, development, retention, recruitment
- Suggest research opportunities
- Clarify community image and partnerships
- Build streams of revenue
- Foster internal campus spirit and performance
- Participate in accreditation . . . and awards (i.e., Carnegie Community Engagement classification) processes"

The community remains the passive object of our benefit. The community is nowhere present in this assessment. What counts is whether we can use the community to further our goals.

POLLUTING STREAMS OF REVENUE

The middle of that assessment list contains what I consider a chilling phrase: "Build streams of revenue." Everyone is aware of the contemporary facts of publicly funded, academic life—that every activity is evaluated for its revenue-producing potential. When I came to the University of Utah—in the previous century—state funding provided for 80% of the core activities. Now, state funding is less than 8% of the university's budget, and tuition is responsible for 50% of the core budget. Consequently, I am not surprised to see the calls for turning community engagement into revenue activity. The consequence of success in this regard is to turn community engagement in on itself, however.

The boulder in the center of a community engagement revenue stream is, of course, the means test. The means test returns the definition of the community back to the list of the usual suspects: persons and organizations of means. It also threatens to undermine a central pillar of community engagement, the pillar of social justice. The pillar and the boulder put those of us in community engagement between a rock and hard place. There is little question that CES that is revenue producing is going to be evaluated higher than such research that is revenue neutral or an expense. There is also little question that research centered in and responsive to the lives of the marginalized is a pretty tough sell.

I am musing a bit here: But consider that we seem quite willing to assist corporations in designing effective messages. What about research on the handheld cardboard signs at street corners? Or research on the most effective panhandling techniques? Our answers to these proposals would probably be conflicted. Do we want to assist people in lives that violate the social principles of many? Do we assist them to live lives that are inherently dangerous? We are communication scholars; does our expertise extend to all? In her critique of action research, Kimberly Kinsler (2010) accuses it of "having fallen short" (p. 171). She comments in her abstract,

> In fact, to the dismay of many of its most ardent advocates, [action research] has more often been used as a technical tool to facilitate the use of particular teaching techniques; increase practical professional efficacy; and implement government policies. This may in part be due to the primacy advocates give to its meeting key theoretical and practical university-based considerations. (p. 171)

We continue to look out for Number One.

SEPARATING FUNDING FROM FUNCTION

The other problem posed in turning CES into a revenue stream is that it turns research activity into a case-by-case solicitation. I spent the early part of my career chasing money to keep a research center afloat. It is extremely difficult to fund a research program (as opposed to a particular study) or to find funding for a study that is not already part of some funding portfolio. Funding agencies set the research agenda.

Funding agencies are also some of the most politically and intellectually narrow organizations on the planet, second only to tenure committees at the university. The studies they fund are appropriate to their ideological positions. Conflicts between community interests and agency interests are guaranteed. And the winner is? Just follow the money.

If we reach back to the beginning, community engagement initiatives arose because academic practices had eroded the relationship with the community and produced a crisis of trust in the academy. Community engagement was to provide for the reform of that relationship, to rebuild the foundation of trust. Instead, we have once again proven to be highly resistant to change, subverting new ideas into the old ways of doing things.

My university has monetized engaged learning (also known as service learning) by returning one third of the tuition from engaged

learning designated courses to the engagement center—the Bennion Center in our case. The center then distributes most of those funds back to the departments, if the departments have an engaged-based budget plan for the funds. Other universities (e.g., Miami of Ohio) are charging students a fee in addition to tuition to subsidize engaged learning.

My department has used its substantial income from this rebate program to augment the budget of the Center for Communication and Community, which it houses. The money has created something of a crisis, because now the center must do something with the money, and the temptation is set up programs that will require annual funding and secure additional outside funding. Those of you familiar with budgets know you use it or lose it, and increasing budgets are the premier mark of success.

The vision for the center was as virtual location based on micro-economics that signaled to the academy and to the community the intention of the department to pursue CES. Now, I am on the precipice of running a research center, chasing funds, soliciting and evaluating proposals, overseeing project budgets, negotiating with agencies, and hosting review and development boards. These are all big-money activities that I believe are antithetical to community engagement. It all too easily becomes community exploitation. We need to find ways to fund the idea of community engagement rather than individual CES projects.

THE SLIPPERY NOTION OF COMMUNITY

Let us consider the notion of community. I live on a dead-end street (*cul de sac* is just too fancy a term for my neighborhood) composed of 18 single households and one duplex on the corner. Most of us have lived there for more than 20 years, although three newer families have been there for only 5. Once a year, from a third to half of the households are represented at a summer potluck where

issues common to the neighborhood are discussed. We have come together over two large projects: street lights and a community pocket park. Both were successful, although not everyone supported either project.

Our neighborhood is part of the Sugar House Community Council and City Council District 7. In the 36 years that I have lived in the area, I have been to one community council meeting. About half of the neighborhood belongs to the faith-based community headquartered in Salt Lake. I do not. I am not registered with a political party. I do not go to Saturday football games or watch the Runnin' Utes basketball team. I am not poor, homeless, or with any addiction or debilitation. I am pretty common, actually, but I am not a community or a community member. I am one of the more mature (the new term for *old*), and because of that, many organizations presume to speak for me, entirely without my authorization.

