

**EJ**

*Elon Journal*  
of Undergraduate Research  
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School of Communications  
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## The World of Journals

Welcome to the nation's only journal devoted to undergraduate research in communications.

The website of the Council on Undergraduate Research lists about 120 undergraduate research journals nationwide ([http://www.cur.org/resources/students/undergraduate\\_journals/](http://www.cur.org/resources/students/undergraduate_journals/)). Some of these focus on a discipline (e.g., Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics). Others are university-based and multidisciplinary (e.g., MIT Undergraduate Research Journal).

The Elon Journal is the only one with a focus on undergraduate research in journalism, media and communications.

The School of Communications at Elon University is the creator and publisher of the online journal. The first issue was published in Spring 2010. The journal is published twice a year, with spring and fall issues, under the editorship of Dr. Byung Lee, associate professor in the School of Communications.

The three purposes of the journal are:

1. To publish the best undergraduate research in Elon's School of Communications each term,
2. To serve as a repository for quality work to benefit future students seeking models for how to do undergraduate research well, and
3. To advance the university's priority to emphasize undergraduate student research.

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## Celebrating Student Research

This journal reflects what we enjoy seeing in our students -- intellectual maturing.

As 18 year olds, some students enter college wanting to earn a degree, but unsure if they want an education. They may question whether communication theory has anything to do with real life. Ready to start their media careers, many would rather focus on workplace skills than analyze issues and concepts.

In Elon's School of Communications, we strive for a balance among concepts, writing and production. All are important.

Student media and organizations are terrific venues for the practice of journalism, broadcasting, public relations, advertising and cinema.

In turn, this journal celebrates the life of the intellect through undergraduate research. It represents the intellectual maturing that occurs by the senior year.

These published articles make us aware of the solitary hours that students spend in research and the untold hours in which student and teacher-mentor work together to revise a paper for public consumption. It's exciting to see students conducting research in such arenas as social media and press freedom.

By focusing attention on undergraduate research, this journal helps reinforce all that we think a university should be.

Dr. Paul Parsons, Dean  
School of Communications

## Editorial Board

Twenty-five faculty members in Elon's School of Communications served as the Editorial Board that selected the nine undergraduate research papers appearing in the 2013 fall issue.

From more than 100 research papers written in advanced School of Communications classes, 27 papers were submitted to the journal by communications students through the encouragement and mentoring of capstone teachers and other professors in the school.

Professors who served as the Editorial Board were Janna Anderson, Lucinda Austin, Vanessa Bravo, Lee Bush, Naeemah Clark, David Copeland, Vic Costello, Kenn Gaither, Jessica Gisclair, Don Grady, Anthony Hatcher, Derek Lackaff, Julie Lellis, Harlen Makemson, Phillip Motley, Max Negin, Thomas Nelson, Youssef Osman, George Padgett, Paul Parsons, Glenn Scott, Michael Skube, Amanda Sturgill, Frances Ward-Johnson and Qian Xu.

Thanks should also go to Bryan Baker, who videotaped student introductions to their projects, and Colin Donohue, who uploaded the PDF version of this issue and student videos.

## Editor's Note

This issue has nine manuscripts covering a wide gamut of topics: advertising, media bias, cyber space activities, crisis management, and film authorship.

In his paper, "A Case Study on Film Authorship: Exploring the Theoretical and Practical Sides in Film Production," David Tredge explored film theories to find the authorship of films and applied his findings to two feature films. Jacob Selzer used a crisis communications as a lens through which he analyzed how three high profile college football players tried to restore their tarnished images following scandals. Using the case study method, his paper, "Pay for Play: Analysis of the Image Restoration Strategies of High Profile College Athletes," found a variety of strategies that the athletes adopted.

In his paper, "Evolution of the Gaming Experience," Nathan Edge adopted uses and gratifications theory as the analysis frame of his research. He found individuals are actively seeking out new media content that coincides with their interests. He applied this frame to the eSports industry in his secondary research. One student got a research idea from the fact that a significant portion of Elon students (72%) study abroad before graduating. In her study of "Constantly Connected," Sarah Woolley examined the impact of mobile devices on the study abroad experience, especially through social media. She found that technology brings students convenience in communication and easy access to information, but it also has a negative impact, such as when students spend time "documenting an experience for the Internet instead of fully appreciating the moment as it happens abroad."

Daniel Quackenbush's research on public perceptions of media bias during the 2012 Presidential Election suggests that the public perception of a liberal media bias is not related to any blatant compromises of professional integrity by American journalists. Rather, his meta-analysis of 2012 electoral coverage pattern suggests an overwhelming conservative media bias. In her study, "The Construction of Southern Identity Through Reality TV," Ariel Miller focused on the portrayal of American southerners in TV reality shows. Her research led her to conclude that three networks were pressured to entertain audiences by portraying southern individuals as unintelligent, crude, violent and engaging in unhealthy behavior.

Lindsay Richards' study, "Examining Green Advertising and Its Impact on Consumer Skepticism and Purchasing Patterns," found that environmental enthusiasts are generally more skeptical of green advertisements than others. She also found the health benefits of green products are a big motivator for purchasing patterns, along with their price. Based on an analysis of 590 advertisements in three women's interest magazines, Kelly Beane found that the top three product categories advertised were food and drink, personal care, and laundry and household products. The most frequently used appeals were performance, availability, and components/contents. Another study on ads was done by Leigh Burgess: "Testing the Appeals of Feminist Ideologies in Female Athletic Advertising." Her focus group study revealed that women's ad preferences were based their lifestyle. Among Generation Y female athletes, the lower-impact athletes preferred the ads that portray active lifestyles but still appeal to their feminine characteristics, while the higher-impact athletes preferred ads that show women in action and highlight the performance-based benefits of a product.

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# A Case Study on Film Authorship: Exploring the Theoretical and Practical Sides in Film Production

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## Abstract

*Film authorship has been a topic of debate in film theory since the Cahiers du Cinema critics first birthed auteur theory. Andrew Sarris used this theory to categorize directors based on their level of artistic authorship, solidifying the idea that a director is the sole author of a film. In The Schreiber Theory, David Kipen argues that a writer is responsible for creating the world of the movie and should be considered the author of a film. However, collaborative theories, such as those proposed by Paul Sellors, provide a more practical framework for studying film authorship. Rarely are any film authorship theories compared with specific examples. To compare theory to practice, this research took a two-fold approach. First, theory is explored through primary and secondary sources to give a background and understanding of the main arguments in authorship. Second, this research documents the production of two feature films (Blade Runner & The Man Who Killed Don Quixote) as case studies through analysis of in-depth documentaries. By examining these productions, this study observes theory in practice rather than studying the finished products.*

## I. The Problem of Authorship

“Authorship does matter,” says Janet Staiger, because it addresses the issue of acknowledging credit behind a motion picture (Gerstner and Staiger 27). When addressing the responsible parties for a film, it is important to know why such analysis is needed. Whether it be an issue of credit when it comes to major awards or discovering the reason why a production failed, it can be paramount to know who is responsible for the creation of a film. Film authorship theories fall into one of three categories: auteur, writer, or collaborative. Classic auteur theory has commanded much of film scholar debate since the 1960s. Although outcries against auteur theory have been published since 1963 (Gerstner and Staiger 9), writer and collaborative theories have not been given the same serious thought (Kipen 17). While critics and scholars can debate for eternity on topics of authorship, the real issue is what filmmakers actually practice during production (Tomasulo 114). An examination of film authorship should cover the evolution of authorship theory from the 1960s to the present.

Feature films are never made by a single person. From the writer to the director to the studio executives, many ideas and hours of hard work go into collaborating on a film production. It is important to know that one theory of authorship will not answer the question for all films. However, opening the discussion and studying films and filmmakers will make the reality of theory more visible (Tomasulo 114). In addition, instruct-

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ing future filmmakers in the processes of established craftsman and artists in the industry can “confirm the value of theoretical inquiry” through the practice of theoretical concepts (Tomasulo 116). Studying the work of filmmakers is one way to improve the production value of a film. In this sense, the study and application of film theory will also inform and improve a production.

Due to the nature of the filmmaking process, film often aligns with a more collaborative form of authorship than other artistic media. While some films are recognized for their directing or writing style, their true authorship lies in the intentionality of the collective that produced the final product. The art department’s contribution is arguably no less important than the camera department’s in bringing the story to the big screen. Even the director’s and producer’s power on set may be debatable considering the impact of actor input, assistant director’s duties, and technicians’ crafting. Therefore, the following paper will examine major authorship theories, building towards a collaborative theory of authorship.

## II. Auteur Theory

At its heart, auteur theory promotes the director as the author of a motion picture (Gerstner and Staiger 8). Behind every movie lies a director with a vision. The director gives the motion picture “any distinctive quality it may have” (Grant 31). Many motion pictures are extensively guided by a director from script to completion and are considered the work of that director. Concept artist Syd Mead said, “The director is God in film” (Dangerous Days). For instance, Alfred Hitchcock’s films are recognizable not only for their story and stylistic elements but also for his standardized production method (Carringer 374). Hitchcock is “universally acknowledged as the world’s foremost technician” and his form “does not merely embellish content, but actually creates it” (Truffaut 17). It is this combination of high technical skill and artistry that makes an auteur. Hitchcock was known for creating detailed storyboards for each of his shots and both experimenting with and implementing filmmaking and storytelling conventions.

When French New Wave critic Francois Truffaut published the auteur theory in the *Cahiers du Cinema* in 1954, it took the world of film criticism by storm (Grant 55). The origins of auteurism can be traced to the article Truffaut wrote, titled “A Certain Tendency in French Cinema” (Caughie 23). In this article, Truffaut explains where he believes American filmmakers have succeeded and where the French have not. The French critics for the *Cahiers* were concerned with not only elevating film itself as an art but also naming American filmmakers as artists. At the time, auteurism was a uniquely American trait from the French critics’ perspective. The French critics became particularly interested in American filmmakers because of their focus on visual narrative and strong heroes (Hess 52). Two strong film genres coming from the U.S. at the time were film noir and westerns, both of which display independent and masculine heroes. It was the way American directors rose above and beyond the genres that fascinated their European counterparts (Hillier 32). What fascinated the French critics was when an American director took a genre movie with a basic story and created compelling characters with an interesting story that amounted to more artistically than its parts would lead a viewer to believe. The critics often discuss this in reference to noirs and westerns where the protagonist became more than the independent macho personality so cliché in both genres.

According to Truffaut, an auteur transforms the film into something personal, “an expression of his own personality” (Caughie 23). Jacques Rivette made a similar argument, saying that an auteur, rather than being at the mercy of a good or bad script, can take the material and turn it into his work (Hillier 38). The original French version of auteur theory was the idea of making a film distinct to the director by infusing ideas of his own into the characters and story beyond what the script required. Jean-Luc Godard, in his article “Sufficient Evidence,” shows that despite the “conventional scenario” of a film, an auteur will probe stereotypes and archetypes to turn them into “living beings” (Hillier 48). This is why the French critics were so obsessed with filmmakers like Alfred Hitchcock because of his tendency to add personal expression throughout his filmography (Truffaut 314). In fact, idolizing of Hitchcock led Truffaut to conduct an extensive, in-depth interview with the filmmaker and allowed him to publish it as Hitchcock. Truffaut holds that a filmmaker, like any artist, fundamentally tries to show his audience how to understand themselves through artistic expression (Truffaut 20). Rather than a theory of authorship, Truffaut’s auteur theory argued that a director is an artist rather than a technician (Hess 50). His interviews with Hitchcock revealed the director to be a deeply emotional man who “feels with particular intensity the sensations he communicates to his audience” (Truffaut 15). This would make Hitchcock more than a craftsman or technician and elevate him as an artist. Alexandre Astruc wrote

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a later article addressing the “camera-stylo” as he termed it, which compares the director’s camera to an author’s pen (Caughie 24). This comparison led to the idea that a director is the sole authorship force behind a film. In addition, the interpretation of Truffaut’s and Rivette’s articles spawned the idea that only auteurs or cineastes (one who has a passionate interest in cinema) were capable of making a film truly their own. Other directors were unable to disguise the fact that authorship lay elsewhere. For example, directors are heavily influenced by the writer of the script or the studio that financed the project (Caughie 24). The French critics would not consider these directors auteurs.

In conjunction with the destabilization of the studio system and a greater emphasis on directors rather than studios, auteur theory came to command major attention in film theory for the better part of the last several decades as well as dominate critical and public notions of film authorship (Grant 111). Due to improved international relations after World War II, the French were introduced to a whole body of American cinema at one time, and they quickly embraced the American individualism portrayed in films by Howard Hawks, Orson Welles, and John Ford (Hess 51). American film critic Andrew Sarris whole-heartedly adopted auteur theory and wrote extensively on the topic, interpreting it for the American world of film theory and pushing auteurism to the narrow, director-focused theory for which it became known (Caughie 9). Charles Eckert argues that works by Sarris and Peter Wollen would have been a “mere eddy” in auteur criticism if other critics and theorists had not clung so whole-heartedly to their assertions (Grant 103). The Cahiers had to devote a lot of time and space “dissociating from the excesses committed in its name” (Caughie 23)

Critics in film theory seek to give credit to the creator of the emotional and psychological impact of a film (Macgowan 308). Auteur theory gives critics a way to associate film authorship to a single entity. The moments, scenes, and sequences that impact the audience are the work of the director because he is responsible for working with the talent, cinematographer, and editor to tell a story that he sees in his head. Allowing the director to see his own version of a scene could let him create a more artistically personal film, which the French critics relished. The auteur critics also emphasized performers’ performances over acting ability, noting the director’s likeness to a psychological therapist who was able to tease out the performances like confessions in group therapy (Hess 52). He is the conductor that approves the artistry of all the separate pieces involved in the production (Grant 191).

Because of the popularity of auteur theory and proof that directors are able to make money through control and personal expression, studios began to give their directors more control over their films after the 1950s (Grant 186). Because of this industry-wide shift, auteur theory began to evolve with the industry. Instead of an auteur’s status being defined by “overcoming barriers to personal expression,” a director’s auteurism became defined by the nature of that expression: the director’s auteur thumbprint (Grant 187).

One should consider the director in discourse concerning his work in order to find the truth behind critics’ assumptions of his decisions and actions (Grant 30). The traditional “low tech” method for auteur analysis involves examining a director’s work “until patterns begin to emerge” (Kipen 51). The Hollywood auteur filmmaker “existed once discovered by the rigorous critic” (Gerstner and Staiger 9). Auteur analysis relies heavily on the subjective observations of the critic through extensive viewing of the filmmaker’s work. Sarris held that auteur theory served two purposes: to classify films and to give them value as works of art (Caughie 27). Observing whether or not a film was created by an auteur could determine whether the film fit into high or low art categories, in Sarris’s opinion.

However, even from its beginning, the auteur theory faced opposition. More recently, theorists have delved into the cultural context in which the French New Wave critics birthed the auteur theory in order to explain the original idea as well as revise it for contemporary critique (Naremore 14). Specifically, after World War II, Europe was flooded with American films, so the French were exposed to a cornucopia of American filmmaking. The French critics’ fascination with American films has been attributed to their lack of exposure during the years of the war.

Even the critics themselves tried to separate themselves from the more radical adherents to the theory. André Bazin, a critic with the Cahiers du Cinema, wrote, “The evolution of Western art towards personalization should definitely be considered a step forward, but only so long as...[it] doesn’t claim to define culture” (Caughie 26). Bazin hoped to correct for the outbreak in director-centrism that sprung out of the Cahiers love for American directors. Rather than pushing to extremes in the way Andrew Sarris did, the Cahiers critics chose to instead attribute directorial genius to other factors including industry environment and historical contexts (Caughie 27). As mentioned previously, Sarris argued that auteur films gave them more value within society than other films. Bazin argues the theory should not be used in this way because it perverts the entire

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idea the creators had in mind. However, Sarris's notion became more popular in the public eye when used on popular and well-known directors, such as the ones analyzed previously.

Critic and theorist Pauline Kael wrote that Sarris's breakdown of the auteur theory in "Notes on Auteur Theory" (1962) relies on "incongruous premises and incorrect assumptions" (Grant 54). Kael considered Sarris to "lack rigor" and be "undisciplined" (Gerstner and Staiger 9). Some theorists hold Sarris in a similar position to the French New Wave critics with their star-struck criticism and Sarris's unwavering dedication to the Hollywood director. Many critics agree that auteur theory is fraught with logical problems (Kipen 63). For example, auteurism unnaturally elevates the director's place within production and judges films based on their director rather than as an individual artistic work (Gerstner and Staiger 39). Even the original writers of auteurism did not intend it as theory of cinema; this was an interpretation perpetrated by Sarris (Grant 76). In fact, Thomas Schatz claims auteurism "would not be worth bothering with if it hadn't...effectively [stalled] film history and criticism in a prolonged state of adolescent romanticism" (Braudy and Cohen 524). Graham Petrie says auteurism evades "all the sordid and tedious details of power conflicts and financial interests that are an integral part of any major movie project" (Grant 110). On a movie set, the director's word is art, but the producer's word is law. The producer keeps a film on budget and on time, if he's doing his job. The director works for the producer unless they are the same person. Therefore the producer curbs the director's vision—his authorship. It is "naïve and often arrogant" to assume the director is the only author that matters in the filmmaking process (Grant 112).

Eckert complains there is "so much oversimplification, obtuseness, and downright unfairness running through the whole debate" (Grant 103). Historically, critics have attempted to design formulas and methods with which to recognize auteurs separately from others. However, these methods "dumb down" the art into a matter of numbers and tally marks that destroy the purpose of analysis: to better appreciate the artistry present. Eckert holds that while coding as part of a "careful, logical system" can assist the critic in his research, there are too many variables to simply lay conclusions down as immutable law (Grant 105).

### III. Writer Theory

Holding generally the supremacy of the director in the construction of a film, auteur theory ignores the writers, the studios, and the collaboration that goes into completing a motion picture project. David Kipen considers his Schreiber—Yiddish for writer—theory to be worthy of the same consideration as auteur theory because it considers the party who creates rather than tells the story (17). In *The Schreiber Theory* (2006), Kipen lays out one of the most "radical rewrites" of authorship theory (19). Irving Thalberg said, "The writer is the most important person in Hollywood" (Kipen 13). Since Andrew Sarris's "Notes on Auteur Theory" (1962), anti-auteur critics have espoused screenwriters as the authors for their contribution to conception and drafting of the story (Kipen 29).

In the silent film era, a director's power over story was unquestionable due to a lack of any real screenplay (Macgowan 307). Early screenwriting obviously drew from theater, but it was also influenced by cartoons and slideshows (Azlant 228). In 1889, the Biograph studio separated writing as its own "branch of production" (Azlant 230). Around the turn of the century, filmmakers began to move beyond simple outlining to a more complex narrative structure (Azlant 231). For the first time, filmmakers began to see writing the story as an integral part of the filmmaking process. One of the first screenwriters, Roy McCardell, was paid a "princely sum" of \$150 per week: an average \$125 more than the average newspaper man (Azlant 233).

A narrative film must begin with a screenplay (Hatfield 2). Simply put, one cannot build a skyscraper without a blueprint. So who writes the story? As basic as it may sound, the individual or group who put the words to paper creates the story. A writer is the architect of the movie, while the director and his crew are the foreman and construction workers. Buildings are credited to their architect, not their builder. A critic cannot assume that the director's contribution is "automatically of major significance" (Grant 111). The original French auteur critics began to find more interest in a film's script than its direction once they began making films of their own (Grant 112). As they began writing and directing their own productions, the critics saw the importance a script had on the outcome of a film. Kipen even gives credence to director John Huston for his great understanding of novellas as premiere works from which to adapt films and names him a "schreiberist" filmmaker for his credit as a writer-director (Kipen 26).

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In response to Sarris's pantheon, critic Richard Corliss created his own list of great film writers. Corliss surveyed writers' works for "themes and idiosyncrasies" that made each writer unique (Kipen 27). These "schreiberist" writers include classic names like Ben Hecht, with a filmography including *Scarface* (1932), *His Girl Friday* (1939), *Monkey Business* (1952) and Academy Award-winning *Underworld* (1927). Hecht infused his "trademark cynicism and racy vitality" in all of his work (Kipen 27). Hecht worked repeatedly with director and producer Howard Hawks because of their similar view on character and cinematic language (Liukkonen). Hecht would go on to work uncredited with Hawks on other projects. Hecht recognized the writer's place in Hollywood movies when he said, "Writing a good movie brings a writer about as much fame as steering a bicycle. It gets him, however, more jobs" (Liukkonen). Hecht's opinion represents the position of a writer in director-focused Hollywood.

However, writer theory breaks apart on the issues of creative control. Once a script is sold, the writer loses control of the final outcome of their idea. Directors are free to rework, edit, and interpret a screenplay "nearer to their heart's desire" (Macgowan 307). Writers often have no control in the interpretation of their story (Sellors 266). In *Blade Runner*, once Ridley Scott was given the script, he was able to ask for rewrites and edits that fit his vision rather than the writer's (*Dangerous Days*). Scott and producer Michael Deeley brought on another screenwriter—David Peoples—to continue work on Hampton Fancher's original script. They wanted to simplify a concept that had become too "cerebral" (*Dangerous Days*). Fancher was adamantly against going "commercial" with *Blade Runner*, but he admits that the movie would not have happened unless he gave up control (*Dangerous Days*). Unless the writer is also director, he is at the mercy of the director to carry out the vision of the screenplay. As mentioned previously, Kubrick exerted heavy control over his screenplays, even to the point of discounting writing partners like Jim Thompson (Naremore 68). Another key example is *The Searchers* (1956), written by Frank Nugent and directed by John Ford. There are "sharp differences between what is in the screenplay and what we now see on screen" because Ford's directorial vision took control of the process from the outset (Eckstein 3). "Crucial scenes" were deleted from the script on set and new ones were added (Eckstein 4).

Corliss notes that screenwriters suffer from being credited for no work, not being credited for work, and multiple writers being credited for the same work (Kipen 28). This confuses the idea of writer authorship because it becomes harder to analyze writers as authors when there is no consistency to their credited contribution. While Kipen claims "collaboration doesn't preclude analysis," it makes it significantly more difficult to "give credit where credit is due" (Kipen 29).

## IV. Collaborative Theory

Paul Sellors claims that authorship—whether for novel, film, or fine art—is an issue of intention (264). He argues the causal party behind the communication of the media in question is the author. This concept is not exclusive to a single person, but rather, it can be applied broadly to the studio, the director, and the writer if they all play a part in producing the final product. The contributions of the cinematographer and the editor also cannot be ignored in bringing the moving image to the screen (Grant 111). Films are not created by a single consciousness (Grant 193). They come together as part of the collective effort by artists and technicians. Collective authorship comes from group intentionality moving towards a common goal (Sellors 268).

Sellors' concept of authorship comes from studies across media and disciplines that avoid the complications that film authorship presents (263). To Sellors, the author intentionally creates an utterance (Sellors 264). He defines utterance as an action of expression or communication. As applied to filmmaking, movies communicate a story. Therefore, the author(s) of a film is the party(s) who possesses the most intentionality behind the making of a film. Sellors then presents the issue of control: whether or not intentionality covers control. Sellors believes an intentional party will exert control in a production, and therefore, control does not need to be explicitly stated in defining authorship because it is implied (266). As to issues of lost control, Sellors concedes we are unable to add mechanisms to evaluate to what extent control was lost (266). A studio executive's power over a production is less tangible than an art director's. In instances like *Alien 3*, where Fincher lost control of the final outcome of his film, his authorship is diminished due to the studio exerting control and intentionality over him (Swallow 60). Because anecdotal evidence can indicate issues of control versus intentionality, it increases the difficulty in assigning authorship because of the varying and disparate inputs a film can have.

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Authorship comes from the “mutual interaction” between the world created and the creators (Gerstner and Staiger 12). While the writers, directors, and producers create the work, the cinematographers, editors, and animators create the world that we perceive as the work. It is through this interaction that we view a whole, and it is this whole that is authored by the talent and crew. Therefore, the perceived world of a film is a collaborative whole that is authored by multiple artists and craftsmen. Films have many components that come together in “some degree of coherency” (Sellors 268). This coherency is due to the audience’s perception of the whole rather than the parts. Rather than simply observing a camera angle, wardrobe choice, or an acting performance, the audience perceives the entire film as a single entity. This renders the director-centric theory of coherency hollow because the director’s contribution is only part of the whole we view (Sellors 268).

“The author is dead,” proclaims Michel Foucault (Caughie 282). Film is a primarily collaborative medium, so it would seem odd that theorists are constantly searching for the singular artist responsible for authorship (Gerstner and Staiger 5). Director-centric auteur theory could not even hold up Truffaut’s own films. The realization of Truffaut’s vision in *Four Hundred Blows* (1959) “necessitated...the use of an experienced screenwriter, a leading cinematographer, and a youthful surrogate [actor]” to bring Truffaut’s biographical story to screen (Carringer 374). In fact, critics now recognize motion pictures having plural authors rather than a singular artistic force (Carringer 374). One must suspend the idea of single authorship in order to properly analyze a production from a collaborative standpoint (Carringer 377). This suspension allows the critic to explore performers, production staff, and even the studio backing the project as co-artists for the motion picture. It also directly contradicts both auteur and Schreiber theories of film authorship. However, collaborative theory prevents a critic from falling into the dogmatic pitfalls and harsh criticism faced by Sarris for being too narrow and simple in his assignment of authorship.

Collaboration theory also accounts for the contribution each artist or craftsman makes to the film, including above-the-line (director, producer, leading actors) and below-the-line jobs (grips, gaffers, extras) (Gerstner and Staiger 41). While certainly a motion picture’s personality can be linked to its major creators—director, producer, leading actors—all those who contribute play a part in its nuances that may go unnoticed by simple pattern analysis (Grant 80). While a visionary director like Ridley Scott may draw up his own set designs and be integral in the creation of those sets, he will certainly not build the entire set by himself (*Dangerous Days*). The producer can be considered the most responsible party in the production of a film because his or her role demands gathering the cast and crew necessary to pull off the production (Movie Staff). Once the necessary craftsman are in place, the producer becomes in charge of logistics rather than storytelling; this role falls to the director and to whom he chooses to delegate certain tasks. However, the producer retains rights of the film; the crew does not (Movie Staff). The production designer delegates set, costume, and makeup design to the necessary departments in order to carry out the director’s and the producer’s vision (Movie Staff). The director of photography oversees the camera and lighting crews and makes what the director sees in his or her head work in the lens of the camera. Perhaps multiple writers collaborate on writing a film, like Hitchcock’s *Suspicion* (Worland 7).

Like a sports team, a film crew creates a collective intention when each individual joins the group with the same goal in mind (Sellors 268). This means that a film crew, including craftsmen and talent, can become an “author” for Sellors’s definition of authorship. Their intentionality renders them a “filmic author” capable of creating an artistic product. Sellors concedes that not all roles will be included in collective authorship, such as catering services. A member of collective authorship must be an “actual or potential member of a cooperative activity” (Sellors 269). Not only this, but authorship is dependent on contribution. To determine authorship in the collective, one must ascertain an individual’s contributions to the overall film and how it relates to the final product (Sellors 270). This relates back to the earlier concept of the interaction of the world created by the work and the work itself. While a single set-builder’s contribution may be physically small, the set piece’s impact on the film may be significant; therefore, the set-builder’s contribution is significant.

Of course, as we continue to break down the complexities of collaborative authorship, we begin to run into similar problems faced by Schreiber theory. It is easier to point to above-the-line cast and crew for authorship for their major contribution to a production rather than dig deep into the credits to explain collective authorship. While collective authorship is much more pleasing to a realist studying film, more specific authorship is needed to effectively discuss a film in literature such as film reviews. Auteur and Schreiber theory present much simpler ways of discussing authorship in the academic and public spheres because of their ease of understanding and lack of need for empirical research.

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## V. Confounding Variables

Schatz argues that films attributed to auteur directors are not “simply of individual human expression” but a product of studio executive and key crew influences (Braudy and Cohen 525). A film is a combination of talent, financial, and labor factors. Auteur critic Jean-Louis Comolli notes even “independent” films are subject to these influences (Braudy and Cohen 688). Therefore, films will always be subject to financial backers’ desires for stories to be told. If financiers don’t like a movie’s story, they will not fund it. This is inescapable. Sellors’s argument of intentionality then shifts to the position of choosing the financiers as the “authors” of a film, which few critics would recognize as an artistic force.

Just as unavoidable are the limitations of genre. Genres come from the action on which a film concentrates most of its attention (Braudy and Cohen 556). Early gangster films were defined as much by their genre as their writers and directors. The films followed given conventions and clichés in order to appeal to an audience and access a certain world in which the filmmakers wished to tell a story. Genre films have traditionally had very strong ties to the studios that produce them, making authorship very muddy (Braudy and Cohen 526). Pierre Kast, a contributor to the *Cahiers du Cinema*, says that “the distributors really control production and they display a complete lack of imagination” (Hillier 32). Studio authorship is evident in 1930’s gangster films predominantly produced by Warner Brothers (Grant 170). During this time, Warner Brothers produced a vast majority of the gangster films made, so their studio executives were able to control much of what went into the films to ensure they matched the studio’s brand. During the same time period, MGM was well known for big budget musical and dramatic productions. So, it is difficult to analyze authorship in this context because a major contributing factor is the studio’s niche. The mass production of films by studios can create a cookie-cutter effect, which blurs the lines of authorship between the studio and film crews.

Another limitation is the lack of data concerning filmmaker intention behind individual motion pictures. Noel Carroll wonders why critics would rather assume hypothetical theses rather than ask an author his actual intentions (Grant 173). Critics chose to limit themselves by not asking directors of their methods and concepts behind production. Truffaut and Schickel sought to remedy this by conducting interviews of Hitchcock and Scorsese, respectively. However, the depth of these analyses is rare, especially considering the number of directors in the industry. The Director’s Guild of America represents over 15,000 “members of the directorial team” (Director’s Guild of America). Comparatively, the amount of critical analysis of their directing methods are scarce to none.

## VI. Methods

This research will look at filmmakers Ridley Scott and Terry Gilliam through analysis of the feature length behind the scenes of documentaries *Dangerous Days* and *Lost in La Mancha*, respectively. It will analyze their methods using the above theories for a case study. Using these features, as compared to featurettes, allows a more comprehensive look at the film and the process. Summary of the production of these films also allows for a more in-depth and look at directors’ work, which is more in line with case study analysis.

Each case study will provide evidence for each director’s production methods. Interviews and scenes will be referenced to provide examples of auteur, Schreiber, or collaborative production methods. This evidence will then be compared to theory to provide practical support for said theory. Evidence will not be cited directly as it will draw from the documentary noted at the beginning of the section.

### ***Case Study: Blade Runner (as documented in Dangerous Days)***

#### **Preproduction**

The screenplay for *Blade Runner* was first penned by Hampton Fancher. Fancher was directed by a friend to the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick. He didn’t immediately like the novel, but saw its potential as a viable screenplay. Dick turned down Fancher’s first drafts because he felt the material was too “dumbed down” and did not reflect his original work. A mutual friend brought Fancher’s scripts to producer Michael Deeley, who chose the title *Blade Runner* for the film. After director Ridley Scott joined the project, he and Fancher began to disagree about the scope of the world set by the screenplay.

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Fancher also differed in opinion over the inclusion of an explicit sex scene in the film. Because of these disagreements, and Fancher's disagreements with Scott and Deeley, David Peoples joined the project as its second writer. Peoples notes that "Ridley was going to make it better, and I was doing his bidding." Deeley diffused Fancher's continued pleas to return to the elegance of his original script by saying, "This is what we need to do to make the movie."

Because of his background in art direction, Scott is known to micromanage his art department. Scott's first jobs in entertainment were as an art director for the BBC. This experience translates into his directing style, particularly on *Blade Runner*. Although Lawrence Paull was the production designer for the film, Scott micromanaged the art and design elements of the set. Scott would often go to the designers himself and approve their work without bothering with the proper hierarchy. Because of Scott's visual style, he felt this level of involvement was paramount to carrying out his vision. Scott would often deliver his own drawings and versions of set pieces to the art department to be made for the sets, rather than having a designer do this work. The one exception was the concept art rendered by Syd Mead. These renderings were done early in the design process and would come to majorly influence Scott's work, so Mead was brought onto the production in a more full-time capacity to design sets and props. When it came down to the production of set elements, Scott said, "You never get what you want." In Scott's eyes, the work of others didn't live up to his ideas. It was these desires of Scott's to bring his dreams to life that drove up costs for the film.

Early in the documentary, Scott said, "I'll get what I want. If you're with me, great. If not, too bad." This perspective on filmmaking is auteuristic and director-centric. As evidenced above, Scott takes a very strong and artistic vision for this production and doesn't allow much room for others to express themselves. Scott notes that the "landscape [set] is a character" in his films, and he wants it to receive the attention accordingly.

### **Production**

Actress Sean Young (playing the character of Rachel) says Scott was "very demanding" on set in both the acting and visual design. Special effects supervisor Douglas Trumbull said that if Scott wanted something, he got it. However, Deeley said Ridley's visual style came at a price, in both finances and morale. Scott's attention to visual elements meant his direction with the actors was lacking, especially with Harrison Ford. Young said Ford was never happy on set because he felt Scott was not giving him enough direction.

Scott's crew and producers agreed that he worked towards perfection, and in order to do that, he shot and printed a lot of takes. One of the film's financiers worried it was too many at the time. However, they came up against his vision, and Scott argued that they hired him for a reason. Scott said, "I don't like discussion. I know exactly what I want." He felt the director isn't meant to "stand there and consult with a dozen people." Dick Hart—lighting gaffer—called Scott an artistic director who liked things a certain way.

Due to Young's age and inexperience, Scott "talked her through" her performances. Scott said directing is a "delicate waltz" because you're dancing the line between realism and professionalism. In order to achieve this control in his scenes, Scott would place and block his actors specifically. While Ford's character in *Blade Runner* is recognized as his best, he did not agree with Scott's directing style. Scott even notes that the film "may be a team thing as well...[but] it's my movie."

### **Postproduction**

There were a lot of debates between Scott and the executives over what was allowed to remain and what had to be cut from the four-hour rough cut. The major shifts were from artistic and "cerebral," as Scott calls it, toward a more cinematic, more commercial experience. The editors complained "all the subtleties were taken out." Because initial rough cuts scared executive producers into making major changes to Scott's visions in the way of cutting scenes and adding a voiceover. Scott reportedly never agreed to the voiceover concept, even though this was an element of Fancher's original script. Ford never believed the voiceover would be used, and in the recording sessions commented the lines were "weird." In these sessions, Ford can be heard laughing after delivering certain lines, finding them ridiculous. Ford attempted to exert some control on the voiceover process by requesting changes. Scott and others felt the voiceover element was too on the nose compared to the film that *Blade Runner* was. However, Scott complied, thinking it would make his work more accessible to a movie-going public.

### **Breakdown**

Based on the evidence provided, we can see Ridley Scott as an auteur filmmaker based on his strict adherence to his personal artistic vision as well as desire to control production. There was little to no artistic collaboration. In fact, Scott only collaborated when the unions necessitated it. In the end, however, Scott

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came up against the confounding variables of the studio system mentioned previously. This did not, however, change his process or mindset. Rather, it was as if he disowned the early versions of *Blade Runner* until the “Final Cut” version came out.

### **Case Study: *Lost in La Manch* (the making of Terry Gilliam’s *Don Quixote*)**

#### **Preproduction**

The story of *Don Quixote* appeals to Terry Gilliam’s taste in film, as noted by his past films like *Brazil*, which features a character struggling against insurmountable odds without a firm grasp on reality. Early in preproduction, Gilliam made himself available to his crew for suggestions and questions to avoid “making a fool of [himself].” He relied on these other artists and craftsmen to turn his ideas into reality. Gilliam thought of himself as more of a resource rather than leader in production because he had been developing the project for so long. This is due in part to Gilliam’s role as writer-director, so he was a major creative force in the story phase of the film. However, moving into the design phase, Gilliam relied heavily on his art department to bring the story to life visually. Gilliam was not concerned with designing every element himself, but he did ask for changes when the designs conflicted with the story.

Facing budgetary and logistical constraints early on, Gilliam turned to his producer and assistant director to make things happen for the production. The assistant director was responsible for coordinating meetings between Gilliam and the busy actors, which led to collaborating sessions between Gilliam and these actors. The crew was in “sheer panic” approaching production because Gilliam was relying so hard on his crew to make things happen that weren’t happening, like finding a sound stage. When Gilliam finally brought in actor Johnny Depp, he allowed Depp to develop an opening scene to explain his character and give himself some back-story. This reinforced Gilliam’s original story by building on the characters he had designed. Commenting on the actors coming together and the sets and costumes finishing for production, Gilliam said, “It’s going to be beautiful.”

#### **Production**

When Gilliam arrived on set, his assistant director and art crew had already been working on setting the scene. However, it was Gilliam’s reliance on his crew that led to some initial problems. Scenes he believed to have been rehearsed with the extras had not been done because he allowed this duty to be taken by an assistant director. Gilliam believed in using his crew for the duties they were assigned rather than micro-managing over their shoulders. This collaborative effort made the process more cumbersome.

When the weather began to change unexpectedly, Gilliam consulted his local crew about how to proceed. They made suggestions based on their knowledge of the area and the weather. Instead of blundering ahead with his own ideas, he took their suggestions in stride to make the most of their production days. “There is a very clear plan,” he said, and he wanted to make the plan work with the help of his crew. Except for occasionally taking the camera under his own control, Gilliam defaulted to his experienced technicians to pull off the shots. He relied heavily on his assistant director to “hold this thing together” because of his [the assistant director’s] dedication to the project.

#### **Breakdown**

Because this film never made it to post production, we don’t know how Gilliam would have continued with his process. However, based on the evidence we can see that Gilliam is a more collaborative filmmaker, relying on the crew around him to create the world of the film. While Gilliam created the story, he was not a perfectionist about the visual elements. This left room for his cast and crew to bring their own ideas. This was a prime example of collaborative filmmaking both technically and artistically.

