Comm-entary

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Table of Contents

The Influence of Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" on Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet" by Nick Miale ......................6

War Justification Rhetoric of President George W. Bush by Anna Pape .............................................................................................13

Rhetorical Analysis of Thomas E. Franklin's "Ground Zero Spirit" as an Iconic Photograph by Janet Lang .........................................................18

Verbal Depiction of the Visual: The Confederate Monument at Shiloh National Military Park by Dalisa Carpenter ........................................26

A Scene Function Model Analysis of Television's Cult Hit "Lost" by Adam-Scott Donovan ........................................................................30

Superman Goes to War: Heroes, Enemies, and the Manipulation of Perception by Michael Soha ........................................................................41


Effects of Negative Political Advertisements by Kathryn Costello ..........87

Social Construction: A Family Approach by Caitlin Bergin ..................103

Final Observation by Mark Avery ..........................................................115

Honors Project

The Influence of Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" on Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet"

Nick Miale

Malcolm X and Influence

In his essay, "The Influence of Malcolm X on Black Militancy," Frederick D. Harper asserts that, "Great men influence great men and are in turn influenced by great men," (Harper, 1971). He goes on to give a specific example, arguing that, "The personality and philosophy of Malcolm X have strongly affected the philosophy of American civil rights leader Eldridge Cleaver, black militant leaders, and black militant students," (Harper, 1971). Regina Jennings cites Malcolm X as, "the muse of [poet, Sonia] Sanchez," and also argues that, "The 1960's poets...mythologized Malcolm X, for example, imitating his boldness in oratory and demeanor," (Jennings, 1998). William W. Sales, Jr. credits Malcolm X with influencing Martin Luther King Jr., a man with a completely different philosophy, claiming that, "Malcolm X's presence, in life and in death, encouraged King's nonviolent movement to take a more strident and militant nonviolence stance," (Sales, 1994). It is clear that there is agreement among scholars that Malcolm X greatly influenced African-American leadership and culture.

Scholars also typically agree on two major figures that influenced Malcolm X: Marcus Garvey and Elijah Muhammad. Robert Terrill, when examining the speeches of Malcolm X, argued that, "The influence of Garvey's nationalist rhetoric is predominant," (Terrill, 2004). In his autobiography, Malcolm X credits Elijah Muhammad as a tremendous influence on his philosophy, saying that, "Mr. Muhammad's teachings reversed my attitude toward my black brothers," (Haley & Malcolm X, 1965). There is, however, much more scholarship left to be done on the orators who most influenced Malcolm X's rhetoric. In the following essay, I argue that Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the
"The Ballot or the Bullet"

On April 3, 1964, Malcolm X first delivered "The Ballot or the Bullet" address in Cleveland, Ohio at Cory Methodist Church. The meeting was sponsored by the Cleveland chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) as part of a symposium entitled, "The Negro Revolt—What Comes Next?" Louis E. Lomax was the first speaker at the symposium and his address was in line with the CORE doctrine. Malcolm X followed, and he delivered his "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech for the first time. Though Malcolm X's speech received far more applause than Lomax's from the large, predominantly black audience, it focused more on Black Nationalism and militancy and less on the ideology of CORE.

"The Ballot or the Bullet" and Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death."


In discussing these two speeches separately, similar interpretations and criticisms are bound to arise because the speeches are so much alike. The similarities between the two in terms of thematic content and phrasing are striking, and it is more than coincidental.
A Direct Rhetorical Influence

Malcolm X was familiar with Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” address as evidenced when he paraphrased it and makes reference to Henry. He recognized the situational similarities between African-Americans in the 1960's and colonial Americans in the 1770's seeking freedom from their oppressors. Malcolm X chose to model his speech after Henry’s because it was to be delivered in a similar context, which he acknowledged, saying, “these 13 little scrawny states, tired of taxation without representation, tired of being exploited and oppressed and degraded, told that big British Empire ‘liberty or death.’ And here you have 22 million Afro-American black people today catching more hell than Patrick Henry ever saw,” (Malcolm X, 1965, ¶ 32). He likens the current situation in the U.S. to Henry’s situation in colonial America but explains that it is on a larger scale. Though that’s one of only two direct references to Patrick Henry, there is more evidence within “The Ballot or the Bullet” that shows it was influenced by Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.”

Henry’s speech has a sense of urgency, evident in the passage, “It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace-- but there is no peace. The war is actually begun!” (Henry, 1775, ¶ 6). Henry declares that the time for deliberation about what to do has passed and now the people of the colonies must fight. He acknowledges that their past non-violent attempts have been futile, saying, “Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne!” (Henry, 1775, ¶ 4). Henry cites that “the throne” or the British Empire is their negligent oppressor against whom they must fight.

The same urgency is found in “The Ballot or the Bullet.” Malcolm X informs his audience that the time for action is the present and they can’t wait any longer when he says, “So today, our people are disillusioned. They’ve become disenchanted. They’ve become dissatisfied, and in their frustrations they want action. And in 1964 you’ll see this young black man, this new generation asking for the ballot or the bullet.” (Malcolm X, 1965, ¶ 26). This sense of urgency is also present when he says, “And 1964
looks like it might be the year of the ballot or the bullet. Why does it look like it might be the year of the ballot or the bullet? Because Negroes have listened to the trickery, and the lies, and the false promises of the white man now for too long. And they’re fed up,” (Malcolm X, 1965, ¶ 27). Malcolm X credits African-American unrest as the primary reason for immediate action. He attributes this unrest to the white man’s neglect of the rights of African-Americans, just as Henry attributed the unrest of colonial Americans to the oppressive British government. Both Henry and Malcolm X demanded immediate action because of communal unrest with negligent oppressors.

Both “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” and “The Ballot or the Bullet” appeal for representation and convey the idea that those without it are nothing or will be nothing more than slaves. In Henry’s speech he says, “Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery!” (Henry, 1775, ¶ 5). Henry argues that since the colonies have no political representation, they will inevitably become subservient to Britain. Malcolm X uses the phrase “second-class citizen” to describe the unrepresented African-Americans in the United States, saying, “They don’t have second class citizenship in any other government on this earth. They just have slaves and people who are free. Well this country is a hypocrite. They try and make you think they set you free by calling you a second class citizen. No, you’re nothing but a 20th century slave,” (Malcolm X, 1965, ¶ 24). The argument in Malcolm X’s speech is identical to that in Henry’s; those who aren’t politically represented are slaves in their society.

In his speech, Henry was describing colonial America’s emancipation from Britain. Malcolm X was describing a similar emancipation of blacks from their white oppressors. Henry tells his audience the following:

“If we wish to be free-- if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending--if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until
the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained--we must fight!” (Henry, 1775, ¶ 4)

Henry encourages his fellow Virginians to take up arms and fight once again, but here he describes what they will be fighting for, freedom. Throughout, the speech he has emphasized that they will only be free if they can separate themselves from Britain and establish their own nation. In Malcolm X’s speech, he too declares freedom as his audience’s incentive to fight against their oppressors, and, like Henry, encourages separation to achieve this goal, saying, “He tells you I’m for separation and you’re for integration to keep us fighting with each other. No, I’m not for separation and you’re not for integration. What you and I is for is freedom. Only you think that integration will get you freedom, I think separation will get me freedom,” (Malcolm X, 1965, ¶ 60).

The most direct link between Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” and Malcolm X’s “The Ballot or the Bullet” can be found within the latter speech. Henry’s famous concluding words, “give me liberty or give me death,” (Henry, 1775, ¶ 6) are referenced by Malcolm X when he says, “It’ll be the -- the ballot or it’ll be the bullet. It’ll be liberty or it’ll be death,” (Malcolm X, 1965, ¶ 65). Malcolm X not only makes reference to Henry’s speech, but he coins his own term, “the ballot or the bullet” to convey the same idea of “liberty or death” that Henry presented. Malcolm X acknowledges Henry’s speech, relates it to his own, then transforms a part of it into his own speech. As he has done throughout “The Ballot or the Bullet,” Malcolm X is taking the ideas of Patrick Henry and applying them to the context of the 1960’s and the African-American struggle for equality.

Conclusion

There are a number of parallels between Malcolm X’s “The Ballot or the Bullet” and Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.” Malcolm X was influenced greatly by Patrick Henry, and it is evident in the similarities between the two speeches. The overriding theme of gaining freedom via political representation and violence in “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” is also a dominant theme in “The Ballot or the Bullet,” and both are characterized by urgency and the offering of the same
ultimatum: freedom or violence. Malcolm X’s paraphrasing and referencing of Henry’s speech offers further support to the notion that Malcolm X was influenced by Henry. By tracing the rhetorical influences of important orators such as Malcolm X, scholars can better understand speeches in their original context, but can also reexamine them in a whole new context as compared to earlier speeches by other orators. By examining not only the speaker, but also his influences, we are able to see how his personal politics and philosophy fused together with the ideas of others to create his own unique rhetoric.

References


War Justification Rhetoric of President George W. Bush

Anna Pape

"It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it"

Robert E. Lee, 1861

In America, war is a course of action not hastily or unnecessarily taken; when the country engages in armed conflict, it must be justified. Throughout American history, generic constraints have developed for war justification rhetoric. The audience expects to hear certain things in a speech to justify war. The purpose of this article is to examine the war justification rhetoric of President George W. Bush on the Iraqi conflict to discover the similarities and differences to generic war justification rhetoric.

President Bush’s war justification rhetoric contains elements of the forensic genre, similar to the form adopted by earlier US war-time Presidents. This rhetoric seeks a judgment from the audience on the justice of the conflict, prosecuting the enemy and defending US actions. The general prosecution outline of the enemy is as follows: 1) The enemy has committed a deliberate, unjustifiable action and has a history of disregard for universal law and human dignity; and 2) The enemy is a threat to national security and the threat must be removed.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt (December 8, 1941) spoke of Japan’s deliberate deception and the "premeditated invasion." In 1962, President Kennedy spoke of the Soviet arms buildup in Cuba as an "explicit threat to peace...in flagrant and deliberate defiance of the Rio Pact..." (October 23, 1962). And President Bush similarly speaks of the Iraqi regime: "...Iraq’s eleven year history of defiance, deception and bad faith" (George W. Bush, Oct. 7, 2001)
"...the Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons"
(George W. Bush, Oct. 7, 2002)

President Bush builds his case against the Iraqi regime using inartistic and artistic proofs. While presenting factual evidence against the Iraqi regime, he utilizes pathos to persuade the audience and encourage feelings of anger, indignation, and fear. In his war justification rhetoric, President Bush includes “devil terms” to describe the Iraqi regime; terms he knows Americans associate with evil: “aggression,” “brutally occupy,” “terror and control,” “Stalin,” “murderous dictator,” and “genocide.” President Kennedy spoke of the “unmistakable evidence” of offensive missile sites in Cuba to undoubtedly “provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere” (John F. Kennedy October 23, 1962). In 1994, President Clinton described the Haitian dictator’s “horrible intimidation campaign of rape, torture and mutilation.”

While prosecuting the enemy, President Bush defends the actions and future plans of the US just as earlier Presidents did. Just as “devil terms” were used to describe the enemy, now “god terms” are used to describe the US. The US is portrayed as upholding men’s inalienable rights: “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

"...we believe the Iraqi people are capable of human liberty...we will work to advance liberty and peace in [Iraq].”
(George W. Bush, March 17, 2004)

"Saddam Hussein must disarm himself—or for the sake of peace, we will lead a coalition to disarm him."
(George W. Bush, March 17, 2004)

War is emphasized as a last resort for the US; a defensive act, and a response to the actions of the enemy, necessary because of the commitment of the country to freedom and peace.
"...we will use diplomacy where possible and force when necessary."
(William Clinton, 1994)

"...every measure has been taken to avoid war and every measure will be taken to win it."
(George W. Bush, March 17, 2004)

"We believe in freedom and we believe in peace. And we believe the Iraqi dictator is a threat to peace."
(George W. Bush, November 7, 2002)

Common to war justification rhetoric is an apostrophe to the people of the country who are in the clutches of the lawless regime. While the US is against the evil leaders of the country, a sense of friendship and compassion is conveyed to the innocent people of the same country. President Kennedy addressed the "captive people of Cuba;" President Clinton addressed the oppressed Haitians; and President Bush follows this form in addressing Iraqis:

"We will tear down the apparatus of terror and help you build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free."
(George W. Bush, March 17, 2004)

War justification rhetoric most often is concluded with persuasion through pathos. Rallying statements evoke feelings of confidence in the cause, the strength, and the ultimate victory of America.

"We will gain the inevitable triumph – so help us God".  (Franklin Roosevelt, December 8, 1941)

"And one path we shall never chose, and that is the path of surrender or submission."
(John F. Kennedy October 23, 1962)

"Our nation is strong, our purpose is firm, and our cause is just."
(George W. Bush April 16, 2003)

Although President Bush’s speeches closely follow the generic constraints for war justification rhetoric, certain elements
of his rhetoric are different. The emphasis on terror and terrorists is unique to his rhetoric and plays a key role in the persuasiveness of the speeches by encouraging feelings of fear and indignation. His underlying terror enthymeme is as follows:

"Since September 11th we’ve been engaged in a war on terror.”
(George W. Bush, April 16, 2003)

Iraq “has aided, trained and harbored terrorist, including operatives of al Qaeda.”
(George W. Bush, March 17, 2004)

The logical conclusion is that the Iraqi regime must be removed. While war justification rhetoric often includes themes of aggressive governments and threats to national security, it does not often emphasize rebuilding the country after removing the oppressive regime. Here President Bush’s rhetoric is different; rebuilding Iraq is a dominant theme in his speeches:

“...the United States and its allies will help the Iraqi people rebuild their economy and create institutions of liberty...”
(George W. Bush, Oct. 7, 2002)

President Bush’s war justification rhetoric is very similar to the rhetoric of former war-time presidents; it seeks to defend the US cause and denigrate the enemy using inartistic and artistic proofs.

References


Robert E. Lee, Confederate Commander, Remark to General Longstreet at the First Battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861.

Rhetorical Analysis of Thomas E. Franklin’s *Ground Zero Spirit* as an Iconic Photograph

Janet Lang

A thin and tired mother, holding her children and staring into a camera has come to represent the Great Depression. An image of a soldier and a woman embracing in a passionate kiss in the middle of street celebration represents overall feelings of joy towards the end of a war. A naked child running down the street screaming in terror captures the Vietnam War and the horror associated with such battles. Single images can provide definitive representations of historical happenings and shared cultural beliefs. Photographs that accomplish this feeling are referred to as iconic.

On September 12, 2001, a photograph taken by Thomas E. Franklin of three firemen raising an American flag, with a backdrop of rubble at Ground Zero in New York City, was printed on the front cover of New Jersey’s *The Record*. The photo was put on the Associated Press wire service and appeared on the front covers of newspapers around the world. The photograph, originally titled, *Ground Zero Spirit*, was almost immediately compared to Joe Rosenthal’s 1945 photograph of six marines raising an American flag at Iwo Jima. This article explores how the image of the firemen raising the American flag at Ground Zero is an iconic photograph, what the implications of such a photograph are in American culture, and how the image may also be considered an ideographical representative form.

I will discuss how the flag raising at Ground Zero meets Robert Hariman’s and John Louis Lucaites’ (2001) four criteria for iconic photography. Hariman and Lucaites claim that the photographs should be “recognized by everyone within a public culture, understood to be representations of historically significant events, objects of strong emotional identification or response, and regularly reproduced or copied across a range of media, genres, and topics” (p. 37). I will address the symbolism and shared community this iconic image creates by exploring Hariman and
Lucaites’ ideas regarding the way photojournalism underwrites liberal-democratic public culture. I will also draw upon Spratt, Peterson and Lagos’ (2005) article concerning the way iconic imagery affects an audience collectively. Additionally I will explore the appropriation of the flag raising at Ground Zero in an editorial cartoon by arguing that this illustrates how the image is in transformation from representing the particular towards representing the general. Finally, Edwards and Winkler’s (1997) study of Rosenthal’s Iwo Jima image in cartoons will aid in the exploration of visual ideography.

The image of the three firemen raising the American flag amidst the debris of the World Trade Center is recognizable by all Americans. The image came about directly following the tragic events of September 11th and has been reprinted and made prevalent ever since. The photograph represents the historically significant event of the collapse of the Twin Towers. The Twin Towers are visible in the debris, which make up the background of the photo. Firemen, major players in the rescue efforts, are the central characters of the image.

This photograph elicits a strong emotional response from its audience. During a time of tragedy and crisis, this image conveyed a sense of strength and perseverance, in addition to representing a sense of community. Spratt, Peterson and Lago (2005) explain, “Sharing these emotions through a mediated experience, as occurred during the September 11th terrorist attacks, can foster a sense of national community, even if we have never been to New York or knew any of the victims and their families” (p. 121). A feeling of patriotism arises from the visual image of the American flag being lifted towards the heavens as the firemen gaze up at it. The firemen elicit feelings of pride and of heroism found in the everyday man. Viewers can identify with the firemen, who represent someone anyone might know – a father, a neighbor or even oneself. Finally, the image of the flag raising at Ground Zero has been commonly reproduced during its short existence. The image has appeared in a myriad of newspapers and magazines; it was made into a commemorative “Heroes 2001” stamp, has been the basis for many statues, and appears on multiple souvenirs including coins, plates, and posters. In accordance with Hariman
and Lucaites’ (2001) criteria of iconic photography, Franklin’s photograph is iconic.

Aside from providing criteria to establish a photograph as iconic, Hariman and Lucaites (2001) discuss the ways in which iconic photos function to underwrite a liberal-democratic public culture. According to these authors, collective identity is necessary for liberal-democratic politics to survive. Iconic photos function to establish a collective identity through presentation of the “individual aggregate” (p. 39). The individual aggregate is a term that describes one person who represents a collection of others. In the case of the flag raising at ground zero, the firemen are the individual aggregate. The firemen, almost like soldiers, represent the typical American who has the ability to become a hero and the obligation to serve his country. Hariman and Lucaites (2001) explain the idea:

“The articulation of liberal-democracy in American culture operates in an apparently irresolvable tension between individual sovereignty and collective agency...These tensions are especially pronounced during moments of crisis and disaster such as war or economic depression, where any political response has to be oriented toward large scale measures designed to meet needs defined in the aggregate, while still maintaining the ideological primacy of the individual.” (pp. 39-40)

After the September 11th disaster, the country needed to be politically unified and this photo served as an excellent way to do so. In our society, we highly value the individual. This is an ideological obstacle that we confront politically when faced with a situation that calls for a unified public. The firemen depicted in the iconic photo as individual aggregates served to unify citizens and, in a sense, prepared them for war.

The idea of unification as a result of imagery is also explored in Spratt, Peterson and Lagos’ essay, “Of Photographs and Flags: Uses and Perceptions of an Iconic Image Before and After September 11, 2001” (2005). This article explores a shared community created by the American flag image and how this image serves to unite the public in times of crisis. The firemen raising the American flag during a tragedy symbolically reveals
common goals and values. The flag symbolizes American ideals of liberty, equality and democracy. The firemen working together symbolize a communal effort towards a common cause, as well as strength and valor. Since we live in such a heterogeneous society, the iconic image helps to unite the masses and create an imagined national community by exposing values that the majority of Americans recognize and hold very high.

"We argue that photojournalistic images also create cultural frames and provide significant ways for us to perceive and understand our surroundings, values and history. In iconic photos, which have achieved a social status beyond their mere visual representation of fact, these frames come to symbolize historic American themes. When this happens, visual images have the potential to elicit shared emotional reactions, and at times, even the impetus to political action on the part of news audiences. Iconic visuals often build images of national unity central to democratic ideology" (Spratt, Peterson, and Lagos, 2005, p.120).

Spratt, Peterson and Lagos (2005) believe iconic photographs come to represent more than the actual historic event they result from and symbolize historic American themes. Patriotism and communal effort towards a common goal are symbolically represented by the flag raising at Ground Zero.

This paper will next examine an editorial cartoon that appropriates Franklin's iconic photo and explore how it functions both iconically and ideographically, through application of Edwards and Winkler's (1997) study. In 2005, the Sacramento Bee, a California newspaper, published an editorial cartoon which depicted three firemen raising a flag with the Playboy Bunny symbol on it. This image, paired with two other cartoon depictions of firemen, was printed in reference to a recent fire department scandal in California (Figure 1-1). Edwards and Winkler (1997) studied the appropriation of the Iwo Jima flag raising image in a vast array of editorial cartoons and proposed that the original iconic image no longer functioned to simply represent a historical happening. Instead, they suggest that its new function is on a rhetorical level where the image is abstracted and elevated to a cultural figure. As a cultural figure, the Iwo Jima image embodies
cultural ideals and values of the body politic (Edwards and Winkler, 1997, pp. 289-293).

Edwards and Winkler (1997) use Michael McGee’s definition of ideographs as “culturally grounded, summarizing, and authoritative terms that enact their meaning by expressing an association of cultural ideals and experiences in an ever evolving and reifying form within the rhetorical environment. An ideograph’s meaning develops through its usage and applications, operating as an abstraction and a fragment within the larger rhetorical environment” (Edwards and Winkler, 1997, p. 298). McGee’s definition is limited to describing verbal ideographs. Edwards and Winkler argue that this definition, along with McGee’s four characteristics of an ideograph, can be applied to visual images, specifically the Iwo Jima photograph. I will argue that these characteristics also define the flag raising at Ground Zero as a visual ideograph.

![Great Moments in Sacramento Firefighting](http://www.kcra.com/news/4105963/detail.html)

The first of McGee’s four characteristics of an ideograph is that it must be an ordinary language term or, in this case, an
ordinary image found in political discourse. The iconic image must be recognized by everyone within a culture. The image of the 9/11 flag raising is frequently reproduced and easily recognized by American citizens. It is within a mass recognition that the image starts to represent more than the event.

