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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 40th edition of Comm-Entary, the undergraduate Communication research journal at the University of New Hampshire. Published annually by a team of student editors, this journal displays the best work from the university’s communication students across the disciplines of media studies, rhetoric, and language and social interaction.

Not only does our journal serve as a platform to showcase students’ academic excellence and creativity, but it also brings their ideas to a global stage. Over the past several years, Comm-Entary has grown to reach readers on six continents and in dozens of countries worldwide, providing UNH Communication students the unique opportunity to share their work with scholars from around the world.

This year, the outbreak of COVID-19 caused some unforeseen challenges, as the university switched to remote classes for the second half of spring semester. Our hardworking team of student editors adapted to the new circumstances with the help of our dedicated faculty advisor, and through video conferencing and countless emails we were able to continue our work. Despite the pandemic, our team successfully published this year’s edition of Comm-Entary, continuing a 40-year-long tradition.

All of the scholarship in this year’s edition focuses on pre-Covid-19 communication phenomena. We collected and selected these essays before the pandemic and social distancing that framed our Spring. We edited and published these essays through a series of regular virtual interactions. The show had to go on, but our work together challenged us and gave us purpose in this strange era.

None of this would have been possible without the perseverance of our Editorial Board and our incredibly supportive faculty advisor, Professor Robert Jackson. I would like to thank everyone involved for their continued hard work and dedication to the journal, which made this publication so successful. I am immensely proud of everyone’s work and am honored to be a part of such an incredible team.

I speak for everyone when I say we are proud to present you with the 40th edition of Comm-Entary amidst this historic time. From our family to yours, we hope you enjoy!

Sincerely,
Ellie Humphries
Editor-in-Chief
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Cover Art:
Photograph by David Hadley; Socially distanced statues concept by Kyra Nelson
For my final research paper, I am going to examine the concept of race and identity within the perspective of digital culture and society. My research will contemplate the changing dynamics of racial ambiguity in the online world. More specifically, I will identify and interpret a rising social media phenomenon known as the concept of “blackfishing.” This online phenomenon and those who perpetuate it challenge ethical and cultural definitions on whether the concept of race is chosen or pre-determined and what it means to portray yourself as a different racial identity online.

Blackfishing is a relatively new concept that did not exist pre-dating the internet. Because the concept of blackfishing is so new, there are no scholarly journals on the term itself. Therefore, I am relying on unofficial sources to define blackfishing in the simplest terms. Blackfishing was originally coined in November of 2018 on Twitter by user Wanna Thompson, a 20-year-old black female writer from Toronto, after noticing the uptake of predominately white influencers mimicking historically black features and styles on Instagram. The title of Thompson’s twitter thread stated, “Can We Start a Thread and Post All of the White Girls Cosplaying as Black Women on Instagram? Let’s Air Them out Because This Is ALARMING,” implying that white women were making a “cosplay” or costume out of being a black women.  

1 As Glamour magazine puts it, blackfishing is when “white influencers and models appear to be passing as light-skin black or biracial women” typically, via Instagram. In addition, the Independent stated that, “those engaging in blackfishing have often been seen to cherry pick aesthetics that they see as being stereotypically associated with black women.”

1 Thompson, Wanna. “Can We Start a Thread and Post All of the White Girls Cosplaying as Black Women on Instagram? Let’s Air Them out Because This Is ALARMING.” Twitter, Twitter, 7 Nov. 2018, twitter.com/wannasworld/status/1059989652487069696?lang=en.
Although the term “blackfish” can only be found within the internet era, that doesn’t mean that idea of blackfishing is a completely new concept. Before the digital era, the idea of white western societies “cherry picking” or stealing cultural identities from minority groups for profit has been, if anything, a consistent feature within our society. As Vincent Miller’s book, Understanding Digital Culture, puts it, western societies pride themselves in their ability to “exercise their individual will and power of choice” that allows them to pick and choose their favorite pieces of other cultures and claim it as their own (160). This idea is known as cultural appropriation, or “the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, etc. of one people or society by members of another and typically more dominant people or society.”

For the most prevalent example of blackfishing, Thompson noted Swedish model, Emma Hallberg, who’s Instagram page depicted the woman’s appearance similar to that of a black woman. Hallberg appears to have “deep, tan, racially ambiguous skin; full lips; and wavy hair” while a further scroll into her older Instagram photos showed that Hallberg appeared to be a naturally pale, straight-haired, white woman. To achieve this new appearance, it was evident that Hallberg had started “darkening her skin several tones deeper than her natural shade” on top of “braiding her hair to make it look similar to mixed people’s curl pattern.” Her ability to mask her original identity was so successful, she had “even been featured on Instagram accounts made for black hairstyles and spotlighting black women.” Before Thompson’s critique on Hallberg’s appearance, it is important to note that Hallberg had never commented on her race, despite being promoted as a black woman on other Instagram pages and making monetary profits off of these profile features.

Since then, the viral “blackfish” tweet has stirred a very large controversy and debate about what it means to for a white woman to “look black” online. People responding to the Thompson’s Twitter thread were mostly outraged to discover the number of white influencer’s they had supported because they had been fooled by their online images into thinking they were supporting mixed or black people. There was also an issue with the idea of white women having (historically) socially accepted Eurocentric features and the power to pick from current trendy black features.

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and “(capitalize) on these (features) to land lucrative sponsorship deals that women of color may not otherwise have access to.” Not only do these issues raise ethical and moral dilemmas, but signify a more alarming (or progressive) transition within our society, is the internet eliminating race?

One might argue that blackfishing is merely a product of the internet’s transgressive behavior. McLuhan was the first of his time to recognize and coin the term “global village.” A global village can be defined as the increasing interconnectivity of the world caused by the progressive forms of communication technology. But most importantly, the increasing pervasiveness of our modern technology. New forms of electronic media have created an appeal to all of our senses and ways of thought, leaving “no part of us untouched, unaffected, (or) unaltered” by its influence (26). Face to face interactions no longer define our relationships or experiences within the world. Instead, we are now shifting towards the individualization of like-minded people finding each other online. We are no longer tied to only one place, group, or set of ideas. As digital technology becomes an increasingly prominent piece of our everyday lives, people are able to strongly identify with different communities or identities than those of the past. Especially, in the case of the internet, where people have the ability to connect with one another around the world.

The people of the digital age seek communities that share similar ideas, values, and interests on the internet. These relations, according to Miller, can be defined as either a community of transaction, interest, fantasy, relationship or any combination of those things (p.188). Although these ideas are similar to the way communities operated in the past, the channel in which these communities take place has become the online social network.

In this case, Instagram, via internet technology, has blurred both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers between identity, perception, and race. Even the accessibility to cherry-pick ideas and identities has become easier as a result of the internet. With thousands of real black women for reference, it is easier for white influencers to mimic their clothing, hair, features, etc. Now, white influencers can dig for articles of authenticity by simply buying products from tagged profiles and promotional photos to emulate black women with an untapped precision.

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The internet has become a melting pot of new cultures and identities that create a changing dynamic to the ideas of traditional identity. But, the remaining factor within these shifting communities and those pre-dating the internet, is the concept of trust. According to Miller, trust is an essential component of a functional society. He suggests that “the notion of trust involves a certain amount of risk for the person or organization doing the trusting,” implying that trust in a community is not always guaranteed (112)\(^\text{11}\). In studying the blackfish phenomenon, this commonality can shift the blame off influencers for blackfishing, and instead, place blame on those who interpreted and supported white influencers identities to be those of black women.

In pondering why anyone would commit to deep tanning or spending large amounts of money on textured hair, I examined the concept of self-presentation within the context of social media. Self-presentation, as defined by Vincent Miller, “involves a performance of self in front of a particular set of observers,” with the goal of presenting oneself within their most favorable image (166).\(^\text{12}\) In the case of blackfishing, favorability might be associated with online fame. Instagram users are set within a social hierarchy based on their levels of engagement which can be publicly displayed via platform features. This might include (but is not limited to) a verified Instagram checkmark, likes, comments, and paid sponsorships. Perhaps, blackfishing can be an attempt by white influencers to gain more traction to their page and separate themselves from other white influencers by cherry picking into black culture. Maybe, these influencers know that when they make a spectacle of themselves by posting ambiguous photos (while their old photos remain on their profiles for comparison) in hopes that they go viral and attract even more attention to their pages. Although their intentions are unclear, it is safe to assume that all Instagram influencers know that controversy leads to reactions. Whether these reactions are good or bad, they result in higher rates of engagement.

However, it is also important to recognize that this phenomenon is more than an extension of identity play. Identity play, according to Miller, is an online persona with a degree of anonymity that allows a person to explore themselves with “shifting hybridity and fluidity” within their identities (163).\(^\text{13}\) Often, taking shape in a new online persona. But the issue with blackfishing, is the specific historical connection to the identity of being a black woman in society versus being a

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white woman. In combination with the lack of anonymity, the implications of a white woman portraying herself as a black woman on Instagram have real-life benefits and consequences. The increasing interconnectivity of the internet has not yet passed the barriers set by the racial historical contexts of Western society.

The concept of race was not presented until the 16th century and not used socially and politically until the 18th century as a result of the European’s colonization of the Americas. At this time, race served as a “new mode of structuring inequality in human societies”14 to justify the colonization and enslavement of Indigenous and African peoples in the New World. Europeans used race as a way to create difference and inequality between peoples, which allowed them to place themselves on the top of the social hierarchy. “Europeans justified this attitude toward human differences by focusing on the physical features of the New World populations, magnifying and exaggerating their differences, and concluding that the Africans and Indians and their descendants were lesser forms of human beings, and that their inferiority was natural and/or God-given.”15 Hence, race was socially constructed by Europeans to justify enslavement. There are no prior studies of race before colonization of the Western world. The European’s original construction of race still dominates our society’s concept of race and has sustained itself because of the power structures created to keep white people in major positions of social and political power.

The concept of race is socially fabricated, as all identities are, as evidence by the blackfishing phenomenon. But that does not mean that people’s racial identity is a choice, despite someone’s controversial abilities to appear as racially ambiguous.

Some might defend Hallberg and other “blackfish” as racially ambiguous or “passing” white women, arguing that it is not their fault for looking like another race. Racial passing is the idea that a “person classified as a member of one racial group is accepted as a member of a [different] racial group other than their own.”16 Historically, however, passing is seen as a form of deception

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placed on people of color by white people that allows a person of color to use their light-skin or Eurocentric features to present themselves as white to survive in times of heightened racism.\textsuperscript{17}

Since passing has been defined as a trait for people of color (as defined above), white people cannot be passing. Passing is typically understood as the ability to appear white. Passing was also used by minority’s as a means of survival and to benefit from privileges they were otherwise excluded from during times of racial discrimination. For example, when a white store owner in the 1940s mistook a woman of color for a white woman, she treated her with respect, until she came into the store with her black daughter who did not appear to be “passing.” She then “declined any further contact” with the woman and her daughter.\textsuperscript{18} White people have never had to experience this racial discrimination as they have always had a dominant social majority and the most social power. Passing and blackfishing are different in which a person who is passing is naturally born with racially ambiguous characteristics that can be seen as Eurocentric versus a white person fabricating racially ambiguous features. When a person of color is “passing” they are not intentionally changing their physical appearance with the intention of “looking white.” Blackfishing is the intentional manipulation of black features to capitalize on social media profits.

Although the internet is shifting the way we define out identities online, we can no longer change the dominant ideology of race that was created in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and the way it has shaped our entire western society. We all are raised to believe we have a racial identity, internalized society’s racial hierarchy, and accept our positions within them. Often times “low-status minority "races” have absorbed and acquiesced unconsciously to the folk belief.”\textsuperscript{19} Our idea of what our race is -is typically passed down generationally, along with “the consequences of the oppressive and mean-spirited policies of white America.”\textsuperscript{20} People of minority groups are raised by “descendants of men and women whose spirits were broken by these practices and who too often turned their pain and frustrations in-ward’’\textsuperscript{21} sustaining the idea of race. Race is a construct,


but we do not get to pick which race we are identified as, raised as, or are treated as within a society. Our race is passed down to us.

In conclusion, although some may argue that race is a choice, the concept of race was created as a socio-political tactic in the 18th century for Europeans to colonize the western world and enslave Africans and Native Americans. The construct of race is passed down generationally and has irreversibly changed the dynamic of our society through its creation of racial hierarchy. Therefore, appearing racially ambiguous in terms of blackfishing does not make a white person racially passing, nor of another race. Despite the argument that blackfishing is just another form of racial passing; to be passing is a term for people of color and a survival tactic. Blackfishing is neither of those. The social power structure that has been created by the concept of race will irreversibly frame the life of a white person, and people of all races, and cannot be erased by a temporary change in appearance. Blackfishing is not identity play, nor is it an irreversible product of the global village. Although the internet has the ability to transcend identity barriers, the real-world connections these identities hold remain anchored in the way we navigate society.


Thompson, Wanna. “Can We Start a Thread and Post All of the White Girls Cosplaying as Black Women on Instagram? Let's Air Them out Because This Is ALARMING.” Twitter, Twitter, 7 Nov. 2018, twitter.com/wannasworld/status/1059989652487069696?lang=en.
Hannah Baum

A Royal Pain: Tensions of Womanhood in *Padmaavat*

Introduction:

Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s period drama *Padmaavat* (2018) depicts the story of a beloved, stunningly beautiful Hindu queen who was featured in a 16th-century epic poem by the same name, which was written by Malik Muhammad Jayasi (Adlakha, 2016). Historians agree that Rani Padmavati was a fictional character (Adlakha, 2016), but she is featured alongside real, historical rulers like King Ratan Singh and Sultan Alauddin Khilji in Bhansali’s colorful, modern adaptation of the poem.

The film was produced by three entertainment organizations, which included Bhansali Productions, Prime Focus, and Viacom18 Motion Pictures (IMDb, n.d.). It stars Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh, and Shahid Kapoor as the three main characters: the radiant Padmavati, the beastial Alauddin Khilji, and the noble Ratan Singh, respectively (IMDb, n.d.). International news outlets were fascinated with the film after it sparked widespread controversy in India, for allegedly tainting Hindu history.

Padmavati, whose beauty is the cause for war, is a powerful, honorable queen who rescues her abducted husband and saves her female subjects from rapacious marauders through self-immolation (IMDb, n.d.). Although she eventually rejects her quiet, socially designated role as a submissive queen and adopts a position of heroism when she ventures off to “get the man” with her troops, Padmavati continues to conform to her designated gender roles through events like standing aside as two love rivals fight over her in a passionate duel (2:25:14). That is, Padmavati continuously cycles between confidence and piousness; she does not transition from one to the other, but rather flip-flops between the two. In the film, women’s assignments to their gendered positionings simultaneously constrain and empower, and are apparent in their daring ordeals and frequent acceptances as subordinates to their male counterparts. Six recurring themes within *Padmaavat* shall be discussed in regards to struggles towards gender equality with the use of narrative analysis, allegorical interpretation and materialist feminist rhetorical criticism.
Historical Context:

The film was initially scheduled to release on December 1st, 2017, but it was delayed after violent protests by Conservative groups: India’s Right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party and the Karni Sena, a Rajput caste group (Saberin, 2017). The Kari Sena angrily accused Padmaavat’s director Bhansali of sexualizing a revered female figure and distorting historical facts about their community and demanded that the film be banned from theaters (Saberin, 2017). There was a rumor circulating around stating that Padmavati was in an erotic dream scene with Muslim warlord Allauddin Khilji, which was a deeply disrespectful gesture to Rajput pride and honor (Qureshi, 2018). After a group of protestors destroyed the film set with petrol bombs, Bhansali released a statement on Twitter assuring that there was never any dream sequence, or any face-to-face interaction between Padmavati and Khilji at all (Hindustan Times, 2018). In November of 2017, several Indian film corporations held a press conference to discuss the severity of politically charged attacks upon the creative freedoms of filmmakers (Press Trust of India, 2017). Actor Sushant Singh questioned the Bharatiya Janata Party’s silence on its supporters threatening to burn theaters down, simply because they disagreed with Bhansali’s interpretations of Indian history (Press Trust of India, 2017). The following month, India’s strict Censor Board met with two historians to evaluate the film. The historians proposed five modifications, including a title change from Padmaavati to Padmaavat and to utilize CGI animation in order to cover the queen’s exposed midriff during a ceremonial wedding dance number, which was viewed to be inappropriate (Hindustan Times, 2018). In January of 2018, the Supreme Court of India became involved and dismissed screening bans that were effective in four states, and rejected any incoming pleas (Hindustan Times, 2018). It approved a nation-wide release of the film on January 25th (Hindustan Times, 2018).

When Bhansali publicized Padmaavat with teaser trailers and posters, he intended to share his fascination with the poem and capture its theatrical wonder with the magic of film (Rammath, 2017). In a 2008 interview with Anupama Chopra, when Bhansali was directing an operatic version of the poem, he revealed that he did not find it sad when Padmavati sacrificed herself in an act of self-immolation, as she refused to submit to the enemy, therefore maintaining courage, pride, and dignity (Rammath, 2017). As a rhetor, Bhansali intended to depict a representation of Indian perseverance, but instead sparked huge controversy with his setup of Hindu Rajputs as good and Muslims as evil. Since Muslim warlord Khilji was portrayed as a rapacious villain during a period of increasing Hindu nationalism, Padmaavat triggered panic among conservative
Hindus to protect their honor and demonize Muslims for a cinematic conflict between a fictitious queen and a historical ruler (Saberin, 2017). The issues with the Bharatiya Janata Party and Karni Sena directly competed with the promotion of the film, and rather than proceeding with typical audience stimulation with advertising, Bhansali fought against censorship and promoted creative freedom of speech in a problematic political climate in one of the largest democracies on the planet. The fact that the film is even available is extremely telling of Bhansali’s passion for his work and the honor of delivering Padmavati’s story, even if she was not an actual figure.

Methods:

Padmaavat shall be analyzed with the methodologies of Narrative Analysis and Materialist Feminist Rhetorical Criticism. Allegorical Interpretation will be utilized as well, after assessing the four formal elements of narrative structure. Narrative Analysis will be effective in examining foundational surface elements prior to engagement in Allegorical Interpretation and analysis of deep, hidden meanings. The characters, settings, plot, and themes of the film must be established before making note of any allegories, which make connections to real-world issues pertaining to gender conflict. Feminist Rhetorical Criticism and Allegorical Interpretation will overlap with one another; that is, the allegories will reference obstructions towards gender equality that occur in societies outside of the film. Materialist Feminist Rhetorical Criticism will observe gender scripts that are assigned to women in the film, and Allegorical Interpretation will analyze how the placement of these scripts align with larger issues like the invalidation of women, assigning value onto women, and the villainization of confident women.

Narrative Perspective and Allegorical Interpretation:

A Narrative Analysis is performed in three steps. The first step is the identification of characters, setting, plot and themes within an artifact (Kuypers, 2016:135), followed by an analysis of its fulfillment of the four narrative elements. The third and final step involves an evaluation of the artifact’s function (Kuypers, 2016:135). Allegorical Interpretation involves the translation of an allegory from a narrative, where the story is used as an evaluation of our own contemporary society (Kuypers, 2016:142). The four elements shall be examined in conjunction with Allegorical Interpretation.

Padmavati, Alauddin Khilji, and Ratan Singh are the three predominant characters in the film. However, there is a series of secondary characters as well, which includes Alauddin’s cousin
and wife Mehrunissa, the Royal Guru, Army Commander Gora Singh, and Alauddin’s advisor and trained assassin Malik Kafur. Padmavati is a dutiful wife and resilient queen, and Alauddin Khilji is a narcissistic, calculating, rapacious warlord; there is a construction of good facing evil, pious protagonist versus intoxicatingly awful antagonist, feminist against misogynist. Alauddin is made to be incredibly unlikable through his blatant narcissism and extreme sexist behaviors. Padmavati’s husband, Ratan Singh, is depicted as a kind and upstanding ruler when compared to Alauddin and is to be interpreted as a good character, initially. However, he expresses sexism very subtly through poetic musings, sarcastic inquiries, and attempts at over protecting his wife. Alauddin is very direct and violent in his sexist ways, but Ratan Singh’s subtleties do not excuse him from contributing to gender discrimination. In that respect, Ratan Singh could be interpreted as both a “good” character and an enemy of gender equality.

The first setting in Padmaavat is in 13th century Afghanistan, which features the facade of a sturdy looking, fortified kingdom in an arid, mountainous landscape (0:05:23). Alauddin, his uncle, and his future wife Mehru reside there. The film then transitions to the misty jungles of Singhal (0:11:14), where Princess Padmavati is free to hunt and climb trees. Padmavati is soon brought to the affluent kingdom of Chittor (0:19:38), where her exquisite beauty is kept hidden from the greedy Alauddin. The walled kingdoms of Chittor and Afghanistan represent the domestic confinement of women, where Mehru and Padmavati are expected to remain. Padmavati has free reign of the jungles until she is wed to Ratan Singh, when she is then kept inside the kingdom and denounced when she tries to leave (1:40:39).

The plot is essentially a Helen of Troy narrative, wherein a war is declared between a villainous man lusting for “the most beautiful woman on Earth” and her loving husband. It is an easily recognizable, engrossing story setup that appears to be romantic at first, but actually correlates with the theme of women being perceived as precious gifts, which men are entitled to and fight over. It has an unexpected twist ending, where the ruthless Alauddin defeats the Chittorian Army and captures Singh’s fortress.

At the beginning of the film, King Ratan Singh of Chittor travels to the jungles of Singhal for pearls, after his wife berates him for selling her cherished pearl necklace (0:14:39). Singhal’s princess, Padmavati, is hunting for deer and accidentally shoots Singh with her arrow (0:12:30). He is enchanted by her beauty while she tends to his wounds, and then eventually proposes to her before he journeys back to his lavish kingdom (0:18:23). Padmavati accepts the marriage proposal
and is whisked away to a life of splendor as Singh’s wife. The Royal Guru, Chetan, spies on the couple on their wedding night and is banished from the kingdom for his acts of betrayal (0:36:53). Enraged, Chetan confides in the tyrannical Sultan Alauddin Khilji that Padmavati is the most beautiful woman in the world (0:47:36). He predicts that Alauddin will become a mighty ruler, but only if Padmavati is at his side (0:47:23). Alauddin, who is fixated with collecting anything that is exceptional, invites Singh and Padmavati to Delhi for his birthday (0:48:38). Singh rejects the invitation, and Alauddin vows to capture Padmavati and make her his concubine, then declares war on Chittor. He kidnaps Singh (1:33:10), and Padmavati devises a clever rescue mission. Padmavati retrieves her husband and they return back to their kingdom (2:06:17), under the impression that their troubles with Alauddin are over. However, his troops return and lay siege upon the walls of Chittor with highly advanced catapults (2:19:09). Singh is executed in a passionate sword fight with Alauddin. (2:23:00) After Chittor’s army is defeated, Padmavati and her female subjects engage in mass self-immolation to protect themselves from the lustful gaze of Alauddin and potential enslavement (2:35:21).

There are six recurring themes within the film, which represent the back and forth tensions between being a strong, powerful woman and gendered expectations that revert women back into passivity, therefore neutralizing the heroic self-developments they have made for themselves. The themes shall be analyzed further with Material Feminist Criticism, and include women being instructed to “wait here” for a man to come back for them, men answering on behalf of women, women being referred to as precious gifts, men refusing to take women seriously, women behaving in nurturing ways, and women standing up for themselves and being in positions of power.

The stunning backgrounds, lavish costumes, and flawlessly made-up actors in Padmaavat not only capture the attention of the audience but also transport them back in time to Medieval India. The greedy, egotistical Alauddin Khilji is polarized from the pious Padmavati and Ratan Singh, which creates a deeper sense of sympathy and identification for the Kingdom of Chittor. The film taps into the values surrounding the fluid, perhaps confusing interpretations of what a woman is “supposed to be”, and how she should behave in accordance with designated gender roles.

The plot of the film is engrossing, and the ending was completely unexpected. However, the riots throughout India are damaging to the film’s credibility within its audience; unfortunately,
conservative Rajputs felt that their community was being disrespected through the inaccurate portrayal and sexualization of a sacred, mythical queen.

Materialist Feminist Rhetorical Criticism and the Six Recurring Themes:

Materialist Feminist Rhetorical Criticism examines the symbolic systems of gender and argues that symbol-using humans are socially constructed (Kuypers, 2016:194). It also notes the ways in which masculinity and femininity are situated as stale categories, instead of continuously growing (Kuypers, 2016:194). The allegories within the film shall be examined as representations of rigid gender structures in conjunction with the approach of “defining”, where the language that shapes gender ideals and stereotypes are evaluated (Kuypers, 2016:196). This method shall be used in interpreting the six recurring themes that were observed within the film.

The first theme within Padmaavat supports the notion that women are to remain in the home, where it is safe, while the men go out into the world where there are greater dangers. This may be interpreted as a protective gesture at first, but its repetition within the film suggests that it is disempowering to women. During Ratan Singh and Padmavati’s wedding night, an unseen prowler spies on them and prompts Singh to throw his blade at the bedroom door (0:33:21). He then wraps his arm protectively around Padmavati, pushes her back and goes onwards to investigate (0:33:24). Through this series of movements, Ratan Singh presumes that his wife is in danger and incapable of protecting herself against an intruder. There are two instances where Singh asks his wife to wait for him while he goes elsewhere: when he goes to welcome Alauddin into his kingdom (1:19:09) and prepares to meet Alauddin in his temporary camp in the desert (1:29:30). Singh reinforces the domestic confinement of women when he expects Padmavati to remain behind while he proceeds outside of the walls of Chittor.

The second recurring theme suggests that women cannot speak for themselves or properly voice how they are feeling in a situation, so a man has to do it for them. These scenes represent the invalidation of women’s opinions, which potentially relates to mansplaining. There is a notable frequency of this theme with Alauddin being present. The sheer audacity of the act of mansplaining relates to Alauddin’s bluntness with expressing sexism. At the beginning of the film, Alauddin asks his cousin Mehru if she will be his wife (0:08:25). Mehru giggles and hides her face behind her hands and is unresponsive in her state of delight (0:08:30). Turning to her father, Alauddin answers for Mehru: “She accepts” (08:32). In this situation, Alauddin does not
give Mehru an opportunity to process the proposal and quell her excitement. He answers on her behalf, suggesting that he knows what is best for her. During Alauddin’s unsolicited conquest of the nearby kingdom of Deogiri, he jokingly throws pearls at the captured Princess Chitai (0:37:57). He ravenously assures Chitai that “[her] beauty is so enchanting [and that she] will be very happy in [his] harem” (38:04). Alauddin answers for how he wants Chitai to feel through the use of future tense in his statement, even if she might disagree with him. Alauddin unapologetically presumes that Chitai will be willing to engage in his harem, and also be happy within it. After Alauddin has his uncle murdered and seizes the throne of the Dehli Sultanate, he enters his bedroom and asks Mehru “why [she] look[s] upset; [she is] now Empress of India” (0:44:27). Alauddin expects Mehru to feel happy for being in a position of power after Alauddin had her father killed. He went through the exhaustive process of forcibly removing the late Sultan from the throne and assumes that Mehru will be impressed with his deeds. Alauddin then believes that Mehru will reward him for what he has done, and says “on this joyous occasion, make unabashed love to your Sultan. NOW!” (0:45:03). In this instance, Alauddin presumes that his wife wants to have sex with him, and when she remains frightfully silent during his demands, he screams at her. This behavior correlates with the entitlement that men feel that they have over women in regard to receiving sexual pleasure whenever they wish.