K. B. Hom, once a community organizer in Washington, D.C., and now a graduate student studying community, has found that community is ongoing array of practices and kaleidoscopic display of commitments that are only partially represented in any titular organization. It is like an iceberg: There is a lot more going on beneath the surface than what is represented at the top. Nonetheless, our most common practical definition of community is the community advocacy group, the nonprofit organization, the service agency, or a membership. They solve an otherwise nearly intractable problem for the engaged researcher or instructor. They solve the problem of people like me because the researcher can go to the American Association of Retired Persons, for example, and engage the community of the properly aged through that organization's membership. Remember, this is not a question of sampling. Community engaged research is supposed to originate or be negotiated within the community itself. Consequently, engaging the community is a necessary part of the action, but most groups that

we would identify as communities are in fact merely aggregates or members of some organization.

About seven years ago, I began to study the homeless in Salt Lake. The homeless to me were always the men and some women clustered outside the shelters across the tracks from the Gateway shopping center. I started by just hanging out with them. It was quite an education. It overthrew all my preconceived notions of what homelessness was and about those we consider homeless. I also learned that there were multiple agencies that provide services and resources for the homeless—54 by one count. And, most surprising to me, the homeless themselves organize into mutual support groups to maximize the benefits they can receive from these agencies, while resisting redemption. Yes, agencies are being played against one another; yes, many people make good money panhandling; yes, they have things like cell phones, expensive backpacks, and computers; and yes, some are hopelessly addicted, wake up in the winter frozen to the ground by their own urine, and will probably die wretched deaths. There are many trajectories of homelessness, there are many agencies that serve, and there are many dispossessed who band together, but there is not a homeless community.

Finally, I ride with a local mule association, although I ride a horse. My brother, an effete Easterner, says I still qualify because Spooky is the horse and I am the ass, thereby constituting a mule. Most of the members are native Utahns who live in central and south-central Utah. They are quite different folks from those who ride in the local chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen, most of whom are monied professionals in the valley, riding equine companions. The mule folks are long-haul drivers, local entrepreneurs, carpenters, construction owners, farmers, and ranchers. It is a wonderful confluence of incongruities, contradictions, connections, and commonalities. They drive rigs in the six-figure range and ride animals that sell for several thousand dollars on the

current market and with whom they seem in constant competition for supremacy. I have a tent, a bumper pull, and an $1,800 horse (who is recognized by the members to be as good as any mule and smarter than most). I am the oldest member of the club and one of its newest riders. Spooky knows (and so do I) that he could take me out any time he wanted to.

Our rides run across extended weekends—three to four days. We are in one another's constant company during that time, eating together, riding together, dealing with the contingencies that always occur together, and socializing together around the campfire well past my bedtime. Are we a community? No, in fact, we are barely friends. There are friendships among the members, but they are formed and enacted outside the group. Conversations within the group are limited to topics associated with riding, equipment, the tasks at hand, or stories about past rides or riding exploits. Violation of those boundaries result in serious consequences, including exclusion.

My point here is that communities are formed by boundaries. The mule club separates itself in the solidarity of not being the Backcountry Horsemen and then fights within those boundaries as to what it shall be. When we talk about engaging the African American community, the Native American community, the Asian American community, the poor, the homeless, or the aging, we step across some boundary composed of arbitrary—though sometimes visible—characteristics that may do nothing more than form the boundary. And in stepping across or engaging the community, we are part of the social processes that define ourselves and the Other. Am I engaging difference by my membership in the mule club compared with my membership in the academy? You bet, but only because I am an academic. I fool only myself if I think I have engaged a community.

EMANCIPATION OR MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The problems we have in defining a community greatly exacerbate the emancipation impulses that drive CES outcomes, whether it is the deliverance of action research, meeting community needs of CES, or just plain making a difference. The basic problem is knowing what is good for the other. Let me take you back to those multiple agencies trying to "fix" the homeless problems. Some of those agencies would have the homeless gain emancipation through Jesus, others through total abstinence from drugs and alcohol, still others in job retraining. But we think we have made the greatest difference by simply giving them a home in which to live a chosen life—no supervision, no abstinence, no religion required.

Critics complain—there are always those who know better—that the program is abetting or promoting an unhealthy or even illegal lifestyle. All I know is that I or another volunteer will not find an apartment holder badly burned because he fell asleep by a campfire down at the river or frozen on the steps to the resource house or dying of exposure and sepsis in the local hospital.

Tribal schools, driven by the doctrine of assimilation, are another powerful example of emancipation gone wrong. Children were kidnapped from their homes on the reservation, sent to a boarding school where they were forbidden to speak their native tongue or to participate in their culture, and severely disciplined if they did either. Sounds like something that happened a long time ago and could never happen again. I taught in the tribal school up in Bingham City, and the English-only movement thrives as a powerful political force in every locale where whites are slipping out of the majority.

There are less spectacular examples, of course. What of the drive to get Latin culture children into higher education? One of the perceived problems is that the communitarian basis of that culture emphasizes family first, whereas our traditionally individualistic

culture advances the individual. Why are we right and they wrong? Our educational system is based on the individual learner model, but it does not have to be. Why can we not deliver the benefits of education to a family?

The first ethical rule is to do no harm. The first corollary is, "Except to those who deserve it." And the first rationalization is that we must pay certain costs for the greater good. I do not have anything new to offer to this age-old debate except the difficult postmodern principles of systemic responsibility and complicity and implication (Anderson, 1996; Anderson & Englehardt, 2001). Those principles hold that we are complicit and implicated in every consequence, both intended and unintended, as well as responsible for discovering those consequences and remediating the harm incurred. Those principles raise the cost of engagement substantially. It is easier to place the responsibility on some agency or advocacy organization. And is much easier to simply publish or do nothing at all.