## **Acknowledgments**

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# Pay for Play: Analysis of the Image Restoration Strategies of High Profile College Athletes

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## Abstract

*This study sought to explore the college athletic landscape through a Crisis Communications perspective. Using William Benoit's "Theory of Image Restoration" as a framework, this study employed a case-study approach to analyze the image restoration strategies of three high profile college football players following scandals. The study found a consistent use of traditional strategies such as mortification, corrective action, and denial from the athletes and associated parties. This research demonstrates the level of prominence that college athletes have been elevated to and concludes they be recognized from a public relations standpoint accordingly. Given the national attention and loyalty that college athletics receive, this study would provide an important foundation for future research on a rapidly evolving section of society as well.*

## I. Introduction

College athletics have been engrained in American culture for nearly as long as the institutions of higher learning themselves. These programs are more than just participatory sports for students, they are a unique aspect of American society. Zealous fan devotion has elevated college athletics to a level of prominence that is largely unparalleled in the world of American sports.

With a devoted fan base and a national spotlight, college athletics have become extremely profitable as well. Nearly every party involved with college sports, whether it is universities, athletic conferences, coaches, television networks, retailers, even the local communities, make upwards of millions, even billions, through the performance of student-athletes.<sup>1</sup> These profits continue to increase as the scope of these programs spreads, with many now referring to the world of college sports as "big business."<sup>2</sup>

Scandals have been a consistent presence in sports over the past century, and college athletics are

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1 Taylor Branch, "The Shame of College Sports - Magazine - The Atlantic." The Atlantic — News and analysis on politics, business, culture, technology, national, international, and life â TheAtlantic.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1969/12/the-shame-of-college-sports/8643/>>.

2 Taylor Branch, "The Shame of College Sports - Magazine - The Atlantic." The Atlantic, College Football Bowl Games: Millions on the Line | AccountingWEB.com." AccountingWEB.com | Your Profession. Your Community.. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.accountingweb.com/item>

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far from being an exception. Scandals involving student athletes have become increasingly commonplace, as the world of college sports has received increasingly more and more spotlight. The causes of these scandals are numerous, although the majority inevitably stem from the NCAA's strict prohibition of athletes receiving any sort of compensation for their athletic prowess. Regardless, these scandals garner extensive attention and are heavily scrutinized by a variety of parties.

Due to the popularity and profits associated with college athletics, there is a staggering amount of responsibility tied into the actions of these young individuals. The very reputation of universities, companies, and entire communities often go hand in hand with the actions of their athletes. Thus, it is imperative that high-profile scandals involving college athletes are dealt with in a timely and effective manner.

The following study utilizes a case study approach to explore the scandals of three high-profile college football players: Terrelle Pryor of Ohio State University, A.J. Green of the University of Georgia, and Cam Newton of Auburn University. The study then analyzes the image restoration efforts on behalf of each player and compares them with the established literature on the subject.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, this study will answer the following research questions and ideally add further depth to the field of sports public relations.

- Do the crisis management efforts of high-profile college athletes coincide with the strategies established by scholars on the subject?
- From a crisis management perspective, should high-profile college athletes be viewed in the same light as professional ones?
- What crisis management strategies are effective in confronting the scandal of a high-profile college athlete?
- Do the involved athletes undertake crisis management efforts, or do the Universities assume control of the situation?
- What caveats are unique to the college athlete when employing a crisis management strategy?

## II. Literature Review

### ***Defining Crisis and Crisis Management***

Crises can come in any number of forms. Whether it is organizational, individual, or another manifestation, crises have attracted significant academic attention. As a result, there are a variety of definitions associated with the term "crisis" stemming from established literature.

According to Dan P. Millar and Robert L. Heath, a crisis is "typically defined as an untimely but predictable event that has actual or potential consequences for stakeholders' interests as well as the reputation of the organization suffering the crisis."<sup>4</sup> Timothy Coombs echoes a similar definition of a crisis as "an unpredictable, major threat that can have a negative effect on the organization, industry, or stakeholders if handled improperly."<sup>5</sup> Steven Fink takes his definition one step further, emphasizing the presence of instability and impending change: "Crisis is an extraordinary event that results in an unstable time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending."<sup>6</sup> Other scholars, such as Irvine & Millar and Fearn-Banks, shift the focal point of their definition of the potential outcomes of a scandal, such as intense media scrutiny or a loss of reputation.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Analyzed works include: *Responding to Crisis: A Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication* by Dan P. Millar and Robert L. Heath, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* by W. Timothy Coombs

4 Dan P. Millar and Robert L. Heath. *Responding to Crisis a Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication*. pg. 2

5 Timothy W. Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999. Print. Pg. 2

6 Steven Fink, *Crisis management: Planning for the inevitable*. New York, NY: AMACOM, re-quoted by Dan P. Millar and Robert L. Heath. *Responding to Crisis a Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication*. pg. 2

7 Dan P. Millar and Robert L. Heath. *Responding to Crisis a Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication*.

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While there are varying definitions of the word “scandal,” scholars clearly agree that a scandal has the potential to cause serious damage to the parties involved. This damage can manifest itself in any number of ways, as scholars, such as Fearn-Banks and Coombs, point out. He states that there are four critical steps to crisis management: prevention, preparation, performance, and learning. Millar and Heath, on the other hand, use three straightforward stages: before, during, and after.<sup>9</sup> The strategies utilized during these stages play a critical role in effectively responding to a crisis and minimizing its damage.

### ***Crisis Management within Athletics***

While significant literature has been established on crisis management, scholars have more recently turned their attention to the field as it pertains to the world of athletics, noting that it is “a unique realm of public relations.”<sup>9</sup> High-profile athletes and athletic organizations are at the center of public attention and have numerous stakeholders invested in their public images. As a result, crisis management efforts within athletics are of the utmost importance.<sup>10</sup>

Scholars have established a number of separate definitions for the term “crisis” as it pertains specifically to athletics. One scholar writes, “Any threat to a sport entity’s image, reputation, and perception constitutes a crisis, because an entity’s reputation is one of its major assets.”<sup>11</sup> Brazeal echoes a similar relationship, writing, “Ultimately, the ‘market value’ of an athlete’s image hinges on his or her public reputation.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, scholars have clearly established the glaring importance of public reputation, and, in turn, crisis management, within athletics.

Partially due to a rapidly evolving communications landscape, crises within athletics are of a particularly high-profile nature. Media outlets such as television networks and newspapers are far more inclined to pay them specific, added attention. As a result, scholars have noted that public relations practitioners are too often tasked with reactive crisis management efforts rather than proactive ones.<sup>13</sup> In her analysis of NFL player Terrell Owen’s image reparation strategy, Brazeal acknowledges that athletes can no longer mend relationships internally when dealing with a scandal; rather, they must make a public apology and address a variety of parties.<sup>14</sup> It is important to recognize that there is an established body of work on the analysis of public apologies by athletes, as this study will aim to conduct similar work on high-profile college athletes.

With the increasing prominence and profitability of athletics on a global scale, public relations practitioners have clearly recognized the importance of managing crises and scandals within sports. That being said, the scholars of this subject have focused solely on professional athletes. This study will aim to demonstrate that college athletics are on a similar pedestal to professional sports from both a celebrated and financial standpoint, and thus the crisis management efforts of high-profile college athletes should be given the same consideration as those of professionals. In doing so, this study aims to fill a void within the established literature of crisis management and sports public relations as a whole.

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pg. 5, Irvine, R.B. & Millar, D.P (1998). *Crisis communication and management: How to gain and maintain control*. San Francisco, CA: International Association of Businesses Communicators.

8 Dan P. Milar and Robert L. Heath. *Responding to Crisis a Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication*. pg. 5-9

9 Toni Bruce and Tahlila Tini, *Unique crisis response strategies in sports public relations: Rugby league and the Case for Diversion*. *Public Relations Review* [serial online]. June 2008;34(2):108-115. Available from: *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, Ipswich, MA. Accessed March 6, 2013.

10 LeAnn Brazeal, “The Image Repair Strategies of Terrell Owens.” *Public Relations Review* 34.2 (2008): 145-150. *Sciencedirect.com*. Web. 6 Mar. 2013.

11 Mark P. Pedersen, Kimberly S. Miloch, and Pamela C. Laucella. *Strategic Sport Communication*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2007. Print.

12 LeAnn Brazeal, “The Image Repair Strategies of Terrell Owens.” pg. 145

13 Toni Bruce and Tahlila Tini, *Unique crisis response strategies in sports public relations: Rugby league and the case for diversion*, LeAnn Brazeal, “The Image Repair Strategies of Terrell Owens.”

14 LeAnn Brazeal, “The Image Repair Strategies of Terrell Owens.” pg. 146

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## **Image Restoration Strategies<sup>15</sup>**

As scholars such as Miloch and Brazeal have clearly established with their work, athletes are particularly bound to their public image, making the implementation of effective crisis management strategies that much more imperative. For the purpose of this study, Benoit's theory of image restoration will be employed to analyze the public statements made by Terrelle Pryor, A.J. Green, Cam Newton, and their respective universities.

Benoit's theory was chosen largely in part because scholars have established the value of the theory as it relates to professional athletes. For example, Blair Bernstein found that Tiger Woods effectively utilized Benoit's strategy of mortification to shift media scrutiny away from his sex scandal in 2009.<sup>16</sup> In similar fashion, scholars Bruce and Tini found that Australian rugby players relied heavily on Benoit's strategies during a highly publicized salary cap scandal.<sup>17</sup> Thus, his theory is well suited to rhetorically analyze statements made by high-profile individuals, as this study aims to do.

Before proceeding into the outline of Benoit's theory, it is important to recognize the distinction between the terms "crisis management" and "image restoration." The two are often used interchangeably, but it is worth noting that image restoration falls under the umbrella of crisis management. That being said, the two terms will be used interchangeably within this paper, as image restoration efforts by the athletes and associated parties are its primary analytic focus.

Benoit breaks his image restoration strategies into five broad categories: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and feature sub-strategies as well.

### **Denial**

Benoit cites several authors in noting that the individual in question can either deny that the event in question ever occurred or deny the fact that they are guilty for it. The individual in question may also utilize evidence, alibis, or pertinent information to add further weight to their denial. Benoit also cites the passing of blame as an important, and often more effective, variant of denial.

### **Evading Responsibility**

When denial of a certain act is not viable, which is often the case, evading responsibility for it becomes the next viable option. The first of four strategy variations is asserting that the accused party was provoked into their actions by another wrongful act. In this way, the accused individual justifies their own actions by passing blame onto another party and reducing their own responsibility.

Benoit defines the second variation, defeasibility, as "pleading lack of information about or control over important factors in the situation." Thus, the accused attempts to reduce their responsibility by affirming that they did not have sufficient information or control to handle the situation effectively.

The third variation of evading responsibility relies on accidents and aims to pass the blame to their arbitrary nature. The fourth and final variation of this strategy does not particularly evade responsibility, but rather attributes it to good intentions.

### **Reducing Offensiveness**

The third image restoration strategy employed by Benoit is reducing offensiveness. An accused individual may attempt to reduce "the degree of ill feeling experienced by the audience" through six methods: bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking one's accuser, and compensation.

Bolstering is one of the more common strategies used by individuals when responding to a crisis, as studies of superstar athletes such as Terrell Owens and Tiger Woods clearly show.<sup>18</sup> The bolstering method

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<sup>15</sup> This citation encompasses the following section: William L. Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. Print

<sup>16</sup> Blair Bernstein, "Crisis Management and Sports in the Age of Social Media: A Case Study Analysis of the Tiger Woods Scandal,"

<sup>17</sup> Toni Bruce and Tahlila Tini, *Unique crisis response strategies in sports public relations: Rugby league and the case for diversion*.

<sup>18</sup> Blair Bernstein, "Crisis Management and Sports in the Age of Social Media: A Case Study Analysis of the

attempts to increase positive sentiments towards the accused individual by highlighting past actions or positive attributes.

Minimization, on the other hand, attempts to convince the audience that the event in question is not as damaging or scandalous as it has been made out to be. Differentiation aims to achieve a similar effect with the audience by comparing it to similar, yet more notorious acts. Similarly, the fourth variation of this strategy, transcendence, attempts to reduce offensiveness by putting the event in question into a different context. While the individual may seem at fault in the initial frame of reference, this method aims to alleviate feelings of ill will by shifting the perception of the audience.

The fifth variation of reducing offensiveness aims to attack the accusers. The accused individual will allege that the accusers deserved what happened or that they were in some way responsible.

The sixth and final variation of this strategy is compensation. Compensation is very straightforward in that the accused individual offers some type of reimbursement to reduce sentiments of ill will.

### ***Corrective Action***

Corrective action, Benoit's fourth image restoration strategy, involves the accused individual promising to fix the problem. This corrective action can take one of two forms: the individual can work to return things to the way they were before the incident in question, or the individual can make assurances of adjustments that will prevent any similar incidents from occurring in the future.

### ***Mortification***

Benoit's fifth and final component of his image restoration theory is mortification. Mortification is the most direct of the aforementioned strategies, as the accused individual admits responsibility for the actions in question and seeks forgiveness for them. Benoit adds as a side note that mortification also couples effectively with corrective action.

Benoit cites these five strategies and their associated variants as options for individuals or parties seeking to mend their public reputation. Using this theory as a basis, this study will aim to see which image restoration strategies high-profile college athletes are employing and the implications associated with these actions.

### ***The Prominence and Profitability of College Athletics*<sup>19</sup>**

In order to grasp the worth of this study and the void in established literature it aims to fill, it is necessary to outline the backdrop behind the scandals of high-profile college athletes. By understanding the world of college athletics and how it has evolved in recent time, the reader can better understand why scandals have become more commonplace and, to a greater extent, why the crisis management efforts of these athletes are so important.

The fame and profitability of modern college athletics are not mutually exclusive; the two are deeply interwoven in a reciprocal relationship. As profits increase from television deals, merchandising, and other lucrative sources, the scope of college athletics only broadens further. Thus, the finances behind the current college athletic landscape speak volumes regarding its national status.

The gargantuan profits behind modern college athletics can be seen along the entire spectrum. Take, for example, one of the focuses of this study: Cam Newton, former quarterback for Auburn University. During his improper benefits scandal (which will be outlined later in this section), Newton wore 15 corporate logos while on the field, ranging all the way from his helmet to his cleats, as part of the university's \$10.6 million deal with Under Armour. Auburn happens to be part of the illustrious Southeastern Conference, which became the first individual athletic league to crack the billion-dollar mark. Not far behind, the Big Ten athletic conference netted just over \$900 million that same year. Members of these conferences, such as Penn State, Michigan, and Georgia, earn between \$40 and \$80 million in profits each year from athletics, after they pay their coaches multi-million dollar contracts. These figures stem from a number of sources, including ticket Tiger Woods Scandal," Brazeal, LeAnn. "The Image Repair Strategies of Terrell Owens."

<sup>19</sup> The following section utilizes information from: Taylor Branch, "The Shame of College Sports - Magazine - The Atlantic." *The Atlantic* — News and analysis on politics, business, culture, technology, national, international, and life @ TheAtlantic.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2011 <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1969/12/the-shame-of-college-sports/8643/>>.

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sales, concession sales, licensing fees, and, most of all, network television contracts. These profits are then distributed to a multitude of associated parties, including the NCAA organization, the University, the respective athletic organization, and television networks. Secondary parties, such as retail and tourism destinations, also benefit financially from the presence of successful college athletic programs.

In December of 2005, the Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection Sub-Committee referred to college football as “big business.” While it is important to recognize where all of this money goes, it is just as important, if not more, to take note of where it does not go. While every party even vaguely associated with college athletic programs consistently earns high-grossing profits, the athletes themselves make nothing at all. This comes as a result of the NCAA’s stance and regulations regarding the sanctity of the “student-athlete” and “amateurism.” The payment, or lack thereof, of college athletes has become a philosophical, financial, and legal debate. Opinions aside, this polarizing situation helps shed light on why scandals have become increasingly present within the world of college athletics. As Branch puts it, “when you combine so much money with such high, almost tribal, stakes, corruption is likely to follow.”

### **III. Case Study Analysis of High-Profile College Athletes**

#### ***Overview of Terrelle Pryor and “Tattoo Gate”***

Terrelle Pryor’s impressive athletic resume at Jeannette High School in Pennsylvania gave him a number of options on where to continue playing in college, a decision which Sports Illustrated deemed “the most anticipated signing day announcement in history.”<sup>20</sup> Pryor chose to attend Ohio State University, where he quickly became a household name. He was voted as the Big Ten’s freshman of the year, and later led Ohio State to a victory in the storied Rose Bowl in 2010, a game in which he was also voted MVP.<sup>21</sup> Despite all of his success, Pryor left Ohio State on sour terms following a high-profile scandal that is aptly now referred to as “Tattoo Gate.”

In December of 2010, reports began to surface of an NCAA investigation regarding several infractions by Ohio State football players, including receiving improper benefits.<sup>22</sup> After continuous reports and both internal and external investigations of the accusations, the University opted to self-report the infractions to the NCAA. Pryor, along with five teammates, admitted to selling game memorabilia, such as their conference championship rings, in exchange for cash, as well as to receiving improper benefits from a local tattoo parlor in the form of numerous free and discounted tattoos.<sup>23</sup> Given the increasing occurrence of improper benefit scandals at the time, Pryor’s national fame, and Ohio State’s storied football history, “tattoo gate” received serious media scrutiny. Having been thrust into a national spotlight, Pryor and the University scrambled to respond to the scandal effectively.

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20 “Pryor announcement to be most anticipated in history”. CNN. 2008-02-05. Retrieved 4/18/13

21 “Ohio State Buckeyes vs. Oregon Ducks - Box Score - January 01, 2010 - ESPN.” ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Apr. 2013. <<http://scores.espn.go.com/ncf/boxscore?gameId=300012483>>.

22 Brandon Castel, “Timeline on NCAA investigation.” NEWS. Ohio State Football, Basketball, Hockey, Baseball, Wrestling, Softball, and More. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.the-ozone.net/football/2010/SugarBowl/NCAAtimeline.htm>

23 “Five Ohio State Buckeyes, including Terrelle Pryor, must sit out five games in ‘11 - ESPN.” ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports. N.p., 26 Dec. 2010. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=5950873>>.

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**Analysis of “Tattoo Gate” Crisis Response<sup>24 25 26 27</sup>**

On June 14th, 2011, Terrelle Pryor held a press conference to address his scandal at Ohio State and his future as a football player. The press conference marked Pryor’s first public statement following the extremely high-profile scandal, his departure from the program and university, and the firing of the program’s longtime head coach, Jim Tressel. Since he was no longer enrolled at Ohio State, Pryor opted to hire one of the NFL’s most well-known agents, Drew Rosenhaus, before addressing the scandal and entering the NFL supplemental draft. Both Pryor and Rosenhaus spoke during the press conference and did not allow questions to be asked. Their statements will be analyzed below using Benoit’s theory of image restoration.<sup>28</sup>

Despite being the focal point of the NCAA’s investigation and the media’s coverage, Pryor spoke for a mere 97 seconds. An analysis of his statement, in conjunction with Rosenhaus,<sup>29</sup> shows a clear image restoration strategy. Pryor utilized two of Benoit’s methods as the foundation for his statement: mortification and corrective action.

Pryor began his statement by apologizing for his actions, and, in effect, acknowledging his wrongdoing. He apologized directly to the various parties attached to his career at Ohio State, including former head coach Jim Tressel:

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification	<p>“In terms of Ohio State, I’d like to say sorry to the coaching staff, say sorry to my teammates, say sorry to all of Buckeye Nation and all the Buckeye fans across the country. I never meant to hurt anyone directly or indirectly with my conduct off the field and I am truly sorry.”</p> <p>“In terms of coach Jim Tressel, a special shoutout. I’m sorry for what all went down and I apologize with all my heart. I love you just like a father. You taught me a lot and I apologize for putting you in a situation and taking you out of a job and place that you loved to be. I regret the fact that you’re not there any more and I regret the fact that I’m not there any more.”</p>

Pryor showcases Benoit’s method of mortification very cleanly with these quotes as he acknowledges his actions, apologizes for them, and emphasizes his regret regarding the actions and the damage they caused. In stating that he loved Tressel “like a father,” Pryor adds further weight to his apology and the potential for emotional resonance with his audience. This use of mortification allowed Pryor to proceed logically to his next image restoration method, corrective action.

Before addressing his future with football, Pryor added a short but important statement regarding his early departure from the university: “I have nine more credits left at The Ohio State University, and I’d like to come back and graduate some time, finish my degree, and graduate a Buckeye.” This statement marks the shift in Pryor’s strategies from mortification to corrective action. His wish to someday return to school implies a level of corrective action in that he is demonstrating a desire to better himself and to make amends. By specifically expressing a desire to “graduate a Buckeye,” Pryor aims to demonstrate loyalty to the university and eventually win back the favor of the Ohio State fan base.

<sup>24</sup>The following quotes and information contained in this section were taken from citations 14-16

<sup>25</sup> “Terrelle Pryor apologizes, will enter supplemental draft - ESPN.” ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/nfl/news/story?id=6661247>>.

<sup>26</sup> “WKEF-TV ABC 22 News :: News - Raw News - Terrelle Pryor’s Raw press conference clip.” WKEF-TV ABC 22 News :: Dayton, Ohio Local and National News. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Apr. 2013. [http://www.newsnet5.com/dpp/sports/college\\_sports/osu/former-osu-quarterback-terrelle-pryor-apologizes-to-tressel-teammates-fans](http://www.newsnet5.com/dpp/sports/college_sports/osu/former-osu-quarterback-terrelle-pryor-apologizes-to-tressel-teammates-fans)

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Carter, “Terrelle Pryor apologizes to Ohio State: Former Buckeyes quarterback Terrelle Pryor apologizes to Ohio State for scandal - Sun Sentinel.” Featured Articles From The Sun Sentinel. Sun Sentinel, n.d. Web. 9 Apr. 2013. <[http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2011-06-14/sports/fl-terrelle-pryor-apologizes-ohio-sta20110614\\_1\\_terrelle-pryor-jim-tressel-ohio-state](http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2011-06-14/sports/fl-terrelle-pryor-apologizes-ohio-sta20110614_1_terrelle-pryor-jim-tressel-ohio-state)>.

<sup>28</sup> Benoit, William L.. Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: a Theory of Image Restoration Strategies. Pgs.74-82

Following his apologies and statement regarding his degree, Pryor shifted his statement toward the future. The rest of his statement, albeit very brief, centered around his entering the NFL supplemental draft and his desire to be a better person both on and off the field:

Strategies	Quotes
Corrective Action	“In terms of my future, I am entering the supplemental draft and am working hard every single day on the field and off the field to be a better quarterback. One of my goals is to be the best person I can possibly be off the field and to be the best role model I can be off the field.”

Here, Pryor’s emphasis on personal betterment highlights his use of corrective action. He stresses that he is working hard not only to be a better quarterback, but a better person as a whole. This assures his audience that he is doing his best to move past his wrongdoings and grow from them, rather than evade responsibility and continue to make poor decisions. By referencing his work ethic and goals, he implies that there is a process for change in mind; he is actively working to move past his transgressions. His specific use of the term “role model” is especially indicative of corrective action, as he implies that his future actions will be positive ones far removed from his past.

After 97 seconds, Pryor finished his statement unceremoniously and allowed his agent to take the reins. Rosenhaus spoke for several minutes and employed a similar strategy to Pryor. His statement utilized a combination of mortification and corrective action methods on behalf of his client. In addition, a large portion of his statement was spent bolstering Pryor as a football player and human being. Selections from Rosenhaus’ statement was analyzed below.

Rosenhaus began his statement by referring to Pryor as an “outstanding young man” and acknowledging his actions at Ohio State. Much like Pryor, he utilized mortification early and openly as a bridge to other methods of image restoration:

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification	“He is a young man here today who is expressing tremendous remorse. He’s very sad about what has happened to his college career and Ohio State. I can tell you that he is extremely, he’s responsible for the mistakes he’s made. He’s owned up to them. There are no excuses here guys, no excuses at all.”

Rosenhaus’ use of mortification is made very clear here. He emphasizes his client’s regret and responsibility for the events that took place. By noting that there are no excuses, he assures the audience that Pryor fully acknowledges the situation and is taking responsibility for his actions. By noting that Pryor has “owned up” to his actions, he also places him in a positive, responsible light. By being straightforward about Pryor’s actions and remorse, Rosenhaus was then able to transition to his bolstering of Pryor, stating that “the past is now the past for him, and we have to move ahead. There is no point in him looking back except for him to become the best person he can be and I believe in him.” This quote demonstrates a clear transition away from the scandal for Rosenhaus and gears the conversation towards the future, where, as both statements emphasize, Pryor will work to change his ways and become a better person.

Following his use of mortification on behalf of Pryor, Rosenhaus shifted heavily to bolstering. He spoke very highly of Pryor in a number of different respects, ranging from his football prowess to his high character. Using his reputation and experience as credibility, Rosenhaus’ bolstering aims to divert attention from Pryor’s transgressions at Ohio State and highlight positive qualities about his client. Rosenhaus also listed off a series of Pryor’s football accolades during his career at Ohio State, compared him to current successful NFL quarterback Cam Newton, and referred to him as “one of the most gifted quarterbacks that this league has seen.” The table below details Rosenhaus’ bolstering of his client:

Strategies	Quotes
Bolstering	<p>“I am a firm believer after 25 years of experience that Terrelle Pryor will be a great, not a good quarterback, a great quarterback in the National Football League. That he’s going to be a star.”</p> <p>“He has a good heart. I’ve represented a lot of players in the NFL. This young man has character.”</p>

These quotes provide a strong example of Rosenhaus’ bolstering of Pryor. These statements aim to generate positive sentiments from the audience and to combat negative ones generated by the scandal.

He further emphasized Pryor’s high character by utilizing Jim Tressel, the man who lost his job due to Pryor’s actions. Rosenhaus stated that he would not have taken Terrelle as a client had he not received a glowing endorsement from Tressel. He stated that “[Tressel] talked about him like you would talk about a son.” Tressel was the most affected individual by the scandal, so Rosenhaus used his endorsement and positive relationship with Pryor as a major testament to his client’s high character. Rosenhaus continued to heap a variety of praises on his client throughout his statement. His final statements were aimed towards the future, where Rosenhaus assured that his client would be a different, more mature individual by utilizing corrective action:

Strategies	Quotes
Corrective Action	<p>“He won’t make the same mistakes. He loves the game of football. He is going to learn from his mistakes and be a better person from it.”</p> <p>“I hope that the people at Ohio State will embrace him in the future, will forgive him, and will give him an opportunity to be a Buckeye for life. He is going to make it up to those fans.”</p>
Corrective Action/ Defeasibility	<p>“He’s a young man. We all make mistakes. Everybody in this audience has made mistakes at his age. He’ll learn from them, and he won’t make the same ones twice.”</p>

Rosenhaus’ use of corrective action is very clear-cut with these quotes. He assures the audience that the actions at the root of “Tattoo Gate” would not be repeated because his client will learn from them and grow as an individual in the process. This coincides seamlessly with Benoit’s definition of corrective action, as assurances of change would help to soften negative sentiments generated from a public scandal. The third quote also demonstrates a subtle use of the defeasibility method, as Rosenhaus essentially attributes Pryor’s actions to being young and irresponsible. In this way, Pryor is portrayed to be a foolish, impressionable young man rather than a selfish celebrity.

Pryor and Rosenhaus exited the press conference following the conclusion of the latter’s statement. Their statements, when analyzed alongside one another, reveal a distinct use of image restoration strategies. In his short statement, Pryor relied primarily on the use of mortification and corrective action. Rosenhaus followed a similar strategy on behalf of Pryor, with the addition of consistent bolstering regarding his client’s football prowess and high moral character. The use of these strategies is logical in that they allowed for Pryor to apologize for his actions openly and honestly, put the past behind him, and look towards his future in the National Football League. The fallout from “Tattoo Gate” was already behind Pryor at the time of the press conference, so these statements do an effective job of gearing the conversation towards the future rather than dwelling on his past transgressions. NFL prospects often fall in drafts due to “character concerns,” but this press conference was clearly effective in highlighting Pryor’s remorse and high character. The Oakland Raiders selected Pryor in the third round of the NFL Supplemental Draft soon after the press conference. While Pryor and Rosenhaus were able to put “Tattoo gate” behind them, Pryor’s image restoration campaign did not end with his press conference.

Less than a year from his press conference, Pryor once again opted to speak out regarding his transgressions at Ohio State. His statements showcase a starkly different strategy than his press conference. Rather than relying on apologies and promises of change, Pryor flipped the tables by going on the offensive. He utilized the methods of transcendence and attacking his accusers in hopes of providing greater perspec-



tive on “Tattoo Gate.” The following quotes demonstrate Pryor’s use of these image restoration methods:

Strategies	Quotes
Transcendence, Attacking Accusers	<p>“The reason why I did it was to pay my mother’s gas bill and some of her rent. I was telling the NCAA, ‘Please, anything that you can do. I gave my mother this so my sister wouldn’t be cold, so my mother wouldn’t be cold.’ They didn’t have any sympathy for me.”</p> <p>“I don’t think I deserved [being punished] in that way, because of the reason I was doing it. I felt like I was doing God’s work in a way, and I was getting driven into the ground.”</p>

These statements mark a distinct shift in Pryor’s stance on “Tattoo gate” from his initial press conference. They are textbook examples of Benoit’s transcendence method, as he attempts to justify his actions by asserting that he did them for the sake of his family’s well being. In this context, Pryor’s actions seem far less heinous or selfish when they are being used to pay for a heating bill rather than jewelry or a car for himself.

This use of transcendence meshes effectively with the strategies employed in his press conference, as he portrays himself to be a man of high moral character, going so far as to say that he was doing “God’s work.” To further distance himself from the negative sentiments associated with the scandal, Pryor passes some of the blame onto the NCAA. He portrays the NCAA as a callous, tyrannical organization that was punishing him for trying to be a supportive son and brother. By placing his actions in a far different context and passing blame to the NCAA, Pryor both highlighted his high moral character and distanced himself further from the scandal at Ohio State.

### **Overview of A.J. Green and Scandal**

A.J. Green began his football career at Summerville High School in Summerville, South Carolina. He was an extremely productive wide receiver, and would go on to play at the University of Georgia, where he continued to dominate the competition and produce gaudy stats. Green’s career at Georgia was marked by numerous accolades, including being named First-team All-SEC on two separate occasions and the SEC freshman of the year in 2008.<sup>29</sup> Before leaving Georgia, however, Green’s sterling career was marked by an improper benefit scandal.

Following rumors in 2010 that he had received improper benefits at a Miami party that was already being examined, the NCAA launched an investigation and questioned Green regarding the accusations. While examining Green’s bank account, the NCAA noticed a \$1,000 deposit that seemed largely out of place. Although Green denied attending the Miami party in question, he was forthcoming about the deposit and admitted to selling his game-worn 2009 Independence Bowl jersey for extra cash to spend on Spring Break. Although the amount in question was far less than with “Tattoo gate,” the scandal received a large amount of media scrutiny due to Green’s success and the growing debate regarding compensation for high-profile college athletes. While the NCAA handed down a four-game suspension for the infraction, Green and the University aimed to handle the scandal effectively.

### **Analysis of A.J. Green Crisis Response<sup>30 31 32</sup>**

On September 8th, 2010 A.J. Green released a statement through the University of Georgia in response to the four-game suspension the NCAA handed him for selling his jersey. The brief statement can be found below:

29 “A.J. Green Profile - The University of Georgia Bulldogs .” University of Georgia Athletics. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <[http://www.georgiadogs.com/sports/m-footbl/mtt/green\\_aj00.html](http://www.georgiadogs.com/sports/m-footbl/mtt/green_aj00.html)>.

30 The following quotes and information contained in this section were taken from citations 21-22

31 Tim Tucker. “A.J. Green: I sold jersey for ‘extra cash’ during spring break | UGA sports blog.” Blogs about Atlanta news, sports and more | ajc.com, accessAtlanta.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2013. <<http://blogs.ajc.com/uga-sports-blog/2010/09/28/a-j-green-i-sold-jersey-for-extra-cash-during-spring-break/>>.

32 “A.J. Green’s Playing Status Clarified - The University of Georgia Bulldogs .”University of Georgia Athletics. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Apr. 2013. < <http://www.georgiadogs.com/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/090810aad.html> >.

I want to apologize to my coaches, teammates, and the Georgia fans for the mistake in judgment. I very much regret all that has taken place and the distraction that's been caused. I've learned a valuable lesson and hope others can learn from my mistake. I can only focus my attention now on practicing and looking ahead to getting back with my teammates as quickly as possible.

Green's use of image restoration strategies is easily identifiable in this formal statement. He clearly utilizes both mortification and corrective action. He apologizes for his actions, acknowledges his lapse in judgment, and takes responsibility for the negative repercussions he caused. With this out of the way, Green was then able to shift the focus towards the future. He assures personal corrective action by noting that he has learned his lesson and is ready to move past the scandal by re-focusing on his football career. Much like Terrelle Pryor, however, Green had more to say about his actions once the scandal was behind him.

Having served his four-game suspension by the end of September, Green spoke out again regarding his scrutinized actions. While he employed similar strategies to those used in his initial statement, Green was also able to speak more openly about his experience with the scandal. He began by expressing mortification regarding his actions:

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification	<p>"I broke the rule, and I paid my price. And I'm just ready to play again."</p> <p>"I feel like I caused a lot of people pain. Because I feel like if I was out there some of the time we would have had a chance. I beat myself up pretty much over that."</p> <p>"I did something wrong. I deserve it, a penalty for what I'd done."</p>

Much like in his initial statement, Green takes full responsibility for his actions and acknowledges their repercussions. He attempts to distance himself slightly from the scandal by adding that "everybody makes mistakes in life" and "I'm not the type of guy who ever got into trouble here and stuff like that." The former quote marks a use of minimization, while the latter is a bolstering of his personal character. Both methods aim to subtly reduce negative sentiments towards his character and past actions. After taking responsibility for his actions and attempting to distance himself from them, Green then turned to his familiar use of corrective action:

Strategies	Quotes
Corrective Action	<p>"It taught me a valuable lesson. I'm growing up, and I've got to do the right thing."</p> <p>"I feel like I still got stuff to prove, that I'm behind and that I'm going to have a lot of catching up to do."</p>

Both of these statements shift the focus of Green's statement toward the future. He emphasizes a change in his personal character and recognition of right versus wrong. In this way, he assures the audience that he is taking the steps necessary to avoid being involved with a similar scandal down the line. Following this interview, the scandal eventually faded from the spotlight, while Green exploded onto the NFL scene as a wide receiver with the Cincinnati Bengals.

### ***Overview of Cam Newton and Recruiting Scandal***

Cam Newton's road to stardom was, and continues to be, a long and tumultuous one. Hailing from Westlake High School in Atlanta, Georgia, the quarterback opted to attend the University of Florida. After transferring from Florida and attending Blinn Colleg for a year, Newton chose to attend the 2010 season at Auburn University, where he produced historic results and carried himself to an unparalleled level of national popularity. His accomplishments in a single year at Auburn are simply staggering, and provide perspective on his celebrity-like status. Newton led his team to a National Championship, received the storied Heisman Trophy award, was named a consensus All-American, and was also named the Associated Press player of

the year, along with countless other awards and accolades.<sup>33</sup> Despite his impressive athletic feats, Newton's illustrious career at Auburn was marred by a high-profile scandal regarding his recruitment to the University.

In November of 2010, during Newton's historic campaign at Auburn, reports began to emerge of an ongoing NCAA investigation regarding his recruitment to the University.<sup>34 35</sup> The reports alleged that Newton's father, Cecil, had solicited large amounts of cash from universities in exchange for his son's commitment to play with their program the following season. The investigation quickly zeroed in on Mississippi State University when a recruiter alleged that Cecil Newton had told him it would cost between \$100,00 and \$180,000 to have his son play for their program.<sup>3637</sup> Although Newton was suspended for the infraction, he was quickly reinstated when the University stated that he was entirely unaware of the actions of his father and that he had no personal intentions of utilizing an agent to solicit payments for his decision. The NCAA's extensive investigation supported these statements, finding that neither Cam nor Auburn University had engaged in solicitation efforts; only Cecil was found to be guilty of the accusations. Despite the fact that Newton emerged from the scandal without repercussions and went on to punctuate his successful season, his alleged involvement with the scandal sparked intense media scrutiny. Due to his popularity and the continued scrutiny of improper benefit scandals at the time, Newton and the University were forced to acknowledge and respond to the scandal accordingly.

### ***Analysis of Cam Newton Crisis Response***<sup>38 39 40 41</sup>

Newton's situation was unique in that he was not actually found guilty of any infractions by the NCAA and thus faced no tangible repercussions. Newton, his father, the University, and other associated parties remained largely tight-lipped about the scandal while the NCAA conducted their investigation. When Newton was finally found innocent of the accusations and ruled eligible to play by the NCAA, both he and the University spoke out regarding the investigation. The University opted for a straightforward strategy of denial in regard to both Auburn and Newton's involvement. The quotes below demonstrate this strategy:

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33 Cam Newton | Auburn, QB : 2011 NFL Draft Scout Player Profile.» 2013 NFL Draft - CBSSports.com - NFL-DraftScout.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <http://www.nfldraftscout.com/ratings/dsprofile.php?pyid=71142&draftyear=2011&genpos=qb>

34 Charles Goldberg, "Auburn's Cam Newton timeline: From recruitment to NCAA ruling | al.com." Alabama Local News, Breaking News, Sports & Weather - al.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2013.

35 "NCAA investigating Auburn QB Cam Newton's recruitment - NCAA Football - Sporting News." Sporting News - Real Insight. Real Fans. Real Conversations.. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <<http://aol.sportingnews.com/ncaa-football/feed/2010-11/cam-newton-probe/story/ncaa-investigating-cam-newton>>.

36 "Kenny Rogers: Cecil Newton put price tag on Cam Newton for Mississippi State - ESPN." ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=5792707>>.