The second characteristic of an ideograph is that it must be an “abstraction representing a collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal” (Edwards and Winkler, 1997, p. 299). The Iwo Jima image was used to unite the nation in the war effort and arguably, the flag raising at Ground Zero was used to do the same. The firemen raising the American flag amidst the rubble of the Twin Towers served to unite a nation against a common enemy and to prepare them for war. It also ignites symbolic notions of honor, heroism and patriotism within the American viewer. The third characteristic McGee offers states that the ideograph must warrant power as well as guide behavior. The Iwo Jima image shows success achieved through collective sacrifice. Without this image, people may have been critical of the number of lives lost at the battle of Iwo Jima, but this image serves to make that criticism unacceptable. The 9/11 flag-raising photograph shows America rising from the ashes to be victorious in spirit. The focus is not on how the tragedy could have been prevented, but rather on the heroic efforts of everyday men and America’s strength and perseverance. The image functions as an ideograph by providing the context for understanding a tragic event. The image does not allow for criticism of American policies or of the developing war. One is seen as socially deviant if he does not respond appropriately.

The final characteristic McGee presents is that the ideograph must be culture bound. The flag raising at Ground Zero represent the ideals and values of American culture. The fireman symbolizes every man and the American flag represents the cultural ideals of democracy (Edwards and Winkler, 1997, pp. 299-301).

Edwards and Winkler (1997) conclude that they can not definitively identify any other visual images that function ideographically as representative forms, but point to other iconic photos as possibilities. They point to recontextualization and
appropriation as central features of the transformation of visual images into representational forms. The cartoon appropriating the flag raising at Ground Zero operates as a lampooning device, showing that the fire department is not all full of heroes. By using such a recognizable cultural image that is heavily charged with American values, the artists were able to get their point across. The cartoon has nothing to do with the historic event of September 11th, but rather the American ideal of the heroic everyday man symbolized in the firemen. By the standards of Edwards and Winkler (1997), it is this abstracted meaning instead of an historical representation that supports the view that the 9/11 flag raising is visually ideographical as well as iconic.

Edwards and Winkler (1997) believe that visual ideographs also function as icons and that the “function of denotive representation associated with icons is a secondary feature of the totalized rhetorical function of these images” (p. 303). Other scholars, such as Spratt, Peterson and Lagos (2005), as well as Hariman and Lucaites (2001), do not make the distinctions Edwards and Winkler do with regards to iconic photos. Edwards and Winkler define an image as iconic, strictly in the terms of representing an historical event. It is only when an image is abstracted to a level where its meaning symbolically represents shared ideas of a culture that they have reached a status of an ideograph. Other authors do not make these distinctions and their definitions of iconic photography include describing an image that contains cultural values. Whether the photograph of the firemen raising the American flag at Ground Zero on September 11, 2001 is analyzed as iconic or an ideograph, I am led to the same conclusion. Eventually, an iconic photograph comes to mean more than just the events it represents.

References


Verbal Depiction of the Visual:  
The Confederate Monument at Shiloh National Military Park

Dalisa Carpenter

The verbal depiction of the visual is very important to the study of rhetorical display. Rhetorical scholar Kenneth Burke furthers our understanding of this concept with the use of the term “terministic screen.” Terministic screen is identified by Burke as meaning that, upon the selective use of terms, the attention of the audience is directed into certain channels rather than others. By using particular terminology when describing something or someone, the speaker or narrative filters out certain aspects of what is being seen and lets in other aspects. Burke says that “we must use terministic screens, since we can’t say anything without the use of terms” (Burke, 1966, p. 49). These terministic screens can be either explicit or implicit. In the case of the Confederate Monument at Shiloh National Military Park, explicit “terministic screens” are put into play. This monument is an excellent example of the verbal depiction of the visual using Burke’s theory. The narrative that accompanies the monument channels the viewers’ thoughts and attention in a way that excludes other meanings, and, in turn, allows the audience to understand the intended meaning associated with the monument; without the screens, the intended meaning could be lost because no one’s “personal equations” are quite identical with anyone else’s (Burke, 1966, p. 52).

The Confederate Monument, designed by Frederick C. Hibbard, was erected in 1917 in memory of Southern troops who fought in the Battle of Shiloh, often known as the Battle of Pittsburgh Landing (www.cr.nps.gov). The monument is large in stature and depicts five different scenes and contains a bust of Albert Sidney Johnson, the Confederate commander killed during the first afternoon of the battle (www.cr.nps.gov). The five scenes would be left open to interpretation by those who visit were it not for the narrative, located in front of the monument, which gives each scene its meaning. When I first viewed the monument, I had
no idea of its purpose, other than to commemorate the Confederates who fought in the battle. Aside from its beauty, I knew it had an important meaning. I thought that the faces on the walls were showing the spirit of the soldiers before the battle and after their loss, but I hadn’t noticed that there was one extra head on the panel to the viewer’s right. The scene in the center appeared to be of three sad women, and the bronze soldiers on each end appeared to be in conversation, but it was unclear about what they may have been talking. The terministic screens of the narrative allowed me to see the story the monument was telling. The narrative explains that the monument is not only a depiction of the Confederate troops at the Battle of Shiloh, but it actually tells about their experiences in this battle, which took place in Shiloh, Tennessee.

When reading the narrative, the audience’s attention is focused first on the carved bust in the middle of the “massive pedestal.” The use of these two words focuses the viewer’s thoughts on this scene and indicates its importance. However, its importance is not yet exposed. The viewer’s thoughts and attention are then shifted to the right of the monument, which contains two Bronze soldiers. The narrative tells the viewer that the figure in front is a representation of the Confederate infantryman, “who has snatched up his flag in defiance of the Northern Army” (www.cr.nps.gov). The use of the term “defiance” stresses the emotion of the Confederate soldier, and it signals the beginning of battle. Next, the focus shifts to the figure in the rear of this scene, which is an artilleryman “who is calm as he appears to gaze through the smoke of battle” (www.cr.nps.gov). Now the viewer knows that the battle has begun; the attention of the viewer is directed to the battle. The use of the words “smoke of the battle” gives a visual sense of what this soldier is experiencing.

The narrative continues and thoughts are shifted to the two bronze soldiers on the far left. We are told that the front figure is a cavalryman, and, with this piece of knowledge, attention is shifted to his hand that is spread open, “indicating frustration”. The use of the term “frustration” shifts the viewer’s channel of thought from the previous idea of calm soldiers in battle, to one where things are
no longer secure for the Confederates. The narrative now tells the
viewer that the cavalryman is frustrated because he cannot
penetrate the heavy undergrowth. The placement of the monument
is in a substantially wooded area, just like the battlefields where
the soldiers fought. This statement about the cavalryman implies
that, had the cavalry been able to help, perhaps the outcome would
have been different. The next verbal depiction is of the figure in
the back which is a representation of the Confederate Army
Officers. The narrative tells us that “he has his head bowed in
submission to the order to cease firing when, it seemed, had it not
been given the first day, there might have been a Confederate
victory” (www.cr.nps.gov). This part of the narrative implies that
the officers were ready to fight and lead their soldiers to victory.
From the next description in the narrative, the viewer will see the
importance of the order to cease fire.

Thoughts and attention are directed to the “massive
pedestal” in the center of the monument. Immediately, we are told
that it represents a “Defeated Victory” (www.cr.nps.gov). These
terms direct one’s thoughts to the loss of the battle and prepare the
viewer to see what contributed to this loss. From the terministic
screens of the narrative, one can see that the front figure is a
representation of the Confederacy and that she is “surrendering the
laurel wreath of victory to Death, on the left, and Night, on the
right” (www.cr.nps.gov). Next, the narrative tells the
significance of “Death” and “Night:” “Death came to their
commander and Night brought reinforcements to the enemy; and
the battle was lost” (www.cr.nps.gov). Without the use of the terms
“Death” and “Night,” the viewer might never see the significance
of the bust below these figures. The viewer might also fail to
understand that it was also the reinforcements that came to help the
North, which cost the Confederates the battle (www.cr.nps.gov).

Finally, the viewer’s focus is directed to the panel of heads
on each side of the middle scene. First the narrative gives a
description of the heads on the right side of the monument, which
are representations of how “hopefully and fearlessly the 11 young
Confederates rushed into battle” (www.cr.nps.gov). Next, the
viewer becomes focused on the panel of heads to the left of the
monument, which “represents the second day of the battle and the
sorrow of the men, now reduced to 10, over the victory so nearly won and so unexpectedly lost” (www.cr.nps.gov). These terms allow the viewer to see how the soldiers felt and understand their thinking. The loss of one of the heads on the left side allows the viewer to contemplate the reality of death and imagine the sorrow and disappointment of the Confederacy.

The important of the terministic screens of the narrative that accompanies The Confederate Monument are key to understanding the meanings it commemorates. The story is very complex, and, without the terms that channel the viewer’s thoughts, its true meaning could be lost and another meaning imposed. This monument tells a story of the Civil War -- a controversial point in history -- in a manner that any viewer can understand regardless of his or her stance. The emotion in the faces of the figures helps to magnify the narrative and allows the viewer to identify with the feelings of the Confederate soldiers. The terministic screens in this example are crucial to filtering one’s observations into the intended field of interpretation.

References


A Scene Function Model Analysis of Television's Cult Hit *LOST*

Adam-Scott Donovan

A man wakes up in the jungle. He is in shock. There is a deep gash in his side. He hears something strange in the distance and instinctively runs towards it. As he gets closer, the sound becomes terrifying. He arrives at the scene. Oceanic Airlines Flight 815 has crashed onto the beach and a group of about fifty survivors are reeling from the terror of it all.

Thus begins the fictional prime-time television series: *Lost*. Since its premiere on September 22, 2004, *Lost* has made an unforeseen impact on the landscape of television culture. The show has been a winner in terms of ratings and a DVD top seller. It has also received critical acclaim, winning "Best New Series" at the 2005 Emmy Awards. *Lost*’s unique style, which often features stories told out of chronological order, conflicts that take numerous episodes to resolve and an intricate ongoing mythology, has become the blueprint for countless new shows since its debut. While most of these new programs have not managed to gain the same rabid fan following that *Lost* has, it remains clear that today’s television viewer is eager to embrace this new complex and sophisticated form of storytelling.

However, despite popularity among viewers, fictional television remains one of the most under appreciated fine arts. While film, dramatic theatre and literature narratives are frequently analyzed within scholarly journals, essays focusing on episodic television are quite scarce. To many, this is not only surprising, but unacceptable. Television programming of today is created with a higher production value than ever before. Most current shows can be viewed in High Definition format, with a 16:9 Cinematic Ratio and Digital Surround Sound audio tracking. The week to week episodic format of television also allows for a variety of narrative characteristics that are exclusive to the medium, including greater character development and detailed story progression. Particularly in *Lost*’s case, this format provides a solid backdrop for viewers to
unwrap stories that are told slowly over time, from multiple vantage points, with complex layers of discourse.

Thus, in response to the scarcity of scholarly research on the subject of fictional episodic television, this article presents a narrative analysis of ABC's cult hit, *Lost*.

**The Scene Function Model**

In order to analyze the narrative structure of *Lost*, I have chosen to use the "Scene Function Model" (SFM), created by Porter, Larson, Harthcock and Nellis (2002). The SFM is an instrument "designed to examine the structural components of scenes in a television narrative," which can be applied to any television program. As television writer Pamela Douglas (2005) claims, the "dramatic scene is the essential building block of storytelling on screen." Looking at the construction of these building blocks (or scenes), one can see how the narrative of a show engages viewers. Also, by applying the SFM to numerous episodes of the same series, many patterns within the overall structure of the program’s stories can be clearly illustrated.

The SFM works by assigning each scene within an episode into one of two categories: Kernels and Satellites. Kernel scenes are those that create the basic framework of the story, featuring the story’s critical junctures. Kernel scenes are considered necessary to the narrative, because the events within them turn the plot in a new or different direction. Therefore, the removal of one would create a gap in the logical progression of the story. In comparison, Satellite scenes are complimentary to the Kernel scenes because they create the "sub layer" of narrative within the story. Satellites add depth by fleshing out characters and their motivations, clarifying plot points and helping to create a sense of wholeness within the story. It should be noted that the removal of a Satellite would not disrupt the progression of the story. The six types of Kernel Scenes and twelve types of Satellite Scenes are outlined below.

**KERNELS:**

**Disturbance** – features the initiating event that leads to the ensuing action of the story.

**Obstacle** – reveals the antagonist or the obstacle that the main
character must overcome. Complication – reveals a new course of action by complicating the situation or creating a new angle on an existing complication. Confrontation – when the main character confronts the obstacle. Crisis – when opposing forces are in conflict and the outcome is certain (also regarded as the "climax"). Resolution – reveals the results of the crisis, balance is restored.

SEXTILES:
Exposition – presents background information or the "back-story." Dramatic Question – raises the basic question that the story will answer. Introduction of a New Character – introduces a new character or set of characters. Action – displays the characters as they carry out their plan/activities. Plan Revealed – presents the main characters’ goal to eliminate the disturbance or overcome the obstacle. Relationship Affirmation (or Character Relationship) – focuses on interaction between characters, can be related or unrelated to the main plot. Clarification – solidifies the basic conflict, helps the viewer better understand the ramifications of the conflict. Conflict Continues – keeps the viewer aware of the basic conflict. Relief – provides a release from the main conflict (usually comedic). Theme – provides the theme or meaning to the story as a whole. Foreshadowing – foreshadows later events and provides them more significance, creates anticipation for future conflict and establishes credibility needed later. Ambiance – reveals characters’ emotional response to conflict and intensifies viewers’ emotional response to the story.

Analysis of Episodes
The first three episodes of the second season of Lost are examined for the present analysis. These episodes are titled, "Man Of Science, Man Of Faith" (201), "Adrift" (202) and "Orientation" (203). Many common patterns found within the structural
composition of each "weekly" episode, although each demonstrates a unique way that Lost carries storylines from episode to episode.

Before delving into the analysis, it is useful to outline the premise of the show for readers who may not be familiar with the program. Lost follows the present and past lives of a group of plane crash survivors on a mysterious tropical island that appears to be deserted. Each Lost episode "flashes back" into one of the main characters' lives before the crash, in order to give the viewer insight into his or her personality and to justify his or her motives for action on the island. The show is also employs storylines that take numerous episodes to resolve; episodes often end with a cliffhanger intended to urge the viewer to return next week for the subsequent "hour" of the story. Season Two begins with the continuation of two major storylines initiated the previous season. The first follows Jack, Kate and Locke as they venture inside a strange "hatch" that the survivors find in the middle of the jungle. The second episode focuses on Michael, Jin and Sawyer, whose raft is sabotaged at sea by a mysterious group of "other" people on the island. Please note that it is useful to view these episodes while studying the SFM analysis of them, but by no means is it imperative.

Episode breakdown by plot:

Lost 201: Man Of Science, Man Of Faith
A plot: Going into the Hatch
0.1 – Exposition
1.1 – Disturbance
1.3 – Clarification
1.5 – Complication
2.1 – Dramatic Question
2.2 – Character Relationship
2.6 – Complication
3.1 – Complication
3.4 – Complication
4.1 – Confrontation
4.3 – Conflict Continues/Complication
5.2 – Crisis
B plot: Jack's Flashback
1.2 – Disturbance
2.3 – Complication
2.4 – Theme
3.2 – Complication
3.3 – Complication
4.2 – Crisis/Foreshadow

C plot: Shannon sees Walt
1.4 – Disturbance
1.6 – Complication
2.5 – Conflict Continues

D plot: Charlie's Virgin Mary
3.1 – Foreshadow

Lost 202: Adrift
A plot: Michael and Sawyer
0.1 – Disturbance
1.1 – Conflict Continues
1.2 – Conflict Continues
1.5 – Complication
2.1 – Complication
2.3 – Confrontation
3.2 – Complication
.2 – Crisis/Resolution
5.2 – Resolution/Disturbance

B plot: Michael’s Flashback
1.2 – Disturbance
2.2 – Complication
3.3 – Crisis
5.1 – Resolution

C plot: Hatch Continued
0.2 – Disturbance/Conflict Continues
1.4 – Complication
2.4 – Complication
3.1 – Complication
3.4 – Conflict Continues
4.1 – Foreshadow/Complication
4.1 – Crisis
**Lost 203: Orientation**

**A plot:** Hatch Continues

0.2 – Disturbance/Conflict Continues
0.5 – Confrontation/Resolution – Complication
1.1 – Obstacle
1.4 – Complication
1.5 – Exposition
2.1 – Conflict Continues
2.3 – Character Relationship/Theme
2.4 – Complication
3.2 – Character Relationship/Foreshadow
3.4 – Complication
4.3 – Confrontation
5.1 – Crisis
5.2 – Confrontation/Resolution

**B plot:** Locke’s Flashback

0.3 – Disturbance
0.4 – Introduction of New Character
1.2 – Complication
1.3 – Dramatic Question
3.1 – Complication
4.1 – Conflict Continues
4.2 – Crisis/Resolution

**C plot:** Michael, Sawyer and Jin

0.1 – Disturbance/Conflict Continues
2.2 – Complication
3.3 – Conflict Continues
4.4 – Crisis/Complication

**D plot:** Back at Camp

2.1 – Resolution

In the above examples, each episode has been broken down by “act.” An act in television can loosely be defined as a portion of the program separated by commercial breaks. Each *Lost* episode begins with a short prologue and five subsequent acts (totaling about forty-two minutes) with each piece of the program possessing its own defining narrative characteristics. In most
episodes, the prologue will reveal the initial disturbance that leads to the ensuing action of the story. Act One generally establishes the main conflict or obstacle of the episode and introduces the characters who will be involved. Acts Two and Three are characterized by a high number of scenes that complicate the conflict or obstacle, aimed at building the intensity of the plot. Act Four most frequently features the episode’s climax or crisis point, and Act Five usually ends with the resolution of a particular plot line, only to make room for a new disturbance that will be explored in an upcoming episode.

It is very interesting to note that almost every scene in the second half of the program is a Kernel scene. This makes sense when we note that each scene in the narrative acts as a building block; each block is meant to make the narrative more complex and dramatic. Thus, the second half of an episode will feature many more critical and dramatic pieces of the story than the first, which is primarily used to set up the boundaries and ramifications of the conflict, and not necessarily progress it. In addition, each act usually ends with a complication scene—most likely to help pique the viewer’s interest in the story right before going to commercial, but also to continue to progress the story at a rate that is compelling to the audience.

*Lost* episodes contain numerous plot lines, each featuring their own unique structural components. The average A plot (or main story) has about eleven total scenes; on average eight of the eleven scenes are considered Kernels. Within each of these eight scenes, a critical turning point in the story is revealed. A Kernel ratio of eight to three may be common in many shows, however because *Lost* is essentially an “adventure” show, there is a strong emphasis on the journey of its characters. As a result, this creates a fast-paced story progression, featuring multiple necessary “beats” (or building blocks) within individual episodes. In contrast, there are fewer scenes meant to display relationships between characters, clarifications and themes. It is possible that the producers of *Lost* make up for this lack of “excess” by simply including Satellite-like elements within the Kernel scenes themselves.

B plots in *Lost* are particularly unique because they feature flashbacks into characters’ pasts which are relevant to the ongoing
A story, but are also capable of standing completely on their own. On average, B plots have six total scenes, five of which are considered Kernels. A possible reason for this high ratio is that the B plot is supplemental to the A plot and therefore does not require much exposition, clarification, foreshadowing or any other "excessive" elements. The flashbacks are meant to tell one complete story from a character's previous life (before crashing on the island) and are therefore constructed in simple and formulaic plots. The general progression involves disturbance, complication, crisis and resolution – with little overall deviation. These B plots are unique because they let the viewer know more about the characters than the characters know about each other. Also, at one point or another, it puts every character on the show into the role of the protagonist, thus blurring the line between who is "good" or "bad."

C plots also involve events occurring on the island, but do so in much less detail than the A plots. On average C plots have five total scenes. Four of the five scenes are considered Kernels. Often times, there is little distinction between A and C plots in *Lost,* aside from the number of total scenes and on-screen minutes. For example, the A plot in episode 201 focuses on Jack, Kate and Locke entering the Hatch, while the C plot in episode 202 picks up on that storyline, but is merely less prominent in the episode to let other events on the island take precedence.

D plots within these particular episodes were very scarce, featuring only one scene when appearing at all. In both cases noted, the scene was a Satellite: acting as part of a bigger story arc that takes place in both previous and following episodes. The main reason for their inclusion is to keep viewers interested in larger, ongoing conflicts as well as in the characters involved. This also helps to create the illusion that even though we may not be seeing these characters or conflicts in detail each week, they have not been forgotten and their "lives" are still ongoing whether the viewer sees them or not.

Another major defining characteristic of *Lost* is the symbiotic relationship between the A and B plots. Often times the flashbacks of a B plot will help to justify characters' actions within the A plot. For example, throughout the three episode arc, Jack
struggles to gain faith that the Hatch will serve a deep purpose for
the survivors venturing inside. Fittingly, his flashbacks — to the
time when he was a doctor — show him witnessing an
unexplainable medical miracle. As a doctor, this experience
provokes Jack to question his own spirituality, as well as the fine
line between “science” and “faith” (hence the title of episode 201).
Another example of this relationship comes in episode 202. As the
episode begins, Michael is struggling with the recent kidnapping of
his son Walt by the “others.” To supplement this story, his
flashback shows him losing a custody battle to keep Walt in his
life. Illustrating Michael’s desire and simultaneous failure to be
with his son provides a strong justification for his motivations to
find his son on the island in future episodes. This relationship is
also interesting because while the B plots stand alone as stories, the
scenes within them also act as “Satellites” to the A plot. This is
something unmatched by the narrative of any other show on
television.

One final concept worthy of discussion is the difference
between story and discourse and the way that Lost manipulates this
difference. Understanding the separation between these two terms
facilitates a view of how Lost’s narrative structure separates it from
other shows. The authors of the SFM (Porter, Larson, Harthcock
and Nellis, 2002) define story as, “the event (actions, happenings)
and the existents (characters, setting). In other words, the story is
what in the narrative is presented.” And, they define discourse as,
“how we are told about what happens, or the means by which the
content is communicated.” To illustrate how Lost presents story
and discourse as two separate entities, let’s focus on the “Hatch”
plot.