THE PROBLEM OF INSTITUTIONALIZED ENGAGEMENT

Working through agencies, advocacy groups, and nonprofit organizations provides a level of protection against the ethical traps of presuming to know the best interests of others. At the same time, it is one of the ways that we both institutionalize and sterilize engagement. Institutionalization of engagement is an important marker of the engaged university for both the folks at Campus Compact (http://www.compact.org/initiatives/carnegie-community-engagement-classification/) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/). Institutions that commit ongoing funding and material resources to put into place centers and institutes of community-engaged learning and research are more likely to have an active future in these activities.

On the other hand, as we have seen, such centers insulate most

academicians from contact with the community and provide a get-out-of-jail-free card to the institution. In research intensive institutions particularly, centers of engagement allow faculty to attach engagement as a codicil to their pedagogy and to drop in and drop out of engaged research without developing a principled program in either. Someone else does the dirty work of engagement.

Equally important, these centers eliminate the need for the institutional development of retention, promotion, and tenure guidelines that would allow faculty to pursue an academic career in CES. You cannot do that at my university or in my department. That path is littered with bodies. Both my university and my department have centers of engagement. The university has a nationally acclaimed center, and the department has one of the few in the nation. As the money flows, the future for both may be a reinstantiation of academic research, distant, sanitized, and bloodless, but safely publishable.

CONCLUSIONS

I have spent the last year reading the entire mainstream output of the discipline for the centennial volume in honor of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the National Communication Association. With my coauthors, Michael Middleton and Tiffany Dykstra, I have accumulated more than 10,000 articles published in C*ommunication Monographs, Journal of Communication, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly,* and the *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* intending an archive of every original research article published in each publication since its inception. I do not recommend this task to anyone. And frankly, the reading makes me more than a little uneasy. All that work, all that intellectual power, and this is it? Because my career starts slightly on the other side of the middle of that 100 years, I am just a few degrees from any author in that archive, and I have hoisted a glass with a good many

of them. I think I should feel more pride than I do. Something has to change; I still have hopes for community engaged teaching and research. I fear, though, that we are in a struggle for its soul and the soul of the academy. It is a struggle we could lose.

When organizations are challenged, as we in higher education certainly are in this economic and cultural climate, the worst thing they can do is to turn insular and work even harder at the practices that produced the challenge in the first place. I started with Boyer (1990). Let me end with Boyer (1996) once again: Two months before his death and five years after he advanced the discussion about the consequences of our efforts, he declared,

> America's colleges and universities are now suffering from a decline in public confidence and a nagging feeling that they are no longer at the vital center of the nation's work. . . . Still, our outstanding universities and colleges remain, in my opinion, among the greatest sources of hope for intellectual and civic progress in this country. I'm convinced that for this hope to be fulfilled, the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and [ethical] problems and must reaffirm its historic commitment to . . . the *scholarship of engagement.* (p. 19)

NOTE

1 This article was presented as the keynote address for the 2013 Northwest Communication Association conference in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The informality of the spoken word has been largely retained.

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Source Elicitation of Action Tendency Emotions in a Health Communication Context

LAUREN M. HAMEL

Karmanos Cancer Institute, Wayne State University Medical School

The numbers of overweight and obese children in the United States have reached epidemic levels. Excess body weight can result in a myriad of health problems during childhood and adulthood, particularly for girls. Mothers have a great deal of influence on the diet of preadolescent daughters, and the current research is focused on that powerful communicative relationship. I used action tendency emotions and the appraisal tendency framework to explore anger, sadness, and guilt as motivators of behavior. I used an experimental design with mothers (N = 132) of daughters aged 6–11 to determine what sources differentially elicit these emotions through hypothetical communication, and whether those emotions predict mothers' intent and encouragement of a healthy diet for their daughters. Findings indicated that emotions elicited from the same imagined message vary based on source, and a negative emotional response mechanism negatively predicted encouragement behavior.

KEYWORDS: Childhood overweight and obesity, family communication, health communication, action tendency emotions, appraisal tendency framework, message source

The percentage of overweight and obese preadolescent children (6–11 years of age) is consistently increasing. In the United States between 1980 and 2008, the percentage of overweight children more than doubled from 7.0% to 19.6% (Ogden, Carroll, Curtin, Lamb, & Flegal, 2010). This alarming trend is not limited by race, socioeconomic class, or region of the world (Caballero, 2007; Kosti

Lauren M. Hamel, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Population Studies and Disparities Research Program, Barbara Ann Karamos Cancer Institute, Wayne State University. She may be reached at hamell@karmanos.org.

& Panagiotakos, 2006; Odgen et al., 2010). It is a complex problem with many contributing factors (Anderson & Butcher, 2006), including the amount and type of food consumed (Johnson, Mander, Jones, Emmett, & Jebb, 2008a, 2008b; Reedy & Krebs-Smith, 2010; Vartanian, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2007).