37 "Report: Cam Newton, father admitted pay-for-play plan - NCAA Football - Sporting News." Sporting News - Real Insight. Real Fans. Real Conversations.. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <<http://aol.sportingnews.com/ncaa-football/feed/2010-11/cam-newton-probe/story/chizik-auburn-ad-defend-caleb-newton-amid-allegations>>.

38 The following quotes and information contained in this section were taken from citations 31-33

39 "Auburn's Cam Newton: I've done nothing wrong - NCAA Football - Sporting News." Sporting News - Real Insight. Real Fans. Real Conversations.. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Apr. 2013. <<http://aol.sportingnews.com/ncaa-football/feed/2010-11/cam-newton-probe/story/auburns-cam-newton-ive-done-nothing-wrong>>.

40 "Cam Newton confident in his actions at Auburn - ESPN." ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Apr. 2013. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=5903485>>.

41 "Auburn Tigers' Cam Newton eligible to play, NCAA says - ESPN." ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2013. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=5870788>>.

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Strategies	Quotes
Denial	<p>“[Auburn] was in no way involved with offering or considering an offer of any recruiting inducement.”</p> <p>“Despite numerous media reports suggesting Newton himself has engaged in wrongdoing, the facts clearly demonstrate Newton has done nothing wrong.”</p>

With the scandal in hindsight and Auburn’s support, Newton subsequently spoke out in an interview with ESPN’s Chris Fowler on several points of scrutiny, namely his involvement with the scandal and his father’s role as well. His strategy feels somewhat scattered, utilizing a combination of bolstering, denial, and other tactics that are difficult to categorize. The following quotes showcase Newton’s denial of the allegations:

Strategies	Quotes
Denial	<p>“Everything I’ve done at this university, I did it the right way.”</p> <p>“The only that I could do and the only thing that I did was tell the truth. The truth will come out.”</p> <p>“I had no dealings with nobody at Mississippi State during the time that I came to Auburn...but I felt that, as a whole, Auburn possessed what’s best for Cam Newton, and that’s why I decided to come here on my decision.”</p>

Newton demonstrates both direct and indirect denial in these instances. He emphatically denies any improper recruiting practices with Mississippi State, and implies it further by asserting that he told only the truth on multiple occasions. When pressed further about the allegations, Newton punctuated his denial by stating clearly: “I’m not here to talk about any reports.” From that point, the focus of Newton’s conversation shifted away from the alleged scandal to his father’s role in the scandal. Newton would not acknowledge any wrongdoing by his father, but instead aimed to highlight their strong relationship through bolstering and transcendence:

Strategies	Quotes
Bolstering, Transcendence	<p>“My love for him is unconditional. This situation can split a family, can split a team, can split any person’s situations with anything, or it can bring a person together. Whatever me and my father have, it’s me and my father. I respect him as a man; I respect him more being my father.”</p> <p>“I’m not sitting up here saying that we are all perfect. Everybody’s made mistakes. I’m not sitting up here saying what he did or what he did was wrong. Who am I up here to say that what he did is true or not. But I know that if I can call Cecil Newton right now, he’ll pick up the phone.”</p> <p>“I love my father, and this situation has just made us stronger.”</p>

Newton’s crisis management efforts are unique for several reasons. Not only was he already cleared of the allegations at the time of his interview, but he was also tasked with defending the character of his father. Thus, his image restoration efforts were shifted more towards his father. All three of these quotes aim to emphasize the strong relationship that the Newtons held, which both diverts attention from the allegations and highlights Cecil Newton’s character. Newton’s assertion that the scandal brought them closer together demonstrates a use of transcendence as well. Due to his clearance of all charges by the NCAA, denial proved to be a sufficient strategy for Newton, which in turn allowed him to defend his father. In light of the charges against him, Cecil Newton chose to not attend the NFL draft, where his son was selected first overall by the Carolina Panthers.



## **Caveats**

There are two caveats that are important to take note of in regard to the analysis of these scandals. These are unique to the college landscape and factor in critically to the fallout of these and other high-profile scandals.

The fact that all three of these scandals took place in 2010 sheds light on the increasing frequency of scandals within college athletics. As more programs continue to be investigated, accusations of improper benefits and other NCAA infractions emerge. The national media tends to gravitate towards these stories, especially specialized networks such as ESPN. In doing so, the spotlights on all of these scandals simply begin to overlap. The amount of infractions in college athletics has essentially saturated the media, which allows scandals to fade from the spotlight more easily.

High profile college athletes are also often provided with an easy escape route from their controversy. Since these young men have not entered the world of professional sports yet, their entry into their respective drafts can provide a strong distraction from any scandals they were involved in. Pryor, Green, and Newton all entered the draft shortly after addressing their scandals, which potentially helped their image restoration efforts. These caveats should be kept in mind when analyzing these and other college-level scandals.

## **IV. Findings**

An analysis of the crisis management strategies of Terrelle Pryor, A.J. Green, and Cam Newton in the wake of high-profile scandals reveals a clear use of traditional image restoration techniques and significant knowledge about the current college athletic landscape.

The fallout of these three scandals clearly demonstrates the staggering level of prominence that college athletics has risen to. Despite the fact that these young men are generally between the ages of 18 to 22, their actions are heavily scrutinized not only by the NCAA, but by the national media and fans across the country as well. This scrutiny has grown to the point that when a scandal does emerge, as it did with these three athletes, it receives a national spotlight and demands acknowledgement. Pryor, Green, and Newton, along with several associated parties, were forced to respond to their respective scandals while facing this spotlight and pressure.

All three of these athletes clearly exemplify Benoit's theory of image restoration in varying respects. Pryor and Green followed similar patterns in that they both issued statements in order to formally respond to the allegations against them. While the tactics they employed vary, there is a clear pattern associated with their initial responses. They both relied heavily on mortification and corrective action. They were upfront about their involvement in the scandal, acknowledged their wrongdoing, and apologized to the parties affected by them. In doing so, they effectively put the scandal behind them and shifted the focus of their statements towards the future. They then emphasized corrective action, where they promised to grow as individuals and make better choices down the line. Since Newton had already been cleared of his charges at the time of his first public statement, there was no need for mortification or corrective action when flat-out denial proved sufficient. Regardless, each athlete faced aggressive demands for explanations, apologies, and/or corrective actions following their scandals.

The fallout of these three scandals reveals a significant amount of the college landscape as a whole. The NCAA's looming presence over its athletes and universities is glaringly evident through their actions. All three of these athletes only chose to speak candidly about their scandals once they distanced themselves from the NCAA. The NCAA's presence also clearly affected the responses of the universities, as they remained fairly tight-lipped and attempted to stay out of the investigation's way. The NCAA's overwhelming influence and control over the college landscape is well documented through the fallout of these scandals.

The use of traditional image restoration techniques, in conjunction with the intense scrutiny that these scandals received, strongly supports the thesis of this research paper. College athletics have clearly risen to a level of distinction that requires its athletes to employ the same techniques as professionals when faced by scandal. From a public relations perspective, college athletes should be viewed in the same light as professional ones. Scholars have overlooked high-profile college athletes like Pryor, Green, and Newton, but the image restoration efforts of these athletes fill a gaping void in the established literature on crisis management

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within athletics.

## V. Conclusion

The landscape of college athletics is a distinctly unique section of American society. College sports and the players that participate in them have been elevated to a largely unparalleled level of stardom. In the process, college athletics has become a major source of profit through its expansive merchandising, television deals, and other endeavors. Due to strictly enforced NCAA regulations, the athletes themselves are excluded from these profits. This, in turn, has manifested itself in a variety of ways into a major spike in illicit activities within college athletic programs. The scandals of Terrelle Pryor, A.J. Green, and Cam Newton all exemplify the fallout that inevitably follows these infractions.

Due to their national fame, Pryor, Green, and Newton were forced to respond to their scandals effectively. Their various responses demonstrate a clear use of scholarly image restoration techniques, which have traditionally been applied to professional athletes. Thus, it is overtly clear that due to the national spotlight that college athletics have been elevated to, college athletes should be viewed in the same respect as professional ones from a public relations perspective.

The importance and benefit of this research is twofold. The findings of this specific case study analysis shed important light on the college athletic landscape and the unique public relations efforts that athletes employ within it following a scandal. Perhaps more importantly, however, is the fact that this research serves as a foundation for a potential area of research that has been largely overlooked by scholars. Whether or not the college athletics system is broken is a debate in itself, but one truth remains overwhelmingly clear: Scandals within college athletics are recurring. The question has now become not *if* another one will emerge, but rather *when*. In the meantime, this research has the potential to serve as a powerful foundation for public relations practitioners, scholars, and the college athletics landscape as a whole.

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# Evolution of the Gaming Experience: Live Video Streaming and the Emergence of a New Web Community

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## Abstract

*The introduction of Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) into the eSports industry has caused an unprecedented growth in its viewership and community involvement. As uses and gratifications theory suggests, individuals are actively seeking out new media content that coincides with their interests. IPTV and live streams of videogames provide a new Web-specific genre of entertainment that is not available from traditional broadcasting methods. The convergence of multiple Internet technologies, social interaction and community-produced content has given birth to a web community with a vast and dedicated following of fans as in traditional sports. This research found a fast growing web community that is being actively sought out and consumed by the core 18-34 male demographic.*

## I. Introduction

The emergence of new technologies and competitors within the marketplace has given rise to a variety of new platforms for streaming media content targeting a wide array of traditional broadcast audiences online. Streaming allows for a new type of social TV that provides an interactive platform for audiences to engage, on a personal level, with their favorite gamer personalities. With the increase in professional gamers and their fandom, streaming platforms like Twitch TV have created a new interactive Internet exclusive marketplace that does not require traditional broadcasting methods.

The emergence of an online technology known as Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) (Scholz, 2011) has spurred the growth of a new user-generated and content-driven Web community. This new technology is the backbone that competitive online gaming (eSports) is relying on to reach users. Twitch TV is currently the platform that dominates the marketplace, attracting over 34 million unique viewers a month (All about Twitch, 2013). Twitch's easy to use platform provides fast and easy access for viewers and streamers alike, attracting hundreds of thousands of unique viewers daily on computers or smart devices. With the rise of a new web community, online platforms like Twitch TV are receiving growing attention and viewership among active participants within the gaming and eSports community. Enthusiastic audiences tune into tournaments, tutorials, competitive game play, and social online chat rooms with their favorite gamer personalities playing their favorite titles (Cheung & Huang, 2011).

Live online video-casting is the technology that the growing sphere of competitive gaming rests upon;

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therefore, this research examines how this new technology has influenced the growth and viewership of eSports internationally. Furthermore, this technology has provided a social outlet for users to become actively involved within the eSports community. This research sought to analyze how live streams influence social interaction within the eSports community; focusing on the relationship between viewers and broadcasters. Lastly, this research explored the reasons why people actively seek out and tune into live streams.

## II. Research Questions

Listed below are the questions that this research sought to analyze and examine through the use of secondary research:

Q1 – How has the rise of live online video broadcasting affected the growth of the eSports industry?

Q2 – How has live online video broadcasting affected how video game players interact socially with their community?

Q3 – Why do viewers tune into live streams?

## III. Literature Review

In the following literature review, the author examined articles that analyzed the eSports community, its rise as a popular entertainment outlet, the unique attributes that contribute to its success, the industry's rapid growth within the United States and international spheres over the past decade, and how streaming has influenced the growth of the eSports community and its viewership.

### ***eSports***

Electronic sports, more commonly known as eSports, is the term used to describe playing high-level games and spectating of digital games in a competitive atmosphere (Hamilton, Kerne, & Robbins, 2012).

eSports consists of many game genres, including real time strategy (RTS), first person shooters, multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) and arcade style fighting games. The eSports community is made up of professional and amateur gamers, teams, commentators, sponsors, spectators and fans (Kaytoue, Silva, Cerf, Meria, & Raissi, 2012). Similar to traditional sport players, professional gamers are especially skilled and participate in intense training regiments. Pro-gamers generate their income through tournament winnings, sponsorships, coaching fees and revenues earned from advertisements on their live streams (Hamilton et al., 2012). Online live video streaming, also recognized as social TV, allows gamers to attract tens of thousands of unique viewers daily (Kaytoue et al., 2012).

The eSports community has grown and evolved over the last 15 years. First popularized in South Korea, Internet cafes fostered an environment of competition and spectatorship as early as 1998. As time progressed, friendly competition grew into tournaments, professional leagues, teams and superstars; spectators became fans and a new web community (Cheung & Huang, 2012). Starcraft II and League of Legends (LoL) have grown to be the largest spectator sports in South Korea and some of the most established eSports communities. Television channels are dedicated to broadcasting Starcraft and LoL matches in South Korea (Cheung & Huang, 2012). Match-ups between the most skilled gamers and teams are streamed live from tournaments, which are spectated by on location and online audiences. The Global StarCraft League finals at Blizzard Entertainments gaming convention, Blizzcon, in 2011 attracted 25,000 on location viewers and over 300,000 online viewers (Hamilton et al., 2012). In addition, Major League Gaming attracted over 11 million unique online viewers in their 2012 Pro Circuit Championships held over four weekends throughout the year (What is MLG?, 2013). "These tournaments are the driving force behind IPTV in eSports." (Scholz, 2011).

### ***eSports and Streaming***

Streaming gameplay is a relatively new phenomenon that has exploded in recent years, attracting hundreds of thousands of unique viewers daily (Tassi, 2013). Twitch TV, a live video streaming platform, has been at the forefront of this success with 34 million unique users a month (All about Twitch, 2013). Stream-

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ing can consist of major tournaments and events, but generally is made up of a single player or team that broadcasts its games and chats, explaining its game style and strategies and giving advice to viewers. This two-way communication fosters a unique relationship between the streamer and its spectators (Kaytoue et al., 2012). This relationship is nurturing the growth of a new Web community: eSports fans watch live streams of Internet personalities who play their favorite video games. As live stream video games get popular, watching them become an entertainment genre on its own (Kaytoue et al., 2012). This growth has caught attention of many media leaders, including Jim Lanzone, President of CBS Interactive. He said, “The eSports scene is one of the hottest trends in video, and is rapidly attracting the core 18-34 male demographic in greater numbers than any other medium or category” (Tassi, 2012).

The cumulative effect of globalization and the growth of Internet and communication technologies have cultivated a complex interface between gaming, sports, and the media (Hutchins, 2008).

### ***Twitch TV***

Twitch TV is currently the leading video streaming platform that dominates the gaming market, attracting over 34 million unique viewers a month. Twitch TV’s goal is to “connect gamers around the world by allowing them to broadcast, watch, and chat from everywhere they play” (All about Twitch, 2013). Twitch TV provides gamers the opportunity to make money from their passion, while engaging them with an active, dedicated and interactive fan base interested in watching speed runs, classic games, and competitive games over the Web (Webb, 2012).

Twitch TV began as another live video streaming platform, Justin TV. As the eSports community grew and interest in video game streaming began to rapidly rise, Justin TV launched Twitch TV, “a live-streamed video game portal and community for gamers” in June 2011 (Rao, 2011). By July of the same year, Twitch TV posted 8 million unique viewers. Since its initial launch in 2011, Twitch TV has seen a 400% increase in its web traffic (Rao, 2011). According to the Emmett Shear, CEO of Twitch TV, sharing a video game experience is something that the younger generation grew up doing from their couches, and Twitch TV’s service is a natural extension of this gaming experience (Tassi, 2013).

Much of Twitch TV’s success is contributed to its easy to use platform. Without the need for any additional software or hardware, Twitch has successfully removed every barrier that may have previously prevented the community from streaming its gameplay (Tassi, 2013). As Twitch gains momentum, certain video game titles are starting to include access to live online streaming within their game software. The most notable of these games is Call of Duty Black Ops II, an extension of the successful Call of Duty series (Tassi, 2013).

### ***The Spectator***

The most valuable asset of live online video streaming and Twitch TV is the spectator. The spectator is defined as the person who follows the in-game experience, but not a direct participant in the game (Cheung & Huang, 2011). According to cultural anthropologist John Huizinga, spectators of a game are active participants of “play,” and have adopted the values of the game-world (Cheung & Huang, 2011). Relating play to the ancient world, Huizinga describes the shift from protagonist to the spectator in the gladiatorial games. Although only a fraction of the Roman population participated in the hand-to-hand combat of the games, their spectatorship provided them with a “vicarious” experience, their feeling like the gladiator fighting on behalf of the spectators. This vicarious attitude is deeply rooted in play and can be directly related to watching video games as a spectator sport. In this framework, the act of spectating can be seen as a form of playing along (Cheung & Huang, 2011). In a recent social study, gamers prefer watching professional gamers compete and play rather than playing the game themselves (Kaytoue et al., 2012). This finding does not seem so far-fetched when we examine the spectating practices of traditional sports. Similar to traditional sports, competitive video games have professional players as well as dedicated spectators. According to the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption, people watch sports based on factors, such as aesthetics, achievement, drama, escape, knowledge, and physical skill. Even further, sport spectating is one of the remaining social outlets in an urbanized environment (Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003). Spectating is an active process because spectators seek out information to follow sports or sporting events closely. Those who watch eSports do it for many of the same reasons as traditional sport spectators (Cheung & Huang, 2011).

The primary difference between traditional sports and eSports spectating is that the vast majority of eSports events take place exclusively online. In addition, the community surrounding eSports is familiar

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with the Internet and various social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Twitch TV and other web platforms similar to YouTube (Kaytoue et al., 2012). Consequently, a very specific social community embedded online is growing as a result. Within this community are a variety of different spectating personas. Of these personas, four directly impact the eSports community at large.

Firstly is *the inspired*. They are eager to play the game they spectate. Their eagerness stems from their desire to attempt new strategies or tactics learned while watching professional players. For inspired players, spectatorship serves as a catalyst that inspires them to directly play a video game.

Secondly, there is *the pupil*. They spectate to learn and gain a level of understanding of the game. Spectating serves as a tutorial that they will practice when they next log into a game. This persona is highly interested in watching the best players with the most information, which can be translated into useful in-game information that they will apply next time they log in.

Thirdly, there is *the entertained*. They tune into live streams for entertainment purposes only, much like those who tune into their favorite television show. Contributing factors to their entertainment include the spectacle, fandom, competition and excitement.

Lastly, there is *the crowd*. They spectate because of the strong communal ties associated with spectating. As in traditional sports, this form of spectators participate in the spectacle as a group and enjoy pleasure and excitement that games bring to the viewer (Cheung & Huang, 2011).

Each type of spectator has one thing in common; they watch eSports for the entertainment value it provides. Entertainment is at the heart of every spectator sport. Much of this entertainment comes from the notion of information asymmetry (Cheung & Huang, 2011). Information asymmetry is the imbalance of information between the player and the spectator. This information gap is created through game design, where one party has access to certain in-game information that another is denied. This can be seen in two of the most prominent eSports games, Starcraft II and League of Legends. In each of these games, there is an in-game design feature called “fog of war.” This fog shrouds enemy territories in a thick mist, preventing opposing factions from viewing enemy players, bases or armies. However, this information is provided for the spectator, giving them additional information that the players themselves lack (Cheung & Huang, 2011).

Information asymmetry exists in favor of the player, meaning the player has information that the spectator does not. For example, each player knows his or her strategy and capabilities. This can consist of rehearsed battle tactics or power-plays that have been perfected over time. When these battle tactics go into action, the spectator can marvel at the skill of the player while taking delight in the well-executed attack (Cheung & Huang, 2011). In American football, this can be seen when coaches and players develop plays during practice or in the locker room. They know their strategy to score a touchdown, but the spectator only learns of their plan once it has been executed on the field. The excitement of watching professional players’ plans unfold in real time contributes to the overall entrainment value of eSports as a spectator sport.

Spectatorship of eSports is directly related to the ease of platform access platforms after a technical leap in 2009, when “video broadcasting was possible for everybody through platforms like Twitch” (Scholz, 2011). These platforms allowed easy access for viewers, integrated with chat functions that allowed for constant interaction between viewers and streamers. This digital participation of audiences is possible because “the core audiences for eSports are people sitting at home in front of their computers and watching the stream” (Scholz, 2011). Ease access is crucial in eSports primarily because the audience is made up of young males aged 18-34 who are technologically literate (Scholz, 2011).

## ***Social Capital***

Social capital is the term used to describe the act of connecting amongst individuals, social networks and the norms of a community and the trustworthiness that arise from them (Lee & Lee, 2010). Social capital has been commonly broken up into two types; bridging and bonding social capital. Bonding social capital “refers to strong social ties delivering emotional support and understanding” (Juechems, Reinecke, & Trepte, 2012). While bridging social capital “refers to the weak social ties in which people feel informed and inspired by each other” (Juechems et al., 2012). In the framework of the online community surrounding eSports, gaming and other online activities have shown an increase in bridging social capital. In addition, some studies have shown “positive effects of online gaming on bonding social capital online” (Juechems et al., 2012). Past studies have shown that eSports and active participants in the community, such as clans or team members, foster online and offline social capital and social support (Juechems et al., 2012). In terms of online communi-

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ties, “social networks, which were based in physical space before the introduction of the web, are now also located online and reshape the social relationships between individuals” (Lee & Lee, 2010). The eSports community has expressed that “the social side of gaming is important to them and one of the strongest motivators to engage in gaming” (Juechems et al., 2012). In terms of viewership, people do not only want to talk about games or directly play them, but they wish to participate personally within their community (Scholz, 2011). eSports’ distinct audience is solely reached over the Internet through IPTV platforms. These platforms establish a social community that gives viewers a chance to interact and contribute to others within the eSports community. The social and interactive atmosphere surrounding live online broadcasting has led to a community-based content-generating community, which dominates traditional broadcasting methods for young males aged 18-34 (Scholz, 2011).

### ***The World Cyber Games and Major League Gaming***

In order to understand the growth of the eSports community, it is critical to examine major events surrounding the eSports industry. Major events include tournaments, playoffs or championships held in-person or online. The World Cyber Games (WCG) is a popular international competitive computer gaming competition that has been running since 2000 and continues to grow in size and popularity each year (Hutchins, 2008). Its unique combination of gaming, computing, media and sport content presents unorthodox content in a familiar presentation (Hutchins, 2008).

Similarly, Major League Gaming (MLG) is the world’s largest eSports organization, made up of millions of live viewers, fans and competitors (What is MLG?, 2013). With over eight million registered gamers, MLG provides gaming enthusiasts with a forum to improve their skills and socialize through the largest online destination for competitive gaming (Taylor, 2011). In addition, MLG hosts an annual MLG Pro Circuit that features live webcast of in-person tournaments. Webcasts consist of competitive play and analysis via online streaming to community members and fans in over 170 countries worldwide (What is MLG?, 2013).

Data analyzed from the World Cyber Games from the year 2000 through 2007 indicated a gradual and continual growth in the game’s popularity and involvement. In the game’s premier year of 2000, there were 174 participants reigning from 17 countries with a total prize pool of \$200,000 (Hutchins, 2008). In 2001, there were 389 participants from 37 countries with a total prize pool of \$300,000. By 2007, there were over 700 participants from 74 countries with a total prize pool of \$448,000. The World Cyber Games have experienced a continual growth and involvement from the international gaming community (Hutchins, 2008).

Major League Gaming has also seen a continual growth in its audience and participation. MLG’s 2011 Pro Circuit attracted over 3.5 million unique online viewers over the course of the four Pro Circuit Championship weekends, up from 1.8 million in 2010. In 2012, their growth continued to increase, attracting over 11.7 million unique online viewers over the course of the championships, experiencing a rapid increase in live online viewership over two years. Additional growth is expected for the 2013 Pro Circuit (What is MLG? 2013).

### ***Uses and Gratifications Theory***

Uses and gratification theory “stresses individual use and choice in communication behaviors and helps explain how the media and their content can be a source of influence within the context of other competing influences” (Bondad-Brown, Rice, & Pearce, 2012). Within this theory there are several assumptions. Individuals are active participants in the media and “purposely select their media content, influenced by their motivations and past media gratifications” (Bondad-Brown et al., 2012). In addition, media competes for audience attention, selection and use. At the core of uses and gratification theory are motivations and audience activity (Bondad-Brown et al., 2012).

Applying uses and gratification theory to new online media, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) suggested five motivations for using the Internet: interpersonal utility, pass time, information seeking, convenience, and entertainment. The use of the Internet as a one-stop convenience outlet for entertainment suggests that online video “combines the instant gratification of TV with the personal control of the Internet” (Bondad-Brown et al., 2012). Audience activity refers to the “utility, intentionality, selectivity, and involvement of the audience with the media, implying variations in the gratification viewers receive from media exposure” (Bondad-Brown et al., 2012). This idea of intentionality means that individuals share, recommend and discuss content with others. Program selectivity is at the base of uses and gratification theory, meaning that individuals willfully seek out media content they are interested in.

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## IV. Conclusion

The research found that eSports and the live online broadcasting that follow with it are an emerging Internet community and marketplace with a vast and dedicated following. The implementation of IPTV in the eSports industry has directly influenced the growth of its online viewership. Providing an easy to use platform without the need for any additional software or hardware resulted in a substantial increase in eSports broadcasting and viewership online. In addition, IPTV has provided an additional medium for income for professional gamers outside of sponsorships and tournaments. This has allowed for individuals to pursue a career in playing videogames, an option that did not exist five years ago.

The implantation of IPTV has also influenced how gamers interact with their community. Social engagement is at the heart of IPTV and live streams, breaking down traditional boundaries associated with passive entertainment consumption. The combination of active chat functions, an enthusiastic user base, and a community based user-generated content, coupled with the fact that this audience is only reachable through the Internet and IPTV platforms, provides for a unique social community that gamers actively seek out and consume. Live streaming eSports competitions and gameplay have grown to become a dominant media channel many males aged 18-34 would access. The interactive and social aspects of IPTV provide an unparalleled platform for the eSports community, which traditional broadcasting lacks.

Lastly, this research has shown the various factors that contribute to eSports and live stream viewership. Foremost is the entertainment value that eSports provides for users. This entertainment is based on information asymmetry, which creates a suspenseful and enjoyable spectacle for spectators. Live stream video games have grown to become an entertainment genre on their own, similar to traditional sports. Among many reasons that viewers tune into live streams are their adopting a vicarious attitude of play and their tuning in for the social aspect that the eSports community and IPTV provide. Interactive chat functions and user-generated content provide a unique social community that builds social capital among its participants.

This study shows that the evolution of technology has provided an outlet for a new type of entertainment genre that young males are consuming at a shockingly fast rate, exceeding traditional broadcasting methods. Uses and gratification theory provides a framework for why people are using IPTV and watching live streams of video games. Individuals actively seek out media content that they are interested in and can easily access. IPTV offers easy access, while eSports and live streams fulfill the entertainment value that users are looking for. The combination of convenience, entertainment and social community provide for an active and dedicated community that traditional broadcasting methods cannot offer.

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# Constantly Connected: The Impact of Social Media and the Advancement in Technology on the Study Abroad Experience

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## Abstract

*This study examined the impact of the advancement in technology and convenience of social media on the study abroad experience. It tried to determine whether smartphones and their ability to remotely access the Internet on the go positively or negatively affect the study abroad experience. The results indicated that the advancement of technology has positively impacted the abroad experience because of the convenience it offers users in communicating and finding information while on the go. However, the study found that the pervasiveness of the social media negatively affected the study abroad experience; people often seem more interested in documenting an experience for the Internet instead of fully appreciating the moment while abroad.*

## I. Introduction

The increase in new media and communications has significantly impacted globalization in the recent decades. Traveling and communicating internationally are easier now than ever before. The popularization of smartphones and social media allows the world to be constantly and conveniently connected.

According to Guo-Ming Chen (2012), new media has brought human interaction and society to a highly interconnected and complex level. However, it challenges the very existence of intercultural communication in its traditional sense. It used to take a letter several weeks to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Today, it takes less than a second to relay a message via mobile device. International travel isn't so lonely anymore with continuous conversation and interaction with the world.

Teenagers and young adults are pursuing their academic careers overseas through study abroad programs in various cities around the world. Sojourner is a term commonly used in study abroad literature to describe an individual who is temporarily studying and living in a foreign county, otherwise referred to as a "study abroad" (Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut & Klute, 2012). Thousands of miles away from home, access to the Internet and social media remains in the sojourner's pocket due to international cellular data plans on smartphones. Within seconds, taking a tour through Vatican City can switch to an interactive online experience with friends and family back at home. This instant communication allows a transparent and comforting experience for both the senders and the receivers. Because of this connection, the distance while abroad ap-

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\* **Keywords:** study abroad, social media, smartphones, new media, social media use abroad

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appears less intimidating. Through access to new media, friends and families are able to live vicariously through these young sojourners and vice versa.

Studying abroad is a valuable and enriching experience, but it can be easily lost due to the distraction of new media. According to Copeland and Hatcher (2007) this generation has never been more wired, yet so less connected. Zemmels (2012) states that traditional media research views young people as a special group in need of protection from media and especially their potentially negative influences. As early adopters of new digital technologies, young people tend to be at the forefront of new media interaction, thus shaping it through their practices.

This paper tried to answer questions: What impact does the adoption of social media and smart-phones has on the study abroad experience? Why do students abroad feel the need to be constantly connected?

## **II. Literature Review**

There has not been much academic research on the effect of modern technology and social media on the study abroad experience. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine the study abroad phenomenon in relation to the recent advancement in digital technologies and the popularization of social media. The globalization of technology has enabled digital users to access and upload information immediately, thus resulting in a constant connectivity among users.

### ***The Study Abroad Phenomenon***

Because this study looks at the impact of social media and new technologies on the study abroad experience, it is necessary to first understand why students study abroad. By providing students the opportunity to earn course credits in another country, study abroad programs have positioned themselves as institutional activities on college and university campuses across America (Twombly et al., 2013). Although prevalent today, the idea of earning an education in another country is far from new; students have been studying abroad for centuries. In colonial times, there were few colleges in America, thus fewer options for higher education. Additional training had to be completed through an apprenticeship or education abroad. In the 1800s, religious programs were created in order to send their students abroad as missionaries to achieve their higher education. Institutions soon understood the impact that students could make as enriched global citizens (Mistretta, 2008).

According to Mistretta (2008), only white wealthy males were able to study abroad prior to the 20th century. The Rhodes Scholarships were established in 1903 to encourage international study for all students, no matter their economic status. The most intelligent students from around the world were invited to study at Oxford University in London, England. After World War II, Senator J. William Fulbright continued to promote international study and research in hopes of building ties between nations and preventing future hostility among nations. The Fulbright program provides scholarships for graduate students and scholars with a desire to study and conduct research abroad (Mistretta, 2008).

By 2008, more than 90% of all colleges and universities in the United States offered study abroad programs. The number of U.S. students studying abroad continues to increase regardless of the fluctuating economy. Between the years of 2010-2011, 271,000 students studied abroad (Twombly et al., 2013).

Study abroad is now a trend in the tourism market (Yu, 2008). However, there is a lack of diversity among those who are able to study abroad. The majority of the U.S. study abroad population is “white, female, young, single, financially comfortable, and without diversity.” (Twombly et al., 2013, p. 37). The female to male ratio is 2:1 and this statistic has stayed consistent over time (Twombly et al., 2013).

According to Twombly et al. (2013), students who have studied abroad are more globally aware and academically driven. “To continue to compete successfully in a global economy and to maintain our role as a world leader, the United States needs to ensure that its citizens develop a broad understanding of the world, proficiency in other languages, and knowledge of other cultures,” said Bill Clinton (p. 23) in 2001. Those who study abroad value intercultural interaction as part of their college education. Students who express interest in improving their understanding of other cultures and countries are twice as likely to study abroad as those who do not. Improving one’s foreign language skills, exposure to diversity, and cultural understanding are all

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motivations for students to study abroad (Twombly et al., 2013).

In order to examine the effect of the study abroad experience, a case study was performed on eight former participants from Buffalo State College that spent a semester in Siena, Italy between the years of 1962 and 1991. Through in-person interviews, the study showed that there are varying effects of study abroad. While abroad, students are exposed to new learning and experiences, which can have life-changing effects on the individual. Furthermore, students learn more by becoming involved and engaging themselves in the culture around them. The stronger the involvement or effort, the more the student will learn; thus, the larger the effect will be (Mistretta, 2008).

According to Twombly et al (2013), a number of positive outcomes result from participating in studying abroad. Research supports that studying abroad improves retention and academic performance. The experience broadens the students' horizons by helping them learn the language and immerse themselves in the culture. It deepens the student's openness to diversity and assists them in developing into adulthood.

### ***New Media and Digital Technologies***

Young people are innovative leaders when it comes to new media interaction, Zemmels (2012) stated. Media formats have transformed into a mobile phenomenon, including personal computers, cellular phones, tablets, etc. International data plans and wireless mobile connectivity allow telephone and Internet access anywhere (Zemmels, 2012).

Access to excellent mobile service is available all around the world. Cell phones with simple features, such as calling and texting, allow users to work and play on the Internet. Smartphones, such as iPhones, BlackBerrys and Androids, have enabled users to roam the world while staying in touch with anyone at almost any time. In 2009, sales of smartphones were up by 70% in North America (Levinson, 2012).

According to Chen (2012), innovations in digital media continue to change the way we think, act and live. New media has taken communication to a higher interconnected and complex level. Mobile access allows communication to be readily available and convenient. The users are in control of what is viewed and shared. This freedom empowers the process of human communication (Chen, 2012). Users are free of the "the constraints of physical proximity and spatial immobility" (Buckingham, 2008, p. 147). By increasing both the amount and quality of interpersonal communications, these interconnected devices are able to make communication faster and easier (Adler et al., 2012).

In relation to study abroad, Huesca (2013) believes that new communication technologies take time away from indulging in the local culture. Levinson believes that "humans are inherently multitasking organisms" and perceive new media to be an extension of our lives (p. 20). Smartphones satisfy the human need to have any information at any time or place.

Levinson (2012) states:

The fact that you can disseminate whatever information you please, to whatever portion of the world you like, from your smartphone, iPad, or any other mobile web-connecting device at hand, means that your access to the world, and its access to you is as much a part of you, as close at hand, as your hand itself" (p. 29)

### ***Applying Social Networking Sites to Abroad Experience***

Decades ago, face-to-face communication was essential in maintaining most personal relationships. However, according to Adler, Rosenfeld, and Proctor (2012), proximity isn't a requirement anymore. Personal relationships can now be maintained through the Internet and social media on any mobile device. Social media collectively describes all the channels that make online personal communications possible. From sending a text message to posting on Facebook, there are endless uses of digital media (Adler et al., 2012). According to Zemmels (2012), since 1997 social networking has established itself as a common method of communication because of its ability to constantly generate new information. More and more individuals have developed an active presence on social networking sites, creating a valuable and universal platform for communication. Social networking sites (SNS) are web-based services that allow individuals to create a profile and create a community through shared connections. These platforms create a culture for sharing creations. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. have allowed users to build and maintain social connections through creation and distribution of information.

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Today, a conversation over social media can be compared to going over to a friend's house, or meeting a friend for coffee. This accessibility was not available prior to the Internet-based forms of communication (Zemmels, 2012). At the beginning of 2010, almost 75% of Americans under the age of 20 used social networking sites (Adler et al., 2012). New media technologies have made online communication platforms and immediate international communication possible (Zemmels, 2012).

"Life takes place on screen," wrote Mirzoeff (as cited in Zemmels, 2012, p. 13 ). Social media gives its users a sense of identity and community. Users are able to become active agents in new media environments and produce their own content (Zemmels, 2012). SNSs allow users to maintain connections with friends. "Social voyeurism" is a term used to describe social media users browsing through SNSs and interacting with other users in order to catch up on the goings-on in society (Buckingham, 2008, p. 122).

Through uploading information immediately, the mobile device becomes the key tool for capturing moments, storing information and documenting experiences to relay back home. Access to social media on mobile smartphones represents a "lifeline to self-perception, a means of documenting a social life, expressing preferences, creating networks and sharing experiences" (Buckingham, 2008, p. 158).

Lin, Peng, Kim M., Kim, S., & LaRose (2012) believe that SNSs continue to receive attention for their effects on social capital and psychological well-being. Social capital describes the resources and benefits received from relationships with other people. With the advancement in technology, the ability to gain social capital has transitioned to social media. Used to maintain pre-existing relationships as well as create new ones, social networks have revolutionized the way friends and families connect. Social networks take the place of face-to-face communication. SNSs provide the information and support that sustain relationships during transitions to a new environment. When individuals enter a new environment, such as studying abroad in a new country, they must adopt different social and cultural patterns. Establishing a social network in a new environment is important for adjustment (Lin et al., 2012). According to Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune (2011), students who study abroad may experience homesickness or discontent, which is why they remain constantly connected to their social networks.

Sojourners are on the move, constantly processing, absorbing and exchanging information. Smartphones make it possible for these students to access and share information independent of physical location. "The mobile is a ubiquitous, pervasive communication device which young people find difficult to be without, whether they like it or hate it, or feel something in between" (Buckingham, 2008, p.146).

Chen (2012) states that this high interaction of online social activity challenges the way reality and personal identity are perceived. According to Buckingham (2008), when talking on the phone or having a text message conversation, the outside world is shut out. Buckingham uses a term, absent presence, to relate the distance created when using technology in a distracting manor. Absent presence is being physically present in one space, but mentally present in another. "Our use or refusal to use social media, says something about us as individuals" (Buckingham, 2008, p. 145).

Based on the literature review, the following three research questions were asked and two hypotheses were established.

RQ1: Why do study abroad students use social networking?

RQ2: How often do study abroad students utilize social networking?

RQ3: If "Life takes place on screen," how does the constant connection to social communities affect the study abroad experience?

H1: The constant connection to social media platforms while abroad benefits students' relationships in home country.

H2: The constant connection to social media platforms while abroad creates distance from the culture of the students' surroundings.

### **III. Methods**

This study examined how new technology and access to social media abroad have impacted the student study abroad experience. The researcher investigated the topic through an online survey and a focus group, which provided well-rounded explanations to research questions.

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In April 2013, 100 people participated in an online survey through SurveyMonkey (surveymonkey.com). The researcher invited all of her Facebook “friends” to complete the survey. Users were able to complete the survey by clicking a link. The survey was directed towards university students that have previously studied abroad. The researcher chose a survey because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a high number of representatives.