**The story:** After blowing open the door to the hatch, Locke lowers
Kate inside. When she disappears inside, Locke goes in after her.
While Locke and Kate are being held captive inside by a man with
a gun, Jack comes in after them.

**The discourse:** In episode 201, we watch events unfold from
Locke’s and Kate’s perspective until Kate disappears into the
hatch. At this moment, we enter Jack’s point of view. He comes
upon the hatch with no knowledge of what has happened inside (the viewer is also in the same "naïve" position as Jack). We then watch as Jack goes inside and finds the man with a gun holding Locke and Kate captive, which is where episode 201 ends. In episode 202 the narrative moves back in chronological order and shows Kate and Locke going inside the hatch. Episodes 201 and 202 both end at the same "chronological" point in the story, but each display a single "piece" of the overall story.

This is a clear example of story separating itself from discourse. Rather than showing everything in "logical" order, the producers attempt to create more drama by telling the story in bits and pieces. Narrative of this kind may portray certain pieces of the story as incomplete, until the entire episode arc is viewed, thus creating the "ultra-surrealist" nature of Lost. Part of what makes this form of storytelling so interesting to viewers is that they will often witness scenes that do not make sense. In turn, they are eager for more details and this is achieved by showing events in non-chronological order. This format creates programming that is considered highly addicting because it raises more questions than it answers. The addictive nature of Lost is often heralded as it's most redeeming (and frustrating) quality.

Conclusion

When analyzing episodes of Lost using the SFM it becomes apparent that the structure of Lost shares some characteristics with other television programs, but also separates itself in numerous ways. The Five Act structure of stories, which often play out – disturbance, complication, crisis and resolution – is very formulaic and frequent in many shows. However, because the pacing of Lost features a high multitude of critical turning points in the story, while also taking numerous episodes to complete story arcs, it creates a format that is able to invest viewers into the show.

This investment helps to gain viewer-ship, particularly because it creates the conditions for viewers to feel close to the characters on screen. The authors of the SFM – as well as many television writers/authors (listed in the bibliography section) note that it is character development that makes television’s narrative so

39
unique. By following the same cast of characters throughout each episode as they continue their adventure on the island, viewers become interested in seeing the ways in which different characters react and change as “people” when the story moves in new and different directions. Lost then becomes a show not only about a mysterious tropical island, but a show about the people on the island and their interactions with one another, and the island itself.

By utilizing flashbacks into characters’ lives, toying with the difference between story and discourse, and constantly adding critical junctures to the narrative within episodes, Lost is able to create a narrative structure unique within the world of fictional dramatic television. This combined focus on both plot events and the characters that are living these events may in fact be the key to Lost’s success. As stated by the authors of the SFM, “many times, character and story are so intertwined that it is difficult to differentiate between them.” If Lost is any indication, then the best shows on television are those that are able to successfully balance the importance of plot and character development within their narrative structures.

References


Superman Goes to War: Heroes, Enemies, and the Manipulation of Perception

Michael Soha

Up in the sky, look! It’s a bird! It’s a plane! It’s Superman fighting the Japanese . . . the Nazis? Between 1941 and 1943, Fleisher Studios, later acquired by Paramount, produced seventeen Superman cartoons (May, 2006). This series was Superman’s first moving picture appearance, having become popular in comic books, made into a popular radio program in 1940, and finally landing on the big screen during World War Two (May, 2006). Of course, there was no television at the time, so this series was seen at the movie theaters, since it was typical for theaters to play at least one short cartoon before the feature film. This academy award-nominated series, costing more than half a million dollars (a high cost for an animation series at the time) helped launch Superman’s fame to lasting success and international stardom, and has subsequently become a landmark in animation history (May, 2006). What is unique about this series is that in three of the episodes; *Eleventh Hour* (1942), *Jungle Drums* (1943), and *Japanizers* (1942), Superman quits fighting the criminals and mad scientists and takes on a very real enemy - the Japanese and Nazis. Superman wasn’t alone. As the documentary *Cartoons Go to War*, explains, “America’s most beloved characters put on the uniform in propaganda films designed to boost morale” (Baker, 1995). Many of the major animation studios created war cartoons, such as the Oscar-winning *The Fuehrer’s Face*, starring Donald Duck (Baker, 1995). The war cartoons were made for both adults and children, and at a time when ninety million Americans went to see a film *every week* (Baker, 1995). As film historian Patti Zimmerman exclaims, “Disney did so much war work that historians like me can’t even see it all!” (Baker, 1995).

After learning that a few episodes of Superman actually featured our “real” enemies of World War Two, I became intrigued to see how the two sides would be portrayed. After watching these
three episodes a few times, I was surprised at how drastically different the two "sides" - the good guys and the bad - were depicted. I naturally perceived the Japanese and Nazis as the "bad" characters, as they were our enemies at the time. However, I realized that there was much more going on here than simple ideology. In a highly systematic way, the films' producers portrayed the Japanese and Nazis (and others, as will be explained) as evil and even demonic, compared to the trumpeting and glorified portrayal of the "good" characters - Superman and Lois Lane. Not limited to simply the characters, the enemies' environments were portrayed as evil, dark worlds. What is also interesting is how quickly the two "sides" were created, as drastically opposed to each other. The length of each episode is under eight minutes, yet as a viewer, you are almost immediately aligned against the "bad" characters, often before you know what is going on. How was this done? I argue that the producers consistently and effectively portrayed the two "sides" - the heroes and enemies - in strongly contrasted and opposed forms -- what I will refer to as "diametrics." In doing so, they are able to quickly "team" the viewer with the "good" characters and against the "bad."

In his article, *Images of Media: Hidden Ferment-and Harmony-in the Field*, Joshua Meyrowitz discusses how media studies can usually be classified using three different metaphorical frameworks: media as "conduits," media as "languages," and media as "environments" (Meyrowitz, 1993, p. 56). Media, viewed as "conduits" puts an emphasis on the content of a particular medium, such as gender-stereotyping or the information in a news cast (p. 56). Viewed as "languages," a study would focus on the "grammar" of a specific medium, exploring the particular expressive variables, or production techniques, such as camera angles or audio multi-tracking (p. 57). Viewed as "environments," the emphasis is put on the unique characteristics of a certain medium which shapes its content and grammar, as compared with other distinct mediums (p. 61).

In my analysis, I break up the process of creating diametrically-opposed characters and worlds into two major sections: one examining the effects of "grammar variables" and the
other of “content” on viewers’ perceptions. I do not, however, look
at the medium-specific effects. The term “diametrics” will serve as
a kind of theoretical bag, within which various tools are available
to use for its implementation - “grammar” tools such as shot
structure, lighting, color, and music, and “content” tools such as
common mythology and character demonization. Taken all
together, I argue that through the use of diametrics, and in a mere
eight minutes per episode, the producers are able to craft a film in
which the “good” characters are created as diametrically opposed
to the demonized “bad” characters in a strikingly quick, simple,
and effective manner.

Methodology
          In determining a methodology, several options seemed
apparent. I could look at many episodes and use a primarily
descriptive methodology, looking for patterns and similarities, or I
could focus on a few episodes and analyze them in-depth. To
explore the use of diametrics, I’ve used a primarily analytical
method, focusing on only two episodes from the series; Eleventh
Hour and Jungle Drums. The other episodes utilize a very similar
structure in both content and grammar, so my general analysis can
be appropriately applied to them in varying degrees. To provide
visual support for my analysis, I have appended an “images cited”
section of screen-shots from the two episodes. In the text, to cite an
image, I’ve used brackets with numbers. For example, [5] at the
end of a sentence refers to the corresponding image #5.

Part 1- Manipulation of Grammar Variables: Heroes
and Enemies

Terms:

Close-up, will refer to any shot framing 1/3 of a character or less
Medium-shot, will refer to any shot framing approximately 2/3 of
a character
Long-shot, will refer to any shot showing the whole character or
more
Super long-shot, will refer to any shot used to show characters framed at a far distance

Summary of Plots

Eleventh Hour:

Lois and Clark have been interned at Yokohama, Japan. Every night at eleven Clark changes into Superman and removes the bars from his window, then goes out and sabotages various vessels, machines, bases etc. He then returns to where he is supposed to be a prisoner and replaces the bars. Lois wonders if it could be Superman who is behind the sabotage acts. After many nights and failed attempts at catching Superman, Japanese soldiers place up signs in English warning Superman that if he commits any more acts of sabotage then Lois will be executed. Superman, however, does not spot the signs and destroys a large ship. It is only afterwards that he notices one of the signs. As Lois is about to be killed by a firing squad, Superman appears and shields her from the bullets. He defends them both from the soldiers, and then takes her away. Later, Lois is interviewed and photographed on a ship as she is returning home. She tells the reporters that Clark Kent is still in Yokohama, but Superman promised her that he would look after him. In Yokohama, when the clock strikes eleven explosions erupt. Superman is still sabotaging. (May, 2006)

Jungle Drums:

Nazi soldiers in white costumes are pretending to be deities to a group of native Africans. Their base exists inside two giant hollow statues with heavy artillery. A plane containing a pilot and Lois is fired on by the Nazis, taking them down. At the crash site the dying pilot gives Lois the coordinates of an American fleet on a piece of paper, and tells her to destroy the document. Before she can do so she is captured by the Africans, but still manages to hide it under a rock. Lois is interrogated and refuses to give any information. For this, the Nazis allow the natives to burn Lois alive on a pyre, with hopes that she will relent to save her life. The paper is found by one of the Africans, and the Nazis leave Lois to them and the fire. The Nazis radio a submarine fleet, giving the location of the American vessels. As Lois is beginning to succumb, Clark and his own pilot fly over, spotting the fire and the crashed plane. Clark parachutes onto a cliff and changes into Superman. He rescues Lois and fights the Nazis on top of the statues, but a heavy door with a broken handle prevents him from entering the base. Lois disguises herself in the white costume of a fallen soldier and
enters the base from ground level. She tries radioing American forces but one of the Nazis sees through her disguise. The Nazi tries to destroy the radio console but Superman enters just in time to stop him. Just as the German submarines are about to fire on the American ships, planes bomb the submarines, thus ending their threat. Adolf Hitler, alone, listens about the event on his radio. (May, 2006)

**You’ve been Framed! Creation of Character Perceptions**

In his article, *Television and Interpersonal Behavior: Codes of Perception and Response*, Joshua Meyrowitz extends Edward Hall’s (1976) “proxemics” and Erving Goffman’s (1959) research on “impression management” to the realm of television drama. Hall formulated that the distance between individuals is often created according to their relationship and can be classified into four “spatial zones”: intimate, personal, social, and public (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 255). Those intimate with each other may stand only inches away during interaction, while others who are strangers stay many feet apart. Drawing upon Hall’s research on spatial zones, Meyrowitz argues that television creates a kind of mediated distance between the characters and the viewer - what he calls “para-proxemics (adapted from Hall’s ‘proxemics’). Meyrowitz suggests that the relative size of people or objects within the screen mimic “real” interpersonal distances, and therefore “cue” the viewer into the perceived distance of the people and objects on the screen (1986, p. 258). In other words, how a viewer perceives a character - as friend or foe, as personal or stranger - depends greatly upon what perceived interpersonal distance is created. This is done, Meyrowitz argues, through manipulating production variables such as camera angle, shot structure, or framing. For example, the use of a close-up shot can create the perception of intimacy between the viewer and character, while a director may use a long shot for characters with which he does not want the viewer to empathize.

**Superheroes and Sub-humans**

In the Superman cartoons, the producers consistently manipulate camera placement and angles to create relationships between the viewer and the various characters. In analyzing these
short films, it quickly became apparent that the shot structure used for the heroes followed a certain pattern, as it did for the villains. Both episodes open up with a long shot of Superman from a low angle. The camera then zooms upwards and in, stopping to frame him in a medium shot [1]. Low angle shots are often used to show authority, as they distort the image making the viewer feel as if he or she is looking up to the person. By moving from a long to a medium framed shot, we are introduced to Superman from an impersonal distance, and are then brought into a more intimate frame. Using a medium shot brings the viewer into a more personal realm, while simultaneously keeping a respectful distance which preserves his larger-than-life, “super” persona. If we had been shown a close-up of his face, Superman would most likely have appeared more human. What is established in this very first scene seems to set the tone for our relationship with Superman. Superman is always framed from either a medium shot or a long shot. By using predominantly medium shots for Lois Lane as well, she is portrayed as a heroine in her own right. Even when she is captured by the enemy, we do not see emotional close-ups of her face, but rather a medium shot, portraying her as defiant and strong-willed [2].

In framing the enemies, we see the opposite pattern of shot structure. Whether it’s the Japanese soldiers, Nazi U-boat commanders, or African “savages,” these characters are often shot with long or even super-long shots [3-5]. At this distance, the viewer doesn’t perceive any of the characters personally. They are portrayed as dark, ominous objects, whose faces are rarely visible. The only exception is the Nazi soldiers, who, although usually shot in long shots, are shown in a more personal medium shot a few times (this discrepancy will be further explored in the content section). There are, however, a few instances in which the enemies are shot using close-ups. On the surface, this seems to contradict Meyrowitz’s theory of para-proxemics (and my theory of diametrics), as we see more close-up shots of the enemy than the heroes. However, a deeper analysis of just how these close-ups are used proves otherwise.

According to the para-proxemic model, using a close-up shot with a character suggests an intimate interpersonal distance. A
close-up shot of a character’s face is often used in romance scenes or even war films to give the viewer a personal glimpse of a character’s emotions or thoughts, to invite the viewer to become relationally attached to the character, or to portray relationships between characters within a scene. While this is generally the case, it depends on how it’s done - what’s being framed (what’s being left out) and in what context.

For the use of close-ups in the two Superman episodes, all have one thing in common: they frame only segments or body parts of the enemies, never the head or face. There are close-ups of enemy hands setting up a machine gun [6], rifle shafts being cocked in a firing squad [7], drums being pounded during an execution ceremony [8], a commander’s black boots as he gives the order to fire [9] - and so on. As film scholar Lewis Jacobs explains, “the close-up focuses attention on what’s important through magnification of relevant details and exclusion of unwanted portions of a subject” (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 257). Instead of bringing the viewer up-close for an intimate image of a the enemy’s face, these close-ups are used to show imminent danger while simultaneously portraying the enemies as threatening objects by framing only body parts and segments. Conversely, we constantly get to see full-figure framed medium shots of Superman and Lois, the heroes. This effectively dehumanizes the enemies, creating a clear dichotomy between our perception of the heroes and of the often faceless, segmented and objectified enemies. As noted film theorist Rudolf Arnheim further explains, “certain portions may be emphasized so as to induce the spectator to seek symbolic meaning in their appearance. Particular attention may be focused on essential details” (Arnheim, 1957, p. 82). In this case, the “essential details” are of objects and pieces of the enemy which are used to symbolically portray them as a threatening, almost mechanical force.

Whose Side Are You On?

A major area of Erving Goffman’s (1959) work on social interaction is his research on what he calls “impression management.” Goffman describes how people, when entered into a social situation, want and need to know information about others.
People, Goffman explains, are constantly mobilizing their energies to create socially meaningful "impressions" (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 263). Impression management serves as a way in which individuals provide identification for others (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 263). One of the main aspects of impression management is that an individual's behavior can be broken down into essentially two major categories: what he terms "backstage behavior" and "frontstage behavior" (p. 264). Frontstage behavior occurs when the individual is in the presence of his or her "audience" and plays out an ideal conception of a certain social role (p. 264). For example, when in the classroom, the instructor plays the role of teacher, which includes a type of behavior and language suited for that social position. When sharing a drink with colleagues, the same individual may do and say things which he or she would never perform in the "frontstage" of a classroom - such as joking about a student's behavior or complaining about the administration. Backstage behavior is usually reserved for close friends and family members. When alone, backstage behavior of an individual is sometimes employed to prepare and practice for frontstage behavior - such as a politician practicing smiles in a mirror before an interview - so he or she can better "manage" the social impression s/he wishes to impress upon the audience.

Meyrowitz extends Goffman's work on impression management into what he terms "para-social impressions." He argues that in television drama, the structure and arrangement of shots can relationally establish a character for the viewer. The camera can, in a sense, make the viewer a teammate of a selected character (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 266). This is often done, he explains, by placing the viewer within the back region of a character, allowing the audience to view the character in a highly personal and sometimes emotional situation; like watching a soldier alone in his barracks as he questions the morality of war. This can even be done by placing the viewer in a "back region" view of a character's frontstage behavior, like viewing a presidential candidate from behind a podium while speaking and seeing his or her nervous, shaking legs. This common use of camera manipulation is very effective in aligning or "teaming" the viewer with one "side" of certain characters. Meyrowitz points out
that “teaming is used most unabashedly in war and cowboy dramas” (p. 267). Here, he explains, camera placement creates a distinct “us” and “them.” While “Our boys,” are seen in both back and front regions, the enemy is usually seen in frontstage shots (p. 267). This technique can be incredibly powerful, creating a response that “has more to do with structure than ideology” (p. 367).

In *Eleventh Hour*, after the opening scene in which we see Superman sabotaging some Japanese ships, the camera follows him into a back region - the apartment complex in which he and Lois have been confined. We then see medium shot of Superman transitioning into his alter-ego Clark Kent [10]. Showing the backstage behavior of Superman changing into Clark Kent, the viewer is given the most intimate and personal knowledge of Superman - that he dresses up as a “mild mannered journalist” to keep his Superhero status a secret. This aligns the viewer with Superman in a highly intimate way. We are given access to his secret identity - information that not even his closest confidant, Lois Lane, knows.

I would argue that the wide popularity of the Superman cartoon character can, in part, be accounted for by this clever use of showing Superman’s backstage behavior. Exclusively giving the audience such highly personal information about Superman, we are effectively invested as Superman’s sole confidant and emotionally placed on his “side.” This, I believe, is supported by most of the other major superhero characters, such as Spiderman and Batman, in which the audience is aligned as confidant to the double-life of the main character. Perhaps this formula can account for the cross-generational and cross-cultural appeal of these superheroes, as today we are provided with remakes, re-remakes, and sequels of films based on these characters - many of which have been hugely successful at the box office.

As we see Superman change back into Clark Kent, we are “placed” in both his and Lois’s room as they carry out a conversation through a wall that divides them:
(sirens blaring)

Lois: Oh Clark, are you awake?
Clark: I'll say, who can sleep through a racket like this?
L: It's been going on every night since we've been in town.
What'd you suppose it could be?
C: Could be sabotage... I hope.
L: Me too. But who? Clark, do you suppose...
C: Yes, Lois?
L: Oh nothing, just a silly hunch that Superman might be over here.

As Meyrowitz describes, by "placing the viewer within the back region of a character," the director can align the viewer with a certain character (Meyrowitz, 1986, pp. 266-267). By placing the viewer "in" on a private conversation between Lois and Clark, we get to see and hear about their hopes and concerns. As we hear Lois cautiously wonder if the sabotage is the work of Superman, we feel like an "insider" because we know of Superman's "secret." In hearing the content of their conversation, in which they express relief and excitement over the sabotage, we are further placed on their side. What we've heard, if overheard by the Japanese patrolman, could mean dire consequences for our heroes.

In Jungle Drums, we are frequently placed within the back region of the superheroes. When the Nazis shoot down Lois's plane, we are shown her plane's descent and placed right in the middle of the crash scene. Here we are shown the dying pilot giving his last wish to Lois - that she take some "important papers and destroy them" before the marauding "savages" capture her [11]. We are brought onto the "side" of Lois and the allies, as we, along with her, now must shoulder the burden of carrying out the last will of the dead pilot. In a later scene, we are placed in the back region of Clark Kent chatting with his pilot in an airplane hanger [12]. We get to see and hear Clark and the pilot casually chatting about their upcoming flight. Later on we are placed right in the cockpit with Clark and the pilot mid-flight as they pass over Lois's crash sight [13]. By placing the camera with the heroes - Superman (Clark Kent) and Lois Lane, we get to see the situation from their perspective, experience what they experience, even know their secrets - effectively becoming aligned with their "side" in the struggle against enemy forces.
Interestingly, in *Jungle Drums*, there is a scene which shows the back region of the Nazi U-boat commander and his men. After the commander, dressed in a white costume, finishes his haranguing speech to the savages, we see him climb down into his secret lair. Although we are being placed in the back region of the enemy, the scene is shot as if we are concealed in the back corner of the room, seeing the enemy interact with walls and other objects obstructing our view [14]. Meyrowitz accounts for this exception, explaining that “even if we later see the criminals in their back regions, we may view ourselves as spies, not teammates (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 267).” In this case, we do not only “view ourselves as spies,” but the director has actually framed the scene as if we were spying on the Nazis. Being placed in their back region we are manipulated into viewing the scene as a spy, instead of being part of the interaction as we are with Lois at the crash site or Clark/Superman in the hanger and cockpit. With this use of back region shot-structure, the films’ creators are able to portray the two sides in a highly contrasted fashion.

**Gloom and Radiance: Lighting Variables**

In *Eleventh Hour* and *Jungle Drums*, lighting techniques are used effectively in creating good and bad characters. Through the use of animated techniques and styles of lighting, the producers are able to create a stark contrast between different characters and even different worlds. As Arnheim explains, “the primitive but always effective symbolism of light versus darkness, white purity versus black evil, the opposition between gloom and radiance, is inexhaustible” (Arnheim, 1957, p. 67). In these episodes, lighting functions to further diametrically oppose the two “sides,” one of hope and one of evil, one of heroes and one enemies, one which is illuminated and the other shrouded in darkness and secrecy.