The third theme describes women as precious gifts or pearls. Initially, these words can be interpreted as poetic and praiseworthy, but they also attach a sense of value onto women. The notion that only the most beautiful things are considered precious prompts a sense of greed and entitlement from men, who get into conflicts over attempting to acquire the most illustrious women. The irony in the third theme relates to clashes between the objectification of women and honoring them. At the beginning of the film, after Alauddin’s brash request to marry his cousin, Alauddin’s uncle laughs and remarks “Aren’t you clever? For one precious gift, you want another in return” (0:08:03). Here, Alauddin’s uncle is referencing an ostrich that was gifted to him, and essentially equates Mehru’s material worth to the ostrich. That is, both Mehru and the ostrich are considered equally precious and valuable, suggesting that women are seen as objects and are to be treated as such. The notion that women are to be treated as objects illustrates the belief that women are vessels that are meant to fulfill sexual desire. In the jungles of Singhal, Padmavati’s father grants Ratan Singh more time in their forest and states that “[he] would like [Ratan Singh] to take pearls back with [him] and not the wound [that Padmavati inflicted on him while hunting].”
(0:17:38), implying that Singh should take his daughter, the rare pearl, back to Chittor. Soon after, Padmavati presents a pile of pearls to Singh and asks “are these the ones you were looking for? Now that you’ve got what you wanted, you’ll return to Mewar?” (0:17:52). Singh gazes at Padmavati longingly, implying that there is one remaining pearl that he has to possess (0:17:52). The references to the pearls suggest that women, like pearls, are cherished but are also objects that are sought after and considered valuable.

The fourth theme observes the recurring formula of a woman making a statement, a man ignoring it or brushing it aside, and then the man learning that she was right all along after he gets into some sort of trouble. The man feels ashamed for overlooking the woman’s intuition, which can be costly or dangerous. During her wedding night, Padmavati hears Chetan shuffling outside of the door and asks Ratan Singh if someone is there. He is dismissive and silences her suspicions, stating that “[the noise] must be the moon, envious of all your extols” (33:15). Here, Ratan Singh minimizes his wife’s concerns and devalues her opinions. During their dinner discussing the set conditions that Alauddin must meet if he wants to come inside of Chittor, Padmavati states that “this proposition could be a conspiracy. Why invite the Sultan into the fort?” (1:14:53). Padmavati’s worries serve as a voice of reason, which foreshadows Singh’s foolishness for not listening to her later on during his capture. Singh dismissively responds that the proposition “could be” (1:14:59) a conspiracy, which downplays his wife's insecurities. After Singh is invited to visit Alauddin in Dehli, Padmavati encourages her husband to bring a sword for protection, as Alauddin cannot be trusted (1:28:59). He rejects her suggestion and reassures her that he is going to dinner and not war (1:29:00). Unfortunately, Singh ignores his wife’s voice of reason once again and gets ambushed in the next scene by Alauddin’s troops (1:32:08). Commander Gorah Singh argues with Padmavati over her agreement to trek over to Afghanistan and rescue her husband, asking if she “trust[s] [their] ability to get [the] king back?” (1:40:47). After Padmavati has the traitor Guru Chetan killed, Gorah Singh apologizes for “doubting [her] acumen [...] Every Rajput sword will now obey [her] command”. Gorah Singh doubted Padmavati's abilities as an effective queen and as a woman, and only apologized when he was proven wrong.

The fifth theme depicts traditionally feminine roles of nurturing, healing, providing care, and sewing. This theme assigns stereotypical duties onto women and conflicts with the theme of women being powerful. When Ratan Singh is in the caves getting healed, he is spooked awake by nightmares, but Padmavati shushes him and rubs his head until he falls asleep (0:14:51). She also
hydrates Singh with a cup of water (0:16:12), both of which demonstrate women’s maternal instincts. The duties of sewing and being skilled with manipulation of fabrics is represented when Padmavati wraps her husband’s turban around his head and sews embellishments onto it (0:18:00), suggesting that only women can engage in these activities and are expected to do so. The submissive, pious role of the wife is shown when Mehru stands at Alauddin’s side and braids his hair (1:52:06) and when Padmavati helps Singh put on his armor in preparation for battle (2:16:57), alluding to the expectation that women must take care of their husbands at all times.

The final theme involves women standing up for themselves and being powerful, which offers the compelling message that women can be strong. It may be undermined by male characters that occasionally villainize women who are independent in their thinking. That is, male characters are threatened when women challenge the traditional aspects of womanhood. When Singh has a flashback in the caves of Singhal, he imagines his first wife slamming a window shut in his face because he gave her pearl necklace away (0:14:31). His wife is depicted as villainous and scary, suggesting that women who are confident in what they want are intimidating. When Princess Chitai rejects Alauddin’s offer of acceptance in his harem, she says that he will never make her happy, and he calls her arrogant (0:38:16). Alauddin attacks Chitai for standing up for herself, rejecting his advances, and reassuring him that she is absolutely sure that she will not be happy with him. While Alauuddin discusses his plans of capturing Padmavati, Mehru warns him that “Padmavati is someone’s wife” (0:49:45). Alauddin uses third person speech with his assassin and ignores Mehru while referencing food: “Ask the empress what she will serve for dinner” (49:56). Alauddin ignores important points made by his wife and puts her back in her place with reference to making dinner. This mimicry of the sexist statement “make me a sandwich” attempts to plant Mehru back in the kitchen after she voices her valid opinion. Padmavati celebrates her strength as a woman when she claims that “Rajput women are just as much warriors as their men” (1:38:44), reassuring the fact that although the women in the kingdom may not be allowed to leave and engage in battle, they are still ferocious like the men of Chittor. This statement is a powerful testament to “girl power” and attempts to harmonize men and women. Finally, Padmavati demonstrates great strength and personal sacrifice through mass self-immolation in an attempt to protect the women of the kingdom from rape, therefore maintaining purity, courage, pride, and dignity (Rammath, 2017). Padmavati is accepted by her subjects as both a goddess and
a martyr for shielding them with flames of modesty. This act is of deep importance to the Rajput community and exemplifies their principles of perseverance.

Significance:

The behaviors and exchanges that exist in this televised form of media relate to gender inequalities within our own society. There is a tension in Padmaavat between the expectation of women being nurturers and strong leaders, where, in both scenarios, men jump in unapologetically and assess their dominance. Women are simultaneously empowered and disempowered in the film, which represents the blockages that have hindered the progress of gender equality, including the objectification of women through discourse that is deemed romantic, mansplaining, or villainizing women that are confident or situated in respectable positions of power. The fact that Padmaavat gained international media attention from the protests that occurred in response to the historically inaccurate portrayals of Padmavati is of great importance towards the sheer volume of viewers. It is incredible that the controversial film premiered in the second most populous country in the world, followed by curious neighbors that wanted to learn more about why there were such passionate reactions to its announcement. The vastness of Padmaavat’s audience is crucial with respect to delivering the messages of gendered inequality and sexism, which were depicted in the six recurring themes.

Padmaavat is both applaudable and problematic in its depictions of women, which contributes towards the gender gap, but also informs audiences on where we can improve and make adjustments in accordance with what we think a woman should be. There are gender roles that are incredibly outdated, like when Padmavati is expected to stay behind in the fortress and Alauddin asks Mehru what she is preparing for dinner. There are gender roles that are also incredibly empowering, which are apparent when Padmavati is praised for rescuing her husband and protecting her female subjects from Alauddin’s invasion. Although the film is set within a Medieval, rigidly patriarchal society, it suggests that women do not have to be either traditional or radical in their interpretations of womanhood, but can embrace both, as Padmavati did. It is deeply important that opposing perspectives of what it means to embody womanhood were represented in the film, instead of only including the expected, appropriate expression of piety and timidity. Padmaavat could have remained historically accurate and honored the strictness of Medieval gender codes, but it had portrayals of feminine independence, strength, and leadership as well.
These progressive depictions make a bold attempt at advocating acceptance towards powerful women and redefining societal definitions of womanhood.

*Padmaavat* is a strikingly beautiful, engrossing period drama that reimagines a revered, fictitious Hindu queen within a modern landscape of animation and special effects. The violence that surrounded this film was incredibly alarming, as conservative Rajputs threatened to kill the director and lead actress for showing the bare midriff of a character from a poem. This portion of the film’s audience appears deeply troubled by even slight provocativeness and demanded that Padmavati be covered up out of respect for all that she stands for. It is possible that other audience members, like the Rajputs, may not feel so inclined in redefining womanhood and embracing *Padmaavat*’s progressive scenarios. But, the inclusion of both traditional femininity and fluid, evolutionary femininity suggests that there is legitimacy in both forms, and that women can make the personal choice on which form they wish to accept, if not both.
Works Cited


During the High Middle Ages, from 1000 to 1300 C.E, the church was the defining element of medieval life in Italy, and religion was expressed through every aspect of it. Unlike any other fundamental component of Medieval Italy, religion was the only international commonality between disparate people in faith, and the common language of Latin. With cathedrals and churches located in the center of every activity, religious services and social activities were held within them numerous times throughout the day, while markets and festivals operated under the protection of the church’s steeple. It was not unlikely for people to look to the church for answers to worldly events, education, guidance, or help for the ill or poor. Prayer and religious devotion also placed great emphasis on the afterlife, taking every step to ensure sacraments and salvation. The very existence of traditions and practices contribute to a rich culture and illuminates the transcendence of the church, which is then implemented and rooted in the medieval arts. During this time, art was made with religious purpose. Paintings, frescos and reliefs were all placed throughout churches to inspire and help people to worship. The art of the middle ages set a new precedent for achievement, particularly in architecture, which was able to embody symbolisms within its physical structure, as well as within the forms of art residing inside its walls. Literature, on the other hand, was written by religious clerics and monks in an effort to continue sharing knowledge, as few others were able to read or write. Without the work of these monasteries, the knowledge and stories of those before us would not have been passed to future generations. Religion was so much a part of daily life, that secular power ultimately submits to the ecclesiastical powers that are derived from the virtues and teachings of the Catholic Church, which uses art and human expression both for worship, and to tell this story to the illiterate by using its visual and linguistic characteristics.

The Cosmopolitan Man

As the Christian Church took shape in medieval Italy, the Pope essentially became the most powerful man, holding both religious and secular power in one hand, thanks in part to this perception of inherited authority. In 1160, near Rome, Lotario dei Conti was born in Gavignano castle, only to become Pope Innocent III in 1198. He was born to power, and well educated at the
University of Paris, law at the University of Bologna (Ten Popes Who Shook the World). Pope Innocent III was known for calling the Fourth Crusade, approving the works of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis of Assisi, convoking the Fourth Lateran Council, and igniting the Albigensian Crusade. A passionate humanist and youthful thirty-seven, Innocent became the most powerful man of the medieval ages. Innocent inherited an institution that played a key role in the medieval west, holding supremacy over all of Europe’s kings, prioritizing luxury, simony, forgery and immortality of the clergy. However, he did not achieve such supremacy without struggle. After more than a century of effort, the German emperors finally submitted and became supporters of the Church and papal policy. Germany believed themselves to declare the title of the “Holy” Roman Emperor, to which the Pope believed himself to have the right to approve or disapprove, as it affected the spiritual world in that sin and salvation were in question. He intervened in politics relentlessly, specifically German and English, growing to become one of the most influential pontiffs of his time, taking both spiritual and temporal power to construct the most prestigious ecclesiastical state that had been seen in its history. He believed himself to be a secular leader, using the papal office to apply a text from the prophet Jeremiah:

I have set you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow.’ And so, he believed, the Pope was set between God and man: ‘He judges all, and is judged by no one.’ Previous popes had called themselves ‘Vicars of St Peter’-- St. Peter’s deputy. (Ten Popes Who Shook the World)

With this ideology that spiritual power, therefore the Papal Supremacy, is omniscient and all powerful, imperial power has no magistracy without the Church. Pope Innocent III relies on the sun and moon allegory, with its imagery stemming from the Book of Genesis, used to illustrate this medieval political theory. In this sense, the Pope is like the sun, or the ‘Vicar of Christ,’ and therefore the supreme authority that is the source of its own light and the center of all. The moon, rather, signifying all secular or civil power and dependent upon the sun for illumination, is the Holy Roman Emperor. He is meant as a symbolic representation of the Church’s powers in that he received his power by virtue of the Pope. Therefore, the Holy Roman Emperor lacks any secular authority without his grace. The sun and moon allegory dominated political theory in the 13th century and is reflected through Pope Innocent III’s rise to power throughout his many letters
In his Letter to the perfect Acerbius and the nobles of Tuscany, 1198, Innocent writes,

> Just as the founder of the universe established two great lights in the firmament of heaven, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, so too He set two great dignities in the firmament of the universal church..., the greater one to rule the day, that is, souls, and the lesser to rule the night, that is, bodies. These dignities are the papal authority and the royal power. Now just as the moon derives its light from the sun and is indeed lower than it in quantity and quality, in position and in power, so too the royal power derives the splendor of its dignity from the pontifical authority. (Pope Innocent III, 1198).

With the papacy as the soul of the social world, the sun and moon allegory represented the two powers as greater and lesser constituents, the latter reliant upon the former. His papacy reasserted the absolute spiritual authority of the Roman Catholic Church, while maintaining a balance within the temporal authority of kings in the realm of material and secular responsibilities. He takes this further, and borrows Pope Urban II’s political ideology to bless the crusade against the Cathars in southern France. This view was later entered into third Canon law regarding heretics, where Innocent III claims in his text:

> We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy that raises against the holy, orthodox and Catholic faith which we have above explained; condemning all heretics under whatever names they may be known, for while they have different faces they are nevertheless bound to each other by their tails, since in all of them vanity is a common element...Secular authorities, whatever office they may hold, shall be admonished and induced and if necessary compelled by ecclesiastical censure, that as they wish to be esteemed and numbered among the faithful, so for the defense of the faith they ought publicly to take an oath that they will strive in good faith and to the best of their ability to exterminate in the territories subject to their jurisdiction all heretics pointed out by the Church; so that whenever anyone shall have assumed authority, whether spiritual or temporal, let him be bound to confirm this decree by oath. (The Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215)
This accentuates the idea that secular authority was undermined by the popes and kings in power. If temporal ideologies are bound by oath to respond to heretics in this religious nature, the power of these forces are then weakened by virtue of the people’s faith in religion and religious power. For this reason, discussion of a holy war was justified in the eyes of Pope Innocent III as a paradoxical force of self defense that justified the struggle of the Christian people by offering salvation. In his early papacy, Innocent III focused heavily on religious heretics and claimed this heresy as treason, with trials using the procedural norms of ancient Rome. The pursuit to annihilate heresy was carried throughout his pontificate, and rose to a crescendo in the Albigensian Crusade beginning in 1209.

*Infidels and the Innocent*

Innocent III was a forceful opponent of religious heresy, and believed he was justified when using this type of strength in the pursuit of a holy outcome, pushing crusades well beyond boundaries that had been seldom crossed. The idea of a crusade, though, was not a new one. As religious faith was so strong, and the center of society, people were willing to perform greater acts of devotion during the Middle Ages. The most extreme of these acts, crusades, occurred when Christians of Europe went on military expeditions to reclaim the land where Jesus had lived; the Holy Land. Though the crusades were intended to recover Jerusalem from the Muslims, many participated with the belief that they were guaranteed salvation, and many with a religious sentiment that has been so deeply rooted in the people of the Middle Ages.

Pope Innocent III believed there was nothing wrong in waging a crusade to achieve a holy outcome, and legitimized this action by the philosophy that it is the struggle and self defense of the Christian people, and therefore just. The plea of self defense could not be used, though, between pagan populations in Northern and Eastern Europe, which posed challenges for many in the region. Most notoriously, Innocent blessed the crusade against the Albeghesians, or the Cathars of Languedoc, Southern France, who had been declared heretical by the Roman Catholic Church because they denied the central doctrines of Christianity. As dualists, they taught the material world created the devil, that materialism is evil and the only way to achieve salvation is through the soul’s departure of the body; marriage and procreation were considered evil because they kept souls confined within the skin. In order to regain ‘angelic’ status, it is necessary to vilify and disassociate from the material self. Innocent sent his legate to investigate, who were then murdered by people of the Cathar religion. Infuriated, Pope Innocent ignited the Albege, or
Cathar crusade. Though Pope Innocent III left them responsible with finances, the French clergy was overwhelmed with lust to conquer and flourish rather than prioritize sacrament and salvation. In the bloody demonstration that followed, the region was pillaged and ravaged in a war between the spirit and faith, and the facade of material goods as evil. However, crusades were no longer about reclaiming the Holy Land of Jesus. Rather, they were a particular way for the Pope to call war on enemies of the faith, who he denounced heretics (Martin, 2014).

Pope Urban II invented the idea of the crusade in the 11th century. However, Innocent had a vision regarding the empire-ecclesia relationship that did not aim for destruction. Instead, renewal takes place through feeding the people’s spiritual hunger in a road towards salvation. Therefore, he allows new movements to operate as long as they stayed within the official bounds of the Christian doctrine. Pope Innocent’s insight led him to realize that condemnation would not suffice on its own, and every pope before him had failed by operating on destruction and denunciation. Well aware of the difficulties his predecessors had experienced, Innocent was determined not to let the same mistakes happen again. The situation in Languedoc was prioritized above all else to Innocent. Heresy had historically been a topic of conversation, as the Third Lateran Council of 1179 had debated the issue, decreeing that force could be used to eradicate it. In 1184, Lucuis III issued the papal bull Ad abolendam, which was the first direct attempt to extirpate heresy, that denounced a number of sects that included the Cathars and mandated clergy to make annual visits to parishes where heresy was suspected (The Languedoc in 1200). The next call to heresy was Innocent’s declaration for a crusade. From 1209 to 1215, the crusaders experienced immense success, capturing Cathar lands and enacting extreme violence, which continued throughout the war. The Battle of Beziers was the first military action in 1209. It ended in a massacre that slaughtered the entire population, and what was once a city burned to ashes. The atrocity at Beziers was not an isolated incident, though it did instill enough fear in many settlements that they surrendered without a fight because the result of the battle had spread rapidly to Catharists who lived elsewhere. Carcasson was the next mission of the crusade, and was well fortified but vulnerable, overflowing with refugees. Brutality towards the Cathar people was merciless and, once the city fell, other towns also surrendered. Pope Innocent’s crusade ended in extreme brutality, with thousands burned to death, body parts removed and water supplies cut off. Torture was used as a means to identify heretics and Cathars who were slow to repent suffered imprisonment and the loss of property, while those who refused to repent were burned. The
Albigensian Crusade ended in an appalling cruelty that surpassed even medieval standards. This brutality was not entirely in line with Innocent’s ideology of emphasizing confession, reform in the clergy and pastoral teachings to oppose heresy. According to many, “the Albigensian Crusade ushered genocide into the west by linking divine salvation to mass murder, by making slaughter as loving an act as His sacrifice on the cross.” (A Most Holy War: The Albigensian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom). To many others, it is one of the worst genocides in religious history.

With such a reputation comes great consequences, with an impact lasting long after the events themselves. Pope Innocent III set a precedent towards heresy, and successfully drove Catharism underground. The Albigensian Crusade played a monstrous role in authorizing and institutionalizing both the Dominican Order and the Medieval Inquisition, which had been previously founded in the Fourth Lateran Council. Innocent III’s remarks in the Fourth Lateran Council was a collection of a number of cannons that reaffirmed persecution and punishment toward heretics, focusing heavily on the Cathar religion that deemed force as an acceptable means of abolishing heresy. Further, the third canon specified procedures against the condemned, and reproduced the papal bull Ad Aboledam of Lucius III. Though much of the Council’s rhetoric focused predominantly on the situation in Languedoc and Southern France, the Church had established mobilizing forces against heresy by the time of Innocent’s death. At this point, the legislation was only in need of a papal inquisition, of which a precedent had already been ratified.

As previously noted, Innocent’s perspicacity had led his papacy to meet new movements in operation, allowing them to preach so long as they did not challenge the fundamental pillars or official doctrine of the Catholic Church. He recognized legitimate aspiration in this spiritual drive, founding a papacy that had shifted from traditional values of condemnation. The art of persuasion had been tried among a group of wandering Catholic preachers surfacing in Southern France. The Dominican friars, led by Spanish Monk Dominic Gutzmann, dedicated their lives to absolute poverty, identifying with Christ in the time of his crucifixion. The Dominican order’s lifework was to preach the teachings of the Church in towns and villages, pontificating the denunciation to those accused of heresy. Though this was not an ideology that came naturally to a man of such aristocratic stature and astute mind but, regardless, he recognized the outcome, which accredited and protected a new band of laymen as beneficiaries. However, formal sanction was not given to the Dominican rule of life until December 1216. Innocent also laid a foundation for another
establishment that was meant to uproot heretical movements by hunting and forcing sacrament, sacrifice, and penance of those accused, which was called the Inquisition.

The Inquisition’s operation surpassed the thirteenth century, and forced the remaining adherents of Catharism and many other suspected heretics underground. Based on procedures put in place by Innocent and the Fourth Lateran Council, priests would give a sermon to the church, and would instruct adherents on the ways of righteousness and illuminate the reputed customs of the Cathar movement, suppressing heresy through ecclesiastical prescription or imprisonment, using torture as a means to find and demand profession of guilt or faith. Officials and Inquisitors, usually Dominican friars, were systematically recruited and eventually the papacy gained full authorization of the organization. A grace period was given, but failure to comply symbolized guilt, and those who were accused were then met with legal proceedings. Further, the search for heretics was not limited to the accused among the living; the deceased who were accused experienced the same punishment as the living, as their bodies were dug up and burned as condemned heretics. Aside from arrest and trial, refusal to repent resulted in imprisonment, loss of property, but most commonly there were large massacres where Cathar perfects were burned to death. In a mass incineration taking place in Carcassonne in 1244, over 200 Catharists were burned in an enormous pyre at the prat dels cremats (“field of burned”) near the foot of the Cathar fortress of Montsegur. This event solidified the eradication of the Cathar movement, and remaining believers hid underground after an organized violence of secular court and bloodshed incited a hunger for power in the papacy that transcended the later Middle Ages. The Inquisition ended the Cathar movement in a cruelty that did not align with the efforts to persuade and reform that, ultimately, led to success in securing ecclesiastical secular power that was unopposed and paved the way for future spiritual and political aspirations for power. Pope Innocent III’s efforts eventually surrendered to the ideology of sacrament and salvation of the Fourth Lateran Council, that states “There is but one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all can be saved.”

Age of Faith

The Council laid down a new set of rules that required reformation of the foundation of the clergy and called for a new set of principles regarding crusades and the Holy Land. They also gave us the first of three infallible definitions that there is no salvation outside of the Catholic Church, instilling the notion in society that it is impossible to doubt the absolute necessity to be a
member of the Catholic Church in order to save one’s soul. As a pillar in everyday society, religion was depicted omnipresently throughout the commonplace as a form of rhetorical eloquence that educates and illuminates the teachings of the Church. The Art of the Middle Ages set a new standard for technical achievement that carries from painting and sculpture through architecture, by which the dynamism of the age is embodied. For religious purposes, Marian Themes and that of Christ were placed in churches to help people worship, while telling the story of Christ’s life in a collectively understood manner. The most predominant and exquisite expression of Catholicism was found in cathedrals, large churches headed by bishops, a term derived from the Latin word *cathedra*, meaning the throne upon which the bishop sat (The Role of the Church in Medieval Europe). Demanding a high level of local pastoral care and teachings of Christianity, secular power asserted a role in ecclesiastical teachings that laid a foundation for the first systematic pastoral framework of its time.

*The Art of Persuasion*

During the Middle Ages, spiritual guides and clergy served as educators by virtue of their own knowledge, to inspire people by example and instruct them adequately. Most of the schooling took place in cathedrals, monasteries, and nunneries, and many of the students of such schools were sons of nobles who were studying for a career in the clergy. Much of the time spent during literacy was dedicated to memorizing prayers and passages from the Bible in Latin. Starting in the 1200s, Cathedral schools gave rise to universities, where students were educated in Latin, grammar, rhetoric, and a number of other subjects. One of the earliest Popes to receive such an education was Innocent III. He inspired many to follow, and steered members of the Fourth Lateran Council toward a framework of Christianity that was practiced into modern times. Religion was important to all Christians in the Middle Ages, so much that some solemnly promised to devote their lives to God and the Church (Role of the Church in the Medieval). For many reasons, serving a quiet life of prayer and service meant living in monasteries for monks and nunneries for nuns. With days full of prayer, study and work, monks and nuns attended eight church services a day and took care of the poor and sick. They performed other duties, including one of the most vital, which was copying religious texts. The man who developed the monastic way of life was Saint Benedict who, in the 6th century, made three solemn vows of poverty (or to not own property), chastity and obedience. Many members of the monasteries lived in lavish
communities, among other practicing Catholic members, each joining a religious order and some becoming important reformers and thinkers.

This lifestyle served as intended, an inspiration to those who became mendicants. With the desire to live a religious life, without the seclusion of monasticism, some went on to establish religious movements that eventually went on to shape the early modern humanist ideology. One such example is Saint Francis of Assisi, born to a wealthy Italian family of cloth merchants. Giving up the whole of his wealth, Francis established the Franciscan order which dedicated its mission to serving the poor and sick, and traveling to cities and town to preach. Living in complete poverty themselves, Franciscans had to beg for food for members of their own order, as well as the poor. For this reason, they were also referred to as mendicants, a word meaning ‘beggar’ (The Role of the Church in Medieval Europe). The Franciscan Order benefited from the recognition and protection of Pope Innocent III, whose approval gave influence and form that allowed news of the movement to spread through Italy that might have otherwise been rejected. Once again, recognizing the need to compromise with legitimate spiritual aspirations, Innocent allowed Saint Francis’ movement to operate, as he did Saint Dominic. However, this was only by the virtue of its relativity to the official doctrine of Christianity, as it recognized Jesus as the ultimate social victim and, therefore, his followers were also expected to strip themselves bare of all possessions and devote life to serving the poor. Innocent’s approval of this philosophy contributed to a new intellectual vitality and religious avidity.

The stories of these histories and religious teachings are all found within art forms that are omnipresent in both public and domestic realms. Francis of Assisi and members of monasteries played an important role in literature by putting vernacular teachings and ecclesia-temporal ideologies into words. By doing so, they played an important role in reflecting Christianity as a dominant form of religious and temporal power. As stated, members of monasteries were in charge of copying religious texts, often in the form of illuminated manuscripts. A trade comprised of various skills, the manuscript is made of a delicate parchment, prepared through washing and scraping, to be used for writing and painting. The scribe would then create text with ink, and metal point or diluted ink, to create decoration. Monks copied books by hand in the library writing room of the monastery, replicating rare documents to keep past knowledge alive, serving as primary sources for much of what is known today. Illuminated manuscripts only served as one means of teaching and documenting events and ancient knowledge, though art and architecture also served
as powerful forces in the medieval realm, a way of life under a powerful influence that regulated life.

