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Spring 2018

VOLUME 9, NO. 1



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Joining the World of Journals

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

The website of the Council on Undergraduate Research lists more than 200 undergraduate research journals nationwide (http://www.cur.org/resources/students/undergraduate_journals/).

Some of these journals focus on a discipline (e.g., Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics), some are university-based and multidisciplinary (e.g., MIT Undergraduate Research Journal), and others are university-based and disciplinary (e.g., Harvard Political Review).

The Elon Journal focuses 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 under the editorship of Dr. Byung Lee, associate professor in the School of Communications.

The three purposes of the journal are:

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

The Elon Journal is published twice a year, with spring and fall issues.

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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 possibly wanting to earn a degree more than they want to earn an education. They may question whether communication theory and research have anything to do with their future. But they get excited at studying great ideas and topical issues.

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.

This journal celebrates the life of the intellect through undergraduate research. It represents the intellectual maturing that occurs by the senior year, reinforcing all that we think a university should be.

Dr. Paul Parsons, Dean
School of Communications

Editorial Board

Thirty faculty members in Elon's School of Communications served as the Editorial Board that selected 10 undergraduate research papers for the 2018 spring issue.

From more than 100 research papers written in advanced School of Communications classes, 31 papers were submitted to the journal by Elon communications students through the encouragement and mentoring of capstone teachers and other professors in the school.

Professors who served as the Editorial Board were Lorraine Ahearn, Bill Anderson, Janna Anderson, Vanessa Bravo, Naeemah Clark, David Copeland, Vic Costello, Kelly Furnas, Kenn Gaither, Jessica Gisclair, Don Grady, Ben Hannam, Sana Haq, Dan Haygood, Jooyun Hwang, Jonathan Jones, Alex Luchsinger, Derek Lackaff, Harlen Makemson, Barbara Miller, William Moner, Phillip Motley, Tom Nelson, George Padgett, Paul Parsons, Glenn Scott, Michael Skube, Kathleen Stansberry, Amanda Sturgill, and Hal Vincent.

Thanks also go to Bryan Baker, who recorded the website's student introductions; Associate Dean Don Grady, who reviewed articles to help ensure the quality of the journal; and Tommy Kopetskie, who proofread articles and updated the publication's website.

Editor's Note

Among many topics covered in this issue, five articles covered the analysis of social media use. Two articles dealt with crime, while three others analyzed images, layout, and newspaper use, respectively.

After analyzing 540 live-tweets, Anderson found that still images had a positive impact on user engagement. The use of links and mentions, however, negatively influenced user engagement. Feinsot studied three digital marketing campaigns by Calvin Klein and concluded that the American fashion company succeeded in appealing to young Millennials through underlying themes found in each campaign as well as consumer engagement techniques employed on the brand's social media platforms. Jackson's analysis of 4,000 tweets on Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes led to a conclusion that Type 1 diabetics more likely prioritize emotional support activities, in comparison with Type 2, especially in the area of discussions of giving and personal experience. Type 2 diabetics, however, prioritize informational support activities, such as diet/exercise, research, and lifestyle management.

After analysis of Facebook and Twitter accounts of the Carolina Hurricanes and the Pittsburgh Steelers, MaGinn found that Facebook received more interactions, but Twitter had more posts. She also found that the Steelers had a better social media strategy than the Hurricanes regarding visibility and consistency. After examining video clips on the YouTube channels of Jimmy Fallon, Jimmy Kimmel, and Stephen Colbert during the first nine months of the Donald Trump presidency, Rosen found that the hosts and the nature of their videos influenced the engagement of the audience.

Brehman analyzed five iconic images from the Black Lives Matter movement. She concluded that the photographs were iconic because they did more than mere documentation, reshaping viewers' collective memories to construct a new narrative about American policies, society, and identity. Thompson examined the trends in the layout design of feature articles in top two outdoor magazines. This content analysis found trends of symmetrical layouts, two to three columns of text per page, full bleed images on title pages, and types of fonts used for text.

Among the two articles about crime, Brainard analyzed the motives of individuals who post their crimes to social media outlets. She concluded that the rationale behind committing the crime and posting evidence of the illegal activities on social media outlets stems from human beings' drive to be recognized by others in their environment and their social media communities. On the other hand, Tinker investigated crime as an entertainment genre through a narrative rhetorical analysis of three popular pieces. This study found that the true crime genre has grown in the last three years due to a variety of circumstances, largely because of today's binge-consumption era. Anderson examined how education, income, and age are related to newspaper use, and whether education is a predictor for media platform preference. The study found a significant correlation between newspaper usage and education, income, and age.

Dr. Byung Lee
Journal Editor

Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications

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How Calvin Klein's Digital Marketing Campaigns Attract A New Consumer Market

Ally Feinsot

Journalism
Elon University

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements in
an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

The rise of social media in the last decade has led brands to establish a strong digital presence to attract a growing, highly influential audience – Millennials. This research studied three digital marketing campaigns by Calvin Klein, an American fashion company, and the tactics used to attract a sub-set group of Millennials, those between the ages of 18 and 25. The research concluded that Calvin Klein succeeded in appealing to young Millennials through underlying themes found in each campaign (self-expression, sexuality, digital generation/ social media, and pop culture) as well as consumer engagement techniques employed on the brand's social media platforms.

I. Introduction

The rise of social media in the last decade has led brands to establish a digital presence to attract a growing, highly influential audience—Millennials. By the year 2030, nearly 80 million Millennials in the United States will control the retail market, and much of their decision-making about spending habits will directly come from their social media usage. Millennials are the most active generation on social media, interacting with brands on a daily basis; a poll conducted by the Boston Consulting Group found that 52% of Millennials “like” a brand on a social network, and 39% post product reviews on their social channels (Barton, Koslow, & Beauchamp, 2014). It is imperative today for brands to monitor and actively engage with Millennials via social media, as their opinions could make or break the reputation of a brand with just one negative post on their social networks.

Calvin Klein, an \$8.4 billion global company, has been marketing to audiences with simplistic, often provocative marketing campaigns for the last 50 years. Its most famous campaign was released in 1980; only thirty seconds long, it featured a 15-year-old Brooke Shields, who flirtatiously looked into the camera and asked, “You wanna know what comes between me and my Calvins? Nothing.” Since that controversial campaign, Calvin Klein has not only continued to shock audiences, but also has maintained a strong following that has seen the brand enter the digital age gracefully. As the global brand seeks to increase its sales in the next few years, it also plans to “increase its engagement with youth-minded consumers. . . [to] create an opportunity to build loyalty over the long-term” (“Calvin Klein,” n.d.). Millennials are the future of the Calvin Klein empire, and through engagement with this audience via digital marketing, the brand will continue to stay relevant as a top lifestyle company.

Keywords: Calvin Klein, Millennials, Consumer Engagement, Digital Marketing, Social Media
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This research paper examined how Calvin Klein has used social media to attract the Millennial market. It conducted a content analysis of three recent Calvin Klein digital marketing campaigns, focusing on the imagery and messaging of the campaigns and analyzing its attempts to generate Millennial buzz.

II. Literature Review

To gain a better understanding of the research topic, the author examined literature on digital marketing, the importance of consumer engagement and Millennials, and Millennials' interaction with brands on social media.

Who are the Millennials?

The Millennial Generation, also referred to as Generation Y, is defined in many ways, but this study defines the generation as individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 (Fry, 2016). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 83.1 million Millennials currently reside in the United States ("Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers," 2015). This study focused on a sub-set of Millennials—those between the ages of 18 and 25.

What is Digital Marketing?

To attract certain customers in the greater Millennial market, brands are increasing their digital marketing presence. According to the *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, digital marketing is "the practice of promoting products and services using digital distribution channels" and includes "digital or online advertising, which delivers marketing messages to customers" (Smith, 2011, p. 489).

The Reciprocity Principle

According to the Boston Consulting Group, the Millennial Generation is the future of the retail market; currently, Millennials are spending an estimated \$1.3 trillion annually, and this number will increase as members of the younger end of the Millennial demographic enter the workforce and begin to earn their own income (Barton et al., 2014). Millennials have distinct shopping habits from older generations. According to a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers, "57% of Millennials agree that ease of access and frugality" are more important than "the prestige of ownership" (as cited in Stahl, 2017). Millennials are more concerned about getting information quickly from brands, whether through social media or other modes of communication, and not spending a lot in the process, while simultaneously avoiding the buildup of debt. Their method of engaging with brands can be explained through the reciprocity principle: Millennials "expect a two-way mutual relationship" with companies. Not only are brands interacting with Millennials on social media, simultaneously, Millennials are influencing other potential consumers by posting their opinions on products and brand experiences (Barton et al., 2014).

Millennial-Brand Interaction on Social Media

In today's competitive digital retail market, brands face a crucial need to have an online presence. Millennials are on social media for hours a day, exposed to countless products and companies that—with an effective digital marketing team—could sway this demographic to purchase their products right on their iPhones and smartphones. Millennials, more than any other generation, are spending more money on social media networks, and they are following companies' social accounts to keep up with the latest news, products, and campaigns (Nelson, 2015).

Social media has been particularly adopted by fashion brands, which feature celebrities and social media influencers to endorse their products. Millennials often follow these influencers on social media to "feel closer" to them or "imitate their behavior" as an ego booster (Ressel, 2016, p. 20). Just as Millennials can like and comment on their friends' accounts, they can do the same with the likes of celebrities Kendall Jenner and Justin Bieber. Social influencers are an important tool for brands to employ on their social media platforms; influencers will post sponsored content on their social channels, generating revenue for themselves and for

the companies that they partner with. According to Malcolm Carfrae, former executive vice president of global communications at Calvin Klein, influencers “help develop content on both sides of the creative process” by creating unique content for their platform, but also “incentivizing fans to participate” by interacting with their content on social media (Nelson, 2015, p. 16).

Social media gives Millennials the opportunity to communicate directly with brands, sending out messages or tagging a brand in their post on Instagram, for example. Brands can track these posts, viewing consumer content and analyzing trends and data they might find from their audience, and by pinpointing any concerns that consumers express. Through interaction with brands on social media, Millennials are changing the way that brands communicate with their audiences. Millennials have the power to influence their social media followers with the content that they post about brands—whether positive or negative. Brands know that their consumers could potentially make or break their reputation; with the possibility of a negative product review going viral, companies must constantly track their hashtags and tagged posts to ensure that the image that they have crafted for themselves is being positively maintained.

Research Questions

RQ1: What social media techniques have Calvin Klein adopted to reach the 18-25-year-old Millennials?

RQ2: What themes did Calvin Klein use in its campaigns to attract 18-25-year-old Millennials?

III. Methods

This study conducted a content analysis of three major digital campaigns by Calvin Klein between 2014 and 2016. Content analysis is defined by the Pew Research Center as “a tool that allows us to look at the way messages change over time and vary across mediums and outlets” (“Content Analysis,” 2017). In conducting content analysis, formulating a research question or goal is the first step in the process. Then, a researcher needs to select an appropriate sample and systematically code it for its important traits (“Content Analysis,” 2017).

To answer the research questions, the study analyzed three digital campaigns by Calvin Klein: CK One, released in 2014; ck2, released in 2015; and #MyCalvins, released in 2015. The campaigns were examined for their written text, imagery, and consumer engagement tools used to attract a Millennial audience. This study used a research method similar to the one adopted by Ashley and Tuten (2014). Their study examined social media content by top brands through content analysis, finding that brands were most successful on social media through frequent posting on their various platforms and creative strategies “associated with customer engagement” (Ashley & Tuten, 2014, p. 15).

The current study used a code sheet based on the creative strategy code sheet created by Ashley and Tuten to analyze how Calvin Klein has used social media to attract the Millennial market. Their code sheet analyzed social media content with three categories: “message strategies,” “sales promotions” and “user-generated content;” message strategies and user-generated content were analyzed for this study (Ashley & Tuten, 2014, p. 20). This current study only analyzed two categories: message strategies and user-generated content.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) define user-generated content, or UGC, as “the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users.” To be considered UGC, the media has to “be published on a publicly accessible website or . . . social networking site; show a certain amount of creative effort; and it needs to have been created outside of professional routines and practices” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009, p. 61). To answer the second research question, this study analyzed major themes seen in each Calvin Klein digital campaign, including sexuality, self-expression, digital generation/social media, and pop culture, and how the themes appealed to the Millennial market. The author looked for these themes within each campaign by following these definitions:

- Sexuality: According to the World Health Organization, sexuality is defined as a combination of “thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles and relationships. . . sexuality can include all of these dimensions, [but] not all of them are always experienced or expressed” (“Defining sexual health,” n.d.).
-

- Self-Expression: According to the American Psychological Association, self-expression is associated with “positive concepts, such as freedom, creativity, style, courage, self-assurance, and even healing and spirituality” (Kim, 2010).
- Digital Generation/Social Media: According to a WIRED article, the digital generation is the younger end of the Millennials, “the first generation born into a world that has never not known digital life. . . technology has shaped not just how they navigate the world but how they see themselves” (Adler, 2013). According to Investopedia, social media is defined as “internet-based software and interfaces that allow individuals to interact with one another, exchanging details about their lives such as biographical data, professional information, personal photos, and up-to-the-minute thoughts” (“Social media,” n.d.).
- Pop Culture: According to ThoughtCo.com, popular culture is defined as “the accumulation of cultural products such as music, art, literature, fashion, dance, film, cyber culture, television, and radio that are consumed by the majority of a society’s population” (Crossman, 2017).

IV. Findings

This section is organized based on the analysis of the three campaigns in chronological order.

CK One: 20th Anniversary Campaign

Calvin Klein released a video campaign for the 20th anniversary of its fragrance, CK One, on YouTube on June 30, 2014, followed by a television advertisement. A print version of the campaign was also released, featuring a selfie collage of the influencers who starred in the campaign. The video did not include text, until the final shot, where the hashtag #ckmeforme and a Tumblr page for the campaign, ckmeforme.tumblr.com, is shown. The video features male and female social influencers and targets the young Millennial demographic, 18-25.

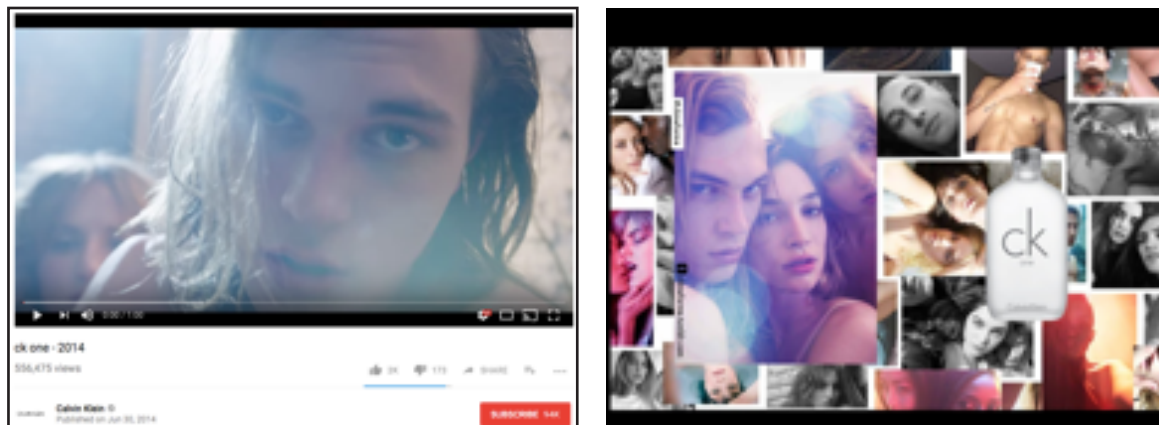


Figure 1. CK One video campaign (left) and CK One print campaign (right)

For consumer engagement, the campaign includes a hashtag, #CKmeforme, to encourage the audience to participate and engage with the influencers of the campaign. A Tumblr page was also created, where the influencers posted content, and the audience was able to like, comment, and repost the content. Through the Tumblr page, fans found the CK One Snapchat account, while others found it through the influencers' personal social channels. On Snapchat, content disappears within 24 hours, but users were able to view posts from the campaign on Snapchat during that time period. On Tumblr, users could like posts from the campaign's Tumblr page, as well as repost them onto their own Tumblr blogs. On Twitter, users could retweet or like tweets from the official Calvin Klein Twitter account, as well as other users' Twitter pages.

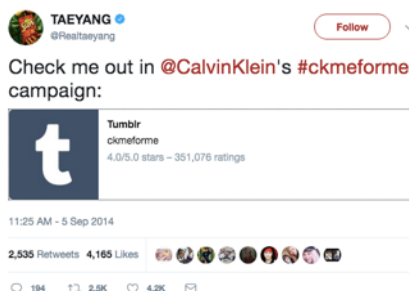




Figure 2. Korean pop star Taeyang invites his Twitter followers to check out the #ckmeforme Tumblr page

The video incorporated narratives of self-expression, sexuality, digital generation/social media, and pop culture. The entire video is shot from the perspective of a person taking a selfie video, which millennials will immediately recognize and can relate to, as nearly all of their social media content is posted from their smartphones. The campaign also sought to target Millennials by featuring young, up-and-coming musicians, including Korean popstar Taeyang, singer Dev Hynes, singer Samantha Urbani, sister musicians Say Lou Lou, and singer Kelela.

Calvin Klein used Tumblr as its main social media platform for this campaign. Most of the content on the Tumblr blog was from the campaign based on submissions by the influencers, some were reposted content from other Tumblr users, including selfies, GIFS, and short videos; and others were content that appeared to be users' selfies. When clicking on a specific post, the page gave the option to share the post on Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, or by email. Content from the Tumblr blog was posted from June 2014 to October 2014. The author analyzed month-by-month content, focusing on narratives, branded content versus UGC, and number of impressions. Below is an example of the Tumblr content analysis between June and August 2014:

Month	# of Posts	# of Branded versus UGC	Narratives	Post with Most Engagement
June 2014	17	All branded posts	Sexuality, Digital Generation	 <p>Branded content; 1,374 impressions</p>
August 2014	45	32 branded, 13 UGC	Sexuality, Digital Generation, Self-Expression	 <p>UGC; 489,092 impressions</p>

ck2 Campaign

Calvin Klein released a video campaign for its fragrance ck2 on YouTube in November 2015, followed by a print campaign with the same models shown in the video. No text is featured in the video campaign, until the last shot when the ck2 and Calvin Klein logos appear on screen, followed by the hashtag #the2ofus. The video features a variety of colors, including a bright scene of a couple outside looking at the ocean, and a deep reddish tinted scene of a couple outside with bonfires in the background.

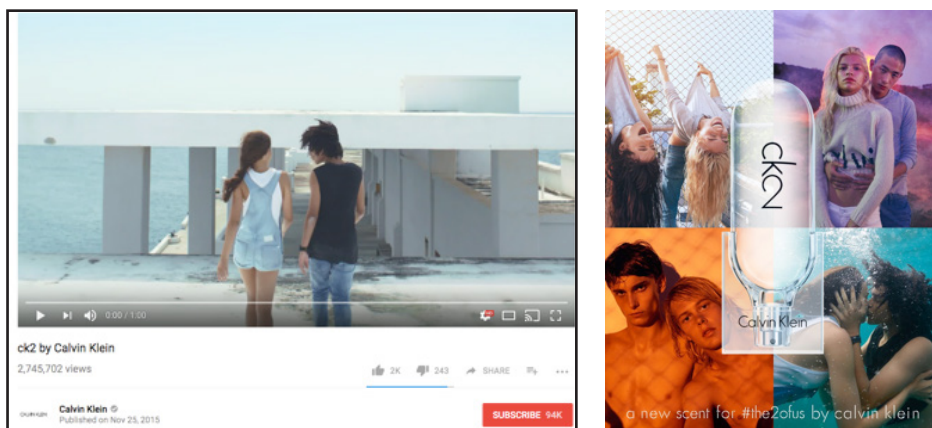


Figure 3. ck2 video campaign (left) and ck2 print campaign (right)

For consumer engagement, the hashtag #the2ofus appears at the end of the video campaign to encourage content sharing. There is no clear indication of a particular social media platform for audiences to interact with the hashtag.

Three months after the release of the video campaign and the hashtag #the2ofus, Calvin Klein released an Instagram post in February 2016, featuring stars of the ck2 campaign. It invited users to “share your together moment” at calvinklein.com/ck2 to further interact with the campaign. Users could like and comment on influencers’ sponsored content on Instagram and could post their own with the hashtag #the2ofus. Users could tweet with the hashtag, like, and retweet other users, as well as comment on the YouTube video campaign, like, and reply to other users’ comments.

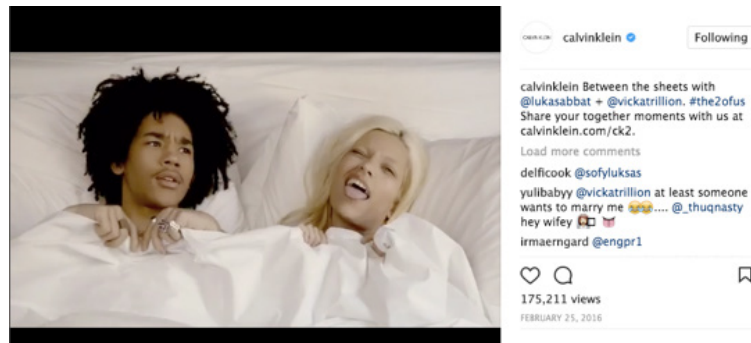


Figure 4. ck2 Instagram post. Caption: “Between the sheets with @lukasabbat + @vickatrillion. #the2ofus Share your together moments with us at calvinklein.com/ck2

The video incorporated narratives of self-expression and sexuality with young male and female models, targeting the Millennial age demographic. The fragrance specifically targets young people, as seen in the video campaign. The fragrance itself is not exclusive to a specific gender—it is being advertised as gender-fluid, from the simplicity of the bottle (clear and gender ambiguous) to the depiction of all genders in the video campaign. Young Millennials are more likely to identify as gender-fluid than other generations; according to GLAAD’s 2017 Accelerating Acceptance report, 12% of Millennials identify as transgender or gender non-conforming (“Accelerating Acceptance,” 2017).

Calvin Klein used YouTube as its main platform to disseminate the campaign. The video campaign released on November 25, 2015, had 2,754,802 views, 2,000 likes and 245 dislikes, and 475 comments by YouTube users, as of February 2, 2018. Among the 475 comments, only 10 were analyzed for this study. These 10 comments had 460 likes and 75 replies in total. They used keywords, such as “equality,” “edgy,” “beautiful,” “diversity,” and “promoting acceptance,” and key phrases, such as “not all of [Calvin Klein’s] customers will be in a heterosexual relationship,” “this is 2016, some people are gay,” “more likely to buy a product if the company features queer people,” and “people can like who they want and be who they want.”

#MyCalvins Campaign



Calvin Klein released its most recent campaign, #MyCalvins, on Youtube on January 6, 2015. The video starred singer Justin Bieber and model Lara Stone. Since its release, the video has garnered over 9.2 million views, 23,000 likes, and 4,000 dislikes. A print campaign with Bieber was released following the premiere of the video. The video is shot in black and white and has no text until the end shot, where #mycalvins appears onscreen, followed by the Calvin Klein Jeans logo and a link to calvinklein.com.



Figure 5. #MyCalvins video campaign (left) and #MyCalvins print campaign (right)

A hashtag, #MyCalvins, is incorporated into the campaign for audience engagement. The campaign video incorporated narratives of self-expression, sexuality, and pop culture and targeted young Millennials between the ages of 18-25, with singer Justin Bieber as the social influencer. In the video campaign description, it also encourages the audience to participate in the campaign by showing their own #MyCalvins look on social media. Following the release of the video campaign, Calvin Klein released a “micro-site” where the best user-generated content was recognized by the brand.

After the initial launch of the #MyCalvins campaign with Bieber, Calvin Klein continued to build on this campaign by partnering with models, musicians, and social influencers, using the phrase, “I ____ in #mycalvins.” The campaign has been seen on various social platforms, but the brand used Instagram as its main platform to broadcast the campaign. According to the Pew Research Center, 59 percent of adults between the ages of 18 and 29 use Instagram. This statistic is significant because young Millennials are on Instagram more so than any other social network (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Ten posts by various influencers were analyzed, focusing on the number of likes, comments, and narratives related to the campaign, and the phrase used for #MyCalvins. Below are two posts that were analyzed:

Influencer	Date Posted	# Of Likes	# Of Comments	Narratives	Phrase Used for #MyCalvins
 <p>Justin Bieber; posted on his personal account</p>	January 26, 2016	1,870,825	74,554	Self-Expression, Pop Culture	"I flaunt in #mycalvins"
 <p>Kendall Jenner; posted on her personal account</p>	January 27, 2016	1,089,963	107,784	Self-Expression, Sexuality	"I pose in #mycalvins"

V. Discussion

This study examined three distinct Calvin Klein digital marketing campaigns: CK One, ck2, and #MyCalvins. For each campaign, a hashtag was incorporated to encourage brand interaction on social media: #CKmeforme (CK One), #the2ofus (ck2), and #MyCalvins. The campaign with the most social media engagement was #MyCalvins, which is still an ongoing campaign today. According to Racked, Calvin Klein's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter followings have increased by 2.2 million, 1.8 million, and 1 million, respectively, since the release of the #MyCalvins campaign (Fumo, 2015). CK One's campaign also saw major social engagement. Within two months of the campaign's release, Calvin Klein generated more than one million views on Snapchat and 150,000 views on Tumblr (Mahoney, 2014).

The study found that each campaign targeted young Millennials through the narratives featured in each campaign video. All three campaigns featured narratives of self-expression and sexuality, while CK One also showcased narratives of digital generation/social media and pop culture, and #MyCalvins included the narrative of pop culture. CK One's video campaign mainly focused on the digital generation narrative, as the entire video is shot from the perspective of taking a selfie; this theme aligns with the target audience, dubbed as the "selfie generation" and who are considered "digital natives," the only generation that has yet to adapt to technology (Blow, 2014). CK2's video campaign focused on the self-expression narrative. According to Women's Wear Daily, the campaign depicted the "free spirited, raw narratives of today's youth," relating to the young Millennial demographic (Naughton, 2015). #MyCalvins focused on both pop culture and self-expression, as each social media post from the campaign included a celebrity with the phrase "I ___ in #MyCalvins." For example, model Kendall Jenner posted on Instagram in February 2016: "I am strong in #mycalvins." Model Bella Hadid posted on Instagram in July 2016, "I intimidate in #mycalvins."

VI. Conclusion

This study sought to examine three major Calvin Klein digital marketing campaigns and how they attracted a subset of the Millennial generation, those between the ages of 18 and 25. The study found that Calvin Klein adopted distinct social media platforms for each campaign to interact with users. Since the brand was targeting younger Millennials, it chose platforms with predominantly younger users who would be more likely to engage with each campaign. The three campaigns featured four underlying themes that attracted the young Millennial audience: self-expression, sexuality, digital generation/social media, and pop culture.

The study found that Calvin Klein has adjusted and tailored its social channels to target the Millennial market. After the release of the #MyCalvins campaign, which was still ongoing at the time of the study, the brand's online presence grew exponentially on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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Note: All images were taken from Youtube.com, Twitter.com, Tumblr.com, and the Instagram app.

Trends in Layout Design of Feature Articles in Outdoor Magazines

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements in
an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

The outdoor industry has been growing steadily over the past decade, with billions of dollars spent annually and millions of jobs created in the United States alone. Magazines are an ideal form of media to reach this huge market. This study examined the trends in the layout design of feature articles in the top two outdoor magazines. Through a content analysis of the grid system and five categories of layout design, the study compares the publications and analyzes the apparent trends. This analysis found trends in three of the five categories. The author concluded that there are some prevailing trends in the feature articles examined, but further research should continue to explore magazine layout and design.

I. Introduction

This study examined trends in the layout and design of feature articles in outdoor magazines. The outdoor industry has been growing steadily over the past decade, with billions of dollars spent annually and millions of jobs created just in the United States (“Outdoor Recreation,” 2017). Magazines are an ideal form of media to reach this huge market. Outdoor adventure magazines combine storytelling along with gear reviews, profiles of athletes and adventurers in the field, and advertisements for outdoor brands. *Backpacker* and *Outside* cater to the outdoor adventurer. These magazines have large audiences of 1 to 2.5 million total readership, reaching a broad range of consumers via their social platforms (*Outside*, 2017; *Backpacker* Media Kit, 2017). These two magazines are of interest due to their reflection of this growing industry.

The layout of a magazine is of utmost importance to conveying the right message to the reader. This is true of all publications, but due to the way in which readers flip through magazines and their highly visual focus, page design is even more important than a book’s layout. Art directors and graphic designers use systems such as the grid to place items upon a page to create an appealing composition with the text and imagery. This study examined if there are any specific design trends in the feature articles of the two magazines.

II. Literature Review

This literature review will explain the history, purpose, and use of the grid system. This system was used as the basis for the research in this study; therefore, it is important to understand its origins and uses

History of the Grid System

The grid system has been in place for many years, although it has not always been used so overtly or called by that name. Design of printed publications began in the early stages of book creation when manuscripts were hand lettered by scribes. A huge shift in mindset and abilities arrived with the invention of movable type. From the invention of the printing press to the Industrial Revolution, books were the main printed publication and almost all used what we would call a “manuscript” layout today. This was a singular column of text that was positioned on the page according to geometrical principles that determined symmetrical margins, gutters and header spacing (Samara, 2002). Various forms of design created artistic movements, which built upon each other to create the graphic design and typographic principles we have today.

The Arts and Crafts movement, led by William Morris, was key to linking form and function within the design of pages (Samara, 2002). Many twentieth-century artistic movements influenced the creation of the grid as we know it today in an unconventional way. These artistic movements broke many of the previous traditions regarding text and experimented with abstract composition and typographic interpretations (Roberts, 2008). These untraditional and chaotic artistic movements paved the way for new movements that created structure and set the basis for the grid system we know today. Major design and art schools in Europe, such as the Bauhaus and the De Stijl movement, called for minimalism and relied heavily on geometry. Jan Tschichold brought these art concepts to mainstream printers. He advocated for the Bauhaus idea of structure and began using similar vertical and horizontal alignments to structure his designs. Tschichold shared these ideas in his popular typography books. Along with various other German designers, Tschichold was exiled to Switzerland during World War II (Samara, 2002). Swiss designers had a large impact on typography and the installation of the grid system in graphic design (Roberts, 2008). A Swiss student of design, Karl Gerstner, took the grid design further than before to create an almost mathematically perfect grid for his journal, *Capital* (Ambrose & Harris, 2015). The grid uses small enough measurements that can build greater modules while still maintaining equal spacing (Ambrose & Harris, 2008). Since the 1960s, the grid has been a staple in creating cohesive corporate communication design (Samara, 2002).