**Dark Worlds**

One of the major ways lighting is used is to create what could be called the “evil worlds” of the enemies. In the opening of *Eleventh Hour*, dark, gloomy scenes are shown of Yokohama harbor in Japan, where Superman has been sabotaging. The camera pans across the harbor, revealing nothing but blackened buildings
and infrastructure [15]. These establishing shots suggest how we should envision Japan and the Japanese - an ominous world filled with menacing darkness. In *Jungle Drums*, similar shots are used to show the African village where the Nazis are hiding out. The first scene is an establishing shot of the tribal camp, which is not only dark and eerie but has torches set against the darkness to create a kind of dangerously-exotic scene [16]. This, as in *Eleventh Hour*, sets up the image of the “evil world” where there is certain danger. Throughout the episodes this same evil world creation is an ever present theme.

As we are shown, Japan is an evil, dark world which is meant to be portrayed in drastic comparison to “our” world. By utilizing the diametric abilities of light and darkness, the audience is given a strict and concise choice for their allegiance. The perfect example of the contrast created between the “evil world” of the enemies and ours is found at the very end of *Eleventh Hour*. In this final scene, we see Lois on a ship arriving back in America after being saved by Superman. It’s a nice bright day and all the people are fully lit, excitedly questioning Lois about her rescue. The camera then pans away towards the cityscape, and zooms in towards a big clock tower [17]. The bright and colorful shot of the American tower then dissolves into a shot of the blackened and gloomy clock tower in Yokohama harbor, with explosions going on in the background [18]. This juxtaposition of the two towers shows the two contrasting worlds, “our” bright world compared to the dark and evil world of the Japanese.

**Darker Enemies**

Aside from the scenery, lighting plays a big role in creating a strong contrast between good and evil characters. This is done not by subtle differences in light but by a completely opposite use of lightness and darkness. The heroes are almost always shown lit and colorful, sometimes even when surrounded by darkness [19]. The enemies are predominantly shown as darkened, faceless bodies. In fact they are often shown as either completely black silhouettes or even as only menacing shadows [20]. By portraying the enemies primarily as blackened bodies or silhouettes, they are effectively dehumanized, embodying a dark, evil force which
poses a dire threat to our heroes. Portraying the enemies in darkness and the heroes in light is so common that this technique holds true even when hero and enemy are shown in the same frame. In *Eleventh Hour*, we see a shot where Lois, shown in substantial light and color, is being dragged away by a blackened Japanese soldier [21]. In *Jungle Drums*, we see similar scenes; such as in the Nazi lair where she is being interrogated, brightly lit Lois is surrounded by totally black silhouettes of the enemy [22]. This is frequently done with Lois, using the image of her white “purity” to create a drastic contrast to the blackened enemies. Using great artistic skill, the producers utilized what Arnheim describes as the “effective symbolism of light versus darkness, white purity versus black evil” (Arnheim, 1957, p. 67) to portray the heroes and enemies. Continuously portrayed using diametics of lightness and darkness, black and white, the heroes are shown as bright and good while the enemies embody blackened, evil objects.

**Cues of Character: Variables of Music and Sound**

Anyone who has ever watched a film or television with the volume off has a sense of how important music and sound can be, not only to the quality of the piece, but also in helping guide the viewer in his or her understanding of the plot and perception of the characters. Although some films have deviated from the use of music to achieve more realism, the majority rely heavily on music and sound effects as a central aspect of the experience. From the very first moment of film until the end, *Eleventh Hour* and *Jungle Drums* heavily rely on music and sound. These audio components function to portray characters in certain ways, such as being a reliable indicator of “good” or “bad” characters. Additionally they cue the audience as to how to emotionally react or perceive certain scenes. This is done through what Royal Brown (1994), music and film scholar, calls “diegetic” and “nondiegetic” sound. Diegetic sound has to do with the action within a scene, sounds that are connected to characters’ or objects’ actions, such as a gun shot. These sounds are “heard” and reacted to by the characters. Nondiegetic sound is that which is not directly connected to the action of a scene, but rather acts as an enhancement.
In the Superman cartoons, nondiegetic sound, mostly as accompaniment music, plays a crucial role. The music is typified by short pieces of a musical theme, or motifs. These short pieces of music act as “cues” in film, which are chosen to interact with a given segment of film (Brown, 1994, p. 50). The standard film cue is utilized to enhance the dramatic and emotional needs of the cinematic action (p. 51). In both Eleventh Hour and Jungle Drums, there are two major motifs used throughout each episode. Each piece of music acts to evoke a certain emotion or perception from the viewer. The first theme is used in the opening scene of each episode, when we are shown a shot of Superman standing proud. Although brief, this motif is permanently associated with Superman, and is used throughout the episodes. This trumpeting, glorifying sound is used to signify that Superman is coming to the rescue. Whenever the viewer hears this motif, they can be assured that Superman has come to save the day, no matter how perilous the situation may seem.

After this scene, we are shown establishing shots of the “evil world” of the enemy. In each episode there is dark and ominous-sounding musical theme used to “cue” the viewer that these are the “bad guys.” In Eleventh Hour, during the opening scenes of Yokohama harbor, we hear shrill, threatening music of tense violins overlaid with a stereotypical “oriental” sound played in a low key to effect an evil and mysterious context. This theme is used throughout the film during scenes where we are shown the “evil world” of the Japanese as they go about trying to capture Superman. In Jungle Drums, a similar type of theme is used in the establishing shot of the tribal village. While we are shown this jungle hide-out, we hear the orchestra play in a low-key, with a slow, drawn-out oboe producing music which sounds simultaneously exotic and menacing. Similar to Eleventh Hour, this theme is used throughout the episode in scenes where the enemy is shown preparing for their deeds. These themes are used exclusively with scenes of the enemy, and function as a cue for the audience that what they are seeing is the “evil world” of the enemy.

Diegetic sound plays a much less dramatic role than the music does, however it’s also an important part of the production.
Audible dialog is, of course, important in explaining what’s going on, however there is surprisingly little dialog in both episodes. The producers rely much more heavily on camera placement and framing, lighting, and music to “tell the story” than they do on dialog. One diegetic sound which plays a significant role is drumming. In both episodes, drums are used in the moment of climax. In *Jungle Drums*, natives pound away at hand drums as Lois is being burned at the stake. Similarly, in *Eleventh Hour* a soldier beats a drum role while a firing squad line prepares to execute Lois. Used at the pinnacle of the episode, the sound of drums provides an effective method to show the viewer how perilous the situation is for Lois.

The use of these three types of themes in both episodes shows how effective they are in helping to portray good and bad characters as well as good and bad worlds. The high-key trumpeting motif of Superman is used in contrast to the low-key, perilous and suspenseful themes of the enemies and their evil worlds. This use of diametics in sound designates quickly for the audience with which “side” to align themselves. In war films such as these cartoons, where there are typically clearly distinguishable sides, this technique can be highly effective.

**Does the Exception Prove the Rule?**

A valid argument could be made in the case of these World War Two cartoons, that the Japanese and Nazis were already ideologically established as enemies. This would lead one to believe that perhaps these grammar variables play a less formidable role in the alignment of viewers to certain characters or “sides” than I have suggested. Although, already viewing them as enemies surely plays an important role in our perceptions. A look at *Jungle Drums*, however, provides an interesting and unfortunate case which supports the power of viewer-character alignment through the manipulation of such production techniques. In this episode, the enemy consists of a handful of Nazi U-boat men who are based in the village of an African tribe. The Nazis dress up in white sheets when outside their secret lair, standing atop a temple-like structure to give orders to the tribesmen. The tribesmen seem to be controlled by the sheeted Nazis, who act as a kind of
demigod. What is interesting in this episode is that while the Nazis are framed with typical shots used to portray an enemy (as described in the para-proxemics section), they are given a few medium-shots in which the viewer is able to see them in a similar way as the heroes. Conversely, the African tribesmen are more often than not shot from long-shots, and when they are shot in close-ups, they are objectifying shots -- shots of a fist clutching a torch, or two hands pounding on a drum. The Nazis are usually shot with little light or in silhouette; however the tribesmen are always shot as blackened, featureless bodies. Finally, while scenes of the Nazis in their lair are paired with a gloomy-sounding theme, the theme used for the natives - drum pounding sacrificial music - sounds much more evil and menacing. Compared to the Nazis, our "real life" enemies, the African tribesmen, through grammar variables, are portrayed as the most inhuman and threatening characters. This is unfortunate, because while the Nazis were our legitimate enemies, the portrayal of the African natives is far worse, perhaps reflecting upon the widespread racism of the time.

Part 2 - Content: Heroes, Demons, & Mythology

So far I’ve limited my analysis to grammar variables - specifically camera placement and framing, lighting, and sound. All are important in creating relationships between characters and viewers and portraying such characters positively or negatively. Such production variables are, however, only part of the story. As Joshua Meyrowitz claims in Images of Media: Hidden Ferment-and Harmony-in the Field, “of course, one cannot discuss grammar choices without also considering content” (Meyrowitz, 1993, p. 59). While one can analyze media grammar as separate from content, they are inextricably bound to one another. By necessity I have included content aspects in my grammar analysis, such as who/what are in shots or paired with which musical motif, but I have not examined the content itself, separately. There are numerous ways to analyze the content of the Superman cartoons. I will, however, focus on what I believe to be the most important in terms of character portrayal and viewer perception.
Demonization and Justification

A dramatic difference between these Superman cartoons and typical film is that they are animations. Cartoons are often characterized, literally, by silly or exaggerated styles and imagery and are often based on imaginary or animal characters. Even humans are often drawn in wildly distorted ways (think about political cartoons). In contrast to many cartoons of the day, the Superman series was animated with a high level of realism, often using a technique called "rotoscoping," in which live-action footage was traced by animators to recreate human-like movement and anatomic proportion (May, 2006). Being animations, the artists have a greater ability to depict the characters according to how they desire them to be perceived. In the Superman cartoons, even when leaving out all of the grammar variables (shot distance, lighting, etc.) there is still a strong contrast between how the heroes and enemies are depicted. This would be less striking if the cartoons featured fantasy or animal-like characters, however in these cartoons all of the characters depict actual nationalities or cultural groups - American, Nazi German, Japanese, and African natives. The clear division in the depictions of characters is that the American heroes are given the most human or even super-human depiction, while the enemies are depicted in varying degrees of unhuman and even demonized portrayals.

As Clark Kent, Superman is animated to resemble a physically fit and attractive adult white male. When seen as Superman, Clark Kent is shown to have amazing physical strength and abilities. In his actions and mannerisms, as both Clark Kent and Superman, he is depicted as quick and cunning, a moral and physical force not to be reckoned with. Lois Lane is not a superhero like Superman; however she is depicted as a heroine in her own right. Although shown as a slender, white woman, unlike other cartoons and general portrayals of women in television and film, she is courageous and never shown with any fear or emotion. For example, In Eleventh Hour, when blind-folded and lined up to be executed by a firing squad, she stands proud [23]. Superman and Lois, despite their heroic actions, are still shown as common or ordinary in their appearance. Their speech is also created to sound "regular," instead of comic as with many cartoons.
With most cartoons, the way in which the characters are depicted is not normally judged according to human comparisons. However these cartoons depict actual nationalities and ethnicities, so it is useful to look at how such groups are characterized. Of the three enemies - the Nazis, the Japanese, and the African natives - the Nazi Germans, although shown with a mean disposition and angry German accent, are animated the most favorably [24]. The Japanese are depicted in a less favorable manner than the Nazis. The Japanese are depicted with buckteeth and short black slants for eyes, with little else for facial features [25]. In addition, they speak in bumbled and mispronounced English along with overly exaggerated “oriental sounding” accents.

As I argued in Part 1, a political and cultural ideology against the Nazis and Japanese had already been established. Both groups were publicly viewed as our “real life” enemies. Despite this, they are given better “camera treatment” or framed in more humanizing shots than the African natives. In looking at the content, this dehumanization of the tribesmen continues. Pictorially, they are shown as mindless, inhuman savages. Their actions consist of running around under orders of the Nazis, pounding hand drums, and jumping ape-like around the sacrificial pit which they eagerly set ablaze to burn Lois alive [26,27]. The Nazis are even depicted as more moral than the blood-thirsty savages, such as when the Nazi commander exclaims to Lois, “I warn you Fraulein, unless you talk, I will make no effort to interfere with these natives.” Although the Nazis are ruthless in not “interfering” to save Lois, it is the “natives” who barbarically want to burn her at the stake. At a time of widespread use of “blackface” and other commonly racist portrayals of African Americans in entertainment, this pictorial treatment of the natives is unfortunate but not uncommon.

Given the choice of demonization in the cartoons, they can be viewed as examples of ethnocentric, negatively-stereotypical views of other cultures and people, at best, and an example of pre-civil rights era racism at worst. In the depiction of characters, it seems race plays a bigger role than ideology, with the white, western European Nazis portrayed much more favorably than the demonized and inhuman depictions of the Japanese and African.
natives. Nevertheless, the characterization of the enemies, most notably the Japanese and natives, creates a strong contrast between them and the heroic portrayals of "our" side - Lois and Superman. Comparing the depictions of the heroes and the African "savages" exemplifies just how great a contrast can be created even when based simply on how they are animated - one pictured as courageous and heroic, the other mindless and barbaric.

**Savage Myths of White Womanhood**

Aside from the stereotypical and variably racist depictions of the enemies, there is another major cultural force that is utilized and which contributes to their demonization. In an interview with *People Magazine*, cultural historian Richard Slotkin explains what he calls the "captivity myth" (Van Biemer, 1987, p. 98). The myth originally centered on a white woman captured by Indians, explains Slotkin, and represented the colonists' fear that their values were endangered by this "savage" race (p. 98). Although it dates back to the colonial days, he suggests it's still a central theme in popular culture today (p. 98). The powerful imagery of the captivity myth, of a white woman taken captive by "savages" or some kind of barbaric people, can be found in everything from entertainment to foreign policy. The captivity myth was at the heart of D.W. Griffith's cinematic masterpiece, *Birth of a Nation*, in which newly freed slaves posed a dire threat to white southern womanhood (p. 98). The power of this myth re-emerged in the now infamous news media frenzy over the saga of Private Jessica Lynch's "heroic" rescue from the Iraqis (Sheer, 2003, p. B9). The story, with a white American woman being stabbed and held captive by the barbaric Iraqis, and later "rescued" heroically, was smattered across the media. Although later found out to be false (as she was well treated, not stabbed, and the Iraqis had assisted in returning her), this false story was initially fueled by its mythic significance.

This powerful "captivity myth" is at the core of both *Eleventh Hour* and *Jungle Drums*. In *Eleventh Hour*, Lois, representing American white womanhood, is snatched away by the demonized Japanese soldiers [28]. Scheduled for execution by a firing squad, she is valiantly rescued by our hero, Superman. In
*Jungle Drums*, the captivity myth is utilized even more strongly, as African "savages" capture Lois, tie her up and plan to burn her in a sacrificial fire pit (tacitly under command of the Nazis). Using this culturally powerful myth, the producers are able to further portray the enemy as savage and evil, contrasted with the innocence and purity of American white womanhood. They don't stop there however, using even more inflammatory imagery to enhance this myth. In *Eleventh Hour*, as the Japanese commander marches up to blindfold Lois in the firing squad, the camera shows a below the waist shot where we see his surprisingly phallic "sword sheath," giving the already tense scene a threatening hint of sexual predation [29] (although this is somewhat speculative, it should be added that in cartoons, there is not a likelihood of 'accidental' imagery, since each frame is painstakingly drawn). In even more bizarre imagery, in *Jungle Drums*, the Nazis don white sheeted costumes which look uncannily similar to those worn by the Klu Klux Klan, with the head commander looking like some kind of grand master wizard [30]. I find this to be disturbing, strange, and unexplainable. Perhaps the producers wanted to use the terror associated with such imagery to further enhance the demonization of the enemy.

**Thoughts on the Use of Diametrics**

A simple, albeit general, formula may be drawn from my analysis. The shorter the amount of time allotted for a film, the greater probability of the use of diametrics in content and grammar variables. This may be especially true in general audience programs, such as *Superman*, in which the viewer doesn't need much specific knowledge before hand. Conversely, the longer the length of a film, the less a film needs to use diametrics. A good example is 2005's *Match Point*, produced by Woody Allen, in which the creation of "good" and "bad" characters is done excruciatingly slowly and subtly (and the film ends with some conflict over who is good and who is bad). In fact for at least the first half of the film, there are only very nuanced hints (many which later prove misleading) concerning with whom the audience should align themselves. In the Superman episodes, from the first
scene onwards, the viewer is consistently aligned with the heroes through the use of strong contrasts in film grammar and content.

Another insight that can be drawn from the use of diametrics is which type or genre of film is typified with strong or weak use of diametrics. It could be argued that films which center on violence and action (such as Superman) would by typified by a strong use of grammar and content contrasts for "good" and "bad" characters. More drama based, character-development films, while still utilizing contrasting grammar and content, would do so in a much less dichotomized and overt way. In this case, directors may focus on only a few techniques to accomplish character-viewer alignment. For example, in Mediated Relationships: Sex, Lies, and Videotape, Kate Wilder explains how the use of close-ups creates a highly intimate relationship between two strangers, a stay at home wife and an amateur filmmaker, and simultaneously estranges the wife from her husband (Wilder, 1991, p. 32-39). This film places the viewer within the growing intimate and erotic relationship between the filmmaker and the wife by manipulating the para-proxemic distances between the characters. This is done largely without sensual "content" or images and absent of dramatic music.

In a broad sense, the use of diametrics in these Superman films must be examined critically in light of the political and social realities of America during World War Two. Of the three "enemies," the Nazis were portrayed much more favorably than the Japanese and African natives, whom were largely demonized. The African American experience during this period was wrought with segregation, racism, civil rights abuses, and a general treatment as second-class citizens. After the outbreak of the war, Japanese American citizens were "interned" for years in concentration camps. Japanese Americans lost their jobs, land, houses, and many close-traditional family structures were unraveled. Conversely, no German Americans were interned during the war. It doesn't seem to be an accident that the diametric treatment of characters seems to have unfortunate correlations to the social and racial biases of the period. I am not suggesting that a few cartoon episodes are to blame for some of the acute social injustice of the time period. These cartoons should be viewed in their appropriate contexts, as "entertaining" propaganda films to boost morale. However, one
has to wonder what effect cartoons, movies, and other
“entertainment” which portrayed demonized and negatively
stereotyped groups had on society. Films such as these certainly
reflected the racism and Euro-centrism of the time, and it could be
argued that they played a role in the maintenance and
“normalization” of such views. Certainly for a government to take
away the rights of American citizens and intern them in camps,
there “needed” to be some kind of justification and rationalization,
especially given the fact that no Japanese Americans were ever
persecuted or charged with any kind of “espionage” - the official
reasoning for the internment.

Where do we go from here?
One way to further study the use of diametrics would be to see if other cartoons and short films utilize grammar and content
variables in similar ways as the Superman cartoons. One of the
reasons I focused on these cartoons is that they are considered a
major landmark in animation, and, created by some of the most
talented animators at the time, clearly influenced how other
cartoons were created. Their style is a good example of common
animation techniques. It would be interesting to see how modern-
day cartoons of this century compare to the cartoons from the
World War Two era. I postulated some theories drawn from my
observations, such as the relationship between the strength and
utilization of diametrics and the length of the film; however this
study does not completely support these theories. Rather, the
theories I have proposed in this article are based upon my analysis
of only a few cartoons and my experience watching and observing
film.

In my study, I separated content and grammar in order to see, analytically, how each variable contributed to the overall
production and its reception by viewers. As I stated, I did not look
at the specific effects associated with the medium itself. Viewed as
environments, each medium has its own distinct characteristics
which invariably shape its content and grammar. The Superman
franchise would be a great case for such a study, as Superman has
manifested itself in so many different types of media - comic
books, radio, video games, movie theaters, and television. It would
be interesting to compare this first animated series with the then-popular Superman radio program, to see how or if diametrics are used. By doing a cross-medium analysis, one could see what type of portrayals and perceptions are capable within the environment created by different media with the same content.

In Conclusion

Having recently watched the remake of *King Kong*, I was surprised to see how the island’s black natives were portrayed as raving, sexually-aggressive, and blood thirsty savages. In an article on 2005’s *King Kong*, societal psychiatrist Kwame McKenzie suggests that *King Kong* “feeds into all the colonial hysteria about black hyper-sexuality” – imagery, which he argues, “has a long history and is difficult to shift” (McKenzie 2005). Contrasted with the innocence and humanness of Naomi Watts, who nicely fits the image of pure, white womanhood, I would argue that director Peter Jackson exploited the powerful cultural imagery of the “captivity myth.” More recent, it would be interesting to see Mel Gibson’s upcoming film *Apocalypto*, about the collapse of the Mayan civilization, which has angered members of the culture it depicts, mainly Mayan rights advocates from Central America, even before it hit the screen.

In the present, as perhaps these two recent examples show, we need to be aware and critical about the way in which diametrics are used in the media when portraying various “sides” to conflicts. Many of the techniques used to demonize and vilify groups or types of people are still widely utilized for their effects. My intent in this study was not to provide the reader with simply a more complex understanding of *Superman*, but rather to use what I saw as a unique cultural artifact to see how different “sides” are portrayed and what possible effects such techniques can have. We should keep in mind all of the dynamics of film production, both content and grammar, when we observe movies, TV, and even the nightly news cast. When we see an “enemy” portrayed on the news, we should be mindful of how diametrics might be in use portraying particular people and affecting viewers’ perceptions. We should be critical and ask who or what receives which type of “camera treatment,” observe how light and sound are used, or
think of how images and story lines might possibly fit into a larger cultural mythology or institutionalized ideology. What we find may be more nuanced than some of the overt techniques used in these *Superman* episodes, but can nevertheless have a powerful effect on our perceptions.