**The Harmonious Dyad**

In its most dominant form, cathedrals were built on a massive scale, built to inspire awe in a glorious expression, and were the tallest buildings in town for centuries. The rise of cathedrals was a response to the growth of new cities, where wealth was concentrated. The passage from Romanesque to Gothic in architecture is marked by a number of characteristic forms. The principle architectural design feature of Gothic style is the Cathedral’s exterior which distinctly resembles the shape of a cross and appears to ascend toward heaven (Selected Themes in Medieval Art). A unique feature of the Gothic cathedral was a gargoyle, a carving in the shape of hideous beasts that were intended to warn people that the devil and evil spirits would besiege them if they did not obey the church. Also, Italian Gothic forms maintained the classical value of harmony by minimizing linearity and using large flat surfaces. A strong example is the Florence Cathedral, built before the development of Renaissance architecture. Like many Italian cathedrals, stained glass windows were not the predominant form of art displayed in the structure, while the building itself is formed in the shape of a Latin cross with aisles separated by wide pointed arches. A visible expression of Christian devotion, high arches allowed for grand stained glass windows and art that would further illuminate the teachings of the papacy, celebrating the eclectic structure of the Church.

The period between the Gothic and modern styles provides an important bridge in the Art History Late Medieval-Early Renaissance period. Illustrations of the life events of Jesus Christ are seen quite early in Christian art forms, the narrative structure of the Church promoting organized themes, most commonly Marian, and depictions of the birth, ministry, miracles performed by Christ, and his death. The portrayal of these events reflect the values and principles of early Christianity during the initial centuries of legitimization and regulation of scripture and doctrine. The Virgin Mary, in particular, developed as an artistic feature both in prevalence and complexity through the Medieval age. Originally featured in representations with a natal Jesus, she is given the title *Theotokos*, Mother of God. Another architectural focus, the altar, was a place of special focus to Marian themes. The altar represented Christ in the midst of his congregation, bringing Heaven and earth together. In larger churches, altarpieces were an elaborate demonstration of this
concept. They were created of independently painted panels placed together and held by an elaborate frame. Themes of the Virgin Mary were displayed on the main panels with additional panels, both small and large, depicting stories of the former. Additional figures, such as saints and apostles, were also depicted (Educator’s Guide to Art). Initially serving the religious purpose of reclaiming the Holy Land, crusades and pilgrimage were also displayed with rich detail throughout ecclesiastical structures. The locations of Jesus’ birth and death became paramount, motivated by penance and piety, signifying the absolute necessity to take part in these journeys that contribute to one’s well-being, both spiritually and physically, binding all individual action to serve the belief of the Church. Encouraged and sheltered by monasticism, crusades began during the Romanesque period, and were often reflected in the character of every church and religious structure. These expressive Gothic edifices were full of paintings, frescos, stained glass windows and other art forms that displayed these narratives in great eminence. Painting played one of the most essential roles in art of the Middle Ages. Fresco painting is an art technique that was inspired by Roman Catholic antiquity, and used greatly in the era. This art form allowed artists to tell religious narratives in greater detail, later influencing artists for centuries to come. A later form, developed in the twelfth century, was the art of panel painting, typically most elaborately found on the altarpiece of a church. Painted panels were also commonly used in domestic spheres as a form of worship and prayer on private altars. A technique previously lost, panel painting experienced revival as a result of the new ideologies of liturgical practices. Now that the papacy held both religion and secular power, they had received full control of commissioning these patrons, selecting these holy themes as decorations (An Educator's Guide). Despite its rare use in Italy, stained glass windows were eventually brought into the architecture of these cathedrals, bringing in an abundance of light to reflect its holy nature. Another visible expression of Christian devotion, the pictures on stained glass windows were deeply rooted in religion, serving to inform the illiterate by telling Biblical stories, as well as enhancing an already elaborate structure (Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400, Volume 47 By John White, John Reeves White). Like fresco painting, stained glass is an art form depicting a narrative of antiquity that has been altered and reformed on a number of occasions, paralleling the ancient Roman philosophy to value religious devotion, as well as education, that inevitably transcends the enlightenment era in its earliest stages.
The Age of Faith

As a response to urbanization, the Church built more cathedrals to advance and maintain the teachings of Catholicism, and while strong faith and devotion was upheld, the dynamism of Medieval Italy was adversely changed by the coming of the Black Death, shaking many with religious fervor, believing the Black Death to be an act of punishment by God’s will as a result of mans’ sin. During this time, Italy underwent changes in cultural, religious, and economic ways, as a result in a shift from what was originally oriented in the teachings of faith in the Roman Catholic Church, and redefined the dominant social system that had existed in the Late Middle Ages. After eradicating a third of the country’s population between 1347-1350, a revival of religious observance led many to attend church and perform strong acts of devotion to repent for their sins in order to achieve salvation. Having experienced famine and food shortages, Italy was vulnerable to the rapid spread of the disease, spreading from cities to outside villages and towns. From urbanization and the population living in close quarters, to the impoverished with the least force of resistance, the plague took lives throughout Italy including one of the country’s major cities, Florence. Further, the Church was unable to escape the upsurge of the plague, losing countless priests and monks due to close living quarters and a number of other factors. As a response, the Church hastily trained new spiritual leaders to serve the clergy who, because they lacked proper training, were unfit to serve the needs of the people and the Catholic doctrine. With a loss of principle, the Church fell victim to corruption, eventually losing the faith of the people. Like many other countries in Medieval Europe, Italy was under the belief that the world was fixed under God’s will, and people began to understand that there is no fixed social role or hierarchy of the universe, not even in a privileged central place, free for every man to detach themselves from the ecclesiastical world that once constituted life. The role of authority was in question and old certainties were overturned by a new spirit of inquiry fixated on the revival of classical Greco-Roman thought, leading to a shift in cultural ideology. The existing social structure had been eradicated and replaced by an eccentric period of social mobility that greatly underscored individual talent and virtue. This affected the elite group of the nobility, whose wealth no longer maintained power in labor or land, which led to a demise of the established aristocracy and gave rise to a new elite, who served as patrons to art. Not only were people deeply upset, but developed into contempt that many felt resulted in a rise in secular ideology, expanding from education, originally monopolized by the Church, to individual value and humanist thought.
Further, the increased wealth of the new elite, beginning with the lavish patronage of the Medici family, allowed for new intellectual and artistic achievements. Coming from the biblical virtue of humility, a group defined as The Humanist emulated luxury and antiquity and helped transform society to the beginning stages of an era known as one of the greatest epochs of art and literature: The Renaissance.

_A Divine Triumph of Adversity_

With domination though financial and intellectual power, the Medici family influenced the rise of Renaissance politics, art and humanism with an impact lasting centuries after their reign. In the thirteenth century, the first Medici arrived in Florence, utilizing social mobility to their greatest extent, establishing Europe’s largest bank of the time and dominating the political realm behind the facade of patronage to humanities, fine arts, and literature. After the spirit of competition arose in the region, merchants who rose to nobility often commissioned the creation of some of the finest pieces of art and architecture to this day. The Medici family positioned themselves at the forefront of the early stages of the Renaissance, assisting its evolution to both political and social development. While they truly valued the fine arts, it served as a facade to appear equal to the traditions of authority as it was known by religious and secular powers in the Medieval times. At the end of the fourteenth century, Giovanni de Medici established the headquarters of the Medici bank in Florence, serving as banker to the papal court, which established the Medicis as one of the wealthiest, most powerful and influential families of the time. He was the first Medici to serve as a patron to power, fortune and arts, setting a standard of achievement for Medici family members to come and his successor, Cosimo, complemented this legacy. Cosimo followed in his father’s footsteps by influencing politics from behind the scenes, while introducing ancient Greek ideology into the ecclesiastic Italian culture. As if he dipped his father’s legacy in gold, Cosimo used the family fortune left by Giovanni to establish a network of alliances that further helped his family maintain power and hinder his competitors. Setting up branches of the Medici bank all over the known world at that time, Cosimo established an accreditation with the Church that gave him full power over the finances of both the Church and the Pope himself. Without any noble birthright, the Medici family created a dynasty that was won monetarily. However, as religious faith remained a pillar of society, Cosimo remained highly unpopular among those who were devoted to the original doctrine of Christianity. Yet, Cosimo brought stability and wealth to the city by serving as the first patron of the family towards the
development of humanist thought, and brought a new level of political sophistication. The circumstances of his authority serves as a means of compensating for the lack of traditional authority that is central to the Roman Catholic Church. The ideas of such were later resurrected by virtue of patronage to artists who were evidently popular among the common people. The aristocracy was then seen as equivalent to that of the old, revitalizing the esteem of the public both during and soon following the rise of Giovanni’s grandson and successor, Lorenzo de Medici. Living a more elegant life than that of his predecessor, Lorenzo utilized the precedent of power and influence that Cosimo had set for him, which enabled him to gain control and influence, an achievement that later served him greatly, as he created the most important city-state in Italy. The Medici family established a new standard of secular outlook that provided stability to many under their reign and protected many of the city’s Humanists from accusation or interrogation by the Inquisition, or any other clerical action taken forth against those who oppose the Church. An excellent ruler, Lorenzo ‘Il Magnifico’ inspired great peace and prosperity throughout the greater fifteenth century. Never officially accepting power, Lorenzo manifested the power of the city and the state under his rule as his predecessors did, ruling Florence indirectly. As every great dynasty faces hardships, one the Medici family suffered was a loss of popular acceptance of the people. In addition, other rival Florentine families resented the family for their dominance, inevitably attempting to seize control of the Florence Republic. In an unfortunate event known as the Pazzi conspiracy, Lorenzo’s brother was killed by a brutal attack on Easter Sunday, while he himself suffered a wound by a competing bank operated by the Pazzi family. Suffering the wrath of the Holy See, the Medicis and Florence experienced great punishment, so severe that Lorenzo and the government of Florence were excommunicated. King Ferdinand I of Naples allied with the pope, Sixtus IV, against Lorenzo, who later journeyed to Naples by himself to successfully negotiate an honorable peace with the King. Rising out of a conflict with greater prestige, Lorenzo was able to secure power once again in Florence which he strived to balance and maintain. Under the Medici family, at least half of the Florentine population were employed by and served them, which secured their role of leadership and influence in the early Italian Renaissance. This era of tranquility provided the stability that allowed for the fine arts to flourish, following the late Middle Ages that was well known as a period of political turmoil. This was drastically altered by the family regime, as the stability brought by the Medici family made Florence a cultural center. As the family served as patrons to the fine arts, as well as architecture, the Medici paradoxically
conjoined respect for the hierarchy and tradition of the Church with exhortation to expansive reform that desires spirituality by the virtue of individual development and talent.

**Men of the Mind**

The Medici family set a new precedent for literature, art, and architecture after a revival in the studies of classical antiquity, inspiring a new way of thinking that is rooted in ancient Greco-Roman ideologies and establishing a standard for luxury. The first Medici to introduce antiquity to a broader public was Cosimo the Elder. He used ancient Greek culture and thought to political rhetoric between the conflicting Catholic and Orthodox Churches and, though it ultimately failed, it influenced humanist thought. The fruit of this culmination of scholarly interest was a compositional of Latin and Greek grammar, eloquence, and moral thought, acquiring prestige and power throughout the various literary and fine art professions; freeing the spirit completely from that of other men bound to nature as a core ideology. The pillars of humanism of the Renaissance were linked to the advancement of philosophical ideas that encouraged secularization but challenged the Church, as it took from the power of the Roman Catholic Church. The humanistic movement shaped the Renaissance from focusing primarily on ecclesiastical purpose and, rather, revitalizing education and literacy as a paramount virtue and patronizing several forms of art and architecture. No age before has ever experienced such a liberation of mind, which flourished in variation of interests and talents. Beginning with the Medici, the pursuit of humanistic culture has reached a peripheral deviation from ecclesiastical sovereignty, asserting a spiritual ferocity that continuously broke forth, leaving an impression on ages to come.

Spiritual grace was a dominant in the soul of spiritual Medieval art. However, a young architect named Flippo Brunelleschi had set the foundation that contributed to the realism that thrived in Renaissance art. Upon visiting Rome to study its ruins as his acquaintance Donatello had done, Brunelleschi mastered the principles of linear-perspective construction used by the ancient Greek and Romans. The geometric principles of linear perspectives then allowed for two dimensional surfaces to transcend space and depth, and artists were able to depict their figures as an extension of, or mirroring, the real world and man which reflected the skill and virtue of classical antiquity. His great gift of engineering genius resulted in some of the finest architectural pieces of the time. Introducing classic forms into his own building designs, Brunelleschi was one of the first to establish a true paradigm of innovation. His work even surpassed earlier designers who had created fine buildings and palaces for the Medici family which illuminated their wealth
and secular authority and served as landmarks for their important societal role. During his time in Rome, Brunelleschi studied the ancient way of engineering and, fascinated by the Pantheon, dedicated his studies to building the first self-supporting dome. Some years later the Florence Cathedral was in need of a dome, which allowed Brunelleschi to achieve his dream to build an octagonal dome and to craft new hoisting machines for the materials needed to build the dome. The building was largely constructed during the Medieval era, with the architectural requirements of flying buttresses, pointed arches and vertical spaces. The rounded structure that was able to withstand the weight of itself was so unlike Gothic structures, and symbolized the spirit of rebirth from hardship that defines the Renaissance. Just as the Medici had repeatedly used architecture to explicate their wealth and luxury as elitists and state authority figures, the dome of the Florence Cathedral served as a watershed of a revival of life after a dark age, illuminating the ideology of both humanist and religious sentiment. When the dome was completed, Cosimo de Medici, who commissioned the artist, invited the Pope to christen the Cathedral, a building that represents triumph, beauty, and power for both the people and the state power of Medici.

*Men of the Heart*

Medicean Florence had undergone a profound change, as a means to display their wealth while serving as patrons and progressive thinkers, drawing intellectuals and artists from all over to Florence. In turn, these elitists made public their authority as an ornament to the city, glorifying both temporal and spiritual Renaissance narrative. Lorenzo continued this family legacy in his equally extravagant patronage to some of the greatest works of art. With such auspices of humanists, Florence became a leading intellectual center and raised the status of many artists and common folk in Florentine Society. His most renowned benefactor was Michelangelo, devoting himself to art beginning at the Medici family’s Humanist academy, creating some of the most exceptional art of the Renaissance. Lorenzo had created an inner circle of intellectuals comprised of scholars and talented men who had an effect on the young artist.

With attention to innovation rooted in the tradition of Catholicism, Michelangelo frequently portrayed the crucified Christ, signifying his sanctity to traditional imagery as well as his personal interest in the human body. This iconography of the human body is now portrayed with great depth, a skill the great painter surpassed. Renaissance art is a continuation of, and inspired by, Greek antiquity that encompasses the individuality that expresses complex feelings and realism. The eloquence of this individuality produced the most varied collection of art that expresses the
spirit of the age. Michelangelo’s abilities as a painter remain unsurpassed, expressing the individual spirit that is far more varied than that of classical antiquity. The expression in his art, especially in the physiology, is noble and in accordance with the subject, gestures defined and appropriate to create a more expressive form of the story. In this, there is a contrast to antiquity, as every artist conveys their craftsmanship, especially in painting and sculpture, with their own uniqueness, illustrating complex feelings of faith and humanist thought as a duality. Contrasting the tranquil strength of Grecian art, Michelangelo depicts a soul troubled by conflicting passions, stuck in the aforementioned paradoxically conjoined values. Not too many years later, he was a patronage of Lorenzo’s heirs after the exile and later downfall of the Medici family. In the midst of political strife, Michelangelo fled to Bologna to pursue his studies before returning to Florence upon its restoration. At a young age of twenty one, the artist arrived in Rome, where he created some of the most esteemed pieces of art to this day.

Michelangelo embodies the humanist philosophy that strives for new virtues and ways of thinking, particularly in religion and art, highlighting the importance of Man rather than that of God and nature. Further, another central matter of artistic endeavor was *disegno*, “drawing” or “design” as fundamental means of connecting man in the form of realism, to nature. Religious figures were now an extraordinary depiction of the human body, a realism that expressed emotion in great detail, most famously portrayed on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. This sacred place underwent an artistic metamorphosis, fueled by the imagination of Michelangelo in his later years that reflected the values of the enlightenment era. Quickly becoming one of the most valued pieces of art in history, the ceiling tells the narrative of the Old Testament, beginning with the creation of the world and ending with Noah and the Flood. The most iconic image was the Creation of Adam, a famous depiction of God reaching down to touch the finger of the first man. The detail of this piece surpassed expectations of realism, exemplifying the ideology of humanist thought, embodying strength and beauty while remaining devoted to Catholicism. Further, his masterpiece known as the Last Judgement lays on the wall of the Sistine Chapel. Though a holy depiction, the nudity of the figures in the image caused an upheaval that called for the removal of the piece as it was believed to disgrace the sacred ground. Though never removed, the piece fell prey to consistent attack by a new organization against heresy, known as the Counter-Reformation. Nudity was their violation of primary concern, though other variables factored into the decision of inquiry. Regardless, Michelangelo created a piece with great symbolic meaning for
the papacy and ideology of the Renaissance. Before achieving excellence in painting, though, the young artist served as a superior sculptor, inspired by the classical antiquity of Greek thought.

Housed in St. Peter's Basilica is the Pieta, a sculpture depicting the weeping Virgin Mary holding the lifeless body of Jesus on her lap. Illustrating a traditional motif of the Church, the Pieta embodies the Catholic Italian culture and introduces thought and realism in new forms. Carved from a single piece of marble, Michelangelo positioned the subjects so delicately, expression in the body illuminated by the fluidity of the fabric. His most unparalleled rendition of humanist thought, however, was that of the Biblical figure David who defeated Goliath in battle; a Renaissance interpretation of the Ancient Greek ideas of heroism and male nudity. The vulnerability of the latter contrasts with the strength in figure and expression and it became a symbol of Florence with the underlying significance of state power. As the city-state understood the threats surrounding the republic, David is the artistic emblem that personifies the communal identity of strength and historic value.

Michelangelo’s masterpiece emulated from another sculptor who influenced him, Donatello, who’s bronze David had been made for the Medici family. Originally intended as embellishment for a cathedral, it was placed in the Palazzo Della Signoria after its completion, just as Donatello’s rendering had been. The placement and illustration of Michelangelo’s David parallels a civic symbolism as a religious sculpture for Florence, though in different political contexts. Medicean Florence had experienced troubles between the people and the dynasty, leading to the exile of the Medici family from the city. Michelangelo’s David is now a symbol of their strength against the family, to be seen and cherished by all in the main square of the city. Though eclipsed by the work of the young sculptor in the makings of David, Donatello is the foremost sculptor on the influence of the Renaissance, as this was the first bronze cast piece during the Renaissance and the first freestanding sculpture depicting a nude man since antiquity. The excellence of his work can be hardly distinguishable from that of antiquity, that embodies humanist individualism in sculpture inspired by his strong devotion to realism. Both his contemporaries and artists to come had followed his ideology of reflecting works of antiquity, while preserving the virtue of the self. Donatello’s genius began a great period of patronage of sculpture, as it became a crucial ornament of architecture in the public realm. Classicism took over the fine arts of the Renaissance, though the demand of sculpture was still largely ecclesiastical, just as sculpture was used for the Church during the Late Middle Ages. The
Renaissance took this interest further by using sculpture to decorate the interior walls of churches to commemorate secular leaders and philosophers, as well as cardinals and bishops. Sculpture was also a common decoration in palaces and private homes, embellished with themes including the Madonna, the Life of Christ, and other major religious themes of the Church. The motifs and themes of early Renaissance art were often limited to the subject of the Old and New Testaments, until the High Renaissance when classical mythology was introduced. Donatello had an unquestionable sophistication of sculpture, influencing sculptors and painters alike by his classical use of motifs, his advanced use of perspective, and dedication to the individual self in terms of antiquity.

World of Words

Classical antiquity as an art form further developed, including the use of non-Biblical figures in iconography. The most famous painting depicting humanist thought as an art form is The School of Athens, a fresco painting by a supreme artist of the Renaissance, Raphael. An embodiment of classical spirit, the fresco is part of a series depicting philosophy, one of four branches of knowledge. Theology, law, and poetry complete the procession that ultimately portrays a multitude of Greek philosophers, most notably Aristotle and Plato, which is the most evident return to the value of antiquity. However, this humanism that inspired spiritual change was primarily displayed through Renaissance literature; the aspirations of the divine spirit of the era is exacerbated in the writings that revive classical rhetoric and oratory of ancient Greek and Roman thought. Humanism not only sparked a revival in culture, but also a literary movement that was inspired by this notion of philosophical thought, bound to classical notions of rhetorical theory that set new standards for scholarly eloquence. In many cases, these ancient teachings were accommodated with the central doctrine of Catholicism, including the notion of humanity as having its own history in respect to that of the Church. The cultural influence extended to thought towards education, as a primary means to guide teachings of man as the self and his dignity, a notion becoming quite popular among literary achievement. While recognizing the authority of the Church, literature was able to succeed in preserving philosophical ideology as it related to man and nature. In the universal hierarchy, it is now believed there is moral virtue in individual acts that contribute to the greater good, a concept that is greatly expressed throughout literary works. During the Middle Ages, the Church had all the power of education and literature, and books were extremely valuable and rare. They were generally held in private collections or monasteries that
were only available to a select few, but were later produced in publication by the Aldine Press, founded by Alfus Manutius in 1494. Publishing some of the first ancient Greek and Roman prints, especially including rhetoric and works of philosophers such as Aristotle, made books an accessible means of communicating thought. Further, this established a new standard for publishing work in the Italian vernacular as translated and inspired by Greco-Roman anthropocentric literature. The revival of the thought of antiquity was used for Christian purpose, serving the pleasure of rational spirit, though new literary forms were developing that complemented the humanist perspective of individuality. Later, this was even more rapidly advanced by the invention of the printing press, encouraging authors to write in the Italian vernacular rather than that of the classical which allowed a broader audience to read and interpret new Renaissance ideas expanded beyond the religious teachings of the Church. Many authors of the Renaissance often used classical rhetoric as a basis for style and methodologies in their writings that were largely influenced by science and philosophy due to humanist thought and scholarship. The most sophisticated of all literary developments was the Dante Alighieri, who set the stage for Renaissance literature with his *Divine Comedy* in 1320. A masterpiece of literary history, this poem reflects a Medieval world view pertaining to Christian thought on religious and Biblical themes, particularly in hell, purgatory and paradise. While remaining true to the spirit of Medieval Christianity, Dante’s precedent set a new standard of achievement for subsequent humanists. The “Father of Italian Humanism,” however, was Francesco Petrarch, a figure of Medieval Italy. He set a standard for humanist thought that was accepted by the Church. Had it not, the basis of Renaissance thought might never have resulted in one of the most iconic eras of history. He believed that classical writings should not be limited to the elite few. Rather, they could serve as a model for moral guidance that could reach the greater audience, later serving as a pillar of Renaissance Humanism. This inspired new forms in society and culture that shifted thought to one that is more secular, and eventually reforming the system of education by instilling humanist thought as the dominant practice. What used to be the responsibility of monks and priests now belonged to a new profession, serving as educators, in law, or a wealthy elitist who is both. Also, they were now producing translated, edited texts of classical Greek and Roman rhetoric, and wrote on matters of grammar and philosophy. Meanwhile, poetry and drama flourished. Just as art and architecture were characterized by the self and individual thought and virtue, literature became about the talent of man in relation to nature and the self and less a reflection of traditional teachings in the Roman Catholic Church.
Halo of Fire

Not all during this era favored the new teachings of the Humanities, though, especially the Dominican Friar Girolamo Savonarola. Preaching against the Medici in the late fifteenth century, he raised power and recognition after the exile of the state power family and called for a return to a more simple faith. In 1494, when the Medici were temporarily driven out of Florence, Dominican friar and puritan devotee Girolamo Savonarola became the moral dictator of the city. After 12 years, he became cleric superior in the convent of St Mark, for his reputation of knowledge, education, and rigor. Unlike the many in Italian culture who enjoyed pleasure and relaxation, Savonarola resented it and believed that the fruits and humility that the people had been blessed with by God was all about to be lost. For this reason, he became obsessed with human wickedness and, as a prophet, he unleashed as a hellfire preacher. During the time he assumed power, Savonarola attempted to revive medieval spirit, burning many books and paintings he considered immoral or indecent. This was true for art forms showing nudity, and humanist thought as a whole. His famous ‘Bonfire of the Vanities' in 1497 burned anything from personal items and cultural representations to nude statues, as well as literature. Of no surprise, Savonarola developed a number of enemies, some of whom were just as powerful, but usually more powerful than him. On Palm Sunday in 1498, the fanatic hellfire preacher was arrested by Florentine authorities, along with two of his most dedicated followers. All were condemned as heretics and cruelly tortured before their burning at the stake. The early Renaissance had undergone a spiritual reformation that shifted power as a dominant form in religion as a pillar to a secular authority from that of ecclesiastical. Most predominantly represented was the Counter-Reformation, a direct parallel to the persecution of heresy initiated by Pope Innocent III. Since the early Middle Ages, the Inquisition had not been very active which allowed humanists the liberation to express their thoughts and ambitions that might pose a threat to the teaching of the official teachings of the Church. However, the religious threat of Protestantism had been rising from the rest of Europe. Appointed ‘The Reformation,’ Western European Christianity posed a religious and political challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, challenging the authority of the papal state in particular. As Western ideology was still rooted in the Medieval era, the Inquisition was reformed and was introduced into authority again as a more active state of power. Like the Cathars, many Protestants were denounced heretics, later tortured and executed in a brutal fashion as Girolamo Savonarola was. Though the original reformation failed, the Counter-Reformation
served as a period of Catholic revival, serving from the opening of the Council of Trent to the end of the Thirty Years War between the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Catholicism was founded on teachings that the Protestant Reformation denounced, such as the necessity of sacrament and the bread and wine as the body of Christ, as well as structural problems of the Church. In an attempt to reclaim the moral high ground, the leaders of the Catholic Church conversed in the Council of Trent for the superiority of the Holy Church in the wake of the threat of Protestantism. Eventually, the “Index of Forbidden Books” was published, condemning over five hundred heretical texts, reforming the order of the Church and introducing vernacular sermons for the first time. Now with for space with room for an abundance of attendees, an acoustic design was created for optimal dictation and listening that instilled a new order of obedience, a trend continued by of Innocent III that established a formal Inquisition. Just as it had been in Medieval times, all crime would be handled by a local Inquisitor, who had all necessary means of torture, persuasion, and punishment needed. In the eyes of the Church and state, guilt was presumed and torture ruthlessly used as a means of persuasion. As the Cathars, Girolamo Savonarola, and the Protestant Reformation had endured, the Roman Inquisition was a merciless force that eliminated that challenge of Catholic authority in both ecclesiastical and political power.