Explaining the Grid System

The grid system that we know today can be adapted for many uses of layout design. The grid is a tool to support designers in their decision making for creating interesting and visually appealing designs (Ambrose & Harris, 2015). Grids function as a behind-the-scenes structure for designers to achieve consistency, balance, and coherency throughout publications. Various elements in the grid system are important to understand how it is used.

The gridlines can be used to create a variety of standard layouts that designers can manipulate to fit their needs. Grids are created based on the absolute and relative measurements of the page to be designed. Absolute measurements are typically in inches or points and are of fixed values (Ambrose & Harris 2008). Relative measurements are created relative to each individual grid layout. Grids for every layout should be created with the knowledge of what elements (images, text, headlines, etc.) will be included and what the format of the publication should be (paper size, binding, etc.).

The grid system is incredibly useful for creating cohesive designs, especially when working with multiple spreads. There are many components of design and the grid system that must be understood before an analysis of designs can be done. For a basic understanding of terms, refer to Appendix A and B.

Magazine Use of the Grid

The main types of grids in magazine layouts are the column grid, the module grid, and a compound grid, which combines the former two types (Ambrose & Harris, 2008). These types of layouts give optimal allowance for manipulating text and graphic elements. The column grid can be adapted to various amounts of copy in order to display a certain context. In magazines, the standard layout is often a three-column design.

For more in-depth features, two columns can be used to display both images and text easily, or longer amounts of copy (Samara, 2017).

When setting columns on the page it is important to consider the margins and gutters. Beyond the column, some grids utilize the horizontal guidelines, called flowlines, which can break up the page across the column grid to create a module grid.

A module is a unit of space formed by both horizontal and vertical gridlines that are used to house text, image or graphics. A module grid is the structure of gridlines upon which these modules exist. Individual modules can also be combined to create larger blocks and a sense of movement within the page. The mixture of both modules and columns in a grid creates a compound grid (Ambrose & Harris, 2000). This is arguably the most versatile grid type, as it allows for less strict guidelines. The compound grid is a grid that mixes modules and columns, or two grid structures at once (Samara, 2017). The compound grid gives designers the most amount of flexibility of all the grid types.

The symmetry of the margins can create a uniform feel to a spread, where an asymmetrical spread could indicate movement and subtly encourage the reader to turn the page. A symmetrical grid is one in which the margins within the spread mirror each other. An asymmetrical grid is one in which the left and right page of a spread have the exact same margins, usually offset to the left or right (Ambrose & Harris, 2008). When working with a symmetrical column grid it is easy to create simplistic and boring compositions. However, these can be enhanced through the placement of other elements on the page such as images, enlarged text boxes, or graphics.

Image placement can have a great impact on the visual aesthetic of a layout. When using large format pictures that take up the whole page, there are two different types of placement. The first would be full bleed, which is an image that takes up the entire page, including the margins (Ambrose & Harris, 2008). An image that was “*passepout*” would have borders or white space surrounding the outer edge of a page or image (Ambrose & Harris, 2015). The major difference between these two compositions is the image’s relationship to the edge of the page, which is known as the perimeter. If a layout has an active perimeter, some of the design elements – usually images – occupy the page edge. If the layout has a passive perimeter, the design elements have a distance from the page edge (Ambrose & Harris, 2008).

Besides images, the most important component of a layout is the utilized text. For a magazine article, there are multiple types of text to consider. All articles will have body copy, a headline, and a byline. Many will have a subheading as well and captions for any images. A hierarchy is a logical and visual way to express the relative importance of different elements by way of scale or placement. When designing for a magazine article, it is important to consider the hierarchy of text, especially on the first page or spread which serves as the title page for the article. Text can be presented in many ways; at an angle, vertically, horizontally or broadside. Broadside text is created by rotating text 90 degrees to the spine so that it reads vertically. The composition of a layout can be dramatically altered by text placement, so these elements of design are important to consider. Lastly, when working with text, alignment is important. Within the columns or text boxes of an article, text can be aligned vertically and horizontally. Horizontal alignment is the lining up of text in a field on the horizontal page, it can be aligned center, range right, range left or justified. Vertical alignment is where text is placed within the vertical plane of a field, which can be at the top, bottom, center, or justified (Ambrose & Harris, 2008).

Lastly, there are a few items in the margins and gutters of every magazine spread. The folios are the page numbers. Their placement can draw the reader’s eye across the page and have a dramatic impact on the overall design for such a small item (Ambrose & Harris, 2008). Running headers are text at the top of the page that stays consistent throughout the layout but can be aligned symmetrically or asymmetrically, similar to folios (Ambrose & Harris, 2015). These small elements may seem insignificant, but they should not be overlooked since they can greatly influence how the reader views a layout at first glance.

In this paper, these main design elements were examined within the context of feature articles in an outdoor magazine. The five categories of types of grids, symmetry, image placement, text placement and miscellaneous were explored.

III. Methods

Content analysis was chosen as the best method of research. To determine the top two magazines for the outdoor industry, the author examined social media following, and magazine rate base, and the average circulation level of the magazine ("Rate Base," 2017). The top two magazines chosen were *Backpacker* and *Outside*. Each magazine published a minimum of nine issues per year. The author chose an issue from each of the four seasons for each magazine in 2017. This resulted in four issues per magazine with a range of topics for each season. Once the magazines were selected, the author chose to examine the first feature article in each. Feature articles were defined as articles that focus on an event or individual with a humanistic perspective. They did not include any product features, nor any article that displays only lists.

The author raised the research question: *How do the two magazines selected utilize the following five design categories in the composition and layout design of their feature articles?*

The articles were analyzed for each of these five major categories. The author counted the appearances of each design principle or grid element. These counts were compared to the total number of pages to calculate its relative occurrence.

The author analyzed the following five design categories that were embodied by the two magazines:

- The Type of Grid: Of the three types of grids, column, module or compound, which was used the most?
- Symmetry: Did the composition, specifically the margins and columns of each spread, mirror each other to create symmetry?
- Image Placement: Were the images placed on the page with an active perimeter, passive perimeter, or passepartout? How many full bleed images were used?
- Typography: Was there consistency between the types of fonts used in each article? Was a hierarchy of text present in the titles? Were there any appearances of broadside text?
- Miscellaneous: What was the placement of folios and running headers?

IV. Findings & Analysis

For this section, the author will describe the findings within each of the five design categories: Type of Grid, Symmetry, Image Placement, Typography and Miscellaneous.

Type of Grid

Of the three main types of grid, the most used was the column grid. Sixty-five percent of the pages of *Backpacker* were columns, while 50% of the pages of *Outside* were, as shown in Table 1. This was mostly likely due to a large amount of copy used in feature articles. The second most popular grid was the compound grid. The use of the compound grid would allow the most flexibility when working with both text and images. Least popular in both magazines was the module grid. Each magazine had a number of pages that did not fit into the three main grid types due to their use of full bleed images. These pages were not included in this analysis.

Table 1. Type of Grid

	Backpacker		Outside	
Type of Grid	Pages	%	Pages	%
Column	13	65%	11	50%
Compound	6	30%	10	45%
Module	1	5%	1	5%
Total pages	20	100%	22	100%

Notes: The total pages refer to the total number of pages that utilized the grid system.

Symmetry

Symmetry was based on each full two-page spread; however, many of the articles only utilized one page of a spread.

Half of the *Outside* articles had some pages facing advertisements, which excluded an opportunity to judge the symmetry of the entire article. *Outside* only incorporated two symmetrical layouts in total.

Backpacker had one article facing advertisements, but there was one spread that showed symmetry in that article. It incorporated three symmetrical layouts and only one asymmetrical in all the articles. Even in the asymmetrical one, the images did not always fall along the exact margin lines, although the text was symmetrical. Symmetrical text and columns may lend themselves better to the legibility of the article for the reader, which may be why it is used most often. A difficulty in the coding of this category arose due to the difference between the symmetry of the columns of body copy and the image placement, which was not always consistent.

Image Placement

Outside had twice as many full bleed images (24%) as *Backpacker*; however, *Backpacker* had twice as many pages with an active perimeter, as shown in Table 2. *Outside* had only 50% more pages with passive perimeters than *Backpacker*. *Backpacker* had two pages with passepartout, while *Outside* had none.

Every title spread had one page of full bleed images, or some had one image spread across two pages. This was consistent across both magazines, but *Outside* used full spreads for three of the four articles examined, while *Backpacker* only used two. *Backpacker* was the only magazine to use passepartout for full images on a title spread; however, *Outside* had more pages with passive perimeters. Both magazines tended to use active perimeters liberally, but *Backpacker* had twice as many pages as *Outside*. This could be due to the greater number of images in the articles in total.

Table 2. Image Placement per Page

	Backpacker		Outside	
Image Placement	Number of pages	%	Number of pages	%
Full Bleed	5	24%	10	48%
Active Perimeter	10	48%	5	24%
Passive Perimeter	4	19%	6	29%
Passepartout	2	10%	0	0%
Total pages:	21		21	

Notes: *Backpacker* had a total of 41 images; *Outside* had a total of 38 images.

Typography

The font of the body copy was consistent across articles of each magazine. Both used serif fonts for the body copy, and sans serif fonts for the captions, but varied the typeface of the title, headings, subheadings, and pullout text boxes, as shown in Table 3. All of the title pages used a hierarchy of size to delineate the importance of the title, subtitles, and bylines/photography credit. Many of the articles included pop-out text boxes that used a similar text to the headings, but sometimes was a larger version of the body copy in a different color. Only one article used broadside text. The use of serif font for body copy was most likely done to increase legibility for large amounts of text on a printed page. The captions lend themselves to a more subtle feel with the sans serif text. *Outside* tended to use more traditional serifs and simple sans serifs when creating titles and headers. *Backpacker* used a specialty font and slab serifs for two articles. *Backpacker's* font pairings tend to work with the visual guidelines they incorporate into the article.

Table 3. Typography

	<i>Outside</i>				<i>Backpacker</i>			
Category	Jan/Feb	Apr	Jun	Oct	Jan	Mar	Jun	Oct
Title	ss	s	s	ss	s	sls	sls	s*
Subtitle	ss	sls	ss	ss	ss	sls	sls	ss
Byline	ss	s	s	s	ss	sls	s	ss
Subheadings	ss	s	s	ss	ss	ss	sls	s*
Captions	ss	ss	ss	ss	ss	ss	ss	ss
Copy	s(ss)	s	s	s	s	s	s	s
Text Boxes	s	sls	s	ss	ss	sls	sls	s*

Notes: s indicates serif; ss, sans serif; and sls, slab serif. * indicates specialty fonts.

Miscellaneous

Both magazines had standard folios with dynamic positioning. *Outside* had the magazine name on the left footer and the issue date on the right footer. *Backpacker* had the issue month on the left footer and the website on the right footer. The image credits for *Outside* were left aligned in the footer with one broadside in the gutter. Both publications used the footer to keep their brand consistently in the view of the reader. The use of the gutter as a place for broadside image credit was consistent in both magazines and lends itself to a discreet line of text. *Backpacker* had running headers for three of the articles, with varying shapes of text. *Backpacker* articles also had a dividing line of different styles to separate the columns or images. Many of the image credits for *Backpacker* were broadside in the gutter.

VI. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine trends in the layout and design of feature articles in outdoor magazines. The grid system was used as a basis for examination. The study found many similarities between the two magazines, *Backpacker* and *Outside*, in the type of grid, symmetry, and miscellaneous categories. Some larger differences were seen in image placement and typography.

Further research of magazine layout could look into the progression of layout design over time, or between different genres. There is not much material on magazine design trends and “best practices,” which could be an area for further research as well. This study only looked at the layout of feature articles, which tend to be text heavy. It would be interesting to research the design of various other sections in outdoor magazines such as gear reviews, survival guides, or lists.

This study is important to the field of design because there has not been much literature on magazine design, especially within the outdoor industry.

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Articles analyzed

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- Donahue, B. (2017, October). Trail daze. Backpacker, 62-69.
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- Pearson, S. (2017, June). Superiority complex. Outside, 64-72.
- Quamman, D. (2017, October). Whose woods these are. Outside, 14-26.

Appendix A

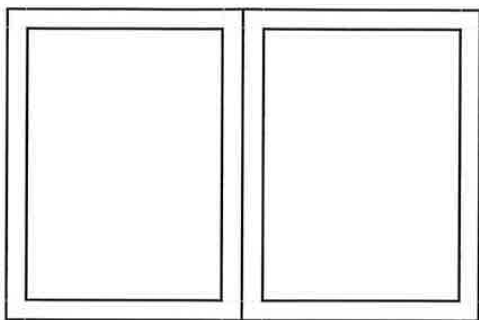
			Columns Vertical alignments into which text is flowed.			Margins The spaces surrounding a text block at the sides, top and bottom of a page.
Module Individual units of space within the grid used to house text, image or graphics						
						Flowlines Guides that break the space horizontally.
	Broadside Layout or text which is rotated 90 degrees to the spine so that it reads vertically.					Perimeter The outer edge of a page or spread. Active Page elements occupy the page edge.
Baseline Grid <u>Invisible foundation upon which text is placed to create standard alignment throughout a document.</u>						Passive Page elements are placed with a distance from the page edge.

Gutter
Space between the two folds of a spread.

Alley
Area between two columns.

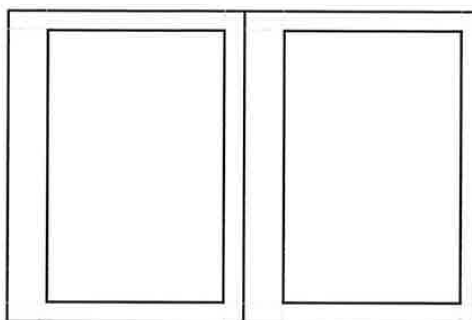
Folio
Page number.

Appendix B



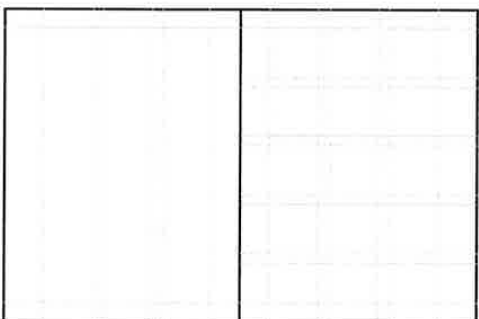
Symmetrical

Grid where the recto and verso pages mirror each other.



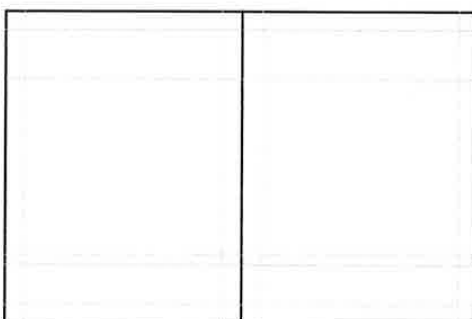
Asymmetrical

Grid where both pages use the same layout, usually with a bias to the left or right.



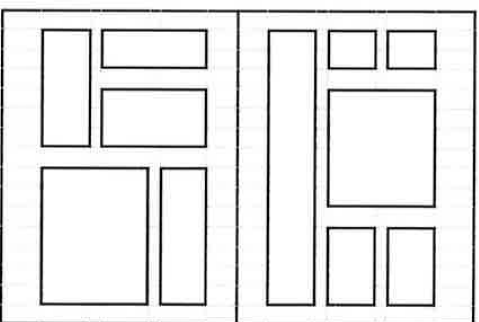
Column Grid

Module Grid



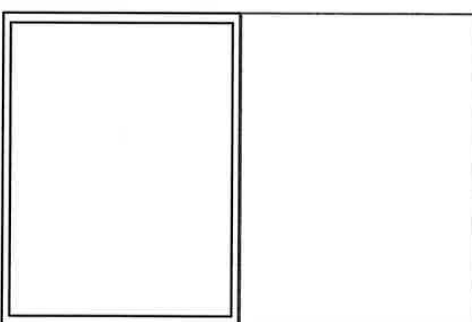
Hierarchical Grids

Grids composed of horizontal columns.



Compound Grid

A grid that mixes modules and columns, or two grid structures at once.



Passepartout

Borders or white space surrounding the outside edge of a page or design element.

Full Bleed Image

An image that takes up the entire page- has an active perimeter.

A Comparison of Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes Online Communities

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements in
an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

As more individuals are diagnosed with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, efforts to manage the disease have shifted toward online support communities. This paper compared how Type 1 and Type 2 diabetics used Twitter for peer support and disease self-management purposes. Tweets were categorized using quantitative content analysis in an effort to compare emotional and informational support conversations. This analysis revealed that Type 1 diabetics more likely prioritize emotional support activities than Type 2, especially in the area of discussions of giving and personal experience. Type 2 diabetics, however, prioritize informational support activities, such as diet/exercise, research, and lifestyle management. Recognizing these differences would allow for improved individualized treatment for the diabetes epidemic.

I. Introduction

An increase in diabetes diagnoses around the world has triggered concern for the widespread epidemic in recent years. The World Health Organization predicts that the number of diabetes patients will more than double from 171 million in 2000 to 366 million in 2030. As more and more children and adults are diagnosed with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, efforts to manage the disease have broadened. The risks of diabetes can be severe and even life-threatening if not properly treated. However, due to the uptick in diabetes patients, healthcare resources are strained when it comes to counseling and individualized treatment options (Brownson & Heisler, 2009).

As social media becomes more popular, chronic disease patients turn to social networking platforms for healthcare advice and support (Hilliard, Sparling, Hitchcock, & Hood, 2015). A recent study by the Pew Research Center found that 34% of caregivers and 20% of patients engage in online healthcare discussion. Even further, 11% of caregivers and 6% of patients actively post experiences or ask questions on social networking sites (SNS) (Sarker et al., 2015). These networks, called diabetes online communities (DOCs), allow patients and caregivers the opportunity to learn more about their disease at no cost, without ever leaving their homes (Hilliard et al., 2015). This is especially important for diabetics in rural areas or patients/caregivers that lack access to healthcare.

The role of emotional and informational support is vital to the chronic treatment of any disease. While emotional support provides patients and caregivers with encouragement and mental guidance, informational

Keywords: Twitter, Peer Support, Self-Management, Diabetes Online Community
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support supplies the health literacy necessary for proper lifestyle maintenance. The vast network of support on social media allows diabetes patients and caregivers the opportunity to take control of their treatment strategies in an individualized way.

Understanding the motivations and usage patterns within DOCs provides greater insight into the treatment plans needed to manage diabetes. Of course, disease management differs between Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. The differences between these communities help people better understand the needs of individual patients. Studying the difference between DOCs for Type 1 and Type 2 can also provide healthcare professional guidance when they advise patients/caregivers.

II. Literature Review

The following is a review articles on diabetes self-management, peer support, and online support.

Diabetes Self-Management & Online Informational Support

As resources for diabetics decrease, the importance of health literacy and information grows. As a result of the lack of resources, 20% of diabetics in the United States have poor glycemic control, one-third have poor blood pressure control, and 40% have poor cholesterol control (Brownson & Heisler, 2009). The need for attainable and free healthcare information for diabetes self-management is clear. Defined by the Institute of Medicine, self-management is “the systematic provision of education and supportive interventions to increase patients’ skills and confidence in managing their health problems” (p. 7). The self-management theory suggests that knowledge about diabetes is the basis for successful treatment and provides health literacy in areas, such as insulin monitoring skills, understanding the role of carbohydrates in blood glucose control, and the consequences of diabetes (Ho, O’Connor, & Mulvaney, 2014).

The foundation of diabetes self-management is informational support. Rather than relying on social networks for emotional guidance, diabetes self-management allows users to view peers’ experiences, treatment options, and outcomes through information sharing. DOCs thus provide an environment for group education where like-minded individuals can discuss self-management behaviors (Willis, 2014).

Diabetes Peer Support

In addition to self-management, peer support is popular among diabetics of both types. As support resources provided by healthcare professionals are sometimes inadequate regarding patient self-care, patients may turn to each other for support (Brownson & Heisler, 2009). Peer support is defined as “the provision of emotional, appraisal, and informational assistance by a created social network member who possesses experiential knowledge of a specific behavior or stressor and similar characteristics as the target population” (p. 8). Unlike self-management, peer support relies on emotional guidance as part of proper treatment. Discussing chronic conditions with peers can help patients/caregivers moderate the fear of their disease while finding a sense of belonging to a group (Brownson & Heisler, 2009). In addition to emotional guidance, peer support can provide informational learning in a group setting. Through the peer learning model, patients have experienced increased “medication adherence, self-reported health status, and better chronic disease self-management” (Brownson & Heisler, 2009, p. 9).

Peer support is an effective means of emotional guidance as it narrows the social distance between the experienced diabetic and the novice diabetic. Patients/caregivers are shown to learn better when taught by trained peers with shared experiences (Brownson & Heisler, 2009). Additionally, research has found that social networking has a conclusive effect on the ability to learn and manage chronic disease (Malhotra, Stockdale, & Wellington, 2008). Social media provides users with a 24/7 connection to peer support, as diabetes online communities continue to grow.

Diabetes Online Communities

The use of social media for diabetes networking and information sharing has evolved from static web browsing to dynamic social discussion. First mentioned in the late 1990s in online chat rooms and discussion boards, the phrase “diabetes online community” was used to indicate online forums and content for diabetics

and their families. In the 2000s, DOCs migrated to social media networks. As of September 2014, more than 1,000 active Facebook groups were dedicated to diabetes communication. In addition to social peer support networks, DOCs on Twitter host live weekly forums where users can discuss experiences in real time (Hilliard et al. 2015).

The existence of DOCs provides researchers the unique opportunity to collect and analyze public social media posts tied to diabetes. The inherent differences between the Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes communities provide an interesting subject of study. Understanding how differently the two DOCs use emotional tone and informational content can provide further insight into the needs of each community. When these needs are identified, healthcare providers can suggest specialized peer support/self-management strategies according to diabetes type.

Understanding the physical differences between Type 1 and Type 2 diabetics is necessary to study the needs of each online community. Type 1 diabetics experience a lack of insulin contributing to hyperglycemia, where onset is most common during youth (Scobie & Samaras, 2009). Type 2 diabetics experience insulin resistance where onset is accelerated by factors, such as obesity and sedentary lifestyle (Scobie & Samaras, 2009). These differences can affect the motivations and behaviors of online use.

Literature suggests that while peer support is critical for both diabetic types, Type 2 diabetics may respond more to self-management tactics, such as weight and lifestyle management. Because nearly 80% of people with Type 2 diabetes are overweight or obese, bodily self-management is vital to the survival of Type 2 diabetics (Mertig, 2012). Alternatively, Type 1 diabetics at a young age require the advice and guidance of their peers regarding insulin products, insulin monitoring, and lifelong treatment. This is especially true due to the onset of Type 1 diabetes during youth (Scobie & Samaras, 2009). Youth Type 1 patients/caregivers will have different diabetes management needs than an adult experiencing Type 2 diabetes due to environmental factors. Ho, O'Connor, and Mulvaney (2014) found that for Type 1 diabetes youth, the most notable features used in DOCs were social learning and networking, which can be tied to peer support. Thus, it is clear that the motivations and behaviors of Type 1 and Type 2 diabetics vary online. Given these differences, it is important to study the emotional and informational content used by diabetics online. The content and emotional themes between the DOCs provide clues into their distinct treatment strategies.

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

RQ1. How do diabetes patients/caregivers engage in online communities for the purpose of self-management and peer support?

RQ2. How do Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes online communities differ from each other with regard to the emotional and informational content used in the online discussion?

III. Methods

This research used quantitative content analysis to examine the discussion of diabetes in online communities. In an effort to compare the discussion between Type 1 diabetes and Type 2 diabetes online communities, the author collected social media posts via Twitter with the TwitterR package, one of the packages for the programming language R.

Sampling of Tweets

Nine hashtags that were chosen based on their popularity of use in DOCs were used to download tweets to a CSV file. The three hashtags of #diabetes, #diabeticlife, and #doc yielded general information about diabetes patients and caregivers. The six hashtags of #t1d, #t2d, #type1, #type2, #type1diabetes, and #type2diabetes generated specific information about patient and caregivers for a particular type of diabetes.

Tweets were collected during a seven-week time period beginning August 17, 2017, and ending September 27, 2017. Tweets were collected once a week, alternating weekdays (collection for the first week occurred on a Monday, collection for the second week occurred on a Tuesday, so on and so forth). A seven-week time period was chosen in an effort to develop a constructed week.

Once collected, tweets were separated into two different CSV files by diabetes type. Tweets concerning diabetes in general or discussion of both types were discarded. Only original tweets were kept for analyses after deleting retweets. Of the resulting 13,376 tweets, 11,213 discussed Type 1 diabetes, and 2,163 discussed Type 2 diabetes. For each DOC, 2,000 tweets were randomly chosen for analysis, which generated a total of 4,000 tweets.

Coding Scheme

The author developed categories to compare the content of tweets between the DOCs. A researcher first reviewed all the tweets to determine any emerging themes for both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. The author coded a sample containing 10% of all tweets with another coder to establish inter-coder reliability for all categories. The rest of the coding was finished after establishing the inter-coder reliability of .8 or higher. The following are the specific coding categories and subcategories (refer to *Figure 1*.)



Figure 1. Different kinds of tweets for diabetes patients and caregivers

Emotional vs. Informational Tweets: A tweet with an emotional focus can be defined as one giving or receiving support while expressing joy, sorrow, hate, encouragement, and other feelings or stating a personal experience using an emotional tone. If coded as emotional, a tweet was marked with a 1. Otherwise, it receives a 0.

A tweet with an informational focus is defined as giving or receiving support through educational information or providing/seeking informational resources regarding self-management of diabetes. If coded as informational, a tweet receives a 1. Otherwise, it receives a 0. It should be noted that the emotion and information categories are not mutually exclusive. Instances of emotionally charged tweets with informational suggestions were coded as both emotional and informational, with a 1 given to both categories.

Emotional Tweets: Tweets in these further subcategories were mutually exclusive. Once a tweet was found to be outreach, encouragement, or advice, it was coded as 1 while the others were coded as a 0.

- *Giving* is defined as providing other users with emotional support, such as imparting wisdom or comfort to users in the form of spiritual, psychological, familial, or mental aid.
- *Taking* is defined as asking other users for emotional support. Seeking the wisdom or comfort of other users in the form of spiritual, psychological, familial, or mental aid.
- *Personal experience* is defined as a statement of an event with emotional themes.

Tweets in these three subcategories above were mutually exclusive. Once a tweet was found to focus on giving, or taking, or personal experience, it was coded as 1 and while the others were coded as 0.

- *Outreach* is defined as providing other users with emotional support by discussing community initiatives, support resources, or physical/virtual support.
- *Encouragement* is defined as providing other users with uplifting emotional support, including comfort and optimism to discouraged users.
- *Advice* is defined as providing other users with emotional support via personal recommendations and guidance.

Informational Tweets: A tweet receives a 1 for each of the five subcategories when mentioning the relevant information. Otherwise, it receives a 0 for any of the subcategories.

- **Diet/exercise** is defined as one regarding the diet and exercise of a diabetes patient or caregiver. Recipes, weight loss, fitness programs, food products, etc.
- *Lifestyle* is defined as one regarding the habits and behavior of a diabetes patient or caregiver.
- *Research* is defined as one regarding current research in the diabetes healthcare field.
- *Products* are defined as one regarding diabetes management products such as insulin pumps, monitors, and meters.
- *Medicine* is defined as one regarding diabetes management via pharmaceutical means such as insulin. Tweets in these subcategories were not mutually exclusive as informational content was prone to overlap.

IV. Results

RQ1 asked how diabetes patients/caregivers engage in online communities for the purpose of self-management or peer support. Reviewing the content of the chosen tweets helps us better understand how DOC users engage in self-management and peer support activities online. The emotional status and content of the tweets provide us with more information about diabetes patients and caregivers. Analysis of the frequencies of informational and emotional contents in Type 1 and Type 2 communities helps answer RQ2.

Once the 4,000 tweets were coded using the above coding schemes, statistical analysis was conducted. Using the programming language R, Chi-square tests were run on data in Table 1 to test whether the two variables of diabetes types and content types are totally independent of each other. The Chi-square value with the degree of freedom, 1, was $X^2(1) = 715.67$, and its corresponding p-value was less than .01. This means that the Type 1 community and Type 2 community are more likely to issue informational messages than emotional messages, but its tendency is more so with Type 2 than Type 1.

Table 1. Contingency Table of Coding Categories

Category	Type 1	Type 2
Emotional	956 (46.1%)	181 (8.8%)
Informational	1,117 (53.9%)	1,869 (91.2%)

Notes. The number of tweets in total is more than 4,000 because some tweets were coded both as being emotional and informational.

Giving, Taking, Personal Experience Tweets under the Emotional category

The child categories of *giving*, *taking*, and *personal experience* help us understand the type of emotional content being used by DOC patients and caregivers. We can see if users are more likely to impart wisdom, ask for help, or discuss their own experiences via Twitter.

As shown in Table 2, personal experience accounted for the largest portion (23.6%), followed by giving and talking. Its order for Type 2 was different, with giving at the top, followed by personal experience and talking.

The child category of giving further highlights peer support activities of DOCs on Twitter. The emotional conversations of *giving* can be separated into the content of *outreach*, *encouragement*, and *advice*. Overall, content of outreach was used most commonly in both communities as shown in Table 2, 17.3% and 6.7% for Type 1 and Type 2, respectively.

Table 2. Differences between Type 1 and Type 2 in Their Use of Tweets

Community Types	Community Types		Percent Type 2 Diabetes	
Tweet Types	No. of Tweets	Percentage	No. of Tweets	Percentage
Emotional	956	46.1%	181	8.8%
Giving	450	21.7%	139	6.8%
Outreach	358	17.3%	137	6.7%
<i>Encouragement</i>	60	2.9%	2	0.1%
<i>Advice</i>	34	1.6%	0	0.0%
<i>Taking</i>	29	1.4%	2	0.1%
Personal Experience	471	22.7%	41	2.0%
Informational	1,117	53.9%	1,869	91.2%
Diet / Exercise	146	7.0%	458	22.3%
Lifestyle	408	19.7%	810	39.5%
Research	292	14.1%	542	26.4%
Product	172	8.3%	12	0.6%
Medicine	92	4.4%	48	2.3%
Total	2,073	100.0%	2,050	100%

Diet/Exercise, Lifestyle, Research, Product, Medicine Tweets under the Informational category

While it is clear that the Type 2 DOC is more likely to engage in self-management behaviors through informational content on Twitter, it is important to understand what kinds of content is popular among patients and caregivers.