**Images Cited**

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* also available for free download as public domain film at:
  
  *Eleventh Hour* -
  http://www.archive.org/details/eleventh_hour

  *Jungle Drums* -
  http://www.archive.org/details/jungle_drums

Joseph Schena

The Second World War concluded in 1945, finally ending six years of carpet bombing, invasions and casualties. A horrifying display of power was unleashed on two Japanese cities when the United States dropped atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The magnitude of the destruction was, as the United States had hoped, so bold that many scholars point to the detonations as the final straw that ended the war. Both cities were left in radioactive rubble with tremendous casualties from the initial explosions, along with tens of thousands who would soon die from cancer attributed to the nuclear fallout. Hiroshima’s death count was estimated to be as high as 150,000 (Katayama, 1995). The power of the nuclear explosion was something the world had never seen and was a jarring public display of the force nuclear energy holds. That same force, beginning in the middle of the 21st century, started to be harnessed for constructive means as technology emerged to utilize nuclear fuel in power plants, yielding, what backers claimed was a cheap, reliable energy source. However, not everyone agreed with the rhetoric of the power companies. A variety of grassroots organizations arose in opposition to nuclear power across the United States, virtually all of which were marginalized by the media.

One of those groups emerged in the summer of 1976 in protest of the construction of a nuclear power plant off the shores of Seabrook, New Hampshire. Taking its name from local wildlife, the Clamshell Alliance formed as a progressive faction with the intention of halting all nuclear power plant proliferation and putting an end to the construction of the Public Service Company of New Hampshire’s proposed twin-reactor plant. This was done for, what the Clamshell Alliance believed would be, the benefit of area wildlife, the people of New Hampshire and for future generations, who would likely be hamstrung by the burden
of nuclear waste disposal. There was also an implicit understanding within the group that they were taking democracy back from the privileged who were in power. Staunch opposition was met not only from the Public Service Company, but also local media and even the Governor of the Granite State.

The Alliance eventually failed in its goal to stop construction of the power plant, as it eventually went online in August of 1990 (University of New Hampshire Archives, 2006). However, in spite of the failure to shut the plant down, the ability of the Clamshell Alliance to shape press coverage and frame the debate on its own terms, rather than those of the establishment in place, separates The Clamshell Alliance from other marginalized groups. While the Alliance could not dictate the terms in which it was covered in the media, unlike the PSNH and government responses, the group showed that it is not impossible to cultivate a positive media relationship. This was evidenced by the coverage of the April 30, 1977 protest in The New York Times, so long as the proper planning and strategy are first instituted.

Building the Clamshell Alliance

The Clamshell Alliance was born, appropriately, in July of 1976. The United States was celebrating the 200 year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the formal document of resistance to England’s rule from abroad. It was in the same spirit of determination and change that the Clamshell Alliance was hatched. The preliminary draft of the founding statement declared, “Clamshell hopes it will help to redress fundamental social problems perpetuated by the few who disproportionately influence economic and political forces affecting all people” (Clam Founding Statement, July 1976). Here, the bedrock was laid for the platform of the organization. Opposition was not merely based on the health and environmental concerns of its members, but also on the basic structure of power in America. The founding statement explicitly articulates a core philosophical principle of the Clamshell that would drive it through its dissenting protest of the Seabrook plant. The Alliance would not settle for merely the status-quo of big business dominating politics through an ultra-capitalist frame that held
financial prosperity as the sole judge of success. Adding more credence to this belief, Seabrook, along with eight other surrounding towns, had voted against atomic power, but Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) refused to alter plans for construction (Clam Founding Statement, July 1976). Seabrook turned against nuclear energy, which was ironic given how middle class, blue collar towns were typically the most ardent supporters of the energy source. As the Clamshell Alliance put it in a flyer, “Public Service Company insistence on building the plant is a blow not only to the voters of Seabrook and surrounding towns, but a loss for democracy everywhere” (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1976). This view permeated throughout the organization as a key concept of what democracy meant and acted as another primary response to why the construction of the power station had to be discontinued. Put plainly, the group was dead set against having the terms of its community dictated, especially if they were in stark contradiction to the will of the people.

The Clamshell Alliance focused on respect for all who participated in an event, promoting equality and unity. Internally, the group set crucial norms and protocols for protesting. This included the emphasis on peaceful civil disobedience and respect for everyone, even if they were in direct opposition to the movement. The Clamshell formally declared its intentions in an official founding statement written in July 1976. Included in it was their intention to stop the nuclear power plant in Seabrook, as well as all other New England nuclear facilities. It demanded the citizens’ rights to be fully informed and have the freedom to decide as they pleased for their community, as well as to achieve these goals through non-violent means. Those means included public demonstrations, one-to-one dialogues, site occupations, public prayer, fasting and by “any means which put life before property” (Clam Founding Statement, 1976). The Clamshell had a well thought out platform and maintained a common respect for all things, ranging from the media to possessions and properties of the company they were protesting, as well as the police who were assigned to corral and disperse the Clamshell events. This constant “professionalism” in protesting and organizing was paramount for their success as an organization.
The pursuit of nuclear-free energy sources led the Alliance to articulate a series of platforms after which to model its approach. One such platform was a West German group that successfully shut down the production of a nuclear power plant through civil disobedience. The Alliance looked to the nonviolent means of protest used by the German's and fully believed it would succeed at Seabrook given the proper amount of time. One of the ways in which the group confronted the plant was on economic grounds. The original estimation of the plant cost was $973 million. However, this cost quickly rose to $1.2 billion and then $1.6 billion, followed by $2 billion and $2.5 billion (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1976).

Plant costs had escalated from a series of shutdowns and stoppages forced by the government as the PSNH secured proper permits for construction. The cooling system was explored in greater depth, as well as a series of other complications in construction. The cooling system remained the primary obstacle. Instead of cooling towers which were deemed too expensive for the project, a massive pipe extended from the plant into the ocean, taking in 1.2 billion gallons of water daily, heating it between 38 and 43 degrees and then releasing it back into the ocean (Cushing, 1976). This thermal pollution was a tremendous concern for local clam diggers who made their livelihood off of those shores, an issue the Alliance capitalized on when they chose their name.

The Clamshell also republished a report by the Massachusetts Energy Policy Office that projected 32,000 jobs could be created in the form of fabricators, tradesmen, and builders while saving Massachusetts $480 million and 600 gallons of oil by using solar energy to heat hot water in only half of the businesses in the state (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1976).

The claim continued another of the Clamshell's arguments that showcased the lack of necessity for nuclear power development. Writing further on the dilemma, the Clamshell Alliance formally declared, "The nuclear industry -- a collusion of private interests, government, and the utility companies -- is embarked upon a course of energy development which is dangerous to persons and to the environment and which concentrates energy resources into the hands of a powerful few"
(Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1976). This also helped the Alliance generate scientific evidence to publish and present. A constant emphasis in media treatment of nuclear power was "undisputable scientific fact," which typically only lies with the establishment. The Clamshell’s ability to present pamphlets, leaflets and surveys with scientific evidence went a long way in furthering its cause.

Another important focal point of the public campaign against nuclear energy was a deep rooted respect and understanding for unity. Laid forth in a draft proposal from 1976, the Clamshell Alliance called for the necessity to strive for consensus, while having a 2/3 majority rule for all major actions. A crucial characterization of the group’s philosophy was that it placed people before property or profits and was committed to nonviolent action (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1976). These principles further enhanced the credibility of the group as a driving force for peaceful change, a critical aspect of its agenda. To put this principle in practice, all activists were placed in affinity groups to better maintain continuity in the field during protests, as well as mandating that each activist be trained in nonviolence. Included in that training were concepts on how to communicate with a police officer, reporter or individual citizen, and also on how to protect one’s self in the event of a physical confrontation. Affinity group members were educated on the vital importance of maintaining calmness and of never losing sight of the larger goals while talking to a reporter (Wolff, 2006). This helped offset the tendency for news stories to be framed by the actions and not the issues underlying an event, further emphasizing how important it was for activists to maintain a strict focus when interacting with media.

The draft proposal put forth initially by the Clamshell Alliance further articulated the necessity for nonviolence by highlighting counter agencies that had infiltrated its core already. Because the Clamshell was an open entity, accepting virtually anyone who pledged to join, it was easily penetrable by competing groups. Explicitly put, a passage of the draft was written to stress the importance of these concepts, which stated, “Since the Clamshell has been infiltrated and disrupted by state police, PSCo hirelings, and fascist fanatics, anyone who acts disruptively should
be told by the group to leave. Our work is too urgent to tolerate disruption” (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1976).

The Clamshell ideology was one that harkened back to the traditional sense of public opinion, dating back to English coffee houses and French salons. They believed in public debate and accountability in an effort to promote what was best for the community, not the individual. The group maintained that the precious future was in their hands and had to be safeguarded appropriately. It was unwise to mortgage the future on the present when it was unnecessary. The democracy they envisioned granted equal time and opportunity to both sides of an issue, without having to constantly manage public opinion. However, unfortunately for the Alliance, that utopian view of democracy was not the one with which they were allowed to operate. The governor of New Hampshire made sure of that.

The Governor’s Role

Governor Meldrim Thomson left nothing to the imagination with his stance on nuclear power. He believed it was the next evolution of energy and he was the champion of the opposition to the Clamshell Alliance. Thomson stretched his power and authority from Concord, the State’s capital, as far as he could in order to set the stage for PSNH and the Seabrook plant to succeed as planned. This included a variety of underhanded tactics. Some bordered on illegality; others were obvious infringements on power. Thomson used New Hampshire state-run liquor stores as centers for petitions promoting and backing the Seabrook plant, which blatantly showcased the direction the state government was headed. There was no polling and the only option was to sign as a statement of support. No space for a counterpetition was available in the stores for those who dissented (Wolff, 2006). Similarly, the Clamshell Alliance also attempted to petition outside of liquor stores but was met with obstacles imposed by government authority that exhibited the disregard for civil liberties that Thomson was willing to use.

The “Seabrook Six” rose to fame early in 1977 when six protestors attempted to employ the same practices Thomson used. Six anti-nuclear power plant protestors tried to solicit signatures
outside of a Nashua, New Hampshire liquor store. The six refused to leave once asked and were eventually arrested. The Clamshell Alliance instituted its formal reaction on February 24th, 1977 with a protest at the steps to the New Hampshire State House. The Alliance presented the governor with a stack of petitions eight inches tall, containing 10,000 signatures in opposition to the plant (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1977). The Alliance also issued a statement, vehemently attacking Thomson for his pressure tactics and power abuses, stating, “Our petitions were collected by individuals in their spare time because of their concern for the health and safety of the people of New England. On the other hand, Thomson’s pro-Seabrook petitions were circulated using – or rather misusing – federal funds and the state bureaucracy. We did not force people to collect signatures yet that is precisely what Governor Thomson has done” (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1977).

Further, the statement called the arrests unlawful and unconstitutional, denying those arrested of their rights to free speech and to assemble. The six arrested protestors each faced fines potentially totaling $1,000 and jail sentences of up to one year for doing the same thing outside of a state facility that was being done inside of it. This might-makes-right democracy was exactly the sort of policy the Alliance wanted to abolish. The scare tactics and bullying were meddling misuses of state power. Cynthia Benjamins, one of the arrested petitioners, highlighted it well when she presented her statement at the State House steps, saying, “Our arrests helped to highlight the threat to democracy that nuclear power poses: First, home rule in the town of Seabrook has not been honored. Second, Governor Meldrim Thomson has violated the responsibilities and trust of his office by using his public position to promote his private crusade” (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1977). Her statement continued to elaborate the notion that democracy was being subverted in the name of nuclear-driven capitalism at the cost of the freedom to dissent and object. Clearly, the trend in that direction was laying down a dangerous precedent.

Thomson did not stop at depriving citizens of their constitutional rights. He also baited the Alliance publicly with wild statements and mischaracterizations of what the Clamshell
signified. Thomson claimed to have "intelligence" showing the Clamshell was a terrorist group. Thomson also claimed that there were Clamshell members who were willing to die on the site for their cause (Wolff, 1977). Even if the Clamshell had activists who were willing to die for the cause on the front line, it would not have happened because of the way in which the organization was designed. The Alliance was built on keeping everyone who participated on the same page. Anyone who was volatile would have been removed immediately. Each rally and protest was accomplished with complete police cooperation. The proper authorities were informed in advance of each event in order to protect both the activists and law enforcement officers (Wolff, 2006). If a violent standoff were to ensue, or if the group had indeed been a terrorist organization, it is unlikely that there would have been any contact with authorities, or any mandate of peaceful civil-disobedience training for all activists. In light of how porous the Clamshell Alliance was to outside factions, there is no way to characterize Thomson's remarks as anything less than outright lies or comments made with total ignorance of what the Alliance actually signified.

Unfortunately, because Thomson occupied the ultimate seat of authority in the state of New Hampshire, his voice was given the most force in the press, and his rhetoric was allowed to spill onto pages of newspapers and over the airwaves. The Clamshell, fearful that Thomson's comments might encourage deviance and violent displays, set up a meeting with him, largely strengthening the Alliance's opposition to violence and diffusing potential tensions (Wolff, 1977). The conflict between Thomson and the Alliance set the stage for what would arguably be the most controversial event of the Clamshell's existence. The continued fighting between the factions finally reached a breaking point on May 1, 1977, twenty-four hours after the largest act of civil-disobedience in opposition to nuclear power was held at the construction site of the Seabrook power plant.

The Breaking Point

After almost a year of hard work, the Clamshell Alliance finally had it's day. Two protests had been held in August 1976,
both resulting in arrests. Its last occupation had resulted in 180 arrests and the activists promised they would return (Wolff, 1977). The Alliance had distributed a supplement to their core handbook declaring that there would be “no weapons, no damage to property, no running, no movement after dark, no breaking through police lines, no drugs or alcohol” tolerated during the protest (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1976). Clamshell leaders also recognized how large a media spectacle the event might be, going so far as to have affinity groups partake in media role-playing skits in advance to better prepare for the barrage of questions (Wolff, 2006). The Alliance led a successful media campaign, alerting virtually every New England and national media outlet of its existence and issued press releases to anyone who would listen. Formal AP style press releases made the work easier for news agencies, increasing the viability of Clamshell reports being used (Wolff, 2006).

After informing the police and rescue personnel of what was to unfold, more than 2,500 people marched onto the construction site on April 30, 1977. Activists paraded from all directions, including some who came by way of lobster boats, eventually meeting together inside of the plant’s fenced off boundaries on the company parking lot. The Alliance was ready to stay for the long haul, as activists came prepared with brightly colored tents and began their occupation of the site (Wolff, 2006). The occupation went smoothly. It was well scripted, with the police knowing what the activists would do and activists knowing how the police would respond. The New York Times ran a story that morning, written on April 29, headlined, “‘Occupation’ of Atomic Plant Site Scheduled Today” (Kifner, 1977). Contrary to how most marginalized protest groups are showcased in the media, the story had a peaceful frame, quickly mentioning how the group planned to achieve its change in the second sentence of the story, “The demonstration organizers, calling themselves the Clamshell Alliance, say they intend to seize the site and prevent the plant from being built, modeling their action on an occupation that stopped a plant in West Germany” (Kifner, 1977). Most important, the story stressed the nonviolent nature of the protest. A brief account was given on how the native wildlife would be affected. A rather unfavorable characterization of both Meldrim
Thomson and *The Manchester Union Leader* was presented at the end, recounting how the newspaper was running cartoons accusing the group of communist activities and citing the headline from the newspaper that morning which read, "Leftists groups hope for violence" (Kifner, 1977). The story ran at the top of page 8, giving both the protest and the Clamshell Alliance favorable national press coverage which it eagerly accepted.

The following day, a story appeared further back in *The New York Times*, at the top left-hand side of page 28, with a picture extending over the middle column of the paper detailing how the first day of the occupation went. The headline read, "2,000 Occupy Nuclear Plant Site In New Hampshire, Vow To Stay" (Kifner, 1977). From the Alliance's perspective, this story also was labeled a success. It had the same tone and theme as the story that preceded it the day before. The demonstration was called a keystone moment in the battle over nuclear power, "Some antinuclear activists are saying that today's demonstration with its direct resistance to the construction of nuclear power plants, marks a turning point for their movement" (Kifner, 1977). This focus is critical in exemplifying how the Clamshell Alliance was succeeding. Through its dedication and pursuit of nonviolent, civil-disobedience and complete cooperation with authorities, and constant, professionalized contact with the press, the Alliance was having its ideals and agenda accurately represented in the national media. The entire focus of the article was on the protesters and why they were protesting. Thomson's agenda was not described until the 20th paragraph, where he absurdly was quoted as calling the demonstration, "nothing but a cover for terrorists" (Kifner, 1977). This depiction was buried deep in the story, with the frame rendering his comments unimportant. The article also gave the Clamshell Alliance increased visibility and national press coverage that accurately exhibited what they signified. The occupiers had moved in, however, they would be moved out the next day.

Meldrim Thomson flew to the site, getting a firsthand account of the large size of the protest. After a meeting set up between the governor, his aides, and representatives from the Clamshell Alliance, the protestors were given two choices. The first was to leave by their own decision; the second was to be
forcefully arrested and moved out. Thomson ordered the police force surrounding the occupation to arrest all who failed to comply with his demand to cease and desist and to immediately leave the property (Kifner, 1977). The protestors stayed and 1,415 people were arrested. The story ran on the front page of The New York Times, just beneath the fold, with the headline, “Hundreds Arrested in New Hampshire Atom Protest” (Kifner, 1977).

The first descriptions of the protestors, again, were of peaceful demonstrators who “waited, sitting on the ground in small circles, their gear stowed in backpacks. A few went limp and were dragged, but when the policemen approached, most stood up, shouldered their packs and lined up by the doors of five school busses” (Kifner, 1977). Once again, the Clamshell Alliance was mentioned extensively by name and the safety of nuclear power plants was called into question. The story continued with an Alliance spokesman proclaiming, “if they keep building, we’ll come back with 18,000,” (Kifner, 1977) and mentioned the nonviolence training each protester had received, as well as the placement of protestors into affinity groups. The story continued to describe how demonstrators were discouraged from heckling and provocating the governor or other law enforcement personnel. The protestors were characterized as peaceful demonstrators, completely clashing with the accounts reported on in The Manchester Union Leader and by Governor Thomson. The New York Times showcased the Clamshell Alliance as a progressive movement with which to be reckoned. The story even recounted how Colonel Paul Doyon – who was leading the police forces at the occupation – and protestors – who had previously met with Governor Thomson – were thanking each other for a smooth event, just after it became clear that any remaining protestors would be arrested (Kifner, 1977).

The Clamshell occupation stories fall into a common theme of peaceful environmental activists, rather than neo-fascist, communist or terrorist summaries. They were characterized appropriately as a tremendous victory and success for a fringe group. The most respected newspaper in America was covering the protestors by their standards and not through the view of the established political leadership.
Lessons Learned and Media’s Role in the Pursuit of Equal Representation

Unfortunately, this is largely where the Clamshell Alliance’s coverage ended in *The New York Times*. Governor Meldrim Thomson was the focus of a story written on May 6, 1977 when he solicited donations from “corporations, labor unions, and rank-and-file citizens throughout America” (Kifner, 1977) to help fund the costs of housing remaining prisoners. The housing of the occupiers was largely considered poor and insufficient, with many complaining of the inadequate conditions. Eventually charges were dropped, however, not until July 3, 1979, when the Rockingham County Superior Court issued a ruling that stated the impossibility of giving the accused a speedy trial, thereby infringing on defendants’ constitutional rights (Clamshell Alliance Papers, 1979).

The Clamshell would not make news in *The New York Times* again until May 8, 1977, where nuclear energy was run harshly criticized via a quote from “The Dover 265,” a group of protestors still imprisoned. It read, “Radioactivity is a silent and invisible killer, the letter said. ‘You cannot see it, hear it or taste it. Can we tolerate having such a killer in our midst? Having such a killer strangle our planet? We believe the answer is no’” (Kifner, 1977). The subtitle of the article, “Letter Signed by ‘Dover Armory 265’ in New Hampshire Indicates 1960’s-Style Nationwide Protest Is Goal” (Kifner, 1977). Again, the Clamshell was given timely and accurate attention. No outside observers or pundits were allowed to tell the nation what the organization was about. The newspaper went directly to the source and allowed them to speak freely. Characterizing the Alliance in broad terms, the articles states, “In the 10 months of its existence, the Clamshell Alliance has moved from a demonstration in which 18 people were arrested as they attempted to plant pine trees on the construction site to a protest in which more than 2,000 joined here last weekend” (Kifner, 1977). In the immediate aftermath of the occupation of April 30, 1977, *The New York Times* reported the Clamshell in a positive light that did not undermine its ability to function as an organization and recognized how much the group
had achieved in such a short time. Undoubtedly, their visibility was improved greatly once Thomson threw the protestors in jail, keeping the story in the headlines for another two weeks. Yet that should not detract from the incredible gains made by the group to be heard as they wanted to be heard, without censorship or misconstruing of the facts.

The struggle over nuclear power is still raging in America. As the United States struggles from a shortage of oil, both in the short and long term, viable energy sources need to be developed that will relieve our dependency on foreign energy sources. Nuclear power was initially seen by supporters as an opportunity to do just that. However, the work accomplished by the Clamshell Alliance and other sister groups, managed to stem the tide before the nation was overrun with nuclear reactors. The Carter administration eventually approved the cooling system at Seabrook, clearing the final significant hurdle (prior to PSNH declaring bankruptcy in the late 1980s) for construction to complete plant construction. The first reactor went online in 1990. The second one was never finished. Carter energy advisor James Schlesinger discussed the prospects of 300-500 more reactors being built in the United States (6-10 per state) (Wasserman, 1977), yet that never occurred for the “boom” of nuclear reactor production fizzled out in the 1980s.

The Clamshell Alliance stands as a beacon for marginalized groups. Even though it did not succeed with its primary goal of shutting down nuclear reactors around New England, it did lead a massive education campaign that made the region and nation more aware of the concerns of both nuclear energy and nuclear waste disposal. It promoted suspicion toward a blind acceptance of government decisions, an idea that could use a rebirth today. The Alliance achieved major press coverage and was largely able to dictate the terms of its organization on its own – at least in the national newspaper of record – in spite of the hyper-inflated rhetoric coming from Concord in opposition. This suggests that, although it is difficult, marginalized groups are not destined for obscurity. With the appropriate planning, structures, and platforms, any organization can still rise up and fight for what they feel is right. America was founded on a principle of removing
those in power if they fail to satisfy the people. The Clamshell was acting in the same spirit and nearly succeeded.