A Divine Spirit of Renewal

Secular and religious power had a complex relationship throughout the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance that was evident in everyday cultural society, illustrated through art and architecture. As declared by Pope Innocent III, the atmosphere of Medieval Italian imperial authority and religion in relation to society and the Roman Catholic Church was tightly linked. This idea is most charmingly expressing this spiritual connection was his sun and moon allegory, noting the moon, the political realm, only gained its light by the light that shines by the sun, gifted by God. This ideology overtook the commonplace, the rhetoric of the allegory proclaimed in every oration of Innocent acquiring total control and papal dominance by the allure of these holy luminaries. This fundamental way of life took precedence in the lives of every being, who in this time, were devoted Catholics taught of sacrament and salvation, as the Church served as a place of knowledge world events, as prayer and religious devotion are central to health and prosperity. Though, the loss of religion devotion, allowed the Medici family to gain secular power that asserted a reign of dominance that lasts for generational successors to come. The Medici
patronized the fine arts and humanist ideology, that influenced a new form of thought oriented around the virtue of individual interpretation and talent, rather than communal identity.

The ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Middle ages contrasts that belief in that they assume themselves to have true authority of secular power, as it pertains to the spiritual realms of Christian communities; an ideology that eventually dominating all communal, political, and domestic realms in routine and action. The vast power and resources that the Catholic Church had gained had allowed for their violent dominance against those who oppose the official doctrine, declaring them heretics condemned to persecution and death. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 composed the most important piece of legislature that set a precedent for later imperial reforms that took place in the fifteenth century after the rise of Girolamo Savonarola and the Pagan Movement. The Inquisition that was established during the era of Innocent III was reestablished after the secularization of imperial power during Medicean Florence and the Renaissance, and worked with the Counter Reformation that established Christianity as the dominant religion as a response to these early Renaissance heretics. Though, the authority of the Church experienced a great spiritual shift in power during the early sixteenth century as a result of a new ideological movement: humanism.

The development of the Humanist movement had numerous effects on the work in art, architecture, and literature for years to come. The Church was the dominant source of education, the hierarchy selecting few clergymen as the heart of knowledge and teaching. Knowledge had originally been rooted in Latin scripture, and only those who could read, write, or translate were the small sector of clerics. This privilege overpowered the illiterate majority in ecclesiastical preaching, teaching, and literature that were bound to traditional values of religious teachings, especially given the rise of universities in cathedrals. Priests were educated to inspire Christianity eloquently, however the rise of humanism displaced both influence in power and thought as literacy was expanded to the public. As humanism promoted philosophy and classical thought of rhetoric and grammar, ancient texts made the Church uneasy when their lexicon is not mediated by the dialect of Latin. While the Church taught people to be guided by faith, ancient rhetoric guided the soul towards knowledge and logic guided in the self, a potential threat to the expert of the Church’s teachings. Eventually, these ideologies were able to extend beyond the limits of the clergy, as people accessed secular ideology in text that contrasted that of religious authority, which no longer had the ability to conform interpretation of Scripture to one clerically sanctioned
idea, a function that originally served as a foundation to their influence. This secular influence of humanist ideology, orienting its primary ideology around human, rather than divine or heavenly powers, allowed scholars of the profession to write and promulgate their personal thought. The Aldine Press allowed for the publication of books, a strong force against the limited scripture once rare and held soundly by clergymen and monasteries. Education, literature, and fine arts thrived as religious liberty was brought to light and enshrined as a natural right, dedicating power in the man of philosophy rather than the man of God. The first to advance the line of secular thought was Petrarch, introducing the theory of Cicero that supported the notions of knowledge as it pertains to its Medieval limitations. Instead, there should be an established hierarchy of virtue, that sets a code of ethics and morals. This revival of classical antiquity creates a fine line between the respect for the religious hierarchy to the virtue of individual talent and achievement, to the necessity of preservation of tradition to the call of reform and renewal. Though rooted in literary history, the revival of antiquity in humanism is most elegantly illustrated in the art and architecture that ornament Florence, and many other great cities of the peninsula.

Just as the early Renaissance had experienced a shift in power of secular and ecclesiastical authority, the fine arts of the era had transformed as it surpassed the control of the Catholic Church. During the Middle Ages, art was used as a form of expressing and teaching religious stories, particularly that of the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, often commissioned and designed by members of the clergy. This theme had been rooted in the spiritual tradition of Christianity, a motif that was not lost during the transformation. However, the means by which these narratives were portrayed had been drastically influenced by humanist thought, including new fundamental techniques, and had been taken control of by the rising secular powers. Ruling forces, particularly the Medici, served as patrons to art and architecture as a means of signifying their wealth and power of the state. Further, they were fond of the humanist ideology and brought the secular culture of ancient Greco-Roman antiquity into the commonplace, leaving the people with great spiritual and individual interpretation, while raising the status of their family and luxury simultaneously. The patronage of the Medici allowed for a physical rendering of the conjoined paradox that people were feeling towards feelings of faith and thought of man, illustrating this concept in a story. In a piece of art commissioned by the Medici, Boticelli’s *Adoration of the Magi*, the Medici are depicted as the religious figures of wise men, a direct assertion of power in the form of divine art. Religious motifs are carried through a patron of the Medici, Michelangelo,
who paralleled the fine works of his predecessor Donatello in both painting and sculpture. This emulation was based on the virtue of political and cultural placement, and artistic interests, particularly embodying the emotion and realism of man as depicted in the depth and intricacy of the human body. Also, they portrayed their art in the form of nudity, an aspect that contradicts the original teachings of the Catholic Church. This is most notable in the Last Judgement, embodying the divine spirit and strength, as well as realism and nudity. Donatello’s David was the first to depict this humanist ideology in art form that carried depth, a tradition that carried through ages while maintaining a deep value in Catholic tradition. Before the Renaissance art was an attempt, but after the establishment of humanist thought in eclectic culture, it was an achievement. Art was best illustrated in the nature of architecture in many forms, however, shifting the established forms of thought and religion as well.

Architecture has long served as a landmark of sacred or imperial territory, asserting a power and dominance in the universal hierarchy. In the Medieval Gothic, cathedrals were built as if they were ascending heavenward, ornamented with religious artistic tributes to the traditional Biblical themes so highly valued. Cathedrals originally displayed art with a communal purpose, illustrating the life of Christ and Christian history in a conceptual manner, while Medicean Florence commissioned architectural structures as a secular assertion of their elite, wealth, and power of the republic. The most powerful representation of the shift in architectural structure was in the Florence Cathedral, beginning in the Medieval times but completed with Florentine design by the patronage of the Medici. Cosimo even invited the Pope to ordain the Church on Easter Sunday, an architectural structure praised for faith and Florentine history and strength as a more secular structure than would have been celebrated in Medieval culture. The construction is a direct representation of religion and secular power as a structure, modifying ancient forms of self-supporting design and artistic ornament to fit the requirements of Christianity, grasping the spirit of antiquity. Both eras underwent large religious, political, and cultural changes that influenced the events of history miraculously, leaving behind a great legacy that is reflected through rhetoric. Most notably, though, was the reflection of these fictions in the fine arts that emulate that of the classic, a history powerfully illustrated by a narrative of antiquity.
Works Cited


Music is an integral aspect of humanity. For thousands of years, men and women across the world expressed thought and art through the minute complexities that make up the foundation of musical theory. As history progressed, music shifted both in how it presented itself and, in turn, the extent of its influence. Looking at past eras, when music was developed solely for art and expressions of pure emotion, it is clear that composers considered music to be an extension of the soul’s inner frameworks; music was meant to signify something greater than anything that could be uttered by any combinations of words. This form of music, now deemed “absolute,” has had a distinct following that remains to this day. Contrasting this philosophy of musical form, both modern critics and composers alike view music in a different light—not as an expression of the ineffable, but as a method of exploration that can transcend the musical form and guide listeners’ imaginations into the unknown. For them, nurturing this “program” music is how the world will launch music exploration into the future. However, modern events and explorations of these forms have required groups to question both the merit and sustainability of each assumed ever-lasting modes of communication.

The views of each group are clear. Before the Romantic Era of music, compositions were based on style, structure, and musical thought. However, beginning with composer Franz Liszt, followed by the likes of Wagner and Richard Strauss, music started to be imbued with describable meaning. As Liszt stated himself, programmatic music was the “‘poetic solution for instrumental music’” (Micznik 212). It is evident that Liszt believed music attached with an idea or purpose has greater potential for developing a better world. Ever since Liszt’s decision to transform music in this way, almost all music shifted to this form. Today, programmatic songs are the foundation of the music industry. However, it remains that there exists musical purists who believe that music is pure art and should remain in its undiminished form. In their reasoning, they posit two main culprits for the modern distinction of form—song titles being the simplest, and film scores the most complex. To speak to the former identified offender, music purists maintain that each title
that is given to a song acts as a cap on the artist’s musical prowess, thereby replacing the level of potential interpretation for a clearer identity.

Miles Davis, a notable advocate for absolute music and a genius composer of the Jazz period, named many of his songs without purpose for this reason. Entitling his songs with names such as “What It Is,” “That’s Right,” and “That’s What Happened,” the artist communicated that music with attached meaning is harmful to the expression of the art form. By translating his belief into action, this black sheep of Jazz history touched upon years of music analysis and thought. Miles Davis is joined in his views by countless critics, composers, singers, and writers who view the world of program music as one that is destroying the innate purpose of the musical form, and that music should be music for music’s sake. Centered in this concern is the film score.

The debate over film scores, which has had a long and arduous history imbued with the spark that could ignite rigorous debate, is at the cornerstone of musicality as it moves into the coming centuries. Music purists argue that music generated directly for film is inherently of a lower quality than their preferred forms, since it negates music’s intrinsic ambiguity. To them, any “stated intent” to reveal the purpose of music degrades the form, because it denies the listener the ability to interpret the music independently from its attached meaning. That is, they emphasize that, with programmatic scores, there is no need to delve into the innerworkings of a score’s form to interpret the composer’s thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, culture, and emotions. For them, analysis of structure and style is futile. There is nothing left to discover. There are no further connotations to unfold. As they see it, if a film composer is successful, he has already explicitly expressed all the intricate meanings behind his work.

The question about quality of film scores is the same for music purists as it is for those who believe in program music’s merit—but with one stark contrast. As the former looks to the past as a means to discover answers for the future, the latter advocates for the cutting out of the middleman and looking to the future practicality of music in a more direct fashion. Those who support the merit of program music do not dispute that film composers fully express their intent. In this way Program music enthusiasts agree with the statements that the purists put forth. Distinctly, however, although they agree that film composers fully express themselves, program music advocates push even further and explain that a score’s quality lies not in its capacity to be analyzed, but on its abilities as a conveyer of meaning. They support the idea that music is a sophisticated tool that has the potential to bring about change either through its own means or by the elevation of other forms of communication.
As it stands today, many composers agree that the full ability of film scores is yet to be realized. Composer Ennio Morricone, famous for scoring “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” believes that modern film music’s standards have slowly deteriorated (Alberge). In this way he asserts that most modern composers fail to grasp the importance of music in film. As he explains, music is to serve the film by describing what is not said and, through this means, the emotion that exists on screen (Alberge). This programmatic method of scoring film plays into the thought that music has the purpose of heightening the visual elements of film. Here, Morricone touches on what many theorists believe is the true merit of program music’s implementation in film. One of those theorists is Douglas Gallez, who analyzed and critiqued film theorist Siegfried Kracauer’s book, *Theory of Music*, wherein Kracauer discusses the qualities of film and its combination with music. In his analysis of Kracauer and his predecessors’ attempts at defining the boundaries of film music’s potential implementation, Gallez asserts that the purpose of music might be too incomprehensible to attempt to establish limits to the form (Gallez 46). In this way, program music scholars explain that there are endless possibilities in the application of film scores.

By looking into the past, music purists see undiscovered intelligence, genius, and new ways to push the boundaries of musical expression as an artform. As forward-onlookers, program music advocates view music as the impetus for global change through imbuing messages with more powerful meanings. While one group sees film scores as a way to elevate stories that have the potential to motivate, inspire, and shape the future, the other sees it as two steps back in relation to musical development. With the absence of the ability to see into the future, only one point is clear. Whatever is decided upon, the decision of whether film music is determined to serve the highest purpose or none at all has monumental implications for the future of music. What music purists are fighting against is that music, once exalted by its intricacies of form, style, rhythm, abstract meaning, and emotion, will inevitably shapeshift into an echo of its former self. Their fear: that where there was once rich pieces of musical expression that encapsulated the culture and society of the time and place it which it was created will become stale by excessive use for a single, repetitious purpose.

With this in mind, those who believe in the attributes of program music feel that these deconstructions of arbitrary meaning are, in themselves, necessary sacrifices. They assert that these works were not wasted but spent to serve the purpose of easily conveying meaning without much effort to the average onlooker. Indeed, this was one of the key elements put forth by Liszt (Micznik 215). One theorist, by the name of Ben Winters, moves beyond many score analyses and
states that music has a greater purpose than that of simply being an aid to the visual elements. Instead, he explains that it is better to understand the music of film as the producer, not reproducer, of narrative expressions (Winters 228). In this way, scores would fulfill a greater purpose in furthering the advancement of thought and contemplation. For Winters, music will become the penultimate carrier of deliberation, argument, and the betterment of society. Overall, it is evident that each groups’ arguments filter into one distinct opposition. Indeed, it appears that the debate over film scores revolves around one single point of contention—that of whether program or absolute music will be the form to enhance the film industry’s benefit to society.
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Introduction

As more and more platforms begin to evolve, the popularity of social media has grown. More people are getting hooked onto the latest platforms and creating a space for themselves to interact and follow others. With the rise in social media platforms, there has been a spark in social media influencers. Companies and brands have turned to social media influencers to advertise and market their products. Macro-influencers, or: “someone who has an audience within followers of 50,000 and 300,000 followers” (Talbot, 2018), play a large role in the advertising products of companies and brands. However, in the last two years there has been a switch from macro-influencers as a means to sell company and brand products to nano-influencers. This paper will analyze the rise of nano-influencers as a commodity by analyzing and answering the following research questions: How has technology influenced the rise of nano-influencers? How does new consumer practices challenge our understanding of technology and labor? What makes the nano-influencer commodity different from the macro-influencer? How does authenticity help to understand new labor processes?

This paper will draw from various academic sources to answer the stated research questions. With the shift in the current labor markets and rise in use of digital technology, it is important to understand how consumer markets have changed and what has led to that change. Currently, more and more individuals are using their digital devices as a means to purchase and sell products, as a result, companies are searching for a commodity to help source their products revenue; turning to nano-influencers.

Background

Nano-influencers are “everyday consumers and have 1,000 to 5,000 followers, telling their small community about the products they love, and therefore, they are trusted by their friends while creating valuable content for brands” (Forbes 2018). Social media has seen a rise in nano-influencers, while macro-influencers are failing to drive consumer goods. Because of their authenticity, nano-influencers are able to engage more with consumers. The rise of nano-influencers is fairly new, but companies have started to work with nano-influencers because they are more engaged with companies in comparison to macro-influencers. Nano-influencers are also
better able to impact companies' capital wealth by increasing consumer engagement with a company or a brand.

According to Duffy, whose work focuses on the interrelationship between media, technology, and society at Cornell University, “appeals to authenticity have been at the heart of commercial messages for decades” (Duffy 2017, p.100), and nano-influencers are authentic. Authenticity is exemplified in nano-influencers who represent the everyday person allowing how products are shown to hold a greater effect on consumerism. Technology has also played a large role in the rise of nano-influencers, as it has allowed companies to track and measure the use of their product(s) to understand how successful they are. Through data tracking, companies are able to select influencers that can best market their product(s) (Maheshwari 2018). Nano-influencers are shaping the consumer market, therefore, nano-influencers as a commodity is an important topic to understand, as it not only will affect the digital economy, but it will also affect how individuals consume products.

Platform based labor

Platforms are “digital infrastructures that enable two or more groups to interact, bringing together different users: customers, advertisers, service providers, producers, and suppliers” (Srincek 2016 p. 3). Nick Srineck’s book, *Platform Capitalism*, examines the rise of digital platforms following the post-2008 crisis, analyzing the defining characteristics that create a market for companies. Srineck (2018) argues that platforms have become a tool allowing users to create their own products, services, and marketplaces. Similar to Srineck, the work of Andre Ross discusses the concept of “play-labor” or “playbour”, arguing that playbour is “a hybrid form of play and labor” (Kücklich 2010). New labor markets are turning into e-lance labor markets, allowing individuals to work online, where work is seen as ‘fun’ rather than boring, especially for nano-influencers as they do not view their work as work, but rather as a way of “sharing thoughts on new products to help others make more educated purchases” (SJ, personal communication, November 23, 2019).

Srineck’s work examines two key types of platforms that demonstrate a shift in the new labor market, influencing consumerism. Advertising platforms “extract information, undertake a labour of analysis, and then use the products of that process to sell ad space” (Srineck 2016 p.4). Advertising platforms have become an essential part to the shift in labor markets online, as
companies have turned to platforms such as Google and Facebook to provide spaces for their commodity (nano-influencers) to sell products in a way that differs from traditional consumer markets. This type of platform strengthens company consumer markets as these platforms generate revenue through data of users online activities, forming an “analysis of those data, and from the auctioning of ad space to advertisers” (Srineck 2016 p. 6). Similar to this, Ross argues that crowdsourcing contributes to a shift in labor markets, specifically in advertising platforms, as crowdsourcing “offers more impersonal solutions that slices costs and delivers owners from any employer-type obligation” (Ross 2012 p.11). Crowdsourcing offers a new technique in labor markets where individuals are able to change how and where they work, shifting traditional labor markets to e-lance labor markets where individuals are able to work from anywhere, thus, allowing companies to “disperse labor without relocation to cheaper labor markets” (Ross 2012 p.10). Ross’s discussion of the purpose crowdsourcing serves connects with Srinecks second type of platform that has also contributed to a shift in labor markets online: lean platforms.

Lean platforms allow “[companies] to reduce their ownership of assets to a minimum and to profit by reducing costs as much as possible” (Srineck 2016 p.4). Lean platforms look to establish themselves as a platform where users, customers, and workers can interact, working through a ‘hyper-outsourced’ model where workers, fixed capital, maintenance costs, and training are all outsourced. Ross’s work is similar to Srineck’s discussion of lean platforms and the purpose of lean platforms is to shift labor markets online to various digital platforms, thereby reducing costs by using fast, efficient, and cheap labor. Technology plays a crucial role in the success of lean platforms as they are “indispensable in the process of finding work on informal labor markets” (Srineck 2016 p. 12). For this reason, as discussed by Ross and Srineck, nano-influencers can be considered part of lean platforms as they have become an appropriate commodity in labor markets, allowing companies and advertisers to appropriate their labor skills in a cheap manner to produce fast and efficient revenue for companies. (Srineck 2016)

The work of Ross and Srineck overlaps in evaluating how labor markets have shifted online. However, Ross critiques recent shifts in labor markets stating that this shift to online labor markets has “isolated individuals from any protective framework of social insurance.” (Ross 2012 p. 23). While the components of advertising platforms and lean platforms have influenced the shift to online labor markets, those who find work on online markets do not have the same level of job security as workers in traditional labor markets.
Gender and Authenticity in Digital Platforms

Digital labor production has become “feminized”, as women favor the ability for work and play to overlap, “making them ideal workers for neoliberal forms of flexible accumulation” (Ross 2012 p.22). As a result, consumer markets have began to shift towards a feminized consumer culture, where the concept of labor and leisure blur together to coincide with the idea of “playbour” as discussed earlier by Ross. (Duffy 2017)

Tied to Ross’s “playbour” claim is the idea of “commodity feminism”. Duffy argues that feminism has become a commodity through which “companies co-opt political aims of feminism to make their message compatible with marketplace demands” (Duffy 2017 p.101). Through feminist commodity, companies are able to create a consumer culture directed at women. According to Duffy, when women mix work and leisure together to generate online content it is not just for fun, but rather with “strategy, purpose, and aspirations of success” (Duffy 2017 p. 48). To feminize consumer culture, companies reinforce societal gender roles through online magazines or social media platforms as “corporate discourse value gendered social sharing, compelling cultural producers to interact with female consumers in various digital spaces” (Duffy 2013 p. 136).

Aspirational labor ties into Duffy’s discussion of a feminized consumer culture, as this form of labor narrates “relationship-building in online and offline contexts and creates individualized self-expression that both reveals and conceals normative feminine consumer behavior” (Duffy 2017 p. 48). Female content creators view aspirational labor as a motivator for combining both their individual interests and “rhetoric of entrepreneurialism” to eventually generate profit. Thus, tying back into the work of Ross and his discussion on “playbour”. From social media platforms, women become capable of branding their ‘visible self’ through fashion or blogging, tying into the ideologies of post-feminism, which, as argued by Duffy, “emphasizes autonomous choice and self-fashioning; yet simultaneously reaffirms the assumption that women are, above all, consumers” (Duffy 2017 p.52). Companies see women as their main consumers, focusing their company products on attracting the attention of women, especially through authenticity. The role gender plays in a consumer market ties into the “discourse of authenticity of the feminist self-brand” (Duffy 2017 p.181).
Tied to this idea of authenticity is the work of Wassberg (2019) where to be authentic means to be transparent, allowing an influencer’s followers to see both the good and the bad aspects of his/her page. Similarly, Beverland (2006) argues that authenticity is important to the way companies market their products. The authenticity of nano-influencers creates transparency between a brand and the product being promoted. Wassberg (2019) argues that authenticity connects consumers, nano-influencers and companies, as “consumers view brand authenticity as an indication that the brand is becoming more transparent, lining the values of the consumers with those brands” (Gustafsson 2005; Holt 2002 in Wassberg 2019). Authenticity is not just a key element for nano-influencers, but it also an important element for the company or brand itself. Similar to the idea of Gustafsson and Holt in Wassberg’s work, Ballantyne et. al (2005), argues that the four dimensions of authenticity: originality, substantiveness, honesty, and truthfulness, become central to the image of (nano) influencers.

Through self-branding, authenticity has become a trait that is commodified by companies and followers (Khamis et. al. 2016). As discussed by Duffy (2017), the characteristic of authenticity that is looked for amongst influencers, especially by women consumers, has feminized online labor markets. Social media has created platforms for women to represent their own viewpoints on beauty, health & wellness, fashion, and etc. By sharing their perspectives online through photos and videos nano-influencers create a version of authenticity that differs from brand authenticity (Duffy 2017). Thus, gender and authenticity become interconnected, as labor markets become more feminized companies focus on women consumers and as women consumers search for authenticity in a brand online nano-influencers become more critical.

Influencers authenticity has become essential for their followers. How they engage with their follower base and the connections they create, make “people feel less alone, viewing the influencer as a close friend and someone to rely on” (Wassberg 2019 p. 35). Therefore, influencers individual personalities and characteristics become an essential part of how authenticity is created. (Wassberg 2019)

Findings

Empirical work was conducted to further conceptualize how nano-influencers have become a commodity and to answer the posed research questions. The empirical work was conducted through interviewing nano-influencers, followers of nano-influencers, as well as, a
personal analysis of how nano-influencers construct their pages across various platforms. The three nano-influencers interviewed have been nano-influencers for around two to three years. When asked to define a nano-influencer, those who were nano-influencers defined the term as “a social media influencer who’s following ranges between 1,000 and 10,000 followers” (A. Baker, personal communication, November 3, 2019). This definition was similar to those interviewed who follow nano-influencers themselves, stating “a nano-influencer is someone with a smaller number of followers, with maybe five thousand maximum” (L. Dixon, personal communication, November 16, 2019). From comparing the empirical work and Forbes, it can be concluded that the understandings of a nano-influencer is similar to how it is defined by Forbes earlier. It is understood that nano-influencers are individuals who contain a certain number of followers that is less than 10,000.

Building onto the analysis of platform-based labor through the work of Ross and Srineck, nano-influencers that were interviewed argued that companies have turned more towards nano-influencers as a means to market their products because the “cost to work as well as to partner with nano-influencers is exceptionally less than if a company were to work and partner with larger influencers” (A. Baker, personal communication, November 3, 2019). Baker’s understanding of why companies have shifted their work to partnering with nano-influencers correlates to Srineck’s discussion on lean platforms as companies are able to use platforms, as a way to disperse labor online that is inexpensive and efficient. As a result, nano-influencers become the appropriate commodity in labor markets, allowing companies and advertisers to appropriate their labor skills in a cheap manner to produce fast and efficient revenue for companies. Ricky Ochilo, another nano-influencer drew upon comparing nano-influencers to macro-influencers and why nano-influencers have become more desirable by companies in the shift of labor markets. He states,

Nano-influencers make it more beneficial for companies to inexpensively export labor by promoting products cheaply and unpaid. As a result, companies benefit from nano-influencers which creates beneficial experiences for companies. For macro-influencers, their rate of engagement is reduced because companies are focused on generating efficient, engaging, and inexpensive products. (R. Ochilo, personal communication, December 7, 2019)
These discussions of companies shifting to nano-influencers is also similar to Ross’s discussion on crowdsourcing which ties into Srineck’s analysis on advertising and lean platforms. Ross argues that crowdsourcing provides labor to be dispersed without companies having to go overseas to find cheap labor. They are able to accumulate cheap labor through the online use of nano-influencers. However, Ross’s work examines this idea of e-lance labor markets, that allows individuals with the means to work from wherever. This form of labor market was unfamiliar to the interviewees, but the discussion of “play labor” which Ross discusses was familiar to them.

When asked why they (nano-influencers) wanted to partner with various companies to market their products, Baker discussed her “love of fashion, beauty, skincare and lifestyle” (A. Baker, personal communication, November 3, 2019). This connects to Ross’s discussion of “play-labor” or “playbour” where influencers are able to mix work and play. (Srineck 2016)

As argued by Srineck, the rise of technology has also contributed to the adoption of nano-influencers. Algorithms play a critical role in the use of nano-influencers. According to Srineck, algorithms “enable the coordination and outsourcing of workers; they allow for the optimization and flexibility of productive processes; they make possible the transformation of low-margin goods into high-margin services” (Srineck 2016, p. 2). Therefore, companies are using algorithms to generate data about their platforms to strengthen their marketplace. Nano-influencer platforms have become a way for companies to create and understand their market. Through data summaries and analysis, companies are able to understand the success nano-influencers have on their market.

Companies acquire profit by drawing attention to nano-influencers’ personalities and personal relationships with their small group of followers, rather than acquiring profit and wealth through abstract economic processes or business strategies. In doing so, companies are redefining how to acquire capital wealth and profit in the digital age. Rao argues technology has created a cycle where “big companies must be in the market for incremental innovations that enhance their main offerings” (Rao 2012, p.3). Nano-influencers create “incremental innovations” for companies through the production of cheap and effective labor. Srineck and Rao’s discussion of technology's influence on the adoption of nano-influencers differs from the empirical work. During the course of the interviews, nano-influencers and followers did not acknowledge the influence of algorithms or economic company incentives. Instead, they focused more on how technology has served as a tool for creativity and outreach as noted by Baker and Ochilo,
The advancement of technology allows brands to analyze one’s influence or interaction with their followers, playing a vital role in the rise of nano-influencers. (A. Baker, personal communication, November 3, 2019). And as noted by Ochilo

Technology has allowed for shared purpose and learning, creating various platforms where people can be reached more broadly and instantaneously. This has allowed people to become familiar with certain trends instantaneously, assisting in what they should market to their followers. (R. Ochilo, personal communication, December 7, 2019)

Technology has changed how products are bought and sold. Through comparing the empirical work to scholarly work, it is evident that nano-influencers see how the change in technology has influenced the rise of nano-influencers differently compared to the work of Srineck and Rao, who look at the advancement of technology based on the influence it has had over the labor market and how companies have changed how they market.