The most common categories of content for both communities were *lifestyle* and *research* as shown in Table 2. The third most popular content was *product* for Type 1, while it was Diet/Exercise for Type 2.

V. Discussion

It is clear that the two DOCs use Twitter uniquely and for different purposes. Understanding these differences provides us with better insight into the content that is most important for each community. Observing social media post content allows us to see the frequent behavior patterns relating to diabetes

patients' self-management and peer support. As diabetes diagnoses are on the rise, it is important to provide patients/caregivers with targeted management plans. This research offers the evidence of the differences between DOCs, and allows medical practitioners to give targeted advice based on those differences.

Emotional and Informational Tweets

The Type 1 DOC prioritizes emotional content about four times more than the Type 2 community. As supported by the Twitter text, pursuits of peer support are used more frequently in the Type 1 DOC. Generally, instances of peer support require emotional discussion as they are heavy in guidance and advice (Brownson & Heisler, 2009). However, the Type 2 community engages far less in emotional peer support efforts. Their discussion is focused on diabetes prevention, healthcare management, and diabetes awareness.

Informational tweets can be tied to diabetes self-management as their content aligns to the monitoring, control, and research of diabetes for patients and caregivers (Brownson & Heisler, 2009). The majority of tweets from the Type 2 community (91.2%) highlight the importance of managing diabetes as well as steps to prevent the condition. Discussion of recent news and research is also frequent in the Type 2 community.

The parent categories *emotional* and *informational* provide us with a general understanding of DOC usage motivation. While Type 1 patients/caregivers are motivated by peer support online, Type 2 patients/caregivers are motivated by disease management.

Emotional (Giving, Taking, Personal Experience) Tweets

We see the Type 1 community engages in the emotional discussion of *giving*, *taking*, and *personal experience* most often. While Type 1 users frequently provide/give peer support outreach, encouragement, or advice, they are not as likely to ask for guidance or take. While users do not explicitly seek support or guidance through the use of questions, the @reply conversations on Twitter, as well as the "like" and "retweet" features allow for confirmation of post quality. When users are satisfied with the content of a post or when their question is answered, they have the option to amplify a post's popularity rather than asking their own question. These features allow emotional content to be spread more widely instead of repeating questions.

Similarly, Type 1 users are likely to post about personal experiences. This may be due to the general purpose of social media, i.e., updating friends and family through personal posts. In many ways, providing personal experiences is a type of peer support as it encourages empathetic listening (Gilbert, Dodson, & McKenzie, 2012). On Twitter, patients and caregivers can listen to the experiences of like-minded individuals, helping them "cope with social or emotional barriers" to "stay motivated to reach their goals" (Gilbert et al., 2012, p. 180).

Type 1 users are likely to engage in giving and personal experience discussion, which Type 2 users seldom participate. The Type 2 community does not engage in emotional conversation frequently; instead, chose to discuss informational topics. As stated, these topics are tied to self-management activities and diabetes lifestyle discourse.

Giving (Outreach, Encouragement, Advice) Tweets

The emotional discussion of giving is again used more frequently by the Type 1 diabetes community. The actions of *outreach*, *encouragement*, and *advice* are directly linked to peer support as they provide other users with comfort and guidance. Outwardly assisting community members is a strong feature of the Type 1 community. Patients and caregivers feel they have emotional guidance to offer, so they disclose personal psychological information. In addition, instances of awareness outreach are common in the Type 1 community. Users are more likely to invite patients/caregivers to physical peer support groups, awareness campaigns, and diabetes events, furthering the peer support profile.

While the Type 1 community is steeped in emotional giving, the Type 2 community engages less frequently in giving activities. The Type 2 community almost never provides *advice* or *encouragement*, but may sometimes engage in diabetes outreach. Using the Twitter text as support, the most frequent examples of Type 2 outreach are invitations to physical peer support groups. Type 2 individuals would sometimes provide a date, time, and location for upcoming peer support circles. This demonstrates that while the Type 2 DOC is focused on lifestyle self-management techniques, they still value peer support as a form of diabetes management.

Informational (Diet/Exercise, Lifestyle, Research, Product, Medicine) Tweets

Informational content is used frequently in both diabetes communities (53.9% for Type 1 and 91.2% for Type 2), but overwhelmingly in the Type 2 community. As discussed earlier, the Type 1 community is more likely to prioritize emotional discussion and peer support activities than the Type 2 community, which solely focuses on self-management discourse.

Type 2 users tweet most frequently about *diet/exercise*, *lifestyle*, and *research*. These categories align with traditional diabetes self-management tasks as they discuss problem-solving as well as treatment options and outcomes (Willis, 2014). The most popular category used by the Type 2 community is *lifestyle*. With the Twitter text, the Type 2 DOC discusses *lifestyle* in reference to school/work, seasonality, and diabetes news. These discussions can provide readers with context about how to manage their disease in innovative ways.

Diet/exercise and *research* are similarly popular categories for Type 2 patients/caregivers. As the treatment of Type 2 diabetes requires constant weight/diet management for insulin sensitivity, it is understandable that the Type 2 community engages in this discussion frequently (Scobie & Samaras, 2009). We also see the research category employed more regularly in the Type 2 community. Using the Twitter text as support, the Type 2 DOC discusses research in the context of obesity, clinical trials, and treatment options in testing.

The final two informational categories, *products* and *medicine*, are used more by the Type 1 diabetes community. This may be due to the constant monitoring and medical supervision required for Type 1 diabetes (Scobie & Samaras, 2009). The use of insulin pumps, monitors, and test strips is thus more commonly discussed in the Type 1 community. The same is true for the *medicine* category. Type 1 diabetes is treated with insulin to sustain life while insulin treatment is just one management option for Type 2 diabetics (Scobie & Samaras, 2009). Thus, the Type 1 community may be more inclined to discuss medical information on Twitter.

VI. Conclusions

This research demonstrates the value of online communities as methods of peer support and self-management for diabetes treatment. As supported by the Twitter communities, Type 1 diabetics are more likely to prioritize emotional support activities than Type 2, especially discussions of *giving* and *personal experience*. Type 2 diabetics, however, prioritize informational support activities, such as *diet/exercise*, *research*, and *lifestyle* management. Recognizing these differences allows for improved individualized treatment for the diabetes epidemic.

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Facebook and Twitter Variations Across Pittsburgh Steelers and Carolina Hurricanes Social Media Platforms

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Abstract

As the reach of social media continues to expand, it plays an influential role in the promotion and advertisement of sports organizations. Through a content analysis, the researcher analyzed the social media posts – specifically Facebook and Twitter posts – of two professional sports organizations over a three-week period. The researcher looked at social media activity before and during games for the Carolina Hurricanes and the Pittsburgh Steelers. The study found that while Facebook received more interactions, Twitter had more posts. The research also concluded that the Steelers had a visible social media strategy, while the Hurricanes were less visible and consistent.

I. Introduction

The use of social media has grown significantly as a way for sports organizations to communicate with their fan bases. Specifically, both Facebook and Twitter have played a huge role in giving sports organizations instant communication to their fans. This two-way engagement has provided many additional opportunities for these sports organizations to interact with their audience. This research examined the official Twitter and Facebook accounts media usage for the Carolina Hurricanes and the Pittsburgh Steelers.

II. Literature Review

As technology continues to evolve, sports teams have access to several social media platforms. It is up to individual teams within each professional sports league to construct an effective social media strategy. Depending on various motives in social media usage, teams use these platforms in a variety of ways.

Keywords: Social Media, Pittsburgh Steelers, Carolina Hurricanes, Strategy, Content Analysis
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Twitter, Facebook, and Communication

Twitter and Facebook are both social media outlets that people can use to communicate their thoughts, feelings and interests. The sports industry is essentially an entertainment industry that caters to a great number of audiences. Hutchins (2011) took a deeper look into the NFL and its national and global fan base. He found that to keep both national and global fans informed, the NFL uses its Twitter profile as a promotional vehicle, providing fans with updates, news, and scores. Social media platforms are an avenue for athletes to disseminate information directly to fans, which is an example of modern-day sports communication.

Social platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide room for fan engagement with constant communication between organizations and fans. Stavros, Meng, Westberg, and Farrelly (2014) suggested that teams use Facebook for branding purposes, providing timely information, and highlighting the potential for two-way engagement between sports organizations and their fans. Furthermore, Sanderson (2014) revealed that Twitter was used to link events and content for fan engagement. These two studies show that the main goals are still quite similar although different social media platforms offer different communication routes. Sports organizations want to engage with their fans and keep building on those relationships to make them stronger.

Facebook and Twitter are beneficial not just for fans, but also for professional sports writers for gathering information. According to Reed (2013), “Full-time American print sports writers who cover at least one professional sport beat are using Facebook and Twitter to gather information” (Reed, 2013, p. 559). These platforms can also give sports writers opportunities to capture from athletes and organizations, which helps eliminate “misquoted” accusations.

Social Media and Sports Communication

Social media has played a vital role in sports communication by being accessible at all hours of the day, giving sports organizations constant contact with fans. The main goal is communicating to audiences in a sport environment. The types of communication have evolved over time, but the current mode of sport communication is social media. Pronchinske, Groza, and Walker (2012) addressed the value of social media and the immense influence it has on sports via marketing, communications, and brand management. Sports communication is about interacting with fans, so as more fans use and have their everyday lives revolve around social media, sports organizations need to cater to that environment. This study also discussed the importance of a visible online presence to attract fans, increase team awareness, and sell team-related merchandise. Another key element to sports communication is engaging with the audience. The more connected fans feel to an organization, the more likely they want to maintain a relationship with the organization.

Sanderson (2014) examined the personal quality that two-way communication that social media can give these sports organizations. Athletes can utilize social media to create more of a personal feeling between them and the fans. Sanderson found that athletes generate support of their views and commentary via their personal social media pages. These athletes are also able to provide exclusive information to fans, giving fans an “insider feeling” that would not be able to be obtained without the use of social media. Sports organizations are the product, and the fans are so invested in this product, which makes using social media effectively so important.

Theory

Various theories and approaches can be used for analysis of communication objectives. The Relationship Marketing Approach, described by Williams and Chinn (2010), focused on building long-lasting relationships to generate further business. Another relationship marketing approach comes from Grönroos (1994), who addressed two parts to establishing a relationship: attracting a customer—a fan in the context of this study—and building on that relationship. Grönroos concluded that “marketing is seen as an interactive process in a social context where relationship building and management are a vital cornerstone” (Grönroos, 1994, p. 9). This approach is seen throughout the sports industry when sports organizations create and maintain relationships with their fans via social media. Williams and Chinn pointed out the connection between this relationship marketing approach and sports communication: “Relationship marketing is a piece of sports communication because sports organizations are looking to build strong, long lasting relationships that will help to further enhance their fan loyalty and brand” (p. 431).

Other scholars emphasized the importance of community through the lens of the Corporate Social Responsibility Theory. This theory has a recurring theme about putting the emphasis on the local community “as a strategic initiative, a focus on the community in which the sport team operates may provide the organization with a stronger, more loyal customer base” (Sheth & Babiak, 2010, p. 442). There is a consistent theme throughout both this theory and the relationship marketing approach, which prioritizes creating proper relationships and maintaining those relationships.

Communication is vital in strengthening a sports organization’s relationships with fans because these organizations have optimal opportunities to succeed with the support of the community behind them.

As the literature reveals, social media is an important means of sports communication, and it continues to evolve in partnership with today’s ever-evolving technology. This study focused on analyzing the Twitter and Facebook profiles of the Carolina Hurricanes and the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The current author raised the following research questions:

RQ1: How do social media posts vary before and during a game?

RQ2: What types of posts, and on which platform, were most common and what was the frequency of them?

RQ3: Is there a clear social media strategy?

A social media strategy is essential, especially in the professional sports industry. This topic is important because of the continuous evolution of sports and social media. As social media platforms become more prominent, the influential sports industry is going to have to adapt even more than it currently does.

III. Methods

The current study analyzed the content of social media posts leading up to and during the respective organization’s games. The official Twitter and Facebook accounts was verified by clicking on the links on the official NFL Pittsburgh Steelers and NHL Carolina Hurricanes team websites. Their Facebook and Twitter pages were analyzed for three days over three constructed weeks from the end of October to the middle of November. In their study, Wallace, Wilson, and Miloch (2011) classified the social media posts into one of four themes: the form of communication, brand attributes, brand association factors, and marketing strategy. The current author adopted it with minor changes, using only three categories.

- “*Form of Communication*” refers to the type of posts presented. Every post analyzed fit into this category, whether it be a status update, picture, video, promotion, contest or hyperlink. In using this as a coding variable, the researcher was able to see the frequency of certain forms of communication and look at consistencies and variations across both platforms and teams.

- “*Brand Attributes*” is composed of product or non-product factors.

- “*Marketing Strategy*” refers to posts involving marketing.

Table 1 shows a more detailed description of the three themes.

Table 1. Three themes of social media posts

Category	Subcategories
Form of Communication	Status Update, Picture, Video, Promotion, Contest, Hyperlink, Reply/Retweet
Brand Attributes	Product: Hype posts, star players, head coach, team performance, beat reporter Non-product: logo, management, stadium, history, culture & values, team history, rivalry posts, team characteristics
Marketing Strategy	Recap, ticket sales, sponsorship, event coverage, in game coverage, team coverage or individual coverage

IV. Findings

This study explored how the Pittsburgh Steelers and Carolina Hurricanes used social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, during a game and beforehand. The Pittsburgh Steelers had more social networking sites (SNS) posts than the Carolina Hurricanes. Both teams had more Twitter than Facebook posts (refer to *Figure 1*). Throughout the three weeks, both teams, in general, had the fairly consistent number of posts across both platforms.

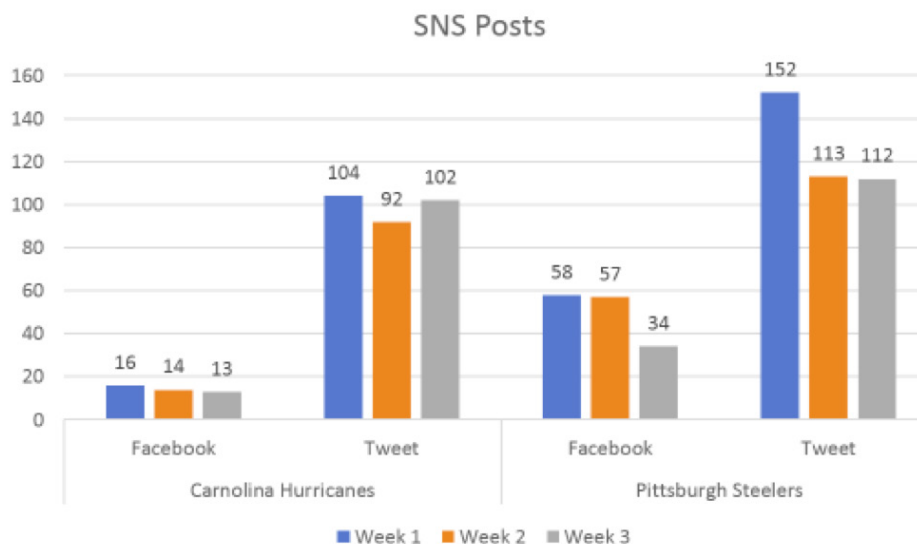


Figure 1. A breakdown of the social media posts by teams and platforms

In most of the cases, this research also found more social media activities on game day than on days prior to game day, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of Messages on Game Day vs. Days Earlier

Social Media	Facebook	Twitter
Teams	No. of Posts	No. of Tweets
Steelers		
Nov. 6	10	12
Nov. 9	15	17
Nov. 12 (Game Day)	32	84
Hurricanes		
Nov. 6	14	14
Nov. 8	2	35
Nov. 11 (Game Day)	8	53

The same trend was found in terms of followers and likes these two teams collected. For example, on November 6, 2017, the last day for data collection, the Steelers outperformed in all areas of fan engagements except for their total number of tweets. The Hurricanes had more tweets than the Steelers on that day.

Table 3. Social Media Engagement Statistics

Team	Facebook Followers	Facebook Likes	Number of Tweets	Twitter Followers	Twitter Likes
Carolina Hurricanes	241,563	262,996	About 50,200	About 332,000	4,546
Pittsburgh Steelers	6,088,859	6,493,386	About 35,300	About 2,910,000	5,876

The Steelers showed a consistent social media strategy on both Facebook and Twitter. On a weekly basis, the Steelers had the same kind of social media plan for which posts and sponsors would appear on a specific day. For example, the Steelers “injury reports” come out three times leading up to the game. For the first week, an injury report was released on the 25th, 26th and 27th, with the game happening on the 29th of October.

They also used consistent visual images for every game updating the end of the 1st quarter, halftime, 3rd quarter, and then the final score. For the Steelers, they also made sure to promote the game, posting videos of players arriving at the stadium, warming up, in the locker room, and even in the team huddle. Another example was the Steelers’ “sight and sound” videos, which were released following the game, highlighting the key moments from the game.

The Steelers also had a visible beat reporter presence, whereas the Hurricanes did not. Missi Matthews, the Steelers team reporter, was responsible for covering a lot of the brand attribute videos. Matthews, a Steelers employee, was a frequent face across steelers.com and the Steelers social media sites. Also, the game was immediately followed by videos of postgame press conferences and other interviews between Steelers beat reporters and players.

The Steelers also were consistent with their #tbt and #Steelershistory posts, highlighting their history in a previous matchup with the opponent of the week. These strategies seemed to reflect the Relationship Marketing Approach. The Steelers have the same consistency on both platforms from week-to-week, enhancing their relationship with their fans and making their platforms easy for their fans to understand.

On the other hand, the Hurricanes needed to work around multiple games a week, so it was more challenging to establish a fixed schedule to incorporate consistent hashtags and a clear social media strategy across both Facebook and Twitter. Throughout the course of the week studied, the Hurricanes did have more events and promotions they would highlight than the Steelers. This finding aligns with the tenets of the Corporate Social Responsibility Theory. Since the Hurricanes are not as popular as the Steelers, the Carolina team needs to make sure it is engaging fans and offering various events and promotions to increase attendance.

a) In terms of communication forms, both the Hurricanes and the Steelers utilized all varieties of the different forms of communications across both Facebook and Twitter.

b) Regarding the brand attributes, there was a much bigger presence of product attributes than non-product. Both teams heavily covered head coach and player interviews. Continuous updates were issued in a variety of forms regarding the team's performance, whether it was pregame, postgame or during the game. The majority of the beat reporting for the Steelers occurred within this product brand attribute category. Game day showed more promotional, hype features. Non-product brand attribution was most visible when it showed the culture or values of the team and its players, like volunteering in the community (refer to Table 4).

Table 4. Product and Non-product Brand Attributes Conveyed via Social Media

	Product Attributes	Non-Product Attributes
Hurricanes (Facebook)	Gameday links Team performance updates Game highlights Game outcomes #CanesCast videos	Pictures of players at the local hospitals Pictures of fans
Steelers (Facebook)	Coach recap video Coach interview video Star player pictures and statistics Player interview videos Pregame pictures and videos Beat reporter video	Video and pictures of the team volunteering and giving back to the community
Hurricanes (Twitter)	"In the Room" videos Gameday Hub links Team performance updates	Team history Team characteristics and values Arena
Steelers (Twitter)	Postgame picture and video Beat reporter video Pregame picture and videos #tbt posts	#SteelersHistory video

c) In terms of marketing strategy, the Steelers relied on Facebook to help sponsors get the attention of fans. For example, a post on Facebook used a word "Paid" and then tagged the sponsor, as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The image above exemplifies sponsored Facebook posts for the Steelers. The two red arrows were added by the author to emphasize the term "Paid" and the sponsor name in the post.

V. Analysis

As mentioned in the literature, it is important to have a strong, visible online presence to attract fans and increase team awareness (Pronchinske et al., 2012). This strategy seemed to be adopted by the Hurricanes and Steelers, which both had a strong online presence on Twitter and Facebook, especially during their games.

Hutchins (2011) found that the NFL used Twitter as a promotional vehicle to provide fans with instant updates, scores, and news. This study found the same strategy with the Steelers' Twitter account. This study also found that the Steelers' pregame videos tried to create personal feelings through social media. For example, the teams' videos showed players warming up, in the team huddle, and in the locker room.

Hutchins (2011) mentioned the use of Twitter as a promotional vehicle for the NFL. With the use of Twitter, the Steelers and Hurricanes were able to communicate directly to their fans and use their account as a way to promote their brand.

This research was limited in that it only looked at two different professional sports teams' accounts and only on Twitter and Facebook.

VI. Conclusion

In summary, this study revealed multiple variations in the posts on Facebook and Twitter for both the Carolina Hurricanes and the Pittsburgh Steelers. Both teams had more tweets than Facebook posts, during a game than other times in the weeks studied. The Steelers had a larger social media following and influence than the Hurricanes, which, in turn, results in the Steelers having a more visible social media strategy with a consistent timeline for one game a week. The Hurricanes balanced their posts and content around how many games they have each week, leaving their social media plan inconsistent. All in all, this study tried to show the role and influence of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, in the professional sports industry.

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A Comprehensive Analysis of Political Perceptions of Host Negativity in Late-Night Comedy

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Abstract

Scholars propose that late-night comedy programming serves as a medium through which political discourse has evolved. Previous studies have analyzed the increasing politicization that has consumed late-night programming and the potential effects such commentary has on viewership and political learnings from this type of soft news coverage. This study examined video clips on the YouTube channels of Jimmy Fallon, Jimmy Kimmel, and Stephen Colbert during the first nine months of the Donald Trump presidency, and found that the hosts and the nature of their videos influenced the engagement of the audience. Upon examining the engagement metrics on each of the selected videos, it is evident that a host's negativity toward Trump helped enhance viewers' engagement metric.

I. Introduction

The job of late-night talk show hosts was once uniform and forthright, giving Americans something to ease their minds and laugh away the workday worries after the daily grind was done. After all, Johnny Carson, an entertainer by birth and a late-night host by profession, built an empire on the premise of doing just that. Today, it appears that the lines have blurred between the friendly comedic acts of the past and the unbridled political satire of present late-night programming. Perhaps "late-night comedy has moved further away from the old broadcast network imperatives—safe, not offensive—to seek broader audiences of political persuasions" (Rutenberg). A decades-long debate surrounding the role of late-night comedy, as a soft news medium, through which the political process has become intertwined, prevails as the late-night landscape continues to evolve along with its equally turbulent hard news counterparts.

Defined as "market-centered journalism that blurs the line between information and entertainment," soft news has become an ever-expansive genre in the current news media landscape. In comparison, hard news, which is commonly defined as programs centered on highlighting the "circumstances of a recent event or incident considered to be of general, local, regional, national or international significance," is still a prominent contender in the array of news genres (Millis-Brown). This distinction held far greater validity in the context of the American news industry prior to the emergence of such vastly popular entertainment programs that have taken on the role of delivering stories that embody a multitude of political commentary and satire.

Keywords: Social Media, Pittsburgh Steelers, Carolina Hurricanes, Strategy, Content Analysis
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One explanation for this amalgamation is that late-night comedy has always played off of conventional hard news networks, and these days hard news has become predominantly political (Rutenberg).

Rob Burnett, the long-time executive producer for David Letterman, confessed that “late-night shows of the past, like Letterman’s, Carson’s, and Jay Leno’s, made mostly ‘toothless’ political jokes, meant to elicit laughs, not change minds” (Carter). Today, however, these shows have become about something that is actually “making a difference, changing opinions, shaping public discourse” (Carter). Perhaps never before has there been such an influx of soft news programs catering their content to address political issues as there has been since the start of the 2016 presidential campaign season.

Coined after the renowned and widely successful Oprah Winfrey, the “Oprah Effect” suggests that exposure to politicians or political rhetoric on soft news programs can have an impact on the political knowledge and attitudes of voters (Baum). This paper explored this theory in the context of late-night TV programming.

At a time plagued by controversies surrounding political education and fake news hysteria, it is crucial to understand the news consuming habits of the American people and how soft news ties into political knowledge. Examining various late-night TV programs as a medium of soft news, examining the viewer engagement and response to each host, and observing the content of the show allow for a more thorough understanding of the American electorate and its reaction to media bias in this genre of programming.

II. Literature Review

An extensive body of literature offers a variety of insights into the soft news genre, agenda-setting, priming theories evident in late-night comedy, the political tendencies of such programming, the news consumption habits, and opinions of the American public influenced by exposure to these shows. Many of these studies discussed relevant topics and often expand on one another in both the scope and direction of a particular idea. Though at times contradictory, it is evident that this topic garners a plethora of scholarship and examination aimed at understanding this perpetual phenomenon.

Theoretical Analysis

Essential to understanding the sensation spawn by late-night comedy shows of late is the notion that agenda setting and priming theories play vital roles in the study of news consumption behavior and learnings from such soft news sources. Agenda setting “refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media places on certain issues (e.g., based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences” (Scheufele 11). This theory postulates that consumers “learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position...that is, the media may set the ‘agenda’” (McCombs 176). Therefore, “as the primary sources of national political information, the media is in a position to define what people should be thinking about, if not quite what they should be thinking” (Peick 15). As such, with heightened media exposure, people’s “ranking of various issues’ importance more closely lines up with the amount of coverage devoted to those issues” (Peick 16).

In the context of soft news exposure, one modern-day example of this is the media coverage of Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential election. Though perhaps counterintuitive due to the excessively negative press coverage Trump received, the earned media exposure the future U.S. president garnered allowed him to confidently declare that he could “stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and wouldn’t lose voters” (Diamond). A Harvard study showed that, compared to Clinton, Trump received 15 percent more coverage than she did; yet his coverage was significantly more negative than hers, despite the negative tone apparent in much of her coverage as well (Patterson). For reference, news reports focusing on his personal qualities were 82 percent negative to 18 percent positive, policy stands were 85 percent negative to 15 percent positive, and leadership qualities and experiences were 93 percent negative to 7 percent positive (Patterson). This proposes that perhaps “the mass media sets the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes towards the political issues,” and thus resulting in Trump’s victory on the premise of heightened, and more visceral media coverage (McCombs 177).

Priming relates to the “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” and “occurs when news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks

for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments” (Scheufele 11). As a study on the priming effects of late-night comedy suggests, in the context of the 2000 presidential election, “there was a main effect of watching late night comedy on evaluations of candidates; more importantly, viewers were more likely than non-viewers to base their evaluations of George W. Bush on character traits after he appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman*” (Moy 198). This study sought to evaluate how “media coverage can increase not only the salience of issues, but also the salience of certain image characteristics” (Moy 200). It is evident that the actual appearance of candidates on these outlets “allow them to be more personal and potentially convey messages directly to an audience, without working through journalist’ lenses of interpretation and sound-bites” (Moy 199). However, character traits were the only measurement in which a priming effect was noted.

The Power of Hosts

Though the priming effects of late-night may be beneficial to a candidate’s likeability by appearing on such shows, this does not explain the effect such programming has on audience learnings from ingesting the political content of many hosts’ dialogues. Perhaps the question underpinning this notion is “how do the late-night comedians get away with ridiculing presidents, taunting Democrats and Republicans, and mocking Congress on network TV” (Peterson 90)? Possible explanations “derive from the peculiarities of the genre,” such as the “production schedule—five nights a week, all year round—makes topicality not just a possibility but a practical necessity” (Peterson 90). Others argue that the late hour at which these shows air allows them to deal with more “adult” concerns (Peterson 90). Or maybe “there is more to the late-night host’s special dispensation to discuss politics than the expediencies of production or the lateness of the hour” (Peterson 91). At its core, “the basic principle of comic license is simple enough: opinions that might be too provocative if expressed in a straightforward manner are permissible when presented as jokes” (Peterson 92). After all, research suggests that “humor may be a particularly effective means of communicating influential political messages” since “messages with humor are more easily remembered” (Niven 120).

In our “democratic system with commercial media, the license to mock the nation’s leaders is bestowed by the public;” after all, it is argued that it is the television viewers themselves who “have granted the tiny elite of late-night hosts the jester’s privilege” (Peterson 92). If so, are the American people to blame for the politicization and subsequent polarization of late-night broadcasting and slew of other soft news programs? Perhaps it is the easy targets our elected officials have become that serve as ammunition to the fiery commentary of a host’s dialogue.

Late-Night Political Rhetoric

The hosts and networks of these shows may vary, but previous studies suggest that depictions of politicians and the topics surrounding them remain the same. Findings indicate that “among the thousands of jokes told each year on late night comedies, few will involve two of the three branches of federal government, state level government, or city level government; rather late night comedy is predominantly directed at the executive branch, encompassing the president, major presidential candidates, the first family, select cabinet officials and advisors, and presidential accusers” (Niven 130). It is evident that “while joke subjects change with the events of the day, the nature of late-night humor is determinedly non-issue oriented,” and among the major late night shows, similar patterns exist in the “choice of targets, partisan ratio of targets, and the subject matter of their jokes” (Niven 130).

Infotainment

The amalgamation of entertainment and news gave birth to the neologism “infotainment,” in the late 1980s. Infotainment “refers to an explicit genre-mix of ‘information’ and ‘entertainment’” and is intended to both entertain and inform (Thussu 7). The formulation of this concept may be rooted in the idea that our present state of “too much news is creating an information overload,” leaving consumers “unable to differentiate between public information and corporate propaganda” (Thussu 8). Therefore, the concept of infotainment emerged as a means of “‘privileging’ soft news at the expense of news about political, civic, and public affairs” (Thussu 8). Some argue this notion of infotainment goes “beyond the debate about dumbing down” news programs, but rather proposes it serves as a “powerful discourse of diversion, in both taking away from, and displacing from the airwaves such grim realities” (Thussu 9).

Expanding on the idea that perhaps soft news programming is the “effect of market differentiation (or fragmentation)” rather than “the ‘dumbing down’ of audiences of media content,” Markus Prior addresses

the popularity of soft news, why people like that genre of news, and whether political insight can actually be gained from consuming such programming (167). Results indicate that “people like soft news for its entertainment value but that soft news programs are still not very popular compared to hard news and pure entertainment” (Prior 149). With regards to political learnings from consumption of such shows, there is “limited evidence that viewers actually learn from soft news” (Prior 149).

The ‘Effects’ of Late-Night

The hostile media effect (HME) is another measure by which scholars assess the political content of late-night comedies. HME occurs when “partisans on opposing sides of an issue perceive an identical news story about the issue as biased against their own side and in favor of the opposing side, while those without partisan views rate the very same story as neutral or more balanced” (Arpan 159). The growing role of late-night comedy in the democratic process raises “questions about its ability to influence attitudes towards candidates, increases cynicism toward mainstream news and the democratic process, and stimulates increased democratic participation and/or further learning about political issues” (Arpan 159).