The movement lost steam in the years following the April 30, 1977 occupation, a loss of steam often attributed to the legal occupation that was granted to the Clamshell in 1978 (Wolff, 2006). However, the group's ability to produce and distribute information and project its platform on a national level reassures us of our political process and of democracy itself as responsive to the will of the people. The Alliance refused to let Thomson, PSNH, or The Manchester Union Leader tell the Clamshell story. Of course, the story would be nicer if it had a happier ending, but the fight carries on in spirit and serves as a sterling example of how to run an organization effectively. As Clamshell member Kristie Conrad asserted, "The Clamshell believes nonviolent direct action is necessary to underline public concern for the wildcat growth of a technology that is not only highly unsafe for people and the environment, but also unnecessary for solving the United States energy needs" (Cushing, 1976).

The Clamshell Alliance operated democratically and publicly showcased its stance in an honest and open manner, while also succeeding in gaining fair news treatment on the pages of The New York Times. The Clamshell Alliance was well structured and effective with the press coverage reflecting the foresight and dedication that Alliance leaders put into planning. The Alliance was established with a theory of democracy that was all inclusive and encouraged decision making by consensus, yielding an organization that was steadfast in its beliefs as well as progressive. They embodied public opinion in the civic republican sense and encouraged debate to get to the heart of issues, rather than bullying or ruling with an iron fist. In light of the current landscape of political turmoil, ranging from war in the Middle East to an obscure war on terror, amidst continued media consolidation, one cannot help but think about when the next Clamshell Alliance will form. One can only hope it is sooner, rather than later.
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Effects of Negative Political Advertisements

Kate Costello

Everyday American consumers are bombarded with advertisements that promote and praise the "amazing" qualities of products. Phrases such as “new and improved” and “long lasting” promote these desirable commodities. This careful symbolic packaging of products, however, is not restricted to the business world. At the beginning of every election process, campaign managers must decide how to present their political candidate's image within public advertisements.

Of these advertisements, negative ones in particular, are the most prevalent form of campaigning. Despite public distaste for such ads and scholarly work that states mudslinging causes voter apathy, large portions of campaign budgets are commonly designated for funding negative political advertisements. In some cases, negative advertising has been shown to have significant positive effects on voters’ perceptions of candidates, as well as voter turnout. Therefore, I pose the following research questions:

What is negative advertising?
What function does attack advertisement serve?
Who is affected by negative political ads and what are the effects?
How can politicians use negative advertisements to their benefit?

What is negative advertising?

As described by scholars, negative political campaign advertising is designed to place a candidate in an unfavorable light. Either by questioning a candidate’s character or casting doubt on his or her political career, negative political advertisements aim to make one’s opponent appear incapable of successfully serving the public and undeserving of support. “In the largest sense, the purpose of these kinds of ads- no matter the variability of techniques employed- is to increase the opponent’s ‘negatives’” (Trent & Friedenberg, 2004, p. 158).
Over the years, political analysts have attempted to study and categorize the types of negative ads that exist. Author and political scientist, Montague Kerns, has identified two distinguishable types of negative political advertising. The first, referred to as the “soft-sell,” are often perceived as light and entertaining (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 158). They may possess some amusing comments or even present the candidate admitting to a minor character flaw, such as not being as eloquent (an admission made by President Bush in several interviews and television commercials). The other form of negative political advertising that is commonly seen is called the “hard-sell” ad. In comparison to the “soft-sell,” the “hard-sell” has a much harsher tone and often makes use of darkened pictures and threatening voices to present the political message (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 158).

The focus of these ads can also vary. Some campaign advisors opt for television commercials that call attention to the flaws of an opponent’s stance on a particular issue. Others attack personal characteristics, depicting the opposing candidate as untrustworthy, unethical, and corrupt. As explained by Larsicy and Tinkham (2004) in their article, “Accentuating the Negative,” the public is much more forgiving of negative issue-based advertisements (p. 175). According to some, these ads stay truer to the political process than character-based ads. They compare the platforms of the opposing candidates and identify specific plans or proposals of the opponent that are not realist or would not prove beneficial to the public.

Character-based ads, however, are seen as “hitting below the belt.” Potential voters express cynicism towards negative advertisements that portray a candidate as overtly evil or corrupt. Research has also demonstrated that the public loathes attack ads that discuss incidences that have occurred in the candidate’s distant past or that involve the candidate’s family members (Larsicy and Tinkham, 2004, p. 175). “There is an unspoken norm,” says William Mayer, a political scientist at Northeaster University, “that the candidate is fair game but that his or her relatives are not” (Arnoldy, 2006, p. 1). After viewing a character-based ad, viewers often condemn the attacker and come to see the opponent as the
victim. However, as will be discussed later, this distaste for the more aggressive candidate usually does not result in considerable support for the opposing candidate.

Negative advertising, for better or worse, has become an overwhelming part of many political campaigns. Very few candidates completely refrain from using attack ads in their pursuit of victory. However, researchers have identified three instances in which the use of negative advertising would be most beneficial. First, if a candidate is working with a limited budget, many campaign advisors would suggest that the modest amount of funds be used to design and air negative advertisements due to their proven effects on voting behavior. When funds are limited, candidates opt to make known their opponents' negatives rather than their own positives.

The campaign of the opposing politician also relies heavily upon attack ads (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 169). Many political scholars explain that it is extremely difficult to defeat an incumbent who possesses a fairly decent political record. It is not enough for a challenger to promote his or her own good qualities because they will only appear inferior to the great leadership qualities of a politician who has already served in office and has served well. Therefore, challengers must publicize the incumbent's character flaws as well as weaknesses in his or her platform in order to stand a chance at victory.

Lastly, researchers believe that if a candidate is far behind in the polls or has experienced a sudden and dramatic drop in public support, his or her campaign would favor the use of negative advertising (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 169). With such a small chance of victory, the losing candidate desperately hopes that any character attack or accusation of corruption will spark a reaction in the voting public and the polls will turn in his or her favor.

**What functions do attack ads serve?**

Negative advertising, commonly referred to as attack ads, has several functions. First, if presented in the early stages of a campaign, and if aired frequently, negative political advertisements can set the framework or the dialogue of the campaign (Trent and
Friedenberg, 2004, p. 161). Through attack ads a candidate’s media personnel can gain control of the rhetorical agenda of the campaign. Such advertisements cannot necessarily tell the target audience what to think, but is quite capable of determining the issues about which the public will think. For instance, if a challenger felt especially strong in his position concerning healthcare, he would attack the incumbent’s stance on free healthcare for all U.S. citizens. The more often the advertisement is aired, the more prominent the issue of health care becomes in the minds of potential voters. Once that stage is set, the challenger can then go on to explain, whether that be in televised debates, newspaper interviews, or further television advertisements, how his or her plan to revise national healthcare is far more superior to the challenger’s proposal.

In the recent gubernatorial election in Massachusetts, Republican candidate Kerry Healey set the agenda of the campaign by airing television commercials that suggested Democratic candidate Deval Patrick had a relaxed stance on crime. The attack ads produced by the Healey campaign focused on the case of Benjamin LeGuer, a convicted rapist that Patrick had advocated be released on parole (Phillips, 2006, p. 1). The GOP candidate believed the rise in advertisements discussing crime would create the opportunity for public safety to become a central issue in the gubernatorial campaign. Such a gamble proved beneficial, as 63% of the respondents to the Globe-CBS4 poll stated that crime was a very important issue in the election (Phillips, 2006, p. 2).

Along the same lines, negative political advertisements greatly reduce the amount of time, money, and energy a candidate can utilize in an effort to promote a more positive self-image (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 161). If a women running for Senate is constantly depicted as an alcoholic or as a politician with an inconsistent voting record, her campaign advisors would most likely encourage that campaign funds be spent on advertisements that negate such serious allegations. Consequently, those funds cannot be spent on advertisements in which the candidate could promote her strong desire to improve the education system. When negative advertising is used, the person being attacked is often put in a defensive position. He or she must constantly fight and negate
any attacks on character and political career and, in the end, find there has been no time, nor funds, to present the issues about which s/he felt passionately. This relates directly to the first function of negative advertising: attack ads set the rhetorical framework of the campaign. If a candidate is placed in the defensive position, he or she is often forced to discuss the issues as determined by the opponent. Put more simply, the candidate is forced to play a game that s/he did not choose and by the rules of his or her opponent.

Lastly, candidates often resort to negative advertising in order to divert attention from their own weaknesses (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 162). Before the media can expose a candidate’s extra-marital affair, verbally destroy his or her weak position on foreign policy, or publicize a candidate’s poor performance in a lower government position, the said candidate will advertise the weaknesses and flaws of the opponent in order to distract the press from his or her own shortcomings. West (2005) refers to this act as defusing, which entails deflecting the lime light from one’s own flaws by directing the media’s attention to the weaknesses of the opponent (p. 125). Relating back to the functions of negative advertising previously discussed, candidates often implement this form of campaigning in order to keep the media’s attention focused on the strengths of the candidate. In addition, by magnifying the character flaws of the opponent, the candidate is seen in a much more positive light than his or her opposition.

**Emotional/learning component of negative political advertisements**

In order to better understand the effects of negative advertisements in political campaigns, one must first realize that advertisements do “not have to be liked to be effective” (Lariscy and Tinkham, 2004, p. 173). This concept goes well beyond the political realm. For instance, the average person cannot recount all the compliments or positive remarks he or she has received in his/her lifetime. However, if a person were asked to recall times when s/he has been mocked or insulted, most would be able to provide several examples in an instant. The reason for this is
"negative information carries an inherent memory bias that the positive variety does not" (Larisey and Tinkham, 2004, p. 174).

Political advertisements that promote the positive characteristics of a candidate are easily absorbed and understood. This effortless absorption of information, however, proves problematic in the realm of political campaigning. Positive ads are often simple and do not present the element of conflict (Larisey and Tinkham, 2004, p. 173). There is very little to think about and the viewer is given very little to process or understand. Therefore, since the viewer does not have to devote much time or effort to comprehending the advertisement, the viewer is less likely to remember the positive ad.

In contrast, the complexity of the negative ad proves to be a beneficial characteristic. As mentioned earlier, the 2006 gubernatorial elections in Massachusetts were marked by the Healey campaign's airing of several advertisements that cast a negative light upon the political career of Deval Patrick. When faced with such complex and conflict-filled messages, viewers had to think and assess the situation. Many had to compare their preconceived notions of the candidate to the unfavorable images of Patrick projected by Republican advertisements. Potential voters also attempted to assess the validity of the allegations. Despite the actual outcome of such mental political investigations, and ignoring whether or not the public bought into the political strategy and revoked their support for Patrick, the time and effort the public spent assessing the political advertisement made the information more memorable.

Another surprising finding is that individuals often forget where and when they hear the negative information; yet, they do not forget the message. In psychology, this is referred to as "the sleeper effect;" some "studies demonstrate that, as time passes, the source of a negative attack decays, but its content remains and becomes even more powerful" (Larisey and Tinkham, 2004, p. 174). Therefore, if a challenger produced advertisements in which the ethics of the incumbent were questioned, over time the public would forget which candidate or interest group supplied such information. However, potential voters will feel some uncertainty when determining the morality of the incumbent. This could prove
quite beneficial in long campaigns, such as the presidential campaign, which often begins a year in advance. By voting day, voters will remember the negative messages but will not be able to place blame on a specific person or group for resorting to "dirty politics" because the source of the information will escape them.

Lastly, negative messages that trigger an emotional response in the voter have been shown to be extremely powerful. According to Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992), individuals remember information and remember it for a longer period of time when they are emotionally invested in the message (p. 15). Therefore, the aim of many negative ads is to invoke feelings such as fear, anger, hatred, or distrust in the voter. By strongly connecting the political message to an emotion, campaign advisors ensure that the information will survive over the course of the campaign and will be prominent in voters' minds on Election Day.

Who is affected by negative political advertisements and what are the effects?

Countless studies have been conducted to determine the exact effects of negative political advertising on public support for a candidate as well as voter turnout. The results of such studies have been somewhat conflicting. However, it has been determined that the credibility of the candidate, the degree of political involvement of the voter, and the tone and content of the attack advertisement all factor into the overall effect of the negative advertisement.

Studies conducted by Yoon, Pinkleton and Ko (2005) suggest that voters are less likely to support a low-credibility candidate who uses negative advertising in his or her campaign (p. 99). The term low-credibility candidate refers to a person who is seeking office but who has perhaps had no prior political experience, has a limited budget with which to campaign, or has a tarnished political career. Therefore, many times individuals attribute the use of attack ads to the candidate’s own character flaws, reasoning that only crooked politicians or those that have something to hide, resort to negative advertising. In other words, the voters’ expectations of a low-credibility candidate are fulfilled
when that candidate utilizes attacks ads in his or her campaign (Yoon, Pinkleton and Ko, 2005, p. 107).

“Voters’ refusal to support a low-credibility candidate allows them to maintain cognitive consistency among their perceptions of the level of expertise and trustworthiness of a candidate and their belief that a candidate is worthy of their support.” (Yoon et al., 2005, p. 99)

Therefore, many challengers, candidates who have little or no name recognition, or politicians who have a blemished political record should tread lightly when using attack ads in their campaigns.

Conversely, high-credibility candidates who make use of negative advertising are seen in a more positive light than the low-credibility candidates who practice the same form of political campaigning. Voters consistently support a high-credibility candidate who uses attack ads because the voters attribute the negativity of the campaign to its competitive nature (Yoon et al., 2005, p. 99). In other words, voters make excuses for their candidate. Instead of detesting a candidate for ignoring the real issues and destroying a campaign with mudslinging and accusations, supporters believe their candidate has done what needed to be done in order to remain strong in the political competition. For that reason, incumbents or strong candidates may be able to air harsher negative ads and present their ads more frequently, while continuing to enjoy public support, unlike their challengers.

The degree to which a voter is politically involved is also a factor in how negative advertisements are perceived. Researchers have found that individuals who pay close attention to political campaigns and elections are more likely to show disdain and cynicism toward attack ads than their counterparts. Yoon, Pinkleton and Ko (2005) explain “involved individuals may develop greater cynicism towards political candidates when a high-credibility candidate uses negative advertising” (p. 108). This relates back to the idea of cognitive consistency. When a well-regarded candidate opts to go negative with his or her campaign, the politician’s positive and clean reputation is stained in the eyes
of politically involved individuals. This group holds the high-credibility candidate to a higher standard of character and dignity than the low-credibility candidate. As a result, when negativity develops among the public, it is usually the forerunner who receives the brunt of the mounting cynicism from political enthusiasts.

In spite of feelings of pessimism towards their candidate, these individuals are still likely to vote for their "high-credibility candidate." When those individuals who are greatly involved in politics become cynical of their candidate, they often engage in what Yoon et al. (2005) refers to as anti-candidate voting. Instead of voting in support of a candidate, their vote is cast against a candidate (p. 108). This practice is often described by the public as "voting for the lesser of two evils." Although the use of negative advertising may turn off some supporters, the effect is not significant enough to persuade the voter to favor the opponent.

In terms of individuals who display low levels of political involvement, studies have shown that the degree of cynicism toward attack ads does not change significantly when used by a well-regarded candidate. This may be due to the fact that people who pay little attention to political news also pay little attention to political advertisements, and therefore do not think about the messages presented in negative advertisements (Yoon et al., 2005, p. 108). Another theory is that individuals who choose not to pay attention to political events may already possess negative feelings towards politicians and the electoral process. Therefore, when presented with attack ads, the negativity of the advertisements only reinforces the individual's belief that the government is corrupt and politicians are not to be trusted.

One major finding concerning the effects negative advertisements is that attack ads have little effect on swaying independents in one direction or another (Borenstein, 2006, p. 2). According to Shanto Iyengar, attack ads increase the likelihood that supporters of the attacker will vote. In terms of the candidate being attacked in political ads, his or her supporters feel wronged and disheartened and are less likely to vote. Iyengar argues that "[attack ads] do not get people to switch sides... 'You can’t get them to vote for you, but maybe you can get them to stay home'"
(Borenstein, 2006, p. 2). However, in terms of the independents, negative political ads are shown to have a neutral effect.

This finding is especially surprising because it has often been discussed that campaign advisors make negative advertising a critical component of their campaign in hopes of gaining the support of the independents and the undecided voters. However, as illustrated by Inyengar’s testimony, attack ads do not encourage independents to favor one candidate over another.

There are two theories that would explain this finding. The first is that negative political advertisements are more likely to cause independents to become apathetic to the electoral process, resulting in their refusal to go to the voting polls. By abstaining from voting, they are not expressing support for any of the candidates. The second theory expresses quite the opposite. Perhaps negative ads do not sway the individual toward one candidate or the other, but the mere exposure to the ad raises the person’s interest in the election. That person would then be more inclined to research each candidate’s platform and watch televised debates, both of which would aid in the independent’s voting decision. Although not conclusively proven, both theories explain why campaign managers continue to target independents with negative advertisements despite research that indicates attacks ads have little significant effect on which candidate the independent supports.

When does backlash come into play?

Although research has concluded that negative advertising in political campaigns often works in favor of the attacker, every candidate runs the risk of losing support when he or she attacks the character and platform of the opponent. This idea of having a candidate’s political ads backfire is known as a backlash or boomerang (Lariscy and Tinkham, 2004, p. 175). Backlash is most likely to occur when the public views negative advertising as excessive and unreasonable (Yoon et al., 2005, p. 98). As discussed earlier, voters are also less forgiving of character-based attacks than issue-based attacks. If one candidate is perceived as too aggressive in his or her ads and excessively attacking the personal characteristics of his or her opponent, the attacked
candidate will come to be seen as a victim of character assassination. Consequently, supporters of the more aggressive politician will lose faith in their candidate and will become less likely to vote (Borenstein, 2006, p. 2).

Backlash became a commonly-used term in the Patrick-Healey gubernatorial race. From the get-go, Healey was perceived by the public as the more aggressive candidate. Initially, the ads sparked some controversy and inflicted some doubt upon the expertise and trustworthiness of Deval Patrick. However, as the campaign carried into October, polls indicated that the citizens of Massachusetts were becoming irritated with Healey’s negative ad campaign.

“A Suffolk poll released [in mid-October showed] Patrick opening a 27-point lead over Healey, who [had] climbed to a high 53 percentage unfavorability rating among voters. [H]er most recent attacks...had an obvious effect, with 61 percent of voters saying her tone made them less likely to vote for her. Independents especially were turned off, dropping from 38 percent in support of her to just 26 percent.” (Arnoldy, 2006, p 1)

Several theories explain this boomerang effect. First, as previously explained, the public is less likely to vote for a low-credibility candidate who uses negative advertising in her campaign than a high-credibility candidate who implements the same tactics. With that in mind, it is quite possible that the evaluation of the Romney/Healey administration, which was filled with controversy concerning the Big Dig collapse, the rise in crime rates, and a significant increase in unemployment rates, damaged Kerry Healey’s standing with the public. Therefore, with Healey being perceived as the candidate with lower credibility, voters were less tolerant of her attack ads.

The public is also less forgiving of advertisements that attack a candidate’s family members. During the gubernatorial campaign, stories surfaced in the media concerning one of Patrick’s relatives being charged with rape in 1993. The Healey camp denied being the source, however much blame was still placed upon the Republican candidate (Arnoldy, 2006, p. 1).
Massachusetts residents considered such attacks as irrelevant to the elections and a dirty political attempt to weaken the support for Patrick.

As described in *Air Wars*, many politicians run successful, negative campaigns without feeling the pain of backlash by "using surrogates to deliver the attacks" (West, 2005, p. 153). Many candidates employ running mates, committee leaders, and heads of special interest groups to be the spokespersons in negative political advertisements so that if/when backlash occurs, the blame cannot be placed on the candidate. Following the same logic, had Healey used other politicians, local community leaders, and members of interest groups to attack Patrick on her behalf, the backlash that occurred would not have struck her favorability rating with such severity.

**How should a candidate respond to attack ads?**

Since it has been determined that, given the right conditions, negative advertising can have significant effects on the support of a candidate and voter turnout, it is critical do discuss what strategies a candidate can implement in response to an attack ad. Although responses to negative ads have come in a variety of forms, the one rule that has remained consistent over the years is that there must be a response and that response must come immediately after the initial attack. Any sort of delay of action could influence voters’ opinions of the candidates, often in the favor of the attacker (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 162).

This idea, however, was not supported during the last election for governor in Massachusetts. In the early stages of the campaign, Lt. Governor Healey launched an extremely aggressive and negative campaign against Patrick. In fact, during the first week of October 2006, the GOP outspent the Patrick camp by a 3 to 1 ratio. With such a large difference in advertisement spending, Democratic leaders urged Patrick to respond more aggressively to Healey’s ads, especially those that insinuated he had a lax stance on crime.

"He needs to balance the need to defend himself-in tough, muscular robust terms, saying who he is and what he stand for- and the need to make sure
that when Kerry Healey attempts to demean and
denigrate him he puts to rest those doubts,’ said
Steve Grossman, the former chairman of national
Democratic Party.” (Phillips, 2006, p. 2)
The Patrick camp did retaliate with negative
advertisements. However, the attacks were not as harsh as
those initiated by Healey. In the end, the GOP candidate’s
aggressive campaign backfired, with voters discouraged by
the amount and intensity of ads attacking the Democratic
candidate, and Deval Patrick came out on top, winning the
position as governor of Massachusetts.

As illustrated by the Massachusetts gubernatorial race, a
candidate does not always need to launch an overtly negative
campaign in order to achieve victory. Some political theorists
believe a candidate can go without responding to attack ads, as
long as the attacker is the weaker candidate, one who has no prior
experience in government or whose political career is marred with
corruption and dishonesty (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 162).
This concept explains why some well-regarded incumbents in local
and state elections usually spend a lesser percentage of their
campaign budget towards funding negative advertisements.