Childhood weight problems can lead to a variety of physical and mental health problems in both childhood and adulthood, including an elevated risk of high blood pressure and high cholesterol (Daniels, 2006), low self-esteem and depression (Storch et al., 2006; Sweeting, Wright, & Minnis, 2005), poor academic achievement (Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989), and discrimination, which tends to be more severe for girls (Reilly et al., 2003; Strauss, 2000). Overweight and obese children are more likely to become overweight and obese adults (Deshmukh-Taskar et al., 2006) and, as a result, more likely to incur and die from type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and cancer (Biro & Wien, 2010; Engeland, Bjorge, Tverdal, & Sogaard, 2004). Overweight girls are also more likely than overweight boys to be overweight in adulthood (Guo et al., 2000). The most successful point of intervention for weight problems is during childhood before adolescence (Guo et al., 2000). This stage of life is typically considered to be between 6 and 11 years of age (Odgen et al., 2010). Because girls are more likely to experience psychosocial problems and the prolonged effects of being overweight, the current research focuses on this population rather than grouping various age groups and the genders together.

Impact of Mother–Daughter Relationship and Communication on Daughter's Health

The mother–daughter relationship and the communication that occurs between them have been shown to strongly affect a variety of health attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes for daughters. For instance, a series of U.S.-based studies have consistently shown that

the mother–daughter relationship and the type of communication that occurs between them have a strong influence on the likelihood of daughters engaging in safe sexual behaviors (Hutchinson, 2002; Hutchinson, Jemmott, Jemmott, Braverman, & Fong, 2003) and engaging in safe drinking behaviors (Bobrow, AvRuskin, & Siller, 1995). More germane to the current context is the consistent finding that the mother–daughter relationship and communication between them has a strong impact on the daughter's diet (Kichler & Crowther, 2001; Prescott & Le Poire, 2002; Turrisi, Wiersma, & Hughes, 2000; Vidovic, Juresa, Begovac, Mahnik, & Tocil, 2005), and her body image (Cooley, Toray, Wang, & Valdez, 2008). Specifically, both maternal perceptions of daughter's weight and eating behaviors and what mothers communicate to their daughters about weight and eating are related to eating and dieting behaviors in general and to disordered eating behaviors in daughters (Keel, Heatherton, Harnden, & Hornig, 1997; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010). This relationship is discussed further in the following section.

Maternal Effects on Food Consumption

United States–based studies have consistently found that the diets of girls are strongly influenced by their mothers in terms of regulation, modeling (Birch & Fisher, 2000; Cutting, Fisher, Grimm-Thomas, & Birch, 1999; Hill, Weaver, & Blundell, 1990), and communication. When communication between mother and daughter is positive and open (when topics of discussion are not limited or not overwhelmingly focused on problems), daughters are less likely to suffer from disordered eating (Vidovic, Juresa, Begovac, Mahnik, & Tocil, 2005). When communication between mother and daughter is negative (when topics of discussion are limited, conversations are burdened with problems, and critical comments are made about body shape and weight), daughters are more likely to exhibit disordered eating attitudes and behavior (Kichler & Crowther, 2001; Prescott & Le Poire, 2002).

Several areas remain to be explored regarding mother–daughter communication about diet. These include what interpersonal sources can influence mothers to encourage a healthful diet for their daughters, what emotions are elicited in these interpersonal health communication situations, and whether these emotions influence behavior. These questions are important for three reasons: people seek health information from interpersonal sources (Brashers, Goldsmith, & Hsieh, 2002; Dutta-Bergman, 2004), the cognitive appraisal of a situation can influence emotional experiences (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), and the emotions experienced when receiving health information can affect engagement in health behaviors (Smith et al., 2010). The current research seeks to shed further light on these areas. Specifically, several close interpersonal sources were assessed to determine their ability to elicit discrete action tendency emotions in mothers of girls and determine whether those emotions predict maternal encouragement of a healthful diet.

Interpersonal Sources of Health Information

Close interpersonal sources, such as friends and family, are often sought out as sources for health information (Brashers et al., 2002; Dutta-Bergman, 2004), and they often offer influential health messages (Pecchioni & Sparks, 2007; Smith et al., 2009, 2010). For instance, Smith et al. (2009) found that close friends and family members often offer information about health and healthful behaviors. More importantly, health information that is received from close friends and family is often remembered by those who receive it. Smith et al. (2009) went on to state that messages sent from sources who have experience with the health topic of interest are more likely to be remembered and offer influence than information from sources who do not have experience with the health topic. Thus, it stands to reason that mothers of preadolescent daughters will likely seek information about healthful eating for their daughters from close interpersonal sources who have experience with this health topic. Furthermore, preliminary formative efforts in this

line of research identified several close personal sources that this population thought would be influential in this matter. Specifically, Hamel (2009, 2010) found that mothers of preadolescent daughters viewed their own mothers, their mothers-in-law, and mothers of their daughters' classmates as sources that could offer information about healthful eating habits for their daughters that could affect their behavior. These three sources were included in the design of the current study.

Action Tendency Emotions and the Appraisal Tendency Framework

Advice from close interpersonal sources can elicit a range of discrete emotions (Dillard, Kinney, & Cruz, 1996). There is accumulating evidence that cognitive appraisals of a situation or context influence the emotions experienced (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), including the source of a message (Dillard et al., 1996). The type and extent of emotions experienced are argued to be influenced by several dimensions, including certainty, pleasantness, attentional activity, control, anticipated effort, and responsibility (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Although these dimensions are not the focus of the current effort, it draws on previous literature indicating that the sources of health messages influence health behavior through a varied emotional responses.