Duffy and Wassberg examine the influence gender and authenticity play in the use of nano-influencers. Duffy’s discussion of gender ties into Ross’s discussion of “feminized” labor productions, therefore, shifting towards a feminized consumer culture. While the interviewees did not discuss the platforms they use as catering to a “feminized” consumer market, through an analysis of ten nano-influencer online pages, it is clear that the majority of company products fall under the subcategories of fashion, health and wellness, beauty, or cooking. One conclusion made from this analysis is that companies tend to use female nano-influencers to further reach women consumers, adding to the creation of a feminized consumer market.

Authenticity has become a critical finding of empirical research, scholarly research, and through non-scholarly research. The nano-influencers interviewed discussed the role authenticity has at setting nano-influencers apart from macro- or mega-influencers, as the appearance of being authentic encourages more engagement with audiences and followers. One nano-influencer stated, “I always remain authentic and honest with my audience, and they know that whatever I promote is only because I absolutely love it or stand behind the brand” (A. Baker, personal communication, November 3, 2019). Baker’s discussion of remaining authentic behind what brand she reviews ties into Wassberg’s discussion of authenticity. By being
truly authentic, nano-influencers are able to show the good and the bad of products. However, Baker discussed promoting brands that she only loves and stands behind. Her discussion of authenticity did not tie into any of the scholarly research, which challenges the idea of authenticity. If Baker and other nano-influencers only promote brands they love, then followers may only see good reviews rather than bad, thus benefiting the company and also the nano-influencer.

Those who were interviewed who follow nano-influencers also discussed authenticity, transparency, and intimacy being attributes that draws them to nano-influencers. One follower of a nano-influencer states:

I think nano-influencers have a more tailored audience they can reach on an intimate level…. I feel as if nano-influencers actually use and trust the products they promote and I feel that they have less motivation to promote a product just for money since their contracts are probably not that much (A.Horrocks, personal communication, November 13, 2019).

This idea that nano-influencers are trustworthy and authentic with their product promotion ties into the argument made by Kucey that the “rise in importance of authenticity, honesty, and integrity shines through the brand ” (Kucey 2019). Followers are able to connect with nano-influencers on a personal level through the connection of honesty, but they are also able to connect with the authenticity of companies to drive the relationship consumers build with that particular brand. Companies have become more invested in using nano-influencers for “brand messaging, customer segmentation, and promoting products beyond the context and scale of what they originally thought it catered to” (Ochilo, R. personal communication, December 7, 2019). Therefore, authenticity becomes an important role for brands to create trust amongst consumers. Followers build an intimate connection with nano-influencers who they trust because of their transparency and authenticity. Their words can be trusted in comparison to macro-influencers. Nano-influencers themselves value authenticity as a means to attract companies for work and to “connect more to the average consumer” (SJ, personal communication, November 23, 2019).

In the analysis of various nano-influencer pages, authenticity was presented through how nano-influencers marketed the product they were promoting. For example, one nano-influencer promoted a Clinique foundation. The photo was a selfie of her holding the product and a
description of her opinion on the product. Those who are followers of this nano-influencer may be
more inclined to buy this product over a macro- or mega-influencer promoting this product
because “she seems like someone I would know and trust” (A. Breece-Sullivan, personal
communication, November 16 2019). The feeling of connection and trust makes it more tangible
for followers to want to buy the products nano-influencers are promoting. When nano-influencers
appear to be like the everyday person, promoting familiar products, the product becomes more
tangible and consumers believe the product will work for them.

Aside from authenticity, gender also plays a critical role in a consumer market. During the
analysis all except one nano-influencer page were women. This further adds to support the
statement made by Ross and Duffy that the new labor markets have become more feminized as
companies focus their attention on attracting women consumers, as “86% of women consult social
media before making a purchase” (TouchPoints 2016). By having a large portion of nano-
influencers be women, companies are able to further connect with women consumers. Women
consumers are more likely to buy a skincare brand or a wellness program from a women nano-
influencer over a male nano-influencer because of mutual connection, specifically a shared
personal connection. (Hennessy 2018)

During the interviews, nano-influencers spoke about the benefits they have gained through
being a nano-influencer. They spoke about accountability, networking opportunities, the ability to
see different perspectives and cater markets to those various perspectives. One nano-influencer
stated that coming into this field of work has allowed her to form “partnerships with brands that I
would have never begun to imagine partnering with as well as trust from her followers and
audience” (A. Baker, personal communication, November 3, 2019). Nano-influencers' reasons for
joining this industry overlapped, but the individuals also had different perspectives to the benefits
of being a nano-influencer. However, these benefits discussed by the interviewees did not appear
in any of the scholarly research. This was striking as it would have been expected for this topic of
discussion to appear in the work of Wassberg or Srineck, and it did not.

Conclusion

Nano-influencers have been adopted by companies as a means to adapt to the shift in
consumer and digital labor markets. The “consumer demographic has been rewired” (Serzaio
2015, 605), as evident through the work of Ross, Rao, and Srineck, as they analyze the change in
labor markets. Nano-influencers have become the new commodity to marketing due to their cheap, efficient, and effective labor. Through a feminized labor market, women nano-influencers as well as followers of nano-influencers have become essential to companies’ consumer culture. In the analysis of nano-influencer platform pages, it is evident that many female nano-influencers play into a feminized labor market as their content surrounds interests that connect with many women (fashion, beauty, health and wellness, and cooking). From the work of Srineck, lean platforms have become essential to companies’ use of nano-influencers as they provide cheap and efficient labor. Nano-influencers have shifted the labor market creating an environment where companies are able to cater to targeted consumers. Nano-influencers experience their work as a job that mixes both work and leisure, tying into Ross’ idea of “playbour”.

Not only have nano-influencers provided a new means of digital labor for companies, but authenticity allows nano-influencers to create a transparent relationship between their followers and brands. Through the work of Wassberg and other scholars, authenticity has become an essential characteristic to the rise of nano-influencers. Companies and consumers value the authenticity of nano-influencers over a mega- or macro-influencer. For companies, authenticity has allowed consumers to trust a brand and for nano-influencers, authenticity has allowed them to create relationships with their followers by sharing their opinion on a particular brand in a transparent manner. Therefore, it has become evident through authenticity and the shift in labor markets to a feminized digital online labor market that nano-influencers have become an essential commodity for companies.


Emma Barresi

Instagram On Paper: Journaling, Photography and Mindfulness

I. Abstract

This paper examines a majorly unresearched phenomena in the area of contemplative studies and media studies. Based on the results of a personal reflective study, the author will compare the contemplative benefits of two ways of documenting memories through photos – on social media platforms such as Instagram and through traditional journaling and scrapbooking methods. Much research has been done to better understand the impact that ‘likes’ on social media platforms, specifically Instagram, can have on the human psyche. For many individuals, Instagram is a way to document their lives and memories in photographs, but the addition of ‘likes’ has commodified those memories and made individuals more susceptible to mental health issues caused by comparing their success to the success of their peers. They seek validation in the form of ‘likes’ and allow that number to dictate their self-worth, which can be detrimental to mental health. Despite the vast research in this area, not much research has been done to examine alternative ways of documenting our memories, which is where this personal reflective study comes into play. Throughout the process, I collected photographs from memorable moments, and both posted them on Instagram and collected them in a journal. From that point, I was then able to compare my emotional and mental reaction to the same photographs in different settings and ask myself which platform evoked a stronger positive or negative response to the same image.

II. Contemplative Media Studies

According to Healey (2015), contemplative media studies provides a distinct area of scholarship that bridges the gap between digital technologies and psychological and economic well-being by “questioning human consciousness, the ethics of technical development, and the construction of the self.” Technologies such as social media work to construct the self, however, they disrupt our “moral ecologies, especially with regard to values like authenticity, responsibility and trust” (Healey, 2015). The framework of technology platforms is built to convince users that the self is a ‘thing’ or an ‘identity’ when it is really a process (Healey, 2015). Scholars have chosen to integrate media studies into contemplative studies because these two areas complement each other in the ways in which individuals create their view of the self. Technology interrupts our thoughts and forces us to disengage, so scholarship in this field focuses on the ways in which technology can augment our ability to engage with our thoughts and be more mindful. (Healey,
2015). By looking at media studies through a lens of contemplative studies, scholars are able to more critically analyze the ways in which media impacts mindfulness and create solutions around fostering a more mindful society by using media in more mindful ways.

Prior to the integration of media studies, contemplative studies were focused on the individual rather than the society. Media studies move contemplative practices into the greater society. Purser (2019) discusses the idea of anger and how current mindfulness practices view it as a bad thing that cannot be contemplative, but it unifies our society because everyone experiences anger. Media and technology provide more ways for our society to unify and find commonality. A lot of the time, we assume that media and contemplation cannot be related because media creates so many distractions that individuals are unable to focus on a single thing; however, if media usage was practiced mindfully, it could contribute to a more contemplative society. Given that media connects the world, it is a necessary evil in creating a mindful society.

III. Photography as Memory and Mindfulness

As discussed by Bate (2010), photography is often considered an aide to memory as they are often linked as an issue of the failure of memory. In the technological age, photo-archiving software programs are becoming the norm and, “if we see these new repositories as a type of “memory bank”, complemented by the many devices designed to provide inputs to them..., then we have to ask what relation do these instruments have to existing notions of memory and photography?” (Bate, 2010, p. 243). Photography, in itself, is designed to capture beauty or meaning in the world around us, which is why it is such a powerful tool for storing memories (Kurtz, 2015). A study conducted by Kurtz (2015) hypothesizes that photography and the photographs produced can create greater sense of appreciation, more motivation and energy, and an increase in positive emotions. However, Kurtz argues that there is a certain kind of photography that allows individuals to reap these benefits – mindful photography (Kurtz, 2015). Mindful photography asks the photographer to focus on the goal and the subject so as to promote greater appreciation of the scene they are capturing (Kurtz, 2015). The conclusion of this study showed that mindful photography is a strategy that can be employed to help individuals increase enjoyment and appreciation of their everyday lives (Kurtz, 2015).

In the age of social media, there are a plethora of options available for archiving photographs online. In fact, Herrman (2018) discusses this in his New York Times article, stating
that “to the people who took [the photos], they were deeply valuable; to anyone else, mostly worthless. Their peculiar sort of pricelessness made archivists of regular people.” In another New York Times piece, Manjoo (2018) discusses his own experiences with photo archiving software, specifically Google Photos. In this case, the collection of photos was so powerful that he described it as a ‘sucker punch’ (Manjoo, 2018). Manjoo (2018) discusses how Google’s A.I. systems can recognize faces, even over time, and notes that they also seem to “understand the tone and emotional valence of human interaction.” Going further, he suggests applications such as Google Photos are remarkable for what they signify about how we may eventually be able to understand ourselves through photography (Manjoo, 2018). In this way, it is clear that photography can be a powerful tool not only for preserving memories but also for helping individuals better understand themselves and their emotions, as well as be a mindful practice that allows the individual to foster greater appreciation of the world and their life.

IV. Commodification of Memories through Social Media Platforms

Historically, image has been an important aspect of human communication, even predating written language (Ibrahim, 2015). In the age of social media, it still rings true that images are integral to the way that humans communicate with each other and interact with the world around them. Ibrahim (2015) describes the popularized practice of capturing the everyday and uploading the trivial and perfunctory as ‘banal imaging,’ and goes on to note that “photographic images act as an aide memoir or as a ‘trigger’ to memory” (p. 44). He describes banal imaging as being implicated by the non-events and the normality of the daily routine (Ibrahim, 2015). Banal imaging promotes the commodification and aestheticization of everyday life through the objectification of images and the manipulation and personalization involved in the process of uploading those images to social media (Ibrahim, 2015). Not only are these images objectified, but they are able to be shared and thus contribute to a new type of economy through which individuals seek validation from their peers in the form of ‘likes’ (Ibrahim, 2015). Images on social media become more than just images of daily life, they are transformed into a type of social currency and capital for the uploader, and that person’s self-worth is dictated by how much of that social currency they possess (Ibrahim, 2015). Ibrahim (2015), notes that the commodification of life is bound to memory creation and the individual’s need to journal life in terms of the everyday. He states that, “journaling life is connected to our need to immortalize our presence in the real world and leave traces of ourselves. The digital economy lends easily to the need to journal life; it
generously enables the creation, archiving, showcasing and exchange of content making it difficult to erase content rather than create it” (Ibrahim, 2015, p. 51). Due to the ease of creating content and the validation that comes with receiving high numbers of ‘likes,’ social media has created a form of social capital that may be detrimental to mental health.

For years, concerns have been surfacing regarding the problematic nature of ‘likes’ given that they hold an immense amount of power over society (Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilan, 2019). In fact, sharing an image on Instagram is a social act that is deeply thought out and planned so as to garner the greatest number of likes (Ross, 2019). Ross (2019) argues that media users have multiple ideologies and switch between communicative forms within the same social media platform depending on the audience they are trying to reach. These ideologies about media are formed based on each individual’s beliefs, attitudes and strategies the utilize when using different forms of social media (Ross, 2019). A new social media trend surface in recent years – the ‘finsta’ – an Instagram account that allows the user to defy the norms of acceptable posting on Instagram. If it were not for the assumptions and expectations about Instagram use that are held by teens and young adults, this new genre would not have emerged (Ross, 2019). Instagram is a socially constructed process that is not as easy as simply uploading a picture – the uploader has to carefully edit, select a filter, and write a witty caption before even posting the image to their feed (Ross, 2019). Ross (2019) highlights the fact that even the timing of the post has to be carefully considered – if the timing is not right, the uploader runs the risk of their post being buried in their follower’s feeds.

Instagram has become so much more than just a photo-sharing platform, as Ross (2019) states, “Instagram is not merely a structure that imposes constraints on user, but users actively create these constraints, while also working strategically to navigate them well” (p. 363). Users have created what can only be described as a rulebook for successful social media use, all of which is founded on the notion that ‘likes’ equal social inclusion (Ross, 2019). As Banks (2013) notes, ‘likes’ do not highlight the best content, they build and maintain hegemony. This is furthered by Instagram’s algorithms which prioritize popular content by promoting images that it thinks each user will enjoy (Ross, 2019). Not only do Instagram users have to think about what determines whether an image is good or not, but they also have to consider what the image says about them as a person and how their audience will respond to it (Ross, 2019). In fact, Instagram is so influential in determining how users present themselves online that many users would conflate their own opinion on what would make a good picture with what would receive the most
‘likes’ (Ross, 2019). The norms that our society has created for social media usage force us to portray a particular version of ourselves, one that the public will like – a practice that stifles the desire for a more candid, less mediated self (Ross, 2019).

V. Mindful Journaling and Photographed Memories

Prior to social media, the print-era scrapbook was the medium of choice for creating and documenting photos as memories (Good, 2013). Just as Instagram, scrapbooks and photo journals are social processes whereby individual’s express themselves and their values through images and the creative presentation of those images (Good, 2013). Both social media platforms and scrapbooks are locations for personal media assemblage and archiving that share three specific functions – documenting friendship, navigating new media abundance, and expressing taste and building social and cultural capital (Good, 2013). According to Good (2013), “like scrapbookers in the print era, today’s active users of [social media platforms] leave mediated traces of the events and social encounters that shape their lives” (p. 569). Many believe that the difference between forms of social media assemblage and scrapbooking, journaling, and diary keeping is the intention behind the actions (Good, 2013). They argue that social media users are focused on creating life-affirming content for the masses, while users of print-era mediums were focused on archiving and documenting history, which is not necessarily the case (Good, 2013). In fact, print-era personal media assemblages played social roles for those creating them, just as the digital content does for social media users (Good, 2013).

Journaling and scrapbooking aide us in the creation of autobiographical memories, which tell us what kind of people we are (Phillips, 2016). These are the memories that construct personally meaningful representations of one’s past and play a major role in the construction and reconstruction of self-identity (Phillips, 2016). According to Phillips (2016), “the activity of collecting, preserving, and reconstructing autobiographical memory is a rich process that can be facilitated by material possessions, such as the scrapbook” (p. 343). Historically, personal photography has been a heavily social practice that is focused on saving memories of past experiences for reminiscing in the future (van Dijck, 2008). Due to this, photography has always been an instrument of communication and a method of sharing experiences (van Dijck, 2008). It seems only natural that practices would emerge allowing individuals to document and archive these memories. Photographs not only capture memories, they also influence memories (van Dijck, 2008). It is becoming accepted that, in the digital age, photography has become
increasingly regarded as a tool for identity construction, rather than recollection or reflection (van Dijck, 2008). However, evidence has shown that “those who take, store, view and share in [photography] are not simply unwitting accomplices in the reproduction of an ideological status quo” (Keightley & Pickering, 2014). Whether photographs end up in the digital universe being stored in an archiving website or printed and logged in a book, those images hold an immense amount of social value. Social media has invoked a set of problems – fear of missing out, performative anxiety, loneliness, and an erosion of privacy – to go along with archiving memories (Manjoo, 2019), and one might ask if it is time to return to print-era mediums of scrapbooking and journaling.

VI. Personal Reflection and Conclusion

Over the past month I engaged in my own form of journaling that incorporated techniques used in the relatively new phenomena of bullet journaling along with photographs. While doing this, I continued to post to Instagram as I normally would so as to get a better understanding of the emotional effects of both practices. Over the course of the month, every time I took a photo or did something that was Instagram-worthy, I posted it to Instagram and pasted a printed version in my journal. Both the image posted to Instagram and the image placed in the journal were given captions; however, the caption used in the journal was less gimmicky and more focused on the feeling that was invoked by the associated memory. I quickly took to this practice of journaling – consistently adding new images and finding creative ways to add text using bullet journaling techniques and scripting. The process of adding to the journal became therapeutic because I was able to be more mindful and candid. Posting to Instagram is a process – the photo has to be edited, a filter has to be used, the caption needs to be perfect. The pressure to create the most ‘likable’ Instagram post is immense, but there was no pressure to be perfect in my journal.

Now that I have collected a significant number of pages in the journal, I can more clearly see the contemplative benefit that this practice of photo archiving has in comparison to that of Instagram. I look back in the journal and am able to reminisce on the memories and feelings associated with them. If I scroll through the same pictures on Instagram, I immediately look for the ‘like’ count to determine what worked and what did not. This is not to say that Instagram cannot be used mindfully and could not be utilized in a way that might be contemplative in nature, it just is not the way that I have ever used it and I do not think that will change anytime soon. Personally, I like having a journal filled with photos and memories. I went into the project hoping
to utilize photography as an art-based practice with no real idea of how I wanted to do so, but I found something even better. Photography does not have to be intentional to be mindful, those memories that are attached to the images we capture of everyday life are just as meaningful. The key is how we use those photos – if we use them for social media, we are allowing our memories to be commodified and exchanged for social capital but using them in print form allows us to keep those memories to ourselves so that we can reflect and reminisce privately. I will admit that, by putting my images both on social media and in print, I muddy those waters a little, but I have noticed a major difference between my emotional reaction to the images in the context of Instagram versus in the context of a print journal.

In the end, the digital world has made it nearly impossible for us to avoid social media, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, we have to acknowledge that social media is commodifying our memories and turning them into social capital that can be exchanged online. If we can recognize this, we can separate the feeling associated with the memory from the feeling of gaining or losing social capital on social media. There is no doubt in my mind that I will continue keeping a journal of all of my photographs because, even in the short time I have been doing it, I already notice myself benefitting from having a separate, safe space in which to archive and document my photos. I set aside time every day to document a new memory and let myself ruminate on why that memory was so special to me in order to better capture it in the text of the journal.
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A Rhetorical Analysis of Twitter: ISTE Educational Technology Conference Exhibitors

Introduction:

Twitter is an online space that is often used as a digital platform for live commentary during an event. Users will type their thoughts, and then their will appear on their screen in real-time with the broadcast that they are responding to. Live Tweeting can occur during the streaming of a political speech, an athletic event, a crime scene, during backstage preparation for a performance, or a video game reveal. However, companies that attend professional and academic conferences are making use of Twitter as well. They create event-specific hashtags and tweet while they are at the event, to encourage discussion between the people who are also visiting and the remote users who could not go. When a company holds a discussion on Twitter while they are actually present at a conference, they are backchannel Tweeting. It is a strange hybrid of blogging and public relations, wherein a company provides exciting insight on their experiences at the convention while maintaining respectful professionalism in the online environment. However, companies will also hype up their following before the date of the conference and offer thanks after it has concluded.

The International Society for Technology in Education, or ISTE, is an organization that hosts an annual expo for educational technology companies. The companies will rent out booths and attempt to sell their products to teachers, K-12 school district administrators, and higher education personnel. ISTE 2019 took place at the Pennsylvania Conference Center, located in Philadelphia, between June 23rd and 26th (International Society for Technology in Education, 2018). Three tweets utilizing either the ISTE19 or ISTE2019 hashtags shall be examined in connection to the internal and external variables of decorum. These tweets vary along a chronological timeline and include a tweet that announced a company’s upcoming attendance at ISTE, a backchannel Tweet that invited visitors to drop by the company’s booth for participation in a raffle, and a Tweet thanking employees and visitors for dropping by during the conference.

A Synopsis of the Conference:

I was physically present at ISTE 2019 as an intern for a small software company that requested my assistance during the conference. The exhibit hall housed approximately three
thousand booths (International Society for Technology in Education, 2018), with company signs, seating areas, display tables, video monitors, and interactive touchscreens. A handful of giants in the EdTech industry were present and included Gale, Canvas, Scholastic, Microsoft, Google, and even N.A.S.A. (International Society for Technology in Education, 2018). However, most of the exhibitors were startup companies that used ISTE as a physical space to amass potential clients. There were thousands of educators present at the exhibition, so it was an excellent place to present marketing pitches. The exhibitors handed out business cards and promotional products, as well as collected the contact information of prospective buyers that wanted to schedule a demo or obtain a sales quote at a later time. Several of the companies also have Twitter accounts and used the ISTE2019 or ISTE19 hashtags to announce their attendance to their followers both during the conference, and before it even took place.

The Announcement of Attendance:

Roughly two and a half weeks before ISTE, LEGO Education posted a chipper announcement on their Twitter account, stating that they would be an exhibitor at the conference. LEGO Education revealed that they, as an entire company, were so thrilled to be participating in ISTE that they were “jumping for joy” (LEGO Education, 2019). To further emphasize their excitement, LEGO Education included a GIF file depicting a LEGO character repeatedly jumping up in down, in a loop.

Broadly speaking, Jasinski (2001) defines decorum as maintaining appropriateness or proper etiquette within an act of communication (p. 141). Jasinski (2001) also notes the elements of instrumental decorum, which center around a rhetor’s “adjustment of thought and style to context and circumstance” (p. 147). By utilizing friendly, professional discourse, LEGO abides by
decorum in order to maintain appropriateness in an online space that is traditionally crass in its tone.

LEGO Education’s tweet implements several external variables of decorum very well. Firstly, they are incredibly aware of timing. The Tweet was posted twenty days before ISTE’s kickoff, which was at an opportune window. If LEGO Education had announced their participation at a completely inappropriate time, a full year or several months before ISTE, its followers may have found the Tweet to be irrelevant and would have been completely disinterested. It would not have been a successful tweet. Thankfully, it was neither too far in advance, at months beforehand, or too soon, at mere days before the conference.

LEGO Education adjusts their language style to appear both enthusiastic and professional on the Twitter platform. The phrase “we’re jumping for joy” (LEGO Education, 2019) in place of “we are thrilled” is an attempt at being a more personable entity, as opposed to being stiff and unwelcoming. They creatively insert the GIF of the LEGO character jumping to accentuate their written statement of “jumping for joy”, just to indicate how utterly excited they are to be attending ISTE.
The tweet’s message content begins lightheartedly but then transitions into a series of strategically placed recognitions of the conference and LEGO’s schedule of events. LEGO Education tags the official ISTE Twitter account and inserts the ISTE19 hashtag, so that their tweet is categorized as having importance to that event, as they will eventually be physically present in a booth. LEGO Education associates themselves with ISTE by inserting those specific items. LEGO Education then directly inquires if its followers want to see what will be transpiring during ISTE, then answers that question inviting them to click on a link, leading to their schedule. It is appropriate, relevant information for LEGO Education to engage ISTE-goers to their page by including ISTE tags, and to encourage their followers to view their scheduled activities so that they will feel compelled to attend the eventual conference.

There is a question of effective consistency and proportion in this Tweet. The GIF does visually mimic the “jumping for joy” phrase, and that is indeed cohesive. However, the GIF is also incredibly distracting. It places too much emphasis at the beginning and disrupts the Tweet’s latter half of asking followers if they are curious to view the schedule of events.

Backchannel Tweeting: Raffle

On June 24th, the second day of ISTE, ELB Education USA invited conference attendees to visit their booth for participation in a raffle. ELB Education USA announced that there was an active countdown until the raffle, which is marked as being extremely important by the use of capital letters in the first line of their tweet. The celebration cracker emoji implies that the raffle drawing will be festive and exciting, and the megaphone and clock emojis suggest hastiness with the two-hour time window that remains. The company also includes their booth number, the time
This tweet is incredibly persuasive in regard to its written discourse and imagery. There is a hypersensitivity to time, which is marked by the urgency of the upcoming drawing. ELB Education USA’s first line of the tweet, written in all capital letters in an attempt to appear loud and eye-catching, announces that a mere two hours remain until they pick a winner. They also include the clock emoji to suggest that time is running out, and mention the cutoff time of 3 PM.

The tweet was also posted online at an ideal moment. If the announcement had been made six hours before the drawing, convention attendees may have forgotten about it or not designated it as being important quite yet. However, declaring that there are only two hours left is a bold, attention-grabbing statement that implies that participants need to hurry if they want to enter.

ELB Education USA adjusts their language style to appear both professional and cordial with their followers, instructing them to not forget to stop by their booth. Although they appear to be screaming in all capital letters in the first line, it is not at all inappropriate, as there is a deadline fast approaching. As a professional entity, it would have been completely inappropriate for the
company to perhaps demand their followers “get their asses” down to booth #1400, which is not a proper way to address clients and potential buyers. The urgency of the timing is emphasized by the attractive prizes that will eventually be awarded: two Google Chromebooks. The sleekness and expensive prices of the Chromebooks is very appealing, and a persuasive phrase that dangles in front of the followers, as they may or may not acquire the Chromebooks.

There is relevant message content as well. ELB Education USA provides the time of the raffle deadline, but also lists the physical location of booth number #1400 so that participants can find them. The specific prizes that will be given away is also extremely important information that encouraged visitors to come to the booth. They also include an image of the fishbowl, chock full of tickets. Potential participants will know to look for that specific booth number and a fishbowl with blue slips of paper if they want to partake in the raffle. The fishbowl also coerces participants to hurry, as there are countless competitors that also want the Chromebooks. The tags and hashtags indicate that ELB Education USA is present at ISTE, and that all attendees of ISTE should come visit their booth.