A study on the general perceptions of bias in late-night comedy in comparison to hard news reveals that “a hostile media effect was found for political content about three topics across five comedy shows, with Republicans, Democrats, and Independents reporting significantly different perceptions of the extent of bias in the content” (Arpan 158). General perceptions of bias in late-night comedy as compared to traditional hard news sources further reveal that “late-night comedy coverage across all three topics was perceived as more biased than hard news coverage” (Arpan 166). This, however, does not translate directly to learnings as other research suggests, and in fact, “the positive correlation between comedy and traditional news viewing” evident in this study “suggests comedy viewing is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, hard news consumption” (Arpan 167).

Matthew A. Baum and Angela Jamison were first to propose the notion that perhaps the “Oprah Effect” explains the alleged effects that soft news has on “*attention* to and *knowledge* about politics,” as well as “political *attitudes* and *behavior*” (Baum). In the context of their analysis, the Oprah Effect is defined as “the influence of consuming soft news political content on vote choice” (Baum). The four subsets of this theory are attention, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior as they pertain to politically oriented soft news consumption. Their 2006 study analyzed the learnings from soft news sources with the goal of accessing a potential correlation with voting behavior. They addressed the “effects on different types of consumers (low vs. high political awareness) of exposure to different types of news (soft vs. hard)” and more specifically, “the effects of exposure to entertainment-oriented, daytime talk shows—a quintessential, and highly popular soft news format” (Baum).

Underpinning this research is the “interaction of the supply and demand sides of soft news” (Baum). The way in which politicians understand and subsequently take advantage of soft news, and the way audiences seek, react, and interact with such programming have offered insight into the critical role soft news is playing in the democratic process.

Participatory Culture on YouTube

An analysis of this issue is not complete without interjecting the influence that participatory culture on YouTube has on user engagement with late-night soft news coverage. Since this study used late-night content posted to a particular host’s YouTube channel, it is crucial to examine the engagement methods this social media platform warrants. YouTube affords the “opportunity to confront some of participatory culture’s most pressing problems: the unevenness of participation and voice; the apparent tensions between commercial interest and public good; and the contestation of ethics and social norms that occurs as belief systems, interests, and cultural differences collide” (Burgess). The use of likes, comments, ratings, and views present a vast array of engagement tools that offer explanations pertaining to audience perceptions towards a particular show.

Studies have found that in analyzing the use of these participatory mechanisms, responses like “favoriting, commenting or rating was a stronger indicator of popularity than simply viewing a video” (Madden). This is presumably because such engagement requires logging on and perhaps even going as far as reading other people’s comments first before deciding to inject one’s opinion. Further, “reaction strength tended to be stronger amongst less-viewed videos” (Madden). This postulates that perhaps in the realm of this study, more

participation may be correlated to less viewed videos and potentially more salient or controversial content matter within these shows to merit such engagement.

The literature alludes to the vast scope of this topic and array of conclusions that explain the multifaceted nature of the current news media landscape, and more specifically the realm of late-night comedy as a medium for political commentary. This study expands upon this previous research and seeks to serve as a model for further investigation into this topic.

For this research, the author raised the questions: What types of engagement did late-night shows elicit from the audience? Does the content and degree of negativity in which various late-night hosts engage in politically oriented topics result in differing reactions from a viewer?

III. Methods

This study utilized content analysis to obtain an “objective, systematic and quantitative depiction of the manifest content of communications” (Rosenberry 42). The author categorized messages based on an established set of criteria and quantified audience behaviors and host negativity present in the observed shows.

Sample

The study analyzed video clips posted on the YouTube channels of Jimmy Fallon, Jimmy Kimmel, and Stephen Colbert between January 20 and October 26, 2017. These dates were selected to align with the day Donald Trump started his term as president, to nine months into the presidency, or two weeks from the one-year anniversary of his election into office. Clips with the name “Trump” or “Donald Trump” in the title, or videos with a preview showing an image of Trump were selected. All video clips meeting the aforementioned criteria in each channel were selected, and only 10 for each host were randomly selected for analysis in this study.

Procedure

The author coded each clip for the following variables: number of subscribers, number of views, likes, dislikes, the like/dislike ratio, like/view ratio, dislike/view ratio, the use of hard news sources within the video clips, number of comments, and the number of positive and negative comments out of the top 10 comments for each selected clip. These metrics were selected to gauge host negativity toward Trump, viewer engagement, and the political perceptions of viewers.

Analysis

The political opinions of viewers were classified into negative comments when they contained profanity, vulgarity, disapproval, or distrust toward Trump, more specifically pertaining to his character, policies, behaviors, appearance, dishonesty, and the like; and comments were classified as positive when they contain praise for Trump, approval of his character, policies, behaviors, appearance, honesty, and the like, or those that talked negatively of anti-Trump sentiment.

Host negativity was calculated like the following: clips that were strictly policy-based were coded as 1 for low negativity, those that were strictly personal in nature were coded as 2 for medium negativity, those that contained both policy-based and personal critiques intensified the strength of the argument thus were coded as 3 for possessing high negativity.

Viewer engagement was coded by likes, dislikes, the like/dislike ratio, views/likes ratio, dislike/view ratio, and the number of comments.

Clips that contained actual footage or articles from hard news sources were coded for the number of sources borrowed. For example, 1 for one source and 2 for two sources. Clips that did not contain the aforementioned were coded 0. Examples of hard news sources can be CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and other similar broadcasts and publications.

IV. Findings and Discussion

This section summarizes the findings of this study by analyzing the selected variables, mostly engagement metrics by hosts and by negativity levels of videos.

Analysis by three hosts

As shown in Table 1, Fallon has the largest number of total subscribers among the three on his YouTube channel, followed by Kimmel and Colbert. The total subscriber numbers don't seem to influence viewers' engagement. Colbert, who had the smallest number of subscribers enjoyed the largest viewers, followed by Kimmel, then Fallon. The same trend was confirmed by other engagement metrics such as likes, dislikes, or comments.

Table 1. Individual Host Viewer Engagement Metrics

Individual Host Metrics			
Host	Fallon	Kimmel	Colbert
Number of Subscribers	14,623,412	10,162,683	3,286,102
Number of Viewers	177,759	394,412	1,371,555
Likes	1,400	3,299	15,500
Dislikes	141	404	1,065
Likes / Dislikes	10	8	15
Number of Comments	121*	541	1,678
Host Bias	2.5	2.4	2.4
Clips containing Hard News	1.3	1.4	1.3
Positive comments out of the top 10	.6	.5	.1
Negative comments out of the top 10	1.5	2.2	2.4

Notes: All numbers indicate mean values per video except for the number of subscribers.

*Average comments on Kimmel's clips were based on 9 clips instead of 10.

This trend is more obvious when these numbers are represented in charts, as shown in the four charts below. The engagement level did not seem to be influenced by the level of host bias either, since the three hosts' bias levels were almost the same.

The use of hard news was not a predictor of the engagement level either, since the three hosts incorporated a similar level of hard news in their clips. All three hosts used at least one hard news clips from the traditional media and sometimes even two clips (30 or 40% of the times). As Rutenberg proposed, late-night comedy has always played off of hard news programing and, in today's modern world, hard news is primarily consumed by politics. Presumably, the engagement level was related to the quality of videos, but further studies have to be done to confirm this conjecture.

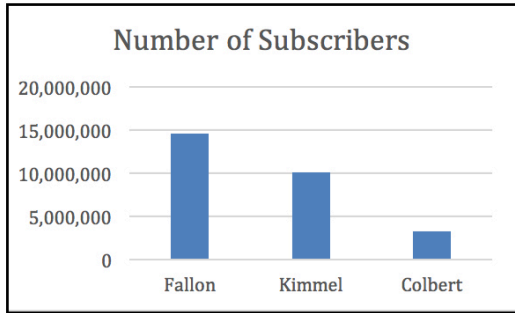


Figure 1. Number of subscribers

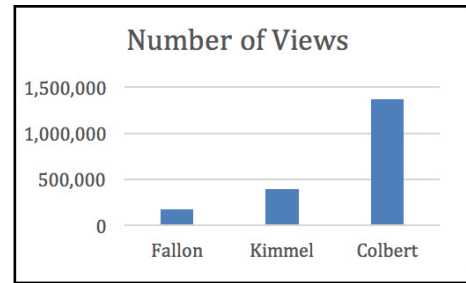


Figure 2. Number of views

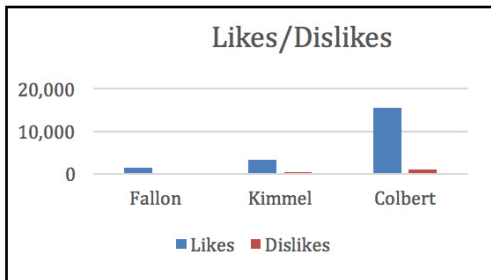


Figure 3. Number of Likes/dislikes

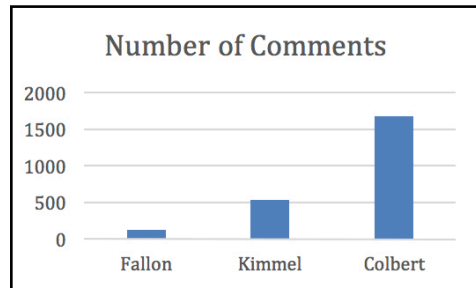


Figure 4. Number of Comments

In terms of favorability of shows, measured by the nature of 100 comments, Colbert received the highest level of negative comments and the lowest level of positive comments, as shown in Figure 5. Colbert warrants further investigation since he had the lowest subscribers, but enjoyed the largest viewers and the strongest engagement. On the other hand, viewers' attitudes toward his clips were more negative, in comparison with the two others. Since the study analyzed 10 clips for each host, this trend may be due to sampling error. In other words, this sample may not represent Colbert's video collection as a whole. Or it could be due to his ability to reach a niche market that was specifically looking for the type of the commentary Colbert offers.

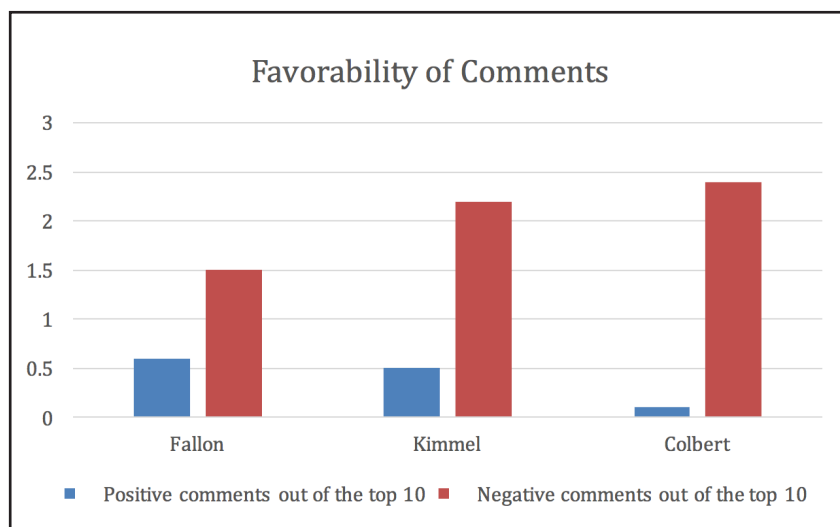


Figure 5. Favorability of comments toward videos viewed.

Host Biases and Political Sentiment

This section analyzed viewer engagement by the level of host biases that were measured by the type of video contents. As shown in Table 2, the three hosts predominantly produced high bias videos (57% of 30 videos), followed by 9 medium bias videos and 4 low bias videos.

Table 2 The impact of Host Bias on Engagement

Host Biases Across All Shows			
Host Bias	Low (or Policy) Bias	Medium (or Person) Bias	High (or Both) Bias
Total Number of Clips	4	9	17
Number of Views	236,102	377,798	887,804
Likes	2,250	2,889	9,823
Dislikes	254	170	798
Likes / Dislikes	9	17	12
Number of Comments	324	240*	1180
Top 10 Positive Comments	0	0.6	0.4
Top 10 Negative Comments	1.3	1.9	2.3
Hard News	1.75	1.33	1.24

Notes: All numbers indicate mean values per video clip except for the number of clips.

*Comments on medium bias videos were based on 8 clips instead of 9 because of one missing data.

A positive relationship exists between some engagement metrics and host's bias that reflects the negative level of contents toward Trump, but not all metrics. When clips contain more negative contents toward Trump as a person and his policies, metrics for viewership, likes/dislikes, the total number of comments, and viewers' negative comments increased dramatically, as shown in Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9.

But the lowest level of negativity did not necessarily receive the lowest engagement metrics. For example, dislikes in Figure 7 and number of comments in Figure 8 were not lower than the medium biased clips.

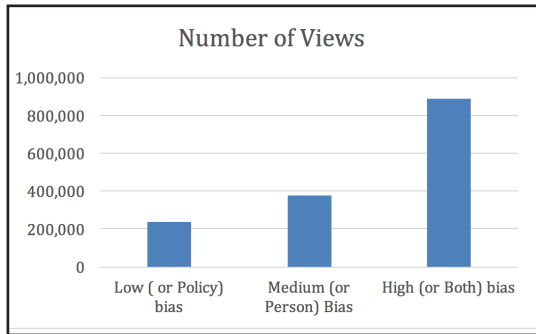


Figure 6. Number of views against hosts' bias

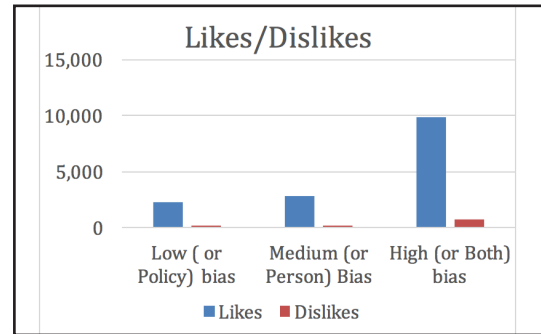


Figure 7. Number of likes/dislikes against hosts' bias

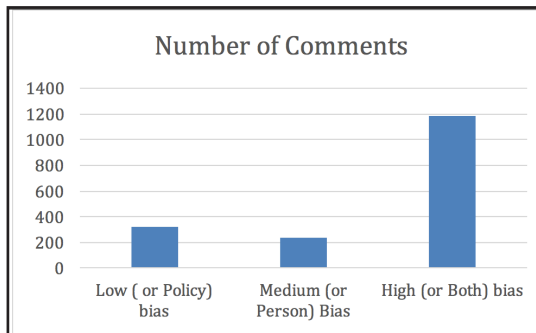


Figure 8. Number of comments against hosts' bias

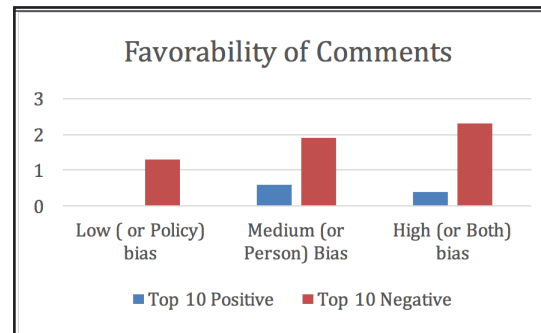


Figure 9. Favorability of comments against hosts' bias

When the hosts attacked Trump on both a political and personal front, they could achieve a higher audience engagement. The high bias clips enjoyed a higher level of engagement across most of engagement metrics. In response to high bias videos, viewers seemed to be more inclined to participate or voice his or her opinion.

Policy-based low bias clips relied more on traditional hard news sources than the other types. This type did not get a lower level of negative comments (Figure 8) and any less positive comments (refer to Figure 9) than the other two types. Further studies should be done to determine whether this low level of engagement is due to a high level of borrowed hard news clips or the nature of content.

As the limitations of this, the author analyzed only 10 videos per channel within the designated timeframe. Additionally, the timeframe of the study did not allow for a complete analysis of the first year of the Donald Trump presidency.

V. Conclusions

Upon analyzing a small selection of the vast number of video clips posted on the YouTube channels of Jimmy Fallon, Jimmy Kimmel, and Stephen Colbert, it is evident that some relationship exists between hosts and viewer engagement on the one hand, and another relationship between host bias and viewer engagement on the other.

These findings indicate that Colbert not only received the greatest mean number of views, but he also saw higher mean engagement per video post in terms of numbers of views, likes, dislikes, and comments than the other two hosts, even though the total subscribers to his channel is the lowest. This suggests that YouTube channel subscriptions do not necessarily convert to number of viewer engagement.

Overall, the host bias across the three shows remained relatively consistent, at around 2.5, meaning that overall, each show was employing content that leaned toward both policy-based critiques and personal attacks of Trump at an almost equal rate. The high level of video bias was generally successful in engaging more viewers.

As seen in this paper, soft news like late-night comedy programming can be an influential player in the realm of the news media genre and possess the power to engage audiences in political discourse, especially if it is negative to a political power like the president.

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Winning over Fans: How Sports Teams Use Live-Tweeting to Maximize Engagement

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Abstract

Professional sports franchises rely heavily on social media to interact with fans – often in real time through live-tweeting their athletic contests. Using a quantitative content analysis of 540 live-tweets, this study examined the content message strategies (i.e. hashtags, GIFs, still images) teams employ and the impact those strategies have on user engagement (i.e., retweets, likes, and replies). Findings suggest multimedia has little positive impact on fan engagement. Additionally, links and mentions decrease engagement. This study carries practical implications for teams trying to effectively engage their Twitter followers.

I. Introduction

Founded in 2006, Twitter is a popular microblogging service that allows individuals to share information within and beyond one's network by composing tweets with 140 characters or fewer. It currently has more than 300 million monthly active users (Twitter, 2016). There is widespread recognition by both sports teams and sports media that Twitter is a powerful and revolutionary tool for publishing, promotion, and relationship management (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010; Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger, 2012). As a result, more and more sports organizations have adopted Twitter accounts to enhance their levels of interaction with fans worldwide. According to Witkemper et al. (2012), almost every team across major professional sports leagues in the U.S. has engaged in some activities with fans on Twitter. Compared to other social media platforms, Twitter allows sports teams to offer more frequent and "disposable" updates in a short period of time (Price, Farrington, & Hall, 2013). Because tweets are constantly refreshed in real time, people may often see the most recent information and disregard those that appear lower in their feed. Having lots of information about their own Twitter data, sports organizations are employing various strategies to compete for users' attention.

More recently, live-tweeting has gained more popularity among teams in major sporting events. Unlike regular tweeting, live-tweeting facilitates dialogues about events as they unfold. Users are likely to engage with live-tweets while watching live events (Corney, Martin, & Göker, 2014). Therefore, these tweets are more time sensitive and focused than regular tweets, which also makes it more challenging for sports teams to identify effective strategies to engage fans and followers. Despite this growing popularity of live-tweeting in

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major sporting events, few research studies have examined how sports teams live-tweet and whether these live-tweets are effective in encouraging user involvement. Therefore, this study utilized a content analysis to examine the different content strategies adopted by sports teams in live-tweeting and how these strategies contribute to user engagement on Twitter.

II. Literature Review

Prior to this study, information was gathered to examine Twitter's role in live sporting events, different definitions of engagement in a social media context, the impact of multimedia on user engagement, and the role of content message strategies. The review of scholarly literature is broken down, accordingly.

Live-Tweeting and Its Use in Sporting Events

Hawathorne, Houston, and McKinney (2013) define live-tweeting as posting on Twitter in an ongoing manner during an event. Its growing popularity can be explained by users' increasing demands for real-time information. Live-tweeting also adds value to content curators because it is able to track ordinary users' participation in the information gathering process (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Live-tweeting has been used in a variety of contexts, such as the presidential primary debates to engage users in public conversation and to influence the framing of debates (Hawthorne et al, 2013) and during the airing of television shows to build and maintain a network of viewers with common interests (Schirra, Sun, &, Bentley, 2014).

Like television shows and important debates, major sporting events take place during pre-specified times, attract large audiences, and are fast-paced (Corney et al., 2014). These characteristics of live events contribute to users' participation and foster their online discussion. They are able to not only connect with sports organizations as they read tweets from their favorite teams and athletes, but also create personalized spaces to discuss games and express support for their favorite teams. Due to the highly concentrated topics, live-tweeting also provides a focused context for conversation that strengthens the social bonds among followers of a particular Twitter account (Schirra et al., 2014). It will be interesting to explore how differently fans and followers engage in live-tweeting as a result of the different content strategies employed by teams in sporting events.

User Engagement and Social Media

At the broadest level, O'Brien (2011) defines engagement as the quality of user experience with technology. Following this experience-focused approach, Mersey, Malthouse and Calder (2010) refer to engagement as the collective experiences an audience has with a media brand. This experience can be further broken down into the engagement at a particular time point or the engagement during a period (O'Brien & Toms, 2008; Peters, Castellano, & de Freitas, 2009). Earlier conceptualizations of engagement have emphasized the psychological aspect in which users become cognitively involved in processing content, leading to absorption (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Jacques, Preece, & Carey, 1995; Wang, 2006). With the introduction and growth of newer communication technologies of interactive media and social media, the concept of engagement has evolved and been defined differently. Oh, Bellur, and Sundar (2015) have called for attention to defining engagement through a behavioral approach. Following this approach, engagement is defined by the tangible ways users perform actual interaction with an interface, such as clicking interactive features and sharing social media posts (Oh et al., 2015). The current study adopts this definition of engagement to examine live-tweeting in sporting events.

Following the behavioral approach, social media engagement can be conceptualized as the different active outcomes of users' interactions with social media content. In these active outcomes, users carry influence by responding to social media content, discussing social media content, and spreading social media content to make it viral (McCay-Peet & Quan-Hasse, 2016). This conceptualization is also consistent with how engagement is defined by the online strategic communication industry (Zarella, 2009), which goes beyond exposure-based measures, such as time spent and attention paid to content (Napoli, 2011). On Twitter, the concept of engagement can, therefore, be operationalized as number of retweets, number of likes, and number of replies.

At the time of the study, Twitter limited the length of tweets to 140 characters, which is almost the size of a news article headline in traditional media (Bruni, Francalanci, & Giacomazzi, 2012). This limitation in length requires message senders to be strategic about creating effective content that is easy for users to consume. Researchers have argued that the actual content and messages on Twitter matter more in influencing users than any non-message features in social media, such as icons and multimedia elements (Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis, & Mishne, 2008). When discussing the social influence of Twitter, Bruni et al. (2012) further propose that the tweets themselves could have a critical role regardless of the message sender's network characteristics. Therefore, this study focused on examining how four particular content strategies commonly adopted in live-tweeting influence user engagement in sporting events: use of multimedia, use of conversation starter/facilitator, variation of message visibility, and valence of tweets. Together, these four aspects address both the informational and the emotional aspects of content strategies (van den Putte, 2009).

Multimedia and User Engagement

The concept of multimedia has been defined in various ways in different contexts. The commonality among these definitions is that multimedia usually involves the use or the integration of more than one form of communication (Jonassen, 2000). Marmolin (1991) and Sundar (2000) argue that multimedia also implies the use of multiple senses in processing information transmitted via more than one modality. The presence of multiple modalities will lead to the co-existence of multiple ways of information presentation. Therefore, multimedia can also be considered as multiple perceptual representation media (Hoogeveen, 1997).

As indicated by the Cue Summation Theory (Severin, 1967), information learning could increase as the number of available modality stimuli increases. The adoption of multimedia elements has been discovered to enhance better cognitive activities as long as these elements complement each other (Brashears, Akers, & Smith, 2005). In online communication, Sundar (2007) considers multimedia or multi-modality as one variable in user engagement. The underlying explanation for multimedia's effects on user engagement can be found via the lens of perception bandwidth. Due to the presence of multiple perceptual presentations, multimedia serves to expand perceptual bandwidth and allow users to adopt multiple sensory channels to process information (Reeves & Nass, 2000), which results in more cognitive involvement and subsequently more behavioral participation. In a sentiment analysis of social media messages, You and Luo (2013) discovered that multimedia components on social media could convey more subtle feelings than pure texts, which drew more attention from users. Bruni et al. (2012) have also found that links to multimedia information increased the virality of social media posts in terms of number of sharing. Following this line of literature, use of multimedia elements will positively influence users' cognitive responses to live-tweets and subsequently influence their behavioral engagement with these tweets.

H1. Use of multimedia will lead to higher user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events.

It is important to note that there are different multimedia components that can be adopted in a tweet aside from text, such as video, still image, GIF, emoji, and link. These components vary in their respective psychological mechanisms to influence user engagement. For example, links influence user engagement through offering interaction possibilities and additional sources of information, which is different from the other multimedia components. Although videos, still images, GIFs, and emojis could all elicit visual arousal, they differ from each other in terms of the needed attention. Still images and emojis are less cognitively demanding than lengthy videos (Bakhshi et al., 2016; Bruni et al., 2012). Users do not need to keep a sustained attention to understand them. Research shows that non-moving visual elements are effective in assisting memory of the surrounding text (Collyer, Jonides, & Bevan, 1972). Because videos and GIFs involve more visual changes than stills images and emojis, they may demand more cognitive resources to process. Users need to be more motivated to finish them and allocate relatively more attention to understand them. In live games, users may have a shorter attention span with limited time to fully consume the tweets due to the fast pace of the event. Multimedia components that are more cognitively demanding may, therefore, lead to less engagement. On the other hand, videos and GIFs have better storytelling capacity (Bakhshi et al., 2016), which could lead to more emotional stimulation. Existing research has also shown that individuals would experience more physiological arousal when responding to moving images (Detenber, Simons, & Bennett Jr., 1998). These emotional and physiological arousals may also lead to more behavioral engagement with sports teams' live-tweets. Given the mentioned differences above, it will be interesting to explore how different

multimedia components contribute to user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events.

RQ1: How do different multimedia components vary in their respective influences on user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events?

In addition to psychological mechanism, the above-mentioned multimedia elements afforded by Twitter vary in technological requirements. For example, still images and emojis do not consume much Internet bandwidth and are more accessible for mobile devices, whereas videos and GIFs require a better Internet connection to be displayed and are less friendly to mobile devices. In sporting events, most users are likely to follow live-tweeting on their mobile devices. Videos and GIFs, therefore, may be harder to access than still images and emojis because they take longer to load than plain text. Because of these constraints, tweets with different multimedia components may vary in their possibilities to be viewed in their entirety (Bruni et al., 2012).

Although videos and GIFs may elicit more favorable attitudes (i.e., likes), they may not necessarily lead to more retweets in social media. Similarly, although links may elicit more favorable attitudes by offering interaction possibilities and additional information, it directs users to leave the current screen or browser window to another one, which complicates behavioral engagement with the tweets. Therefore, different multimedia components may influence different aspects of user engagement. It will be interesting to see how multimedia components affect different aspects of user engagement, including retweets, likes, and replies.

In relation to RQ1, H1 was set up: The use of multimedia components like still images, links, videos, gifs, and emojis, will positively influence user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events.

RQ2: How do multimedia elements in a tweet affect user engagement, as measured by retweets, likes, and replies, in live-tweeting of sporting events?

Use of Discussion Starter and Facilitator

In live-tweeting of sporting events, two common content strategies that many sports teams have adopted to start and to facilitate the discussions with users are the call-to-actions and the giveaways. Both of these two content features are classic persuasive techniques that have been widely used in sales, marketing, and advertising (Goldstein, Martin, & Cialdini, 2009).

The purpose of a call to action is to elicit desired actions by encouraging readers of the message (Safko, 2012). Most of the calls to action on Twitter are in the form of text. More recently, Twitter has also launched call-to-action buttons that allow users to interact with the sponsored tweets (Lafferty, 2016). The call to action on Twitter can, therefore, be defined as a content element that invites users to engage in conversation(s) with both the message sender and other users. Given the prevalent use of calls to action on websites and social media (Zarrella, 2009), users are mentally prepared for the experience of being called to act (Smith, 2014). This mental preparedness can be explained by the perceptual set theory in psychology: Individuals may develop predisposition to notice a particular aspect of a stimulus if their past experience helps them establish this expectation (Allport, 1955). Based on this assumption, social media practitioners have strongly recommended integrating call to action into social media content strategies (Safko, 2012). Research has shown that the adoption of call to action could lead to higher conversion on social media (Zarrella, 2010).

In addition to call to action, giveaways have also been adopted as a way to facilitate discussion on Twitter. It has proven to be effective in boosting sales and customer engagement in traditional merchandise campaigns (Goldstein et al., 2009). In live-tweets about sporting events, giveaways are usually in the form of merchandise or promotional items. For instance, the Chicago Blackhawks tweeted to fans at home in the middle of a game to reply with a photo of their gameday setup inside their house. That tweet received 134 replies and one fan received a set of coasters as a prize. The psychological explanation for the effect of giveaways lies in the emotional responses about getting something for free (Ariely, 2010). Anderson (2009) considers this free concept as a radical price that could lower the mental barrier to engagement.

H2. The use of 1) call to action and 2) giveaway will positively influence user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events.

Variation of Messages Visibility

Aside from using conversation starters and facilitators, another commonly adopted Twitter strategy is to vary the visibility of content. There are two specific ways to vary the visibility of a tweet: mention (i.e., @username) and hashtag (#) (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Suh, Hong, Pirulli, & Chi, 2010). They influence tweet visibility through different mechanisms.

On Twitter, a mention is a tweet that includes a user's username preceded by the "@" symbol anywhere in the tweet (Twitter Help Center, 2016). Once a user is mentioned in a tweet, he/she will receive a notification from Twitter. By clicking the link included in the notification tab, a user will be able to access the tweet in which he/she is mentioned. If multiple usernames are included in a tweet, each of the mentioned users will be able to see the tweet in their notification tab. Therefore, Suh et al (2010) describe mention as a referencing feature by specifying a user or several users. Through the manipulation of addressivity (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009), this particular message feature gains the attention from the tagged user(s) by increasing the visibility of the tweet. Boyd et al. (2010) have also conceptualized the mention as an attention seeking feature that alerts the tagged person that he/she has been talked about. Given that Twitter sends a clickable link for each mention to the tagged person, this message feature also allows the discovery of other interesting account to follow if the tagged person has not already followed the account. The use of mention can, therefore, be considered as an attempt to start a conversation with another user (Bruns & Moe, 2013).

Given that a particular username or usernames are tagged in the tweet, the use of mention usually implies an underlying intention to address specific individual(s) rather than the entire population of followers. Because of this focused addressivity, other followers may consider the tweet as less relevant and become less interested in it, which negatively impacts user engagement. For example, Suh et al. (2010) have discovered a marginally significant negative association between the use of mention and retweeting behavior. In addition, when a user replies to another user's tweet, the tweet usually begins with the @username of the person replied to. Reply is, therefore, considered as a special case of mentions (Twitter, 2016). When a tweet starts with the @username (without a period before it), only the sender, the receiver, and those who follow both the sender and the receiver will see the tweet. It thus limits the visibility of the tweet to the greater population of the followers and their engagement with the tweet.