A line of research that assesses the link between behavioral responses and discrete emotions is focused on action tendency emotions and the appraisal tendency framework (ATF) (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001). Emotions are internal mental states that result from an evaluation of people, events, or objects (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988). Action tendency is the capability of discrete emotions to motivate some type of judgment or behavioral response (Izard & Ackerman, 2000; Lazarus, 1991). The ATF links emotion-specific appraisal processes to predictable judgments and choices caused by changes in cognition, physiology, and action in response to the event that elicited the emotion (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001). Dillard and Nabi (2006) argue that emotions have direct impact

on persuasion and behavior because of their associated action tendencies. Although evidence is accumulating around the general ability of certain discrete emotions to elicit predictable judgments, intentions, and behaviors (Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007; Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Nabi, 2002), particularly with a health communication or health behavior focus (Smith et al., 2010), it remains unclear what emotions are elicited by what sources and what behaviors are likely to occur subsequently.

Generally, negative emotions are found to be more effective at influencing behavior change than are positive emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Nabi, 2002). Of the negative emotions, fear is arguably the most understood in terms of its effect on attitude and behavior change (Nabi, 1999), whereas the theoretical and practical understanding of anger, sadness, and guilt as motivators to attitude and behavior change is still developing. Thus, the current effort is focused on these three emotions. *Anger* is the reaction to a demeaning offense (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991) and is differentiated from other negative emotions on its dimensions of certainty and responsibility (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Its associated action tendency is problem solving to neutralize the existing obstacle that is causing the anger (Nabi, 2002) or attacking the source of the offense (Dillard & Peck, 2001). *Sadness* is the result of a loss and is distinguished by its uncertainty, moderate avoidance, and situational control (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Although it has been shown to slow cognitive functioning (Izard & Ackerman, 2000; Lazarus, 1991), sadness can also increase inward evaluation and processing (Mitchell, 2000), which leads to problem-solving activity in an attempt to recover the loss (Dillard & Peck, 2001; Nabi, 1999). The response to sadness can be slower than the response to anger, but the subsequent problem solving makes it also worthy of investigation as a potential emotive influencer of behavior (Dillard & Peck, 2001; Nabi, 1999). *Guilt* is the reaction that occurs when one has transgressed (Izard, 1977; O'Keefe, 2002), and the action tendency is to atone for the harm (Dillard

& Peck, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Lindsey, Yun, & Hill, 2007). Atoning for the harm is typically a behavioral response in an effort to make amends with the person one has transgressed against (Dillard & Peck, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Lindsey et al., 2007). However, high arousal of guilt can result in reactive responses (O'Keefe, 2002) if a person perceives a threat to a freedom and will not acquiesce to the requested action as a means to reestablish personal autonomy (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). These feelings of irritation and annoyance interfere with any persuasive effects guilt provides (O'Keefe, 2002). Guilt is distinguished from other negative emotions by its focus on self-responsibility (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

The current research, which was conducted in the United States, considered the ability of close interpersonal sources to a mother of a preadolescent daughter, including one's own mother, mother-in-law, and a mother of a daughter's classmates, to elicit certain discrete emotions. These specific sources were chosen based on formative efforts in this line of research (Hamel, 2009, 2010). Participants from the same population reported that they would probably experience an emotional response to messages from these sources about encouraging a healthful diet for their preadolescent daughters. This finding, coupled with previous work that has demonstrated that people seek out close interpersonal others for health information and guidance and are influenced by those messages, especially when the source has direct experience with health topic of concern (Brashers et al., 2002; Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Pecchioni & Sparks, 2007; Smith et al., 2009, 2010), led to the posing of the following research question about sources' ability to elicit the discrete emotions of anger, sadness, and guilt:

RQ1: Will hypothetical messages from one's own mother, mother-in-law, and a mother of a daughter's classmate differ in their ability to elicit anger, sadness, and guilt?

Based on previous research in the area of action tendency emotions, the following hypotheses about the discrete emotions of anger, sadness, and guilt are posed:

HYPOTHESES 1, 2, AND 3: Anger, sadness, and guilt will be positive predictors of behavioral intention and actual encouragement of a healthful diet by mothers to their preadolescent daughters.

Last, because this study is assessing not only behavioral intent but also behavior, the final hypothesis is posited:

HYPOTHESIS 4: Behavioral intent to encourage a healthful diet for one's preadolescent daughter will be a positive predictor of actual encouragement of a healthful diet.

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

A sample of 132 mothers residing in the United States with at least one daughter between the ages of 6 and 11 was recruited through e-mail invitations by the members of the research center in which this study was conducted. The mean age was 40.2 years, with a range between 28 and 58 years. The ethnicity of the sample was 90.1% Caucasian, 3.8% African, 2.3% Latina, 3.0% Asian, and 0.8% other. Most participants were married (90.2%); 3.8% were single, 0.8% were engaged, 4.5% were divorced, and 0.8% were in a long-term relationship but not married. Almost half (48.5%) of the participants had completed graduate school, 9.1% had completed some graduate school, 29.5% had completed college or post–high school training, 9.8% had completed some college or post–high school training, and 2.3% had completed high school. All of the participants had at least one daughter between 6 and 11 years old, 19.7% had two daughters in that age range, and 3.0% had three daughters between 6 and 11 years old. More than half of the participants had at least one other

child (besides the daughters between 6 and 11; 62.1%). Ethical approval from the host institution was obtained before participant recruitment and data collection.

All participants received an e-mail invitation with a link to the web-based survey, which assessed all emotional responses to the message–source combination, demographic information, and one of the dependent variables, intent to encourage a healthful diet in their preadolescent daughters. The web survey was designed so that the combination of message and source was determined randomly when the participant began the survey. At the end of this survey, participants were given a web link to the second survey with a request to return in one week to complete a two-question follow-up survey to measure behavior (encouragement of a healthful diet for one's preadolescent daughter). All 132 participants completed the first web survey, and 32 (24.2%) participants completed the second web survey.