The consistency and proportion of the tweet are debatable. There is a very heavy emphasis at the beginning, with the capital letters. It could be perceived as too much- perhaps too dramatic. But, the concluding statement of 3 PM ties back to the beginning countdown of two hours, which softens the intensity of the capital letters.
An Offering of Thanks:

On July 1st, after ISTE had concluded, Wakelet tweeted their astonishment at the rapid passing of time. They acknowledge their employees as being “awesome” and praise their successes with their oral presentations. They then tag four employees and include images of their aforementioned staff members from the conference and the large turnout at the speaker presentations.

Once again, this is an effective use of time. Wakelet allowed a week to pass so that convention attendees could digest their experiences before recapping what had transpired. It may have been too soon to reflect back on ISTE only two days after it had concluded, and too far in the future at one month. One week later is an appropriate passing of time for ISTE to still feel recent, but not too distant in the past.

The language style of the tweet features Wakelet as an amiable, thankful employer. Wakelet states that its speakers were “awesome” and that their “awesomeness” is what contributed to the full audience. Wakelet professes that the presentations were a huge hit with use of the celebratory party horn emoji and noting that the educators in the audience were “excited” (Wakelet, 2019). With regards to source, it is appropriate for Wakelet, as an employer, to individually recognize its workers in a message of thanks, tags of acknowledgement, and images that identify each person that made their success possible.
There is also incredible unity within the tweet. There are several words of praise for Wakelet’s employees, which include “awesome”, “excited”, “rocked it”, and “amazing” (Wakelet, 2019). They are peppered throughout the tweet as opposed to weighing heavily at the beginning or the end. Both the first paragraph and the second paragraph are praiseworthy, which is cohesive when compared to staff recognition that is followed by a link to a software demonstration or free trial. The focus is on the hard work of the employees, not marketing the company product.

Conclusion

Twitter is an engaging digital environment for companies to participate in when they are physically attending conferences. The companies need to abide by decorum in order to maintain appropriateness in an online space, as a professional entity. LEGO Education, ELB Education USA, and Wakelet incorporate the internal and external elements of decorum in their tweets that were necessary to appear fun and engaging as a brand, but respectable as a corporate entity addressing its following. It was very rewarding to study the virtual timeline of tweets as they aligned with the tangible events occurring in the exhibit hall.
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Monique Ricard

DNA Databases: Problematic on Grounds of Constitutionality, Fallibility, and Discriminatory Practice

Introduction

The use of DNA forensics in criminal investigations is nothing new in the United States. The national DNA bank, the Combined DNA Index System or CODIS, was established by the FBI in 1994, which has the DNA profiles of over eleven million citizens (Murphy, 2010; Kimel, 2013). What is new is the use of these and other databases for the intentional search of familial or kinship matching, through partial DNA matches. This practice was popularized by the capture of the Golden State Killer, Joseph James DeAngelo, whose distant relative uploaded their DNA onto a commercial genealogy website, which the police used to trace back to DeAngelo. This case, however, was not the first use of this method, which actually stemmed from the solving of the New Hampshire Bear Brooks case, also known as the Chameleon Killer (Moon, 2018).

Intentional familial DNA searching is best exemplified through the Bear Brooks Murder case, since it was the first of its kind. In 1985, one of two blue barrels were found in Bear Brook State park in Allenstown, New Hampshire by a hunter (Moon, 2018). The content of these two barrels was the remains for four people; one being a middle-aged woman (23-33 years old) and three female children (ages 5-11, 2-4, and 1-3) with blunt-force head trauma. There was a 15-year gap between the discovery of the second barrel, but both were found to have been left in the forest at the same time. In 1985 it was estimated that the barrel (and eventually both barrels) had been in the forest for a few months to three years. Through maternal testing, it was found that the woman victim was mother to the oldest and youngest child. The middle child had no relation to the other victims.

In the Bear Brook Murder case, the killer was named as Terry Rasmussen, who was known by many aliases, specifically Bob Evans, when he resided in the New Hampshire area (Moon, 2018). He had committed several murders across the United States from the 1970’s to the 1990’s under his many names, making it particularly difficult to connect him to his many crimes. Authorities were able eventually to connect Rasmussen to the Bear Brook Murders when they were able to trace the middle unidentified victim to be his daughter. Intentional familiar DNA searching was used through the creation of a genetic profile for the middle child. Through GEDmatch, a commercial DNA database, an ancestral tree was able to be created, tracing back to
Rasmussen’s daughter. This search revealed Rasmussen’s true name, and that he died in prison in 2010 after killing his wife in 2003 under the name of Larry Vanner. The identification of his core identity allowed for the creation of a trail which later allowed for the discovery of the identities of three out of the four victims in the barrels. After the establishment of this method of forensic genealogy, law enforcement in California were able to apprehend DeAngelo in only a few months after the solving of the Bear Brooks case.

While this type of genealogical sleuthing is incredible and opens up ample opportunities for solving cold cases like the Golden State Killer and the Bear Brook Murders, one should look at this new method of discovery with skepticism. There is currently no legislation or policy on familial/kinship searches of federal DNA databases, which were not created with this purpose in mind (Murphy, 2010). The movement to accepting DNA as the new “gold standard” for criminal investigations is problematic, like in the case of Timothy Durham who was falsely convicted of raping an 11-year-old girl (Krimsky & Simoncelli, 2011). Although eleven witnesses placed him in an entirely separate state at the time of the incident, the case against Durham was built solely on DNA evidence alone. After four years of his original three-thousand-year sentence, it was discovered that the DNA sample from the crime scene was contaminated and resulted in only a partial match, resulting in the DNA database search connecting Durham, an innocent man, to the crime.

Forensic genealogy through the search of partial matches to DNA is still new territory for police forces, and although this new methodology has been widely adopted by authorities for its crime solving capabilities, many questions about ethics and legality have been left unanswered. More specifically, these questions raise issues of constitutionality, reliability, and discrimination that might be present in this practice of using both federally created DNA databases and commercial genealogical databases to assist in criminal investigation. The use of DNA databases by police authorities searching for partial matches and international familial searches is largely concerning, due the questionable constitutionality of the practice, the widely adopted discourse that DNA evidence is infallible, and the fact that these DNA banks and the collection/use of these profiles are often discriminatory.
In 1994, the United States Congress passed the DNA Identification Act, which established the FBI’s Combined DNA Index System (Epstein, 2004). The Combined DNA Index System, or CODIS, is the national database for all DNA profiles collected, including those collected in all 50 states individual databases starting in 1998 (Murphy, 2010). Originally, with the establishment of this act, the only DNA profiles that were to be includes were those of sexual offenders and those who commit violent felonies. This was then expanded to all felony holders, then those with misdemeanors, then to illegal immigrants. Currently, most states, with some variation, take DNA samples from all arrestees, including juveniles (Kimel, 2013). CODIS also includes the DNA of individuals that ‘volunteered’ their DNA to exclude themselves as suspects in criminal investigations. As of 2013, CODIS had DNA profiles of 11 million citizens of the United States in the FBI’s database alone.

One may ask, “What is in included in a DNA profile?” The vast majority of DNA, over 99.7%, is identical between two people (Murphy, 2010). On average, all people share 95% of the same DNA between each other, and the human race shares 85% of its DNA with mice (Epstein, 2004). Very little of DNA distinguishes individuals (or other animals) from others. Only about 10% of our DNA (estimated to be about 3 billion base pairs) is said to “determine (us) physically and probably our emotional make-up” (Epstein, 2004, p. 26). Since there is so much overlap in DNA, all of it is not sequenced into our genetic profiles. In fact, even the genes that determine our physical and emotional traits are not sequenced; what is sequenced in these profiles is referred to as “junk DNA,” a randomly selected section of the DNA strand. Most DNA testing, including the FBI, uses Single Tandem Repeat (STR) testing to create genetic profiles. This testing looks at 13 specific places in the DNA genome (called loci), codes it, and uses them as the profile (Murphy, 2010). While all of these loci are recorded in the profiles, all 13 are not used or needed to make DNA matches (Epstein, 2004). “Generally, 4-6 sites are deemed sufficient to declare a statistically significant match” (p. 26).

In addition to federally maintained DNA databases, recently there has been an influx in popularity of at-home DNA testing kits, also referred to as lifestyle test, which have been utilized by the police in criminal investigations (Phillips, 2019). These private DNA databases, like 23andMe and deCODEme offer the standard STR testing and more (Shetty, 2008). More complex testing, such as SNP analysis, BRCA1, BRCA 2, etc., can gather more personal information, like
health and genealogical data, that wouldn’t be available through STR analysis. Most of these private companies do not actively give third parties access to their data, but they can be searched with a warrant. In these cases, police authorities conduct “fishing expeditions,” or when authorities submit DNA to these companies on behalf of the culprit or suspect unknowingly for the purpose of identifying their family tree, often times under a false name (Snydercombe-Court, 2018, p. 203).

However, GEDmatch, is available for the use of third parties (Snydercombe-Court, 2018). GEDmatch is a public genealogy database created by two enthusiasts. The site itself does not do genetic testing. Rather, it creates a space where people individuals can upload their genetic information from sites like AncestryDNA and 23andMe in order to compare results. The purpose of GEDmatch originally was to create a space for adopted individuals to look for their biological parents and for ancestral tree mapping. This database was what was used in the Golden State Killer and Bear Brook Murder case to find the families of the killers.

Concern for police using genealogical databases and intentional familial searches to aid in criminal investigations did not arise until 2017, with the highly publicized conclusion to the Golden State Killer (GSK) case. While it was known that federal DNA databases existed and were used by police, these were often taken for granted due to how removed they were deemed to be from the general population (Phillips, 2018). The only individuals who were profiled were thought to be hardened criminals. The release of the methods used by the LAPD in the Golden State Killer search produced the harsh reality that these databases are not only limited to criminals, but everyday citizens too. With this ethical concern for the general population’s DNA, taken-for-granted assumptions about federally maintained databases were re-examined as well. Since the media frenzy surrounding such investigations, there has been ample scholarly research into the ethics of such a methodology—especially asking whether it is constitutional, whether DNA should be held at the “gold standard” it is held to, and whether using DNA databasing for intentional family searches is discriminatory.

Concerns for DNA Databases

Constitutionality: In light of the recent surge of DNA genealogical searches in police investigations, concerns surrounding the practice have risen. With its recent public exposure as a commonly-used practice of discovery, this technique has been thrown into the public sphere,
where issues about it being an unconstitutional technique arise. More specifically, these concerns are about possible infringement on the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution. Most of the controversy surrounding DNA databases and the police stems from the Fourth Amendment of the constitution. This amendment protects “the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.” (Fernandez, 2005, p. 21). The Fourth Amendment requires police to have probable cause before a personal search for further evidence or seizure and may not rely on suspicion alone, but on probable cause. On the topic of searches of DNA databases, there are three main concerns.

The first, questioning the constitutionality of compelling arrested individuals to the potentially invasive process of biological DNA harvesting. This argument is perhaps the most common of its kind and there is ample research on this topic. Legislation has proved that this practice is in fact constitutional, due to the decision that mouth swabbing for DNA is a noninvasive method of harvesting. For this reason, there is no need to entertain this idea further (Joh, 2006).

The second concern is the legality of harvesting “abandoned DNA” samples by police. “Abandoned DNA’ is any amount of human tissue capable of DNA analysis and separated from a targeted individual’s person inadvertently or involuntarily but not by police coercion” (Joh, 2006, p. 859). Essentially, everywhere we go we leave traces of our genetic identity, when we shake hands, spit on sidewalks, toss half-eaten pizza. These actions can be traced by police and used to collect the DNA that we have left behind. Should this be allowed? Is there a reasonable expectation of genetic privacy for the DNA we have no control over abandoning? Is its collection constitutional? Many say it is or should not be.

Traditionally, the requirements of collecting an item by police forces is that it must be “legally abandoned and may only be connected if the suspect has demonstrated probable cause for a personal search” (Fernandez, 2005, p. 21). Cases built upon abandoned items are often called “garbage cases,” since these items are usually the trash of suspects. Abandoned items are created when its previous owner has forfeited any reasonable expectation of privacy that he may have previously had. These items become abandoned when suspects knowingly expose items to public view, thus they fall outside the lines of the Fourth Amendment. There are no rules of criminal
procedure to pose upon police when collecting DNA evidence however and the Fourth Amendment is ill suited for DNA (Joh, 2006). In fact, authorities prefer the acquisition of abandoned DNA to traditional methods due to the lack of bureaucratic hoops to jump through (the requirement of a warrant and reason). But can one really compare the parting with DNA like parting with trash? One could argue for DNA exceptionalism, since individuals do not part with their DNA knowingly or intentionally. The key to DNA exceptionalism is the fact that abandoned items are knowingly exposed to public view. When we shake another’s hand or blow our noses, we do not think to the fact that we are spreading DNA. This is a fact of life and unavoidable. This issue is greatly important, for it allows police forces to acquire and upload DNA profiles onto their databases, further impeding on the privacy of innocent citizens without requiring more than a hunch.

The last concern regarding the Fourth Amendment is whether the process of searching these DNA databases acts as an unreasonable search against individuals. CODIS, the FBI national DNA database, is “searched an average of 100,000 times a day” (Kimel, 2013, p. 934). The function of the Fourth Amendment is to protect the personal privacy and dignity against unwanted intrusion by the state. In order to search the personal effects of an individual, evidence-based suspicion is required as well as a court ordered warrant to make the search constitutional. The purpose of this is to protect citizens from “oppressive methods of acquiring information” (p. 946). One could argue that every search of the DNA database is an invasion of thousands of people’s privacy.

The rationale for this argument is that DNA can reveal extremely personal information about an individual and is best explained by comparing it to a confiscated copy of a hard drive from a computer (Kimel, 2013). Judicial courts protect the information secured inside of computers, even after they have been seized by police forces with a warrant. In order to search its contents, police must obtain an additional warrant specific to the crime they are intending to find evidence of. If additional evidence of a crime is happened upon, then additional warrants may need to be secured. Clearly the privacy of computers is greatly protected by the United States judicial system and law. “DNA and computer evidence share at least three essential characteristics; both have a near-dispositive effect on criminal investigations and prosecutions, both have an enormous storage capacity relative to their physical size, and both are repositories of intensely personal information” (Kimel, 2013, p. 959). Laws that protect computers from searches...
are created to protect the privacy interest of the extremely personal information, like bills, finances and medical information. This could be compared to the encrypted information within DNA, which can reveal information about an individual’s health, emotional disposition, and biological relationships. One could argue that the protections afforded to searches of computers should be extended to DNA databases, both federally maintained and public.

Public DNA databases, like GEDmatch, should be protected since there is no probable cause for searching them. The individuals that make up the database are innocent civilians, and searching such databases reveal personal information about genealogical ties. Federal databases, like CODIS, should be protected as well, for “convicts do not lose reasonable privacy expectations simply by virtue of being convicts (Kimel, 2013, p. 952). Griffin v. Wisconsin best illustrates this point. In this case, an individual on probation was victim to a warrantless search of his home, which was found constitutional. However, the reason the search was legal was because surveillance is necessary under the terms of probation, explicitly, not due to the fact of the individual being convicted for a crime. Following this logic, ex-convicts in federal DNA databases should not be subjected to the same illegal searches as other citizens.

When it comes to constitutionality and DNA databases, there have been no judicial decisions on the methodology itself. Due to possible infringements upon the Fourth Amendment on the basis of the fate of “abandoned DNA” and privacy concerns of unwarranted searches of individual’s genetic information, DNA databases are a problematic practice which should be maintained with caution.

Fallibility: In criminal investigations, DNA evidence is now seen as the “gold standard” for scientific forensic discovery (Obasogie & Duster, 2018). DNA, although considered a pseudo-science in the 1990s, is now seen by the police as the most credible of evidence, due to the uniqueness of each individual’s DNA. The statistical chances of two individuals having a complete DNA match are almost impossible at one in 5 million (Murphy, 2010; Obasogie & Duster, 2018). While DNA may seem infallible, the collection and analysis of DNA evidence is not as foolproof as it is often thought to be. DNA evidence quality can vary due to the lack of standardization, the possibility of false positives, and the subjective nature of DNA analysis.

Although it may seem that DNA evidence has been used in solving crimes for a while, complete trust in DNA evidence had only occurred over the last two decades, making it a
relatively new form of evidence compared to fingerprinting which has been used in the U.S. since the early beginnings of the 20th century (Obasogie & Duster, 2018). This new field has staggeringly few established protocols and a wide lack of standardization compared to other forms of forensic evidence. In fact, “increasing evidence suggests that the way scientists have calculated the probability for random matching may be inaccurate” (p. 430). This is due to the numerous variations surrounding DNA evidence and analysis. DNA evidence collected from crime scenes often doesn’t contain a full profile when analyzed and, like any other chemical compound, breaks down over time. There is considerable “case-to-case variation” in the nature and quality of DNA evidence (Krimsky & Simoncelli, 2011, p. 41). There is also incredible variation between state owned and privately-operated DNA databases in effectiveness and results (Rosen 2003; Shetty, 2008). Quality of databases vary state to state, and when completing at home DNA testing like 23andMe or Ancestry DNA, one is likely to get at least slightly different results from each company. The lack of standardization leaves more room for statistical error, which is unlikely to be considered in the probability calculation between matches.

The lack of standardization is problematic especially when it comes to communicating evidence during court proceedings (Krimsky & Simoncelli, 2011). There is no solid standard of what constitutes a probability of a match that is “beyond a reasonable doubt” or what information about the DNA should or shouldn’t be included in the evidence presentation: for example, if it was a partial match and how many loci were identical or out of how many DNA profiles were compared against (Epstein, 2004). “DNA would be foolproof if the entire unique gnome was compared with the DNA sample taken from the crime scene, but such comparisons are not yet within our technical means” (p. 26). Instead, profiles contain a maximum 13 points of comparison (loci), and usually only four to six site matches are “sufficient to declare a statistically significant match” (p. 26). Also, DNA testing is extremely complex and with a lack of standardization of testing and presentation of this type of evidence to court, there is ample room for miscommunication of evidence and varying results, or the creation of false positives.

False positives are contaminated wrongfully matched DNA profiles, which often lead to incorrect conclusions and accusations (Obasogie & Duster, 2018). False positives are easily created, but difficult to catch due. Often times, false positives manifest through error while processing, which could be attributed to lack of standardization or a departures from established protocols, like machine malfunctions or human error (Epstein, 2004). Humans unknowingly
deposit DNA remains constantly as we walk through life, making the contamination of inadvertent trace DNA a real concern in DNA testing (Krimsky & Simoncelli, 2011). Incorrect sterilization of lab equipment or deviating from protective lab clothing can cross-contaminate analysis with DNA from other samples or the lab technicians themselves. In fact, one such lab, the Washington State Patrol Laboratory made “mistakes while handling evidence in at least 23 major criminal cases over a span of three years” (p. 280) Incorrect matching can also be created outside of the lab, often times by police officers, through common mix-ups in the collection and labeling of samples. Lazaro Soto Lusson was sentenced to life in prison over the switching of two sample labels, falsely convicted over “two sexual assaults and a rape” (p. 279). He served over a year of this sentence and was only exonerated after requesting the biological material be retested. DNA is often only retested when scrutinized, which is uncommon due to its perceived fallibility.

“False positives do occur in (or the analysis of) DNA profiles, not in individual genomes” (Krimsky & Simoncelli, 2011, p. 227). Part of the infallible veil over DNA evidence is the perceived sense of objectivity. The analysis of DNA is a science, which is often taken to be free of human interpretation. Since most of the matching is done through computer databases, this sense of objectivity is achieved; however, that simply isn’t so. The creation of each DNA profile requires subjective interpretation of lab results by a technician. The latest methodology of DNA testing produces electropherograms, or a card with bars that represent specific sites of a genome. While these bars have gotten clearer since the creation of DNA analysis, what is included in the official DNA profile which will be matched again DNA databases is entirely up to human “interpretation of the data” (p. 282). Lab technicians have immense power in how the results of DNA are reported, such as whether they include that the DNA was partially broken down or if the results were ambiguous. This is especially true when it comes to mixed DNA samples, a common occurrence in criminal investigations. Technicians are tasked with reporting which DNA sites belong to which profile and with no standards of how to report these findings, there are several different ways of interpretation. The ability to include or omit information by the lab results in bias.

DNA evidence is not as credible as it is often thought to be. The harm in the false infallibility of this evidence is that it now seems to be the starting point of many criminal investigations. In the case of the Golden State Killer, ten “viable” suspects were discovered via databases, “including one involving a genetic profile that linked the slaying of at least ten women
in the LA area of one likely perpetrator” (Murphy, 2010, p. 294). This perpetrator was a close DNA match, until a second investigation which lead to the capture of the actual killer. It’s concerning to think that if there wasn’t a closer DNA match provided by the killer’s son, that this first perpetrator might have been pursued further and perhaps prosecuted falsely. The practice of police searching DNA databases for matches is problematic, since DNA matches are often as good as a conviction in the eyes of the law. The truth is that there is not exceptionalism for DNA, and it is just as fallible as other forms of evidence.

**Discrimination/Privacy Invasion:** As alluded to earlier, “the overriding function of the Fourth Amendment is to protect personal privacy and dignity against unwarranted intrusion by the State” (Kimel, 2013, p. 941). The practice of familial searches of DNA databases runs on a lot of assumptions; the assumption that it is legal and the assumption that DNA evidence can be trusted. One of the most harmful assumptions created by the use of DNA databases is that it is not ethically problematic to infringe on the privacy of select groups through these searches. In a country that promotes the belief that one is “presumed innocent until proven guilty,” this is a highly problematic practice. DNA database searching is a discriminatory practice, for it targets against two groups specifically; those in relation to individuals who commit (a) crime(s) and minorities, specifically African Americans.

In intentional familial searches of databases investigators, rather than look for an exact DNA match, purposely search for partial matches and individuals who share similar profiles, which they hope will lead to the offender of the crime. In this method of investigation, rather than trying to find the actual person who committed the crime, they try to find family members. “Once a DNA-database subject has paid her debt to society for a crime for which she had been convicted, the justice system positively is forbidden to assume that she is more likely than the ordinary citizen to violate the law” (Kimel, 2013, p. 953). It is already ethically questionable that the DNA of past offenders fill governmental databases, but this is somewhat understandable under the thought that “convicted offenders, by virtue of their crimes, have forfeited the privacy to which law abiding citizens are entitled” (Murphy, 2010, p. 305). Why, however, are their family members subjected to this same genetic surveillance? Why are innocent members of society subjected to unlimited search of their DNA, solely due to the fact of their uncontrollable biological relatedness?
Familial searches “unjustly distinguish between innocent persons related to convicted offenders and innocent persons unrelated to convicted offenders” (Murphy, 2010, p. 305). These searches operate on the assumption that if an individual commits a crime, then their family are most likely criminals too. While this idea is empirically baseless, it is also ethically irresponsible. It is unfair that this group of innocents is singled out in databases like CODIS, subjecting them to scrutiny any other law-abiding citizen wouldn’t be. This “guilt by association” placed on families of convicted offenders can create some uncomfortable and unnecessary pressure on the unit. Families, though more often “socially bonded than biologically,” are intimate by nature (p. 316). One of the three universal sources of privacy is privacy of the family (Westin, 1967). Uncovering the biological ties with families can uncover large amounts of personal information and can create deep conflict within the social structure. Information about abandoned parental bonds, adoptive relations, and family parental secrets can all be revealed through familial searches. These revelations can disrupt family ties and be uncovered for no reason except a possible partial match to the offender. Investigations that do not lead to the capture of the offender can often strain family relationships, and oftentimes the clearing of suspicion is not made clear to the prior-suspect or their family, continually causing damage. Those who donate their DNA to databases, willingly or compulsory, forfeit their privacy rights, and it is unfair that though familial searches, they forfeit the privacy rights of their entire families as well.

Besides discrimination against families of convicted offenders, there is also racial discrimination present in DNA databases. “Although blacks represent only 13% of the population, they make up an estimated 40% of federal DNA database profiles” (Obasogie & Duster, 2018, p. 432). Racial discrimination is very present in police practice, where “black Americans are five times more likely to be incarcerated than white Americans” (Murphy, 2010, p. 322).

The use of DNA databases will and actively does exacerbate the racial inequalities represented through police enforcement. DNA searches will be of these subgroups, unfairly overburdening innocent minority families to police scrutiny. Black Americans are more likely to be wrongly convicted of a false positive, in light of the fact that black men are seven times more likely than white to be falsely convicted of murder. This overrepresentation will unfairly draw more police attention and suspicion to black Americans and other minorities. DNA databasing practices also institutionalize racism, in a way that is harmful and potentially dangerous. Currently, CODIS organizes its DNA profiles among racial and ethnic categories (Murphy, 2010).
With race being a social construction and no definite connections between race and biology (only a link to ancestry), the categorization of profiles in this way is misleading and can falsely be interpreted as linking race and genes. These categories also ignore possibility of mixed raced individuals and divide profiles into only five labels. Separating by race has the ability to create a bias with the generation of a DNA match, which is starkly different from the objective science DNA is supposed to be.

Conclusion

The use of public and private DNA databases by police in order to aid in investigations is highly problematic. The use of DNA databases by police authorities searching for partial matches and international familial searches is largely concerning, due the questionable constitutionality of the practice, the widely adopted discourse that DNA evidence is infallible, and the fact that these DNA banks and the collection/use of these profiles are often discriminatory.

Issues of DNA on grounds of unconstitutionality stem from possible conflicts with the Fourth Amendment, which secures the individual’s right to privacy and from search and seizure without probable cause and a court secured warrant. The fate of abandoned DNA, the DNA we leave behind unknowingly as we move through our lives, is extremely important. If abandoned DNA is harvested from suspects without probable cause, this can easily be interpreted as seizure without a warrant (Joh, 2006). If this current allowance is left unchecked and corrected, then the entire population can be under genetic surveillance. What is to stop agents of insurance firms or other corporations from acquiring an individual’s left behind DNA, looking into the extremely sensitive and revealing information of their customer’s genetics? The other constitutional issue is the unwarranted searches of these databases. Rather than probable cause leading into a search of an individual and their personal affects, searches of DNA databases violates the privacy of thousands of innocents to find one or a few for probable cause (Kimel, 2013). This is the opposite of what the Fourth Amendment requires, for one’s genetic code is more intimate and telling than their personal belongings. Without judicial action and discussion of these issues of constitutionality, the U.S. government is leaving its civilians vulnerable and not fully providing them with their federally protected rights.

The overreliance of DNA testing in modern police investigations is largely concerning. While it is just one out of many methodologies of discovery in criminal investigation, DNA
testing has become the “gold standard” of evidence, due to its assumed infallibility. This assumption however is a false, dangerous claim. With the young age of the field, DNA forensics is still largely unstandardized (Obasogie & Duster, 2018). Calculations and effectiveness of DNA data profiles vary from lab and state. There is also no standard on how this complex evidence is to be presented in court (Krimsky & Simoncelli, 2011). What is a good probability? How many loci count as partial matches? There is no standard way of presenting such evidence, resulting in the possible omittance of key information on the match. There is also ample room for human error, which is difficult to catch due to the sensitive nature of the DNA profiling process. Criminal cases have been won solely on DNA evidence, and there have been some circumstances where those convictions are proven to be wrong, due to mix-ups or false positives. The law enforcement’s embrace of DNA technology and databases as the start and end to investigations is extremely dangerous, for it is just as subjective and open for misinterpretation as any other method of discovery.