H3. The use of mentions, including replies, will negatively influence user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events.

The other feature that influences tweet visibility is hashtag. By adding the hashtag symbol (#) before a keyword or a phrase, users group the tweets into categories, which allows the tweets to be discovered more easily via the Twitter search function (Bruns & Moe, 2013). When a user searches for a particular hashtag, he/she will discover tweets from accounts that he/she has not followed. Therefore, hashtags could increase the visibility of tweets by enabling them to reach beyond the existing followers and rapidly assemble the ad hoc public (Bruns & Moe, 2013). Existing literature on Twitter has established a positive relationship between use of hashtags and user engagement. For example, Stefanone, Saxton, Egnoto, Wei, and Fu (2015) have discovered that hashtag use is positively related to tweet diffusion. The use of hashtags has also been found to be a strong predictor for retweetability (Suh et al., 2010). Based this discussion, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4. The use of hashtag will positively influence user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events.

Effect of Tweet Valence

The valence of a tweet indicates the predominant sentiment of the message, such as positive, negative, or neutral (Jenders, Kasneci, & Naumann, 2013). In online persuasion literature, message valence has been found as influential on triggering biased source evaluation and on the development of attitude and behaviors toward message (Lee, Park, & Han, 2008; Clemons, Gao, and Hitt, 2006). With regard to the effects of message valence on Twitter, the existing research findings have not been entirely consistent. For example, Jenders et al. (2013) have discovered that tweets with negative sentiment are more likely to go viral than those with either positive or neutral sentiment. This finding is consistent with the negativity bias discovered in e-commerce literature, such that negative messages have a stronger influence on individuals than positive messages (Lee et al., 2008). This negativity bias can be explained by the prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979): Individuals place more weight on negative information than positive information

because the experience of loss is usually considered greater than the pleasure of gain. Therefore, negative messages are more likely to attract attention and enhance tweet engagement.

In contrast, positively valenced tweets have been found to be retweeted more often than negatively valenced tweets by Stefanone, et al. (2015). In a study about brand fan page on social media, de Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012) have discovered that positive brand posts increase the number of likes. Pfitzner, Garas, & Schweitzer (2012) have also found a general bias toward positive tweets. Given the inclusive findings on the effect of message valence, the current author proposes the following research question instead of a hypothesis.

RQ3: How do tweet valence influence user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events?

III. Methods

A quantitative content analysis was conducted to examine how different content strategies influence user engagement in live-tweets. The analysis included the live-tweets published by 12 sports teams in 12 games (refer to Appendix I for more details). In order to ensure the representativeness, the live-tweets analyzed in this study were collected from three different sports: baseball, basketball and hockey. These three sports were chosen based on the following three criteria. First, it is important for the sport to have a large audience. Second, there is a significant number of professional teams across the United States for the sport. Third, the sport has been active on Twitter for live-tweeting. The live-tweets were collected for the premium games of these three sports between March 28 and May 17, 2016. During this time period, basketball and hockey teams were competing in their respective postseasons. For baseball, Opening Day was about to begin. Therefore, home openers were analyzed for baseball teams.

After determining the different sports for research, a total of 12 teams were selected based on the team's Twitter follower count, the ability to host a premium sporting event, and its geographic proximity to teams of other sports. The size of a team's Twitter follower count was important to ensure a large enough number of who would have been able to see any posted tweet. By the time of data analysis, the numbers of followers of these 12 teams ranged from 265,000 to 2,450,000. Based on preliminary research, teams usually generated more tweets if they were hosting games. Therefore, live-tweets for home games were selected. Finally, geographic proximity of teams was taken into consideration to ensure that these teams shared similar fanbases so they could be compared for analysis. Four teams were chosen per sport across four different regions: West, Midwest, South, and East.

The four baseball teams selected were the Oakland Athletics (West), Chicago Cubs (Midwest), Atlanta Braves (South), and New York Yankees (East). The four basketball teams selected were the Golden State Warriors (West), Cleveland Cavaliers (Midwest), Charlotte Hornets (South), and Boston Celtics (East). The four hockey teams selected were the San Jose Sharks (West), Chicago Blackhawks (Midwest), Carolina Hurricanes (South) and New York Islanders (East). These 12 teams represented large sports markets with sizable fanbases on Twitter. The majority of these games were broadcasted nationally with a large audience. The eight basketball and hockey teams either made it to the playoffs or were fighting for a spot in the playoffs toward the end of the regular season.

One game was selected for each of the 12 teams. Game selection was determined based on whether it was nationally or widely televised and whether the game itself carried significance for the team's respective fanbases. Most nationally televised games during this data collection involved rivalries, such as the New York Yankees vs. Boston Red Sox, and San Jose Sharks vs. Los Angeles Kings. Other nationally televised games were held for home openers, such as the Atlanta Braves. In addition, other types of games were included because of the time of year, including playoff games for the Golden State Warriors and Cleveland Cavaliers.

A sample of 540 live-tweets were collected in this study. This research defined the live-tweeting period as one hour before the scheduled start time of a game to one hour after the conclusion of the game. All of the tweets posted during this time period for each game were included for analysis. The numbers of retweets, likes, and replies were counted one hour after the composition of a pregame or postgame tweet. For example, if a team tweeted a starting lineup at 6:30 p.m. before a game started, the numbers of retweets, likes, and replies were counted at 7:30 p.m. The numbers of retweets, likes and replies were counted two hours after the publication of a tweet during the game. Longer response time was chosen for in-game tweets

to allow followers enough time to respond. This decision was made based on the findings from the pilot study on some existing live-tweets. The pilot study found that user engagement in live-tweeting, as measured by retweets, likes, and replies, tended to die out after an hour for pregame and postgame. In contrast, in-game tweets tended to have high levels of engagement within a two-hour timespan. In-game tweets were defined as those taking place from the time the team recognized the game began to the time the team tweeted out the final score. For example, if a team tweeted out a score in the middle of a game at 8:05 p.m., the number of retweets, likes, and replies were counted at 10:05 p.m. The majority of tweets were posted in-game rather than during pregame or postgame. As shown in Appendix 1, the number of live-tweets varied by region and by team.

Coding Scheme

The unit of observation in this study was live-tweet on Twitter. The following categories were developed to code the live-tweets posted for the selected sporting events.

User engagement. Following Stokes and the Minds of Quirk (2013), this study operationalized user engagement as a composite measure with three sub-dimensions: retweets, likes, and replies. For each collected tweet, the researcher coded the number of retweets (Mean (M) = 364.07, Standard Deviation (SD) = 995.60), the number of likes (M = 564.86, SD = 1113.58) and the number of replies (M = 10.24, SD = 20.40). Overall engagement was calculated by adding up the numbers for the three sub-dimensions (M = 939.16, SD = 2,091.81).

Multimedia components. Multimedia was measured by five components in this study: videos, still images, GIFs, emojis, and links. The number of each multimedia component was counted for each tweet. Among all of the collected tweets (N = 540), 16.7% of the tweets had at least one video, with 25.2% having at least one image, 11.3% having at least one GIF, 16.9% having at least one emoji, and 10.4% having at least one link.

Call to action. Call to action was operationalized as a message in which Twitter followers were explicitly told to do something or were asked to answer a question. For example, during the San Jose Sharks game, the team's Twitter account asked fans to tweet out their seat locations. The presence of a call to action in a tweet was coded as 1 with the absence of it coded as 0.

Giveaway. Giveaway was operationalized as a promotional item given to reward fans or Twitter followers. In live-tweeting, it often entails a material prize given to a fan by the team directly. For example, in a #SharksSocial campaign, the San Jose Sharks gave one fan a red scarf. The presence of a giveaway in a tweet was coded as 1 with the absence of it coded as 0.

Mention. Mention was operationalized as the use of @username in the tweet. The author coded the number of mentions included in each tweet (M = .51, SD = .76).

Hashtag. Hashtag was operationalized as the use of # followed by a keyword or a topic in the tweet. The author coded the number of hashtag included in each tweet (M = .93, SD = .88).

Valence of tweet. This study coded tweet valence into three categories by identifying the dominant sentiment of a tweet. These categories were positive (56.3%), negative (3.5%), and neutral (40.2%). This variable was then dummy-coded into three variables of positive, negative, and neutral valence.

Time of tweeting and use of scores and stats were included as two control variables. Time of tweeting was coded into two categories of during game (1) or not (0). Use of scores and stats was coded into two categories of with scores and stats (1) and without scores and stats (0).

Coding Procedure and Inter-Coder Reliability

The current author and another coder first categorized the tweets after several training sessions and developed the filtering criteria to sort out the irrelevant tweets. The researchers then established the definition for each category with sufficient examples to guide the coding. After establishing the coding scheme, the two researchers randomly selected and coded a subsample (i.e., 12%) of all collected live-tweets. The inter-coder reliability test using Krippendorff's alpha was conducted for this subsample of tweets and accordingly set at 80%. For the coding categories with lower inter-coder reliability, the two researchers further discussed the coding strategies and trained each other to reach higher agreement and conducted another round of coding. The inter-coder reliability test results indicated that all of the coding categories reached a high level

of reliability: time of tweeting = 1; scores and stats = 1; number of videos = 1; number of still images = 1; number of GIFs = 1; number of emojis = 1; number of links = 1; call-to-action = .8; giveaways = .8; number of mentions = .97; number of hashtags = .97; valence of tweet = .83. After establishing the inter-coder reliability, the two researchers independently coded the respective portions of the entire sample of tweets.

Data Analysis

This study adopted hierarchical multiple regressions to examine the research questions and test the hypotheses. The control variables and the independent variables were entered into the models in blocks. Regression analysis was first run for user engagement as a composite measure and then for each dimension of it.

IV. Results

This section described how different components of tweets have effects on user engagement as measured by the composite number of retweets, likes, and replies, followed by their effects on the three composite elements individually.

Still images. As shown in Appendix II, specifically in Block 1, the use of still images among different types of multimedia components significantly predicted user engagement as measured by the composite number of retweets and the number of likes, replies ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$). Therefore, H1 was partially supported by one multimedia component. The more still images used in a tweet, the more likely users engaged in the tweet. Regarding still images' effect on each dimension of user engagement, still images resulted in more retweets and likes at a statistically significant level. However, the use of still images did not have any significant effect on the number replies received by a tweet.

Links. In addition to still images, the use of links also had some effect on user engagement. Although the number of links used in a tweet did not have any significant effect on user engagement as a composite measure, it significantly predicted number of replies received by a tweet ($p < .05$). Unlike the positive influence of still images, the use of links had negative impacts on the number of replies.

For the other multimedia components, such as the uses of videos, GIFs, and emojis, this study discovered any significant influence on neither user engagement as a composite measure, nor their individual components, which partially rejected H1.

Effects of Discussion Starter and Facilitator

This study did not find any significant effect of call to action or giveaway ($p > .05$) on user engagement as a composite measure or any dimensions of it. Therefore, H2 was not supported (refer to Block 2 in Appendix II).

Effects of Messages Visibility

Among the different message strategies sports teams used to vary the visibility of tweets, only the use of mentions (i.e., @username) was found to have significant effect on engagement (refer to Block 3 in Appendix II). The number of mentions had a negative effect ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .01$) on user engagement as a composite measure. The more mentions used in a tweet, the less engaged a user was. Therefore, H3 was supported. This negative effect was also discovered for all three dimensions of user engagement. If a tweet mentioned Twitter accounts (i.e., usernames), it was less likely for it to be retweeted ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .01$), liked ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .01$), and replied ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .01$).

Hashtags had no significant effect on user engagement as either a composite measure or any dimension of it. H4 was thus not supported.

Effects of Tweet Valence

RQ3 asked, how do tweet valence influence user engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events? The valence of tweet was found to have some significant influences on user engagement (refer to Block 4 in Appendix II). Compared to neutral tweets, positive tweets led to significantly more user engagement as a

composite measure ($\beta = .21, p < .001$). Positive tweets also led to significantly more retweets ($\beta = .20, p < .001$), more likes ($\beta = .22, p < .001$), and more replies ($\beta = .16, p < .01$) than neutral tweets. Negative tweets did not significantly differ from neutral tweets for user engagement as a composite measure, or number of retweets, or number of likes. But negative tweets did lead to a greater number of replies than neutral tweets ($\beta = .10, p < .05$).

Effects of Control Variables

Aside from the independent variables, control variables were found to exert some significant influences on user engagement and different dimensions of it. In order to run the multiple regressions, the researchers dummy-coded the three-level variable of sports type into baseball and basketball with hockey as the reference category. Different sports received different levels of engagement.

Type of sport. The analysis results showed that there was no significant difference between baseball live-tweets and hockey live-tweets with regard to user engagement as a composite measure, or number of retweets, or number of likes (refer to Block 5 in Appendix II). However, baseball tweets led to significantly more replies received by a tweet than hockey tweets ($\beta = .09, p < .05$). When comparing basketball tweets to hockey tweets, the author found that basketball tweets led to significantly higher user engagement as a composite measure than hockey tweets ($\beta = .23, p < .001$). For each of the three dimensions of user engagement, basketball led to better outcomes than hockey. Basketball live-tweets got retweeted significantly more often than hockey live-tweets ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). Basketball live-tweets obtained more likes than hockey live-tweets ($\beta = .24, p < .001$). They also received more replies than hockey live-tweets ($\beta = .16, p < .01$).

Time of tweeting. Whether a tweet was posted pregame and postgame or during game did not predict either user engagement as a composite measure or any dimension of it.

Scores and stats. Including scores and states in live-tweets significantly predicted all aspects of user engagement. Having scores and stats in live-tweets positively influenced user engagement as a composite measure ($\beta = .17, p < .001$), number retweets ($\beta = .18, p < .001$), number of likes ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) and number of replies ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) received by live-tweets.

V. Discussion

This study examines the influence of live-tweet strategies adopted by sports teams on fans' engagement. It contributes to the existing literature on sports communication by focusing on an underexplored social media practice: live-tweeting. Compared to other social media activities, live-tweeting of sporting events is more fast-paced and provides a more concentrated context for discussion (Schirra et al., 2014). Given these unique characteristics of live-tweeting, the researchers have discovered some interesting findings that are different from the existing studies (Bruni, et al., 2012; Corney, et al., 2014).

First, despite the general positive assumptions about multimedia (Bruni et al., 2012; Sundar, 2007; You & Luo, 2013), this study did not discover significant positive effects of many multimedia components, except for still images, on fan engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events. The positive influence of still images can be explained by the elicited visual arousal and emotional stimulation with relative low cognitive demand for processing (Bruni et al., 2012; Collyer et al., 1972).

Unlike previous research (Bakhshi et al., 2016; Detenber, et al., 1998), videos, GIFs, and emojis had no significant impact on any aspect of engagement. This might be attributed to both the nature of live-tweeting and the expectation of Twitter users. In general, Twitter users expect short bursts of information and disposable updates in live-tweeting, especially when it moves along with the event. Compared to still images that require no action except for a glance, videos and GIFs demand sustained attention and more cognitive resources to process. During a live sports game, fans and followers are more likely to focus on the game itself and less willing to spare effort on viewing the moving images on Twitter. Additionally, videos and GIFs may take a while to load on mobile devices with slow Internet or a poor connection, which would likely cause disengagement from the tweet. One possible explanation for the lack of engagement with emojis might be that they are harder to interpret than text itself. For example, during a San Jose Sharks game, the team tweeted the entire second period of the game exclusively through emojis. As the period progressed, fans found this to be an annoying tactic because the meaning of the messages was unclear. At one point in the

game, the Sharks scored, but the goal was disallowed upon further review by the referees. This complicated situation and the team's reaction could not be easily expressed by just emojis. One fan even described the use of emojis in this circumstance as "irritating as hell." Another fan said that he was "still not sure what happened." Although emojis may be a creative way to capture an emotion that text could not otherwise provide, they can reduce engagement when used in excess.

Links had a negative impact on engagement, most notably with the number of replies and likes. This could be attributed to the fact that links take up several characters and limit the amount of content of a tweet, leading to less user engagement. In addition, clicking on a link forces a user to leave his or her current screen or browser window, which makes it hard to come back to Twitter to like or reply.

Only the use of mentions had negative effects on all aspects of engagement as predicted by existing research (Suh et al., 2010), which indicates that it did reduce engagement by limiting visibility and narrowing the size of the audience. If sports teams would like to engage more users in live-tweeting, they need to consider limiting the use of mentions. The use of hashtags did not have any significant impact on any aspect of engagement. It is possible that sports fans mainly unite with other fans based on the teams they support. Therefore, the use of hashtags is less likely to expand the reach of tweets to the broader public. On the other hand, once fans were already united by the focused topic of a game, using hashtags would not matter to them.

This study also contributes to the understanding of engagement by examining the effect of live-tweeting strategies on different aspects of engagement. The findings suggest that different tweet content strategies vary in their capacity to affect tweet virality (i.e., the number of retweets), emotional support (i.e., the number of likes), and direct conversation with teams (i.e., the number of replies). For example, polarized tweets (i.e., positive or negative) both positively predicted fans' engagement in direct discussion with teams, whereas only positive tweets affected the virality of tweets and the emotional support received by the tweets.

VI. Limitation and Future Directions

This study defines and operationalizes engagement following the behavioral approach by focusing on user activities and actions (Zarrella, 2009). However, engagement can also be conceptualized as a multi-dimensional concept that goes beyond digital outreach on social media (Oh et al., 2015). Future research may consider exploring how content strategies in live-tweeting of sporting events influence other dimensions of engagement. For example, it may be interesting to examine the fans' experiences with live-tweeting by measuring their attention allocation, absorption, and appraisal of live-tweets (O'Brien & Toms, 2008). An extension of the current study may also compare the psychological engagement to the behavioral engagement and evaluate how the two influence each other.

In the current study, engagement was determined by the presence of activities and actions of fans. However, the active contribution on social media mainly comes from a small percentage of the community (McCay-Peet & Quan-Hasse, 2016). Many Twitter followers are the lurkers who listen to conversations without contributing much to the content. Future research may take this particular way of engagement in live-tweeting of sporting events into consideration.

Due to the time constraints, the current study collected and analyzed the live-tweets during games for three types of sports. A follow-up study can expand this sample to include live-tweets from other sports, especially those with large fanbases.

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Appendix I.

Numbers of Twitter Follower & Live-tweets by Sports Teams

Team	Region	Number of Followers*	Number of Live-tweets
San Jose Sharks	West	463K	67
Oakland A's	West	366K	13
Golden State Warriors	West	2.45M	58
Carolina Hurricanes	South	265K	81
Charlotte Hornets	South	585K	60
Atlanta Braves	South	849K	39
Cleveland Cavaliers	Midwest	1.5M	43
Chicago Cubs	Midwest	1.08M	36
Chicago Blackhawks	Midwest	1.65M	66
Boston Celtics	East	1.96M	24
New York Islanders	East	330K	48
New York Yankees	East	1.88M	5

* Follower counts as of September 26, 2016.

Appendix II.

Predictors of Engagement

	User Engagement (Composite) β	Dimensions of User Engagement		
		Retweets β	Likes β	Replies β
<i>Block 1</i>				
Still Image	.09*	.09*	.09*	-.01
Link	-.07	-.06	-.08 [#]	-.09*
Video	-.05	-.03	-.06	-.07
GIF	.01	-.01	.02	-.04
Emoji	.01	.01	.01	-.01
<i>Block 2</i>				
Call to Action	-.04	-.03	-.05	.05
Giveaway	-.06	-.05	-.07	.07
<i>Block 3</i>				
Mention	-.15**	-.13**	-.15**	-.14**
Hashtag	-.02	-.02	-.02	.02
<i>Block 4</i>				
Positive Valence ^{††} (Neutral as baseline)	.21***	.20***	.22***	.16**
Negative Valence	-.02	-.02	-.02	.10*
<i>Block 5</i>				
Baseball [†] (Hockey as baseline)	.07	.06	.07	.09*
Basketball (Hockey as baseline)	.23***	.20***	.24***	.16**
Time of Tweeting (during game or not)	-.01	.01	-.03	-.03
Scores & Stats (with=1, without=0)	.17***	.18***	.15**	.10*
Total R ²	.18	.16	.19	.10
Adjusted R ²	.15	.13	.17	.07

Note: Sample size = 540. Cell entries are final entry ordinary least squares standardized Beta (β) coefficients.

[#] $p = .05$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. [†]Type of Sports (i.e., baseball, basketball and hockey) was dummy-coded into two variables of baseball and basketball with hockey as the reference category (or baseline). ^{††}Valence of tweets (i.e., positive, negative and neutral) was dummy-coded into two variables of positive valence and negative valence with neutral valence as the reference category.

An Analysis of the Iconic Images from the Black Lives Matter Movement

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Abstract

In the midst of the national conversation surrounding the injustices faced by the black community, a wave of imagery documenting the Black Lives Matter movement has populated the media. This research sought to discover what elements raise a photograph to iconic status through the exploration of the images that have emerged from the Black Lives Matter movement. A qualitative two-part content analysis was used to examine the rhetorical power of a sample of five iconic images from the movement. It was found that the photographs in this sample were iconic because they served as more than mere documentation. Rather, they reshaped society's collective memories to construct a new narrative about American policies, society, and identity.

I. Introduction

A child's lifeless body washes up on the shores of a Turkish beach. A naked Vietnamese girl runs in terror after being splashed with napalm. Police dogs in Birmingham attack a black teenager. Social movements are often remembered through their icons. A single photographic icon has the profound impact to redefine narratives and shape humanity's collective consciousness. Hariman & Lucaites (2007) wrote that iconic photographs "have more than documentary value, for they bear witness to something that exceeds words" (p. 1). Icons place the visual at the forefront of cultural construction, thus acting as powerful tools for social change.

In 2013, after the shooting of 17-year-old African American Trayvon Martin, an online platform emerged with the objective of campaigning against the brutality and systematic racism aimed toward black people. It was built behind the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Throughout 2013 and 2014, activists used #BlackLivesMatter to organize groups and individuals throughout the country to amplify conversations about the injustices faced by the black community. Immediately following the shooting of Michael Brown Jr. in August 2014, protests and riots broke out in the streets of Ferguson, Missouri. This event sparked nationwide outrage and, soon after, the #BlackLivesMatter project transformed into a social movement (Khan-Cullors, 2016).

Thousands of images circulated the internet from these protests and continue to populate it to this day. The most successful of the images that emerged out of the countless others have become icons for the

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movement. Through the exploration of the images that have emerged from the Black Lives Matter movement, this research seeks to discover the conditions that led some photographs to be elevated to the level of an icon. The author considered not just the formal techniques of the image's construction but also the civic performance of the photograph.

II. Literature Review

The power of the photographic image has been well documented for decades. Yet not all images achieve an equal level of influence. Perlmutter (2004) suggests that the photographs that achieve an "elevated level of fame" and "recognition in our media-saturated world" create the standard elements of a photojournalistic icon. Hariman & Lucaites (2007) define photojournalistic icons as those that are widely recognized and remembered, understood to be representations of historically significant events, activate strong emotional responses, and are reproduced across a range of media, genres, or topics. Iconic photographs go beyond mere documentation, they present powerful social realities within the interaction rituals of everyday life (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007).

Iconic photographs produced during the Civil Rights movement were at the core of shifting attitudes and policies. Spratt (2008) found that the images played a vital role in igniting emotions and fueling debates surrounding the issue of race. Additionally, the repetition of these iconic images within mainstream media added to the images' influential power. These icons epitomize American racial brutality and provide easily recognizable symbols that act as "frames" in constructing narratives about American politics, society, and identity (Spratt, 2008).

The photograph, specifically the iconic image, has a unique relationship with the viewer because it is unmatched by text or other communication visuals. Images convey information to viewers much faster than written or spoken word as well as carry more information than other forms (Wakeland, 2013). Schill (2012) noted that empirical studies have found that people believe what they see more than what they read or hear. When visual and verbal messages are in conflict, viewers have difficulty remembering the verbal information. In addition, visual messages override other messages when processed simultaneously. In regard to social change, studies have found that images trigger emotional responses almost instantly, even before a logical response can be created (Wakeland, 2013).

While researchers and political and news elites alike have asserted the influential value of visual images, the actual influence of visual images was not often systematically investigated. Domke, Perlmutter, and Spratt (2002) attempted to gain insight into how people process visual images within the context of news coverage through an experiment in which news coverage was systematically altered. They found that images have a powerful ability to trigger the information processes within a person's mental system. The findings revealed that the influence of visual news images on the public could only be understood after considering viewers' predispositions and values. This builds on the social psychology theory of priming, which refers to unconscious effect of preceding stimulus or event on how people react to some subsequent stimulus (Bryant, Zillmann, & Oliver, 2002). Domke et al. (2002) showed that priming could be applied to how people react to visual images. The new images we encounter are not isolated stimuli but relate to previous images or ideas and are likely to be evaluated in relation to pre-existing beliefs and experiences.

Other studies have demonstrated that media priming offers the audience a prior frame of context that affects an audience's later judgment and behavior. Iyengar and Simon (1993) investigated priming in relation to the first Persian Gulf Crisis in 1990. The findings revealed that the increasing prevalence of media coverage on the Gulf Crisis significantly altered Americans' political concerns. Further, the study revealed George Bush's popularity became more dependent upon foreign policy due to the media's priming effect. More recently, Johnson, Olivo, Gibson, Reed, and Ashburn-Nardo (2009) conducted two experiments that tested the influence of media priming of black stereotypes on support for government policy that assisted black versus white persons in need. Experiment 1 revealed that priming the "black criminal" stereotype to white participants through exposure to photographs of black people looting after Hurricane Katrina reduced policy support for black victims, but did not influence support toward white victims. Experiment 2 revealed that priming the "promiscuous black female" stereotype to white participants through exposure to sexual rap music reduced policy support for a black pregnant woman in need, but did not influence support toward a white pregnant woman in need. The results demonstrated that empathetic responding is significantly influenced by

the mere exposure of negative media depictions of stereotypical groups (Johnson et al., 2009).

In our modern media-saturated world, worries about visual overload leading to desensitization have become a growing concern. Sontag (1977) argued, “In these last decades, ‘concerned’ photography had done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it” (p.21), thus, linking photography with the theory of compassion fatigue. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, compassion fatigue is the “apathy or indifference towards the suffering of others or to charitable causes acting on their behalf, typically attributed to numbingly frequent appeals for assistance, esp. donations; (hence) a diminishing public response to frequent charitable appeals” (quoted in Campbell, 2012, p.7). Campbell (2012) contests the compassion fatigue thesis by pointing to the identifiable victim effect, referring to the tendency to offer greater help to an identifiable victim than to large numbers of anonymous people (Lee & Feeley, 2016). Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson, and Gregory (2017) demonstrate the identifiable victim effect by showing that in the case of the iconic image of Aylan Kurdi, the 3-year-old Syrian child whose lifeless body washed up on a Turkish beach, had more impact on the world than statistical reports of the hundreds of thousands of deaths in the ongoing refugee crisis. The researchers gathered behavioral information consisting of Google trend data on searches worldwide and data on monetary donations to the Swedish Red Cross for funds designated to aid Syrian refugees. They found a dramatic increase in public interest after Kurdi’s photo was published. Social psychologists further contest the compassion fatigue theory through the idea of emotional contagion. Small and Verrochi (2009) theorized that emotional facial expression in pictures of victims is likely to cause contagion in viewers, thus altering viewers’ emotional states automatically and unconsciously. The victim’s negative emotional state converges with the viewer’s emotional state, resulting in greater sympathy and pro-social behavior. As with the identifiable victim effect, sad pictures generated greater sympathy and increased charitable giving.

The issue remains that the influence of iconic photographs is notoriously difficult to demonstrate. In recent years there has been a growing interest in the visual rhetoric of iconic photographs. Hairman and Lucaites (2007) suggest, “Easily referenced and, due to the proliferation of digital technologies, easily reproduced and altered” the iconic image possesses the ability to transmit meaning that can be widely circulated (p.12). Visual social semiotics, then, offers a means to analyze these rhetorical structures to extract meaning from images. Although visual social semiotics is not the only theoretical framework for visual analysis, it uniquely emphasizes that an image “is not the result of a singular, isolated, creative activity” but is “itself a social process” (Harrison, 2003, 47). Semiotics is the study of signs and their meanings. Visual social semiotics involves what can be said and realized with images and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted, which in terms of the photograph would be its point of view (Harrison, 2003). Writer and critic Umberto Eco (quoted in Hairman & Lucaites), a leader in semiotics, asserts that an iconic photo presents a set of transcriptions, meaning that the “larger operation of shifting between visual semiotics” and shifts in meaning that occur as the viewer reacts to “specific narratives or interpretive terms” both “in and extending beyond the composition” (p. 34).

This research sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What visual qualities help the photographs related to Black Lives Matter achieve an iconic status?

RQ2: What features and patterns are shared by the iconic photographs from the Black Lives Matter movement?

RQ3: What social narratives do these photographs transmit?

III. Methods

A qualitative two-part content analysis was conducted to examine the rhetorical power of selected iconic images from the Black Lives Matter movement. A visual social semiotic approach based on the work of Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) method of visual analysis provided a framework for the analysis of the photographs’ distinctive forms of appeal. An interpretive approach provided further analysis of the images as a mode of civic performance (Hairman & Lucaites, 2007). For the purposes of this research, the researcher has simplified the analytical processes detailed in the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and Hairman and Lucaites (2007) to best fit the research questions.

Sample

A sample of images was chosen from a curated gallery published by ABC News (“Black Lives Matter”, 2017) of the Black Lives Matter movement. This gallery captured some of the most widely used and recognized images seen and shared in news media reports and social media. For the purposes of this study, a sample of five images was chosen from the overall 37 images published in the gallery. To maintain a stylistically diverse sample of images, no two images were chosen from the same photographer. Additionally, images were chosen that varied in subject matter and style to better represent the various narratives captured in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Procedure

Three categories of meaning were adapted from the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). They were used as a semiotic framework of analysis for each photograph from the sample. Specific characteristics were outlined for each category of meaning. This study operationalized these categories and their subsequent characteristics as follows:

1. Representational meaning: the visual content of the image; this includes (a) subject matter, (b) symbols, (c) setting, (d) action/reactional processes, and (e) people.
2. Interpersonal meaning: the relationship between the viewer, the image, and the people represented in the image. This includes (a) social distance (how close the subjects in the image appear to the viewer), (b) perspective, and (c) demand characterized by the visual gaze of the subject(s) in the image.
3. Compositional meaning: the image’s layout of visual syntax. This includes (a) leading lines, (b) color, (c) visual focal points, and (d) salience (size, focus, foreground/background)

The close reading of the visual forms of appeal within each image offered the means to account for its role in public culture through interpretive analysis. To analyze the images as a mode of civic performance, the following themes were applied to each image: (a) indexicality¹, specifically on a historical account, (b) universal themes, (c) emotional experience (civic pride, outrage, confusion, etc.), (d) cultural transparency (people understand the visual information equally regardless of cultural differences), and (e) political context and implications.