Experimental Design and Inductions

A 2 × 3 between-subjects experimental design was used. Each participant was randomly assigned to a condition and read one message from one of three sources (own mother, mother-in-law, or a mother of a daughter's classmate). One message focused on the lower likelihood of having an overweight daughter if a mother encouraged her to eat healthfully ("I am concerned with whether you talk with your daughter about her eating habits. You know, if you encourage her to eat better she will be less likely to be overweight as a child and as an adult"), and the second message focused on the improvement of a daughter's general social well-being as a child and an adult if a mother encouraged her to eat healthfully ("I am concerned with whether you talk with your daughter about her eating habits. You know, if you encourage her to eat better she will be more likely to experience more general social well-being as a child and as an adult.").

Measures

After reading one of the six message–source combinations, participants were asked to estimate how often they had heard this type of message from this source with one 7-point Likert response item ($M = 1.21$, $SD = 0.55$) and how likely it was that this source would present a message like this with one 7-point Likert response item ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.74$). These findings indicate that participants did not hear this type of message from these sources very often, and they thought it was unlikely they would ever hear these messages from these sources. Participants were then asked to assess how likely they would be to experience each emotion on receiving the hypothetical message from a particular source. The emotion scales were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (Hamilton & Hunter, 1988) because the scales were theoretically derived to assess each emotion. The CFAs were used to determine whether the items assessing these separate components were measuring these constructs reliably as predicted. These scales were adapted for the current purpose, so this was the first time they were used in their current state. All alpha levels were acceptable, so all three scales were fully retained: anger, $M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.79$, $\alpha = .92$; sadness, $M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.75$, $\alpha = .92$; and guilt, $M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.83$, $\alpha = .89$. The perceived likelihood of experiencing each emotion based on the hypothetical message was measured with four 7-item (1 = *I feel none of this*, 7 = *I feel a lot of this*) Likert-response scales for each emotion (Table 1). The items used to assess these emotions were partially adapted from Mitchell et al. (2001).

Additionally, nine items assessed the previously specified mechanisms predicted to be associated with each emotion: solve a problem, overcome an obstacle, return to a state of happiness and contentment, reduce unpleasant feelings, or respond because of feelings of irritation, aggravation, reduced freedom, or annoyance. One item assessed behavioral intent ($M = 6.56$, $SD = 0.71$), asking participants to indicate how likely they think they are to encourage a healthful diet in their preadolescent daughters in the future.

Table 1. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of Variables*

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	α
Anger	3.08	1.79	.92
Sadness	2.73	1.75	.92
Guilt	3.79	1.83	.89
Behavioral intent	6.56	0.71	One item[a]

[a]All scales were 1–7, where 7 is high.

To assess actual behavior (encouragement of their daughters to eat healthfully) one week after the completion of the survey, mothers were asked to complete a second survey and indicate whether they had engaged in the behavior of encouraging a healthful diet in their daughters in the previous week.

RESULTS

To ensure that the two messages did not result in any unpredicted significant findings, independent sample *t* tests were conducted. The messages used did not result in any differences in terms of emotions experienced (anger, $t(126) = -1.42$, $p = .159$; sadness, $t(124) = .03$, $p = .975$; guilt, $t(125) = -.243$, $p = .81$), so the data were collapsed across messages.

Source Elicitation of Emotions

Research Question 1 asked whether hypothetical messages from different sources (mother, mother-in-law, and mother of a daughter's classmate) would differ in their ability to elicit the emotions of anger, sadness, and guilt. One-way ANOVAs were conducted to assess any differences. Results regarding anger demonstrated a significant difference for source on anger, $F(2, 122) = 15.10$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .20$. Tukey's post hoc test demonstrated that one's mother-in-law ($M = 3.10^a$, $SD = 1.58$) and a mother of a daughter's

classmate ($M = 3.93^{a}$, $SD = 1.94$) were significantly more likely to elicit anger than one's own mother ($M = 2.10^{b}$, $SD = 1.25$). Results also demonstrated a significant difference for source on sadness, $F(2, 122) = 7.22$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$. Tukey's post hoc test revealed that a mother of a daughter's classmate ($M = 3.46^{a}$, $SD = 1.92$) was significantly more likely to elicit sadness than one's own mother ($M = 2.14^{b}$, $SD = 1.30$) and mother-in-law ($M = 2.48^{b}$, $SD = 1.69$). The results showed no significant difference for source on guilt, $F(2, 122) = 1.13$, $p = .326$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. In sum, one's mother-in-law and a mother of a daughter's classmate were more likely to elicit anger than one's own mother, and a mother of a daughter's classmate was more likely to elicit sadness than one's own mother and mother-in-law; however, there was no difference in sources' ability to elicit guilt (Table 2).

Emotional Influence on Intent and Behavior

To test the predictions that anger (H1), sadness (H2), and guilt (H3) are predictors of mothers' behavioral intent to encourage a healthful diet in their preadolescent daughters, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. Participant's age was entered in the first block, the three emotions of anger, sadness, and guilt were entered into the second block, and then they were regressed on the dependent variable of behavioral intent. To guard against nonessential multicollinearity, the variables were mean centered for all regression analyses before they were entered into the equations (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). The analyses indicated that the overall model was not significant, $F(4, 119) = 1.32$, $p = .27$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.01$ (Table 3).