The last concern for police utilization of DNA databases is that they act as an extension of institutional racism within the judicial system. These databases have an overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of minority profiles represented (Obasogie & Duster, 2018). Racial biases, which lead to more arrests of minority group individuals, could account for the large representation of these groups. It is dangerously trying to add science to the social phenomenon of race. Surveillance and institutional racism are only exasperated by searching these individuals first for every crime. Even those who were not convicted or charged have their genetic profiles uploaded, thus searching them for probable cause with every use of DNA database. As a result, families of these minorities and arrestees are under more genetic scrutiny, opening themselves up to more invasive surveillance than those not in relation to potential offenders (Murphy, 2010). Through familial searches, genetic informancy is thrust upon these families, with the possibility of greatly injuring important family bonds and making family members turn on family members.

These three points are not to argue that DNA testing and searches of databases are not useful. The innovations in DNA technology are inspiring and can be used to tell individuals much about their ancestry and can indicate genetic risks. The danger in DNA databases is when authorities put too much faith in them. The normalization of DNA databases has drastically changed criminal investigations and how we handle cold cases. Investigators no longer put any faith into circumstantial evidence and almost entirely rely on scientific forensic evidence. Too
much is riding on DNA evidence and databases for it to be the sole decider on a guilty or non-guilty verdict. Rather, DNA databases should be used for more generative means, like connecting unidentified victims (Jane/John Does) with their families or reversing false guilty convictions. While DNA databases offer a lot of opportunity, they should be accessed in a more limited and control manner.
Bibliography


Introduction

During the 1950s and 1960s women were not viewed with any substance, and the advertisements targeted towards them reinforced this notion. Women were only meant to be beautiful and pristine; their outsides matter, not their insides, which is a concept highly prevalent in the advertisement depicted above. Located in the March 1965 issue of Harper’s Bazaar, is an ad for Revlon lipstick. Three shades of lipstick, accompanied by a matching nail polish, are advertised as, “The Worldly Young Innocents.” Not only does this embody the expectations placed on women in the 1960s, but also, fittingly, is the name of the collection. Here, the social and political implications of this ad will be explored, as it is significant not only to the technology of the time but also to the gender climate that was present in the 1960s. However, to truly understand the ideas of the beauty industry as illustrated through advertisements, and the way in which marketers in the industry choose to advertise, it is important to understand the history of the
beauty industry. Additionally, it is also important to understand the way in which women were treated and valued by society and to understand that during this time, they were beginning to revolt.

Background

In 1963, Betty Freidan’s groundbreaking and highly controversial book, *The Feminine Mystique*, was released. In this book, Freidan addressed “the problem which has no name,” which was the general unhappiness of women in the 1950s and 1960s. She blamed, in large part, women’s magazines for perpetuating the ideals that were at the root of this all-encompassing issue. As Freidan states, the “…image of woman that emerges . . . is young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies, and home” (Freidan, 1964). Freidan explains that women were only meant to exist within the home. The domestic sphere was their entire world, and images that encouraged this notion were present within the magazines and advertisements of the time. Additionally, they were portrayed inaccurately under the themes of childlike imagery and symbolism. Women are portrayed as innocent and youthful, suggesting that a women must look young.

However, these magazines and advertisements do not stray away from the more taboo issues, like sex. As Freidan explains, “the only goal a woman is permitted is the pursuit of a man. It is crammed full of food, clothing, cosmetics, furniture, and the physical bodies of young women, but where is the world of thought and ideas, the life of the mind and spirit?” (Freidan, 1964). Friedan is anticipating what will become the sexual revolution that women experienced in late 1960s, when women will be able to regain control of their bodies, and subsequently their lives because of the new birth control pill. Before this revolution, women were not permitted to have lives filled with mind and spirit, as it did not fit into their days filled with household duties. Their only pleasure was to come from their families, and most importantly, their husband’s happiness. Hence, they had to be concerned with not only the appearance of the house but that of themselves. Women aren’t dressed proper for their own personal satisfaction, but presumably for their husbands. Until they are able to get a grasp on their independence, which is what Friedan is calling for, their lives will remain subject to men and their position in the house. Ultimately, it is evident that technology served as the means by which women could gain independence.
The technology that is being discussed is not the typical technology that comes to mind when thinking of present-day context. Technology is all-encompassing, and is defined by Langdon Winner as “all modern political artifice…smaller or larger pieces of systems of hardware of a specific kind” (1980, p.123). What Winner means by “political artifice” is anything, from rocks to mascara, that has some sort of power associated with it. In the case of makeup, it would be the power that society confers to it: the notion that women are not beautiful unless they are wearing a full face of makeup. Makeup is important because and how we say it is so. This idea illustrates what is commonly referred to as the social determination of technology, which as defined by Winner, who describes this notion as “what matters is not technology itself, but the social or economic system in which it is embedded” (1980, p. 122). The technology system that is being referred to here is makeup. Essentially, women wear makeup because they feel socially obligated to. (Society has yet to tell men that they do not look good without makeup.) This is especially true with men in modern-day Western culture. This notion would cause one to think that the cosmetics industry is an industry that women should have control over, considering that they are the target of these products. Rather, under these social implications, makeup is a tool, and at times a weapon, used against women to show them everything they are not and, at the same time, everything that they can be.

This advertisement is an example of power, and specifically the power that men exude over women. It is notable among many advertisements through its appearance and design that it was thought of and created by men. We know this from a historical context which tells us that ad agencies, especially in the 50s and 60s, were male-dominated. Consequently, men are in charge of setting the standard for women. As Winner explains, this is in many ways to be expected, and not just in the beauty industry, but throughout all facets of society. She exclaims, the “issue is the claim that the machines, structures and systems of modern material culture can be accurately judged not only for their positive and negative environmental side effects but also for the ways in which they can embody specific forms of power and authority” (Winner, 1980, p. 121). Advertisements often times had negative effects on the community of consumers that it was targeting. They embody this male-dominated power and authority over women and their looks. Accordingly, it is damaging to the progression of equality for women, which directly corresponds to Friedan’s critiques on society and pushes against the equality and progress that she is fighting
for. The power is not in the makeup but, how the viewer is told to use the makeup. That is where the power lies.

This sets a standard of beauty that women must uphold. Their hair and makeup must be perfect at all times, even if their life is a mess their face must not be. These standards were set by people that are removed from the industry and are not new, as standards of the beauty industry have been around longer than many parts of the modern world. Makeup and, therefore trends in makeup, can be traced back to Ancient Egypt; exemplifying this is the winged eyeliner trend, rooted in this world of antiquity. But still, it is evident that there is a standard of beauty that people had to adhere to. Additionally, it should be noted that the idea of beauty is far from a universal idea, “the premise that most people strive to attain a certain ideal of beauty currently prevalent in their culture,” exists fully (Englis et al, 1994). This concept of a beauty ideal has evolved into “an overall “look” incorporating both physical features, (“pouty” lips vs. thin lips, large breasts vs. small), and a variety of products, services, and activities” (Englis et al, 1994). Women wear and use what people, specifically marketing and advertisement companies and magazines tell them to. This does not exclude the trends present in cosmetics and the beauty industry. Marketers pick women of high social status to be the faces of these products because they believe that that is what women should aspire to be. The selected women are known as the gatekeepers, they would be referred to as tastemakers and trendsetters, but in more popular terminology: influencers. Not only do they “influence the selection of beauty types thought to appeal to a mass audience,” but they exert their beliefs “about various types of good looks” (Englis et al, 1994). In turn, this also tells what a “bad look” would be, and this ad, like many others, sets the standard for women and tells them how they should act. It does not reinforce the views and wants of the customer, but instead, of the few who make the decisions that create standards for women to live their life by.

Revlon is no exception to this. However, they have proven that they are not just a line of nail polishes and lipsticks, but an iconic staple in classic American beauty. Revlon was founded during the Great Depression when it’s founder identified a hole in the market. As Gonsalves writes, during the time, “the only shades of nail enamel available were pale and transparent” (2012). The color they chose to introduce first, a vibrant red named “Cherries in the Snow.” Business boomed, and soon they were selling to stores and salons. During the war effort, Revlon
switched to making first aid kits, but as soon as it was over they went right back to making
“manicure implements” (Gonsalves 2012). But then, they stumbled upon a marketing gold mine,
“Matching Lips and Tips,” based around the idea that women’s lipstick should match their nail
polish, and Revlon pulled out all of the stops to market it effectively. They hired the best high
fashion photographers and put out glamorous full-color ads in magazines that catered to their
target audience. Additionally, Revlon brought in the most gorgeous models and celebrities to be
the faces of their products, proving that they were an unstoppable force in the cosmetics field. By
choosing these trendsetters who were already popular in their respective fields, they already had a
built-in fan base, who accordingly wanted to wear Revlon products. This trend of Revlon success
has continued on well into modern times, as Revlon remains a thriving company. However,
Revlon failed to market to all women; a recurring theme not just in Revlon’s history, but in the
history of the beauty industry.

Revlon has never been at the forefront of diversity and inclusion, beginning in the mid-
1960s, contemporary to this ad, when there was a lack of inclusion toward women of color. By
refusing to cater to their needs, and create products not geared towards women who were not
white, the market had seemingly decided that they did not exist. There were no shades of makeup
created for women of color until years after this advertisement. This is not just a blind spot at
Revlon, but one that occurs in most cosmetic companies. “Makeup brands have had this
relationship with women of color that is very trend based” (Shapiro 2018). These women are
treated as if they only had different colored skin for a short period of time. Even in modern times,
cosmetic companies would only release lines of diverse products if they were trying to fit the new
face of their line, like Tyra Banks. (Shapiro 2018). The collection would mysteriously disappear
after their partnership was over. Accordingly, the number of shades for women of color versus the
amount for white women was outrageous. Women of color would get one shade that was
supposed to fit all of their skin types, while white women would get ten or even more for each
shade of paleness. This does not fall on women, but the beauty industry for failing to recognize
the hole they are creating in the market. The 1960s changed a lot of things, but they,
unfortunately, did not change this.

The 1960s was a decade of turmoil filled with constant social change. Part of that social
change included the implementation of the birth control pill, which did wonders for women in
terms of the reproductive freedom, which meant that they were able to have lives outside of the homes and live for themselves. They were on the cusp of a feminist revolution, one that will progress and continue on for decades, even into modern times. The pill, however, was just the start. “Activists demanded not only the vote but also equality in marriage, access to divorce and the right to engage in or refuse sex and reproduction. The birth control movement emerged as part of this wide-ranging feminist agenda” (May 2010). Women were ready for something more and they were ready for their advertisements and products reflected that.

Analysis

The Revlon “Worldly Innocents” advertisement itself is only a page, but there is quite a lot going on. Most prominently, is the presence of the teddy bear. The woman in this ad holds the bear as an accessory, like a handbag. She is completely unbothered and uninterested by its presence as she clutches it with her bright red nails. The teddy bear is being used to represent innocence, to emulate the name of the product- “The Worldly Innocents.” To the average eye, though, the bear can come across as disturbing. Especially in the way that it is looking and waving at the reader. In accordance, it serves as a visual aid to represent the keywords present in the advertisement: young and cuddly. It is a toy that a child would play with, a theme which is present throughout the advertisement. The bear signals to readers, and spectators of the ad that like the bear, women are childlike, and things to be played with.

This imagery also perpetuates the concept that youth is equal to beauty, while aging equates to being ugly, unattractive, and unwanted. This sends the message that women have two stages of life, childlike, where they are frail and innocent, and matronly, where they are tasked with taking care of people and things – a stage in which their voice or opinion does not matter.
However, the woman in the advertisement appears to be a stark contrast of everything the bear represents. Every aspect of her is like that of a mature adult woman; her face is strong and sultry. You can tell by the look in her eyes that she is but the opposite of fragile. Dressed in a lace gown, and designed for the time period, to be sexy, as it is showing just the right amount of skin. Huge diamond earrings are evident, suggesting she is well-off, well taken care of. Because of what we can see from her appearance, we can assume that she comes from a high stature, and therefore is what women should aspire to be, and what they can be if they wear the collection. Her hair is thrown into an updo, and her eyes are heavily lined with eyeliner, mascara, and eyeshadow. She is the definition of fully made up, which shows her sophistication, her readiness for the day.

From what we can see, she is not wearing a wedding ring, and it can be inferred that her job, especially in this ad, is not only to appeal to women but to men also.

In this picture, the names of the shades of lipstick and nail polish are missing. However, in the original print ad that was found, they were present. From left to right, they are named: “Little Red Red,” “Sugar Beige,” and “Pussycat Pink.” All of which, have a greater meaning and embody stereotypical feminine themes. “Little Red Red,” serves a symbolism of “Little Red Riding Hood,” a children’s fable. Again, serving to remind the viewer that women are childlike. “Sugar Beige,” allows the viewer of the advertisement to associate the product with something sweet, making them more likely to have a favorable opinion of the lipstick. Finally, we reach “Pussycat Pink,” a clever alliteration and name for the pink lipstick. It
provides the audience with a fun and playful name, that while now would perhaps evoke a gasp from a reader was just scandalous and controversial enough to remain sexy and risqué.

One of the most provocative facets of this advertisement, however, is that the woman in this advertisement and any woman who chooses to use this product has “the mouth with a message.” But, what is the message? Everything seen so far would lead one to believe that she has no message. She is there for her husband, or the satisfaction of a man, not to arise to her own thoughts and conclusions. Perhaps this advertisement leads women on with the promise that with this lipstick, what they have to say will become important. But this tease is a false notion, a ploy for women to buy the product, not a call that what women have to say is important.

The excess blank spaces and basic imagery of the ad implies that the marketers want the viewer to pay attention to the key pieces of the ad; the words, and the picture of the woman. In a few words they are able to completely embody the standards and the expectations set for women in this time period; to be “heartlessly cool,” but also “prim and proper,” while still maintaining her “young and fragile,” demeanor. Women have to be everything, but yet to be nothing, all at the same time.

Conclusion

Makeup is a small part of the social construct that is the beauty industry. This has been created and perpetuated by men so that women can be the source of their affection. It completes the notion that a woman’s only purpose is to be beautiful, sexy, and serve her husband. It’s nothing but a power trip. This is very reminiscent of the film Stepford Wives, which follows a town in Connecticut, where in order to create the perfect woman, husbands kill their wives and turn them into robots. They build perfect replicas of their wives, able to move and talk just like any woman would normally be able to. Interestingly, this movie and this ad are both telling woman the same message, which is the standard of beauty and the standard of life that they should strive to attain. The only thing they are missing is their brains and the ability to think for themselves. What they can do, however, is submit to their husbands. Essentially, women are only existent to be their husband’s playthings, their only goal is his pleasure. This is the image that Revlon is trying to set forth through their advertisements. They do not want to empower women with “matching lips and tips,” but create perfect polished women, who are ready to please, and over time they have objectified women into these roles.
However, when this product hit the market, women were gaining their freedom and becoming more independent. Birth control was available on the market for women to take. Women were no longer interested in the life that they had been cast into. Instead, women were ready for new beginnings, and products that reflected that. Unfortunately, the beauty industry was not as progressive, and did not want the same change that their consumers wanted. Rather, they wanted to keep their consumers buying the same products. The Revlon ad for “The Worldly Innocents,” not only reinforces a beauty standard for women but, additionally, serves as a roadblock in the progression of the feminism movement brought on by the writing of Betty Friedan, which, are seen through its social and political implications. The product itself is an oxymoron, as “worldly” and “innocent” completely juxtapose themselves from one another. However, the lipstick can essentially be named anything, as the power does not lie within the product, but how we dictate the members of society use that product.
References


The Power of Context in a Court of Law

The outdated perception that law is unambiguous poses serious questions when it comes to the intersection of social science and judicial decision making. Law is not static. As circumstances and conditions in society change, court cases and verdicts are transformed to mirror the issues and beliefs of its cultural environment. It's essential to understand the role context plays in conventional American litigation as well as human behavior. The idea of "context" can be used to evaluate numerous facets of judicial and individual reasoning.

Moreover, the capacity to which these assessments are made can be influenced by courtroom players and communicative practices in order to manipulate perception, recognition, and decision in a case. In this paper, I look to explore the power of context in relation to both influence and result pertaining to the events and subsequent trial of Bernhard Goetz. While doing so I will: 1) present context about both the details of the Bernhard Goetz case and the climate of New York City at the time; 2) acknowledge how important issues in American society become prevalent in courtroom drama; 3) raise comparisons between the prosecution and defense strategies used in trial 4) signify the errors of the state’s prosecution of Bernhard Goetz; 5) highlight the implications of this trial and its controversial conclusion; and 6) Illustrate the importance of context and communicative practices in judicial reasoning.

Background

On December, 22nd 1984, Bernhard Goetz, a thirty-seven-year-old white man, was riding in a New York City subway car that was also carrying four African-American teens, Barry Allen, Troy Canty, James Ramseur, and Darrell Cabey. At some point during the ride, Canty approached Goetz and said: "give me five dollars." In response, Goetz stood up, pulled out the illegal handgun he was carrying, and quickly fired at all four teens (Serena, 2018). The first shot hit Troy Canty directly in the chest. The second shot hit Barry Allen in the back. The third shot traveled through the arm of James Ramseur and became lodged in his left side. However, the fourth bullet missed Darrell Cabey completely. Goetz then moved towards Cabey and said, "You don't look so bad, here's another." He fired a fifth and final shot at point blank range, severing Cabey's spinal cord and paralyzing him for life (Linder, 2011).
After the train came to a stop, Goetz jumped to the tracks below and disappeared into the subway tunnel. For several days he moved around New England, staying in cheap motels and paying cash for necessities. In New York, however, he had been identified as a suspect, and a search was underway. Eventually, he turned himself in, at a police station in Concord, New Hampshire, stating, "I am the person they are seeking in New York" (Serena, 2018). Upon his arrest, Bernhard Goetz gave a two-hour videotaped interview with police. He expressed wanting to shoot them again, and an insatiable need for revenge on those who had wronged him. When asked what his intentions were when he drew his gun, Goetz replied, "My intention was to murder them, to hurt them, to make them suffer as much as possible" (Serena, 2018). Later in the tape, Goetz said, "If I had more bullets, I would have shot them all again and again. My problem was I ran out of bullets." He added, "I was gonna, I was gonna gouge one of the guys' [Canty's] eyes out with my keys afterward" (Serena, 2018). With the taped confessions, Goetz was charged with attempted murder, assault, reckless endangerment, and several firearms offenses. However, after a long and tortuous trial, a jury found Goetz not guilty on all charges except for one count of carrying an unlicensed firearm, for which he served eight months of a one-year sentence (Linder, 2011). This result seems almost inconceivable given the nature of the crime and Goetz’ clear and conscious confession. However, to truly understand the verdict and sentencing we must take a look back at the context of the trial and keep in mind the theories introduced by Rieke and Stutman in their book Communication in Legal Advocacy.

The Case in Context

"The Subway Vigilante," as the media labeled Goetz, was front-page news for months, partly due to the frustrated feelings the incident enacted for New York natives. The Goetz case came at a time when crime was at an all-time high in New York City, and its increasingly dangerous subway system left average day citizens frightened and afraid. According to David C. Anderson, of the New York Times, "Goetz had come to symbolize urban America's frustration with the failures of the criminal justice system" (Anderson, 1988) and, therefore, his crime had sparked a media frenzy in which Goetz was both vilified and idolized in the press and public opinion.

Public opinion tilted, however, in favor of vigilante justice. Supporters viewed Goetz as a hero for standing up and defending himself in an environment where the police were increasingly seen as ineffective in combating crime. (Latsin, 2014) A national debate about race, corruption,
and civilian roles became a common conversation on New York news channels and city streets and subways. Moreover, it's undeniable that this pretrial publicity had a visible influence on jury impartiality. However, this impartiality seemed to swing in favor of Goetz who was tried before a Manhattan jury of ten whites and two blacks, of whom six had been victims of street crime.

This small, but significant advantage was not overlooked by defense lawyers, Barry Slotnick and Mark M. Baker. Who built their case on the fact of "reasonable self-defense" and the alarming crime rate of New York City at the time. To fully understand Bernhard Goetz's actions that day, Slotnick explained one must go back several years before when he found himself being mugged for the first time. (Serena, 2018) In 1981, Goetz was attacked in the Canal Street subway station by three young men who he claimed were trying to rob him. Despite his injuries, he was able to assist a police officer in arresting one of the men. However, the suspect was only charged with criminal mischief, and the other two were never found (Serena, 2018).

This incident infuriated Goetz and to his account caused him to buy the unregistered gun that was used in the 1984 subway shooting. This experience Slotnick mentioned ties in thoroughly with the power "context" and the influence it had on the crime. In his essay "The Power of Context: Bernie Goetz and the Rise and Fall of New York City Crime," Malcom Gladwell gives us a probable explanation of human behavior and how it is sensitive to and strongly influenced by its environment.

Being in the subway where he had once been beaten so severely was a powerful environmental factor adding to the Goetz' perceived threat. This explanation worked in favor of the defense because of its ability to resonate with members of the jury. An interesting and unattainable consideration would be to consider the difference in sympathy had the jury been comprised of non-New Yorkers, unable to relate to the nature of the NYC subway system. In this trial, the defense used various communicative practices in order to manipulate the New Yorker jury's experience and perceptions throughout the trial. However, to fully comprehend the defense strategy, we must first look at the prosecutions.

In "A crime of Self-defense," George P. Fletcher described lead prosecutor, district attorney Gregory Waples as having a modest, taciturn style, in which he often relied on "an argumentative posture of taut, pointed remarks, and seemingly no patience for little ingratiating gestures" (9). The context of this manner seemed almost the opposite of the defense. While
Waples remained sitting every time the jury entered the room, the entire defense table stood. Moreover, when Waples spoke to Justice Crane, he did so briefly and directly. Waples addressed Justice Crane as "Judge." Defense attorneys Slotnick and Baker almost always referred to Justice Crane as "Your Honor." This difference in approach could have had a severe impact on how the jury perceived each side.

Rieke and Stutman, highlight in their chapter "The Opening Statement," how attorney behavior can influence juror opinions. Using the perspective of persuasion theory, Rieke and Stutman compare trial attorneys to campaign candidates, through which the campaign continues even during informal times of trial, even when one is not necessarily expected to perform a specific way. As the jury notices these behaviors, however big or small, these behaviors inherently push jury members to one side or another.

A large part of the prosecution's case was spent focusing on witness testimony and Goetz' confession, which in hindsight may have hurt the state the most. The prosecution called nine eyewitnesses to testify in the Goetz trial. Three of which were the victims of the crime. Troy Canty, spent more than two days on the stand describing his version of events. However, under questioning, Canty admitted to heavy use of crack cocaine and convictions on several misdemeanor charges. James Ramseur, who was called the day after Canty, refused to take the stand despite having received immunity from prosecution (Linder, 2011). The judge cited Ramseur for contempt, and he was led out of the courtroom. Barry Allen, who had not been granted immunity from prosecution, asserted his Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate himself in response to nearly every question from both Waples and Slotnick (Linder, 2011). This would come to benefit the defense, as Slotnick persisted in asking Allen question after question in an apparent attempt to show the jury Allen's unwillingness to comply. This coupled with the defense use of words like "hoodlums," "criminals," "savages," " punks," "low-lifes," and "thugs." when referring to the "victims" of the case further defamed the prosecution's claims of innocent parties. These extrinsic features of credibility are researched and confirmed by Rieke and Stutman.

Another shockingly clever strategy by Slotnick was to suggest through his questions that Ramseur may be bias based on an impending civil suit he and others had filed against Goetz. George P. Fletcher, writes, that Mr. Slotnick
pushed Ramseur over the edge and managed to show the jury an irrational and furious man who would commit the crime of contempt rather than answer a question about his whereabouts three days before the shooting. The implicit message was simple: In a subway encounter with these four black toughs, any normal, reasonable person would have feared the worst. (Fletcher, 1988)

This play by the defense was smart and tactical. The ability to discredit witnesses went further to discredit the prosecution as a whole. Waples’ decision to rely so heavily on characters who were neither trustworthy nor sympathetic showcased the significant errors in the prosecution’s case. Although the version of events differs between retellings, it all comes down to the more believable character.

Law is not static: it changes based on who or what is being told. Conventional American litigation is not isolated from influence. The players and the context of those players play the ultimate role of justice. One cannot fully understand the verdict of a trial without being educated on the cultural context of the crime. In this paper, I looked to explore the power of context in relation to both influence and result pertaining to the events and subsequent trial of Bernhard Goetz. While doing so I 1) presented context about both the details of the Bernhard Goetz case and the climate of New York City at the time; 2) acknowledged how important issues in American society become prevalent in courtroom drama; 3) raised comparisons between the prosecution and defense strategies I found most pertinent to the trial 4) pointed out some errors in the state’s prosecution of Bernhard Goetz; 5) highlighted the implications of this trial and its controversial conclusion; and 6) illustrated the importance of context and communicative practices in judicial reasoning.
References


Matthew Gilligan

Social Media and the Narcissistic User

Introduction: Social Media Identity

Before the internet, identity was managed during face to face interactions within our social groups. During identity play, we present different versions of ourselves to different social groups or people we encounter within our lives. In his early work on social identity, sociologist Irving Goffman uses a theater metaphor to describe social interaction (Goffman 1959). He describes that, for different audiences, we present an idealized version of ourselves that is consistent with what is normal by revealing or concealing different aspects of our identity (Goffman 1959). With the advent of the internet, and the rise of digital culture, we have created new spaces where identity play is managed. Online identities are managed in much different ways than how we manage our identities in real face to face interactions. In his work on digital culture, Vincent Miller points out a few of the major differences found within identity research, claiming that identities online are decentered, disembodied, and fragmented within online spaces (Miller 2011). We cannot achieve these characteristics in displaying our identity in face to face interactions. The internet has not only opened new spaces where identity is managed, but it has also given us new methods and new tools to manage our identities in different ways.

A surmountable amount of research is focused on the effects of social media and how people’s identities are translated during online interactions. On different social network sites we become highly visible to a large number of people with whom we reveal parts of our identity. People, especially a younger generation growing up with networked interactions on social media, blog sites, gaming communities, and other digital spaces, have new spaces and new ways to manage their identity within networked communities. Founder of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, Sherry Turkle strongly compares different application windows to how we manage identity in different online spaces. Having multiple applications to cycle through implies efficiency but simultaneously makes us think about ourselves as a multiple able to display new forms of identity and self through various identity windows (Turkle 1995). Different social media networks work in the same way. We engage in different forms of identity management and display different varieties of online presence across different platforms and online spaces. Vincent
Miller notes that identities are something we construct, writing that they “are not unified, solid and stable, but maintained, changeable and often contradictory” (Miller 2011). Miller also notes that a person online can access many digital spaces were “fluidity and hybridity” of identity can be achieved with much more freedom than in the offline world (Miller 2011). These conceptions of online identity are the basis for a lot of research surrounding the effects of social media on identity.