Content analysis of the five images allowed the researcher to find common themes and strategies central to the iconic images’ meaningful whole. While analysis of the visual makeup of the images can be accounted for, the true rhetoric of each image is never static and changes with the passage of time. Through analysis of what makes these images iconic, a platform for exploration into the images’ role in social change was provided.

IV. Findings

An analysis was done on an image-by-image basis by performing a semiotic analysis and then an interpretive analysis before moving to the next image.

Photo 1: Tear Gas Thrower

Representational meaning. The scene depicts three protesters on a road with its location undefined by the image’s contents (refer to Figure 1). The protester in the foreground stands with his left arm cocked holding a flaming tear gas canister. His posture implies that the subject is seconds away from throwing the canister toward whatever remains outside of the photographic frame. The protester in the foreground is wearing an American flag T-shirt, a symbol synonymous with patriotism, thus placing America at the heart of

¹: For the purposes of this paper, *indexicality* is defined as the understanding of the relationship between the image and the concepts it stands for.

a scene resistance. Two of the protestors are shown wearing bandanas around their nose and mouth. This practice is common throughout various protest movements and further symbolizes a theme of resistance. The bag of chips in the protester's right hand adds a humorous element to the overall image, as it is an item not conventionally associated with protests. It indicates the strange energy and spontaneity among protests that night.



Figure 1. Cohen, R. (Photographer). (2014, August 9). Photo 1. Tear Gas Thrower: Ferguson protester throws a tear gas canister back to police [digital image].

Interpersonal meaning. Taken from a side angle, the viewer is placed in a position of power where the subject is watched from a distance that yields an objective viewpoint. From a distance, the subjects become less individual and instead become representative of a larger group. The image, devoid of any eye contact, offers no personal connection between the viewer and the subject. The focus of the image shifts away from the subject-viewer relationship to the action processes present in the frame. The image was shot at eye level creating a sense of equality between the viewer and the subjects. This perspective of equality plays into the larger narrative of the image as well as the overall Black Lives Matter movement. In the fight against oppression, equality is the overarching goal. Visual icons of the moment, such as this image, mirror that sentiment.

Compositional meaning. A visual focal point is created between the stark contrast between the bright, white light of the flaming tear gas canister and the dark tones in the background and surrounding elements. The subsequent focal point is the American flag T-shirt. The light radiating from the flaming tear gas canister illuminates the red colors of the shirt. Additionally, the contrast between the vivid red color and the dark tones surrounding it give it emphasis. Despite the similar size of the subjects, the cloud of smoke helps separate the foreground from the background, making the foreground elements more prominent. The background elements then become secondary to the understanding of the image, causing the viewer to create meaning from the flaming tear gas canister and the man throwing it. The cloud of smoke acts as a leading line that causes the eye to follow the path of the smoke to the canister. This line continues to lead the eye to the arm of the subject to the upper body and face. This form of a leading line draws attention to the subject in the image shifting the image's narrative away from a cloud of smoke to an icon of protest.

Interpretive analysis. The narrative of resistance is a universal theme at the heart of almost all social movements. The photograph captures Edward Crawford, the man throwing the tear gas canister, at a moment in time that greatly resembles Banksy's Flower Thrower. The artwork depicts a rioter, indicated by the figure's stance and outfit, about to throw a flower bouquet. Through the use of an unconventional weapon, Banksy promotes peace and hope in a place of destruction. Crawford mirrors the same pose of the figure within Banksy's work. He becomes that iconic hero figure that embodies this notion of hope in a place of destruction. The illustration of a black hero challenges cultural conventions as it is rarely depicted.

Photo 2: Blood Smear

Representational meaning. Visually uncomplicated, much of this image's meaning is drawn from the element's representation, rather than its literal value (refer to Figure 2). The bloody hand represents the protestors of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the police riot shield represents American police. The ambiguity of the location, identities of the subjects involved, and the specific context makes this image the epitome of the fight against police brutality. The officer holding the shield loses his or her individual identity and assumes the identity of an oppressive force as the word "police" is boldly displayed on the plastic barrier. The identity of the hand is established through its skin color and represents the American black community. The combination of the hand with the blood together symbolizes the police brutalization of the black community. The action of smearing blood on the police riot shield is what separates this image from others that depict similar scenes.



Figure 2. Rayford, S. (Photographer). (2016, September 21). Photo 2.Blood Smear: A woman smears blood on a police riot shield [digital image].

Interpersonal meaning. The close-up angle gives the viewer a personal account to experience the image's details and sensations. Having the police riot shield so close-up and dominant within the frame provides the subject and viewer a somewhat shared experience. The viewer adopts the hand as their own or experiences the hand as belonging to someone next to them, making the viewer have a feeling of oneness with the subject. The blood dripping down the hand can be felt and projected onto the viewer. The eye-level perspective mirrors a natural viewpoint that creates equality between the viewer and subjects. The hand and police riot shield are also positioned at the same eye level, creating a tension between the two. The visual gaze of the subjects in the photo is absent from the image, which offers no connection between the subject and the viewer. Instead of producing a visual demand through direct eye contact, it is established via intimate distance.

Compositional meaning. The eye is immediately drawn to the two bloody fingers touching the police riot shield. The black frame around the word "police" draws two leading lines that direct the eye toward the hand. The word "police" also acts as a leading line that draws a path directly to the two bloody fingers. The saturated red color of the blood contrasts the surrounding soft colors giving it greater salience, resulting in greater visual demand. Excluding the narrow visibility of the background elements, the elements in the frame are equally in focus. The visual focus points share the same relative values that contribute to the rhetoric of the image. However, the word "police" is the largest element as it stretches across the frame, emphasizing its importance. As the dominating element, it appears powerful in comparison to the weak hand.

Interpretive meaning. Violence is a universal theme that transcends cultural boundaries, and the smearing of blood captured in this image speaks directly to this theme. The viewer is instantly able to connect the word police and violence, thus creating a narrative of police brutality. More specifically, the omission of the subject's face makes the narrative about police brutality among the black community. Regardless of any prior

contextual knowledge, this image communicates this narrative effectively.

Photo 3: Mourning

Representational meaning. The image's subject matter depicts the agony of a man mourning the death of his son (refer to Figure 3). The rhetoric of the image relies on context to provide meaning. Without it, the image communicates a different message. There are several subjects within the frame; however, the image is visually constructed to draw attention to a crying Michael Brown Sr. It is a common practice in America to see funeral attendees wearing all black to signify mourning. No subjects are shown wearing black in the image, making it less obvious that they are at a funeral. The emotion is what gives this image its context.



Figure 3. Perry, R. (Photographer). (2014, August 25). Photo 3. Mourning: Michael Brown Sr. cries out as his son's casket is lowered into the ground [digital image].

Interpersonal meaning. A removed social distance is established by the wide angle of the image, but it is still close enough to make the viewer feel as an observatory participant present at the funeral. The casket at the bottom of the frame further adds distance between the subjects and the viewer. An intimate moment viewed at a comfortable distance emulates much of how this funeral service was broadcasted to America, and further, much of how the majority of Americans view the Black Lives Matter movement. The eye-level perspective of the image establishes not only equality between the viewer and subjects but also a sentiment of understanding that elicits empathy within the viewer. Instead of demand being characterized by the visual gaze of the subjects, the visualization of such a strong emotional experience demands a reaction from the viewer.

Compositional meaning. This image does not heavily rely on compositional techniques for its narrative. The main visual focal point is the face of Michael Brown Sr. The wide-mouthed sob stands out among the serious expressions surrounding him. The majority of the people in the image are looking at Brown, causing the viewer to follow each gaze's path back to him. There are no leading lines physically present in the image. Color in this image does not serve as a compositional technique, but rather as a political function as the majority of the clothing is red, white, or blue. Brown is the most in focus, with the casket in the foreground out of focus. As a result, the narrative becomes a story about the impact of the passing of Michael Brown Jr. on those who knew him, especially his father.

Interpretive meaning. The emotional experience of viewing this image is what makes it so powerful. According to Hariman and Lucaites (2007), "The emotions captured in the iconic image acquire additional significance because they become political emotions" (36). The pure agony of Michael Brown Sr. speaks

more than just a man mourning the death of his son. The image of Brown at his son's funeral became an icon for the pain and suffering of those affected by the injustices surrounding police brutality as it captured national attention. The loss of a loved one is a universal theme that everyone eventually comes to face. The image becomes personal for the viewer as he or she is confronted with the idea of losing a loved one.

Photo 4: 'Unrest in Baton Rouge'

Representational meaning. This image in its entirety is a symbol of the civil unrest of the black community that has spread across the nation (refer to Figure 4). The image is a construct of the visual tensions between excess and restraint, male and female, black and white, protection and vulnerability. The location is ambiguous, yet contains objects that are easily recognizable, thus creating a familiar scene that could take place throughout the country making it more relatable to the viewer. The stark contrast between the heavily armed officers dressed in riot gear and the unarmed black woman symbolically points to the long history of the brutalization of black people in the United States. The riot gear acts as an indicator of a scene of violence, yet the lone woman appears calm, as she stands straight-bodied, with nothing but car keys, a phone, and her fluttering dress in the breeze. The long dress further emphasizes her femininity, which is a theme classically associated with vulnerability. The riot gear obscures the faces of the officials, lessening their individual identities and unifies them as a powerful mass. Conversely, the woman standing alone humanizes the subject and the contingent cause of the Black Lives Matter movement. Body language defines the key action processes within this image. The woman's stance, bold, and tall, dominates the space around her. It's this stillness that personifies the power of resistance - an invisible force that appears to repel the approaching officers as their bodies arch backward. This moment of non-violent heroism taps into our collective memories as it embodies the same style of peaceful resistance used by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Figure 4. Bachman, J. (Photographer). (2016, July 9). Photo 4. 'Unrest in Baton Rouge': Ieshia Evans is detained by law enforcement during a demonstration following the shooting of Alton Sterling [digital image].

Interpersonal meaning. Captured at exactly 90 degrees to the side, a perfect portrait profile of the woman makes the image appear posed. The subjects are also displayed at eye level, making it appear as if the photographer was waiting in position for this moment to happen. The humanistic qualities visible in images through slight imperfections make them appear slightly more in the moment and true to reality, which adds to the images' rhetoric. The exactness of this angle along with the calm composure of the woman makes the image appear more as an illustration, rather than a photojournalistic representation. This illustration speaks to a much deeper meaning, but in the current media-saturated world of the present day, iconic images

need to immediately evoke a response from their viewers. Whether this image was posed or not, it lacks a quality of realism.

The subjects are captured from a comfortable social distance that puts the viewer in an observatory role. A closer social distance would allow the viewer to better feel the tension between the woman and the arresting officers. Direct visual gaze is absent from the image, further making the viewer feel like an observatory participant. Visual demand is established through body language and compositional construction rather than direct eye contact.

Compositional meaning. A study of contrast that can be divided into two halves - the concentration of officers gives the left side of the frame a heavy visual weight that contrasts the lone woman on the right. The concentration of the dark tones of the riot gear outfits worn by the officers also contributes to a greater visual weight on the left side of the frame. The imbalance of visual weight speaks to the greater imbalances of power and equality of the represented groups in the image – a metaphor for a dynamic that has been repeated throughout history. The image is framed in a way that cuts off where the line of officers begins and ends. This makes it appear as if the row of officers is never-ending and greater in force. This framing, in addition to the visual weight of the left side of the frame, drawing attention to the line of officers so that they are not lost in the background. The key action takes place directly in the middle of the frame, immediately drawing in the viewer's attention to the foreground. The line created by the division in the road with the green grass draws a path that leads the eye directly to where the hands of the officer and woman meet. Directly below where the two hands meet is a cracked line in the road that creates a vertical division between the two subjects, yet simultaneously brings them together by acting as a leading line.

Interpretive analysis. An individual standing up to a more powerful force, the oppressed confronting the oppressor is a visual narrative that has been captured numerous times before and has become a part of our collective memory. Marc Riboud's iconic 1967 photograph Flower Child captured a young American holding up a flower to a line of National Guardsmen during an anti-Vietnam march. In part Unrest in Baton Rouge gains part of its rhetoric by transcending the experience captured in Flower Child. It demands viewers to remember the political struggles of the past. The problem that remains is that Unrest in Baton Rouge bares too many similarities to its counterpart, which make it appear almost as a replication of the original. Recycled iconography merges together in our collective memory and lacks individuality. Unrest in Baton Rouge is ultimately a cliché that fails to offer a new perspective. Further, the relative lack of emotion on the woman's face makes it seem as if the image is a representation of this message rather than the reality captured within it.

Photo 5: Hands up, don't shoot

Representative meaning. Raising both hands in the air is a classic gesture to signal surrender to authorities. Protesters after the shooting of Michael Brown adopted this gesture as a symbol of protest with the slogan "hands up, don't shoot." In this defining moment, a figure raises both hands in the air in a sea of tear gas as the person kneels alone in the middle of the street. Appearing almost as a silhouette in addition to having her back turned, the identity of the subject becomes ambiguous about gender, facial features and race are obscured. Identity is insignificant to the understanding of the image, as the "hands up, don't shoot" gesture tells a powerful narrative of its own. The subject, surrounded in a cloud of smoke and glaring lights, appears in the middle of an unidentifiable road. The setting is ambiguous, signaling to the viewer that this could occur almost anywhere. What is clear is that this is a scene of a protest.



Figure 5. Olson, S. (Photographer). (2014, August 17). Photo 5. Hands up, don't shoot: Tear gas surrounds a woman kneeling in the street with her hands in the air after a protest for Michael Brown [digital image].

Interpersonal meaning. It is an uncommon practice in photography to capture subjects' backs because it is unengaging for viewers with some exceptions. There is some degree of suggestibility that comes from being behind an action that creates a visual innuendo. Additionally, silhouettes engage viewers differently as it creates a visual that is open to interpretation. The viewer subconsciously projects his or her own emotions onto the silhouetted figure in reaction to the scene. As the viewer sees the lone figure in this image kneeling on the ground, hands up surrounded by tear gas and glaring lights, a range of feelings of fear, anxiety, helplessness, or disempowerment are projected onto the subject. The far social distance of the image puts the viewer in an observatory role and creates a focus on the scene rather than just the individual. Void of any visible facial features, the photo's demand is not established through any sort of visual gaze; rather, it is established through compositional techniques.

Compositional meaning. Positioned in the center of the image, along with surrounding negative space, draws attention to the subject. The stark contrast of the dark tones of the figure with the bright white and orange hues in the background further emphasizes the subject. The white light in the image has a blinding effect that strains the eyes upon viewing. It elicits an emotional reaction that brings feelings of vulnerability, confusion, and intimidation, simulating some of the characteristics of tear gas. The parallel solid white lines in the road that horizontally cut across the bottom third of the image act as leading lines to the legs of the subject. Even though the image is compositionally built around the subject, these leading lines create an awkward focal point that leads the eye to the legs, instead of the arms and hands, which are far more significant to the image's narrative. Salience in this image does not play a significant role.

Interpretive analysis. Protesters took a universal gesture and turned it into a reminder of the police brutality upon unarmed black individuals. Image rhetoric and body rhetoric are separate entities, meaning that the act of this gesture captured in this image is not equivalent to the rhetoric of the image as a whole. This image captures the spark of a social revolution where the transition from passivity to confrontation is personified, making it stand out from the countless other photographs depicting the same gesture. Tear gas, commonly used by law enforcement during riots, juxtaposed with the image's characteristics reminiscent of a crime scene transforms the narrative from one of oppression to one of defiance.

V. Analysis

The study sought to identify the distinctive forms of appeal of the photographic icon and its implications as a mode of civic performance. Through analysis of the visual characteristics of each of the photographs, it was revealed which of those were successful in contributing to the image's meaningful status. Features and patterns of the visual characteristics shared by the images were identified to present a proposed standard for the practices that can produce photojournalistic icons. It was found that each image included a single protagonist. This supports the notion of the identifiable victim effect proposed by Slovic et al. (2017), who asserted that a photograph of a single identified individual captures the attention of people and moves them to take interest in ways that other media are unable to do. The revelation that each protagonist is black played an imperative role in each image's narrative. *Unrest in Baton Rouge*, *Tear Gas Thrower*, and *Hands up* portray the single protagonist as a hero. In the American media, black civic heroism is rarely portrayed. The visualization of the black hero introduces a new narrative into the American media landscape.

All of the photographs tell a simple narrative that plays into a collective desire for defiance. The archetype of the individual confronting a powerful force is a part of a collective memory. Each photograph was a different version of that archetype. Michael Brown Sr., in his state of despair, acts as a call to action to challenge the injustices committed by law enforcement. Whether confronting the oppressive force directly or by promoting the need for change, each image, *Tear Gas Thrower*, *Blood Smear*, *Mourning*, *Unrest in Baton Rouge*, and *Hands up*, don't shoot, was a different narrative of resistance told through a single person.

The semiotic analyses revealed that the most successful of the images have a clean composition, were taken at eye level, have ambiguous locations, and are devoid of direct visual gaze. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) wrote that demand established through direct visual gaze is the first place that creates "a visual form or direct address" that "acknowledge the viewers explicitly" as well as demand that "the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her" (p. 122). The photographs studied in this research reveal that key action processes can establish such demand. The absence of direct visual gaze shifted the image's rhetoric away from the subject-viewer relationship, but to the action processes.

VI. Conclusion

Photojournalism plays a unique role in defining and shaping public culture and has become an integral role in American democracy. In a media-saturated society, true photojournalist icons recast social knowledge that initiates change and strengthen their influence rather than dilute it due to their wide circulation. Through the close reading of the photographic images of the Black Lives Matter movement, the author proposed a standard for the practices of photojournalistic icons. A finding here is that what makes a photo iconic is not the event itself, but what was captured and how it was captured. Photojournalistic icons are not art, rather as Hariman and Lucaites (2007) proposed, they represent a mode of civic performance that functions within the interaction rituals of everyday life.

Images like these must deal with the biases that already move people to think and act. "To change that behavior, you have to create a system of repetition around your issue in order to create new neuropathways in people's brains so that they interact with black people and blackness differently," said Shanelle Matthews, director of communications for the Black Lives Matter Global Network (Tringali, 2017, para. 7). Rooted in a deep history, the photographs of the Black Lives Matter movement generate a new narrative surrounding race and police brutality. The photographs analyzed here did more than mere documentation. Rather, in their re-use and repetition, these images became iconic as they reshaped collective memories to construct a new narrative about American politics, society, and identity.

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A Content Analysis of Crimes Posted on Social Media Platforms

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an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

With an increasing rate of violent crimes across the country as well as an uptick in crime in the news, perpetrators have turned to social media to gain attention, posting their crimes online. This study analyzed the motives of individuals who post their crimes on social media. By incorporating Sigmund Freud's theories on guilt and utilizing a narrative criticism of testimony, the findings demonstrate a lack of remorse and guilt on the part of criminals who conduct unlawful acts, such as drunk driving, gang rape, and murder. The study concluded that the rationale behind committing the crime and posting evidence of the illegal activities on social media outlets stems from the drive of human beings to be recognized by others in their environment and social media communities.

I. Introduction

Historical Context

With a skyrocketing presence of violent crimes across the country as well as an increase in crime in the news, perpetrators are turning to social media to gain attention by posting their crimes on social media platforms. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report showed an increase in violent crime in 38 out of 50 states in 2016 (FBI, 2016). Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has attempted to raise awareness around this issue, has declared, "The Department of Justice is committed to working with our state, local, and tribal partners across the country to deter violent crime, dismantle criminal organizations and gangs, stop the scourge of drug trafficking, and send a strong message to criminals that we will not surrender our communities to lawlessness and violence" (The United States Department of Justice, 2017). With an increase in crimes across the nation, the media's coverage has risen as well.

Crime news had been an information priority in America's culture for centuries. Court reporting can be traced as far back "as the 1830s, and early newspapers sensationalized crime to increase circulation" (Barak, 1994). The New York World, which was first published in 1860 in New York City, played a large role in the shaping of America's news production. In the late 1880s, the newspaper altered its focus from political news to crime and tragedy and enjoyed an increase in its circulation from 15,000 to 250,000 (1994). As the prevalence of crime news increased, exposure to crime through news outlets increased as well.

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Among Americans, 34% reported that they receive their news all throughout the day, not any specific time of day. Each day in 2011, Americans spent an average of 668 minutes with major media, including digital (online on desktop and laptop computers, mobile non-voice, and other connected devices), TV, radio, print media; with a projection of 728 minutes in 2018 (MediaPost, 2017). As news exposure increases, crime exposure has risen as well.

As American citizens continue to be exposed to aggression in the news, imitated behavior has been closely monitored. In a study of aggressive behavior of children in 1963, Bandura examined what children learned after observing adults physically and verbally abuse an inflatable doll. The children later mimicked this behavior by attacking the doll as the adults did ("Bobo doll experiment," 2015). Experiments such as these demonstrate that as children learn by watching crime on the news, children will, in turn, lack guilt and believe that this behavior is tolerated.

Sigmund Freud demonstrated the study of guilt in his book, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, which was published in 1930 (Gray, n.d., para. 1). World War I became a defining experiment opportunity for him. With the introduction of mass killings and societal pessimism, this event generated an overwhelming sense of negativity about human beings and human nature (para. 2). By reflecting on the events of World War I, Freud studied the Super-Ego and the sense of "Guilt." His theory will be used in this study to examine why people turn to social media to post crimes.

Modern Text

As Americans turn from newspapers to social media platforms for news, Facebook specifically has seen a large increase in users accessing its site. As of August 2017, 67% of Americans reported that they get at least some of their news on social media. Additionally, 66% of Facebook users use the site for news consumption (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017). Moreover, as of 2017, 202.8 million United States citizens have reported to be Facebook users; with a prediction of 219.8 million users for 2022 ("Number of Facebook users," 2017). This transition from crime exposure in traditional news media to social media has resulted in a relationship between social media users and criminal activity. With the continuous rise of social media use, people have turned to social media platforms to post crimes they have committed, and in turn create an epidemic of copycat crimes.

Prior to the integration of social media, crimes often were committed away from the public eye unless traditional media broadcasted the information. With the prevalence of agenda setting, traditional media often would choose which stories should be considered important and relevant to the public. Today, as social media continues to grow, the power of the people is expanding. Surette (2016) argued that social media has led to a new genre of performance crime "where people create accounts of their law-breaking through text, images and video, which are then digitally distributed to the public on a large scale" (Surette, 2016, para. 1). Reading the newspaper has in fact been replaced with the exposure to posting, tweeting, and other viral content. In criminal justice systems, information traditionally has been textual, linear, impersonal, and paper-based, and flowed in one direction across loosely coupled criminal justice agencies. Social media content, in contrast, "is multi-medium, digital, holistic, emotional, and image dominated" (Surette). The reshaping of the production and posting of crimes have increased the widespread presence of performance crimes that have resulted in offenders posting pre-crime confessions, videos of themselves committing crimes, footage showing the crime bragging, or evidence in the video that can be used against the perpetrator.

As social media performance crimes take over American's social media feeds, a line is blurred between the freedom of expression and criminal law. Traditional media, which was founded on the freedom of expression that the United States has subscribed to, acted as public watchdogs. However, social media, as stated previously, had changed the media landscape and is not constrained by the boundaries that traditional media once had. Prior to the interrogation of Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and more, media were confined to boundaries, such as location, time, space or culture. Coe (2015) reckons, "When in place, these boundaries acted as a natural filtration system for news and information" (p. 22). The access to 24-hour platforms has enabled users to escape the constraints that traditional media offered. Without such boundaries, Facebook users have the freedom to post crimes they have committed; therefore, motivate and even encourage other users to follow in their footsteps.

The term "copycat crime" implies that the cause of a crime can be connected to the exposure to media coverage of a prior crime. As media has controlled people's attention today, the view of copycat

crimes has evolved into media-sourced transmissions (Surette, 2017). Thompson, a forensic psychologist, believes “these crimes have the potential to increase. The terrible crimes being broadcast via social media get extensive media coverage which could contribute to copycat killers” (Levett, 2017). Without the involvement of the social media sites and efforts by others, such as scholars, law enforcement, and credible news outlets, crimes such as these will continue to happen on citizen’s social media feeds and increase the activity of copycat crimes.

With the increasing prevalence of social media and the growing threat of copycat crimes, social media users have seen the platform increasingly used for other inappropriate behavior that encourages these crimes. Among Facebook’s millions of users, some have used the outlet for actions that encourage and promote rape and sexual assault. Change.org, a website used to assist individuals with organizing petitions around advocating change, and Women’s Views on News, a not-for-profit website discussing women’s news, opinions and current events, have continuously commented that Facebook does not take these issues seriously and most importantly does not shut down the pages that promote this violence. Jane Osmond of Women’s Views on News commented, “This is hate speech . . . I find it very disturbing that Facebook don’t [sic] appear to see the connection between pages such as this and the prevailing rape culture we have in our society” (Davies, 2011). This general concern is not just maintained by a small population. People across the globe are joining a Twitter campaign asking Facebook to remove pages that promote this violence. With more than 180,000 supporters, American citizens continue to express a general concern for why this social media platform is not acting (“Petition campaign,” 2011). Unfortunately, this horrific content has resulted from users creating pages, and social media platforms have not stopped violent imagery. Only after Steve Stephens, the murderer of an elderly man in Cleveland, posted the gruesome video on Facebook, combined with the Facebook community’s backlash and disgust with the video, did Facebook finally removed the video. Facebook only issued a statement condemning the video, noting that it was removed after it had garnered global attention (“Why don’t social media,” 2017). With the expanding volume of content put on Facebook today, it is hard to determine when content will reach a massive audience. No army of moderators has the capacity to review and assess posts for violent content on all visual aspects of social media. This challenge brings little hope to the interception of videos even before they are done airing, let alone after the image has received global attention.

This study analyzed the motives behind posting committed crimes to social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter. For the purpose of this research social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

II. Literature Review

Overview of Civilization and Its Discontents

Although guilt and happiness are two overarching themes, Freud discussed not only their interpretation, but also the reconstruction of narcissism, love, and the origin of civilization (Dufresne, 2015). Dufresne concluded in his commentary that throughout the discussion of the said topics, Freud is, in fact, anti-cultural. Throughout the text, Dufresne translated Freud’s thoughts through the application of psychoanalysis. This theory concludes that the foundation of civility is *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (“dissatisfaction in society” or “discomfort with culture” or “discontentment in civilization.”) This finding may attribute to Freud’s overall belief that people act out in an aggressive manner due to their discomfort or discontentment with the world that surrounds them.

Corbett (2001) questioned whether civilization is a benefit or harm to human beings. Through the questioning of the origins of civilization, individuals are born into a threatening world in which they seek to avoid pain and gain pleasure. Freud viewed “the birth of civilization is rooted in egoism -- each of us striving in an often-hostile world, to create the greatest amount of personal happiness and avoid pain as best as we can” (2001, para. 6). As human beings develop, Freud believed that early people survived in a difficult world where there were three distinct sources of danger: natural disasters, disease, and other living beings. In summary, primitive human development strictly was concerned with dangers that would cause death. Today, with the continuing elimination of danger often caused by natural disaster and disease due to the ever-evolving society human beings inhabit, Freud argued that the societal danger from others has evolved into the worst form of

danger, our own super-ego (2001, para. 19). The super-ego is the part of a person's mind that acts as a self-critical conscience, reflecting social standards learned from elders. "Since the super-ego internalizes most of society's rules it can punish us with one of the strongest punishments possible: Guilt is the super-ego's calling our attention to our own failure to live up to what we have come to know as objective good. We then are evil or sinful," according to Corbett (2001, para. 21). This danger is believed to be the most harmful to humans, and without the feeling of guilt, humans cannot be a proper component of civilization.

Freud and Guilt

Throughout Freud's analysis of guilt and how it is formed within the human brain, one theory that he believed affects human being's guilt is the idea that through helplessness and dissatisfaction, human beings lack guilt when acting savagely and uncivilized.

By essence of identification with one or both parents, Freud argued that "a sense of guilt arises when the conscience blames the ego, there is an unconscious, pathogenic sense of guilt when the superego condemns the ego and is simultaneously powerfully repressed by the ego" (Westerink, 2009, p. 207).

Freud believed that helplessness has shaped the lack of guilt. The helplessness of an adolescent is believed to be the repression of drives and directives for mutual relationships between people. Freud declared himself in favor of a culture with which individuals could be satisfied. He considered it necessary that leaders of people be authoritative examples. Individuals are prepared to conform to a culture only if leaders indeed can set a trustworthy example for individuals (Westerink, 2009, p. 215). With the lack of guidance and direction through leadership or parental figures, it can be argued that citizens within a culture that lack this presence in their lives, were never educated or enlightened on guilt and societal norms.

With the lack of education surrounding societal standards, Freud additionally argued that human beings possess an unconscious desire for punishment. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud stated that the unconscious need for punishment is expressed in patterns of self-torment and self-sabotage with the unconscious sense of guilt. The need for punishment can often substitute for genuine guilt (Carveth, n.d.). With the inability to contain the capacity for the concern of others, one is not able to feel guilt, according to Freud (Carveth). "In the end, we come to see that we are dealing with what may be called a 'moral' fact . . . which is finding its satisfaction in the illness and refuses to give up the punishment of suffering . . . But as far as the patient is concerned this sense of guilt is dumb; it does not tell him he is guilty; he does not feel guilty, he feels ill" (Carveth). Without guilt, Freud believed that human beings often self-torment because of the evasion of guilt.

Comparing Interpretations

In juxtaposition to the phenomenon that guilt is established internally through the subconscious mind, other empirical research finds that guilt is established through interpersonal connections among members of a society or community. Guilt specifically appears most consistent, common and strong in times of communal relationships, which are classified by suppositions of mutual concern (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). When individuals surround themselves with other members of society that often do not feel a sense of concern about their personal actions or relationships with others, individuals become accustomed to avoiding all sense of responsibility or amenability. Other characteristics of establishing guilt in relationships include motivating people to treat partners well and avoid transgressions, minimizing inequities and enabling less powerful partners to get their way, and redistributing emotional distress to others. This belief, furthermore, does not deny that some experiences of guilt are established within one's own psyche when in isolation. However, many of the said instances may be derived from interpersonal processes and may reflect socialized individuals with internalized reference groups (Baumeister et al., 1994). This belief stems from the idea that individuals might find themselves feeling a sense of guilt alone, but still subconsciously consider the repercussions of their actions toward others in their life and social circle.