**How is negative advertising handled when a woman is the
candidate?**

Women have an innate obstacle to overcome when running
for political office: gender stereotyping. Although candidates are
expected to present themselves as strong, assertive, independent,
and assertive individuals, in today’s society, women are suppose to
act submissive, sensitive, emotional, affectionate and caring.
Therefore, there exists a dichotomy between what qualities
constitute a good leader and what qualities constitute femininity.

With gender stereotyping in mind, the general public is
much less accepting of negative ads produced by female
candidates than attack ads in favor of male politicians. Often times,
when a female candidate attacks the voting record of her opponent
or aggressively questions the ethics of her opposition, she is seen
as overstepping gender bounds and is perceived as vicious,
ruthless, or even a *bitch*. Yet, if the woman appears overly
concerned with family issues and sensitive to the public's needs, both critical components of "femininity," she is not portraying the assertiveness and ambition that voters look for in a candidate. "In other words, 'everything she does to enhance her assertiveness risks undercutting her femininity, in the eyes of others. And everything she does to fit expectations of how a woman should talk risks undercutting the impression of competence that she makes'" (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 167).

Stuck in a seemingly "no-win" situation, women candidates have developed strategies in devising negative ad campaigns that allow them to act assertive and competent while still remaining within the gender roles as determined by society. In order to promote masculine traits, such as aggressiveness and capability, the negative ads of female candidates often make previous political experience as well as competency the main focus of the ad. Attack ads also depict the woman in professional attire and use male voiceovers (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 170). On the other end of the spectrum, in order to project a feminine image, these same ads often depict the female candidate with a child or senior citizen. Comparisons are made between the candidate's platforms in place of harsh attacks on candidate's character and voting records. Lastly, negative ads of a female politician often end on a positive note, commending the candidate's work in improving education or promoting her plan concerning social welfare, rather than continuing to attack the opponent. "In other words, attacks on opponents [are] embedded within a set of secondary strategies designed to mitigate against potential negative impact of the ad on the candidate herself" (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004, p. 170).

Overall, female candidates have enjoyed more success when their negative advertisements have been comprised of both masculine and feminine characteristics. Unfortunate for Healey, the overly aggressive, and therefore, by society's standards, overly masculine, tone of her advertisement campaign did not register favorably with the public. One would speculate that had Healey included more feminine qualities in her attack ads, the voter backlash may not have been as severe. This is not to say that female candidates should bow down to the gender stereotypes of society and downplay their capabilities and assertiveness in order
to appease the general public. However, studies have shown that
female candidates enjoy more success in the political realm when
they design their political campaign to fit within the existing
framework concerning gender and politics.

Conclusion

In sum, countless studies have determined that negative
political advertisements have significant effects on voters’
perceptions of candidates as well as on voter turnout. Attack ads
often encourage supporters of the attacker to vote, while those who
favor the candidate that is being attacked often become
disheartened and are less likely to vote. The credibility of the
candidate and the political involvement of the voter have also been
shown to factor into how a negative ad is perceived. Politicians
must also be weary of the possibility of backlash, having their
attack ads work against them. In a final note, female candidates
must be especially careful when creating their negative
advertisements so as to run a successful campaign without stepping
beyond their gender role. In conclusion, every aspect of a negative
political advertisement has the potential to negatively or positively
affect a voter. Therefore, candidates must foresee how the public
will perceive their attack ads and modify them accordingly.

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Social Construction: A Family Approach

Caitlin Bergin

"Whenever we hold firm to a particular account of the real, we seal ourselves off from other possibilities”.  
Kenneth J. Gergen

My grandmother passed away in April of 2001. While her death was not completely unexpected, the remaining implications were. Many believed that my grandfather, who had been married to my grandmother for over 50 years, would quickly pass away after her death. It has now been almost six years and at the age of 89, my grandfather is still very much alive. I have lived in the same town as my grandparents my entire life. Though my mother has 4 brothers and sisters, we are the closest relatives, with the others residing in California, Illinois, New Hampshire and Boston. In this respect, my mother was immediately cast into the role of “the caretaker”. Believing she would help my grandfather out for a while until he adjusted to his newly widowed life, the arrangement was initially not an issue.

My mother has remained my grandfather’s sole mean of “surviving” for the last five and a half years. She has put many of her own priorities on hold in order to maintain my grandfather’s needs – paying his bills, cooking his meals, taking him to and from doctor’s appointments and basically being his shoulder to cry on (and complain to). With strong conviction, I can honestly say I do not know how my mother does it. There have been extreme lows over the last five years due to this arrangement with my grandfather, yet every time she seems to bounce back and continue to move forward. My immediate family has been affected by this arrangement, as we have become enmeshed in this two-sided relationship and its effects. In addition, my mother’s relationships with her siblings have altered greatly – some in positive ways and others in highly negative. It is a situation that just seems normal now; as if my mother has always been my grandfather’s caretaker and my grandmother has been gone for much longer than five years.
Until learning about social construction, there has been much one-sidedness on my part with regard to my mother’s views, as I see regularly the toll that this situation is taking on her. Yet over time, as I have accepted and related to the ideas and concepts of social construction, I am beginning to see how effective these views have become in my understanding of my grandfather’s relationship with my mother. I am starting to shift from my individualist outlook, in which my mother is always right about the situation and my grandfather should be thanking his lucky stars that he has such a wonderful daughter. While I still hold my mother to such a high esteem, I am gradually beginning to understand that there are multiple ways of constructing the relationship the two of them share. It is difficult to challenge these ideas at this stage of their relationship, as things have been this way for so long. Yet I realize the significance of reevaluating the situation my family and I are in. By approaching some of the issues that we deal with in a relational way, it is much easier to imagine a chance for a bit of understanding on both sides, or possibly even a change of some sorts.

The following story-like representation of my mother and grandfather’s relationship is based upon my own interpretation of the situation. While the context is valid, their separate accounts are ones that I have personally surmised from watching them interact and listening to their conversation with people outside of the relationship. In light of trying to remain relational about the following relationship, I found it essential that both sides were given the justification they would be met with if both my grandfather and mother were to tell their story from an individual standpoint.

My Mother

If I had ever imagined this to be the way things would be almost six years after my mother’s death, I would have hesitated to agree to this arrangement. I am the fourth child in a line of five; the youngest girl of the bunch. I shared a room with both of my sisters for much of my childhood. My family was relatively religious, going to church every Sunday as a family and attending Catholic schools through college. My father worked at Grover Cronin’s, a
department store that no longer exists. As a finance lender, he made just enough money to support the seven of us. My mother did just about anything my father asked of her. We had the same meals weekly and we rarely had friends over the house. Though we were raised fairly, all five of us went our separate ways in adulthood.

My younger brother passed away four months after my mother died, in the summer of 2001. Still dealing with the death of my mother and the added responsibility of taking care of my father, my brother’s death was devastating for me. Though he had moved to California many years before, we remained close. Now in my own despair, I was expected to take on my father’s bereavement as well. On a regular basis I was forced to listen to my father cry over what a horrible situation he was going through. While I agreed with him wholeheartedly, it was exhausting to listen to this, knowing I was going through much of the same.

Eventually we settled into a routine. I am a school teacher and my days typically end around two in the afternoon. In the beginning, I would go to my father’s house before leaving for work. I would get him out of bed, help him change, make him his breakfast and get him anything he would need for the day. I would then go to work and as soon as my students had left, I would race out in time to give my father a late lunch. I then would have a few hours to myself – although these were usually filled with multiple errands and school activities I needed to get done. By five or six, I would be heading back to my father’s house to give him his supper. While he ate, I would get the house cleaned up and ready his bedroom for the evening. I would then help him to change, get into bed and make sure he had the things he needed for the night. As my father’s only immediate medical needs are his diabetes and legal blindness, he was at least able to have a sense of where things were located and how to move about the house if there were an emergency. Yet this type of lifestyle was hectic and overwhelming, leaving me with little time for myself.

In 2005, after almost four straight years of this chaotic schedule, my siblings and I decided that a change was needed. We hired a home-aid to come to my father’s home one hour in the morning and one hour at night. This decision stemmed from the
fact that the biggest issue my siblings and I deal with is whether or not to place my father in a nursing home. Though many signs point to him benefiting from this change, there are others that do not. My father is a very lonely man who is strongly set in his ways. With no desire to meet new people, a nursing home may only depress him further. It would also cost a lot more for him to move out of his home: with little savings, moving him to a nursing home would only become a financial burden for my siblings and me. Instead, taking on a home-aid began to solve a lot of problems. I now usually only go by my father’s house once a day, right after school, to give him his lunch and check on the house. While I am still responsible for his laundry, grocery shopping, doctor’s appointments and finances, these extra hours in the morning and evening are very welcomed. In turn, my father is not spending his last dollars on a nursing home but instead on a very kind woman who spends individual time with him every day.

My father is a stubborn man. Though 89 and becoming frailer, he still believes that he could be doing this all on his own. He and I have had some severe fights over the years, in which I have threatened to throw in the towel and let him deal with all of this on his own. Yet as angry as I become, I always go back. There is a pressure that I put on myself to deal with this. I feel as though I have to take care of my father, as my whole life he has continued to remind my siblings and I how much he has done for us. Even as I have given so much of my time to him, it is a rare day that he thanks me or tells me he appreciates what I am doing for him. He is completely naïve to the extent of what I do for him and I have occasionally overheard him telling his home-aid how easily our arrangement works. Even still, I know I would feel very badly if I continued living so close to my father yet did not go by and see him. There have been extreme lows in this situation and I know that I have given up a lot of my own time to deal with my father. My father is not on his “deathbed” and could easily continue to live for many years. It is difficult to imagine letting my own life be consumed by his needs for much longer.
My Grandfather

I am 89 years old, blind and frail. I can not cook for myself, bathe myself or get out of bed on my own very easily. To depend on my daughter for everything is upsetting and hard for me to deal with, yet I realize it is better than living in a nursing home. I am lonely all the time and I miss my wife. We were married for over 50 years and I had to learn to live differently after she passed away. I worked long hours and long days just to get the family by. However, I take pride in the fact that I was able to support a family of seven during the 1950's and 60's. Each of my children went to college and has prospered in their own way. Our lifestyle was not one of great wealth, yet none of my children was ever denied a warm meal, a good education or a roof over their head.

My daughter has been amazing to take me on as a responsibility. I think she knows I appreciate her. I have very few immediate medical issues, so I am sure that she does not feel overwhelmed by merely needing to fill my medicines once a week. It also works out wonderfully that she cooks for her family, as adding extra for me can not be too hard. She also takes care of my laundry, but it is thankfully not a big deal with regard to all of the other laundry she must do for her own family. It has become a very easy, comfortable situation that my daughter and I have created.

I am fortunate to have children who get along amicably and treat me well. Yet against my wishes, my children have still decided to hire me a home-aid. When my aid comes by in the morning and evening, it leaves my daughter with extra time to get to work and be with her family. My aid is nice enough, but sometimes she can be forgetful about things and I do not like to speak up and remind her. Instead, I will wait until the next day when my daughter comes by and let her know what the aid did wrong. It is hard because my daughter can tend to get very frustrated when I do this, telling me that I should speak up and let my aid know when things are not right or when I need something. Usually I do not speak up because I know that my daughter can typically just do it better anyway. I trust her more than my aid, especially when it comes to my finances and medical appointments. She knows me better than any stranger or home-aid ever will.
I love my daughter and she knows that. Although our family does not spend much time together anymore, with my children strewn all over, I still think of myself as fortunate. The family still spends Christmas together and they each try to come and visit every once in a while. I know my daughter realizes that her siblings are all busy and have obligations where they live. It is much more feasible for her to be my primary caretaker, as she lives only a few miles away.

At this point in my life, I am just living day to day. I enjoy visits from my grand and great-grand children. I like to listen to the Boston College sports games on the radio. There are simple things that get me by. I know my family knows that I love them and that they have made my last years very comfortable. I am so thankful that I have been able to stay in my own home, among my own things, instead of becoming accustomed to new settings and situations at such an old age.

Social Construction: Let’s Look At This Together

Looking over the accounts of my mother and grandfather, it is amazing how many of their relationship issues involve individualistic thought. The individualist process is easy to rely on, as American society maintains and encourages the ideology of personal gains and successes. People trust only themselves and those closest to them, weeding out anyone who is in the way of “their right” to earn the “best” position at work or achieve the “perfect” relationship. Social Construction interrupts this process by asking the question: Who decided? Who said that the “best” position at work is the highest-paid one or that the “perfect” relationship is the one that has lasted the longest and most amicably? An individualist approach would typically suggest that there are such standards (as being the best or perfect) because other, “lesser” acts (such as a lower-paid position or a relationship where cheating has occurred) enforce this. On the contrary, a social constructionist would offer that while things may seem “the best” or “the worst” to one person, it is through the process by which we create these labels together that their meanings becomes shaped. No one person can define what is right or wrong for another; instead it is the collaboration of multiple ideas that creates a shared...
reality. What may seem the best to one person could easily be something that another perceives as horrible or unpleasant. As Vivien Burr (2003), author of *Social Constructionism* writes, "The going-ons between people in the course of their everyday lives are seen as the practices during which our shared versions of knowledge are constructed" (p. 4). When working together, instead of holding personal benefits and gains as the ultimate prize, people begin to share realities and perspectives and find themselves accepting various views that could be possible for the given situation.

My mother and grandfather share a very tough relationship. It is one that holds resentment, anger, confusion and miscommunication. Both my mother and grandfather assume certain things about one another, without ever actually asking the other how they are interpreting the situation. For example, my grandfather will regularly presume that my mother "just knows" that he is thankful for her; that he appreciates what she does, etc. He also assumes that my mother has plenty of time to do his chores, since she already does so for her own family. Yet assumptions are where most of their issues begin. When my grandfather assumes that my mother knows he is thankful, he immediately closes the door on any other possibilities. Many different scenarios could actually be the case: my mother may have no idea my grandfather is thankful since he never vocalizes it or she may think that he actually hates the way she does things for him since he never says anything at all. Although my grandfather is certain of his own view of their relationship, he is looking at it in a very individualistic way. What he "knows" is what counts and that is all that matters; it is not really "his problem" that my mother does not understand his actions. He may believe that my mother should just "get" that he is thankful – she has been helping him for so long that it should just be something she knows. Possibly for my grandfather, it is his silence that signifies that he thinks my mother is doing a great job; that there is nothing he needs to tell her to do or change because she is already doing it the "right way".

On the flip side, my mother approaches the issue in an individual sense as well. Instead of ever broaching the subject herself, she immediately becomes hurt when he does not voice his
appreciation. Without looking at alternative views or challenging him herself, she becomes disappointed over a situation that she has not tried to rework. Although to ask for a thank you may seem a bit absurd, it is one possibility. Another suggestion could be to ask his opinion in an indirect way: “Was that alright?” or “Is this the way you like it?” Although this would require her to begin the dialogue, it may give my grandfather the space to reply with an answer and then finally, a thank you. Before just assuming that he is an ungrateful old man, my mother should try and consider some alternative reasons as to why he never seems to voice how he perceives their situation. Burr (2003) suggests that different discourses are one reason for alternative views. Discourses are particular sets of meaning and interpretation that an individual or group hold. Burr writes, “Each discourse brings different aspects into focus, raises different issues for consideration, and has different implications for what we should do” (p. 65). By approaching the situation with convinced assumptions, my mother and grandfather both leave out the possibility that the other is merely dealing with the situation in the discourse they most readily associate with.

A sensitive topic among my mother’s family is the death of my uncle. In the past, my mother has blamed her lack of mourning time on my grandfather, saying that she had to deal with his grief before she could find time for herself. Though this may be true, by uttering this statement blame is being placed, making the situation someone else’s “fault”. Kenneth Gergen (1999) looks at fault and blame as constructing a wall that only hinders the relationship that people are trying to work on. Gergen writes, “In finding fault with another, we begin to erect a wall between us. In blaming you, I position myself as all-knowing and all-righteous and you as a flawed being subject to my judgment” (p. 156). For my mother, placing the blame elsewhere was much easier than confronting possible other reasons as to why she had not faced her grief. In doing so, my mother also allowed my grandfather to remain individualistic; by never discussing the situation, she gave my grandfather no indication that anything was wrong. As far as he is concerned, nothing is wrong with the way he is dealing with and projecting his grief. Gergen (1999) discusses this type of issue
when explaining talking patterns. He writes, "Often our conventional ways of talking – for example, about our feelings or intentions – lock us into unwanted patterns of action: hostile arguments, self-scorn or pity, a debilitating outlook on the future" (p. 63). Instead of my mother allowing her grief to surface, she maintained my grandfather’s feelings as "the ones that mattered more". She enforced and continued an unwanted pattern of behavior, rather than suggesting the possibility that each of them could experience their losses equally.

Instead of placing blame or allowing his grief to surpass hers, my mother and grandfather both could have reached for a shared experience. They each lost the same two people. Although my grandmother was a mother to one and a wife to the other, it was still the loss of this one woman that unites them. Though my uncle was my grandfather’s son, that should not be "more important" than the fact that he also was my mother’s brother. Both had separate relationships with the two and their experiences with them were merely different. This should have been accepted and embraced. Instead of maintaining the idea that one person’s grief must be "more real" than the other’s, both my mother and grandfather should have been able to consider one another’s experience. My grandfather never told my mother not to grieve and be sad – yet he also never asked her, at any point, how she was doing or if she was okay. On the contrary, my mother was quick to assume that my grandfather’s interpretation of the deaths mattered more – without ever actually being told that. Two people who knew both my grandmother and uncle better than many others did were unable to meet at a point where each of their experiences was allowed to "matter". Instead of embracing the fact that they have wonderful, shared memories of these people, an individual approach was taken, resulting in their individual grieving processes.

Performance is another big part of the relationship that my grandfather and mother share. My mother performs the act of the doting, loving daughter while my grandfather performs the act of the sickly, old man who should be taken care of and attended to by the family that he raised for so long. These misconceptions are so deeply embedded in their relationship (and in society) that it is
difficult to imagine them not "acting them out". Yet why do people play by the rules? Who set the one rule for all else to abide by that says a sick father should be taken care of by the children he raised? There is no written law that dictates this, yet many people in various cultures and societies live by this design. What if the rules were switched, so that parents were expected to take care of their children for as long as they lived, no matter how old they were? Or what if it was mandated that anyone over the age of 65 was to be placed in a nursing home? Why are nursing homes viewed as such awful places to be anyway? As Burr (2003) states, "Health, illness and disability are not only socially created; they are sustained by social practices that often serve the interests of dominant groups in society" (p. 38). People perceive old age and nursing homes as awful things, continuing to enforce their image as such in society. If other views were invited into the dominant discourse of elderly health care, the issues of my grandfather's home-aid and nursing home placement may not have been concerns at all. If assisted living or extra help were viewed as enjoyable or a type of privilege, the experience could have the potential to be completely different. Even now, many alternatives can be offered with regard to the conventional "family duty" role. Yet still, my mother and grandfather have both allowed one another to maintain this type of construction. For my mother, it is a situation that just "is the way it is". With the same regard, my grandfather never questions what is being done for him. How does he know that he may not be more fulfilled and energized by living at a nursing home, where people are trained to work with individuals in his situation? How can he assume that he would hate it and that it would be an awful experience? Without ever allowing another option to be viable, my grandfather showed no appreciation of the fact that his daughter immediately stepped in to care for him. Both my mother and grandfather allowed their "performances" to be upheld without ever once, even minimally, questioning why this was the way it is.

Assumptions are my mother and grandfather's strongest setbacks. When they immediately believe that their view is right and the other must be "looking at it wrong", they allow individualistic thought to flourish. Gergen (1999) reiterates this point by stating, "No set of assumptions is without weakness; there

112
are no ultimate justifications for any of our beliefs” (p. 117-118). Ultimately, no real communication or understanding is taking place between them. Their current relationship was created over a terribly sad situation and it has been hard to watch it deteriorate even further. Instead of taking the opportunity to switch some of their existing habits and co-construct a new way of dealing with one another, they have allowed old routines and past issues to chart the course of their new relationship. Burr (2003) writes, “Behavior is therefore ‘specific’ to a particular situation and, social learning theorists would say, is acquired through the particular set of reinforcers present in those situations” (p. 31). Neither my mother nor my grandfather acts the way they do with one another as they do with other people. When my mother is at work, home or in public, she is not reacting to the behaviors of my grandfather. With the same regard, my grandfather does not react to his other children, strangers or his grandchildren the same way he does to my mother. However, when they are together, they sustain behaviors that are appropriate for their relationship. My mother performs well when around him, maintaining her role as the helpful, caring daughter. With the same regard, my grandfather has not taken the opportunity to evaluate his own actions. By portraying the fragile, decrepit father that my mother and her siblings have cast him as, he does not have to change any of his behaviors. He can continue to rely on other people and be rude and insensitive because it is “how he has always been”. No one is surprised by his actions, so he is not moved to change. While no one speaks up to him or ever asks his opinion, the family is only enforcing his role and closing off options for positive change.

It is frustrating and refreshing at the same time to be a part of social construction. I feel enlightened and fortunate for accepting some of these views into my life and allowing the opportunity for change to occur. However, it is equally discouraging that I have these new concepts to work with and can do little to change the course of a relationship I have so much familiarity with. Although that may sound individualistic, it is due to my previous efforts of trying to contribute to the growth of their relationship. Regularly I am met with the phrase, “Thank you for trying to help, but it just won’t work”. This is what Gergen (1999)
refers to as the closing-off of options. He states, "...as we make declarations of the real – what is true, what really happened, what must be the case – we close off options for dialogue" (p. 223). There is no chance for social construction to even begin because the offer is so quickly met with uncertainty and the unwillingness to look at alternatives.