The main aspect of debate within research surrounding narcissistic identities online is the relationship between social media and narcissistic identity traits and behavior amongst users. But what is the strength of this correlation? What activity can be justified as narcissistic online? Can we even assume these online activities are accurate reflections of personality traits or products of using the platforms? Previous conceptions of online identity point to the fact that across different social network sites we are required to, “consciously create a digital presence,” which is much different from how normal face to face interactions occur (Boyd 2014). Boyd points out that we utilize different platforms to manage different aspects of our identity in different ways. (Boyd 2014). We are inclined to different expressions of self on different social networks. Yet at the same time, we create these different conceptions of ourselves throughout them. These are important concepts when thinking about narcissism in online contexts, and especially important in determining the validity of the claim that social media makes people more narcissistic.

Narcissism on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

The most common social media platforms where I think narcissistic identities are most prominent are the three major social network sites of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. More importantly, these are the three most likely to be used by generations growing up alongside the internet. First, it’s important to understand what narcissism means and how it can potentially be translated online through identity. Narcissism (noun) or narcissistic (adjective) refers to self-centered or egotistic behavior, personality traits, or characteristics. If we start to think about activity within social networks and how people interact with the platforms, we can begin to conceptualize how the connection to narcissism is made. Research around these social networks on the topic of narcissism is largely focused on actual responses from young adults and their tendencies, desires, behaviors, and intentions behind social media use.
A lot of modern online identity research is heavily focused on studying how people interact on different social media sites or what their intentions are behind using these platforms. This research is heavily reliant on surveying to show how young adults utilize these platforms in narcissistic ways. A survey of over 200 college students concludes there is a positive relationship between Instagram user and narcissism suggesting that young adults strive to be seen in a positive light within the context of Instagram (Sheldon 2016). According to this research we use the app to display our lives and edit our pictures in a certain way to create new conceptions of ourselves (Sheldon 2016). This clearly displays narcissistic behavior within the context of Instagram and how people engage with the app. Engagement with these platforms promote activities such as “liking”, “commenting”, or “sharing,” which can increase one’s conceptions of self-worth (Sheldon 2016). Similar conclusions were made in another study suggesting that narcissism online was related to the desire to gain a following within social network sites (Bergman 2011). Additionally, people go on social media sites to engage in such behaviors and promote themselves, which can obviously be considered narcissistic. These forms of engagement are often considered much more shallow and meaningless than face to face interactions (Sheldon 2016).

None of these findings came as a surprise to me throughout the research I saw. Many of these generalizations such as the desire for followers, editing photos, and the desire of self-worth through connections seemed like weak links to legitimate narcissism or self-obsessive behavior.

So how do we evaluate narcissism online?

One of the best articles I have read on the topic of narcissism introduces both sides of the debate in a general analysis. In his work on Facebook and Twitter, author Bruce McKinney begins to distinguish between narcissism online and true, genuine, openness and positive desire for social capital as well as engagement within social networks (McKinney 2012). While some research does not consider how these correlations of tendencies, desires, behaviors, and intentions could be seen in a positive light, the article by Bruce McKinney raises many important questions. Are these tendencies, desires, behaviors, and intentions behind social media use necessarily a negative thing? How can these patterns of identity management be considered narcissistic online? Are people utilizing these apps to connect in genuine ways or searching for acceptance in all the wrong places? Most studies relied heavily on the correlation of these behaviors to narcissism but failed to account for the other side. Many studies failed to consider the fact that we want activity on our pages, we want a following within social sites, we strive to be seen in a positive light on
social media. But who is to say that causes a narcissistic identity in real life? Is social media to blame for narcissistic identities among young adults or are these normal, genuine interactions being mistaken for narcissistic identities online?

Considering how these social network sites function and how they are used by different people, both sides of this debate are clear. Although research has shown that there are many positive correlations between social media and narcissism, there are far too many people on social media to take a small sample of college students and start to jump to conclusions that social media is making a young generation narcissistic. Which is critical error that such surveying studies make. Perhaps the most important thing to take away is the fact that social media platforms are, in fact, tools of social connection. Different social network sites are not used in the same way, and people within each platform do not use these platforms in the same way (Mckinney). Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are used in drastically different ways. Different people will undoubtedly utilize these platforms in different ways and for different reasons. Shawn Bergman reminds us that “Millennials SNS usage is not solely about attention-seeking or maintaining self-esteem but is also a means of staying connected and communication” (Bergman 2011). This is where the line is drawn between narcissism online and genuine forms of social connection. Bergman’s study, along with numerous other studies fail to take into account that “causation cannot be inferred given the utilization of a correlational design” (Bergman 2011). In other words, the variables being tested within these surveys can also be seen as “extraneous” to real narcissistic identities, which suggests that this correlation is relatively weak (Bergman 2011). Simply put, it seems rather hard to justify the intentions of many interactions within these platforms as being narcissistic without deeper knowledge of one’s social structure in real life. We must not forget the simple fact that it is the individual person who chooses to create their presence within the platform. In this way, we can begin to differentiate between someone who is attempting to be genuine and portray an accurate identity through social media and someone who is being blatantly narcissistic. Within this stance, narcissism can be better viewed on a spectrum within online interaction rather than looking at the effects of the platforms themselves or general behaviors that occur on the platforms. In this view, we can accept that narcissism does exist online and can be displayed in several ways, but so does interaction that can be easily mistaken for narcissism that are genuine. It remains much more important to begin to evaluate how one is being narcissistic in relationship to their lived realities rather than their behaviors, intentions, and desires when interacting within social network sites.
Evaluating Both Sides

There are many people throughout social media displaying true versions of themselves and genuinely connecting with friends or fan bases to engage in a positive form of social interaction. On the flip side, there are many people on social media portraying someone who they are not and are searching for an ever-expanding network of connections that aren’t genuine. As a result, they are ultimately engaging in the search for self-promotion and acceptance with both the wrong ideas in mind and in all the wrong places. In order to make social media a positive virtual reality, we still need to partake in being ourselves and searching for genuine forms of connection within these networks.

One quote that easily relates to this issue was published long before the internet in 1959 by Erving Goffman. As previously noted, we attempt to show idealized versions of ourselves and, as we have learned, this activity in an online setting becomes much more easy, prominent, and visible in relation to real interaction. Many studies have been discussed use this factor as the basis of their arguments against the platforms. We engage in these activities to present the idealized self and we desire to be viewed in better light through likes, shares, comments and a larger following. Goffman writes about the idealized self by stating:

In so far as the expressive bias of performance comes to be accepted as reality, then that which is accepted at the moment as reality will have some of the characteristics of a celebration. To stay in one’s room away from where the party is given, or away from where the practitioner attends his client, is to stay away from where reality is being performed. The world, in truth, is a wedding. (Goffman 1959)

This quote about interaction speaks more truth in the age of the internet than it did in the media environment of 1959. When we get online, we can easily be bias about ourselves. This is something we are granted in an online setting. In revealing such biased aspects compared to our real identity we are left with momentary shallow celebrations and weaker, more narcissistic, forms of social connection. To portray bias and display strong narcissism online is to stay away from where reality is being performed and where real interaction takes place. This is where narcissism is justified online. The question then becomes: how bias is one willing to be online about who they are as a person? In this way it becomes easier to distinguish what narcissism online looks like from an individual’s perspective of themselves online. We must not forget who the person is
behind the account when considering narcissism or narcissistic behavior online. To effectively achieve these conceptions, we need to look at both sides of the spectrum.

Narcissism goes hand in hand with where we search for acceptance, self-worth, and social connection both online and offline. It truly is about how the individual will utilize and distinguish social media and balance this with their actual realities. That is where we will be able to identify narcissistic behavior online. For instance, one study published by Elon University asked students “if they thought that posting selfies to various social networking platforms encourage narcissism and selfish behaviors” (Wickel 2015). To no surprise at all, the answers to these open-ended questions were very mixed (Wickel 2015). The research found that people use social media and functions within the platform with different intentions. The report showed that people post selfies looking for satisfaction or acceptance, while others said they post to document experiences and genuinely connect with friends and family (Wickel 2015). The two sides of the spectrum are clearly defined throughout this study. Genuine connection on social media or blatant narcissism through selfie posting? What do you post selfies for?

Take another common conclusion that has been made that the desire to amass a following leads to narcissism. If we take into account young creatives such as graphic designers, photographers, musicians, artists, why would they not want to amass a following based on the art they make? That is their reality. That is what they love to do. Shouldn’t that be authentically recognized online? Is this narcissism or is there a greater cause behind self-promotion and being true to your craft or who you are as a person online? People can be genuinely interested in what you do, which can foster positive social connections online.

Another example was generated through a conversation with my dad who has been doing comedy in the Boston area for almost 30 years. When he started out doing comedy, Facebook didn’t exist. Since so much of his posts are now geared towards his career, I asked him the simple question “what do you use the Facebook app for”? His response was rather remarkable. He noted that he’s been in the business with many people long before Facebook was a thing, and now that he is on Facebook he can see how these comics have translated their identity online in different ways. During our conversation, he admitted, “Of course I want exposure on my page, I want all my friends to know I’m playing Giggle’s (a comedy club) on Thursday”. He has amassed almost 3,000 friends and another 2,000 separate followers on Facebook. He commonly posts photos with other comics or celebrities and invites his followers out to every show with status updates to buy
tickets. In fact he is portraying his actual reality and insisting on real connection around comedy. He pointed out that other comics are making short videos on social media such as Facebook and Instagram trying to reveal more of their identities for self-promotion in a genuine way. Likes, sharing, commenting, and following are all positive forms of engagement within his page. In this case, social media is used in genuine ways by comics to advance their careers and show more of what they do through online media on social network sites. His statements also shows how social media like Facebook was utilized as a tool by comedians in different ways to display different identity traits.

Discussion

There seems to be a weak correlation in jumping to conclusions that social media makes people narcissistic. Most studies that have been discussed the topic of online narcissism focus on surveying to prove that some behaviors, intentions, and desires on social media create negative narcissistic personality traits. However, this seems like a reach considering the complexity of the internet today. What becomes evident is that narcissistic tendencies, behavior, and desires within social network sites can be seen in both positive and negative lights. We do have the ability to display accurate versions of ourselves and connect with people to form actual relationships for good purposes. At the same time, we can also seek approval, attention, and self-acceptance by painting false realities from behind the screen. We need to decide how to engage positively with these platforms for ourselves. More importantly, we must stay true to ourselves both online and off. In an article published by The Verge, Paul Miller states the simple fact that “there’s a lot of reality in the virtual, and a lot of virtual in our reality” (Miller 2013). Balancing this throughout our social media use is extremely necessary. We must still be true to ourselves and our values in online spaces and offline spaces to show genuine forms of interactions.

It is rather important to continue to study the effects of social media related to narcissism. Currently, Instagram, under the ownership of Facebook, has been performing test pilots to remove likes from their platform. As previously noted, the structuring of some networks to allow for likes, comments, and shares that people desire can be seen as narcissistic. Indeed, it appears that the removal of likes by the company was directly in response to this argument. Perhaps Instagram has removed the number of “likes” because they have realized that these forms of expressions and desires don’t belong on the platform. Perhaps they have realized this metric is something that
drives people to paint false realities in the search for self-acceptance and attention for the wrong reasons.


Miller, Paul (2013). I’m Still Here: back online after a year without the internet. *The Verge*.

Payton Taylor

Mindfulness as a Media: Concrete or Commercial?

Abstract

This project is focused on the slow change of mindfulness and meditation from its traditional Buddhist and spiritual roots to its internet-based meditation sessions and expensive high-class education for mindfulness. While the traditions have changed, the purpose of this paper is to discover what patterns can be found specifically throughout YouTube created mindfulness content, and what exactly does that mean for a general consumer who wants to learn about the purpose, meaning, and reflection of mindfulness?

By looking about completed studies, including several about the top 100 most viewed mindfulness videos and the impact of them on users, I focused my project on top creators, what they are teaching, instruction strategies, channel statistics, and instructor demographics, one being on the top 100 viewed mindfulness videos on YouTube and one study seeing if six months of YouTube based mindfulness will have a positive change in users. With this information, I am hoping to learn about whether mindfulness is still rooted in its traditional values and important spiritual elements, or if the entire platform has created a capitalist chase for money in an era where people are in a dire need for stress relief.

Through this study, there were multiple conclusions drawn. By looking at the demographics of YouTube mindfulness instructors, I concluded that mindfulness practices are increasingly whitewashed. Despite the fact that these spiritual traditions came from India and through religious and spiritual studies, none of the top creators make spiritual based videos, simply focusing on oneself and the ability to help oneself through learning to be more mindful, observant, and present in the moment. The diversity was very weak, with 90% being white, 80% being female, and 40% having some mention of donating, sending money, or having sponsored posts to make money off of their videos. Also, within these top creators though, are people who stick to the very traditional values of free, accessible, and ease of use for a beginner. David Potteris a creator who through his most popular videos makes a point to not even post his content on YouTube since that platform will make money off the consumer, but explains that if one was to visit his website,
he offers and entirely free, no questions asked, meditation guide and mindfulness class where a
person can learn.

While much in the realm of spiritual mindfulness has changed, it hasn't necessarily
become less traditional, but the scope of what mindfulness can be has shifted. Instead of now
only simply the traditional way, there are also creators who focus more on self-care, creators
who teach mindfulness activities, or more specialized fields of what it means to live in the
moment. Mindfulness has not lost validity or necessarily become "too western", but the
responsibility has been put on the consumer to ensure that they do the research to find out
what type of creator fits best for what they are looking for as someone hoping to learn more.

Introduction

Meditation and mindfulness as practices can be cited as far as 3,500 BCE but are going
through a change. Traditionally, "Mindfulness practice does not have specific goals, but is open
ended. It could easily be practiced for a whole lifetime, for broadening and deepening awareness
has no limit. Meditation does not have the aim of solving problems or making us feels better;
rather, it provides a space in which we can let ourselves be, just as we are, and thus discover our
basic nature" (Welwood, 48). At one point, these traditional activities were directly correlated
with religion and spirituality such as Buddhism, but now being made a mainstream theme of self-
care. Practices that were originally free for public use and teaching as by the word of Buddha
have now often been put at a price point, whether on the internet or in person. This
goes against original teaching's values, not as a small change but as a monumental ethical change of the
practice. Though, despite the fact that often there is now a price, there are also creators who still
are willing to post for “free.” Along with smart phone applications and lead classes, the main
contributor of these videos with a modern take on mindfulness is on the platform YouTube.

YouTube is a platform that emerged in 2005 and has only grown as a serious
entertainment platform since then. With this massive conglomerate of content creators
and videos, one can find just about any type of video they could possibly dream up.
One of these areas of content is meditation, yoga, and all things mindfulness. The goal
of this paper is to do a deep dive into that realm of content and determine how far has
modern mindfulness fallen from traditional, and answer the question if just because the
content has changed, does that mean its worse? If this content happens to be positive for
the viewer in its values and intentions, that's incredibly important as "internet-based interventions offer solutions to these barriers in treatment seeking. They combine the advantages of high availability, easy access, low cost, and anonymity" (Andersson, 2009). These practices could bring mindfulness for people and families who normally wouldn't have the time or ability to learn. Finally, in addition to the evaluation of the content itself, the following research will determine patterns within the mindfulness community on YouTube and see what diversity takes place in the teachings.

Representation of races in the popular mindfulness area on YouTube is crucial as this was not an originally white or western concept, and if as suspected most of the top creators are people who are white, then all the creators who come from the Buddhist or spiritual culture itself are not being featured or watched as heavily. This doesn't necessarily mean that the people who aren't from that culture or background are teaching incorrectly or bad messages, but it will make a statement on diversity of creators that viewers choose to watch and listen to when looking for messages on mindfulness and spirituality.

Theoretical Framework

Contemplative studies are a wide variety of practices that all have one goal in common, to ease the mind of the one performing the practice. Contemplative studies includes focusing attention and mindfulness on the mind's ability to think and act creatively (Plante, 2). Definitionally, "contemplation derives from contemplari, to "gaze attentively," but the word was originally linked to the act of cutting out or creating a space, as in "to mark out a space for observation" (Barbezat, 21).

The history of these contemplative studies can date back to the early days of Buddhism, when Buddha, born approximately 480 BCE, began many of these practices.” While the beginning of contemplative studies was in India with the birth of Buddhism, the studies spread fairly rapidly and was adopted by other early cultures in Japan, China and much of the middle east (Meditation History & Origins). Some examples of these contemplative acts can be traditional ones such as yoga and meditation, but one can hike, shower, walk, or paint contemplatively as well. Seemingly the main ingredient for being able to do something mindfully or contemplatively is giving your mind no rules or guidelines to follow but allowing oneself to
just be exactly in that one moment. There is no thinking about the past or the future, no matter how close or far, but the focus is on what is going on right in front of you. Traditionally, these practices could be done alone or in a group setting, but with silence and focus on breathing being the main priority. The span of what mindfulness can mean has grown exponentially, both in its activities and how it can be taught.

Nowadays, the framework has changed. People are busier than before, life is faster moving, and people in general allow themselves to have less free or down time. In this media frenzied world, people are finally starting to have this restlessness catch up with them, which is where modern mindfulness was born. Originating with self-care and meditation and yoga, mindfulness became the route people chose to take when the overwhelming feelings of life began to wear on them. Though, like with many things today, there has been a change in the price; "Mindfulness, like positive psychology and the broader happiness industry, has depoliticized and privatized stress. If we are unhappy about being unemployed, losing our health insurance, and seeing our children incur massive debt through student loans, it is our responsibility to learn to be more mindful" (Purser, 11).

YouTube has provided a very interesting framework for this platform to emerge into, as there are many pros and cons. Some of the cons can be easily spotted, as it's very possible to not be as efficient, it's easier to get distracted from with life still happening around the computer screen, and there is no guarantee or license necessarily by the creator you are choosing to watch. In addition, with all the options, how can one even decide who is trusted to watch? On the positive side - most of these cons can happen in a mindfulness classroom as well. In addition, there are less barriers to entry for families who are busy or less economically stable, and the comments and like ratios can act as a type of review of sorts. With the comments, a consumer can see "remarks about the video, reports of subjective experience and responses to other comments" (Buie, 45). In addition, there is something for everyone. With a platform like YouTube where there are approximately 1,300,000,000 people utilizing the service, there are bound to be copious amounts of "user-generated video content on sites such as YouTube and Vimeo offers researchers immediate access to huge amounts of primary data" (Buie, 43). With the background of both mindfulness and YouTube in mind, I want to introduce the purpose and plan of the following research project to be done.

Research Process
To determine the YouTube creators, I conducted my research from the perspective of a mindfulness consumer: by searching 'ten most popular mindfulness YouTubers' on the internet and using them as my sample I would begin with. After doing this, the creators I focused on are as follows; Tara Branch, Rachel Talbott, Marissa Lace, Matt D'Avella, Mooji, Jamie Marich, David Potter, Wing Chun, Melli (Mrs. Mindfulness) and Loch Kelly. To be as fair as I can with each channel, I am only going to watch their most popular video on their channel. Off a first glance, there is an interesting diversity here with a majority being white women, but with a diversity of people of color, men, and people of Asian cultures, of which meditation and mindfulness descended.

After watching all ten videos in their entirety, I broke these creators up into four categories: traditional mindfulness guides, mindfulness activity assistance, mindfulness advice, and unrelated. Traditional mindfulness guides would include Tara Brach, David Potter, Mrs. Mindful, and Loch Kelly. Mindful activity assistance creators would include Matt D'Avella, Wing Chun and Jamie Marich. The mindfulness advice category contains only one creator being Mooji, and the final category of non-related videos includes Rachel Talbott and Marissa Lace.

Traditional mindfulness guides would relate most directly back to original intentions of Buddhism in the spiritual and historical context. This doesn't necessarily mean this is the superior type, as with many forms of spirituality things change as times change. These creators though speak to the spiritual realm of Buddhism and self-actualization and enhanced focus the purpose of mindfulness. When also researching the 100 most viewed videos on mindfulness on YouTube, "Out of all 89 videos that were usable, only "20 videos associated with established faith traditions - nine Hindu, eight Buddhist, two Sikh and one Native American" (Buie, 43). This shows that while some of the most popular mindfulness YouTube creators have spiritual backgrounds, many of the most popular videos don't hone in on traditional mindfulness at all.

Mindfulness activity assistance videos become a little vaguer, as they touch on literal activities that utilize science to enhance mindfulness. This type of mindfulness that surrounds activities that can be both spiritual and not, such as how there is the traditional style of movement and how to live as a minimalist both within this category. This category is not necessarily mindfulness, but it really enhances people's ability to silence their minds and hone that focus in the same way mindfulness and meditation do. These videos feel like a gentle slide into learning about mindfulness, rather than immediately jumping to meditation or
activities that are more difficult to begin with. Mooji is, perhaps, the premier creator in the category of mindfulness advice. He in a sense is giving advice on being mindful and releasing of negative feelings and emotions to self-actualize.

The final category is fairly self-explanatory, but two videos that really didn't relate with mindfulness at all, but the category of 'self-care' which has been commodified and attempted to relate with mindfulness. This category had one markup video and one hair video, with many quotes such as "I believe it's good manners to wear concealer everyday" and other appearance-centered comments, which is not what Buddhism or mindfulness is about. This is what people have criticized new age mindfulness for, this western version. According to Purser, "In this version of mindfulness had a mantra, its adherents would be chanting 'I, me, mine'... the first question most Westerners ask when considering the practice is: ‘What's in it for me?’" (Purser, 11). This category appears to be the reason that mindfulness has not gained the respect it always has, as many have confused self-care and mindfulness for being interchangeable. Following these research findings, there are certain patterns that feel important to discuss in the context of modern mindfulness.

Analysis and Discussion: The Whiteness of Mindfulness

Whether originally noticed or not, out of these ten most popular creators regarding mindfulness, 9/10 were white. There are plenty of creators of color on the platform, but none of them except Mooji appeared on the top creator list. This is certainly a problem as there is a severe lack of representation from which the spiritual acts began. While these practices can change over time, the problem is that “whiteness” has overpowered traditional Buddhist mindfulness that originated in India.

This is not just mindfulness and meditation issue, but an equity and inclusion issue that ranges from mindfulness to early classroom experiences. One of the articles researched for the whiteness of mindfulness recanted a story regarding a female student of color in a classroom of white classmates speaking about how the word "tolerance” when speaking about the treatment of Americans towards Jewish people during the Holocaust was an appropriate term (Vacarr, 286). The young female student of color spoke out bravely about how this word is not appropriate in this context since it was not tolerance, but basic human decency to not commit genocide (Vacarr, 287). The author was the teacher when this classroom scenario took place, and she had
to confront her whiteness and confusion in how to speak to the white students about experiences that were not hers, and how to bridge this gap of knowledge that came with privilege, as "the cultural context of truth is denied when dominance and privilege are touted as universal truth" (Vacarr, 288). The purpose of utilizing mindfulness in this context is it "enhances and enlarges our capacity for empathy. It cultivates a sense of open curiosity toward each emerging moment, and it strengthens our ability to sustain a non judgemental stance both towards ourselves and in relation to the full range of our students’ experiences" (Vacarr, 293).

These are conversations that are similar to those of western cultures claiming mindfulness as their own, though not to the same level. While conversations about the Holocaust are much more sensitive than western individuals trying to claim mindfulness, there are similar implications of the privilege that white people have for popularizing things that other diverse groups have been punished for doing. This can be solved, and "his confrontation of privilege the author describes as "moral re-education" (Vacarr, 286). This is a difficult lesson for many to take though, as "nobody wants to discover that his or her conception of rightness is just another form of oppression" (Vacarr, 288).

Analysis and Discussion: The Commercialism of Mindfulness

There was a very interesting pattern I was not expecting with these creators, and it was the different levels of commercialism or lack thereof that their channels held. One creator, Matt D'Avella (the minimalist focused channel), promoted his Patreon three times throughout the video he created. For context, Patreon is essentially an exclusive version of YouTube that viewers can pay a certain tier monthly to get a certain number of benefits, ranging from shoutouts to extra content depending on the amount donated to the creator. He attempted to defend this promotion, saying that these donations help keep his YouTube channel alive, but then those who are unable to donate are unable to receive the same benefits as those who can afford to gain them. This is not the original intent of mindfulness or Buddhism, which made a constant point to be attainable for all. In addition to Patreon, the two self-care or unrelated videos both contained either advertisements or brand deals for products, therefore making a financial gain. Considering "mindfulness is positioned as a force that can help us cope with to noxious influences of capitalism. But because what it offers is so easily assimilated by the market its potential for social and political transformation is neutered" (Purser, 19).
Other creators filled the other side of the spectrum such as David Potter. His video was a simple introduction to a program that he holds on his own website because he wanted to ensure it was completely free and nobody would have a barrier to access. The introduction is educational, heartfelt and very transparent about intentions and meaning, with a free higher-level meditation program. This is incredible to see on a platform where many of the creators are there primarily to make money. There are hundreds of comments about how this changed their lives and made them feel in touch with themselves 'finally'. This kind of content is following the traditional workings of Buddha, while having the modern touch of being on a platform such as a personal website or YouTube.

There is a wider range of creators in the top ten mindfulness creators than I even imagined there could be for all creators combined. It's important for consumers to realize the purpose of putting a price on mindfulness isn't tradition, but is something to consider along with personal values when choosing an influencer to listen to. This high level may or may not say something about the validity of the creator, but that is once again, up to the values of the consumer to decide.

Conclusion

Mindfulness as modern content on YouTube has not entirely changed, but has grown into a wider range. While some mindfulness and Buddhist values are put with a price, there are still plenty of creators who ensure to have low barrier to entry for those who want to seriously learn and practice, no matter their situation. People such as David Potter would fit the Buddha's traditional view of what mindfulness could be, but with the Americanization of this culture, there have been capitalist versions added.

With this in mind, as long as a consumer does their research, I would personally recommend utilizing the resources on platforms such as YouTube. In a separate study than mine, a researcher utilized the top 100 viewed videos on mindfulness on YouTube. This provided a separate but similar idea as my topic, but using it to treat anxiety. Much like access to stress relief and education, "a major concern in mental health care remains the limited access to evidence-based treatments and the low treatment rates" (Boettcher, 2014). In her study, it was discovered that only 20 videos out of 89 (11 removed from study due to comments being disabled) were related directly to spirituality in any form,
and this makes this more accessible to people who want the spirituality without the devotion necessarily (Buie, 40).

Even without the direct ties of religion attached, there are indisputably net positive outcomes. While the diversity may not be representative yet, and there may have been some white washing of aspects of mindfulness, there are still true creators on the platform who can assist with stress, anxiety, self actualization and depression. During a study focusing on simply how YouTube meditations can affect anxiety, “pre-post change scores as well as the comparison to an active control condition indicated that participants of the mindfulness program benefited substantially from the treatment and experienced a significant decrease of anxiety symptoms. Participants of this group also achieved substantial reductions in symptoms of depression and insomnia, which are very common comorbid conditions among individuals with anxiety disorders. Most improvements were stable at 6-month follow-up with the exception of changes in depressive symptoms” (Boettcher, 2014).

Just like with the immersion of many other types of technology such as cell phones, Amazon, and personal computers, the entire decision process is centered around what is needed and what works for one specific person - you. Therefore, why shouldn't there be an entire platform full of options to choose from? As long as the values stay the same and the education is rooted in fact, then there doesn't necessarily need to be one way to be mindful.
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