Other scholars find guilt to be an extremely necessary component for life's equation in working order. Guilt can be used as a social function that binds human beings together and signals individuals they have gone too far in their actions. However, although guilt can be used to modulate the way we treat each other, there are people who feel too little guilt. "I remember many years ago hearing the behaviorist O. Hobart Mower talk about his time as a patient in a mental hospital. While there, he formed small "honesty" groups, "confession" groups. Patients came together to confess their sins, speak truth to each other" (Eigen, 2007).

These citizens of society were believed to lack the common decency to go crazy and speak of the pain they caused in a matter-of-fact manner. Today, the United States is often believed to be run by insufficiently guiltless people; people who fail to feel the dreadful and horrendous aspects of their action by keeping their focus on self-interest; people who kill but do not feel the effect of killing (2007). Mohamed Atta, one of World Trade Center terrorists, was found with a four-page letter in his luggage. As described in the letter, Atta considered the fact that he was going to be killed for a godly thing of beauty and glory. In this instance, the United States of America possesses evil and plane hijackers as “God’s helpers.” The mentor guides Atta that shortly all his disturbances in life will be consecrated and even his fear is holy. Guilt is not ever mentioned in this letter. All wiped away by righteousness, and the sense of being good erases all sense of guilt (2007). In instances such as this, the lack of guilt can be demonstrated by an outlet of God and those that enforce their believed rulings. The lack of guilt can be explained through subconscious thought, interpersonal relationships, and human beings that enforce and impose the lack of guilt.

This research examined the motives and reasons people post crimes they have committed on social media platforms through examination of Freud’s book *Civilization and Its Discontents*. A content analysis study was conducted to answer the following research question: Why do people post pictures of crimes they committed on social media outlets?

III. Research Methods

Through a subset of rhetorical criticism, this study examined the testimony of three cases, varying in severity, in light of narrative criticism. The study of rhetoric delved into the understanding that humans are the creators of rhetoric, symbols are the mediums for rhetoric, and communication is the purpose of rhetoric (Foss, 2009). Through a critical lens, researchers study rhetoric with the goal of understanding the world. By understanding the world through human beings’ actions, this research examined narratives to comprehend how people describe their actions. Narratives distinguish how human beings think, act, and communicate. By establishing stories for a series of events, we not only establish coherences of ourselves but create meaningful discursive structures that may be communicated, shared and conclusions reached on how individuals participate in the social world (Klapproth, 2004, p. 3).

A narrative can be defined, unique from other rhetorical criticisms, by four characteristics: the narrative must possess two events, the events must be defined in time order, there must be a casual or contributing relationship among the events and possess a unified subject. Narratives are additionally exclusive in the fact that they involve audiences in ways that form a connection through content. This method of storytelling is a joint achievement between the narrator and the audience. “To experience the narrated world, both the narrator and the audience must recognize the discursive form of the story and understand the story’s meaning” (Foss, 2009). Perpetrators, therefore, have an urge to demonstrate to the public and the environment around them, to promote and pride themselves on the crime they have committed.

Using the narrative method of criticism, the author used three narratives to draw conclusions as to why people feel the need to document crimes they commit as well as determine why people post crimes to social media pages. In this study the first step was to select an artifact. Two court-documented videos from two cases (Case #2 and Case #3) were compiled and news outlet’s release of a conversation with a perpetrator (Case #1). Secondly, this study analyzed the artifact by identifying the objective of the narrative, the features of the narrative through its setting, characters, the narrator, events, temporal relations, casual relations, audience, theme, as well as the type of narrative.

IV. Findings

Case #1

In Case #1, a resident of Astoria, Oregon, was found guilty on two counts of “failing to perform the duties of a driver” after posting a Facebook status declaring his act of drunk driving. The author found that the artifact selected was a narrative of a video of testimony by the perpetrator Jacob Cox-Brown. Throughout the testimony, Cox-Brown testified the following statements:

Testimony Statements
“Oh yeah yeah that was a big joke.”
“Yeah sure I probably shouldn’t have posted what I said on there. Yeah, I kind of regret it, you know cause it blew out of proportion. But I don’t know.”
“They know I’m a sarcastic *****. I’ve posted stuff on there before. It’s never blown up like this.”

After assessing the artifact, the author identified the objective of the narrative as the intent to construct identity since Cox-Brown was establishing how he felt about his actions in his testimony. Utilizing this objective, the author identified the following features of the narrative:

Features of the Narrative	Finding
Setting	The narrative took place in Astoria, Oregon, on New Year’s Day in 2013. The perpetrator conducted a hit and run on two vehicles.
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacob Cox-Brown was an 18-year-old resident who publicized his act on Facebook and was charged with the offense Victim whose car is hit by Jacob’s car
Narrative	The narrative is directly told by the perpetrator
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cox-Brown conducted two hit-and-run accidents Cox-Brown posted a Facebook status stating, “Drivin drunk... classsic ;) but to whoever’s vehicle i hit i am sorry. :P” Cox-Brown was charged with two counts of failing to perform the duties of a driver. Cox-Brown was not charged with drunken driving because the Facebook post is not sufficient evidence that he was intoxicated
Temporal Relations	Events occur over one day
Casual Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cause: Human action (The act of posting on Facebook) Effect: The arrest based on the grounds of the Facebook post as evidence
Audience	Addressed to media and social media friends
Theme	Recognition
Type of Narrative	A Tragedy - Protagonist tries to achieve a goal but falls short because of an inability to overcome flaws or faults

Case #2

In Case #2, residents of Steubenville, Ohio, were found guilty with one perpetrator Ma'lik Richmond, charged with the minimum of one year in a juvenile correction facility, and the second perpetrator, Trent Mays, charged with the minimum of two years because of the additional charge of disseminating photographs of a nude minor after the perpetrators raped and distributed photo and video content of the victim on social media platforms. The author found that the artifact selected was a narrative of testimony by the perpetrators, prosecutor, police, witnesses and the victim's parents. Throughout the testimony, the following statements were made:

Source	Testimony Statement
Trent Mays	"I would truly like to apologize to her family, my family and the community. No pictures should have been sent around, let alone even taken. That's all sir."
Ma'lik Richmond	"I would like to apologize to you, too. I had no intentions to do anything like that. I'm sorry to put you guys through this. I'd just like *sobs* I just want you to realize that I'm sorry. I know I ruined her life, for life."
Prosecutor	"One of the things the state sees is absolutely no remorse for what happened to the victim and the absolute disregard for another human being cannot go without punishment."
Police Officer, William McCafferty	"If you could charge people for not being decent human beings, a lot of people could have been charged that night."
Witness #1	<i>When friend asked Trent Mays if he did anything with the girl</i> "Yeah dude she was like a dead body. I just needed some sexual attention..."
Witness #2	"One member of the "rape crew" used to date her, which is why she was targeted."
Parent of Victim	"Human compassion is not taught by a teacher, a coach or a parent. It is a God-given gift instilled in all of us. You displayed not only a lack of this compassion, but a lack of any moral code. Your decisions that night affected countless lives, including those most dear to you. You were your own accuser through the social media that you chose to publish criminal conduct on. This does not define who my daughter is. She will persevere, grow and move on."

After assessing the artifact, the author identified the objective of the narrative as the intent to construct identity since the perpetrators were establishing how they felt about their actions in their testimony. Utilizing this objective, the author identified the following features of the narrative:

Features of the Narrative	Finding
Setting	The narrative took place at a party, a 15-minute car ride, and a basement of the house where the act occurred in Steubenville, Ohio.
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim • Unidentified friends who possess plea deals • Trent Mays • Ma'lik Richmond
Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attorney • Perpetrators • Mother of victim
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At approximately midnight, the intoxicated victim left a party with four males • The group went to a second party where the victim was vomiting • The same group left the second party and headed to the home of one of the witnesses • During the 15-minute car ride, the victim's shirt was removed, and Mays penetrated the victim and exposed her breasts while his friends filmed and photographed • In the basement of the house, Mays attempted to orally rape the victim by forcing his penis into her mouth • Now unconscious, she was stripped naked and Richmond, also digitally penetrated the victim's vagina • The victim was again photographed • Three witnesses took the photos back to the second party and shared them with friends • When the victim awoke, she was unaware of what had happened to her • By then, the story of her night was already unfolding on the internet, on Twitter and via text messages • The parents then notified the police and took their daughter to a hospital • At 1:38 a.m. on August 14, the girl's parents walked into the Steubenville police station with a flash drive with photographs from online sources, Twitter posts and the video on it • Mays "seemed to try to orchestrate a cover-up, telling a friend, 'Just say she came to your house and passed out,'" and pleading with the victim not to press charges • The evidence presented in court mainly consisted of hundreds of text messages and cellphone pictures that had been taken by more than a dozen people at the parties and afterwards traded with other students and posted to Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube
Temporal Relations	Events occur over one day
Casual Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause: Human action (The act of posting on social media outlets) • Effect: The arrest based on the grounds of the Facebook post as evidence
Audience	Addressed to social media friends
Theme	Recognition
Type of Narrative	A Tragedy - Protagonist tries to achieve a goal but falls short because of an inability to overcome flaws or faults

Case #3

In Case #3, a resident of South Miami, Florida, was found guilty of second-degree murder of his wife after posting a picture of her dead body on Facebook. The author found that the artifact selected was a narrative of testimony by the perpetrators. Throughout the testimony, the following statement was made:

Testimony Statement
“Focus, Barack Obama, president, on this corrupted world that I will be suing,” Medina said. “Focus again, presidents and future presidents, of the world. OK. I will be suing this world. Not only that <i>Unfriended</i> ¹ the movie by Universal Pictures, came out with a movie before my trial, which was unfair. OK, which is bias. And, um, pretty much the point I’m trying to make is I did not get a fair trial. I will be taking action. I will be suing, and I want Barack Obama, the president of the United States of America, to focus on corruption. Corruption is a big problem that we have in the United States of America and all over the world. Nothing further. Oh, God knows the truth, and nothing further.”

After assessing the artifact, the author identified the objective of the narrative as the intent to construct identity since Medina was establishing how he felt about his actions in his testimony. Utilizing this objective, the author identified the following features of the narrative:

Features of the Narrative	Finding
Setting	South Miami, Florida
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perpetrator Derek Medina• Victim Jennifer Alfonso
Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The narrative is directly told by the perpetrator

1: *Unfriended* is a thriller horror film regarding a dead high school classmate that contacted their personal bul-
lies via a social media platform when deceased.

Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfonso and Medina were arguing • Alfonso wanted to spend more time with him • Alfonso threw mascara and a towel at him • Medina went and got the gun • Medina went to the closet and un-holstered his gun • Medina pointed the gun at her • Alfonso told him she was going to leave him • Alfonso stopped went downstairs to the kitchen • Medina came downstairs to re-engage • Alfonso was punching him in the kitchen • Alfonso picked up the knife because she saw him with the gun • Medina disarmed her from the knife • Medina put the knife in the kitchen drawer • Alfonso started punching him in the chest and in the arm. And that's when he shot her • Medina emptied the clip - 8 shots at Jennifer causing 21 empty • Every shot hit • Medina took a picture of her • Medina posted to Facebook "I'm going to prison or death sentence for killing my wife love you guys miss you guys take care Facebook people you will see me in the news. My wife was punching me and I am not going to stand anymore with the abuse so I did what I did I hope you understand me." • Medina went to police the same morning to tell authorities that he had a domestic dispute with his wife and then shot her • Medina drove himself to the South Miami Police Department and turned himself in • Officers then responded to the location where they found the victim deceased from apparent gunshot wounds, as well as the victim's daughter, 10, who was unharmed • Medina later told police that he shot her multiple times after she picked up a kitchen knife, then began punching and kicking him
Temporal Relations	Events occur over one day
Casual Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause: Human action (The act of posting on social media) • Effect: The arrest based on the testimony of the perpetrator, the Facebook post and the camera footage in the apartment
Audience	Addressed to social media friends
Theme	Recognition
Type of Narrative	A Tragedy - Protagonist tries to achieve a goal but falls short because of an inability to overcome flaws or faults

V. Analysis

After analyzing three narratives of testimony in three cases, varying in severity of the crime, many similarities were found among features of the narrative. In all three of the testimonies, the author found that the objective of the narrative was to construct identity, according to the objectives defined by Foss (2009). The perpetrators, therefore, utilized social media outlets to communicate with their viewers by promoting the fact that they were proud of their actions and possessed no guilt when conducting the crime. The use of social media has allowed users to share with their network in an arrogant and complacent fashion. Therefore, the theme of all three of the narratives was recognition that the deed of posting the crime to social media brought them acknowledgement of their achievement.

In addition to similarities in all three narratives, there were differences as well. Throughout the narrative in Case #2, there were more signs of remorse and regret in statements by the perpetrators. In Case #1 and Case #3, the perpetrators showed no sign of repentance nor guilt after conducting their actions. These cases confirm Freud's guilt theory; perpetrators' lack of guilt can cause them to perform the committed crime and post evidence of the crime to social media outlets. The research question can, therefore, be answered by the following statement: People post crimes they have committed to social media outlets because they lack guilt and seek recognition to construct their identity.

Regarding the publics' reaction to the crimes posted on social media, the prior concern of copycat crimes in the study was proven not true. In the aftermath of each case on social media, there was an overwhelming prevalence of calls for justice on social media pages, such as 'OccupySteubenville A Peaceful Protest' as well as from public figures, such as Anderson Cooper, noting social media to tweet messages, such as "As a parent of two boys I would be fundamentally ashamed as a mother if my boys talked like this. - @RosalindWiseman #steubenville." Overall, there was more of a prevalence of positive call to action rather than a presence of copycat crimes.

Additionally, the effects of the acts on social media to the public varied as well. In Case #1 it was viewers of the perpetrator's post that turned Cox-Brown into the police. However, in Case #2, viewers of the perpetrator's social media posts did not turn the perpetrators into the authorities but instead tweeted statements, such as "Song of the night is definitely Rape Me by Nirvana" or "Never seen anything this sloppy lol." Additionally, in Case #3, social media "friends" or Medina only commented on the picture he uploaded with statements, such as "What happened?" or "What happened???? derek" without taking serious action to assess and question the truthfulness of the situation or call authorities. Therefore, Case #2 and Case #3 showed insight into social media users' lack of action taken when individuals see crimes posted on social media.

A narrative criticism is a good source for this study because it assesses the actions taken throughout the narrative and directly applies it to a specific objective.

A limitation of the study is the fact that a narrative criticism does not provide a specific assessment of comparing narratives to one another. A suggestion for future research would be to directly compare each identified feature of the narrative. Other limitations include the lack of detailed information available regarding each case. With many high-profile cases, trial attorneys do not often allow their clients to speak heavily on their own behalf. Because of this limitation, the artifacts analyzed only the events of the crime through the testimony of other varying parties as well as the perpetrators.

VI. Conclusion

Overall, the research showed that the act of posting crimes to social media is caused by human beings' drive to be recognized by others in their environment and their social media communities. This can be demonstrated because the perpetrators craved attention from others in their lives. Due to the lack of guilt perpetrators possess when committing the crimes, individuals proceed to take the action of posting evidence of the crime on a social media platform. Evidence to this argument is, therefore, additionally demonstrated in the lack of the word "apology" in the testimony statements in Case #1 and Case #3. Apology is defined as a regretful acknowledgment of an offense or failure (Apology, 2018). Without the feeling of regret, perpetrators who post crimes they commit to social media, therefore, lack guilt and confirm Freud's guilt theory.

Future studies may compare the direct correlation between the cases and their corresponding social media posts to 'copycat' crimes or other inspirations after viewing other individuals posting crimes on social media outlets. Another study constructed from this data may use rhetorical criticism to examine specific words or phrases stated in each of the testimony statements.

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Guilty Pleasure: A Case Study of True Crime's Resurgence in a Binge Consumption Era

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Abstract

While the fascination of the true crime genre can be traced to the 16th century, it has grown in widespread popularity in the last three years. This study explored potential causes for why the genre has become popular through a narrative rhetorical analysis of three popular pieces of true crime media – season one of the podcast Serial, The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst, and Making a Murderer. The study found that the true crime genre has grown due to a variety of circumstances, largely because of the resurgence of the binge-consumption era, which allows the audience to get more instant gratification for the program's cliffhangers. It can also be deduced that true crime shows with certain rhetorical consistencies are more likely to take off in today's media landscape.

I. Introduction

Humans' bloody fascination with crime and murder has been linked to primitive needs for safety and security, in addition to the desire for certainty and justice.¹ Within the last three years, the "true crime" genre has experienced a cultural revolution of sorts, and can be found across a variety of media platforms, from Netflix and HBO to podcasts and magazines.

True crime, as it is referred to throughout the remainder of this paper, is broadly defined by Oxford Dictionary as "a genre of writing, film, etc., in which real crimes are examined or portrayed."² What used to be relegated to a specific corner of media is now stretching into the likes of CBS and NBC; as cable channels like the Oxygen Network focus solely on true crime, it gains additional coverage. True crime has been around for years, so why is it suddenly becoming so popular?

This research examined what makes true crime media popular. Are there consistent traits across the genre? Has the binge-watching era influenced the true crime genre? If so, how? These are important

1 Mark Lawson, "Serial Thrillers: Why True Crime Is Popular Culture's Most Wanted," The Guardian, December 12, 2015, sec. Culture.

2 "True Crime," *Oxford Living Dictionaries - English* (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

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questions to consider, as true crime reaches a broader audience and influences the content released by media outlets, especially streaming services. By understanding the motivation to watch true crime content, media can continue to develop fresh content that the public will enjoy. Mass media have experienced a rise in the popularity of the true crime genre over the last three years. The public's fascination is due to a variety of psychological circumstances, but the genre's recent resurgence can largely be credited to the binge-consumption era. Some psychological studies regarding people's interest in crime have been conducted; however, there has been limited exploration of what has allowed the content within the genre to continue to rise in popularity. This study examines the reasons for this true crime revolution through a case study of season one of the podcast *Serial*, *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst* (hereafter referred to as *The Jinx*), and *Making a Murderer*.

Literature Review

To better understand the modern true crime genre, the history of the genre must be contextualized. It is important to understand the potential psychological motivations behind society's fascination with the macabre, and the media's role in those fascinations. Lastly, to understand how the history and psychology meet *Making A Murderer*, *The Jinx*, and *Serial*, it is important to examine why audiences binge watch and the impact of the binge consumption era on media as a whole.

History of True Crime Genre

The true crime genre has been traced back to the 16th century Europe, as publications of crimes in newspapers and pamphlets skyrocketed.³ These pamphlets and newspapers were not yet aimed at the masses; they were produced and consumed primarily by literate members of the "artisan class or above" for the ones with disposable income.⁴ The true crime genre is said to first have been introduced to the United States by Benjamin Franklin, who published an article in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1734, entitled "The Murder of a Daughter." Franklin, a journalist, described the horrific crime committed like the following: "For that they had not only acted contrary to the particular Laws of all Nations, but had even broken the Universal Laws of Nature."⁵ Franklin's description of murder created a strong connection to much of the true crime genre today, as it called into question why people go against human nature and commit heinous acts.

The genre of crime journalism continued to proliferate in the media, as the penny press paved the way for making it a widespread and accessible genre in the 19th century.⁶ *The National Police Gazette*, a magazine founded in 1845, told gruesome stories "filled with sex, race baiting, sports, violence and lurid illustrations" and catapulted the penny press into "dizzying new levels of circulation."⁷ *The National Police Gazette* became a staple across cities in America, where a copy could be found in almost every barbershop and saloon at the time.⁸

The genre at the time was rather formulaic: The publications "almost always featured grisly cover and title-page illustrations framed by bold fonts proclaiming bold titles about the crime of the century, the horridness of some homicide, the fiendishness of some fiend, the full particulars of some particularly awful assassination, the only copy of some confession, or the freshly uncovered correspondence of some killer."⁹ This continued to modernize into the 20th century when *The New Yorker* began publishing the Annals of Crime feature in 1936, a feature still published to this day.

3 Pamela Burger, "The Bloody History of the True Crime Genre," *JSTOR Daily*, August 24, 2016, <https://daily.jstor.org/bloody-history-of-true-crime-genre/>.

4 Joy Wiltenburg, "True Crime: The Origins of Modern Sensationalism," *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 5 (December 2004): 1377–1404, <https://doi.org/10.1086/530930>.

5 Benjamin Franklin, "The Murder of a Daughter," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 24, 1734.

6 Burger, "The Bloody History of the True Crime Genre."

7 Elliott J. Gorn, "The Wicked World: The National Police Gazette and Gilded-Age America," *Media Studies Journal; New York* 6, no. 1 (Winter 1992): xviii.

8 Gene Smith, "The National Police Gazette," *American Heritage*, October 1972.

9 Casey Cep, "The Indispensable Guide to Early American Murder," *The New Yorker*, June 22, 2016.

It is evident that crime sells. The phrase “if it bleeds, it leads” continued to echo in the middle of the 20th century, when stories of crime shifted publication to books, rather than just newspapers, which was a direct continuation of the pamphlets popular in the 1700-1800s. In 1966, a story of a murder in Kansas would become a landmark of the true crime genre. This was Truman Capote's blockbuster *In Cold Blood*. Discussing his work, Capote said he selected the topic because “murder was a theme not likely to darken and yellow with time.”¹⁰

His point seems to hold true, as the genre of true crime is still widespread today, over 50 years later. Capote's work carved the path for successful books such as *The Executioner's Song* by Norman Mailer in 1979 and *The Stranger Beside Me* by Ann Rule in 1980, both of which remain popular.¹¹

Psychological Theories of Society's Fascination with the Macabre

Based on the success of the genre in media of the 17th-20th centuries, it is evident that society has long been infatuated with true crime. Harold Schechter said, “The appetite for tales of real-life murder, the more horrific the better, has been a perennial feature of human society.”¹² What about true crime makes it inherently human?

Humans' fascination with true crime can be tied to the psychological concept of a shadow, developed by Carl Jung. Eric Wilson in *Morbid Curiosities* explains that Jung “maintains that our mental health depends on our shadow, that part of our psyche that harbors our darkest energies, such as melancholia and murderousness. The more we repress the morbid, the more it foment neuroses or psychoses. To achieve wholeness, we must acknowledge our most demonic inclinations.”¹³ Jung's theory of the shadow is commonly known as the “dark side,” which consists of primitive emotions and impulses. According to Wilson, it is “whatever we deem evil, inferior or unacceptable and deny in ourselves becomes part of the shadow.”¹⁴ Wilson continued by recalling that renaissance scholars kept skulls on their desks to remind them that life is precious, and that English poet John Keats “believed that the real rose, because it is dying, exudes more beauty than the porcelain.”¹⁵ Our interest in true crime, perhaps, is closely tied to the shadow. By exposing oneself to true crime, one confronts the morbid, rather than repressing it, keeping it in control. “To stare at macabre occurrences,” Wilson concluded, “this can lead to mere insensitivity, gawking for a cheap thrill; or it can result in stunned trauma, muteness before the horror. But in between these two extremes, morbid curiosity can sometimes inspire us to imagine ways to transform life's necessary darkness into luminous vision.”¹⁶

Scott Bonn in *Why We Love Serial Killers: The Curious Appeal of the World's Most Savage Murderers* found there may be a more human reason to the public's fascination with these gruesome crimes:

The serial killer represents a lurid, complex, and compelling presence on the social landscape. There appears to be an innate human tendency to identify or empathize with all things—whether good or bad—including serial killers. I discovered that serial killers are terrifying and captivating to the public because some of them, such as Ted Bundy, are highly educated, charming, successful, and could easily be a next-door neighbor.¹⁷

Our need to identify, empathize, and understand others motivates our curiosity. This ties into the concept of the shadow self, as exposing oneself to true crime can make humans recognize the darkness in the world, and thus actively pursue the opposite.

10 Quoted in Jordan Foster, “The Truth Is in the Crime,” *Publishers Weekly*, March 30, 2012.

11 Sarah Weinman, “True-Crime Stories: A Centuries-Old Craze from Ben Franklin to Making a Murderer,” *The Guardian*, January 7, 2016, sec. Culture.

12 Quoted in Weinman, “True-Crime Stories,” n.p.

13 Eric Wilson, “The Moral of the Morbid,” *Psychology Today*, November 8, 2011.

14 Stephen Diamond, “Essential Secrets of Psychotherapy: What Is the ‘Shadow’?,” *Psychology Today*, April 20, 2012.

15 Wilson, “The Moral of the Morbid.”

16 Ibid.

17 Scott Bonn, *Why We Love Serial Killers: The Curious Appeal of the World's Most Savage Murderers* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2014).

The shadow could be potentially one cause for society's fascination with crime. However, another theory, known as the "just world hypothesis," may reveal the motivations as well. The just world hypothesis states that humans believe the world is fair, so when something happens to someone, good or bad, it is because they deserved it.¹⁸ Though many people would not admit to thinking this, this theory can be attributed to why people can expose themselves to true crime without feeling as though they're more likely to be victimized. Dean Burnett, a journalist at *The Telegraph*, reflected on why humans have such a curiosity about crime, and in particular, murder. Burnett claims that, as humans, we "try to distance ourselves from the victim by focusing on how we are different to them. Watching others who aren't us experience terrible things could consolidate our belief that they definitely won't happen to us."¹⁹

Beyond the innate fascination with the macabre, how true crime is depicted in the media may also be psychologically impactful when it comes to finding the cause of fascination in today's society. Bonn's research revealed that "our fascination has something to do with the glamorized and sensationalized manner in which serial killers are presented in the news and entertainment media."²⁰

Fictionalized versions of crime stories have some close ties to those that are of a true crime nature. In particular, they may share the same motivations for piquing human interest. David Schmid examined serial killers in popular culture in *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*. Schmid claims that fictional stories of serial killers are "nearly always premised on a person's ability to identify with the serial killer in the sense of learning to think like him, coming to see the world through his eyes. This type of identification is often presented in these films as dangerous because it can lead to the violent cancellation of one's own identity; but only in this way, these films suggest, can the serial killer be apprehended."²¹ The same concept can be examined in many true crime documentaries, such as *Making a Murderer* and *The Jinx*.

The Impact of the Binge Consumption Era

Platforms that allow binge consumption are the new normal. A study conducted on behalf of Netflix found that "a majority (73%) defined binge-watching as watching between 2–6 episodes of the same TV show in one sitting."²² According to Deloitte's 2017 Digital Democracy Survey, "nearly three quarters (73%) of US consumers—and nearly 90% of Millennials and Gen Z—say they have binge-watched video content."²³ In fact, Millennials and Gen Z viewed an average of six episodes, or five hours of content, in a single sitting.²⁴ As more people abandon cable television for streaming services, content can be created with binge watching in mind. Psychologist Uri Hasson of Princeton University developed the field of neurocinematics, the study of how TV and film interact with the brain. Hasson conducted a study in 2008 that focused on the inter-subject correlation (ISC) across viewers' brains when watching different content. He found that a clip from an Alfred Hitchcock film elicited an ISC of 65 percent across the cortex, the greatest of the four clips he studied.²⁵ Jordan Gaines Lewis explained in *Psychology Today* that "Hitchcock was a master of orchestrating everything: what you're watching, what you're thinking, how you're feeling, and what you predict will come next. In similar ways, modern-day TV writers and directors engage viewers worldwide with the flash-forwards of *Lost*; the gruesome action of *Game of Thrones*; and the eerie exchanges between *Breaking Bad*'s Gus Fring and Walter White."²⁶ Viewers are looking to be fully immersed in the content they're viewing, increasing the popularity of binge-watching.

18 Claire Andre and Manuel Velazquez, "The Just World Theory," Santa Clara University, November 13, 2015. <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/the-just-world-theory/>.

19 Dean Burnett, "James Foley's Murder, and the Psychology of Our Fascination with the Gruesome," *The Telegraph* (London), August 20, 2014, sec. World.

20 Bonn, *Why We Love Serial Killers: The Curious Appeal of the World's Most Savage Murderers*.

21 David Schmid, "Serial Murder in American Popular Culture," in *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), 112.

22 "Netflix Declares Binge Watching Is the New Normal," Netflix Media Center, December 13, 2013, <https://media.netflix.com/en/press-releases/netflix-declares-binge-watching-is-the-new-normal-migration-1>.

23 Kevin Westcott, Scott Lippstreu, and David Cutbill, "Digital Democracy Survey: Eleventh Edition" (Deloitte, 2017).

24 Ibid

25 Jordan Gaines Lewis, "Why We're Wired to Binge-Watch TV," *Psychology Today*, March 14, 2011.

26 Ibid.

Cultural anthropologist Grant McCracken concluded that “we’re actually craving the long narratives that today’s best television series can provide. Instead of dealing with our life’s stresses by zoning out, we’d rather become engrossed in an entirely different world.”²⁷ Together, content is being generated with binge-consumption in mind, and it is typically watched that way. This need to fully engross oneself in something so different, and the ability to do that via binge-watching, may allude to why true crime is becoming so popular to binge.

As one can tell from the extensive history of the genre, interest in true crime is nothing new. The binge consumption era is changing the way all media, and true crime, in particular, are produced and viewed. Traditionally, nonfiction series have been a staple of public television, but now, with large amounts of viewership switching over to on-demand services like Netflix, documentary series have become more popular. Sam Adams, a reporter for *Rolling Stone*, examined how *Making a Murderer* has changed how true crime documentaries are made. “Where a series like *The Civil War* is authoritative in its scope, *Making a Murderer* goes deep instead of broad, exploiting the inherent drama of a murder investigation and subsequent criminal trials,” Adams said.²⁸ Binge viewership allows content to dive deeper and explore more than has been traditionally shown on television.

This study sought to connect the dots left by the literature review. After a long history of true crime existing in the media, along with a potential psychological predisposition to be fascinated by the macabre, why now, in an era of cord cutters and binge-watching content, is true crime becoming popular among the masses? Based on the literature review, two research questions were developed:

RQ1: What about true crime media makes them popular? Are there consistent traits across the genre?

RQ2: Has the binge-watching era influenced the true crime genre? If so, how?