The survey included a variety of questions regarding how participants communicated with their friends/family at home, how often participants used social media while abroad and what kind of impact new technologies had on their overall study abroad experience (Refer to Appendix I for survey questions). The participants also had an opportunity to express their opinion on whether or not the advancement in technology and the convenience of social media positively or negatively impacted their abroad experience. These questions will further identify the benefits and setbacks of the use of social media by today’s sojourners.

The focus group was conducted in April 2013 with eight Elon University students who have previously studied abroad. The focus group lasted 30 minutes. In order to provide a greater, more in-depth perspective on the use of technology and social media while abroad, the focus group participants were selected from different groups in terms of their study abroad location and year.

In the focus group, questions were asked about the use of cellphones abroad, Internet access, how the participants utilized social media and the positive/negative impact this had on their study abroad experience (Refer to Appendix II for focus group questions). The researcher chose to do focus a group in order to receive personal opinions, stories and experiences from previous study abroad students. The focus group also gave participants an opportunity to answer open-ended questions about important/unimportant aspects of new technology and social media during the study abroad experience.

## **IV. Findings and Discussion**

The goal of this study was to assess the impact that social media and advancement in technology have on the study abroad experience. Questions in the survey and the focus group gathered specific information about the respondents and their relationship with technology and social media while studying abroad in a foreign country.

### ***Demographic Information***

Survey participants were recruited from former study abroad students through a snowball sampling technique to reach various age groups. A total of 100 respondents participated in an anonymous survey. The majority (88%) of the participants were female. Only 12% were male, reflecting the national trend of women representing the majority of the study abroad population (Twombly et al., 2013). Thirty-nine percent of the respondents were 21 years old and another 39% were 22 years old. This data shows that majority of students do not study abroad until they are in their early twenties.

The participants of the focus group consisted of eight senior Elon students that had studied abroad in the past: three males and five females. Their answers and opinions provided further insight into the implications of student’s use of social media and digital technology while studying abroad.

### ***Cellular Devices Abroad***

Eighty-six percent of the survey participants owned a cellphone while overseas. Of those that owned a cellphone abroad, 42% owned smartphones that had access to the Internet and social media. Those without smartphones used basic devices that offered only calling and text messaging capabilities.

Regarding the question “How much time did you use your phone each day?” the majority (73%) of the survey respondents said they used their cellphone less than 30 minutes a day. While 13% said they used it one to less than two hours a day, followed by 11% for 30 to less than 60 minutes a day, and 3% for two to less than four hours a day. This information is significant because it shows that the majority of students kept their phone usage to a minimum each day. This included phone calls, text messaging or any other amenities their phones offered.

Of those who had access to the Internet and social media on their cellphone, a sweeping majority of

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them studied abroad in 2012 or 2013. This is significant because it shows that smartphones and international data plans are growing more convenient and accessible with each passing year. In fact, according to the survey, 75% of the student that studied abroad in 2013 brought a smartphone with them overseas.

### **Communication and Social Media Use**

When asked “How much time did you spend on social media daily?” the majority (62%) of the survey respondents answered that they spent less than 60 minutes a day on social media. Twenty-three percent spent one to less than two hours on social media. Twelve percent spent two to less than four hours a day on social media and 3% spent four or more hours on social media a day. These responses indicated that a vast majority of the participants spent less than an hour on social media daily.

Sixty-two percent of the participants communicated with family and friends in the United States two to six times a week. Thirty-one percent communicated with their family and friends at least once a day and 7% communicated with their family and friends once every two or three weeks. The majority of the students were in contact with their friends and family on a daily basis. This exemplifies the convenience and accessibility that the advancement in technology has brought to international communication.

In order to gain a perspective on the mobile accessibility of cellular devices, the participants were asked, “Did you ever utilize social media while walking around a city abroad? For example, uploading a picture to Facebook while in a museum or sending a tweet or a text message while sightseeing?” The majority (78%) of the survey respondents said they did not have access to the Internet and/or social media while on the go. However, 22% did utilize social media while walking around a city abroad.

The thirteen participants that did utilize social media on the go said that it enhanced their experience. They were able to sustain their relationships via social media. Students enjoyed the ability to communicate with their loved ones in America as things were occurring. The Internet was also a valuable resource for guidance and information, especially in a foreign city. One participant stated, “It enhanced my cultural experience. I liked to share messages and photos with my friends and family as it was all happening.” Along the same lines, a participant wrote, “People were interested in what I was doing and where I was, so I would then go into detail about what I was uploading or posting. It really made me realize how lucky I was to be seeing these things.” As Lin et al. (2012) stated, these responses supported that with the rise in digital technologies, students were able to gain social capital and sense of identity through social media communities. Students are able to access the Internet, get their questions answered and find local spots to visit. Additionally, students believed they “felt safer” knowing they had access to calls and information at any given time.

However, 11 students believed mobile access to the Internet and social media hindered their cultural experience, saying, “I wish I hadn’t had such easy access to free Internet.” Students felt they were too focused on updating their social media sites instead of focusing on the world around them. “If you are constantly using your phone/social media and not experiencing the sites, you are living less in the moment,” said one participant. According to Twombly et al. (2013), students study abroad to develop an understanding of the world, a proficiency in other languages, and knowledge of other cultures. However, these objectives cannot be met if students allow technologies and social media to interfere, thus creating absent presence (Buckingham, 2008). As a witness to such behavior, one student said, “It bothered me that other people were using their smartphones and Facebook while we were visiting historical sites.” This remark signifies the extensiveness of such actions. Not only does it distract the user from their education and their immersion with the surrounding culture, but it also disturbs learning and immersion for bystanders as well.

Embarking on a new idea, one participant in the focus group added, “I think that people use social media in terms of jealousy; social media gives them a platform to show the world all the fun they’re having.” People are “*over-sharers*” when it comes to social media. In today’s world, people are becoming active agents on social media. This insight gives reasoning behind the sojourner’s need to keep their online communities up-to-date by consistently uploading statuses and photos in a timely manner. Because other online users are able to view, comment and share the sojourner’s study abroad information, it can be used as a promotional device. Their pictures, blogs, etc. can positively influence other students to study abroad.

Those users who did not have mobile access to the Internet and social media on their phones believed that no access had a positive effect on their experience. “Not having social media meant I spent more time with others which led to deep and meaningful conversations,” stated one participant. Enlightened by the world around them, sojourners are able to soak in their surroundings and hold intellectual conversations

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without any digital distractions. “I didn’t have access to the Internet or social media while walking around. This greatly helped my experience because I was living in the moment, not online,” said one survey respondent. Study abroaders value intercultural interaction, and distancing themselves from technology allows for more learning opportunities and cultural immersion (Twombly et al., 2013).

### ***Impact of Technology and Social Media***

When asked whether the advancement in technology and the convenience of social media had an overall positive or negative impact on their study abroad experience, 47% percent of the survey respondents answered “positively” and 38% answered “negatively.” Seven percent reported technology and social media had both negatively and positively impacted their abroad experience. The answers to this question assessed the participant’s personal perception of the impact of technology on their study abroad experience.

Of the 47% that answered positively, there was a resounding appreciation for the Internet’s ability to connect the sojourner to their loved ones at home and friends abroad in a quick and easy fashion. Students embraced the international access and immediate communication. Not only did it allow easy communication, but also aided in day-to-day needs. For example, one student wrote, “We were able to utilize maps, find directions, and look up good restaurants and sights to see.” Those with smartphones were able to constantly keep their families up-to-date on their whereabouts. “It was nice to have that option to let my family know I was okay. It kept my parents from worrying too much.” A number of students were able to keep blogs to inform friends and family about their activities abroad. “Now you can share everything you see in such a short manner of time, in a way that is fun to engage in,” said one student. All in all, these students believed that having access to the Internet and social media positively impacted their study abroad experience and made it easier to adjust to a new culture. Whether it was for their benefit, or for the benefit of those back home, there was an abundant source of dependency on their technological devices.

The students made it clear that utilizing the Internet and social media can have its perks, as long as it is used sparingly. “I wasn’t connected all the time. I’d snap pictures during the day and then spend time on social media at night,” said one participant in the focus group. By setting time aside each day, students had to make an extra effort not to let technology interfere with their cultural experience.

Contrastingly, 38% of the students believed the advancement in technology and the convenience of social media had a negative impact on the ability for study abroad students to fully immerse themselves into the culture. “People get so preoccupied with staying connected to people back home that they don’t fully live in the moment and experience their time abroad to the fullest. Even if they’re not looking at it; they’re thinking about it. It’s always on their mind. It’s toxic and distracting,” said one participant in the focus group. The distance created through the constant communication through the Internet and social media was a common denominator amongst those who thought negatively of the act. One student said, “Instead of enjoying the experience and fully soaking in what they’re seeing, students are wondering what picture they’re going to upload next or if someone is going to text them back.” Social media enables students to latch onto home; therefore, hindering their ability to further immerse themselves in their surroundings. Students in the focus group and in the survey valued the opportunity for spontaneous exploration while abroad and felt that mobile Internet access seemed artificial and took away from the adventure. “I like that grassroots adventure; Just kind of forging your own way,” said one participant in the focus group.

Some students pointed out that the advancement in technology and the convenience of social media both positively and negatively affect the study abroad experience. “Positively in that I didn’t feel so far away from home, but negatively in that I probably spent time on social media when I could have been out and about exploring the city and enjoying my time.” For those that rely heavily on social media on their mobile devices, this constant distraction can deprive students of getting involved and engaging themselves in the culture around them. The student’s indecisiveness embodies the subconscious need for that sense of comfort: the Internet. Students realize it can be distracting, yet they seek to stay connected regardless.

Given the valid reasoning behind the respondent’s opinions, it is clear that there are both positive and negative effects of social media and the advancement in technology. The advancement of technology has positively impacted the abroad experience in that it’s much more convenient to communicate and find places to go and things to do while on the go. The pervasiveness of social media has negatively affected the experience; people often seem more interested in documenting an experience for the Internet to see instead of fully appreciating the moment as it happens.

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## V. Conclusion

The study took a critical look at the impact of the advancement in technology and social media on the study abroad experience. Advancement in technology positively impacted the study abroad experience because it is now easier for students to communicate and navigate on the go. However, social media negatively affected the experience; people wanted to remain connected to the online communities, yet their use of media device prevents them from full cultural immersion. The survey and focus group responses demonstrated that study abroaders' need for mobile Internet access (smartphones) is growing due to the constant desire to stay connected. The amount of time spent on social media depended on individual personalities.

This study was limited because of the convenience sample of the survey, which was heavily skewed to women (88%), even though it allowed the researcher to access many of her student organizations and friends in a short amount of time. The same goes for the focus group. As a result, this study should be replicated with a more balanced sample.

The survey was distributed through social media, which garnered highly active social media users as respondents. When replicating this study, researchers should use other methods to include non social media users.

To study this topic further, more research should be done to investigate the increase/decrease in the number of American study abroad students if technology were unavailable while studying abroad. Additionally, assessing how students' Internet usage and cultural immersion while abroad changes each year, may provide insight into how the advancement in technology and social media impacts their overall experience. This could be accomplished by interviewing and creating a case study following a group of current study abroad students in one country for three months and then following another group of study abroad students in the same place a year or two later. The researcher should study and analyze the students' social media activity both in their homes and on the go.

Future sojourners must be informed of the potential negative effects of overusing social media while studying abroad. With an increasing number of students choosing to complete academic courses in foreign countries, more research should be conducted on the effect of technological advancements on the study abroad experience. It is also important to conduct further research on the correlation between personality types versus social media presence. The researcher hopes that this study will lead more people to study and assess the power of social media and its ability to impact the study abroad experience.

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## **Appendix I: Survey Questions**

1. Age
    - a. 18
    - b. 19
    - c. 20
    - d. 21
    - e. 22
    - f. 23
  2. Gender
    - a. Male
    - b. Female
  3. What year did you study abroad?
  4. Where did you study abroad?
  5. How long did you study abroad?
  6. Did you have a cellphone with you overseas?
    - a. Yes
    - b. no
  7. If so, how often did you use it a day?
    - a. 0-30 minutes
    - b. 30-60 minutes
    - c. 1-2 hours
    - d. 2-4 hours
    - e. 5+ hours
  8. Did you have access to the Internet/social media on your cellphone?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  9. How many hours a day did you spend on social media while abroad?
    - a. 0-30 minutes
    - b. 30-60 minutes
    - c. 1-2 hours
    - d. 2-4 hours
    - e. 5+ hours
  10. How often did you communicate with friends/family in the US?
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- a. Once a month
  - b. Once a week
  - c. 2-5 times a week
  - d. Every day
11. Did you ever utilize social media while actively touring a city abroad? For example, upload a picture to Facebook while in a museum or send a Tweet or text message while site seeing?
    - a. If so, did this enhance or hinder your cultural experience? Explain.
  12. Do you think the advancement in technology and the convenience of social media has positively or negatively impacted the abroad experience? How so?

## **Appendix II: Focus Group Questions**

1. What year did you study abroad?
  2. Where did you study abroad?
  3. How long did you study abroad?
  4. Did you bring a cellphone with you overseas? If so, how often did you use it?
  5. What kind of Internet access did you have abroad?
  6. While you were abroad, how many hours did you use social media a day? On what device?
  7. What device(s) or platform(s) did you use to communicate with friends/family in the US? (Cell phone, iPad, laptop, etc. or Facebook, Twitter, email, Skype, etc.) Which one did you use most often?
  8. How often did you communicate with friends/family in the US?
  9. Did you ever utilize social media while actively touring a city abroad? For example, upload a picture to Facebook while in a museum or send a Tweet or text message while site seeing? If so, did this enhance or hinder your cultural experience?
  10. Do you think the advancement in technology and the convenience of social media has positively or negatively impacted the abroad experience? How so?
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# Public Perceptions of Media Bias: A Meta-Analysis of American Media Outlets During the 2012 Presidential Election

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## Abstract

*There has been a considerable surge of scholastic inquiry in recent years into understanding the factors responsible for the fluctuating levels of public trust in the American news media. With every election year, the American public continues to perpetuate the stereotype that the American news media is ideologically biased, negatively shaping other citizens' views of the American political system and impacting their willingness to participate in the electoral process. This study asserts that the likely factors contributing to public perception of a liberal media bias are indicative of the ideological preferences of partisan individuals and customers, rather than any blatant compromises of professional integrity by American journalists. Furthermore, supported by a selection of existing media bias literature and a multi-tiered meta-analysis of 2012 electoral coverage patterns, this study found strong evidence to suggest an overwhelming conservative media bias within the 2012 election coverage by American media outlets.*

Public opinion is formed and expressed by machinery. The newspapers do an immense amount of thinking for the average man and woman. In fact, they supply them with such a continuous stream of standardized opinion, borne along upon an equally inexhaustible flood of news and sensation, collected from every part of the world every hour of the day, that there is neither the need nor the leisure for personal reflection. All this is but part of a tremendous educating process. It is an education at once universal and superficial. It produces enormous numbers of standardized citizens, all equipped with regulation opinions, prejudices and sentiments, according to their class or party.

- Winston S. Churchill (*Mass Effects on Modern Men*, 1925)

## I. Introduction

For over 30 years, there has been intense discussion and scholastic inquiry into the subject of media bias in the American media. Americans are repeatedly exposed to accusations that the mainstream media are inherently biased through their daily coverage of social, political and economic news to the American populace. Politicians from both sides of the spectrum have howled that an overwhelming majority of American mainstream media outlets, including CBS, NBC and CNN, and three major U.S. print outlets, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, routinely compromise their journalistic respectability

\* **Keywords:** American Media, Liberal Media Bias, Partisanship, 2012 Election, Public Perception  
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through obvious liberal slants found in their reporting.

The subject of this blatant media bias, more commonly referred to as the “liberal media bias,” has become a central theme of political maneuvering since the 1980s, penetrating numerous socioeconomic and ideological demographics within our society, now arguably equated to the level of cultural gospel. Conservatives in particular often claim that media gatekeepers intentionally shut out conservative ideas and have an ingrained slant toward liberal perspectives, particularly within the context of presidential and legislative election years.

People are perpetually exposed to information about our world by America’s mainstream news media. While the information itself routinely reshapes our opinions about the world in which we live, consumers also routinely develop attitudes toward the media outlets themselves during the process of consuming news.

This paper will attempt to provide insight into the underlying societal factors that are responsible for the continued cultivation of the “liberal media bias” theory. The author will place particular emphasis on the role of consumer attitudes, which stand to affect public perception of the American media’s impartiality during the 2012 election.

### ***Extant Theories of Media Bias***

Researchers have attempted to examine the circumstances under which a “biased media” could logically exist in equilibrium, and what effects an inherent bias might have on public opinion in general, as well as the outcome of our nation’s electoral process. Previous empirical articles on the existence and effects of media bias suggest the presence of a palpable media bias. However, it is the assertion of this research that an individual whose ideological belief system is comprised of more extreme political views and who self-identifies as politically active will perceive media bias more often, no matter which end of the spectrum the bias is perceived to occur.

Existing research highlights three commonly referenced explanations as to how and why bias perceptions emerge. Excessive exposure to messages enforcing the validity of bias can create a false impression of a perceptible level of bias in the media. Unfortunately, this explanation neglects the distinction between the information itself and the media outlet publicizing it.

A second explanation concerns the extent to which measurable media bias exists. Previous studies suggest that claims of partisan biases in the media are unsubstantiated, and that media coverage is predominantly fair and unbiased.

The third and final explanation for bias perceptions, referred to in academic circles as the “hostile media phenomenon”, postulates that people who are highly involved politically, often referred to as partisans, will perceive media content as “hostile” and biased if it is incongruous with their personal ideological viewpoint.

### ***Model Timeframe Selection (2012 Presidential Election)***

Mainstream media outlets in the United States have long been subjected to waves of criticisms and accusations pertaining to the existence of a blatant liberal media bias. But perhaps the debate surrounding media partiality has never been more widely discussed or applicable than within the context of the recent 2012 presidential election. Citizens from every corner of the American political spectrum openly chastised American media outlets for vilifying the 2012 Republican candidates whilst forsaking their commitment to objectivity to coincide with their (supposed) private “pro-Bama” agendas.

In a press release drafted September 25, 2012, Brent Bozell, president and founder of the Media Research Center, a conservative media watchdog group, openly lambasted the (supposedly) corrupt American media in an open letter, asserting that the establishment media are “out of control with a deliberate and unmistakable leftist agenda”(Bozell, 2012), whilst urging discerning Americans to switch off the “biased news media.” The letter reads: “In the quarter century since the Media Research Center was established to document liberal media bias, there has never been a more brazen and complete attempt by the liberal so-called ‘news’ media to decide the outcome of an election,” wrote Bozell. He went on to present a litany of grievances on behalf of “millions of Americans” against the news media, some of the highlights of which include; “shamefully smearing” Mitt Romney over the course of the election; downplaying the “horrendous economic conditions” within the country; “pouncing” on missteps by conservatives while “suppressing” gaffes by Vice President (Joe) Biden; and “deliberately covering up embarrassing government failures and scandals, including the Solyndra debacle, Fast & Furious, and national security leaks”(Bozell, 2012).

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And while some of the sentiments presented in the letter as can be dismissed as sensationalist in nature, a number of important questions remain: What is the media's responsibility with neutral, objective reporting? Which type of news outlet best serves the concerns of our democracy: an outlet which claims to uphold the tenets of "fair and balanced" reporting, yet is unmistakably aligned with a partisan ideology, or an outlet which makes claim to neither neutrality or bias? Furthermore, to what affect does bias (if existent) impact the coverage patterns of a general election by the mainstream media, as well as its subsequent outcome?†

Due to the prevalence of highly contentious ideological battles that dominated American airwaves and headlines from April to November 2012, it seemed entirely appropriate to select the 2012 presidential election as the dedicated analysis period within the context of this study. Through analysis of the pre-dominant political, social and economic issues and the media's subsequent coverage patterns of those issues, this author hopes to further the reader's understanding of the phenomena that drives public perception of the liberal media bias.

## II. Literature Review

The issue of mainstream media's credibility and commitment to "fair and neutral reporting" has been a subject of scholastic interest for many years, the most notable resurgence of which occurred following the re-election of President Barack Obama during the 2012 presidential campaign. However, existing empirical literature on this subject is already limited because bias is, by its very nature, a subjective entity, thus making it difficult to discernibly analyze in a quantitative manner.

Existing research on this subject typically assert their conclusions through utilization of two common methodologies: either addressing the issue of subjectivity vs. objectivity and empirically analyzing whether the news media does indeed possess political bias (be it liberal or conservative) (Alterman, 2003; Dennis, 1997), or having already discerned the existence of discernible bias to analyze the potential effects and/or consequences of said bias on society.

Despite the perpetually increasing collection of empirical research indicating the presence or absence of a perceptible media bias, there is a discernible lack of studies examining the relationship between factors that influence public trust in federally regulated institutions and subsequently, their relationship to public perception of the American news media. This research attempts to fill this gap by examining the interdependent relationship between the fluctuating level of public trust in government and individuals' behavior in regards to general perceptions of media bias.

### **Definition of Media Bias**

The perception of media bias has been a subject of considerable debate amongst scholars for years, due in no small part to cultural disambiguation of the term itself. It is, therefore, imperative to first define what constitutes bias.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, the term media refers to "a means or agency for communicating, transmitting or diffusing information to the public." Meanwhile, the dictionary defines bias as "a preference or an inclination that inhibits impartial judgment or an act of policy stemming from prejudice" (Pickett et. al., 2002). In the interests of comprehension, let us assimilate the words "media" and "bias" into one collective term from this point forward. According to Black's Law Dictionary, America's most widely cited legal compendium, the term "media bias" refers to "a political bias in journalistic reporting, in programming selection, or otherwise in mass communications media" (Garner and Black, 2009).

### **The Nature of Media Bias**

The question as to whether or not a measurable bias can be found within the mainstream media is completely irrelevant if one does not first understand the implications and indicators of bias, regardless of its context. Bias must exhibit certain characteristics or properties in order to accurately reflect a blatant compromise of objectivity. As coined and used by Williams (1975), in order to meet the criteria of a bias, the behavior or rhetoric in question must represent a willful and blatant challenge to widely upheld public ideals and con-

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† For future reference, the term "general" election refers to the period of time between the two major parties' nominating conventions and Election Day.

ventions, one that is continuously demonstrated and not merely an isolated incident.

In the context of this research, however, the author will be primarily focused in examining media bias as perceived by the public. Since the bias is defined “as any form of preferential and unbalanced treatment, or favoritism, toward a political or social issue or political party (Democratic or Republican),” its notion in the context of news coverage directly counteracts the time-honored journalistic standards of accuracy, balance, and fairness (Fico & Soffin, 1995; Lacy, Fico, & Simon, 1991; Streckfuss, 1990).

### ***In the Public Sector: Theoretical Models of Media Bias***

As previously discussed, prior scholastic inquiries into the field of media bias tend to indicate a number of reasons as to why bias perceptions emerge. The first is commonly referred to as “meta-coverage,” or the media’s portrayal of its own news reporting (Bennett, 1992; T. J. Johnson, Boudreau, & Glowaki, 1996). In essence, with the advent of information-sharing and social media, the general public has become exposed to an overabundance of conflicting messages about bias on a daily basis. These messages, if unchecked, can trigger a widespread false impression of a high degree of bias within the media (Watts et al., 1999). Unfortunately, this explanation fails to offer credible distinction between the information itself and the media outlet providing it.

The second explanation examines the extent to which palpable media bias can exist. References made in regards to the “liberal media” postulate that there is indeed an authentic, measurable media bias that directly opposes any and all conservative ideologies or perspectives (D’Alessio & Allen, 2000). However, most research suggests that the majority of claims inferring partisan biases at the hands of the media are unsubstantiated, and that media coverage is overwhelmingly fair and unbiased (Dennis, 1997; Domke et al., 1997).

The third common explanation for the emergence of bias perceptions is scholastically referred to as the “hostile media phenomenon” (Vallone et al., 1985). This theory suggests that individuals who are actively involved within the political spectrum (referred to as “partisans”), are predisposed to perceive the news media’s reporting as inflammatory (and therefore, inherently biased) if the given news outlet’s coverage directly conflicts with the viewers ideological viewpoint.

### ***In the Private Sector: Theoretical Models of Media Bias***

It is a widely held assumption that the majority of consumers value and actively seek out objective news coverage. However, the continued perception of media bias within the media has also been attributed to the personal and professional standards and practices of media outlet owners (publishers), employees (reporters, producers and editors) and customers (readers and viewers).

Anand, Di Tella and Galetovic (2007) sought to analyze the potential impact of owner preferences in relation to public perceptions of media bias. In their study, results indicated that inherently biased reporting that is endorsed at the corporate level can prove to be financially disastrous as well as reputedly detrimental, as some consumers demand news that is unbiased and refuse to patronize outlets whose coverage does not coincide with their consumer preferences. They found that the degree to which owner preferences affect public trust in the media only matter in the context in which a given outlet’s target demographics of consumers share the owners’ ideological preferences and do not openly espouse a desire or preference for objectivity in their news.

Perceptions of bias may also exist because the consumers demand it. This demand for bias may come from either advertisers or readers. The news media, like any other industry, represents an extremely powerful constituency of advertiser-supported business. As such, they must consistently proffer a quality product to their consumers to make a profit. Modern market researchers and public relations analysts have made considerable progress in examining the possibility that consumers may demand bias in favor of business interests generally or themselves, specifically.

Mullainathan and Shleifer (2005) and Sutter (2002) each took to analyzing the perceived impact of readers demanding bias in their news content. Their research indicated that particular demographics of consumers prefer media outlets that validate their own private belief systems over those that are unwilling to compromise journalistic objectivity.

Another explanation for the issue of media bias may relate to reporters and editors may taking upon themselves to actively abuse the resources of their workplace (referred to by scholars as a “visual” or “nar-

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rative bias”), using the media as a podium (or in some instances, “bully pulpit”) to espouse their own political views whilst diminishing the legitimacy of viewpoints contradictory to their own. As the fundamental purveyors of social, economic, political and international news, editors and reporters entrusted with accurately conveying objectivity may choose to forsake their commitment to said objectivity by polluting the objective facts with subjective, sensationalized or disparaging comments about the information being presented.

### ***Discerning Bias: Practical Models of Media Bias***

In addition to their work analyzing the influence of partisan consumers on media coverage, Mullainathan and Shleifer (2005) were also able to determine two distinct styles, or forms, of measuring media bias.

Proponents and believers of an inherent media bias also point to several practices or behaviors as proof of the media’s partiality to liberal causes. The first method is referred to as the “gatekeeper” bias. This particular method of bias refers to the purposeful selection and aggrandizement of certain stories by American journalists to over-emphasize the relative importance or correctness of one side of the issue. This form of bias is especially relevant to the context of this study, as the proverbial “gatekeeper” (which in this context may either be a sole journalist or a representative of a larger institution) is directly regulating and manipulating the scope and flow of information into American society.

The second pattern of behavior associated with biased reporting is known as “bias by placement.” This pattern reflects the practice of journalists intentionally depicting news stories in either a prominent or negligible way so as to magnify or downplay the information; this pattern is often, but not always, attributed to the issue’s coincidence with the journalist’s personal political or social belief system. This pattern can often be observed through analysis of nightly broadcast rundowns or newspaper design mock-ups (D’Alessio & Allen, 2000).

Due to the American public’s notoriously short attention span in response to being presented new information, journalists are now expected to accommodate this behavior by relaying the most contextually relevant information to consumers by the most prominent and obvious means available to them. Traditionally, print stories that receive the biggest headlines and/or “above the fold,” front page placement are perceived by readers as the most timely and appealing stories in the entire paper, thus garnering reader attention. Meanwhile, within the format of television broadcasts, produced segments and packages that are scheduled for the “A” or “B” blocks are typically placed there for the immediacy of their relevant facts and their simultaneous ability to draw in (more) prospective viewers, as well as their ability to retain existing viewers (D’Alessio & Allen, 2000).

This particular form of bias is directly linked to the third type of bias, known as “coverage” bias. In this context, coverage bias reflects the amount of calculable time or physical space each issue (as well as its subsequent sides) is allotted. Similar to the prominence and relative weight that reporters purposefully or negligibly assign to each story, coverage bias is also meant to expose the ideological balance that should technically exist if the journalist is claiming to uphold the tenets of fair and neutral reporting. In other words, there should be an obvious, equal partisan representation of the various sides during an outlet’s coverage of a specific issue (D’Alessio & Allen, 2000).

The next two styles of biased reporting will be discussed in tandem with one another, given their inter-relatedness. The forms in question are referred to as “statement” (or narrative) bias, and “bias by omission.” These two practices entail journalists purposely interjecting their personal opinions or anecdotal knowledge about the legitimacy of objective facts (D’Alessio & Allen, 2000). The objective for the journalist in this case is to promote one ideological perspective (likely one that coincides with their own) whilst decrying the intellectual or factual foundations of another. In some cases, the journalist will intentionally conceal or ignore pertinent facts that may contradict or delegitimize the basis of their arguments (hence bias by omission).

The final practice that can be commonly attributed to biased presentation or reporting is known as “bias by source selection” (D’Alessio & Allen, 2000). This practice aligns itself considerably with the aforementioned coverage and omission biases in that they reflect a journalists conscious efforts to curtail the presentation and public knowledge of relevant facts by choosing to obtain or feature information provided by sources who will either a) willingly espouse subjective comments that aligns with the journalist’s ideological identity, or b) purposefully relay only facts that will reaffirm the journalist’s (or network’s) partisan-influenced depiction of a relevant news story.

Each of the above manipulative patterns of partisan reporting is critical to furthering our understand-

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ing of the arguments legitimizing the existence of a palpable liberal bias by American media outlets. However, while there are plenty of documented examples of biased reporting throughout the entire expanse of American news media, there simultaneously exists a number of relevant counter-arguments that attempt to contextualize the myth of a liberal reporting bias within the realm of journalist's (in this case, excusable) incapacity to consistently emulate objectivity in the eyes of an increasingly polarized, partisan consumer base.

### ***Arguments Against the Liberal Media Bias***

One of the most devastating elements to the foundational argument of the existence of a perceptible bias by the news media is that many journalists actively seek to avoid implicit displays of partisanship or non-objectivity in their work. It can be argued that since it is near impossible to maintain complete and total objectivity at all times, journalists across the spectrum actively strive to uphold more realistic and attainable standards of conduct within the context of their jobs, such as "fairness" and "neutrality." Instead, a journalist attempts to be objective by two methods: 1) fairness to those concerned with the news, and 2) a professional process of information gathering that seeks fairness, completeness, and accuracy.

In an excerpt from "21st Century Communication: A Reference Handbook", Andrew Cline explains his theory that journalists are (by their human nature and intellectual basis) predisposed to be unable to remain completely neutral in their reporting. "No matter how much we may try to ignore it, human communication always takes place in a context, through a medium, and among individuals" (Cline, 2008).

Cline asserts that journalists exist on a similar plane with elected officials in which they are, by the nature of their industry, expected to vocally espouse political positions, but not as overtly. The Society of Professional Journalists harnesses journalists with its code of ethics, but they are not always as pristine as they claim to be. Cline postulates that journalists attempt to compensate for said inability to forego partisan leanings by employing two methods to reflect objectivity: fairness concerned with the news, and a professional process of information gathering focusing on fairness and accuracy (Cline, 2008).

"Language is associated with a conceptual system. To use the language of a moral or political conceptual system is to use and to reinforce that conceptual system." He further argues, "We share the same English language, we often do not share dialects of the denotations and connotations of concepts, lived experiences, and ideologies" (Cline, 2008).

These conscious efforts to emulate standards that reflect inclusivity and balance in reporting, by their very nature, directly contradict the very standards by which bias can logically be determined. If we are willing to accept Williams' (1975) pre-requisites of definitive bias as an acceptable measuring tool for evaluating partisanship in this context, it must be noted that in order for a pattern of behavior or statement to be considered inherently biased, it must reflect an intentional disruption or challenge of pre-existing social customs or beliefs. If a given media outlet is already actively seeking to avoid conflict by over-compensating and consciously curtailing their coverage to uphold their responsibility to objective reporting, it can be logically inferred that any remaining discrepancies between the format and presentation of coverage and the public's perception of its neutrality are accidental by nature and therefore not intentional.

The researcher, throughout the course of this study, will endeavor to address the following research questions:

- RQ1: Is the perception that media outlets have an outstanding liberal bias consumer driven and based on political affiliation within society, or is there an actual bias in the manner in which information is presented?
  - RQ2: If a liberal media bias does indeed exist, to what degree does the media bias affect political outcomes?
  - RQ3: Is there a systematic partisan media bias in presidential campaigns?
  - RQ4: Is one political party the subject of overwhelming praiseworthy or negative coverage by the media?
  - RQ5: If a bias does indeed exist, does it vary from campaign to campaign or from medium to medium?
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### III. Methodology

The author's research has expanded upon the initial assertions proffered by Mullainathan and Shleifer to include six specific manifestations or patterns indicating bias within outlet-presented information.

Within the context of this study, the most logical approach to understanding public perceptions of media bias would be to thoroughly review and analyze the outlets being perceived as such. If American citizens believe the media to be inherently biased, the operative question is: Is there a means of proving that the mainstream media are in fact biased in favor of a particular candidate, political party or ideology?

Using this rhetorical inquiry as a guideline, this meta-study sought to gather a variety of quantitative secondary research relating to public opinion polls regarding overall public sentiment toward media-related institutions. This study analyzed a number of informative and aesthetically discernible info-graphics, each of which depicts a multi-tryed evaluation system for analyzing major media outlet coverage of issues relevant to the 2012 presidential election. Each of the depicted graphics represents a small portion of a much larger, comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by 4thestate.net, a liberal media watchdog consortium, which processed a total of 717 articles and 15,357 quotes collected from news stories, broadcast and radio transcripts between the period of May 1 and July 15, 2012. Furthermore, each graphic provides considerable insight into a specific statistical or cognitive aspect relating to the mainstream media's coverage patterns of the election.

Drawing any definitive conclusions in a scholastic field of study like media bias is difficult when existing research suggests it to be a largely subjective issue. In an effort to correctly and concisely analyze this enormous field of study, the author has attempted to curtail the amount of reliance on subjective-related findings to help support the conclusions offered in this paper. Rather, the author of this meta-analysis will attempt to legitimize his argument by utilizing objective, numerical data to test the original hypotheses.

### IV. Results

#### ***Impact of Public Opinion on Media Bias Perceptions***

Statistically speaking, the 2012 presidential election happened to occur during an era of American history that has been definitively characterized by the American public's mistrust in their elected government for the better part of a decade.

Through a Gallup poll conducted September 6-9, 2011, public distrust toward all federally regulated institutions has progressively escalated to a new record high; sadly, American media outlets are no exception to this phenomenon. Survey figures from a 2011 poll released by Gallup indicate that public distrust of media is quickly reaching a new plateau.

As depicted above in *Figure 1*, when polled "how much trust and confidence" they held toward mass media outlets, 55% of respondents reported "not very much" or "none at all" (Gallup Politics, 2012). This figure marks a 9 percentage increase from the reported 46% calculated in 1998 at the inception of the survey, as well as a 5 percentage increase from a reported 50% in 2005. Meanwhile, when polled about their perceptions of the potential existence of a liberal bias within the media, 47% stated their belief that the media is decidedly "too liberal," marking a considerable ideological disparity when compared to the 13% of respondents who identified the news media as being "too conservative." Meanwhile, 36% of respondents reported feeling that the media is "just about right" in terms of its ideological orientation.

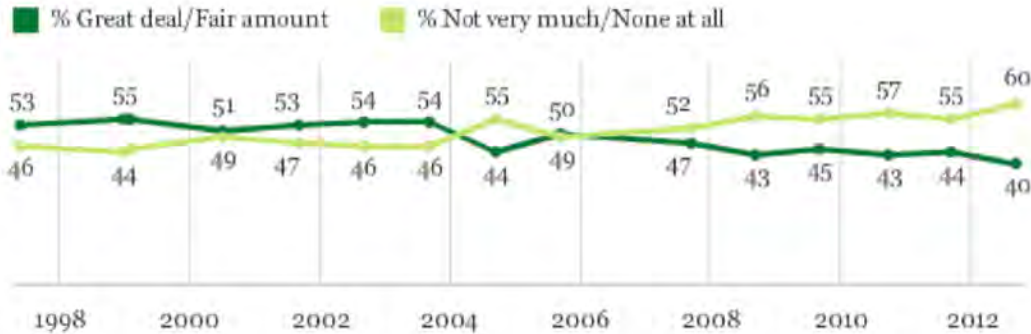
These can be further corroborated through analysis of the findings of a 2012 Pew Research Center survey, which calculates public distrust in media to have reached a historic level ("Pew, 2011"). Opposition to the mass media has reached the pinnacle of a 26-year growth spurt. The survey's findings indicated that 66% of survey respondents perceived news stories as "often inaccurate," marking a 32 percentage jump from a reported 34% in 1985. Meanwhile, 77% of respondents perceived the media to "tend to favor one side," marking a 24 percentage increase from a calculated 53% in 1985. Finally, 80% asserted their beliefs that the media is "often influenced by powerful people and organizations," illustrating a drastic 27 percentage increase from the previous 53% in 1985.