The relationship between my mother and grandfather is one that could only benefit from relational construction. Although it is disappointing that these changes will most likely never happen, it has been helpful to write about alternative techniques that could reshape their path. Even if I am the only one to ever fully embrace what "creating a shared reality together" means and could do for them, it is still nice to know that a situation this distressing could be altered by working communally. Becoming aware of alternative views and giving equal value to everyone's interpretations is truly what social construction is for me. Gergen (1999) writes, "By reflecting critically on our taken-for-granted worlds, and the way in which our lives are affected by these constructions, we may be freed to consider alternatives" (p. 101). In this light, I hope to keep these concepts in mind when evaluating my mother and grandfather's relationship in the future, while also working to keep the subject at the surface. Though change seems impossible in the given situation, the more eagerly I continue to talk about relational learning and social construction, the better the chances are that transformations will be discussed and accepted.

References


Typing Interaction: The World of Online Chat Rooms

Mark Avery

Introduction
The topic of internet chat room interaction can be compared and contrasted from that of face-to-face interaction and telephone call openings. This is accomplished by collecting data from a chat room and examining the different components of both the face-to-face interaction and telephone openings. My observation and analysis has led me to some interesting findings on internet chat room interaction.

When two people meet in a face-to-face interaction, they engage in eye contact which is usually followed by smiling or possibly waving. Anthropologists also state that no matter your race or nationality, humans tend to open their eyes wider, and wrinkle their foreheads when beginning face-to-face interactions (Axtell, 1999, p.396). There may also be a physical component to a face-to-face interaction, such as a handshake or a hug. This element varies greatly depending on the social standards within a given culture.

While both face-to-face, as well as telephone call interactions, share a verbal element, internet chatting lacks this verbal element. It also lacks the face-to-face visual/physical contact. Internet chatting relies heavily on self-disclosure and typed information. This creates the opportunity for participants to seek out knowledge of one another as well as to present information in order for others to gain a similar understanding of the other with whom they are talking.

Data and Method
I have observed a chat room named “Welcome” from a website called Spinchat.com. The chat site required no registration; it only required a personally created handle name and the gender of the user. Overall, it was a fairly friendly atmosphere to start up conversation and gather data.
Coordinating Entry into Interaction

I observed what was going on and tried to make sense of people’s actions in comparison to face-to-face and telephone call interactions. When new participants entered the room, a prompt would pop up saying “participant x has entered the room.” This can be compared to a summons, or a ringing of the telephone, as it served the function of letting other participants know that participant x would like to join in the interaction of the group. Generally, some form of greeting by the participant or those already in the room followed the entry. This usually consisted of a greeting such as “Hello” or “Good day everyone.” There would also commonly be a response to this greeting by the newcomer. I noticed one or two people said “hello” or “welcome” to the newcomer. No other participants seemed to feel obligated to say hello as well. It was usually those who greeted the newcomer who would engage in further conversation. This further conversation usually consisted of playful text, witty comments, or sometimes an initiation to an in depth conversation.

People in the chat room also seemed to feel very comfortable with whatever they were typing. Participants made jokes and poked fun at each other with ease, which created a “be yourself, or whoever you want to be” atmosphere. I believe this was attributable to the creation of an atmosphere free of judgment toward any participant in the chat room. It was possible for each participant to feel comfortable since he or she was in his or her preferred environment. Kendon (1990) states that “To be the object of another’s attention is to be vulnerable to him.” This is not necessarily the case in an online chat room since the only consequence a participant might experience for saying whatever he or she feels is the possibility of being restricted from participating further in the chat room by a monitor. Normally, if something goes wrong while interacting, the participant can simply choose to leave the room and end the interaction at his or her will.

When I entered the chat room of about 20 people everyone seemed to be engaged in mid-conversation. I was the most recent participant to join. As shown in Appendix A, I entered the room with the handle name Scartissue2. My text is shown in bold
(Appendix A), as are the related responses. I began participation with a greeting, "Hey what's up everyone?" The greeting was followed by a response greeting of "Hi Scartissue2" from IrishLaura. This exchange follows the rules of a telephone call opening. I then inquired if there was any way to copy the text on the screen and paste it elsewhere. Immediately I had a response from IrishLaura, who was my initial greeter. Two or three other participants also joined in to help me answer my question.

After my question was resolved, people seemed to talk to me a bit less, and other interactions continued at a normal pace. There was no formal ending or set continuance such as, "talk to you soon" or "have a good day" which would generally occur in a face-to-face interaction or a phone call. The interaction was left open-ended, giving me the opportunity to rejoin the conversation. I eventually faded out of the conversation to the point where it was quite apparent I did not need to say goodbye to any of the other participants. In fact, I would have felt odd if I said goodbye because people had moved so far beyond the point where I was involved that they may have seen the closing as strange or out of place. I vanished from the minds and screens of the other chatters.

**Topic 1- Public vs. Private**

When involved in an online chat interaction, I found there are some comparisons as well as some contrasts to the idea of public versus private interaction. Gardner (1995) writes that our assumptions in regard to behavior in a public place help us to gather clues and evidence of a private identity (p.19). I found this particularly interesting when tied to Loftland’s (1975) writing on the city, where a city is defined as essentially a world of strangers. Loftland says that cities are essentially comprised of complete strangers who are aware of one another’s existence, but do not know those strangers’ names or personal details (p.3).

In this case, I am using the city as a public realm where strangers engage in face-to-face interaction commonly, in comparison to the realm of virtual chat interaction, in which an individual joins a virtual room full of strangers. In this situation, size is of great importance, both within cities and within chat rooms. It is no secret that in small cities people tend to know more
of the population, whether it be a friendship, acquaintance, or facial recognition (Loftland, 1975). There are more opportunities to encounter face-to-face interactions and gain personal knowledge of others in a setting of this sort.

I observed the same idea to be true within chat rooms. At one point during my observations, I entered the room in the middle of a fairly personal conversation. RadioShack was in the midst of telling the room about his personal problems with his love life and child. There were approximately eight people in the chat room and about four or five people who were actively participating in the conversation. Loftland (1975) writes, however, that as a city increases in size, it becomes nearly impossible to know everyone (p.10). Upon my entry to the chat room, during a busier time when there were more participants (around 30), personal conversation such as this was rare. Participants tended to engage in more “small talk” with many different conversations taking place at once. One illustration (with pippy) shows the different interactions taking place on quite an impersonal level by playing around and making a minor joke.

Factors such as number of participants in the chat room, and others such as the topic at hand may or may not have led participants to disclose personal information. At the same time, participants often sought knowledge of their partners (Lee, 2006, p.3). Lee explains that those actors, who are presenting information, the audience, and the situation, all help to determine the giving and seeking of information. At one point, I joined the interaction during the middle of a personal conversation. I attempted to join by observing the information RadioShack was providing about his life, and then asked him questions based on what he said. RadioShack responded by turning what I said around, trying to gain an understanding of who I was, as someone participating in talking about his problems. “Scartissue2, how old are you?” was the question he presented after I had been talking to him for a while. Participants often ask these types of questions in order to gain pattern knowledge such as name, age, credibility etc. (Lee, 2006, p.11). The knowledge they are able to put together helps to determine the information a person will give about him or herself.
Topic 2- Testing Relationships

Goffman (1995) tells us that individuals expect others to uphold and act the way that is appropriate for the situation (p.95). This is true in all types of communication. This theory can also be applied in chat room interaction as well. Sometimes keeping face is the most challenging part of interaction. It is not always easy to uphold or act the way others expect us to. In moments when information is presented in such a way that it cannot be socially woven into the interaction, Goffman claims that we are in a situation of presenting the wrong face” (p.97). This situation is not uncommon in other types of interaction, and if a participant does end up in the “wrong face,” he or she as well as other speakers will sometimes make an effort to save that person’s “face.” Immediate reactions will alert the speaker to whether or not they “lost face.” This realization may consist of a direct response or even the amount of time one takes to respond back to the original participant.

Once “face” is considered to be lost, the participant has a chance to correct for his or her offense (Goffman, 1995, p.99). This can consist of an explanation of why the offense was made, whether it is a joke or sarcasm. An acceptance can then be granted on the part of the challenged or offended. The acceptance will usually depend on the seriousness of the offense and whether or not the offender’s explanation is believed to be sincere.

Returning to the interaction with RadioShack (see Appendix A), an interaction takes place that challenges his face. After I tell him my age is 22, he tries to make a joke about being gay and looking for a hot young guy with whom to start a relationship. Although I was not offended, my delayed response led RadioShack to believe he had lost face. He seemed unsure of whether or not I took humor in his comment, considering he doesn’t know anything about me except my age. In an attempt to save face, he then made numerous attempts to let me know he had been just kidding and actually apologized for the comment. When I finally responded with laughter, RadioShack’s face has been saved and regular conversation then followed.

Challenges such as these are known to take place frequently in daily interaction. During both face-to-face
interaction and telephone calls these sorts of challenges occur frequently. My analysis of chat room interactions however shows that these situations occur just as frequently, if not more often, while engaging in and establishing relationships in a chat room setting.

**Conclusion**

My overall experience with chat room interaction and observation was fairly interesting. I had not participated in a chat room for a number of years, so it was definitely an unusual experience for me. I did, however, feel a bit out of place. It seemed like each of the participants genuinely wanted to be in the chat room, interacting with people they may or may not have known. I saw myself as an outsider trying to socially work my way into the chat realm. The more I visited the chat room, the more I recognized some of the same names that had been involved on a previous date. Although I did interact a significant amount, I did not become close with anyone.

The chat room experience brought with it a chance to dissect the similarities as well as the differences of chat room interaction compared to face-to-face interaction. I also found it intriguing how much people were able to integrate the everyday social framework of proper interaction into a box full of text, which is actually a dominant medium of conversation today. People use chat rooms as a way to connect with others on different relational levels. Also unique is that within a chat room, participants can construct their identities as they want. Unlike face-to-face and telephone interaction in daily life, there are no obvious social restrictions that prohibit a person to enter a chat room and act as a female or male when he or she is not. The chat room seemed marked by a “be yourself, or whoever you want to be” atmosphere. This offers some understanding about why so many people engage in online chat rooms. The self can be expressed using alternative communicative methods, methods that are not readily available in face-to-face interactions or in telephone calls.
References


Appendix A: Chat Room Transcript

*[scartissue2 entered room]*
harlequin_: lol
*[pintking entered room]*
^BeTTY^: lol huh
[Happysexyme left room.]
*scartissue2: hey what's up everyone*
[bigboy!!! left room.]
IrishLaura: hi scartissue2
harlequin_: shhh make 'em think we're good people
Im*fit*and*i*: no: borein

Monki: who?
[NIQAYAIQAWHALLA entered room]
IrishLaura: ur fit but my gosh dont u know it

Monki: huh?
^BeTTy^: ok sorry babe lol
harlequin_: woooow what a nickname, NIQAYAIQAWHALLA pintking: hi all
scartissue2: is there anyway to select the text in the box and copy it out??

IrishLaura: yes
harlequin_: yes...using an html-based chat
IrishLaura: hi pintking
NIQAYAIQAWHALLA: FUCK THE WORLD YOUR all going to be crucifexed upside down be
[NIQAYAIQAWHALLA left room.]
[UPforfungirl left room.]
IrishLaura: lol
ForeverEngland: wow, that's polite! lol
IrishLaura: wtf
~Sheri~: whoops sorry
harlequin_: u can change it in your preferences
scartissue2: so how would i do it?
[NIQAYAIQAWHALLA entered room]
Monki: why the hate person with wierd nickname

harlequin_: u can change it in your preferences, scartissue2
[chamoko2 entered room]
harlequin_: instead of Java Chat
pintking: hi ya irishlaura
[NIQAYAIQAWHALLA was kicked by an operator.]
IrishLaura: hi ya

harlequin_: select HTML chat
IrishLaura: lol
[Linda2000 left room.]
[Hot__PVT... left room.]
[Linda2000 entered room]
[USHER entered room]
pintking: hi irishlaura
[NIQAYAIQAWHALLA entered room]
[NIQAYAIQAWHALLA left room.]
IrishLaura: hi
[NIQAYAIQAWHALLA entered room]

**Monki:** *what's the difference between HTML and Java, harley?*

andre*: any fine girl wanna talk?

*Pires*: pzzzz

**harlequin_**: Java chat is powered but a little software and its cookies

[00x entered room]

*Pires*: damn idiot hour

**harlequin_**: Html is coded, monki

~Sheri~: yup

DrunkenirishMan: hey 00x
00x: hey DrunkenirishMan
[chamoko2 left room.]

*Pires*: hey 00x

IrishLaura: hi 00x

pintking: how r u
00x: hey **********************pires**************

**harlequin_**: it's like... the matrix I think
00x: IrishLaura: hello :D

*Pires*: lol

scartissue2: cool thanks, so i change it in which preferences the internet preferences?

[saggy_friend left room.]

*Pires*: love you too 00x
00x pokes IrishLaura and DrunkenirishMan

IrishLaura: oww

lm*fit*and*i*no: lol

**harlequin_**: yes, scartissue2 or in chat

Monki: which is better?

DrunkenirishMan: irishpoker

**harlequin_**: I don't memba
00x: can you two do some irish folk dance for us? :D
[Coolguawera left room.]
00x rolls on the floor laughing.
[icu left room.]
[mccloy78 entered room]
[THE_WHO?--??-? left room.]
[%valentino entered room]
scartissue2: oh yea i just clicked show chat log-
[Linda2000 left room.]
IrishLaura does an irish jig on 00x's head
00x: amaazaaing scartissue2 :D
pintking: what ur age irishlaura
harlequin_: but it only works with new-opened windows
00x opens a barrel of beer.
IrishLaura: im 23 pintking
~Sheri~ opens a bottle of vodka
scartissue2: so damn smart
00x: for sure scartissue2 ;)
[angel_girl entered room]
unclevanya opens a bottle of beer.
Monki: *Pires*?
00x: *Pires*!
DrunkenIrishMan: more sheri?
harlequin_: thanks, scartissue2
00x: monki wants you right now *Pires*
~Sheri~: yup
00x: :D
DrunkenIrishMan: sheesh
scartissue2: no thank you
~Sheri~: what
[NIQAYAIQAWHALLA left room.]
Monki: oh sush 00x
00x: nothing nothing ~Sheri~
pintking: klkl ime 22
00x shuuuuuuushs just for the monki
IrishLaura: where r u from pintking
Monki pats 00x head
pintking: fife in scotland
[NiM entered room]
00x grins evilly.
DrunkenirishMan: nimmers
~Sheri~: heya Nimmy
Monki: hiechie
[ChatGuy entered room]
IrishLaura: cool
[Madziara entered room]
Tynuka-Rhytishy waves to NiM.
NiM: whtasup irishman
NiM: hey there Sheri, and Tyn ;o)
^BeTTy^: heya NiMMy
DrunkenirishMan: you know my initials are kinda like yours NiM
moseph yawns.
NiM: g'day betty
[Madziara left room.]
DrunkenirishMan: Dim and Ni
[scartissue2 entered room]
RadioShack: Shes a nice girl.
acs: sunny san diego
MissT: yeah she is
RadioShack: I'm kind of into her.
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: aah, ok
scartissue2: whats up everyone
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: woohoo, go RadioShack
Nammi: RS say hi to Nammi
RadioShack: Well I just broke up with my gf, so i'm single now.
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: aaww
RadioShack: Hi Nammi.
MissT: RS say hi to Nammi
MissT: :P
Nammi: =P
Nammi: what?!
Nammi: wait
Nammi pushes Jaz in the pool
FLAMING_GOAT_!! huggs Nammi
acs: my dog just ran into a wall for no reason
Nammi hugs goatly goat
Nammi: probably a ghost
MissT: Goaty
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: :)
RadioShack: Its different being single. Kind of difficult too, honestly.
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: lol, funny dog
RadioShack: especially with my son.
MissT: its getting down to like -6 celcius here to give you an idea
acs: dumb dog
RadioShack: Stacy and I spent all of our time together.
Nammi: -1 here according to my widget
scartissue2: thats tough
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: wow tores, thats cold
[Coolace entered room]
RadioShack: And now its me and Jordan.. and I'm alittle lonely, as far as my romantic life goes.
MissT: yeah
MissT: sucks
MissT: =/
scartissue2: how long were you dating?
RadioShack: And I can't really go out and meet to people, having my son.
acs: it is still crying!!!!hahahahah
MissT: you have him all the time RS?
RadioShack: We were together about 6 months, known each other for 13 years.
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: how old is he now RadioShack?
[Kraven entered room]
[Kraven left room.]
RadioShack: Yes. Right now I do. I'm trying to get full custody of him. I've had him for about 5 months.
RadioShack: He is 2 years and 2 months old.
MissT: all the time for 5 months RS?
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: aaww, thats a lovely age
RadioShack: yes
scartissue2: wow, are you still close?
acs: dont get married young!!!!!!!!!!
MissT: what happend to his mom?
RadioShack: Yes We're rather close scartissue. Part of the problem is I think is she isn't completely ready for the type of loving relationship I am. I also don't know that she wants to step up to the plate and be "mommy".
RadioShack: She screwed me severely. I divorced her.
RadioShack: After 2 1/2 years of marraige.
RadioShack: marriage.
[MooDY. entered room : PHD.. This is pure cocaine ladies and gentlemen ( disco shit )]
Nammi jumps on lee
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: hey Mooooooooooooody !!!
~Sheri~: heya moody
MooDY.: yay jumps on Nammi
Nammi: that sucks Radio
MooDY.: ey goooooooooooooooaty
scartissue2: yea, thats tough when there's not an exact balance between two people like that
RadioShack: yup.
acs: lisen to tom lickes on 103.7 free fm from 3-7!!!!!!!!!
MooDY.: hi ~Sheri~
Nammi: sheri is sleping
RadioShack: right.
RadioShack: Scartissue, how old are you.
acs: my dog isnt moving
Nammi: bbl
[Nammi left room. : I'll be back, but don't hold your breath]
MissT: how'd you get your son full time for 5 months RS?
RadioShack: My ex wife called me "I can't handle him, etc; this is just to much for me"
RadioShack: I've had him ever since.
[Nammi entered room : >=D muhahahaha! I'm the leader of the ninja pirate mofia (NPM)]
scartissue2: only 22
RadioShack: I sure hope i get get full custody.
Nammi: gosty open dials
FLAMING.GOAT.!!: wb Nammi
Nammi: dshgsdufk
MissT: wb Nammi
Nammi: goaty
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: ok
Nammi: thanks
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: hold on
[redneck_96 entered room]
Nammi: kk
acs: you should sue her
RadioShack: Scartissue, I'm gay. interested in trying an online relationship with a hot guy.
RadioShack: just kidding!
[redneck_96 left room.]
RadioShack: trying to be a little comical, sorry.
[Nammi left room. : I'll be back, but don't hold your breath]
MissT: why doesn't she just give you full custody then
acs: eeewwwwwwwwwwwwwww
scartissue2: haha college student? YESS
MissT: or is she afraid of having to pay childsupport?
RadioShack: Talking about all this relationship stuff for a while depressed me.
[craig~ entered room]
MissT: craig~!
[Kraven entered room]
MissT hugsssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssss craig
craig~: hi MissT
RadioShack: MissT She says she can't handle him and doesn't have time for him.
MissT: so
MissT: why doesn't she cough up
FLAMING_GOAT_!!: brb
MissT: the full custody?
RadioShack: I paid around 400 per month.
[moirai entered room]
RadioShack: I dunno.
craig~: okkk who is MissT ?
RadioShack: She sure needs too.
MissT: maybe she is scared of paying childsupport
scartissue2: its good to talk about it though- especially bouncing it off others
moirai: o.O
acs: you could get child support
MooDY.: cmmmmmmmmmmmmffffffyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy
MissT: Torcs craig
craig~ hugssssssssssss flaming_goat_!!
MissT: :D
Kraven sighs...
[moirai left room.]
craig~ hugssssssssssss MissT

*pippy* pokes up her head from behind ~Sheri~ to see if 00x noticed
moseph: Wb, Kyara.
Kyara: hey hit
moseph: Hey, *pippy*
[zambro87 entered room]
[Hawk_Eye5 left room.]
hittitalready: how is everyone
*pippy*: hiya Paul
Kyara: a bit late reaction, moseph?
00x: O.o
Elsa: ok mary y de que parte eres?
zambro87: hi all
[mark_33 left room.]
Kyara: hi zambro
[Mackay left room. : I'd still be on your lips like some unfinished, half-remembered song...]
[cool_griffe left room.]
zambro87: hola kyara h r you today?
hittitalready: so uh can i be a part of this whole chatting scene i see before me?
[Cowboy1 left room.]
[kanso entered room]
Kyara: i'm fine thanx, you?
Kyara: of course hit ;)
zambro87: welcome hiti
moseph: Sorry, talking to people. Lol.
badlittlesis: some fun please pm me
[Kuja entered room]
hititalready: thank you
*pippy*: hallo hititalready
Kyara: yea, can be seen moseph :p
[kanso left room.]
[tiitu entered room]
hititalready: how old is everyone in here 20 something?
Kyara: hit, i think that's the meaning of a chat ;)
zambro87: moseph talk with animals too
hititalready: haha yeah i know
[kanso entered room]
hititalready: glad you caught that
[dilemma entered room]
moseph: I'm Dr. DoLittle?
moseph: Awesome.
*pippy* is 20 something
~Sheri~: lol
kanso greets all.
Kyara: hi kanso
HONORS
THESIS
ABSTRACT
And Nothing But the Truthiness: How The Daily Show and The Colbert Report's Rhetoric of Humor Has Revitalized Public Discourse

Lindsey Charles

In this essay, I examine the rhetorical and sociopolitical functions of Comedy Central’s The Daily Show with Jon Stewart as well as its recent spinoff The Colbert Report. The cultural impact of the programs is evident in their increasing popularity as well as in how they are cited and received in mainstream media (i.e. hosts Stewart and Colbert's mentions in major news outlets as two of the nation's most influential public figures). I will look at The Daily Show's self-given moniker of "fake news" and compare its techniques and conventions to those of more traditional news sources. Additionally, this paper uses theories of humor, satire and parody to analyze how the programs critique mainstream journalism, governmental actions and contemporary political discourse.