To determine whether the emotions were significant predictors of mothers' actual encouragement of a healthful diet in their preadolescent daughters, participant age, emotions, and behavioral intent were entered into three-step logistic regression analyses with

Table 2. *Means, Standard Deviations of Sources' Elicitation of Emotions*

Emotion	Source	Mean	Standard Deviation
Anger	Mother	2.10[b]	1.25
	Mother-in-law	3.10[a]	1.58
	Mother of a daughter's classmates	3.93[a]	1.94
Sadness	Mother	2.14[b]	1.30
	Mother-in-law	2.48[b]	1.69
	Mother of a daughter's classmates	3.46[a]	1.92
Guilt	Mother	3.63[a]	1.72
	Mother-in-law	3.63[a]	1.93
	Mother of a daughter's classmates	4.08[a]	1.83

Table 3. *Unstandardized and Standardized Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Behavioral Intent*

Variable	B	*SE* B	β
Age	.006	.011	.047
Anger	.073	.058	.198
Sadness	.078	.066	.209
Guilt	–.048	.058	–.134
Negative response	–.078	.053	–.189
Positive outcome	–.044	.59	–.091

Table 4. *Coefficients for Logistic Regression of Predictors of Behavior*

Variable	B	*SE*	Exp(B)
Age	–.068	.040	0.934
Anger	.034	.209	1.034
Sadness	.337	.272	1.401
Guilt	–.364	.232	0.695
Negative response	–.419*	.194	0.658
Positive outcome	.235	.207	1.264
Behavioral intent	–.229	.326	0.795

*p < .05.

behavior as the dependent variable (Table 4). The overall model ($\chi^2 = 5.37$, df = 5, $p = .373$) was not significant.

Because of the lack of significant findings in both regression analyses, it was concluded that the data were not consistent with Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. More surprising, however, is that the data were also not consistent with Hypothesis 4, which predicted that behavioral intent would be a significant positive predictor of mothers' actual encouragement of a healthful diet in their preadolescent daughters.

Post Hoc Analyses

A post hoc analysis of the emotional mechanisms was conducted to determine whether intent or behavior may have been influenced by perceptions of broader states or possible future outcomes. The nine emotional mechanism items were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis with a varimax rotation. This analysis yielded two distinct factors with eigenvalues of 4.49 and 1.79 and reliabilities of .90 and .79 (Table 5). One focused on negative reasons for responding to a message. These reasons included responding because of feelings of annoyance, aggravation, irritation, and reduced freedom. The other

Table 5. *Factor Loadings and Eigenvalues for Emotional Mechanisms*

	Factors		
Scale and item	**Factor 1**	**Factor 2**	**Eigenvalue**
Negative Feelings I would respond to this message because I was annoyed.	.89	.10	4.49
I would respond to this message because I was irritated.	.92	.19	0.30
I would respond to this message because I was aggravated.	.88	.27	0.21
I would respond to this message because I do not like being told what to do.	.74	.10	0.11
Positive Outcome I would respond to this message so that I could feel happier.	.12	.78	1.78
I would respond to this message so that I could feel more content.	.18	.84	0.53
I would respond to this message in order to solve a problem.	.13	.76	0.43
I would respond to this message in order to overcome an obstacle.	.11	.72	0.22

factor focused on future positive outcomes and included reasons for responding based on future happiness, contentment, and the ability to solve a problem or overcome an obstacle. One mechanism item regarding a response based on eliminating unpleasant feelings did not cleanly load on either factor. In a post hoc analysis, these two factors were included in a reanalysis of the multiple linear

regression with intent as the dependent variable and the logistic regression with behavior as the dependent variable, to determine whether either of these overarching mechanisms predicted intent or behavior.

The overall model of the linear regression assessing predictors on intent was found not to be significant, $F(6, 110) = 1.18$, $p = .32$, and although the logistic regression analysis assessing predictors of behavior was also not significant ($\chi^2 = 10.55$, df = 7, $p = .16$), it revealed that the negative response emotional mechanism was a significant, but negative, predictor of encouragement behavior ($\beta = -.419$, $p < .05$). This finding suggests that if a message involves some type of negative response such as feeling annoyed, aggravated, or a loss of freedom, the respondent is less likely to engage in encouraging behavior.

DISCUSSION

This research explored mothers' emotional responses to hypothetical messages from various close personal sources. The ultimate goal of this line of research is to tap into the powerful and influential communicative relationship between mother and preadolescent daughter as it relates to the daughter's diet. The literature focused on action tendency emotions was used (Lazarus, 1991; Nabi, 1999) along with the ATF (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001) as a means to elicit health communication behavior as a framework. Specifically, I examined the ability of various sources to elicit discrete emotions and assessed whether emotion responses are likely to predict behavioral intent and behavior. This investigation included three discrete action tendency emotions (anger, sadness, and guilt) that have been shown to possess problem-focused action tendencies (Dillard & Peck, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Nabi, 1999; O'Keefe, 2002; Turner, 2007). This area of inquiry is important theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the literature

Table 6. *Correlation Between Measures*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Anger						
2. Sadness	.68**					
3. Guilt	.51**	.79**				
4. Negative response	.64**	.41*	.26**			
5. Positive outcome	.32*	.51**	.58**	.36**		
6. Intent	.13	.12	−.04	.02	−.09	
7. Behavior	−.04	.02	−.04	−.14	.05	−.02

*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .001.

on action tendency emotions (especially in regard to anger, sadness, and guilt) is still being developed, in terms of what sources are best at eliciting discrete emotions and what effects those discrete emotions have on action. Practically, the relationship of focus here (between mother and preadolescent daughter) has been shown to have a great influence on eating habits (Kichler & Crowther, 2001; Prescott & Le Poire, 2002; Vidovic et al., 2005) and, subsequently, the general health of preadolescent girls while still in preadolescence and beyond (Cutting et al., 1999; Hill et al., 1990). Thus, it is important to understand what influences mothers to encourage a healthful diet in their preadolescent daughters.