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*In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV, and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?*

Gallup trend since 1997

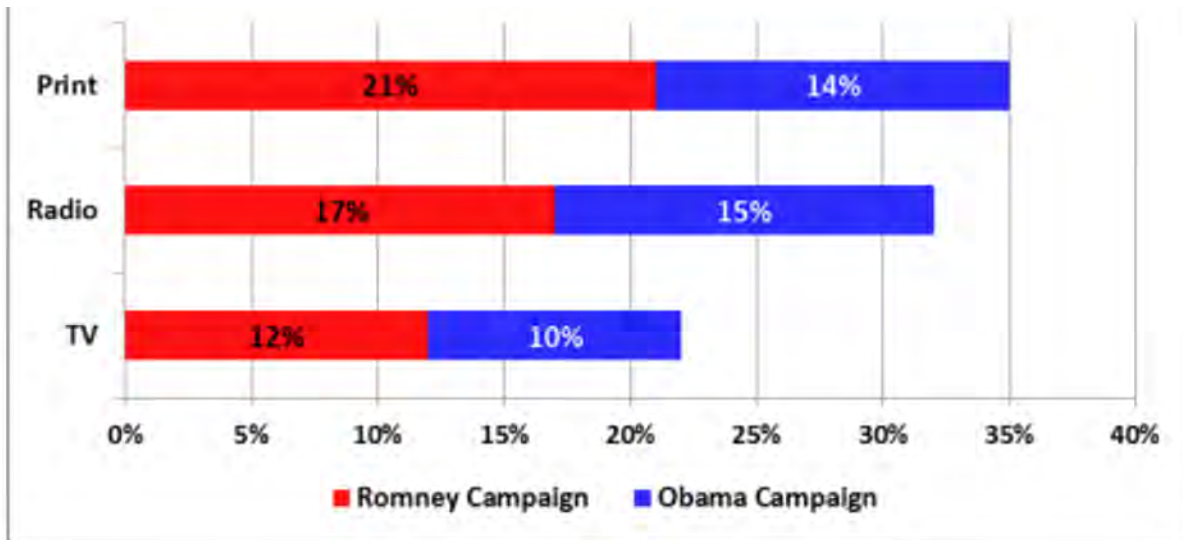


GALLUP

*Figure 1.* Respondents were asked to convey their relative trust and/or approval of American media outlets (“Gallup Politics”)

And yet, despite previous documented claims of liberal media bias, contemporary research profiling electoral coverage patterns does not coincide with popular belief.

The data presented in *Figure 2* indicates the Romney campaign boasted a greater percentage of electoral coverage than the Obama campaign across the print, radio and television mediums. On average, the Romney campaign was allotted 3% more statements in election coverage than the Obama campaign. The largest disparity in this trend can be observed through analysis of electoral print coverage, where Romney or members of his campaign staff held 6% more statements than Obama and his campaign officials did.



*Figure 2:* This figure illustrates what percent of total campaign statements are offered from the Romney and Obama campaign officials through the print, television and radio mediums (“Romney Campaign Gets More Coverage Across Media Space”, 2012).

**Content Analysis: Major Print News outlets**

Analysis of electoral print coverage points to a number of revelatory statistics regarding the perceptible ideological imbalance of partisan sentiments exemplified throughout the course of the election.

Figure 3 suggests that amongst the top four syndicated print outlets depicted above, candidate Mitt Romney received a noticeably larger portion of total electoral coverage than President Barack Obama throughout the course of the campaign. Analysis of electoral coverage patterns exhibited by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* shows a 4:3 ratio in terms of overall space dedicated to Romney over Obama, thereby espousing almost double the number of campaign or issued-related statements coming from Mitt Romney than from Barack Obama.

When it comes to *Boston Globe* electoral coverage, however, the pro-Romney coverage ratio drops to 2:1, a noticeable departure from the coverage patterns of the three aforementioned publications. The four print outlets depicted in Figure 3 represent the largest constituency of print consumers within the United States, thus offering the most encompassing representation available.

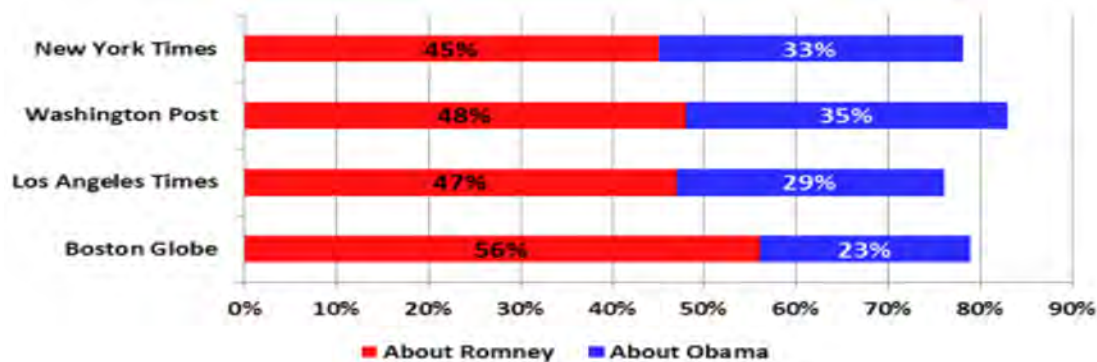


Figure 3: This graph profiles the total percentage of electoral coverage dedicated to each candidate. All of the data here represents the collective assortment of news articles for these four publications within the sample timeline (“Candidate Coverage Among Top Print Outlets,” 2012).

To get a conclusion from the print medium in general, other prominent American print outlets should be included in the study.

Figure 4 illustrates the amount of positive coverage amplified by the 10 most patronized print outlets in the United States during the course of the election. Collectively, the 10 outlets referenced above allocated 22% of their overall electoral coverage to reflect negative sentiments about the candidates. These results also indicate showed that an average of 13% of statements in election coverage among four major print outlets could be viewed as positive in context. Amongst the 10 outlets rendered above, only 14% of their total dedicated election coverage was perceived to reflect a positive context and tone; this value highlights an 8% gap compared to the amount of negative coverage.

As depicted in Figure 4, only 3 out of 10 newspapers printed less percentage of negative statements against Obama than Romney.

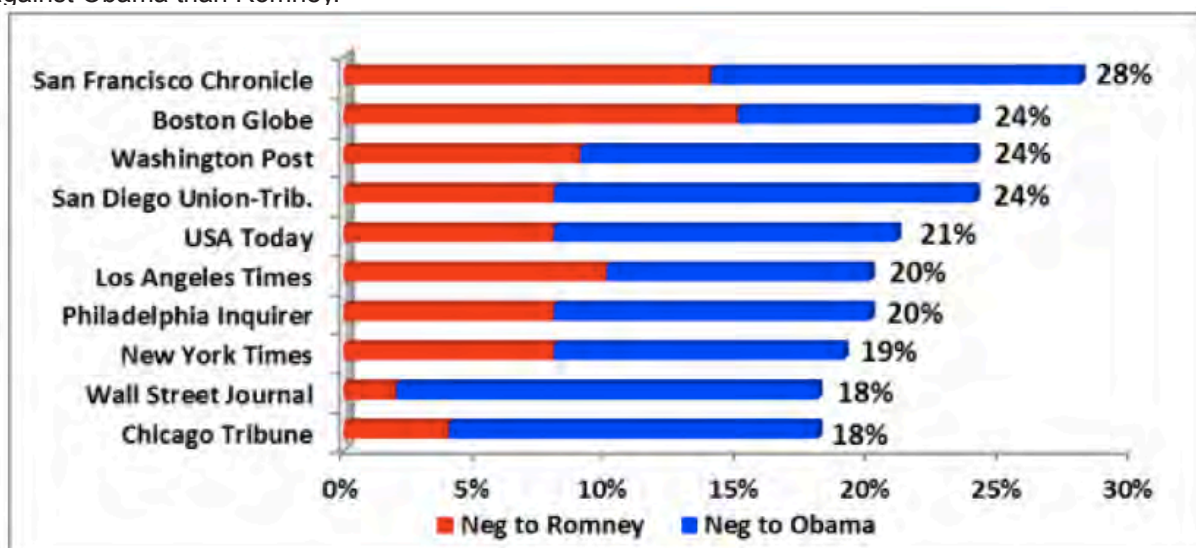


Figure 4: shows percent of negative statements out of total coverage among the top ten print outlets in the United States (“Negative Coverage Among Top Print Outlets” 2012).

### Content Analysis: Major Television News Outlets

This part will feature a coordinated meta-analysis of the issue-specific coverage patterns of American broadcasting networks (namely, in this instance, network and cable television).

The evaluation system this paper relies on is created by 4thEstate.net (whose data the author will also feature) as “Voiceshare.” It encapsulates each candidate’s respective share of the total dedicated electoral coverage across all major news mediums. Any statement is said by a candidate or campaign officials, about them, one point is assigned to the candidate, raising his or her total Voiceshare percentage.

Print and television outlets covered the 2012 election differently. While the former predominantly tailored their electoral coverage to reporting on candidates policy initiatives and advocacy of relevant social issues, the latter seemed to consciously downplay the candidates’ respective policy stances in favor of placing added emphasis on campaign strategy and professional decorum.

Figure 5 illustrates that electoral television coverage lacks considerable policy-related discussion in comparison to its print counterpart. About 45% of all broadcast sentiments were oriented around discussions of each candidates respective campaign strategies. By comparison, the most heavily discussed policy issue featured in electoral television coverage related to the ongoing universal healthcare debate (more popularly known as Obamacare), representing a mere 15% of analyst statements. This pattern reflects a conscious effort by American broadcast outlets to place particular emphasis on critiquing candidate image and campaign developments over policy initiatives.

In addition, 30% of statements made by featured analysts and commentators throughout all television election coverage on campaign strategy have been partisan-influenced, whilst the remaining 70% majority had been viewed as non-partisan or neutral toward Romney and Obama. This final statistic is particularly unexpected within the context of televised electoral coverage, as the broadcast format is more commonly associating with several of the previously discussed forms of biased reporting from which the public identifies bias. For the overwhelming majority of statistics pertaining to broadcast statements to indicate a minority of partisan sentiments (especially in regard to such subjective facets of a presidential campaign like campaign strategy and perceptions of professional decorum) helps concretize the author’s previous assertion that modern journalists strive to uphold the tenets of objectivity and fair, neutral reporting in spite of the public stigmatization of their profession.

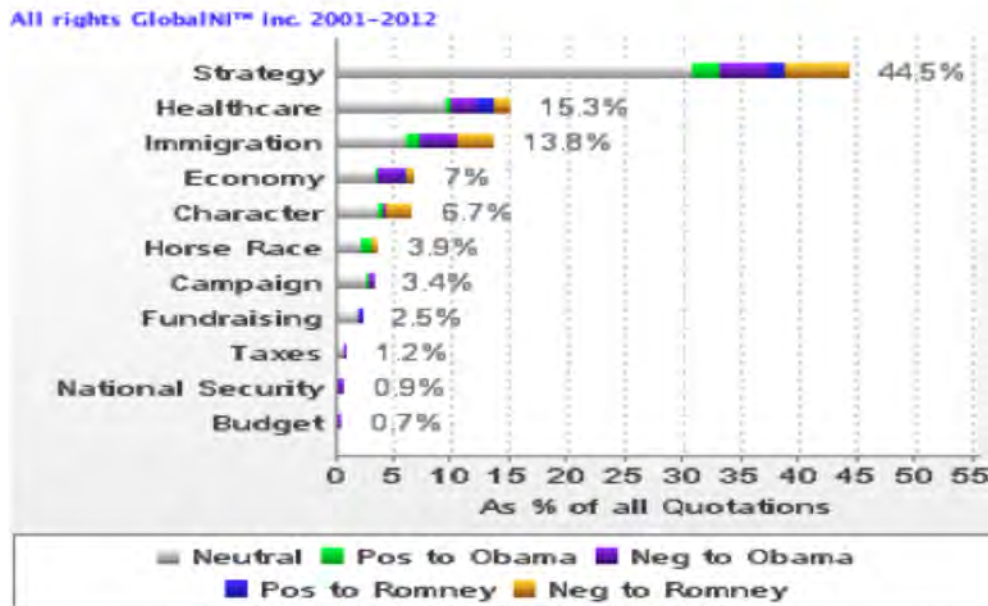


Figure 5: This chart illustrates the percentage of statements from analysts and commentators in television coverage of the election, categorized by topic (“Election Coverage on TV Lacks Substance,” 2012).

## **Discussion**

In the interests of coherency and organization, the discussion of the study's findings will be subsequently divided into five distinct portions; each portion will center on revisiting one of the author's original five research questions.

The findings of the study offer a multi-faceted answer to the issues raised in RQ1. Through our analysis of existing bias literature, multiple studies pointed to the "hostile media phenomenon" (Vallone et al., 1985) as one of the primary underlying factors that has allowed for continued social perpetuation of the liberal media bias myth. This theorem provided an expository glimpse into the tendency for citizens to view media coverage of controversial events as unfairly biased and hostile if it does not coincide with the position they advocate. Furthermore, it can be ascertained that individuals who self-identify as being actively involved within the political spectrum (textually referred to as "partisans"), are thus more inclined to perceive the news media's reporting on a specific issue as inflammatory (and therefore, inherently biased) if the given news outlet's coverage directly conflicts with the viewers ideological viewpoint. This innate desire by American consumers for ideological self-validation, if challenged, tends to strengthen their convictions that they and those who identify with their respective ideologies have been (and will continue to be) slandered and manipulated by the so-called "liberal media."

However, it must also be acknowledged that the myth surrounding the existence of perceptible media bias is not without some small modicum of truth. Advocates of the existence of said bias commonly cite a number of professional patterns and standards of conduct historically employed by journalists (though are not exclusive to "liberal" journalists) in an effort to manipulate the depiction and depth of information presented each day to the American public. Such techniques discussed included six main types or styles of biases, including; gatekeeping information (i.e. purposefully selecting ideologically reaffirming stories for syndication), employing partisan source selection, omission of (potentially contradictory) facts, manipulating the degree of attention and calculable time devoted to a given issue, and finally, openly displaying narrative, subjective contempt for objective facts.

Unfortunately, while the results also indicated a considerable pro-conservative bias amidst the media's collective coverage of the 2012 election, it seems that the degree to which bias can be perceived within the coverage itself remains a subjective entity; however, numerous examples of existing literature indicate that an overwhelming majority of claims inferring partisan biases by the news media remain unsubstantiated, and that mainstream outlet media coverage is predominantly fair and unbiased.

Through RQ2, the study aimed to determine to what degree a liberal bias on the part of the news media would affect the political outcome of the electoral process. If one is to proffer a conclusion for this question, one must address the issues raised in this question empirically. As previously stated, the degree and manner to which perceptible bias on the part of the news media can be ascertained remains an overwhelmingly subjective phenomenon, rendering the author unable to offer definitive answer on the subject, even in consideration of strongly supportive data.

However, if the author is to examine this question within the parameters of a scientific cause and effect relationship, he is then capable of proffering a more definitive conclusion. In accordance with the patterns gained by analyzing the featured data profiling media outlet's coverage and public opinion polls indicating popular sentiment to be in support of the liberal bias theory (the "cause"), the subsequent effect would hold for the study's defined sample period, namely the 2012 presidential election.

In this case, despite existing popular opinion endorsing the existence of the liberal bias theory, the results of this study effectively counteract and (partially) delegitimize these claims. Despite a documented conservative tilt in favor of Mitt Romney and partisan Republican ideology observed in the media's coverage of the election, history shows that President Barack Obama was re-elected for a second term, garnering a 51.1 majority percentage of the popular vote. Even amidst an unfavorable 6:1 ratio of negative to positive coverage and an established pro-conservative tone displayed across all major news media, President Obama was still able to achieve victory.

These findings lead to a dual-layered conclusion: That a liberal bias by the American news media stands to affect electoral outcomes can only be ascertained on a select case-by-case basis; and the calculated conservative bias exemplified by the American media did not successfully manipulate the ultimate outcome of the electoral process governing the 2012 presidential election.

RQ3 and RQ4 both endeavored to explore whether a systematic partisan media bias could be mea-

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sured during the span of presidential election campaigns, and whether one political party exists as the subject of overwhelming praiseworthy or negative coverage by the media in comparison to the other. In order to present an accurate and documented conclusion to this question, it seems appropriate to consult the featured info-graphic, which serves as a cumulative representation of the overall coverage patterns exhibited by national media outlets regarding timely campaign issues (see Figure 6).

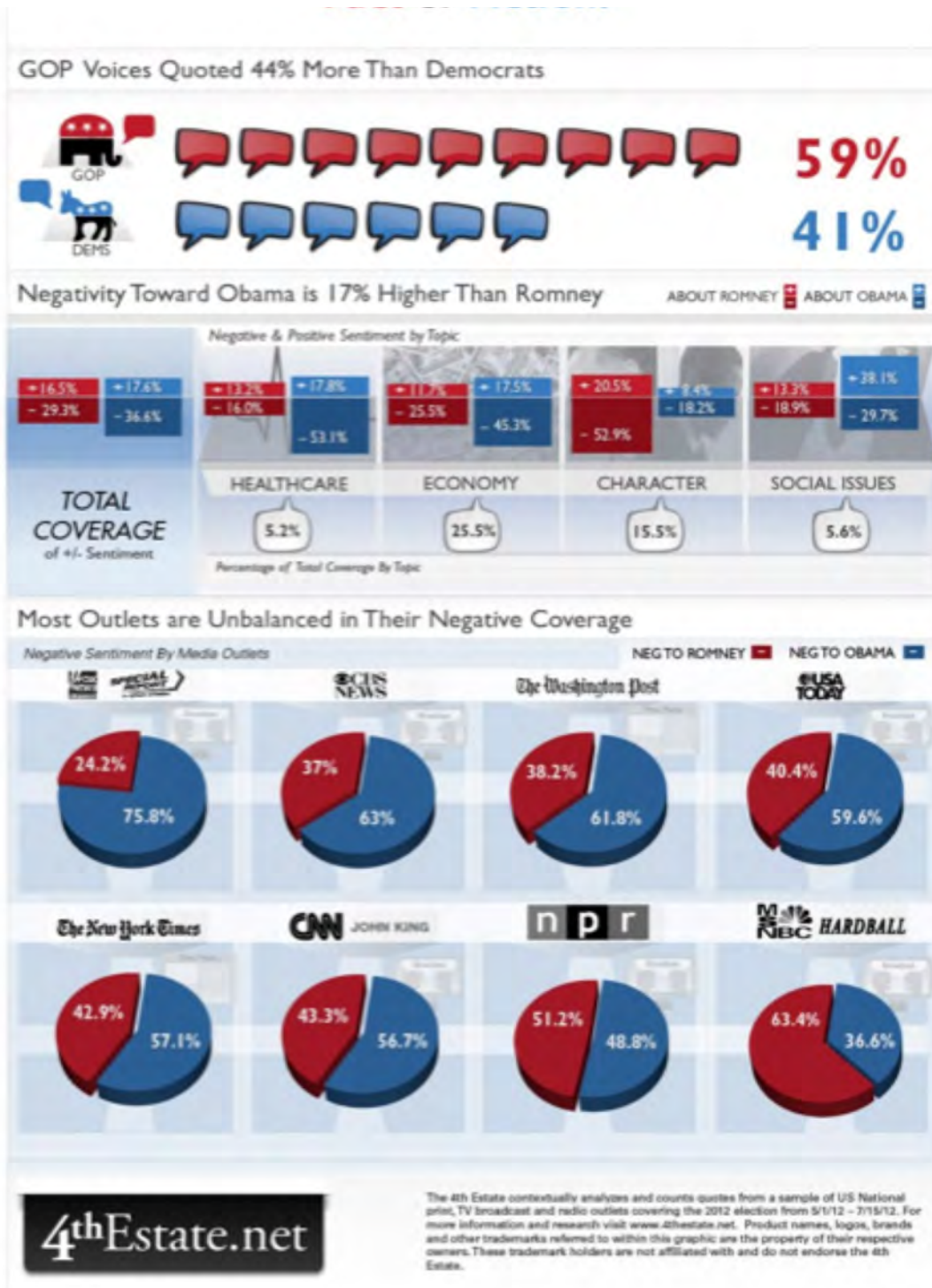


Figure 6. "Liberal Media Bias: Fact or Fiction", 2012

As evidenced by the numerical collage of results offered in Figure 6, throughout the course of the election, the news media curtailed their overall depth of electoral coverage so as to feature statements origi-



nating from partisan Republican officials at a 44% higher rate than those from partisan Democratic officials. Additionally, the overall calculated ratio of positive to negative coverage indicates that outlets across all three major mediums were 17.1% more critical of Obama than Romney. These results indicate overwhelmingly that the existence of a discernible liberal bias cannot be logically associated with the overall electoral coverage patterns and images displayed by the mainstream media during the course of the 2012 presidential election, thus affirming another of the researcher's original hypotheses offered at the onset of this study.

The author's fifth and final research question sought to explore as to whether the existence of a discernible bias would vary from campaign to campaign or medium to medium. While previously discussed in the research and findings portion of this thesis, it seems that the most logical foundation of bias can be found in the analysis of medium vs. medium electoral coverage. The data presented in *Figures 2, 3, 4* and *6* indicated the Romney campaign boasted a greater percentage of electoral coverage, averaging an increase 44% more media attention than the Obama campaign across all major news information mediums. And while the possibility for the existence of campaign-based bias may exist, it has not been thoroughly examined enough within the research implications of this study for the author to offer a substantiated conclusion.

### **Research Limitations**

The author acknowledges that the considerably limited scope of the accumulated results and the consistent reliance on selected sources to provide the bulk of the study's statistical basis does not permit him to speak indisputably about either the source or the depth of the perceptual bias this paper has sought to document.

Meta-analyses are by nature somewhat subjective, and are typically limited in their academic scope to primarily reviewing and analyzing quantitative studies, even though qualitative research stands to provide measurable insight into the research issue being studied. Furthermore, the conclusions garnered by meta-analyses often conflict if different studies are sampled or excluded for different reasons (in essence, researchers who craft meta-analyses can base the entirety of their argument off an unrepresentative sample of the topic being examined).

Despite the prevalence of American consumers obtaining a veritable portion of their news via aggregate content sites, many scholars now attribute the overwhelming functionality of the American political blogosphere to be that of an open avenue for the exchange of partisan-influenced ideas and opinions that primarily stand to reaffirm existing conservative or liberal belief systems and ideological self-validation. This means that print and online editorials, opinion columns, letters to the editor and other subjective-based content sites (including content featured on popular political news aggregate blogs and websites like the Huffington Post, Drudge Report or Christian Science Monitor), which do not reflect an open and unwavering commitment to objectivity in their news reporting, were thus excluded from the analysis. Therefore, the conclusions drawn through analysis of the accumulated data are limited to the coverage of traditional news media, including television, print and radio.

Throughout the discussion of the empirical results below, aggregated results from analyzed newspapers, television and radio broadcasts are presented in order to give the reader a more concise understanding of the profiled outlets and issues presented.

## **V. Conclusion**

In summation, the extant data and research presented in this paper does not support the existence of a liberal media bias as it relates to mainstream 2012 election coverage. If anything, analysis of the discussed content contradicts ongoing public assumption, indicating a measurable ideological imbalance in typically required non-partisan coverage, one that tips overwhelmingly in favor of then Republican candidate Mitt Romney. If anything else, the statistics presented in this paper clearly suggest a considerable conservative bias by the mainstream media during the course of the 2012 election, exemplified through their calculated dominant coverage of partisan Republican officials across all major news mediums.

This analysis has sought to demonstrate that the stigmatization of the American media and its perceived liberal partiality stems from a series of interrelated factors that include the roles of partisan identification and need for self-validation of political ideology.

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As to whether the news media actually contains a discernible liberal or conservative bias; if this study's findings are any indication, it is likely this subject will remain a topic of debate among scholars for decades to come.

## Acknowledgements

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# The Construction of Southern Identity Through Reality TV: A Content Analysis of *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*, *Duck Dynasty* and *Buckwild*

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## Abstract

*The reality television genre has been increasingly at the forefront of media and cultural studies and a subject of critique across the disciplines of communications, anthropology and visual studies. While reality television programs have been analyzed for elements of racism and sexism, quantitative research to date has rarely been done to explore whether the portrayal of the American southerner was distorted. Using a data-driven approach, the frequency of commonly held southern stereotypes within three shows across three networks were evaluated through content analysis. The researcher observed 100 minutes of each program, marking incidents of visibly unintelligent, crude, violent and unhealthy behavior. Results showed high frequencies of the “unintelligent,” “crude” and “violent” stereotypes.*

## I. Introduction

*Candid Camera*, an American television comedy series that premiered in 1948, is often credited as the first reality television program.<sup>1</sup> Since that time, and particularly within the past decade, reality TV has exploded into mainstream popular culture. Reality-based shows are no longer a rare occurrence on television; they are now ubiquitous in television programming across networks ranging from MTV to The History Channel. Viewers are not just watching these shows, but they are discussing them long after the segment ends. According to an article from the New York Times, 15 of the top 20 highest-rated programs among those between ages 18 and 29 were reality or unscripted shows.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, reality TV programs featuring redneck culture in particular have seen increased popularity, showing southerners doing everything from fishing with their bare hands, eating triple-fried foods at county fairs, making up words not found within the traditional English dictionary, and often times just acting downright ignorant and crude. The issue here is that while these shows may be watched solely for their enter-

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1 Charles Slocum, “The Real History of Reality TV Or, How Alan Funt Won the Cold War,” Writers Guild of America, n.d, <http://www.wga.org/organizesub.aspx?id=1099> (15 March 2013).

2 Bill Carter, “Reality TV Once Again Dominates Summer Ratings,” New York Times, last modified September 13, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/13/business/media/13reality.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/13/business/media/13reality.html?_r=0) (15 March 2013).

\* **Keywords:** Stereotype, Southern, Culture, Representation, Reality Television  
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tainment value and while they seem harmless and even fun, they are constructing a distinct southern identity and it is not a flattering one at that. Shows like *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* (TLC), *Hillbilly Handfishin'* (Animal Planet), *Duck Dynasty* (A&E), and *Swamp People* (History Channel) are beginning to dominate programming across multiple stations. It is interesting to note that these shows are appearing on a variety of networks. They are not limited to the less serious stations and are beginning to be featured on networks heavily trusted for disseminating accurate information through documentary-style production.

One must ask the question, as with any reality TV program, are the subjects of these shows really being represented as they actually exist when the camera is not present? To what extent may they be simply performing constructed cultural identities that have already been, in some sense, assigned to them? Related to this, one must also consider what role both subject and filmmaker play in the production of these programs. Critical analysis from disciplines ranging from anthropology to visual studies may be applied to explore these issues.

This paper will place the study of popular culture, specifically the exploration of issues within reality television, at an academic level. The analysis will be approached using theoretical frameworks from sociology and anthropology along with media studies. The intention of this paper is to explore issues of representation of reality television subjects from the American South. Secondary research will explore the impact of reality television on viewers' perception of reality and reference studies on stereotypes seen in other areas of reality television. Primary research will include a content analysis of *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* (TLC), *Buckwild* (MTV), and *Duck Dynasty* (A&E).

## II. Background

Some might argue that studying popular culture, which is sometimes referred to as "low culture," is essentially frivolous and therefore not worthy of scholarly study. After all, how could studying a genre where absurdity is heightened, where storylines are deliberately constructed, possibly be considered worthy of an intellectual analysis? How could material that is so mass-produced be on the same level as studying high culture?

Filoteo argues that it is precisely because this popular culture is mass-produced and mass consumed that it is worthy of study. Examining popular culture through a critical lens helps us learn about our society. It helps us hold the "dominant class" (i.e. those in control of editing and producing reality television and other forms of popular culture) accountable for the messages that are being communicated through various media. It is thus imperative for us to study these messages and try to uncover meaning from them.

Quoting Friedman (2002), Filoteo explains the possible reason that reality television has been studied minimally. The lack of scholarship is not due to "a lack of an interest in the subject, but rather to an inherent difficulty in describing and containing the ideological, economic, cultural, technological, and political influences that impact televisual representations of real events."<sup>3</sup>

If these reality television shows are deliberately being constructed in a way that expresses overt or perhaps more subtle messages about the subjects in the shows, it is imperative that we study these messages through a critical lens as they may be indicative of larger societal issues. While attention has been brought to the unfair representation of particular ethnic groups as well as women in reality television, little to no academic work has been written on the representation of the American southerner through these shows. Why has this group been neglected? In a 2011 article from NPR, Eric Deggans argues that these shows have emerged to make "a new generation laugh at the expense of real understanding." He writes, "Despite reality TV's tendency to stupefy everything it touches, perhaps it's time for these programs to actually get real and give us a vision of Southern culture that reaches beyond the fun-loving redneck."<sup>4</sup>

In an article from the *Washington Post*, Ted Ownby, the director of the Center for the Study of South-

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3 Janie Filoteo, "Placing Reality TV in the Cultural Spectrum: Making a Case for Studying the World of Reality Television," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, August 13-16, 2005), 6.

4 Eric Deggans, "Disappointing 'Redneck' TV Shortchanges The American South," National Public Radio, last modified December 7, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/monkeysee/2011/12/07/142861568/disappointing-redneck-tv-shortchanges-the-american-south> (4 April 2013).

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ern Culture, is quoted saying that people from the South get frustrated at the “narrow range of representations” on these shows. According to this article, it has become increasingly apparent that individuals from the American South are the last cultural group to be openly mocked and stereotyped without penalty.<sup>5</sup>

### III. Literature Review

Since introduction of reality shows, scholars have been studying the genre. Previous research has explored the psychological appeal of reality television for viewers, issues of performance and authenticity of reality TV subjects, as well as the many ethical issues that arise with the production of these shows. While previous studies have addressed everything from substance abuse in the popular reality show, *The Osbournes*, to issues of racism in *The Real World*, no studies to date have examined the recent explosion of “redneck” reality shows. While scholars and critics have written articles expressing their opinions on the representation of subjects in these shows, there is currently no quantitative research on the actual frequency of southern stereotypes in reality television. For this reason, the findings of this study may be vital in providing some of the first concrete data to support or contradict the claims that these reality shows play a role in emphasizing existing southern stereotypes.

#### ***Emergence of Reality TV: Explaining the Phenomenon***

Several scholars have written about the emergence of reality television as a popular TV genre. Many have written about how reality television has been born out of earlier styles of observational filmmaking, and now can be considered a part of post-documentary culture, where documentary realism blends with celebrity and constructed scenes.<sup>6</sup> Many have compared earlier observational documentary films with reality television, suggesting the latter is now more relevant in our study of modern culture.

One author who provides some historical background on why reality TV came into existence is journalist Richard Huff. According to Huff, during a time when networks were struggling to fill programming gaps, reality TV served as an inexpensive alternative to bring in the audiences that these networks were specifically trying to reach: young adults.<sup>7</sup> Some of the earliest shows, including MTV’s longest running reality series, *The Real World*, and Fox Broadcasting Company’s *American Idol*, started to become some of the most watched, most talked about shows on television.

#### ***Performance and Authenticity***

Several scholars have also explored issues of performance and authenticity in reality television, specifically looking at underlying motivations for reality TV subjects to perform an assigned role despite reality TV’s claims of depicting subjects as they really are in everyday life. In her text, Rachel Dubrofsky suggests that participants in reality shows do not actually have complete autonomy in how to present themselves, suggesting that editing techniques in particular play a massive role in constructing reality on these programs.<sup>8</sup>

Other scholars, including those who studied earlier modes of documentary filmmaking, have suggested that subjects are not represented as they really are because the presence of a camera inevitably causes a behavioral change in the subject. Some scholars have suggested that when subjects know they are being filmed, they have a greater tendency to “perform,” exaggerating certain personal characteristics or at the other end of the spectrum, changing their persona altogether. Annette Hill, a leader in reality television research, found that many viewers have the common-sense belief that in order to create entertaining television, there is a basic need for participants to be entertaining.<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, this is problematic when considering the

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5 Roger Catlin, “Reality TV’s explosion of Southern stereotypes,” *The Washington Post*, last modified June 7, 2012, [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-06-07/entertainment/35460112\\_1\\_american-hoggers-turtleman-swamp-people](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-06-07/entertainment/35460112_1_american-hoggers-turtleman-swamp-people) (6 April 2013).

6 Justin Lewis “The Meaning of Real Life” In *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*, ed. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 288.

7 Richard Huff, *Reality Television* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 20.

8 Rachel Dubrofsky, *The Surveillance of Women on Reality Television: Watching The Bachelor and The Bachelorette* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011), 100.

9 Annette Hill, *Reality TV Audiences and Popular Factual Television* (London: Routledge, 2005), 75.

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supposed authenticity of reality TV subjects.

### ***The Impact of Reality Television on Viewers' Perceptions of Reality***

As stated earlier, Annette Hill has been one of the leading researchers of reality television's impact on viewers' perceptions of reality. Hill has studied this topic over the past decade and has published research from in-depth interviews and focus groups that has shed insight on how reality television influences viewers' feelings and attitudes towards subjects, along with their overall trust or mistrust in the programming. Hill's research has shown that most audience members are not naive to the fact that reality television is often "set up" and at least partially scripted. In fact, Hill's research has shown that viewers often discuss and even gossip about how subjects "perform" their roles and to what extent they are acting or being true to their identity.

### ***Ethical Issues of Representation in Reality Television***

Especially within the past few years, scholars have given heightened attention to ethical issues within reality TV production, viewing, and participation. As mentioned earlier, the editing process involved with reality television production leads to some ethical problems.

Producers have the opportunity to include or exclude scenes often from many hours or days of filming. They are able to piece together scenes and show participants in a way that is most appealing or entertaining to viewers, inevitably contributing to the "construction" of the representation of reality television subjects.

Jonathan Kraszewski wrote a chapter -- "Country Hicks and Urban Cliques: Mediating Race, Reality, and Liberalism on MTV's *The Real World*" -- in a book, *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. There he discusses the ethical issues of representation in the MTV show, suggesting that the series is laden with racist elements that reinforce dangerous stereotypes. Kraszewski suggests that MTV producers in one season of the show have actually looked for racist participants, and when they were unable to find a participant who was "racist enough," they encouraged one participant to act as if he were, even though he claimed he "did not have a racist bone in [his] body."<sup>10</sup> Another scholar has similarly noted that it is an ethical issue that viewers may be naive when it comes to casting decisions in that often, someone may be cast solely because that individual embodies and satisfies a stereotype.<sup>11</sup>

### ***The Explosion of Southern Stereotypes***

Many scholars and journalists have published highly opinionated articles on the recent popularity of reality television programs showcasing "redneck" culture in the American South. As mentioned earlier, Roger Catlin of the *Washington Post* recently covered both sides of the issue, interviewing experts in the field and finding mixed reactions: While some fervently believed that these shows build upon and proliferate existing negative stereotypes, others felt that the shows are not derogatory because subjects are shown in an affectionate way that lets viewers connect to something both raw and real. Eric Deggans' recent article on NPR, on the other hand, argues that these shows are both disappointing and completely unacceptable and should not be universally embraced and celebrated.

While scholars and journalists have expressed their views by publishing a number of articles on the topic, to date, no quantitative research has been done to explore the issue. Therefore, this paper will serve to provide key, data-driven insights in a specific subject area that has not yet been given this attention.

The thesis statement of this study is that the proliferation of reality television shows featuring subjects from the American South exacerbates the existing stereotypes associated with these communities. The following research questions were derived from the thesis.

RQ1. What have previous scholars discovered about the potential problems with reality television and its representation of "reality"?

RQ2. What are the dominant stereotypes for southerners that exist within reality TV shows and to what extent and frequency do these stereotypes appear? Looking specifically at the stereotypes of southern-

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<sup>10</sup> Jon Kraszewski, "Country Hicks and Urban Cliques: Mediating Race, Reality, and Liberalism on MTV's *The Real World*." In *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*, ed. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 179.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Denham and Richelle Jones, "Survival of the Stereotypical: A Study of Personal Characteristics and Order of Elimination on Reality Television," *Studies in Popular Culture* 30, no. 2 (2008): 81.

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ers as unintelligent, crude, violent and unhealthy, which stereotypes are most prevalent?

RQ3. To what extent does television have the power to influence viewers' perceptions of the subjects within reality television shows?

## IV. Methodology

Content analysis was used to quantitatively measure the exploration of this topic. Three reality television shows were selected for the analysis: *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* (TLC), *Duck Dynasty* (A&E), and *Buckwild* (MTV). These shows were selected as they all contain subjects from and take place in the American South. These shows were also chosen because of their range in network, geographic location, and age of the subjects.

*Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* airs on TLC and takes place in the rural town of McIntyre, Georgia. It follows the daily activities of 7-year-old Alana "Honey Boo Boo" Thompson and her mother, father, and three teenage sisters. The show was born out of TLC's *Toddler's and Tiaras*, a child pageant reality show where Alana and her entire family proved to be entertaining, larger than life characters apparently deserving of a television show dedicated to chronicling their daily lives. The popularity of the young star and her family is undeniable; according to an article from *Parade* magazine, Honey Boo Boo was one of the ten most Internet-searched reality stars of 2012.

*Duck Dynasty*, which airs on A&E, follows the lives of the Roberston family in West Monroe, Louisiana. The series primarily follows Willie Robertson, the company's current CEO, while he tries to keep his family, who all work for the company, away from distractions. The family became extremely wealthy from their business, Duck Commander, which makes products for various duck hunting activities. The network's website for the show states, "They may be living the rags-to riches American dream, but they're just as busy staying true to their rugged outdoorsman lifestyle and southern roots." According to A&E, it is the network's most watched series and is in its third season.

*Buckwild* is a recently cancelled reality show on MTV that follows the lives of several young adults in both Sissonville and Charleston, West Virginia. The show features a group of young adults who have just graduated high school and are either taking classes at local colleges, working at businesses in the area, or not working at all. The show mainly follows the group as they engage in dangerous stunts, go out drinking, or get into fights with each other, neighbors, family members and friends. Following the death of main character Shain Gandee due to a carbon monoxide poisoning incident, the show was cancelled in early April 2013.

Each show was evaluated for four stereotypes sometimes associated with the South. Those elements included unintelligent, crude, violent or unhealthy actions. After reviewing literature identifying southern stereotypes, these four factors were chosen for the study.