III. Methods

This study utilizes a case study of season one of the podcast *Serial*, HBO’s *The Jinx*, and Netflix’s *Making a Murderer*. These three are critically acclaimed within the genre of true crime and have been acknowledged as potential causes in the rebirth of the genre.²⁹ In his review of *Making a Murderer*, *New York Times* Television Critic Mike Hale said, “the serious long-form true-crime documentary is the glam genre of the moment, coming off the success of HBO’s six-episode *The Jinx* and the eight-and-a-half-hour podcast, ‘Serial.’”³⁰ The cause of true crime becoming a “glam genre” may be understood as this case study is paired with the literature review. This case study utilizes elements of a narrative rhetorical analysis. This is done by reviewing each episode of the show in succession and examining rhetorical elements such as the setting, subject or characters, and causal relations. These were chosen as the main elements to examine because of the need to identify, empathize and understand others as explained by Scott Bonn.³¹

The objective of this case study, through a rhetorical lens, is to pinpoint what features of these shows make them as popular as they are, and examine if there are consistent traits across them, despite being produced by different companies. By analyzing the rhetoric in a narrative way, connections can be made across these shows that reveal more details about the motivations of the producers and the “cult-like” following that these series have developed.

27 Ibid.

28 Sam Adams, “‘Making a Murderer’ and True Crime in the Binge-Viewing Era,” *Rolling Stone*, January 13, 2016.

29 Weinman, “True-Crime Stories.”

30 Mike Hale, “When DNA Is Not the End of the Story,” *The New York Times*, December 17, 2015, sec. Television.

31 Bonn, *Why We Love Serial Killers: The Curious Appeal of the World’s Most Savage Murderers*.

IV. Findings

The rhetorical analysis of *Serial*, *The Jinx* and *Making a Murderer* examined elements, such as setting, the depiction of the main character, and the depiction of the victim, to answer the first research question. To help answer the second research question, the analysis also examined how the transitions from one episode to another differed across the three works, and to see if the shows' format encourages bingeing the content. These analyses are conducted in chronological order of their release.

Serial Season One

Season one of the podcast *Serial* centers around the case of a girl named Hae Min Lee, a high school senior who disappeared on January 13, 1999. A month later, her body was found in a park, strangled. Adnan Syed, her ex-boyfriend, was arrested for the crime, and within a year, he was convicted and sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison. The two were both students at Woodlawn High School in Baltimore, Maryland. The setting was argued throughout the series, as a point of contention regarding the alibis of those potentially involved. Because the setting was a point of argument that drove the story forward, it was hard to determine consistencies in comparison to other true crime works. In the other cases, the setting influenced how people were viewed, as well as social, economic, and historical contexts, but because the setting is broad, ranging from the high school to the scene of the crime, the setting creates less of a frame for the story as it does in the other works.

Featuring young people of diverse backgrounds—high school students in a large city—*Serial* created a unique setting for the story for season one to unfold. It is unknown how this case would have turned out if it involved people of same races, so it unclear how the setting impacted how people saw the characters or interpreted the guilt of Syed. The depictions of these characters were not without controversy. Unlike the other two shows examined in this study, the main characters, both the criminal subject and the victim are non-white. Jay Caspian Kang's article in *The Awl*, "'Serial' and White Reporter Privilege," addressed this controversy of bias in the podcast. "'Sarah Koenig, the journalist telling their story, is white,' Kang writes. 'This, on its face, is not a problem. If *Serial* were a newspaper story or even a traditional magazine feature, the identities of all three could exist alone as facts; the reader could decide how much weight to place on them. But *Serial* is an experiment in two old forms: the weekly radio crime show, and the confessional true-crime narrative, wherein a journalist plays the role of the protagonist. The pretense of objectivity is stripped away: Koenig emerges as the subject as the show's drama revolves not so much around the crime, but rather, her obsessions with it.'"³²

First, one must examine the main character and the accused in this story, Syed, who was 17 years old at the time of his arrest in 1999. Characterized by *Serial* host Sarah Koenig as "an incredibly likable and well-liked kid," Syed was a popular Pakistani-Muslim student who went behind his parents' back and began to date Lee during their junior year. The prosecution of the case painted the deceit as "proof of bad character, someone who could be a murderer."³³ The tone that *Serial* took with Syed, however, was one motivated by the effort to clear his name. Many of the statements made by the host and Syed himself portrayed him as innocent, if not a victim in this case, at least in the beginning. It was believed that the attorney botched the case, which made way for the audience to continue to empathize for Syed. This need to uncover if such a likeable person could commit such heinous acts, motivates the listener to continue through the series.

In the first episode of *Serial*, Lee, a Korean girl, is described as "smart, and beautiful, and cheerful, and a great athlete. She played field hockey and lacrosse, and she was responsible."³⁴ Lee is obviously the victim. By discussing the victim in the detail, as done in the first episode, Lee was portrayed as innocent throughout the series. This may motivate the audience to continue listening in hopes of finding justice for the character with whom they can empathize. Together, Lee and Syed were painted as star-crossed lovers of sorts; in fact, Koenig went as far as to describe them as such "on paper, the case was like a Shakespearean mashup—young lovers from different worlds thwarting their families."³⁵

32 Quoted in Conor Friedersdorf, "The Backlash Against *Serial*—and Why It's Wrong," *The Atlantic*, December 3, 2014.

33 Sarah Koenig, *The Alibi*, *Serial*, October 2, 2014.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

The entire season of *Serial* was in search of causal relations and cause-and-effect relationships. The possibility of Syed's exoneration drives the podcast forward; keeping the listener engaged from week to week as new episodes were released. This approach gives listeners greater sympathy for Syed. These sympathies largely stem from how Koenig and others interviewed described Syed. Trying to uncover the motivations behind the killer, and whether or not it was Syed, is one reason the show's fans continue listening week to week. This was significantly different from the other shows studied, interviewing witnesses and trying to clear Syed's name.

Listeners cling to the possibility of exoneration, or clear evidence of guilt, and neither is ever quite found. The narrative storyline and the lack of closure has made *Serial* a smash hit around the world. It kept listeners on the edge of their seats, trying to find justification either way in the case. This is best shown in the final episode of the first season, when Koenig expressed that there would be "a smattering of new information, a review of old information cast under a different light and an ending."³⁶

Though the episodes of the series were released weekly, the podcast format is easy to listen to in succession. The format of the show encouraged this, as each episode would end with a sneak peek of what was to come later in the season. This teaser kept the listener on edge and listeners easily find satisfaction from listening to the next episode.

The Jinx

The Jinx story began in 2001 in Galveston, Texas, where the body of Morris Black was found in the Galveston Bay, but the vast majority of the story takes place in New York City in the early 1980s with the investigation of the disappearance of Robert Durst's wife, Kathie. *The Jinx* was set up in a narrative format that captured historical evidence, modern interviews, and reenactments to paint the scene for the viewer. Unlike many true-crime stories, it is not a question of whether Durst committed the 2001 murder of Black, but whether it was his only crime. The strong forensic evidence in the first episode established credibility with the viewer. Because of the timeline for when the show was produced and the alleged crimes committed, the setting did not have as significant an impact on the show, as other series studied. The crimes chronicled by *The Jinx* took place over a span of nearly 20 years, across multiple state lines.

When examining rhetoric surrounding the main character, Robert Durst, similarities were found with *Making a Murderer*, despite the two men coming from distinctly different backgrounds. Durst came from a wealthy New York real estate family but was somewhat estranged from his relatives. The guilt of Durst, a misunderstood loner, is never in question throughout the mini-series; instead, what is uncovered is his background, in his own words through interviews, that may have led him to commit such crimes. His mother killed herself as Durst watched at the age of only seven.³⁷ Many other unfortunate events are outlined as a part of Durst's life; however, none of them are used by the producer to push an agenda for his innocence.

Durst exemplifies odd behavior from the beginning, hiding his identity by cross-dressing as a deaf and mute woman while living in Galveston.³⁸ This was very different from the rhetoric used in the other shows examined, as unfortunate events are commonly used to establish pathos and evoke sympathy from the audience. This sets *The Jinx* apart from other true crime shows because it is the eccentricity of the character, Durst, and his own words, that keeps people watching, not his potential innocence. *The Jinx* instead paints a complicated picture and connects the dots that may have led Durst to commit such crimes. Viewers watch as he digs himself in a hole through his own words that eventually leads to him being arrested for first-degree murder the day before the finale aired.³⁹

The Jinx does not spend as much time focused on the victims of Durst as other true crime shows typically do. This is potentially due to the fact that there were multiple victims, and because the show existed more to find an explanation for Durst's behavior than to exonerate him. This is significantly different than the other two shows studied and the show does not have many similarities in structure to *Serial* or *Making a*

36 Sarah Koenig, *What We Know*, *Serial*, December 17, 2014.

37 Andrew Jarecki, "Poor Little Rich Boy," *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst* (HBO, February 15, 2015).

38 Andrew Jarecki, "A Body in the Bay," *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst* (HBO, February 8, 2015).

39 Andrew Jarecki, "What the Hell Did I Do?," *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst* (HBO, March 15, 2015).

Murderer. The narrative format rhetorically drives the direction of the series and does not allow for as much time to be spent on the victims alone. Instead, whenever the victims are discussed, it is typically shown in relation to Durst and the roles they played in each other's lives.

The entire mini-series of *The Jinx* is focused more on the cause-and-effect relationships of Durst's upbringing, and how it led him to commit murder three times. The focus is on human action, specifically of Durst, along with other incidences in his life that created the man highlighted in the show. Events in *The Jinx* are largely caused by human action and intervention. The most significant break in the case surrounded a handwriting match on an anonymous tip letter sent to the Los Angeles Police Department and letters Durst had previously sent to his friend Susan Berman. *The Jinx* utilized contemporary interviews and reenactments to put together a six-episode mini-series with a strong narrative driving it. This narrative highlighted the contradictions in Durst's actions and words. *The Jinx* was also special because it aired as Durst was on trial. What was uncovered on the show aided in his conviction, in particular, an off-camera statement made into a hot microphone during the final interview where Durst said to himself, "What the hell did I do? Killed them all, of course."⁴⁰

The Jinx comes to a definitive close with Durst being arrested on first-degree murder charges the day before the finale aired. Many elements of *The Jinx* were polar opposites of *Serial* and *Making a Murderer*, and that is potentially what made it successful. Rather than trying to clear Durst's name, the show follows the journey of trying to gather evidence to lead to an arrest. This show supports the "just world theory" and shows that in the end, Durst is arrested for his crimes.

The Jinx, like *Serial*, was released weekly by HBO. Like many docu-series, each episode ends with a cliffhanger. Once *The Jinx* was no longer airing on television, HBO made all episodes available to viewers on other platforms, such as HBO Go. Because of the cliffhanger endings and the ease of watching episodes in succession, it is likely that the ability to binge *The Jinx* aided in its popularity after airing.

Making A Murderer

Netflix's *Making a Murderer* tells the story of Steven Avery, who served 18 years in prison on a wrongful conviction of rape and attempted murder convictions before DNA evidence fully exonerated him in 2003. In 2005, Avery was charged with another murder, that of Teresa Halbach and was convicted and sentenced in 2007. The filming of the ten-episode series took place over a period of ten years, capturing as events unfolded from his arrest in 2005 to when the show debuted on Netflix in December 2015.

Making a Murderer is set in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, where most people are farmers by trade; but, the Avery family "dealt in junk," as they owned the local salvage yard and were known for not being well educated.⁴¹ It is described in the first episode, "Eighteen Years Lost," that Avery was seen as a troublemaker by those outside his family, having a previous legal record for burglary, animal cruelty and possession of a firearm on different occasions.⁴² This paints an emotional picture for the viewer, and despite his record, viewers continue to root for Avery's success, as he faced many hardships.

The show begins with emotional homecoming footage of Avery released from prison in 2003. Surrounded by his family and loved ones, he is depicted as innocent, as he was exonerated. To echo this innocence and establish pathos with the viewer, Avery expressed "I don't want to be a criminal. I want to be normal."⁴³ Despite his desire for normalcy, the show captured how Avery was kept from justice on multiple occasions, as he did not even match the original description from the victim. Avery was found guilty and sentenced to 32 years in prison. Knowing he was innocent and would not receive parole, he refused to admit guilt. The tone of *Making a Murderer* reflected Avery's innocence, focusing on the injustices he faced when he was wrongly accused, by interviewing his alibi witnesses and more.

The rhetoric surrounding other characters, specifically the victim, has a significant impact on the tone of the show. Halbach, the woman who disappeared on October 31, 2005, was a freelance photographer with no previous ties to the accused, unlike the victims in *Serial* and *The Jinx*. This made the uncovering of

40 Ibid

41 Moira Demos and Laura Ricciardi, "Eighteen Years Lost," *Making A Murderer* (Manitowoc, Wisconsin: Netflix, December 18, 2015).

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

a potential motive by Avery increasingly difficult. This factor alone enabled the show to push a narrative of Avery's innocence, especially because to his previous wrongful conviction for which he served 18 years in prison. *Making a Murderer* depicted Halbach as an innocent young woman with no enemies, so it was unclear what would have motivated someone to murder her. The show interviews her family and Avery was shown as much as a victim of the justice system as Halbach was of her murder.

In defending Avery's innocence, *Making A Murderer* had the strongest set of causal relations of all three of the shows. After Avery's wrongful conviction, the whole thing seemed suspicious. Some of the most persuasive police evidence came in episode four, "Indefensible," when a taped confession by Avery's nephew, Brendan Dassey, claimed that he watched and assisted in the murder of Halbach.⁴⁴ Avery's defense would later claim that this confession was coerced out of Dassey by police. That confession largely leads to the conviction of Avery, despite certain circumstances being unclear. Dassey had some learning disabilities and a low IQ. When paired with the various inconsistencies in his confession, his treatment was treatment by police may have been enough to get him to falsely confess. Dassey was convicted as well based on this confession, but that decision would later be overturned in 2016.⁴⁵

More than two years after the release of *Making a Murderer*, Avery's guilt is still argued among viewers. This show, like *Serial*, did not come to a firm conclusion, but left it up to the audience to decide. *Making a Murderer* relied heavily on the context of the setting and previous arrest of Avery to drive a narrative that he may be innocent. *Making a Murderer* exposed viewers to the various injustices in the United States criminal justice system, but also called into question whether a person can be driven to commit heinous acts because of their experiences. Rhetorically, the show is set up to allow viewers to sympathize with Avery and his nephew because it puts the viewer in their shoes on multiple occasions. This rhetoric is powerful and set the tone for most true crime shows.

Making A Murderer was released all at once on the Netflix platform, which was new to the true crime genre at the time. The evolution and growth of the genre from the premiere of *Serial* led to the creation of a show that was released all at once, thus encouraging the audience to binge-watch it. Netflix as a platform encourages this with the auto-play next episode feature. The release of *Making a Murderer* on the Netflix platform created a pathway that would be followed by many other true crime shows over the next two years.

V. Analysis

Upon examining the shows through a narrative rhetorical lens, an answer emerges to our first research question—What about true crime media makes them popular? Are there consistent traits across the genre? After examining three of the most widespread and popular true crime shows of the last few years, one can identify elements of the genre that keep the audience interested; however, there is not a formula that can be identified within the scope of these three shows. One consistency was that the accused was interviewed in all three shows, providing a unique viewpoint. Different portions of different shows kept the audience interested, but it was largely linked to the setting of the show, the depiction of the accused, the depiction of the victim, and the causal relations established throughout the series. These factors, when met with the innate human fascination with crime, motivate viewers to continue to consume the product and binge consume it when possible. Despite these rhetorical elements being different across the three shows, these factors together create popular true crime content. *Serial* and *Making a Murderer* were fueled largely by trying to find out if someone was wrongfully convicted, while *The Jinx* focused on convicting someone of a series of crimes. Each of the series focused in a different way on the accused, in particular, using rhetoric to push an agenda and satisfy the psychological need of the audience to distance themselves from the accused. That is why characterization of the accused alone was not enough. The accused must be considered within the context of the setting and the victims to get a complete picture of how their life may differ from what happens in the shows.

Has the binge-watching era influenced the true crime genre? To answer the second research question, one can look at the evolution of the release of new true crime content over time since the release of

44 Moira Demos and Laura Ricciardi, "Indefensible," *Making A Murderer* (Manitowoc, Wisconsin: Netflix, December 18, 2015).

45 Steve Almasy, "'Making a Murderer': Conviction Overturned," CNN, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/12/us/making-a-murderer-brendan-dassey-conviction-overturned/index.html>.

Making a Murderer. As each show was produced, the episodes became easier to binge, and as new content was created, more and more true crime content was released all at once on its respective platform.

Limitations

The true crime genre is broad and continues to expand throughout a variety of media. This research was limited to studying three of the most popular true crime shows. By studying these three shows, this study only captured the essence of shows that were popular in 2014 and 2015. Since that time, more true crime shows have emerged, along with entire television networks dedicated to the genre. This allows for further research to be conducted based on a larger sample of true crime content across different platforms. Other research could also be done on the impact of the resurgence of the genre and how it has impacted the way people view crime as a whole, in addition to the way people view the way crime is covered by the media.

VI. Conclusion

This paper sought to identify potential causes for why true crime has become increasingly popular over the last three years. Results indicate that there is no formulaic answer, but rather different elements, when mixed, create popular content for viewers. This experience is enhanced by the binge-consumption era, as it allows the audience to get more instant gratification for the cliffhangers throughout the show. The evolution of the true crime genre has brought shows to where they are today. Evidence shows that there are some consistencies across the shows studied; however, each individually captures an audience due to its unique storytelling nature.

This research provides insights into the future of the true crime genre by identifying the elements that have allowed it to grow in popularity. In today's binge-consumption era, more shows are being created with the intention of watching episodes in immediate succession. In order to keep people hooked, these shows must utilize rhetoric to push the viewer to one side or another, even if the final decision falls to the audience. As the true crime genre continues to expand, producers will need to take into account the rhetoric behind these shows to keep the genre at the level of popularity with the help of *Serial*, *The Jinx*, and *Making a Murderer*.

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Influence of Education, Income and Age on Newspaper Use and Platform Preference

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Abstract

Newspapers are finding themselves in a time of great uncertainty due to the fragmentation of news consumers. As a result, understanding base characteristics that can predict newspaper use is key to a publication's survival. Drawing from prior research and existing General Social Survey data, this study examined how education, income, and age are related to newspaper use, and whether education is a predictor of media platform preference. The study found significant correlation between newspaper usage and education, income, and age. This study furthers the understanding of news engagement and provides practical implications for media outlets to better recognize how their potential audiences might interact with them.

I. Introduction

The ways in which people obtain their news has dramatically changed since Schramm and White's seminal work (1949) on age, education and income in newspaper readership. The Internet has provided its users with more news sources than ever before. Online media outlets have delivered a continuous stream of information to consumers, making it more difficult for those consumers to sort through articles of interest (Maes, 1994). As news consumers find themselves in a period of information overload, print circulation has declined. Newspapers are struggling to sustain themselves and meet news consumers' growing demands. News organizations must provide quality content, but also leisure, entertainment and cultural services based on their understanding of readers' needs (Goyanes, 2014), since the development of a lifetime news habit is less of a given. News still matters, but the methods of finding news have changed. "The new digital environment has jolted traditional journalism out of its conservative complacency" (Bird, 2009, p. 295). Today, there is a tremendous need for print news outlets to understand whom their audiences are and how they can best satisfy reader needs. Thus, this study examined the relationship between newspaper use and education, income, and age, as well as the relationship between education and news platform preference.

II. Literature Review

While there is a limited amount of research comparing education level and newspaper usage, researchers have confirmed the power of education as a predictor of media behavior (Self, 1988). Education is positively associated with general news exposure (Poindexter & McCombs, 2001). Exposure to a variety of media outlets, especially for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, has been found to predict the extent to which people are able to receive diverse ideas, with interest and prior knowledge as even better predictors (Wurff, 2011).

Education consists of more than years of schooling. It is a lifelong process that can come from several different sources, including conversations with community members (Ognyanova et al., 2013), suggesting that news, as a common information denominator, can become part of education. Others argue that political interest is a predictor of interest in news, and interest in newspapers (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2011). Less is known about the relationship between general level of education and interest in newspapers. Formal education is a factor in a person's preferred news medium. However, findings have suggested that media use varies widely from person to person, regardless of education.

User demographic profiles of news sites are individually distinct, and the topics that readers view vary by the sites they access (Tewksbury, 2005). Usage of media can reduce information disparities. For example, television news viewership significantly reduced the knowledge gap between education groups during the 1992 presidential election (Kwak, 1999). There are several ways people choose media platforms. "Personal characteristics predict the reception of diversity better than exposure to a variety of news media" (Wurff, 2011, p. 336). Additionally, those who are interested in news must have some knowledge about the issue at hand before they receive diverse ideas from news outlets (Wurff, 2011). Positive content that evokes high-arousal emotions is more viral and can determine which platforms a consumer uses (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Newspaper and Internet use is likely to have a positive influence for readers who are more comfortable and willing to share their opinions (Choi, Cacciatore, Xenos, Scheufele, & Brossard, 2012). Finally, news readership when delivered online varies based on scope. "Readers of online editions of local papers tend to be readers of that paper, but online editions of national papers reach people who don't read the print edition" (Chyi & Lasorsa, 1999, p. 2). Much research about platform preference has focused on audiences' wants and needs and the content itself rather than demographic variables like education.

The author asked the following two research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between level of education and use of newspapers?

RQ2: What is the relationship between level of education and choice of platform for news delivery?

Another area of concern is the well-documented slip of newspaper readership among younger readers (Pew, 2016). While people search for credible information from media outlets, younger audiences do not place a high value on reporters' professional training and experience (Armstrong & Collins, 2009). Researchers have historically been somewhat divided on the impact of age on newspaper usage. Some have found age to be significantly related to newspaper readership (Burgoon & Burgoon, 1980), while others claim the influence of age on medium choice is declining (Self, 1988). Nevertheless, it is fair to say people are not reading as many print newspapers as they once were. Between 1999 and 2015, daily newspaper readership has declined by 26% for 18-24-year-olds and 27% for those between the ages of 25-34 (Pew Research Center, 2016). Declining readership is high across all ages, though. Daily newspaper readership decreased by 33% for 35-44-year-olds, 35% for 45-54-year-olds, and 31% for 55-64-year-olds. Those who are 65 years or older have seen the smallest decrease in daily newspaper readership, but that decrease is still 22%.

Because of the dwindling interest in print, many outlets are turning to the Internet as it presents them with a better chance to attract and convince young readers to subscribe (Goyanes, 2014). Even so, readers' lack of trust in newspapers inhibits a news organization's ability to reach a younger audience. "Young adult readers do not ascribe a higher credibility rating to a local newspaper with a professional staff than they do to a student-run newspaper (Armstrong & Collins, 2009, p. 107). While young readers are the least likely to use newspapers, they are still important to news organizations' ability to sustain themselves after older generations die out.

RQ3: What is the relationship between people's age and their newspaper usage?

Limited research has been done about the relationship between income and newspaper use. Some have found that income and newspaper readership are significantly related (Burgoon & Burgoon, 1980), while others have determined socioeconomic status does not correlate significantly with the utility of news (Abrams, Kaul, & Ma, 1979). Although Abrams et al. found no significant correlation between socioeconomic status and perceived usefulness of news, respondents of lower and middle classes demonstrated "statistically significant positive correlations between perceived utility of news" (Abrams et al., 1979, p. 45). In other words, people with low incomes see the value of gathering news.

Online news sources operating under a freemium model can be difficult to compete with. Internet users have grown accustomed to consuming "free" content and are generally unwilling to pay for information. This phenomenon can be observed in declining print circulation revenue (Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013) and paywall failures (Myllylahti, 2014). The traditional business model of newspapers is deteriorating, as evidenced by slow, constant decreases over time in the Spanish newspaper industry (Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013). Both in the United States and internationally, several outlets attempted to make up for circulation losses by pushing online content to their audiences. However, efforts to make paywalls a sustainable business model have largely been unsuccessful. "Revenue generated by paid online news content is not substantial enough to make paywalls a viable business model in the short term" (Myllylahti, 2014, p. 179). Still, it is worth noting that media corporations do not disclose information about their digital subscription revenue. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of newspaper paywalls. As with paywalls, issues of affordability might impact a person's ability to access news through newspapers, particularly when discretionary income is already going toward technology. The study asked:

RQ4: Does a person's income predict his or her newspaper usage?

III. Methods

A quantitative analysis was conducted to examine the influence of education, income, and age on newspaper usage and the relationship between education level and preferred platform for news consumption. The analysis included responses from 2,538 U.S. adults polled in the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS). Since 1972, GSS has gathered data on contemporary American society in order to monitor and explain trends and constants in attitudes, behaviors, and attributes. "The GSS is a project of the independent research organization NORC at the University of Chicago, with principal funding from the National Science Foundation" (NORC at the University of Chicago).

This was the most recent publicly available dataset from the GSS with all of the five desired variables. The three independent variables analyzed were education level (educ), income (income), and age (age). The two dependent variables were newspaper usage (news) and preferred newsgathering platform (newsfrom). To ensure accuracy, the downloaded GSS 2014 dataset was cross-referenced with the online GSS Data Explorer. All measured variables were identical both online and in the 2014 downloaded dataset.

SPSS was used to recode the variables. Education, income, age and newsgathering platform were recoded. The original education variable from GSS had been coded based on years of schooling. To make this more easily understood, this study recoded education levels into the following five categories: less than high school, high school, associate's degree/some college, bachelor's degree, and graduate/professional school. Total household income was recoded into five groups so it could generally reflect groups of people from the lower class, low-middle class, middle-middle class, upper-middle class, and upper class. GSS's income variable was limiting in that it capped responses at \$150,000 or more. Therefore, it is hard to draw conclusions about and distinguish between respondents in the upper-middle and upper class. Age groups were 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. These specific age groups were chosen to align with existing newspaper circulation data from the Pew Research Center. In doing so, it would be safer to draw broader conclusions. The original newsgathering platform variable listed a plethora of options. The recoded variable kept all the existing categories but pushed newspapers, Internet, and television to the top.

To analyze the cleaned dataset, two-way cross-tabs were used. After that, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the significance of the relationship between newspaper use and education,

income, and age. A Chi Square test was used to explore the relationship between education level and preferred newsgathering platform.

IV. Results

This results section described answers to each of the four research questions on relationships between demographic data and use of newspapers or preferred platforms for news access. With respect to RQ 1, How does a person's level of education predict his or her newspaper usage, the correlation between newspaper readership and education level is significant at $p < .01$. More highly educated people were more likely to be regular newspaper readers.

For RQ2—Is education a predictor for media platform preference?—differences in platform preference and education was found, with a χ^2 significance of $p < .01$. Data suggest that among college-educated individuals, the internet is the dominant platform of choice for receiving news information, as shown in Table 1. Those who have not graduated high school or did not go to college after graduation relied more on television for their news needs. Radio is used pretty equally across all education levels. Less commonly reported were alternative forms of getting news, which includes all the other ways GSS respondents said they got their information. Respondents were asked where they get most of their information about current news events: newspapers, magazines, the Internet, books or other printed materials, TV, radio, government agencies, family, friends, colleagues, or some other source.

Table 1. Education by Newsgathering Platform*

(Unit: %)

		Level of Education				
		Less than High School	High School	Assoc. Degree/ Some College	Bachelor's Degree	Grad or Prof
Preferred News Platform	Newspapers	10.3	8.3	6.8	16.6	16.8
	Internet	18.0	23.9	43.5	43.5	42.9
	TV	61.3	55.3	39.0	30.9	29.2
	Radio	5.2	6.8	6.1	5.8	5.6
	Books/Magazines	0.5	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.6
	Government Agencies		0.3		0.4	0.6
	Friends/ Family/ Colleagues	4.1	4.3	3.5	1.8	4.3
	Other/Don't Know	0.5	0.3			
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Percentages are of the total pool of respondents, sorted by education and platform

With respect to RQ3—How does a person's age predict his or her newspaper usage?—the moderate correlation between newspaper readership and age was found at a statistically significant level of $p < .01$.

When it comes to RQ4 on the relation of income with newspaper usage, the relationship was significant at $p < .01$. There is an interesting pattern of readership by income, as shown in Table 2. Although for the lowest income levels, about 1/3 of respondents (32.5%) said they never read a newspaper, in the middle range of \$50,000 to less than \$110,000, about equal percentages of respondents (28%) were either daily or never readers. About half of the highest income respondents (51%) were daily newspaper readers.

Of the three independent variables, age has the strongest relationship with newspaper usage. Findings are consistent with prior research highlighting young readers' dwindling demand for print media. In general, regular readers tend to be older. This poses a continued challenge for publishers as older generations die out.

Table 2. Income by Newspaper Readership

		Frequency of Newspaper Readership					Total
		EVERYDAY	FEW TIMES A WEEK	ONCE A WEEK	LESS THAN ONCE WEEK	NEVER	
Total Annual Household Income	\$0- <\$25,000	16.3	17.7	17.7	15.8	32.5	100.0
	\$25,000- <\$50,000	21.1	14.7	13.3	18.6	32.4	100.0
	\$50,000 - < \$110,000	28.0	16.3	14.2	14.0	27.6	100.0
	\$110,000-< \$150,000	26.7	20.8	15.0	16.7	20.8	100.0
	\$150,000+	51.3	11.1	9.4	10.3	17.9	100.0
	Don't Know/Refused	25.2	7.7	15.4	23.8	28.0	100.0
Total		24.9	15.5	14.7	16.2	28.7	100.0

V. Discussion

Despite the hardships that confront the print news industry, there are some positive opportunities for newspaper. People across all educational and financial backgrounds did read newspapers, at least some. While some national publications may market themselves to a wealthier audience, they should also recognize the readership among lower and middle class U.S. residents in both content and advertising. To fail to do so is both a financial and an ethical risk.

Despite this encouragement, there are hurdles that will be challenging for print media to overcome. Of particular concern is the high usage of the Internet for news among young adults and the high usage of television among people with lower levels of education. Findings from this study suggest that newspapers must more effectively engage their non-wealthy audiences and continue exploring alternative, sustainable business models including digital content delivery and partnerships with television news, particularly in local markets.

The impact of education, income, and age on newspaper readership is an underexplored area of study. This study brings into question the notion that newspapers are primarily of interest to upper-middle class and upper class people. Although these groups do have higher readership, many in the lower income

levels still do read newspapers, and they are the great majority of the US population¹. It is dangerous to the future of print media to write off populations still interested in consuming information through newspapers.

This study is limited by the types of data collected. The Pew Research Center and General Social Survey offer valuable insights, but are limited by the fact that there is not a great depth of variables. Data can provide some information on behaviors related to news, but more specific data about users and their choices requires asking users themselves and mixed-methods work including more detailed questioning could generate valuable insights for the news industry.

VI. Conclusion

As more news outlets struggle to sustain themselves, they must work to understand their audience and appeal to readers. Using General Social Survey data, this study found that there was a sizable amount of interest in news consumption across all educational and financial backgrounds. Those with less education tended to prefer getting news from television sources. Those who preferred print tended to be wealthier and more educated. Still, there is demand for news across all demographics analyzed in this study. Future research could use updated data to explore any demographic shifts that have taken place in the last four years.

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