Sources

Three close interpersonal sources were investigated to determine whether they would differ in their ability to elicit particular discrete emotions. It was found that hypothetical messages from certain sources are indeed more likely to elicit discrete emotions than others, potentially based on situational and contextual appraisals of

those reading the messages (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Specifically, hypothetical messages from one's mother-in-law and a mother of a daughter's classmate were more likely to evoke anger than one's own mother, whereas a mother of a daughter's classmate was more likely to evoke sadness than one's own mother and one's mother-in-law. Dillard and Meijnders (2002) have also reported that messages can result in more than just the targeted emotion because of the subjective appraisal of persuasive messages. This indicates that the characteristics of a source have a great deal of influence on the emotional response to a message, and subsequently any attitude or behavior change.

Emotions

The discrete negative emotions of anger, sadness, and guilt were assessed as potential predictors of intent and actual encouragement of a healthful diet in mothers' preadolescent daughter. These emotions were included because they have been previously shown to possess problem-focused action tendencies (Dillard & Peck, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Nabi, 1999; O'Keefe, 2002; Turner, 2007), and the theoretical understanding of their influence on behavior is being developed (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Nabi, 1999). It was predicted that anger, sadness, and guilt would all be positive predictors of intent and behavior. The data were not consistent with any of these predictions, but a post hoc analysis involving positive and negative emotional mechanisms was conducted to determine whether intent or behavior was caused by a broader influence rather than discrete emotions. The exploratory factor analysis revealed two factors for the emotional mechanisms, one centered on responses motivated by negative feelings such as being aggravated or annoyed and the other on responses to achieve more positive feelings such as feeling happier or overcoming an obstacle or solving a problem.

When these factors were included in subsequent analyses on

intent and behavior, the response motivated by negative feelings was the only significant predictor of encouraging behavior. However, this predictor was negative. This means that the more participants felt annoyed and aggravated by the message, the less likely they were to encourage their daughters to eat healthfully. This finding may be the result of feelings of reactance, defined as a response when a person perceives a threat to a freedom and will not acquiesce to the requested action as a means to reestablish personal freedom (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). This general reactance finding is in line with what has been found in the past in regard to the emotion of guilt (O'Keefe, 2002). Past research on guilt has found that persuasive messages that evoke high levels of guilt tend *not* to lead to greater persuasion or behavior change (O'Keefe, 2002). This lack of persuasion is thought to be caused by feelings of irritation or annoyance, and this finding demonstrates that it is important not to irritate or aggravate this population or risk the opposite of the desired behavior.

Future Research

Future research in this area should improve on the messages presented. The messages in this case were simply read by the participants from a computer screen, and they were asked to imagine the source communicating the message to them. The addition of a more stimulating audiovisual message might be more likely to elicit varying levels of discrete emotion. Varying the intensity of the emotions may offer more insight into the influence on subsequent attitude and behavior change. This would also allow deeper examination of the effect emotions have on different types of persuasion goals, specifically, whether there is a difference in the types of emotions that influence whether one is changing a behavior, maintaining a behavior, or stopping a behavior. The current research effort did not differentiate mothers who were continuing to encourage a healthful diet from those who were just beginning to. Additionally,

the influence of source on differential emotional experiences is initial evidence that the appraisal of the situation can influence the elicited emotions, which is in line with what has been found previously (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). However, future research should continue to investigate what source characteristics are likely to elicit which emotions.

Limitations

This effort is not without limitations. As previously mentioned, the emotional induction was achieved simply by the participants reading from a computer screen. Although varying levels of the emotions were experienced, it could be the case that the presentations of messages were not powerful enough to induce emotions intensely enough to promote intent or behavior. Future research should craft messages that induce varying degrees of these emotions to further test their action ability.

After participants read the message of concern, they were asked how frequently they have actually received this type of message from the source and how likely this source would be to actually say this message. Most respondents (83.3%) indicated that they had never received this message from the source, and 40.2% of participants strongly disagreed that this message would ever come from this source. This lack of realism may also have been a limitation of this study.

Last, it could be the case that the first stage of data collection may have been a cue to action in itself. Because the survey instrument did not mask what it was assessing, it is possible that just completing the survey made the behavior of encouraging a healthful diet more salient. Moreover, because respondents were asked to return in a week, they may have been cognizant of their encouraging behaviors in case they were asked to report on them.

CONCLUSION

This effort was designed to address the growing overweight and obesity problem of girls through further exploration of the influence of hypothetical messages from close interpersonal sources on the elicitation of discrete emotions and the influences of emotion on mothers' intent and encouragement of a healthful diet. Overall, it was found that sources varied in their ability to elicit emotions from the same hypothetical message, and a broad negative response mechanism was the only predictor of actual encouragement behavior. Health communication practitioners should be aware of the best message–source combinations to elicit the desired emotional responses to their messages and understand that a reaction of avoiding, aggravation, or irritation may result in undesired behaviors.

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