Many authors have published articles on what they argue to be southern stereotypes proliferated through both politics and the mainstream media. Kristin Rawls of political journalism site *Salon.com* published an article last year arguing that the "white trash" representation of southern culture makes it seem as if the entire community is uneducated. While underfunded education remains a problem throughout the South, Rawls asserted that the representation of Southerners as universally unintelligent is inaccurate and leads to a dangerous misunderstanding of the entire community.<sup>12</sup>

The crude and violent stereotypes surrounding Southern culture may stem from films like *Deliverance*, which came out over 40 years ago. The influence of this film, according to University of Tulsa professor Robert Jackson, was both "powerful and pernicious." In an interview with CNN he said, "It's had a tenacious hold on people's imaginations, establishing the hillbilly as a kind of menacing, premodern, medieval kind of figure."<sup>13</sup>

The study included the unhealthy stereotype as the final factor for evaluation primarily because of the association of the South with high obesity rates. In 2011, a study from the nonprofit organization Trust for America's Health in conjunction with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that nine of the ten states

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12 Kristin Rawls, "The media's southern stereotypes," *Salon.com*, last modified April 4, 2012, [http://www.salon.com/2012/04/04/the\\_medias\\_southern\\_stereotypes/](http://www.salon.com/2012/04/04/the_medias_southern_stereotypes/) (24 June 2013).

13 Todd Leopold, "The South: Not all Bubbas and banjos," *CNN*, last modified April 14, 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/04/14/us/bubba-southern-stereotypes/> (24 June 2013).

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with the highest obesity rates were in the South. Mississippi, Alabama and West Virginia were at the top of the list, with obesity rates of 34.4%, 32.3%, and 32.3% of the state's population, respectively. This information was based on data from the CDC. According to Jeff Levi, executive director of the Trust for America's Health, this may be due to high rates of poverty in the South and a traditional diet that is unhealthy.<sup>14</sup>

The researcher fully acknowledges that selection of these stereotypes may be a limitation to the study. By narrowing the subject matter to four stereotypes for analysis, some stereotypes are neglected. In addition, no stereotypes with positive connotations have been included, limiting the results of this study so as to provide only insight into the prevalence of negative stereotypes. Additionally, the interpretation of the representation of the frequency of these stereotypes is, of course, personal; therefore, the results of the study may be largely dependent upon who is conducting the research.

These four factors, unintelligent, crude, violent and unhealthy, must be defined in more specific terms in order to explain the data collection. Any behavior that could be deemed "unintelligent" was included in the analysis. This included any time a character mispronounced or struggled over a word, used words like y'all or ain't, or any time a character expressed an obvious lack of awareness in a topic and it was brought to attention either by other characters or by the producers. It also included any instances of subjects making ignorant comments about other cultures or current events.

Crude behavior was another factor for evaluation. This included any time a subject swore or used vulgar language, any time focus was brought to bodily functions, or any occasions of heightened sexuality, specifically promiscuous behavior. Crude behavior also included any occasions of nudity, regardless of whether this nudity was sexual in nature.

Violent behavior included all physical violence ranging from pushing (even in a joking and not necessarily aggressive way) and general roughhousing to full fledged physical assault. Violent behavior also included verbal violence, where attention was brought to characters that were verbally berating or assaulting other characters or strangers on the show. Violent behavior also included any dangerous stunts, certainly capable of causing serious harm and possibly even death, performed by characters on the show.

Unhealthy behavior included any emphasis on subjects eating heavily processed or fried foods, particularly in excess of what could be considered nutritionally healthy. Unhealthy behavior also included any kind of emphasis brought to characters being excessively overweight or obese.

The process involved a careful watching of five full episodes of each of the three shows, marking tallies for each occasion of a particular stereotype, along with taking detailed notes to with the goal of drawing more qualitative thematic conclusions across the shows.

Based on analysis of the five episodes (roughly 100 minutes) for each show, the author tallied the instances of each stereotype and calculated their means as shown in the following three tables.

**Table 1 Instances of four stereotype actions in *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* (TLC)**

	Episode #1	Episode #2	Episode #3	Episode #4	Episode #5	Total	Average/ Episode
Unintelligent	26	28	38	49	42	183	36.6
Crude	11	19	12	13	20	65	13
Violent	5	2	6	1	6	20	4
Unhealthy	5	5	6	3	2	21	4.2

<sup>14</sup> Nanci Hellmich, "Southerners, poor have highest rates of obesity," USA Today, last modified July 8, 2011, <http://yourlife.usatoday.com/fitness-food/diet-nutrition/story/2011/07/Southerners-poor-have-highest-rates-of-obesity/49173468/1> (24 June 2013).

**Table 2 Instances of four stereotype actions in *Duck Dynasty* (A&E)**

	Episode #1	Episode #2	Episode #3	Episode #4	Episode #5	Total	Average/ Episode
Unintelligent	20	21	18	22	20	101	20.2
Crude	1	3	5	5	5	19	3.8
Violent	11	2	3	7	8	31	6.2
Unhealthy	1	1	2	0	0	4	0.8

**Table 3 Instances of four stereotype actions in *Buckwild* (MTV)**

	Episode #1	Episode #2	Episode #3	Episode #4	Episode #5	Total	Average/ Episode
Unintelligent	28	27	29	28	38	150	30
Crude	39	36	46	47	62	230	46
Violent	15	13	8	4	15	55	11
Unhealthy	1	3	1	1	0	6	1.2

## V. Primary Research Findings

Overall, *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* demonstrated the highest frequency of subjects being portrayed as unintelligent at an average of 36.6 occurrences per episode, followed by MTV's *Buckwild* (30 occurrences per episode) and *Duck Dynasty* (20.2 demonstrations). It is important to note the implications of even this lowest value: it still means that on average at least one unintelligent behavior per minute was shown on screen during the 20-minute segment.

*Buckwild* had the most frequent demonstrations of crude behavior at an average of 46 instances per episode. *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* and *Duck Dynasty* had considerably lower numbers of crude behavior at 15 and 3.8 instances, respectively. Much of the crude behavior in *Buckwild* had to do with subjects swearing, using otherwise vulgar language, and engaging in overtly promiscuous sexual behavior throughout the show.

*Buckwild* also appeared to be the most violent show, with an average of 11 incidents of violence in comparison to *Duck Dynasty* which had 6.2 instances, and *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* with four. Violence in *Buckwild* included reckless and dangerous stunts performed by the characters as well as several incidents of physical violence. This physical violence ranged from subjects pushing each other around perhaps in a less serious way to full-fledged physical assault.

The unhealthy stereotype was the least frequent stereotype present in all of the shows observed. *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* had the highest frequency of unhealthy behavior with an average of 4.2 incidents per episode, followed by *Buckwild* (1.2 occasions) and *Duck Dynasty* (0.8 occasions). The unhealthy behavior in *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* largely had to do with the consumption of fried or heavily processed foods in excess. There was also a heightened attention brought to the weight of the characters as they intermittently competed against each other to lose weight. As the camera zoomed in on the scale reading, it was clear that every character, even young Alana, could be classified as overweight and some even obese or morbidly obese. In one episode, June, otherwise known as "Mama," clocked in at over 300 pounds. Rather than seeming concerned for their health, the characters made minimal efforts to change their eating and lifestyle habits. The camera frequently zoomed in on the subjects continuing to binge eat from huge bags of food.



## VI. Discussion of Primary Research Findings

### ***Southern Dialects: Translation, please?***

The abundance of unintelligent behavior in *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* largely consists of subjects struggling with the English language. Frequently, subjects struggle over words, use expressions like “y’all” and “ain’t,” and have accents so thick that what they say on camera is almost unintelligible. One character in particular who struggles with speaking is Mike Thompson, or as he is called on the show, “Sugar Bear.” When Mike is in front of the camera, subtitles are used to help the viewer understand what he is saying. Subtitles are used intermittently for multiple characters throughout the show, which differentiates it from any of the other shows that were observed. It seems there is a heightened attention brought to the struggle with language by the inclusion of these subtitles. For the viewer, it almost implies these subjects are so backwards, so uneducated, that they are unable to communicate in the ways in which we are able to communicate. We need the producers to “decode” what these people are trying to say. It seems that this “language barrier” is one of the most basic ways to emphasize the southern stereotype and to create a distancing sense of “other” for the subjects of these shows. In other words, their struggle with language creates in the viewers’ mind a sense of “other”: They are different from us; therefore, we are not the same.

### ***Fist Pounds for Fist Fights: Celebrating Violence in Buckwild***

As stated earlier, *Buckwild* stood as the most violent show. Through observing several episodes of *Buckwild*, the author found that violence did not just occur on the show, but it was celebrated. In a particularly gruesome scene, Tyler, a character on the show, physically assaults an unwelcome guest at a party to the point where the victim is bleeding profusely from his mouth, unable to stand, and seemingly left unconscious. The viewer feels as though they are thoroughly involved in this fight, as the camera wobbles and shakes while trying to capture all of the action. When Tyler returns to the kitchen where his other friends are congregating, he is met with high fives and one girl even exclaims, while beaming at Tyler, “Oh my god Tyler, that was so hot.”

Violence was ever-present throughout all of the *Buckwild* episodes observed. Each episode even starts with a warning, read aloud by a female character of the show: “The following show features wild and crazy behavior that could result in serious personal injury or property damage. MTV and the producers insist that no one attempt to recreate or reenact any activity performed on this show.”

Also in the introduction to the show, which is included in every episode, several of the subjects exclaim that living in West Virginia, a place “founded on freedom,” gives them the freedom to do “whatever the f\*\*\* [they] want.” A female subject of Bangladeshi origin is introduced in the second episode of the series. In her first interaction with the camera she exclaims, “I may look exotic, but I’m as country as it gets.” This emphasis on identification with the South, and West Virginia in particular, makes it difficult to separate the outrageous violent and crude behavior from this location. By the subjects’ constant communication of pride in their home of “wild and crazy” West Virginia, the viewer may be left feeling as though this is representative of the American South as a whole, which is, of course, problematic.

This reality show became tragically real when 21-year-old cast member Shain Gandee was found dead in early April 2013 after an off-roading trip with his uncle and a family friend who were also found dead. Shain’s name was synonymous with crazy stunts and daredevil activities through the series. In one episode, he rides a four-wheeler recklessly up a hill and is later yelled at by an adult (presumably a parent) for not wearing a helmet. Shain, along with his friends, laugh off the stern warning from the adult and continue riding up the hill without any kind of protection. This incident, along with countless others where Shain is clearly the ringleader of dangerous activity, seem to eerily foreshadow his death.

### ***Camo versus Cappuccino: Cultural Differences Reach a Boiling Point in Duck Dynasty***

In one episode of *Duck Dynasty* titled, “Duck Be a Lady,” several characters from the show express their frustration that the company coffee machine has broken. Jase Robertson, one of the brothers on the show, even goes so far as to say that he cannot survive without a cup of coffee. The men decide to travel to a nearby coffee shop and as they enter the door, immediately provide a stark visual contrast: a sea of cam-

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ouflage, long untamed beards, and bandanas juxtaposed with the academic types who are reading, typing on their laptops, and sipping their complicated drinks in the shop. Every difference between the worlds of these two groups is emphasized for the next several minutes of the episode. Jase expresses his confusion over the menu, claiming that there is not a single option that is just “coffee.” A well-groomed man in front of the group orders a complicated mocha drink and Jase compares it to being as complex as building a bomb.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical frameworks of habitus and cultural capital may be applied to *Duck Dynasty* and especially to this scene in particular. Bourdieu theorized that the way in which we see the world and our own identities is inextricably bound to our gender, class, and the environment in which we are raised. For Bourdieu, “the culture of modern society is a class culture, characterized by socially ranked symbolic differences that mark out classes and make some seem superior to others.”<sup>15</sup> When the men of *Duck Dynasty* enter the coffee shop, they are forced to depart from their habitus, a term used by Bourdieu to describe the personal ideological frameworks by which we all operate. They are forced to interact with people vastly different from themselves in terms of education and what Bourdieu would call “cultural capital.” While they reject the high culture of the coffee shop by making mocking remarks and generally putting down the lifestyle of these individuals, this world also in a sense, rejects them. This is visible from the barista’s patronizing tone as she, in the close-up shots, explains the different types of coffees to the men, appearing seemingly disgusted by them as they clearly do not regularly inhabit this space.

Something very interesting to note is that although the men of *Duck Dynasty* have acquired a small fortune through the success of their family business, they refuse to adopt certain “high class” behaviors. They all have large, beautiful homes, but continue to wear camouflage outfits and sport unkempt beards. Despite the family’s commercial success, it seems clear that they still are holding on to what the eldest family member, Si, would consider “honorable” things, like knowing how to “live off the land.” In one notable scene in the episode, “Tickets to the Fun Show,” Si teaches the younger sons of the family how to kill and prepare bullfrogs. When giving the boys advice on how to find what he considers to be the perfect woman, he says, “If she knows how to cook, carries her bible, and loves to eat bullfrogs, that’s a woman.” This “lesson” reinforces a number of southern stereotypes just in one sentence.

Throughout the episodes, it seems that Willie is the bossiest member of the family, but also the smartest and most responsible. While on vacation in Hawaii, Willie plans a complete itinerary for the entire family. When things do not go according to plan and the family essentially rejects Willie’s planned programming, the men in particular choose to get into some potentially dangerous adventures. They all find a small cliff and jump into the water, and Willie, who has tagged along, says, “I’m starting to see a link between Jase’s definition of manhood and poor judgment.” Despite looking down on his family’s actions and the entire situation, Willie eventually decides to jump off as well, claiming that he does not want his “manhood” to be challenged any longer. This theme linking masculinity to recklessness seems to be consistent throughout all of the episodes.

While there is a heightened attention brought to the clothes these characters wear and occasionally the way in which they mispronounce words and exhibit reckless behavior, overall, these traits do not seem to come across in a completely derogatory way. The viewer can see that when, for example, Willie is faced with the daunting task of taking his teenage daughter dress shopping, universal family issues are apparent. It is also important to note that each episode concludes with the family at the dinner table, showing that despite their bickering, at the end of the day they come together as a family and share a meal. There is typically also some sort of universal lesson communicated by the end of the episode and the lesson typically ties back in some way to the idea of family and togetherness. As Willie says in one episode, “Nobody drives us crazy like our families. They are the source of our biggest frustrations but also our biggest joys.”

## VII. Discussion of Secondary Research Findings

### *Surveillance and “The Gaze”*

One issue, briefly mentioned in the review of literature, is how issues of surveillance along with power relations play into reality television. Montemurro suggests that subjects who are placed in front of the camera

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<sup>15</sup> David Gartman, “Bourdieu and Adorno: Converging theories of culture and inequality,” *Theory & Society* 41, no.1 (2012): 42.

are perhaps deliberately placed in a position of subordination. Montemurro mentions one of the first examinations of this idea: sociologist Michel Foucault's discussion of prisons and more specifically, Bentham's Panopticon, which was designed so that prisoners knew that they could be watched at any moment, yet were not allowed to know when this was happening. Montemurro argues that this is one of the first examples of technology being used to aid in surveillance of subjects and draws the parallel to present-day reality television production as the modern form of surveillance. Montemurro's piece, which focuses on examining the technology that contributes to surveillance in the popular show *Big Brother*, notes that contestants are not in control over their representation. She states, "Contestants are usually required to wear microphones and sign contracts that dictate that they may be filmed at any time or all of the time. However, they do not know how much of what they do or which specific interactions will actually become a part of the television show."<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, Montemurro suggests it is the producers that have the power over contestants or subjects in reality television because they choose what is shown.

Media scholar Mark Andrejevic also mentions the concept of the "omnipresent gaze of the camera and audience" in his *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*. Looking at reality shows such as *Temptation Island*, which aired in the early 2000s, Andrejevic mentions the idea of voyeurism and the power and control associated with this "voyeuristic fetish" tied to reality television viewing. He argues that viewers are part of this "omnipresent gaze" as they are invited into the private relationships unfolding on these shows.<sup>17</sup>

Dubrofsky, who as mentioned earlier, completed a case study on *The Bachelor*, argues that participants in reality television shows do not have "complete autonomy" in how they present their selves under surveillance. She argues that the mediated presentation (i.e., the construction of montage sequences and the overall editing process involved in reality television filmmaking) plays an important role in the construction of participant identity. These deliberate editing decisions are not communicated to viewers, and they are often not communicated to participants, thus taking their own representation out of their hands. Hill (2004) argues, "All too often ordinary people have little recourse to complain about the way they have been treated or represented in reality programs."<sup>18</sup>

### **Reality TV & Artistic Sacrifice**

One issue inextricably bound to reality television is the criticism that it has departed from "quality" programming or earlier modes of observational documentary. It has been widely argued that reality television is representative of "trash" culture and some have even gone so far as to say that it is playing an active role in making Americans as a whole, less intelligent.

Scholar Junhow Wei conducted an ethnographic study at a reality television production company called Sunshine productions. Through fieldwork, which included observation but also in-depth interviews with employees, Wei uncovered the struggle that workers in this industry face when producing these shows. Wei found that workers struggle to maintain and often have to sacrifice their "artistic integrity" when producing these shows, which ultimately do not meet their standards of artistic quality. Wei spent time with workers, was included in several planning meetings and parties, and also conducted several personal interviews where workers openly expressed frustrations. In one interview, a worker stated:

Well, I think that every single shot is based on will it have an impact on the buyer. Will it make—every single thing is based on is the buyer going to look at it and think, "Cool, I like that." It has nothing to do with my emotions or anybody's emotions. It has everything to do with is the buyer going to sit there and have a reaction to it, because otherwise you're wasting your time.<sup>19</sup>

Many employees expressed that "heightened drama" along with "larger than life characters" are more appealing to buyers and viewers, thus producers and editors are pressured to manipulate situations to

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16 Beth Montemurro, "Surveillance and Power: The Impact of New Technologies on Reality Television Audiences," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, New York, August 11-14, 2007), 6-8.

17 Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 173-175.

18 Annette Hill, *Reality TV Audiences and Popular Factual Television* (London: Routledge, 2005), 108.

19 Junhow Wei, "Dealing With Reality: Market demands, artistic integrity, and identity work in reality television production," *Poetics* 40 (2012), 451.

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heighten entertainment value, even at the perhaps ethical cost of skewing reality. From a wealth of footage, producers and editors are forced to construct a kind of narrative or storyline. Because of the market pressures to create “sellable” entertainment, these decision-makers are likely to position footage in a way that creates the most entertainment value.

While Wei was on location filming a sizzle reel for a reality show called *Riders*, a show about a traveling carnival company, he had an interesting interaction with one of the junior level development associates who was clearly reluctant to focus on the dirty, ramshackle living quarters of the carnival workers. When Wei asked the employee why he felt this way, his grave response was “Well, that’s not really the truth.” He explained to Wei that he did not want to continue to perpetuate negative, inaccurate stereotypes about the carnival workers.

### *Viewer Involvement and Feelings of Identification*

Several scholars argue that the nature of reality television causes viewers to feel as though they are thoroughly involved in the lives of reality TV subjects. Some scholars have argued that because these programs invite viewers to become involved in the lives of ordinary people, there is an increased level of identification with the subjects in both mental and emotional ways.<sup>20</sup> The danger in this, of course, is that with the increase in feelings of identification, there may also be an increase in viewers’ perceptions of reality. If viewers assume that they know the characters, they may potentially forget what could be staged events. They may also forget the good possibility that subjects may be acting a certain way because producers have encouraged them to act in this way or “play up” certain behaviors. Quoting Jaffe (2005), who wrote, “It is a significant issue for viewers to be lulled into a belief in something so artificially constructed,” Coyne, Robinson and Nelson note in their article on relational aggression in reality television.<sup>21</sup>

## **VIII. Conclusion**

As the findings of this study suggest, our persistent and curious infatuation with reality television is dangerous because it continues to perpetuate the negative stereotypes associated with the people of the American South. Unintelligent, crude and violent behavior manifested itself across all shows under observation in this study. Through industry pressures to create entertainment, producers are forced to construct individual and cultural identities that are perhaps not representative of reality. The nature of reality television allows an artificial sense of closeness to the characters. This prevents a critical and analytical study of the show and thereby allows stereotypes to proliferate unchallenged. We are consuming without thinking. We are laughing without reflecting. We are exploiting a segment of society at the expense of real understanding and in the process, relegating an entire cultural community to a singular distorted vision.

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# Examining Green Advertising and Its Impact on Consumer Skepticism and Purchasing Patterns

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## Abstract

*The twenty-first century has seen a significant increase in environmental awareness and activism, which has ultimately developed into a pro-environmental trend. Similar to previous societal trends such as cigarette smoking and fashion fads, environmentalism has recently entered the advertising world under the term “green advertising.” This research aimed to identify the impact of green advertising through evaluating consumers’ connection to the environment, trust in advertising and willingness to purchase green products. An analysis of 107 online survey responses indicated that consumers are generally skeptical of green advertisements, and have clear motivating and deterring factors when purchasing green products. This research is useful for advertisers, as it can help environmental firms understand and reach their target consumers more effectively.*

## I. Introduction

This research was designed to provide credible environmental companies with more effective and ethical ways of advertising to their desired target audiences.

Over the past couple of decades, the green movement has become more and more of a presence in our society. Organic items are more readily available, fuel efficient vehicles are becoming more popular, and many consumers are looking to make an environmental difference no matter how small it may be. The green movement has also made its way into advertising and the consumer marketplace, where communicators are using the trend to spark consumer interest and drive sales. Labels with green color schemes, print advertisements with “natural” images and commercials boasting environmental claims both intentionally and subliminally address the green movement—and are examples of what many refer to as “green advertising.”

This research was structured to better understand green advertising’s impact on consumers. However, in order to understand the impact of green advertising, one must first understand the green consumer. The success of an advertisement is critically dependent upon the advertisers’ ability to motivate action through consumer-specific messages. Therefore, this research investigated consumers’ connection to the environmental movement, their skepticism of green advertising and what motivates and deters them from making green purchases.

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\* **Keywords:** Green, Environmental, Advertising, Skepticism, Consumers  
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## II. Literature Review

Much research has been conducted in response to the recent increase in green advertising in the U.S. and abroad. The effectiveness and impact of green advertising is often difficult to gauge, as consumers' actions are often dependent upon numerous subjective variables (e.g. brand perceptions, ethical beliefs, product convenience, perceived product value, etc.). Therefore it was necessary to further investigate consumer environmental insights and their connectivity to advertising—and ultimately purchasing patterns—in order to fully understand the relationship between green advertising and the consumer market. The following sections outline the methods of recent studies pertaining to green advertising and consumers.

### ***Consumers' Responsiveness to Advertising***

This section defined the relationship between advertisements and consumers on a general level. Consumers' responsiveness to advertising is critical to the effectiveness of an advertisement, and is, therefore, a cornerstone in understanding the impact of green advertising. In a society that is constantly digesting advertisements on all media platforms, consumers respond to advertising content in many different ways. A particular response could either be driven by individual motives and preferences, or more collective and communal motives that are shared within a particular sub-culture or group. These motives are then what ultimately shape consumer insight in advertising. Hilliard, Matulich, Haytko & Rustogi (2012) stated that a consumer's response to an advertisement will directly impact either negative or positive brand perception, ad skepticism or ad activism (i.e. product purchase).

Recent studies explained such responses through the application of the Theory of Reasoned Action. This theory describes the relationship between individuals' beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviors (Hilliard et al., 2012). Furthermore, an individual will have a favorable attitude toward a behavior if they believe it will lead to a positive outcome, and vice versa. This theory has been used to explain why people choose to engage or not engage in certain actions, and can help predict one's behavioral response to various interventions (i.e. advertisements). Advertisements are thus created with this theory in mind, and are designed to change not only behaviors themselves, but also the beliefs that will, in turn, change behavior and drive a desired action or purchase (Coleman, Bahnan, Kelkar & Curry, 2011). Such concepts are critical to understanding one's responsiveness to advertising, in light of preconceived attitudes/ beliefs and their level of flexibility.

### ***The Many Shades of Green***

This section investigated the complexity of the green movement and its relation to advertising. In order to fully understand the perceptions, effectiveness and impact of green advertising, one must first define the term "green." That being said, most studies are in agreement that there are many "shades" of green consumers, products and advertisements.

A product's level of "greenness" is gauged by various elements such as recyclable packaging, "all natural, organic" ingredients or eco-friendly production, consumption and disposal standards. While these are just a few examples, research has shown that such claims are most frequently associated with products that are considered green.

A consumer's level of "greenness" is commonly gauged by their actions and behaviors. Environmental enthusiasts may partake in a wide range of "green" activities such as recycling, energy conservation, purchasing energy efficient appliances, joining sustainability programs, etc. (Coleman et al., 2011). The complexity then lies within one's frequency and consistency of environmental actions and behaviors. Is the non-recycler with an electric car considered more or less green than the avid recycler driving a Hummer? Such variances allow advertisements to create a wide window of content—applicable to whichever "shade" of green consumer they're strategically targeting.

An advertisement's level of "greenness" is a bit trickier to gauge. Researchers have labeled an advertisement as green due to various elements such as stating environmental claims, the highlighting of "green" product attributes, or the placement of natural images/symbols into the advertisement's design. Leonidas, Palihawadana & Hultman (2011) measured the level of greenness in particular advertisements as being shallow, moderate or deep in complexity. Their findings concluded that of the 473 advertisements analyzed, most claims exhibited either shallow or moderate greenness. No further research has been conducted in order to clarify the scale of an advertisement's greenness.

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As detailed above, the various shades of green—in both advertisements and consumer enthusiasm—have led to falsifications and skepticism of environmental claims. Researchers have coined this action with the term “greenwashing,” which is defined as the “disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image” (Mitchell & Ramey, 2011). Recent years have shown a dramatic increase in companies that utilize greenwashing, resulting in consumer doubt regarding ethical practices of various organizations. The motivations and implications of greenwashing has been the topic of many studies, highlighting its negative impact on valid environmental organizations whose competitive edge is underpinned by others’ false yet convincing claims. However, there has been little research on greenwashing’s impact on consumer’ purchasing patterns. According to Furlow (2010), the power—or lack thereof—of greenwashing ultimately lies within the decisions of consumers. Such controversy is not uncommon when discussing green advertising, thus motivating further research to define consumers’ inclination to “buy green” at the face of skepticism.

### ***Willingness to Purchase Green***

This section investigates the final piece of the green advertising puzzle—the purchase. Similar to other universal product trends (e.g. technology, fashion, etc.), the green “industry” has unique properties and consumer relationships that influence purchasing patterns, both negatively and positively. Consumers’ willingness to purchase green products has often been contributed to their self-labeled level of environmental enthusiasm, coupled with their skepticism and awareness of green claims.

Leonidas et al., (2011) studied the relationship between consumers’ *knowledge* of environmental issues and the effectiveness of advertising claims. The advertisements used in these studies featured basic or “shallow” claims, and were perceived by consumers to be lacking in credibility and comprehensiveness. Results also concluded that only low environmentally involved participants found validity in the green appeals (Leonidas et al., 2011).

Contrastingly, researchers Mitchell & Ramey (2011) suggested that consumers’ willingness to purchase green may be rooted in their *passion* for the environment. They wrote that those who are considered environmental enthusiasts are more likely to purchase green products than others. Mitchell and Ramey (2011) go on to state that those passionate about the environment will be motivated to purchase any product that is “green”—no matter what “shade” of green it may be.

According to Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla & Paladino (2012), such discrepancies can be attributed to the complexity in environmental issues, making it difficult for even the most enthusiastic consumer to be completely updated on jargon and claims featured in green advertisements.

Research conducted by Basgöze, & Tektas (2012) found various factors that make a difference in consumers’ purchasing decision after interviewing both environmental and non-environmental enthusiasts. Their research outlined various elements and barriers that impact consumers’ willingness to purchase green products:

- **Price:** Consumers have a clear comfort zone in regard to pricing of green products. If they perceive a product’s value as outweighing its monetary cost, they will follow through with the purchase. However, if the quality did not outweigh that of a cheaper, non-green product, then they more than likely did not make the purchase. Additionally, their research found that consumers would purchase environmentally sustainable products, such as appliances, if the product would benefit their long-term financial investments.
  - **Time:** In a fast-paced society, many participants in the study stated that their schedules do not permit the extensive research required to make sound and informed purchasing decisions. The convenience of stopping at one store to get all of their items outweighed the multiple stops it may have taken to purchase green products.
  - **Confusion:** Many of the participants vocalized concerns with the complexity of green advertising and environmental products and issues. Difficulties in deciphering advertisements and understanding product labels often deterred consumers from purchasing green products. Furthermore, they were often left confused as to whether a product was green or not.
  - **Unavailability:** In particular geographic areas, consumers addressed that there was a lack of green options available in their area. Additionally, participants felt that the U.S. was not “set up to be green . . . with big cars, big packaging . . . our community design just doesn’t cur-
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rently support green.”

- Trust: One of the largest and most pertinent issues addressed by consumers was skepticism of green products, labels and advertisements. Some products advertised recyclable packaging; however, participants were unsure whether the actual production was sustainable. Participants often questioned the claims of the advertisements, the politics fueling some green movements and whether or not green products were necessarily domestic. (Basgöze, & Tektas, 2012)

Similar research conducted by Leonidas, Palihawadana & Hultman (2011) highlighted that the most challenging aspect of green advertising and consumer purchasing patterns is the gap between the attitudes and buying behavior of consumers. One study conducted by Coleman et al. (2011) suggested that purchasing patterns might follow the foundations of the Competitive Altruism Theory. This theory describes the process in which an individual attempts to outcompete others in terms of generosity/status. For example, a green enthusiast would view a green purchase as a means of obtaining long-term gains, such as respect or admiration for their actions. However, research has also documented environmental enthusiasts avoiding green products. Such contradictions have also been interpreted through the Competitive Altruism Theory. In this view, environmental enthusiasts believe that by *avoiding* false claims in green advertising they are in turn paying a *better* service to the environmental community. Ultimately, the disconnect within green advertising lies between what is getting consumers interested, and what is getting them to act on these interests.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

RQ1: Does the level of environmental enthusiasm determine the level of trust a consumer has in green advertising?

Out of RQ1, the following hypothesis was derived.

H1: If a consumer is an environmental enthusiast, then this person is skeptical of green advertising.

RQ2: What factors lead consumers to avoid green products?

Out of RQ2, the following hypotheses were derived.

H2: Price will be a barrier to consumers' willingness to purchase green products.

H3: Trust will be a barrier to consumers' willingness to purchase green products.

## **III. Methodology**

Data was collected through a SurveyMonkey inquiry of 107 students and faculty of Elon University, who were asked 13 questions about their demographics, level of environmental enthusiasm, and responsiveness to green advertising.

### **Procedure**

The sampling frame comprised both Elon University on-campus organizations that were considered environmentally sensitive, and Elon student and faculty peers of the research conductor. The survey link was sent out via email with a message that requested recipients' participation in the survey. The link was also posted to the research conductor's Facebook page, asking the current Elon student and faculty friends to complete the survey.

All members of the previously listed on-campus organizations were emailed directly because of their interest in and activism toward environmental issues. However, convenience sampling through Facebook and general email contacts was used to reach participants who were indifferent to environmentalism.

### **Questions**

Survey questions were structured in order to operationalize concepts in the previously outlined research questions. In order to discover the connectivity between environmental enthusiasm and ad skepticism, respondents were asked to rank environmentalism's level of personal importance in comparison to other cat-

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\* Elon Outdoors, Elon Sustainability Department, Elon Garden, Sierra Club, Environmental Studies Department.

egories such as personal finances, education, etc (see Appendix). They were also asked to share their level of agreement with various statements that indicated their personal perceptions of the green trend in advertising. Furthermore, respondents' environmental involvement was measured by asking respondents to list any affiliations they had with environmental organizations.

In order to discover consumers' barriers to purchasing green products, respondents were asked to define their personal definition of green products and advertisements, and their awareness of green messages. Additionally, respondents were asked to list their motivations for choosing to or opting out of making green purchases.

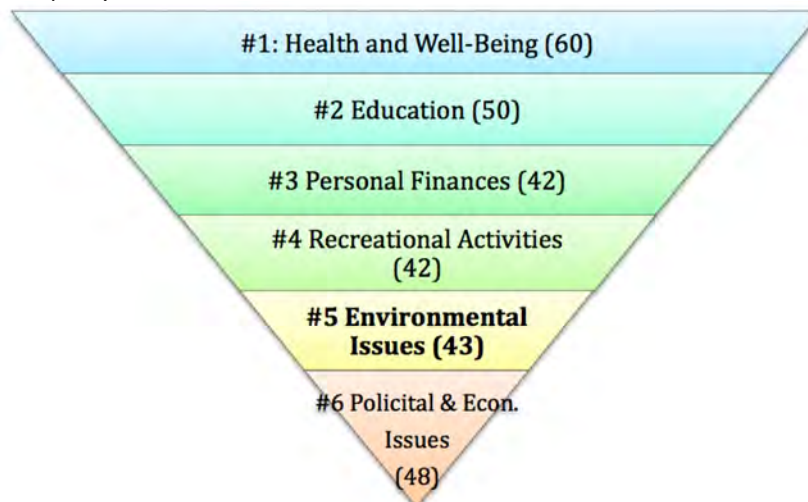
### Explanation

The above-mentioned research method was used in order to generate anonymous feedback regarding consumer skepticism of green advertising as well as consumer purchasing patterns. The participant sample covered a wide range of demographics and environmental activism in order to explore the correlation between enthusiasts and green purchasing patterns. Furthermore, the research method was designed to allow participants to openly share their opinions of green advertising and the "greenwashing" trend.

## IV. Findings

Among a total of 107 individuals who completed the online survey, 73 (68.2%) were female, and 34 (31.8%) were male. All were affiliated with Elon University, totaling in 98 (91.6%) student and 9 (8.4%) faculty respondents. Additionally, of the 107 respondents, 22 were indicated as members of various on-campus environmental organizations.

They were asked to rank specific items in order of personal importance. The results indicated that the majority of respondents (56.6%) valued their health and well-being as the most important item, followed by education, personal finances, recreational activities, environmental issues and political/economic issues. *Figure 1* below illustrates the average respondent rankings and their respective respondent totals. As seen in *Figure 1*, 43 (40.6%) respondents ranked environmental issues 5th in order of overall personal importance.



*Figure 1:* Ranking of items respondents considered most important

Respondents were then asked to indicate whether or not they would consider themselves to be an environmental enthusiast. Of the 107 respondents, the majority of the respondents considered themselves *not* to be environmental enthusiasts (see *Figure 2* on the next page).

Participants were then asked to describe in their own words what made a product "green." Responses frequently included the following key words or phrases: sustainable; recyclable; minimal environmental impact; biodegradable; no harmful chemicals; small carbon footprint; low emissions; organic; efficient; minimizes waste; natural; environmentally friendly; and renewable resources.



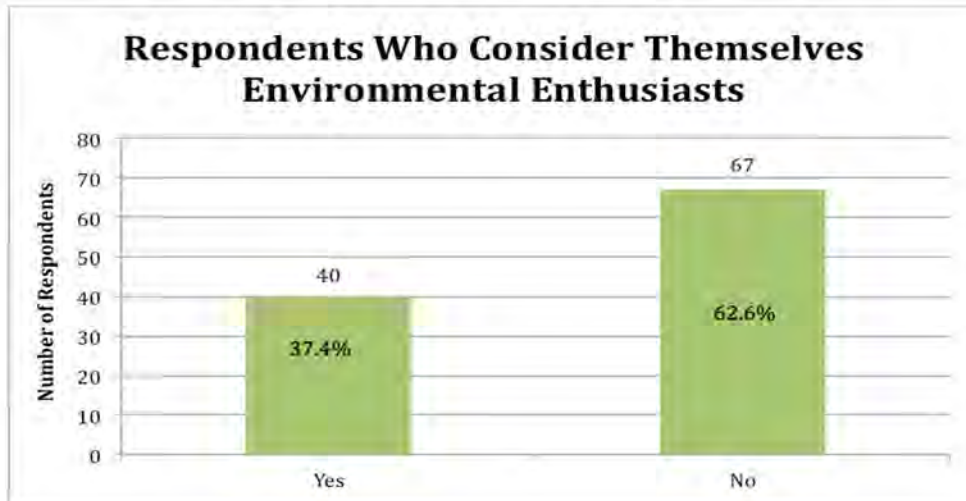


Figure 2: Respondents who consider themselves environmental enthusiasts

Respondents were then asked whether or not they purchased green products as they defined. The majority of the respondents (80.4%) answered positively (see Figure 3).

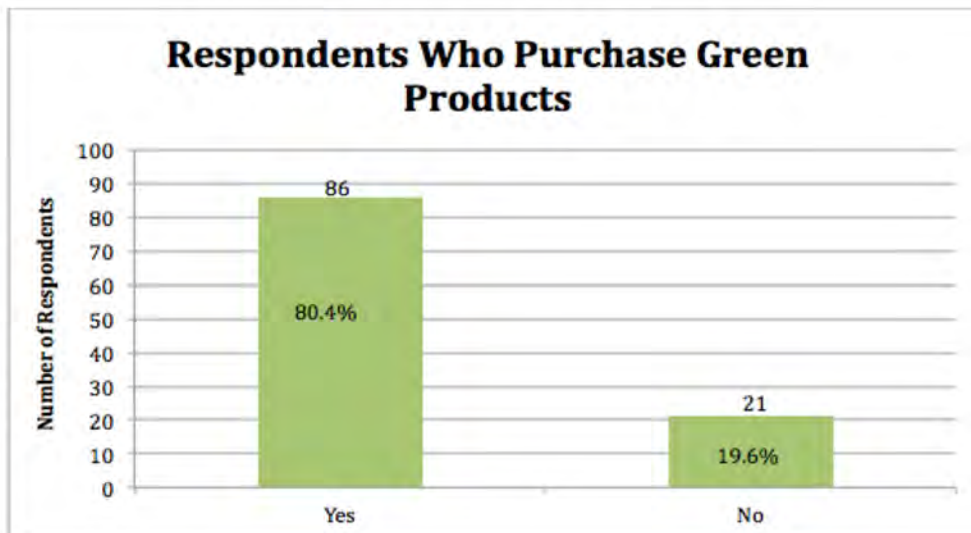


Figure 3: Respondents who purchase green products

Regarding their level skepticism of advertisements in general, most respondents fell within the neutral–skeptical–very skeptical range, with only 9.3% of respondents indicating trust in advertisements (see Figure 4 on the next page).

Participants were then asked to identify elements that led them to perceive an advertisement as “green”. Responses frequently included the following key words or phrases: natural images; accreditation labels; fair trade logos; usda organic; green colors; using low-waste advertising mediums; uses environmental buzz words (green, recyclable, etc); identifies environmental efforts; and personal testimonies

After identifying their awareness of green advertising, respondents were then asked to indicate their level of skepticism in regard to *green* advertising. Results indicated that, similar to advertising in general, the majority of respondents (93.5%) fell within the neutral-skeptical-very skeptical range (refer to Figure 5 for more details).

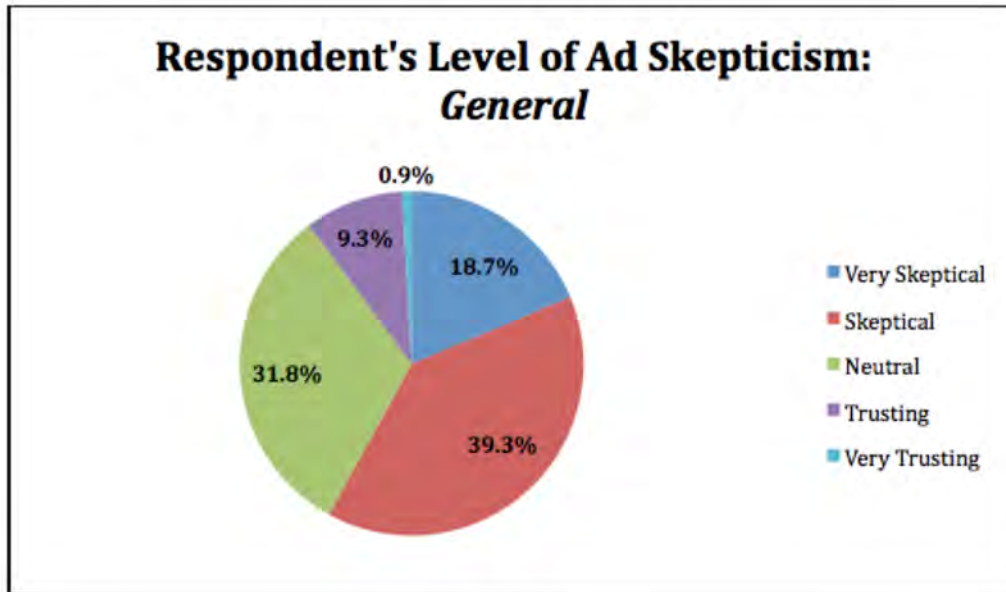


Figure 4: Respondents' skepticism regarding general advertising

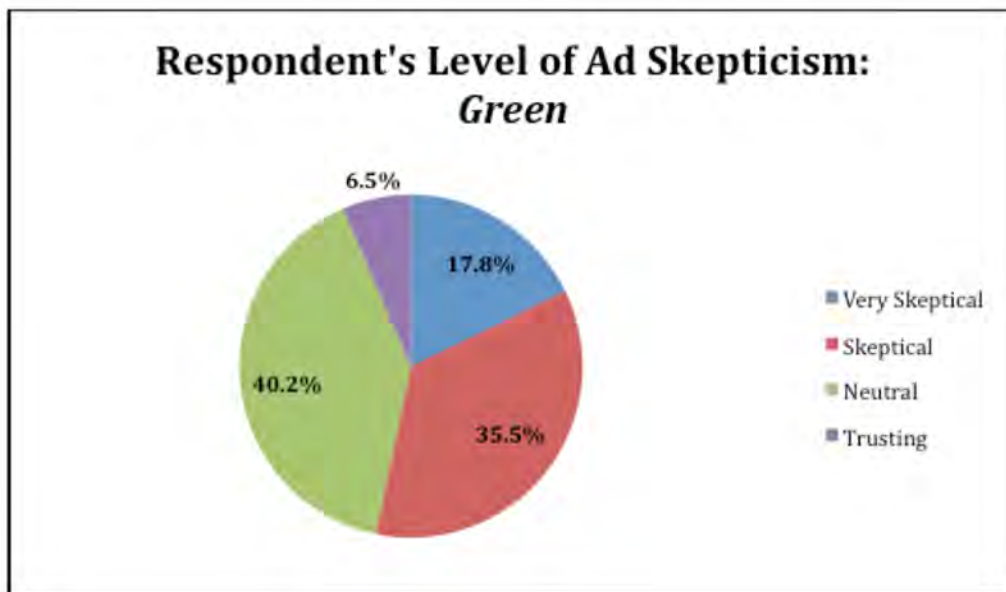


Figure 5: Respondents' skepticism regarding green advertising

Respondents were then given a set of questions to which they indicated their level of agreement, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” These questions allowed respondents to express their knowledge of and position on green advertising and its appeals. Results can be seen below in Table 1 on the next page.

The online survey then asked respondents to list the top three reasons they would be motivated to purchase green products. Of the various responses provided, the top purchasing motivations are illustrated below in Figure 6 on the next page. As seen in the graph, many respondents (39.8%) listed perceived environmental benefits as their primary motivation for purchasing green products.

**Table 1. Respondents' insight regarding green advertising**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am educated in environmental issues.	18.7% (20)	46.7% (50)	22.4% (24)	12.1% (13)	0
I am often exposed to green advertisements.	16.0% (17)	50.9% (54)	23.6% (25)	9.4% (10)	0
I find environmental issues complex and confusing.	8.5% (9)	34.9% (37)	26.4% (28)	26.4% (28)	3.8% (4)
Green advertisements are necessary for environmental awareness.	20.6% (22)	48.6% (52)	19.6% (21)	10.3% (11)	0.9% (1)
More people should purchase green products.	41.1% (44)	43.0% (46)	15.0% (16)	0	0.9% (1)
Green products are not truly "green".	4.7% (5)	35.5% (28)	50.5% (54)	9.3% (10)	0
I often question green advertisements.	15.9% (17)	37.4% (40)	33.6% (36)	13.1% (14)	0
I actively research products' environmental claims.	11.4% (12)	12.3% (13)	19.0% (20)	33.4% (36)	22.9% (24)
Green products are priced appropriately.	5.6% (6)	11.2% (12)	37.4% (40)	42.1% (45)	3.7% (4)
Green advertisements accurately reflect a brand's environmental efforts.	2.8% (3)	19.8% (21)	46.2% (49)	23.6% (25)	7.5% (8)

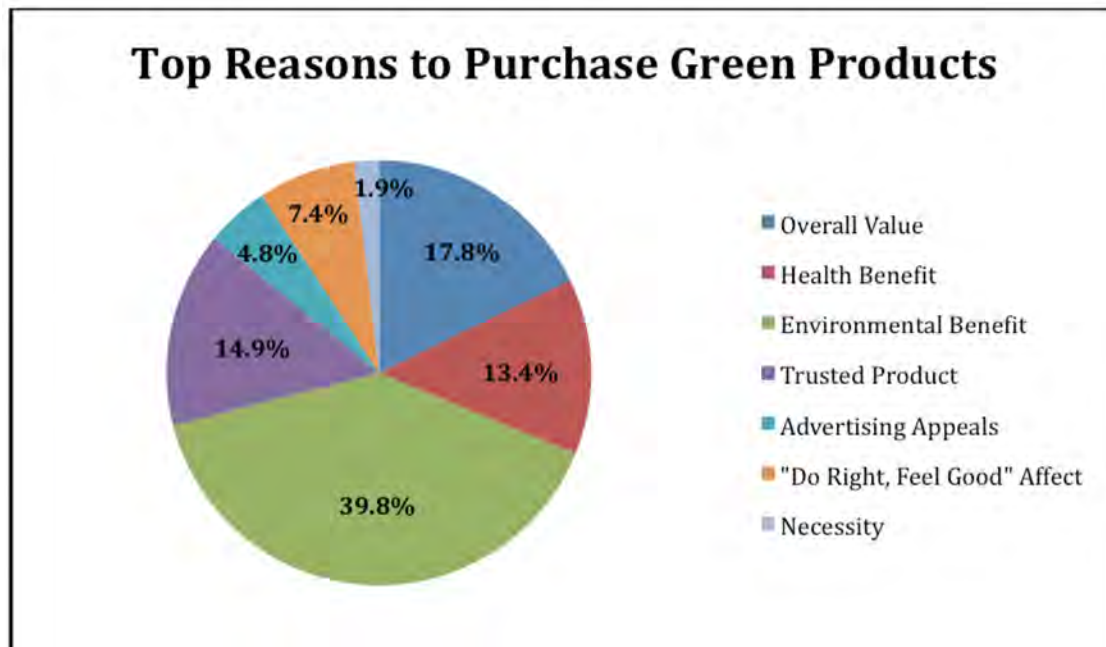
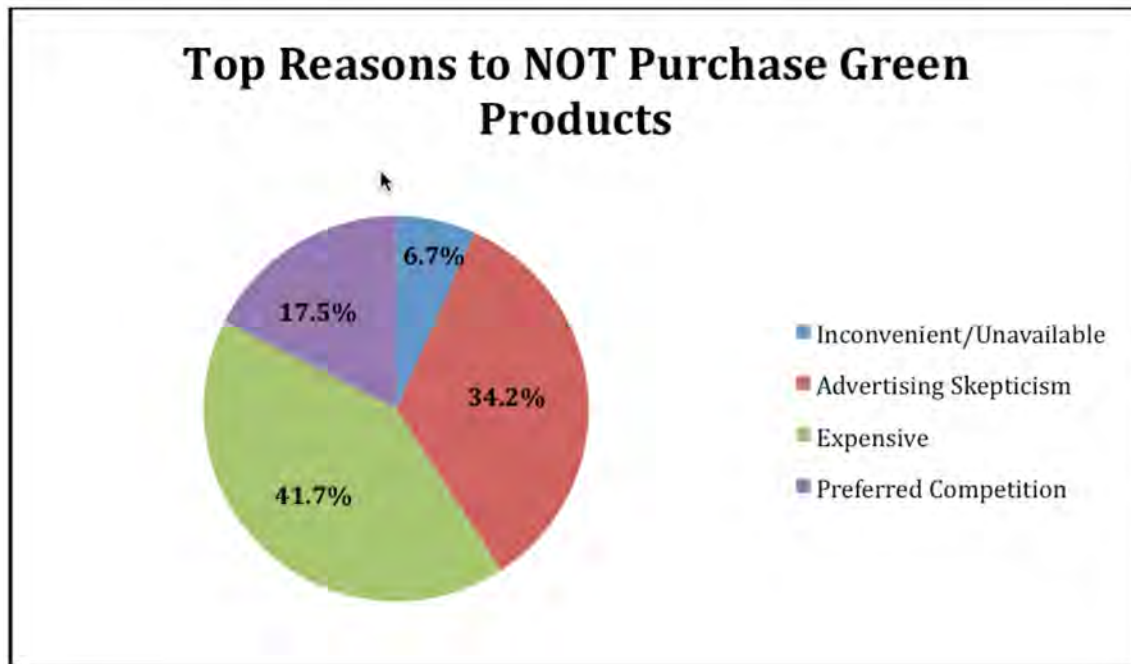


Figure 6: Key motivators when purchasing green products

In addition to the top reasons driving respondents' purchases, consumers were also asked to list the top three reasons they would *not* purchase green products. Results indicated that price and advertising skepticism were the most commonly expressed green purchasing deterrents (See *Figure 7*).



*Figure 7:* Key deterrents when evaluating green purchases.

## V. Analysis

The results of this study did not provide enough evidence to draw conclusive answers to RQ1: “Does the level of environmental enthusiasm determine the level of trust a consumer has in green advertising?” Having only 37.4% of respondents consider themselves environmental enthusiasts significantly impacted the study’s ability to gauge whether or not enthusiasm directly determined the level of trust consumers had in green advertising. However, while a minority of respondents considered themselves enthusiasts, the vast majority of respondents (80.4%) indicated that they do indeed purchase green products. This information provided insight for half of the equation—in that the non-enthusiast may be more susceptible to green advertising appeals. While 65.4% of respondents indicated that they were well-educated in environmental issues, only 23.3% of respondents stated that they actively researched environmental claims in advertising. Respondents also indicated that they were more than likely either neutral or skeptical of both general and green advertisements. In both circumstances, fewer than 10% of respondents indicated trust in advertising. This information may indicate that advertising skepticism is a previously developed doubt, which is simply carried over to green advertising. Tables 2 and 3 below illustrate the crosstab relationships found between environmental enthusiasm and consumer skepticism.

As seen in the Table 2 on the next page, 39.3% of respondents indicated that they were skeptical of advertising in general, of which the respondents were split down the middle in terms of environmental enthusiasm: 22 were self-reported environmentalists while 20 were not. Furthermore, in Table 2, of those 40 respondents that answered yes to environmental enthusiasm, 55.0% stated that they were skeptical of advertisements in general. Of the 67 respondents that answered no to environmental enthusiasm, 46.3% stated that they were neutral to advertisements in general.

**Table 2. Crosstab of interaction between environmental enthusiasm and *general* skepticism**

		<i>Would you consider yourself to be an environmental enthusiast?</i>		
		Yes	No	Total
<i>How skeptical are you of advertisements in general?</i>	Very skeptical	13 (32.5%)	10.4% (7)	20 (18.7%)
	Skeptical	22 (55.0%)	29.9% (20)	42 (39.3%)
	Neutral	3 (7.5%)	46.3% (31)	34 (31.8%)
	Trusting	1 (2.5%)	13.4% (9)	10 (9.3%)
	Very trusting	1 (2.5%)	0	1 (0.9%)
	Total	40 (37.4%)	67 (62.6%)	

**Table 3. Crosstab of interaction between environmental enthusiasm and *green* skepticism**

		<i>Would you consider yourself to be an environmental enthusiast?</i>		
		Yes	No	Total
<i>How skeptical are you of green advertisements?</i>	Very skeptical	30% (12)	10.4% (7)	19 (17.8%)
	Skeptical	37.5% (15)	34.3% (23)	38 (35.5%)
	Neutral	27.5% (11)	47.8% (32)	43 (43%)
	Trusting	5.0% (2)	7.5% (5)	7 (6.5%)
	Very trusting	0	0	0
	Total	40 (37.4%)	67 (62.6%)	

Similarly, as seen in the Table 3 above, of the 40 respondents who indicated environmental enthusiasm, 37.5% indicated that they were skeptical of green advertisements. Likewise, of the 67 respondents who indicated non-enthusiasm, 47.8% indicated a neutral level of green advertising skepticism. Such findings indicated that respondents in this study viewed advertisements (both general and green) more skeptically if they were considered environmental enthusiasts. While this provided insight in regard to RQ1, further research would need to be conducted in order to acquire a larger, random sample size that would allow results to be generalized.

Other implications found through this study were rooted in RQ2: “Which factors lead consumers to avoid green products?” Consumers’ willingness to purchase green products can depend on a variety of factors, and this study uncovered a breadth of information regarding respondents’ green purchasing motives and deterrents.

According to the study, respondents were more likely to purchase a green product if it advertised valid, environmental and health benefits at a valuable price. Respondents stated that claims must be transparent, as they are more likely to purchase green items if “[they are] produced in a sustainable manner, and [do] not harm the environment in all stages of production, use and disposal.” They also expressed a great interest in the health aspect of green products. As indicated in the study’s ranking question (*Figure 1*), the majority of survey participants (56.6%) value health and well-being as #1. Therefore, the health benefits of green products are a big motivator for purchasing patterns. Price was another big motivator for green purchases, according to survey respondents. While many expressed concern for cheap and affordable products, a significant percentage (17.8%) stated that long-term value was more important than initial costs (i.e. assumed health benefits, environmental support, etc.). Respondents also indicated that they were often inspired to purchase a green product in order to achieve a sense of accomplishment that the researcher has called the “do right, feel good” effect. Survey participants stated that they “felt like they were part of a larger initiative,” when they purchased green, or that they often “felt better about some of their other non-green habits.” Such findings complemented previous studies, as well as the application of the Competitive Altruism theory outlined in the literature review (Coleman et al., 2011).



In contrast to the above-mentioned purchase motivators, respondents also provided significant insight regarding purchase deterrents. Participants said that they would often abstain from purchasing green due to inappropriately priced items that are either too difficult to seek out, or are often overshadowed by more readily available, cheaper competitors. Respondents expressed a large concern over the pricing of green products, with many stating that they would “definitely buy more green items if I could actually afford them in college.” Additionally, respondents felt that their preferred one-stop shopping locations did not feature as many green products. This concept of inconvenience and unavailability was a key deterrent for many respondents, which led some to elaborate that they often “wonder[ed] where to even find green items more easily.” In addition to the previously listed deterrents, respondents also stated that false advertising played a large role in their refusal to buy green products. Many responses included statements such as “if it says its ‘green’ but doesn’t have an accreditation seal of some sort—it is not going in my cart!” Similar respondents also stated that they felt a lot of products simply “slapped a green leaf on their logo” in order to bait environmentally conscious buyers. Such respondents vocalized that such actions “made them feel like they couldn’t trust *any* green brand,” and therefore stopped buying green products altogether.

## VI. Conclusion

According to this research, there is evidence linking environmental enthusiasm with consumer skepticism of both general and green advertising. This study indicated that environmental enthusiasts are often more skeptical of both forms of advertising, with non-enthusiasts remaining more neutral. However, this research did *not* indicate that environmental enthusiasm was *directly* related to consumers’ responsiveness to green advertising. Instead, this study provided a better understanding of both the motivators and deterrents impacting consumers’ willingness to purchase green products, which were independent of one’s self-labeled environmental enthusiasm.

Ultimately, this research indicated that consumers are skeptical of green advertisements. They are conscious of advertisements’ usage of natural images, green color schemes, and environmental accreditation labels, yet do not actively research environmental claims. Consumers value green products and brands that are trustworthy, affordable, healthy and environmentally beneficial. If such values are expressed in green advertisements, consumers are generally more willing to make green purchases. Such findings could be applied to green advertising planning, as the research provided a deeper understanding of consumers’ green insights. Green advertisers could use this research to craft designs, themes and messages that would better motivate consumers to purchase green products.

Further research should be conducted in order to broaden the scope of the study and thus solidify any claims. Obtaining a larger, random sample size would benefit this study, as the researcher used both convenience and purposive sampling methods. Furthermore, obtaining an equal balance of both environmental enthusiasts and non-enthusiasts would benefit this study’s ability to track the relationship between enthusiasm and skepticism of advertising. One may even consider conducting two separate surveys, one for enthusiasts and one for non-enthusiasts, in order to compare their differing levels of skepticism and purchasing patterns more effectively. Additionally, further research should be conducted in order to test consumers’ responsiveness to green advertising appeals. For example, allowing participants to view and then respond to various green advertisements may have provided more conclusive answers regarding consumer responsiveness.

## Acknowledgements

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## Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

1. Please rank the following items in order of personal importance and interest, with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Education
- \_\_\_\_\_ Health and well-being
- \_\_\_\_\_ Personal finances
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recreational activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Environmental issues
- \_\_\_\_\_ Political and economic issues

2. Would you consider yourself to be an environmental enthusiast?

- Yes
- No

3. In your own words, describe what makes a product “green”:

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4. In accordance with your above definition, do you purchase green products?

- Yes
- No

5. How skeptical are you of advertisements in general?

- Very skeptical
- Skeptical
- Neutral
- Trusting
- Very trusting

6. What elements lead you to perceive an advertisement as “green”?

7. How skeptical are you of green advertising?

- Very skeptical
- Skeptical
- Neutral
- Trusting
- Very trusting

8. For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement:

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I am educated in environmental issues.

I am often exposed to green advertisements.

I find environmental issues complex and confusing.

Green advertisements are necessary for environmental awareness.

More people should purchase green products.

Green products are not truly “green”.

I often question green advertisements.

I actively research products’ environmental claims.

Green products are priced appropriately.

Green advertisements accurately reflect a brand’s environmental efforts.

9. Please list the top 3 reasons you would be motivated to purchase green products:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

10. Please list the top 3 reasons you would NOT purchase green products:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please list any environmental organizations/departments of which you are a member (e.g. Sierra Club, Sustainable Living, Environmental Studies department, etc):

12. Please provide your affiliation to Elon University:

- Undergraduate student
- Graduate Student
- Academic faculty member
- Non-academic faculty member

13. What is your gender?

- Male
  - Female
  - Other
-

# Appealing to Women: An Analysis of Print Advertisements in Three Women's Interest Magazines

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to analyze advertisements in magazines targeting women readers and find the preferred type of appeals advertisers used. This study analyzed 590 advertisements in three women's interest magazines from October 2012 to April 2013. It was found that the top three product categories advertised were food and drink, personal care, and laundry and household products. The most frequently used appeals were performance, availability, and components/contents. This study provided details on the application of the Resnik-Stern Content Classification System and laid the foundation for future studies in advertising appealing to women.*

## I. Introduction

What do women really want? In the AMC series *Mad Men*, advertising creative Don Draper boldly stated, "Advertising is based on one thing: happiness. And do you know what happiness is? Happiness is the smell of a new car. It's freedom from fear" (Weiner, 2007). Do women want products that free them from fear? Do they want products that ensure safety? Are they interested in the newest products on the market? This author was interested in analyzing print advertisements targeting women and what appeals advertisers most frequently appeal to in order to affect their buying intentions.

Contrary to a general thought that magazine readership is decreasing because of new technology, magazine readership has grown over the past five years. Additionally, magazines deliver more ad impressions than TV or Web in a half-hour period. People still spend a lot of time reading magazines – the average reader spends 43 minutes with each issue ("11 Facts About Magazines," n.d.).

The research performed in this study is important because print advertisements are still relevant. The more effectively advertisements sway the buying intentions of women, a demographic that is predicted to control two-thirds of the consumer wealth in the U.S. over the next decade, the more the product or service will sell ("U.S. Women," 2013). The average cost of a full-page, color advertisement in the three publications analyzed in this study amounts to \$178,037 (The Hearst Corporation, 2013; Martha Stewart Omnimedia, 2013; Real Simple, 2013). It is important to analyze the advertisements that are being printed because a return is expected on the huge investment on brands.

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\* **Keywords:** Advertising, Women, Content Analysis, Resnik-Stern, Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel  
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## **II. Literature Review**

### ***Appealing to Women***

There has been much research that looked at how gender affects advertising. Baird, Walhers, and Cooper (2007) found that men and women respond differently to advertising. They found that one's emotional involvement with stimuli tend to enhance memory and that this linkage appears more highly pronounced for women than for men (Baird, 2007).

Additionally, Cramphorn (2011) found that women typically respond more positively to advertisements than men. Although there has been little research dealing with advertisements aimed specifically at women, there has been a lot of research that looked at how gender relates to advertisements.

### ***Emotional Advertising***

The use of emotional advertising is very prevalent in print advertisements (Baird, 2007). Whether it is the use of a visual of a couple in an advertisement for a car, the use of dramatic copy in an advertisement for a television series, or the use of a visual of a family holding hands in an advertisement for a cruise line, emotion is frequently used. Using an emotional appeal can lead to a positive attitude toward the brand and may sway the buying intentions of the consumer (Baird, 2007).

An important study has found that emotional appeals may affect memory (Canli et al., 2002). Memory is crucial for a successful advertising campaign. The message in the advertisement must be stored in the memory and then recalled later when a brand decision is being made to affect the buyer's intent (Ambler, 1999).

Baird, Wahlers and Cooper found that using emotional appeals can be beneficial for advertising to women and could be expanded by using emotional appeals to products normally devoid of emotion, such as tires. For example, the use of a baby in an advertisement for tires to stress the safety of the family could be more memorable, especially for women (Baird, 2007).

### ***Women as Socially Oriented***

It has been found that men respond better to advertisements about self or ego, while women respond better to advertisements that are more externally focused (Brunel & Nelson, 2003). From early ages, girls play "dress up" and "try on" social roles. Women are more socially oriented and have more empathy towards their friends (Brizendine, 2007). Women respond to images or situations that they can empathize with. Additionally, photographs are more effective with women (Cramphorn, 2011). Advertisements that use celebrities, typical people, and personalities have been found to effectively grab the attention of women (Cramphorn, 2011).

### ***Cultural Priorities***

Advertising affects buying behaviors by associating particular values to a brand and then emphasizing how these values may be gained or experienced through the purchase or use of the particular brand or product (Morris, 2013).

Pamela K. Morris and Katharine Nichols performed a content analysis of advertisements from magazines in the United States and France. They found that American advertisements show people smiling more often than those in French Magazines. U.S. magazines also present more women, non-working women, and "women as decoration" in their print advertisements than their French counterparts (Morris, 2013). In comparison with France, the U.S. had more advertisements for makeup and hair care products. Additionally, they found that Americans prefer makeup to skincare products, and they use makeup to cover flaws and treat makeup as a commodity. They found that American women value great hair because of the prevalence of hair care products. By looking at how frequently certain products or product categories are advertised, assumptions can be made about the cultural priorities of the culture that the magazine is distributed in.

### ***The Importance of Advertising***

In 2004, American businesses spent over \$260 billion on advertising. Advertisers rarely direct advertising to a particular gender, and most advertising is "broad-brush" (Cramphorn, 2011). Cramphorn (2011)

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found that no matter what style used, advertisements targeting women are overwhelmingly more effective. It is important that advertisers are successful in advertising towards women because women in America today have tremendous spending power – and it's growing. Women's purchasing power is estimated to grow from \$5 trillion to \$15 trillion annually. Fleishmann-Hillard Inc. estimates that women will control two-thirds of the consumer wealth in the U.S. over the next decade. Additionally, women handle the bulk of purchasing decisions for consumer goods in the U.S. and are likely to influence or manage many other big ticket purchases – such as homes, automobiles, appliances, furniture, etc. as well as a large portion of the apparel, groceries and everyday purchases (“U.S. Women,” 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel was the theoretical framework used in this study (Taylor, 1999). Taylor stated that there is no single way that advertising works. Advertising depends on the situation, which consists of the type of product, the nature of the target audience, the purchase motivation, and the importance of the decision to the consumer.

The Six-Segment Message Strategy Model is a wheel that contains six segments. The left-hand side of the wheel represents the transmissional or informational view while the right-hand side represents the ritual or transformational view.

The transmissional view contains three segments: Ration, Acute Need, and Routine. The ration segment is characterized by the Marshallian Economic Model (Taylor, 1999). Consumers require a lot of information before purchasing products in this segment. Consumers are concerned with the product features, services, warranties, and price. The acute need segment is characterized by the acute need that consumers have to buy a product. The need for these products pops up unexpectedly and consumers must make decisions quickly. The routine segment is characterized by the Pavlovian Learning Model. Consumer decisions are often made in a routine way for products in this category. The consumer does not think much about the product before they purchase it. These products are often purchased in a habitual way.

The ritual view contains three segments: Ego, Social, and Sensory. The Ego segment is characterized by the Freudian Psychoanalytic Model (Taylor, 1999). This is the “I am me” segment. Consumers buy products that define who they are. The social segment is characterized by the Veblenian Social-Psychological Model (Taylor, 1999). Products in this segment are used to make a statement to others (Taylor, 1999). Consumers buy these products to gain social approval from family, significant others, and other people in their lives. The sensory segment is characterized by Cyrenaics philosophy (Taylor, 1999). These products provide consumers with “moments of pleasure” or “life's little treats” based on the senses (Taylor, 1999).

### **Coding Strategy**

The coding strategy used in this study was the Resnik-Stern Content Classification System (Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern, 1983) as adapted by Robert R. Harmon, Nabil Y. Razzouk, and Bruce L. Stern in their study, *The Information Content of Comparative Magazine Advertisements*. This original coding sheet can be found in Appendix I. This strategy was chosen because of its comprehensive categories and continued relevance and accordance with today's product categories and advertising appeals used.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the literature review, the following five research questions were asked:

- RQ1: What product categories are most advertised in women's interest magazines?
  - RQ2: Are there significant differences between product categories advertised or appeals used in Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern's 1983 study and this study?
  - RQ3: Are there significant differences between *Real Simple*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine* in terms of product categories?
  - RQ4: What informational cues do advertisers most frequently use to appeal to women?
  - RQ5: What informational cues do advertisers most frequently use within different product categories?
-

### III. Methods

#### ***Sampling Procedure***

Using a content analysis, this study examined the message strategies most frequently used in print advertisements as they appeal to women. The author analyzed print advertisements in four women's interest magazines from October 2012 to April 2013. To reduce the number of ads, she selected magazines every other month from October 2012 to April 2013, resulting in a total of 590 advertisements were selected.

*Real Simple*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine* were chosen based on their readership statistics. *Real Simple* has a readership of 90% women, while *Martha Stewart Living* has a readership of 89% women, and *O, The Oprah Magazine* has a readership made up of 88% women.

Some advertisements were excluded because they were too small to contain the information. Those were found in the "Simply Shopping" section of *Real Simple*, in *Martha Stewart Living's* "The Marketplace" section, any "advertising promotions," "promotions," or "retail promotions."

#### ***Coding Strategy***

Coding for this study was based on the Resnik-Stern Content Classification System (Harmon, Rasouk, and Stern, 1983) as adapted by Robert R. Harmon, Nabil Y. Razzouk, and Bruce L. Stern in their study, *The Information Content of Comparative Magazine Advertisements*. This original coding sheet can be found in Appendix 1.

The coding scheme was adapted further for this study. The magazine categories were changed for this study from *Ladies Home Journal*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, and *Reader's Digest*, to *Real Simple*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*. The month of the publication was added to the coding sheet so that the data could be analyzed according to the month.

One criterion omitted was "number of products compared" because none of the advertisements analyzed compared one product with another. The study dropped the "Other Durable Products (autos, etc.\*)" and "Agricultural Products" option under the "Type of Product" criterion and added 10 new criteria including automobiles, clothing/accessories, electronics, entertainment, Banking services, paper goods, philanthropic organizations, service/program, toys, and travel.

The question of "What limited-time, non-price deals are available with a particular purchase?" was changed to "What limited-time deals are available with a particular purchase?" so that the researcher could look at non-price deals as well as price deals.

The coding sheet used in this study can be found in Appendix II. And examples of coded advertisements can be found in Appendix III.

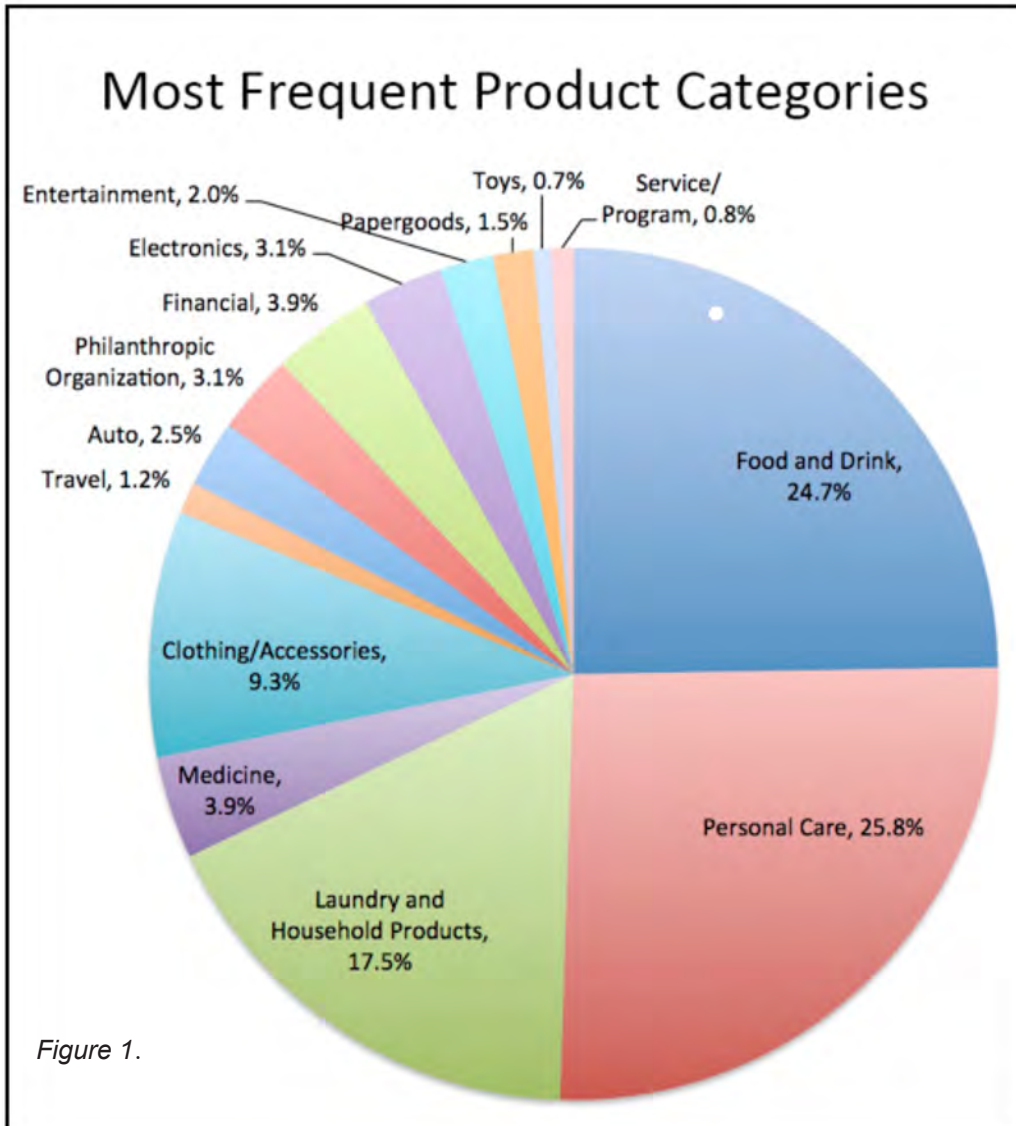
### IV. Findings & Discussion

#### ***Product Categories***

##### *Overall Product Categories*

RQ1 asked what product categories were most advertised in women's interest magazines. The top five product categories were food and drink, personal care, laundry and household products, medicine, and clothing/accessories. This can be seen in *Figure 1*.

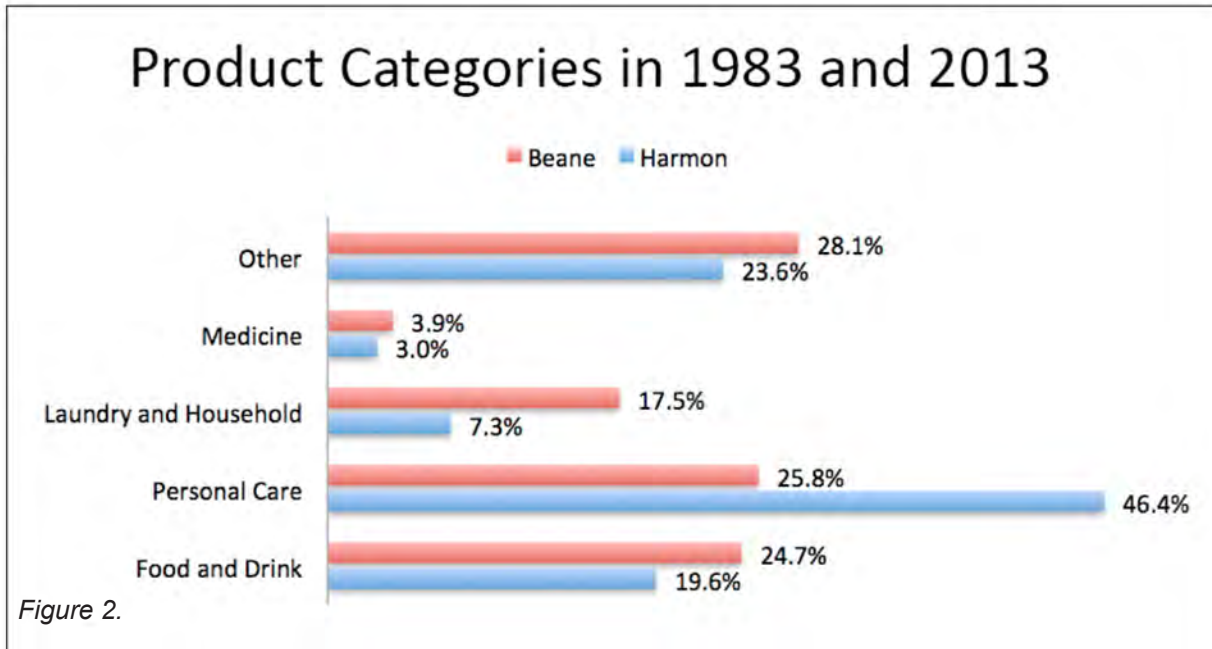
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### **Product Categories – A 30-Year Span**

RQ2 is about significant differences between product categories advertised or appeals used in Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern's 1983 study and this study? In *Figure 2*, the data from this study (marked as "Beane") was compared with the Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern study (marked as Harmon), which was performed in 1983.

To effectively compare the two studies, the author combined the product categories of clothing/accessories, travel, Auto, Philanthropic Organization, financial, electronics, entertainment, paper goods, toys, and service/program from this 2013 study into a new category called "Other." They make up 28.1% of the data. The product categories "Durables" and "Other Products/services" from Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern's 1983 study were combined into a category titled "other," which accounted for 23.6% of the data. Some changes have occurred over the 30 years: 10.2% more advertisements for Laundry and Household items found in the 2013 study; 5.1% more for food and drink items; and 20.6% down for personal care items.



**Product Categories: Comparing Publications**

RQ3 asked whether there are significant differences among three magazines in terms of product categories? Table 1 shows the percentages of each product category in each of the three different publications. *Real Simple* is indicated by “RS,” *Martha Stewart Living* is indicated by “MSL,” and *O, The Oprah Magazine* is indicated by “O.” The top 5 categories for each publication are highlighted.

In terms of food and drink, MSL has the largest portion of advertisements (40.8%), followed by RS (25.3%) and O (11.0%), as shown in Table 1. This difference occurs because each of the magazines focuses on different themes. Food/Entertaining is listed as one of MSL’s core editorial Themes (Martha Stewart Omnimedia, 2013). O makes no mention of food or entertaining in their positioning statement and food/beverage editorials make up only 11% of their editorials (The Hearst Corporation, 2013). RS “turns to us for the quick and effective fixes for her home, meals, celebrations, and messes” and still had a significant amount of advertisements in this category, with 25.3% (Real Simple, 2013).

In advertisements in the personal care category, O (39.6%) was followed by RS (25.0%) and a distant third, MSL (10.0%). This is because O treated this as a “catalyst that helps confident, intelligent, affluent women live their best life. With an emphasis on personal growth, it engages and addresses every aspect of a woman’s life – the material, the intellectual and the emotional” (The Hearst Corporation, 2013). Additionally, editorials concerning personal growth make up 16% of their editorials (The Hearst Corporation, 2013).

In the case of advertisements for laundry and household products, MSL (24.2%) was followed by RS (19.0%) and O (9.1%). This is because one of MSL’s core editorial themes is decorating & home (Martha Stewart Omnimedia, 2013). Additionally, MSL has a “detailed emphasis on every aspect of today’s well-rounded lifestyle – from food and entertaining, crafting and decoration, to holidays, celebrations, family, and work – the brand remains keenly relevant, authentic, and meaningful by designing innovative solutions to the challenges of living well” (Martha Stewart Omnimedia, 2013). RS’s editorial calendar for 2013 features “closet organizing,” “cleaning shortcuts/routines,” “home handbook,” and others. Additionally, 77% of RS’s readers own their own home. Their readers are homeowners who look for ways to organize and clean their home.

**Table 1. Product Categories Across Publications**

	RS	MSL	O
Food and Drink	25.3%	40.8%	11.0%
Personal Care	25.0%	10.0%	39.6%
Laundry and Household Products	19.0%	24.2%	9.1%
Medicine	3.8%	5.0%	3.2%
Clothing/Accessories	8.5%	2.5%	16.2%
Travel	1.9%	0.8%	0.0%
Auto	2.8%	2.5%	1.9%
Philanthropic Organization	1.9%	4.2%	4.5%
Financial	5.4%	2.5%	1.9%
Electronics	2.5%	2.5%	4.5%
Entertainment	1.3%	0.0%	5.2%
Papergoods	2.2%	0.8%	0.6%
Toys	0.3%	1.7%	0.6%
Service/Program	0.0%	2.5%	1.3%



Therefore, it is logical that there were many advertisements that fall into the laundry and household product category.

O had many advertisements that fell under the clothing/accessories category, the second largest product category with 16.2%, followed by RS (8.5%) and MSL (2.5%). Style is one of the core editorial themes in O so this fact is not surprising (The Hearst Corporation, 2013).

In terms of travel, which included brands such as Westin, Disney, Hilton, Hyatt, RS led MSL (.8%) and O (0%). This may be because RS audience has the highest median household income. RS readers' median household income, \$92,145, exceeded that of MSL (\$72,477) and O (\$68,991). The higher median household income is correlated with more ads that promote travel.

*Martha Stewart Living* (4.2%) and *O, The Oprah Magazine* (4.5%) had more advertisements for philanthropic organizations that *Real Simple* (1.9%).

Advertisements for financial services, which included brands such as Ally, Chase, BB&T, Wells Fargo, Citi, Fidelity, etc. made up 5.4% of products advertised in RS, followed by MSL (2.5%) and O (1.9%). The difference among the three magazines may be due to the income differences among different readers. Advertisers are more likely to advertise financial services in publications that have audiences with higher median household incomes.

There were significantly more advertisements for products that were categorized under the entertainment category in O (5.2%) than in RS (1.3%) or MSL (0%). Brands in the entertainment category included Barnes & Noble, People Magazine, Dr. Phil, etc.

**Product Categories: Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel**

Figure 3 shows the product categories from the Resnik-Stern Content Classification system broken up in Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel. The product categories were placed based on the explanations of the six different segments in Taylor's study (1999). The products under the category of segment 4 make up a significant 68% of the advertisements found in the three magazines. Taylor found that users placed groceries and personal-care products into this category. People tend to perpetually buy the same brand for these products because people believe there is little difference among them. It is not surprising because advertisers need to penetrate this market given that users typically buy products in a routine way.

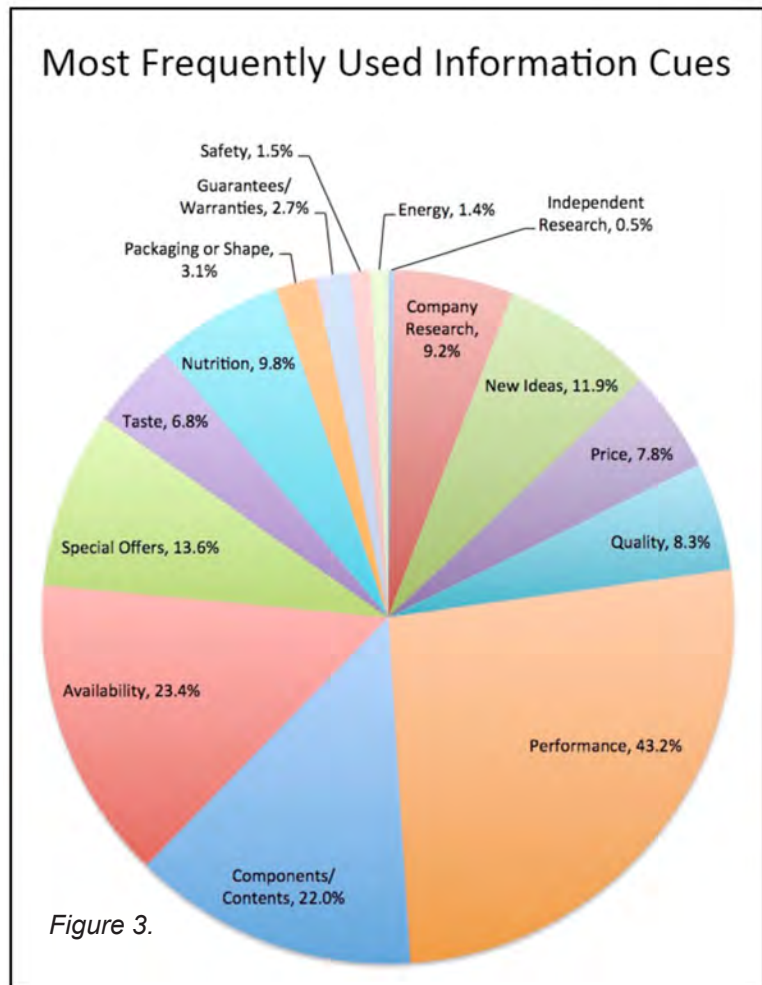


Figure 3.



## Information Cues

### Overall Information Cues

RQ4 asked about informational cues advertisers most frequently use to appeal to women. The frequency of the information cues is illustrated in *Figure 4*. Almost half or 43.2% of the advertisements mentioned performance. This means that 43.2% of the advertisements answered the question, “What does the product do?” or “How well does it perform relative to other products?”

The second most used cue was Availability, which answered the question, “Where can the product be purchased?” or “When will the product be available for purchase?” 23.4% of the advertisements used this cue?

The third most used appeal was Components/Contents, which answered the question, “What is the product composed of?” or “What ingredients does it contain?” or “What ancillary items are included with the product?”

Special Offers were also used frequently (13.6%). This appeal answered the question, “What limited-time deals are available with a particular purchase?”

New Ideas (11.9%) dealt with the advertisements that introduced a totally new concept or presented the advantages of the new concept.

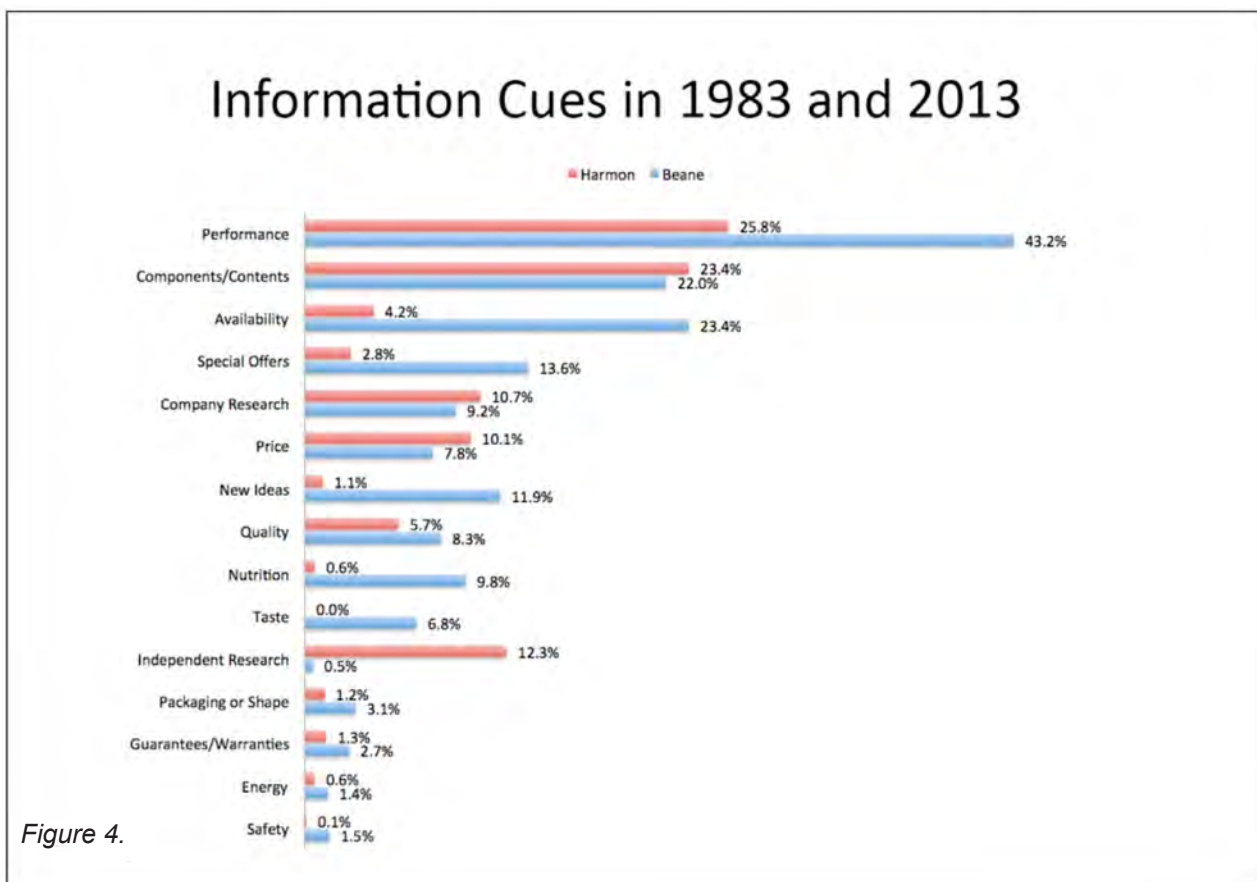


Figure 4.

### Information Cues – A 30-Year Span

Relatively speaking, many of the appeals that were used in 1983 and 2013 were similar in terms of percentages.

The following areas showed the difference of 5% or more during the 30-year period, as shown in *Figure 4*. Performance was up 17.4%; nutrition up 9.2%, which dovetails with the increased amount of advertisements in 2013, 5.1% more than 30 years ago; and taste up 6.8% from nil in 1983. Independent research went down from 12.3% in 1983 to .5% in 2013. It seems that if any research was used, it was company research.

The following areas showed less than 5% of changes over the time probably because those appeals are as equally valued and used today as they were 30 years ago. These categories included Components/Contents; Company Research; Price; Quality; Packaging or Shape; Guarantees/Warranties; Energy; Safety. The last two categories were not expected, given today's society value of "green" products and safety features.

Special Offers can't be compared because the researchers in the 1983 study only included "limited-time, non-price deals" but the author looked at all deals, including price deals.

**Information Cues: Comparing Product Categories**

RQ5 asked what informational cues do advertisers use most frequently within different product categories? The product categories most frequently used were personal care, food and drink, and laundry and household products.

**Personal Care**

The three cues most frequently found in advertisements for products that were in the "personal care" category were performance, components/contents, and company research, as shown in Table 2. Advertisers most frequently explain what the personal care product does or how well it performs relative to other products, as well as explaining what the products is composed of or what ingredients it contains. Advertisers frequently use these cues to compare their products with their competitor. Additionally, advertisers may use research to back up the statements about how the product performs relative to others' products.

**Food and Drink**

The three cues most frequently used for "food and drink" products were nutrition, components/contents, and taste, as shown in Table 3 above. Researchers most frequently give specific data concerning the nutritional value of a product or make a direct specific comparison with another product, as well as explaining what the product is composed of or what it contains. Additionally, they frequently present evidence from an independent source that the taste of their product is superior to others.'

**Table 2. Personal Care**

Personal Care	
Performance	79.6%
Components/Contents	33.6%
Company Research	32.2%
New Ideas	26.3%
Availability	21.1%
Special Offers	10.5%
Price	5.3%
Guarantees/Warranties	4.6%
Quality	3.9%
Packaging or Shape	2.6%
Safety	2.0%

**Table 3. Food and Drink**

Food and Drink	
Nutrition	36.3%
Components/Contents	26.7%
Taste	26.7%
Availability	13.7%
Special Offers	9.6%
Performance	8.9%
Quality	7.5%
Packaging or Shape	4.8%
New Ideas	4.1%
Price	2.1%
Guarantees/Warranties	1.4%
Safety	0.7%

**Laundry and Household Products**

The three cues most frequently used for products that fell into the "laundry and household products" category were performance, availability, and components/contents, as shown in Table 4 on next page. Advertisers most frequently explain what their laundry or household product does and/or how well it performs relative to others'. Additionally, advertisers often state when and where the product can be purchased. It is also common for advertisers to mention what the laundry or household product is composed of, what it contains, or what supplemental items are included with the product.

## V. Conclusion

Literature review clearly shows that women respond more positively to emotional advertising and remember emotional advertisements more frequently. Women respond to advertisements that are externally focused and involve groups of people.

This study found that the most advertised product categories in women's interest magazines are food and drink, personal care, laundry and household products, medicine, and clothing and accessories. There was no strong difference between this study and the study performed using the same categories in 1983 in terms of frequency of products advertised. The only large difference was more advertisements for personal care products in 2013 than 30 years ago. There were some variations among the three magazines in 2013. All these differences resulted from the characteristics of the publications' audience and their core editorial content. When the product categories from the Resnik-Stern Content Classification System were broken down into Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel, the products in the category of segment 4, the routine segment, made up a whopping 68% of all of the advertisements analyzed.

Overall, the information cues used most frequently were performance, availability, components/contents, special offers, and new ideas. There was no strong difference in the frequency of cues used between the two studies. The large increase occurred in the cues of availability, new ideas, nutrition, or taste. The most frequently used product categories for personal care were performance, components/contents, and company research. Analysis of food and drink showed that nutrition, components/contents, and taste were the cues used most frequently in that product category. Lastly, it was found that performance, availability, and components/contents were the cues used most frequently in advertisements for laundry and household products.

Future research may address the limitations of this study. This study used only every other issue of magazines over a 7-month period. Given more time, all issues could have been coded. Additionally, a future study could expand the number of magazines used. Originally, *Ladies' Home Journal* was to be used in this study but the amount of advertisements was too large for one coder to handle. Additionally, multiple coders could increase the validity of the data collected. Future research could take into consideration advertisements in iPad and Kindle versions of the publications chosen.

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Table 4. Laundry and Household Products

Laundry and Household Products	
Performance	47.6%
Availability	29.1%
Components/Contents	19.4%
Special Offers	19.4%
Quality	15.5%
Price	13.6%
New Ideas	11.7%
Guarantees/Warranties	4.9%
Company Research	3.9%
Safety	3.9%
Packaging or Shape	2.9%
Energy	2.9%
Independent Research	1.9%
Taste	1.0%

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## Testing the Appeals of Feminist Ideologies in Female Athletic Advertising

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to determine whether Generation Y women respond more to athletic ads that embodied a second-wave feminist ideology or a third-wave, post-structuralist ideology. A focus group was conducted and its findings revealed that the women's ideological preferences were not based on their generation, but their lifestyle. In other words, the Generation Y women did not unanimously identify with one feminist ideology over the other. Instead, the ideology they responded to in the athletic ads was based on their athletic lifestyle. This ultimately indicates that Generation Y females are segmented, and each market segment responds to ads that present a lifestyle and values similar to their own. The implications found in this research may be used to provide consumer insights to professionals in the advertising industry.*

### I. Introduction

Second- and third-wave feminist ideologies helped advertisers determine the values and preferences of women in each generation. By understanding what women responded to, advertisers produce images and copy that engaged their female audiences. A new wave of feminism has yet to emerge, and its absence contributes to the lack of insight into the ideology that appeals most to female Generation Y™ consumers. Second- and third-wave feminism, although still relevant now, can both be associated with a generation of women. Generation Y has the two conflicting ideologies of the past, making it difficult to determine which, if either, mindset reigns supreme among today's early adult, female consumers.

This research aims to determine if Generation Y women respond more positively to second-wave or third-wave feminist ideology in athletic advertising. The studies in this investigation identify the characteristics of female athletic advertisements that appeal to Generation Y women and their corresponding ideologies. Athletic advertising has been selected because the athletic-wear industry was one of the many markets affected by feminist movements and trends. Brands such as Nike were strictly masculine and did not begin adding women's lines until the end of the 1980s (Grow & Wolburg, 2006). Since then, some brands have produced women's ads similar to their men's ads – taking a more second-wave, gender-neutral approach to advertising to their female audience. Others have catered specifically to third-wave, feminine sensibilities. The findings included in this research are intended to help athletic advertisers understand to which feminist ideology female Generation Y consumers relate most. The information garnered from this study will help these advertisers

\* **Keywords:** feminism and advertising, women's athletic advertising, Gen Y, feminism, advertising  
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\*\* Generation Y, for the purposes of this study, is defined as the demographic born between 1984 and 2000 and is also known as the Millennial Generation (Mashable, 2013).

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better tailor their messages to fit this demographic.

## **II. Literature Review**

### ***Background Theory***

Market segmentation is changing the way in which advertisers reach audiences, especially women. Females have long been considered one “homogeneous category” (Scott, 2008). Now, with markets growing increasingly segmented, targeting such a broad audience is ineffective. As Janet Riccio, CEO of the women’s consultancy G23, notes that marketing just to “women” is a bankrupt concept – “it’s very paternalistic . . . far too passive for the women of the 21st century and seems to be code for ‘marketing to moms.’ Women are other things besides moms” (Scott, 2008). As advertisers begin to specify and segment female markets, the challenge becomes how to effectively communicate with each target audience.

A study of women’s responses to different portrayals of females in advertisements demonstrates the value behind segment-specific messaging. Although performed over 20 years ago, the findings from this study still apply to today’s advertising industry. Researchers tested women’s reactions on a cognitive response level to understand how the “spontaneous thoughts of the audience to an ad influence the audience’s attitude toward the ad and the product” (Leigh, Rethans, & Whitney, 1987, p. 55). As the basis for their experiment, Leigh, Rethans, and Whitney (1987) examined the relationship between role orientation – a woman’s beliefs about the lifestyles and place of women in society – and role portrayal, the “characterizations of people in commercials as well as their setting relative to the product and other characters” (p. 56). In 1987, when women were still grouped into broader audience categories, the researchers tested the different reactions traditional and modern women had to traditional and modern role portrayals of women in advertisements. To gauge the respondents’ cognitive responses, they measured the different groups’ “attitude toward the advertisement, the role model (or source), the brand, and the act of buying the brand” (p. 56). They found that traditional women responded strongest to ads with traditional role portrayals of women. Likewise, modern women related best to the ads featuring women in modern roles. In other words, women responded to the role portrayal that was consistent with how they saw themselves and their role orientation. It follows then, that effective advertising maintains consistency between the role portrayal of females and the target audience’s role orientation or general values.

The findings from this study ultimately indicate that ad context and messaging must align with the views of the target audience. A harmonious matching of female portrayal to audience expectations yields positive viewer responses and influences, among other things, their consideration and/or purchasing of the product and their opinion of the ad’s effectiveness. (Leigh et al, 1987, pp. 54-55; Scott, 2008). Researchers found that messaging needs to be segment-specific to effectively influence an audience’s perception of the product and brand. Once the modern women identified the traditional women in the test ad as “housewives” they tuned out the ad completely (Leigh et al, 1987, p. 58), indicating the negative result of a role portrayal inconsistent with the target audience. Overall, the results “confirm the market segmentation view that communications effectiveness is enhanced by tailoring that advertisement . . . to the target audience” (p. 60). The ads whose context matches the views of the market segment will be the most effective. Furthermore, as Riccio found in her survey of women around the world, “there is power to be had in the intersection of a product . . . and the needs or values of women and girls in your target customer group” (Scott, 2008).

Advertising today does not solely focus on selling the product, however. Ads help construct consumer product preferences, establish a brand’s identity, and likewise, influence the audience’s perception of the brand as a whole. The postmodern branding theory identifies brands as more than a collection of products; brands are an entity of their own. They are living things with sacred identities and are full of emotional promises (Grow, 2008, p. 314). A compelling brand and its advertising “recognizes there are fundamental human truths and needs that it can uniquely serve” (Grow, 2008, p. 315) and communicates those qualities in a way that resonates with its target market. In short, ad context influences the audience’s perception of both the individual product and of the brand in general. For this reason, it is imperative that ads accurately appeal to the intended audience.

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## **Feminism and Advertising**

The rise of second-wave feminism in the later 20th century helped define a generation of women and their preferences. The driving women behind this movement, such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, sought to liberate women from the constraining gender roles and gender discrimination of the patriarchal culture in which they lived (Skinner, 2009, p. 9). Second-wave feminists addressed the primary issue of role equality, while arguing that “gender roles and gender behaviors . . . inherently disadvantaged women” (Skinner, 2009, p. 12). These women shaped the second-wave through their efforts to “break through the oppression of women” (Mack-Canty, 2004, p. 157) and incite a change in “traditional” gender roles that would ultimately affect societal gender norms (Skinner, 2009, p. 13). Essentially, the second-wave feminists saw no “difference between women and men, other than the superficial one of having been treated differently” (Mack-Canty, 2004, p. 157). They rallied for images, especially in advertising, that portrayed women as more than housewives and positioned them as equals to men (Skinner, 2009, p. 12).

Second-wave women wanted “egalitarian representations of women [and] . . . texts more respectful of women’s intelligence, paired with images more reflective of their diverse roles” (Howard, 2010, p. 142). As Steinem and her editors at Ms. Magazine explained, “We don’t spend half our money on makeup . . . and the other half on food . . . we also buy cars, books, airline tickets . . . and the many products that aren’t usually directed to women at all” (Howard, 2010, p. 139). These demands changed advertisers’ perceptions of the “American woman consumer” and how they targeted female audiences (Howard, 2010, p. 137). Effective advertising gave women what they wanted; it valued the female consumer and portrayed women in roles more similar to men.

Third-wave, post-structuralist feminism – the ideology born in the late 1980s and early 1990s – embodied a different set of values. Unlike second-wave feminist ideology, which referred to women as a singular group and assumed “a universalization of their experiences as ‘women’s experience,’” third-wave acknowledged the diversity in experiences and views among women (Howard, 2010, pp. 158-159). Third-wave feminists continued the second-wave’s resistance against hegemonic gender roles and a patriarchal culture. Yet, these feminists did not see gender neutrality as synonymous with gender equality and encouraged women to own their femininity and “re-appropriate their girlhood” into a means of rebellion and empowerment (p. 162). In summary, the third-wave ideology promotes individuality and the sharing of female experiences among women. During this movement, effective advertising meant presenting images of women who were empowered by their femininity, and copy where these women shared a story.

## **III. Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to determine if Generation Y women respond more positively to second-wave or third-wave feminist ideologies in athletic advertising. A focus group was conducted to gain insight from female Generation Y consumers who purchase athletic gear. A focus group was the most appropriate research method for this study because it helps measure participants’ reactions and gauges their attitudes, perceptions, and thought processes to a particular subject (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p.4, 12). Ultimately, a focus group was the most effective method of determining the participants’ opinions (p. 12) on the ads presented and questions posed during the discussion.

### **Sample**

A focus group of six Generation Y women was conducted for this purpose. The participants in this focus group were selected based on a convenience sample in an effort to gain input from a variety of women, and also due to time constraints. To protect the confidentiality of the focus group, the participants will be referred to as participants 1-6.

- *Participant 1*: 20 years old; exercises daily with a combination of weights, strength training, and cardio; plays rugby; considers self an athlete
  - *Participant 2*: 21 years old; exercises daily with a combination of weights, strength training, and cardio; heavily involved with intramural sports; considers self an athlete
  - *Participant 3*: 21 years old; exercises sometimes; does not consider self an athlete
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- Participant 4: 22 years old; exercises sometimes; does not consider self an athlete
- Participant 5: 22 years old; runs regularly; exercises a few times a week; does not consider self an athlete
- Participant 6: 22 years old; runs regularly; exercises multiple times a week; does not consider self an athlete

## Procedure

The focus group was conducted on April 10, 2013. The six participants sat around a table and introduced themselves by age, regularity and type of athletic activity, and whether or not they would consider themselves an athlete. From their introductions, two types of participants emerged: higher-impact athletes and lower-impact athletes. On the spectrum of high to low, participants 1 and 2 were high impact athletes, participants 3 and 4 were low impact athletes, and participants 5 and 6 were in the middle, leaning more to the lower end.

A script guided the focus group and posed discussion topics to gain insight toward the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do Generation Y women relate to advertisements that focus on females athleticism and appeals to femininity?

RQ2: Does copy or imagery have a greater impact on a Generation Y woman's response to an ad?

The focus group began with broader discussion topics regarding the participants' opinions about what appealed to them in ads. The participants discussed some values-based questions about the impact a woman's portrayal in an ad has on them, if a woman's portrayal affects their purchasing decisions, and if the portrayal of a woman influences their greater perception of the brand. From there, the discussion began to narrow and focused on identifying the characteristics in athletic ads that appealed to the participants.

The participants were given four advertisements to discuss. To avoid any brand bias, the test advertisements were from different campaigns done by Nike. All logos and mention of a specific product or of Nike itself were removed in Photoshop so that the participants would react solely to the ad content.



Ad 1: "Serena Williams"



Ad 2: "Thunder Thighs"



ARE YOU LOOKING AT MY TITLES?



Ad 3: "Titles"



Ad 4: "Make Yourself"

The next part of the discussion was focused on the participants' responses to the test ads – how they would describe the women in each ad, the idea they saw each ad presenting, and how the portrayal of each woman affected their perceptions of the overall ad. The participants also highlighted the most impactful

characteristics in each ad. Participants then selected the ad that appealed to them the most and shared their reasoning behind why the ad appealed to them and went more in-depth about what made them connect to it. They ended by determining whether the ad would compel them to purchase a product from the brand.

The focus group discussion was recorded, transcribed, and then coded to identify trends in the participants' responses and attitudes toward the four ads. The discussion was guided in hopes of determining whether Generation Y females responded more to ads that had characteristics of second-wave feminist ideology or ads that embodied more third-wave values. The responses, however, did not fit into a binary of pro-second-wave or pro-third-wave.

Since the majority did not clearly lean toward one ideology over the other, the content needed to be analyzed using a more "who" and "why" approach. A basic typology was employed first, to group the respondents into two categories based on their professed level of athleticism or athletic activity. Each participant was either a high-impact athlete or a low-impact athlete, based on the distinctions provided earlier in this section. A content analysis was then performed to identify which category of respondents had responded most favorably to each ad. Given that each ad represented either second- or third-wave feminist ideology, analyzing the responses high-impact and low-impact women gave to the ads would identify any correlations between consumer type and feminist ideology.

The responses to each ad were separated out and color-coded to identify the reactions from high- and low-impact athletes. Under each ad were lines of pink (low-impact) and purple (high-impact) responses to show respondent preferences and to distinguish opinions. "Serena Williams" and "Thunder Thighs," the opposite ends of the feminist ideology spectrum, garnered the most responses. The responses to each of these ads were then analyzed for content to determine the values each respondent category had expressed. In other words, the content was analyzed to understand who favored each ad and why. The patterns that emerged during this coding process revealed relationships between types of athletes and their underlying ideology preferences.

## IV. Findings

### ***Lower-impact athletes: feminine focus***

In responding to the ads, participants 3-6 said the third-wave ads – identified as "Thunder Thighs" and "Titles" throughout the focus group – appealed to them the most. Both ads had concepts based on female experiences, and for this reason, were ads to which these participants related because they could identify with the experiences communicated.

Participant 3 noted that at first glance, the tagline in "Titles" looked as though it said, "Are you looking at my titties?" The actual tagline reads, "Are you looking at my titles?" but participant 3 liked the seemingly sly play on women's objectification and the shared experience.

*When you're walking down the street and you see people checking you out, you're like, "are they looking at my 'titties'?" Are they looking at my ass?" That kind of thing.*

She responded most strongly to the challenge the ad's tagline posed because of its "sassiness" and how it took a commonly negative experience and thrust it back in the perpetrator's face, empowering the woman behind it. Participant 3 favored this ad because she found it the most relatable. She identified with the personality of the ad and the experience behind it.

*These people could be my friends.*

Participants 4, 5, and 6 shared similar justification when describing how and why they favored "Thunder Thighs." As with "Titles", "Thunder Thighs" acknowledged a familiar concept among females – "thunder thighs" – the term for thighs that are larger, thicker, and curvier than the ones seen on slender, model-like women. "Thunder Thighs" use of the term and its portrayal of thunder thighs resonated with the participants because it appealed to something they understood.

*["Thunder Thighs"] appeals to me most mainly because I do run and I know people that have stopped running because they started getting thunder thighs, so I understand that concept.*

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*I just like that it really related to me and kind of what I get out of working out.*

Generally, participants 3-6 responded most positively to “Thunder Thighs” because it appealed to their female values.

*The [“Thunder Thighs”] advertisement is probably the most feminine one because it appeals to what a woman would care about now and in the future.*

Participant 5 liked that “Thunder Thighs” recognized her values of family and body image, but appreciated that the ad still celebrate her being active and athletic.

*My favorite is [“Thunder Thighs”] . . . because it talks about having a grandchild – and that’s more of appealing to the female – but then it talks about thunder thighs, so that would be more athletic.*

### **Higher-impact athletes: gender-neutrality**

In contrast to the preferences of the lower-impact athletes, the higher-impact athletes did not connect with the femininity-focused, third-wave ads. Instead, they responded more to the gender-neutral, second-wave “Serena Williams” and “Make Yourself” and the equality-based messages they held. Participant 3, in weighing which ad she related to the most, recognized that “Serena Williams” did not give attention to any specifically female attributes, making it, in her opinion, the most symbolic of gender equality.

*The text in it [“Make Yourself”], it’s totally non-gender specific because it doesn’t say, “ranked #140 because I’m a girl,” it says, “ranked #140 because of all these traits” . . . and you could apply that to any athlete.*

Additionally, the higher-impact athletes did not feel the need for a stronger female focus to compel them. Participant 2 said she related more to “Serena Williams,” but that its appeal did not span beyond anything more than gender. She also liked how the two ads’ less feminine-focused approach made the women appear more equal. She identified with the fact that the ads did not give special focus to any female attributes but rather, gave the message that an athlete is an athlete, regardless of gender.

*I feel like if it’s girls pictured, I can relate to it more being a female athlete, whereas, if it was just like, a guy tennis player flexing, I’d relate to it more just as being an athlete. So it depends on the sex of the person in the picture.*

In other words, the appeal of “Serena Williams” was not in the depiction of the woman or her role portrayal, but in the ad’s presentation of a woman in general.

### **Higher-impact athletes: performance**

Throughout the discussion, the participants compared elements of each ad to their own associations with athleticism and their personal lifestyles. Based on what each participant mentioned, it was clear that there were differing values between the higher and the lower-impact athletes. The higher-impact athletes primarily valued performance and related most to “Serena Williams” and “Make Yourself” because they portrayed this value.

*It’s not about how you look when you’re working out. It’s more your performance.*

*I like [“Serena Williams” and “Make Yourself”], again, because these two women just look like the epitome of hard work, which for more, as an athlete, that’s what athletics have always been about – always working hard to win something or not necessarily to get in shape, but to get somewhere.*

### **Lower-impact athletes: empowering copy**

Participants 3-6 associated “Thunder Thighs” with the concept of empowerment because of the positive spin its copy put on thunder thighs. The participants saw the ad’s copy as taking a generally negative concept and repositioning it as a positive thing. Thunder thighs are a potential cause for self-consciousness among women; “Thunder Thighs” is encouraging women to take ownership and pride in their bodies, which, the participants agreed, embodies their definitions of empowerment.

*I see empowerment as putting power back into something or taking something without power and adding power because something has been changed.*

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*It's saying, "actually, thunder thighs are powerful and strong and awesome." So I see that as being most empowering.*

### **Higher-impact athletes: dynamic visuals**

"Serena Williams" and "Make Yourself" appealed to participants 1 and 2 because of their intense images. Both participants were engaged by the visuals alone and gave little regard to the accompanying copy.

*There's more going on in both of those ["Serena Williams" and "Make Yourself"].*

*The more action in the picture really draws me to it ["Serena Williams"].*

*I would also agree and say that ["Serena Williams" and "Make Yourself"], I feel like I can relate to more. There is more action going on.*

Also of note here is that the higher-impact athletes likened the visuals in "Serena Williams" and "Make Yourself" to images they would find in male athletic ads. Participants 1 and 2 noted that the visual elements present in most male athletic ads were the same characteristics that appealed to them in these female ads.

*If I see male fitness ads . . . there's a lot of muscle, a lot of sweat, and I feel like in 1 and 4 that's kind of what would draw you in.*

*Especially in ["Make Yourself"] – I mean, I don't think she has that much makeup on and I feel like when you're like, either on a team or like, doing a sport, it's not about the way you look.*

Essentially, participant 2 noticed that the women in the second-wave ads were styled similarly to men. Their natural appearance appealed to her because it more closely resembled her image of an athlete.

## **V. Conclusion**

The relationships found during this study emerged from an open round of coding. They were not discovered through a priori inquiry, but instead, revealed themselves. The responses from the focus group ultimately demonstrated that one ad, or feminist ideology for that matter, does not fit all. There are different athletic lifestyles among Generation Y female athletes, each with their own feminist values. The lower-impact athletes – the yogis, intermediate runners, and cardio-intensive gym goers, for example – preferred the ads that portrayed active lifestyles but still appealed to their feminine characteristics, as in the highly favored "Thunder Thighs." For this reason, it can be said that low-impact athletes favor ads that evoke a third-wave feminist ideology. These respondents found the ads that depicted more intense, masculine versions of women intimidating. On the contrary, the higher-impact athletes – the sport-intensive and cross-training-oriented females – preferred them, aligning their preferences with ads promoting second-wave feminist ideology. These differences indicate that each lifestyle has its own athletic values that guide its members' ideology preferences and ad responses.

Lower-impact athletes value an active lifestyle over straight athleticism. They mostly engage in exercise of some form to stay fit and maintain a good figure. These women appreciate athletic ads that maintain a balance in promoting fitness and appealing to their femininity. They are empowered by ads that promote positive body images and frame commonly negative aspects of female life (i.e. thunder thighs) as positives. For this type of audience, an ad with copy communicating a positive message and a corresponding visual of a healthy, active woman will have the strongest impact.

While a lower-impact athlete might lift weights to tone, a higher-impact athlete lifts to tone and build muscle mass. The higher-impact athletes value athleticism defined by performance, achievement, and physical strength. They participate in sports and exercise for the physical benefits and for the feeling of accomplishment it brings them. Higher-impact athletes favor ads that show women in action and that highlight the performance-based benefits of a product. While an acknowledgment of femininity resonated with the lower-impact athletes, higher-impact athletes are not concerned with this concept. The fact that there is a female athlete in the ad is enough for them to find it relatable. This audience will respond best to an ad that has a large visual depicting a physical activity with some level of intensity and very little copy to detract from the action in the image.

A lower-impact athlete is the female who wears Nike shorts for running, but also wears them because

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they are fashionable. A higher-impact athlete wears the same Nike shorts, but because they do not restrict her leg movement during her run and wick away sweat well. Both groups of women are buying the shorts, but for different reasons. This underlines the key characteristic of Generation Y female athletes (or athletic wear consumers) – they are not a single group. These female athletes may have gender and generation in common, but the values that drive their purchasing decisions are entirely different and rooted in two distinct feminist ideologies.

A company needs to understand these differentiating characteristics and determine to which group it wants its ad to appeal. Therein lies the importance of understanding the values of each athletic lifestyle. A feminist approach to advertising to women may create impactful ads, but the ideologies communicated in them need to be appropriately tailored to fit each audience. The femininity-focused, female-empowerment messages of the third-wave's post-structuralist ideology matches the values of lower-impact athletes. A company or agency should design ads that reflect this ideology to better reach lower-impact athletes. Likewise, the gender-neutral, or rather, gender irrelevant approach of second-wave feminist ideology shares values similar to those of higher-impact athletes. The characteristics of this ideology should be present in ads directed toward a higher-impact audience. In short, successful athletic advertising will understand the need to go beyond cursory categorizing and sub-categorize. Advertisers need to recognize the differences in the female athlete audience and appeal to the feminist ideologies and corresponding lifestyle values of each.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

While this study may present conclusions regarding Generation Y females and the feminist ideologies that appeal to them in women's athletic advertising, most of the inferences made are based on the responses from a focus group of six females. The focus group is too small for any strong generalizations to be made about the greater female athletic audience. The findings and conclusions from this focus group may serve as inspiration for further research, but alone, are not enough to provide any larger insights into the preferences of Generation Y females. Ideally, several focus groups of six participants each would have been conducted to strengthen the conclusions of this research.

Using this study as a starting point, further research could be conducted to determine if specific athletic activities influence the feminist ideologies that appeal to a woman. Additional studies could also be performed to determine the ideologies present in different brands' ads and whether brand perception or ideology has a greater influence on consumers' purchasing decisions.

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