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*Elon Journal*  
of Undergraduate Research  
in Communications

**2015** Spring  
Issue  
School of Communications  
Elon University

## 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/](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

Twenty-eight faculty members in Elon's School of Communications served as the Editorial Board that selected 11 undergraduate research papers for the 2015 spring issue.

From more than 100 research papers written in advanced School of Communications classes, 24 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 Jonathan Albright, Janna Anderson, Lucinda Austin, Vanessa Bravo, Lee Bush, Naeemah Clark, David Copeland, Michael Frontani, Don Grady, Ben Hannam, Anthony Hatcher, Jonathan Jones, Derek Lackaff, Julie Lellis, Harlen Makemson, Barbara Miller, William Moner, Phillip Motley, Thomas Nelson, George Padgett, Paul Parsons, Glenn Scott, Michael Skube, Jessalynn Strauss, Amanda Sturgill, Hal Vincent, Frances Ward-Johnson, and Qian Xu.

Thanks should also go to Bryan Baker, who videotaped student introductions to their projects; Colin Donohue, who uploaded the PDF version of this issue and student videos; Associate Dean Don A. Grady, who reviewed articles to help ensure the quality of the journal; and Tommy Kopetskie, who proofread the articles.

## Editor's Note

This edition of the journal provides studies on contemporary media topics ranging from impacts of new technology on individuals and society to advertising and marketing to media portrayal.

Four articles dealt with effects of new technology. In her study on narcissism and social media, Wickel determined that college students' posting selfies on social platforms encouraged narcissism and selfish behaviors. Drago found cell phones have a negative effect on both the quality and quantity of face-to-face communications. In his study on the impact of technology on music star's cultural influence, Shapero discovered that musicians influence their fans through not only streaming services, but also Twitter. Brogan also found that Twitter became a news channel for Americans through a case study of the Boston Marathon bombings.

Another four articles covered advertising and marketing issues. After analyzing six brands from Unilever and Procter & Gamble, Baxter concluded that companies producing female-empowering advertisements are not truly supporting the activist movement, but are manipulating consumers for bigger profits with faux activism for feminism. After studying the potential of beacon, a smartphone app, Moody concluded that the technology has promising potential if merchants are aware of consumer hesitation and keep consumer benefits at top of mind. Hanke examined how luxury fashion brands utilize YouTube to engage the consumer and promote brand identity. In another study on branding, Ginsberg examined Instagram accounts of food brands that are using the social media platform to express their unique personalities.

The remaining three articles investigated media portrayal. Blunt used media framing theory to assess coverage of Hitler published in three U.S. newspapers between 1923 and 1924. Her analysis of approximately 200 articles revealed "credible" and "non-credible" frames relating to his political influence. Boyd explored the role that Native Americans have played in the Hollywood film industry and the space they are creating for themselves in establishing authentic representations of their culture in the media. Bowen's study explored the way news organizations presented the Ferguson, Missouri, story in comparison with a similar Rodney King incident. She found that overarching frames focused on the conflict between the public and authorities, black hardship, and black male youth hardship.

These studies reflect hard work of students and their mentors in answering significant communication questions of our time. I hope the articles in this issue will inspire students in the next semester to commit to examining important research questions and submit their papers to this journal.

Dr. Byung Lee  
Journal Editor

**Elon Journal of  
Undergraduate Research in Communications**

**Volume 6, No. 1 • Spring 2015**

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<b>Narcissism and Social Networking Sites: The Act of Taking Selfies</b> <i>Taylor M. Wickel</i>	5
<b>The Effect of Technology on Face-to-Face Communication</b> <i>Emily Drago</i>	13
<b>The Impact of Technology on Music Star’s Cultural Influence</b> <i>Dean Shapero</i>	20
<b>How Twitter is Changing Narrative Storytelling: A Case Study of the Boston Marathon Bombings</b> <i>Mary Kate Brogan</i>	28
<b>Faux Activism in Recent Female-Empowering Advertising</b> <i>Alyssa Baxter</i>	48
<b>Analysis of Promising Beacon Technology for Consumers</b> <i>Marisa Moody</i>	59
<b>How Luxury Fashion Brands Utilize YouTube to Engage Consumers and Promote Brand Identity</b> <i>Melissa Hanke</i>	69
<b>Instabranding: Shaping the Personalities of the Top Food Brands on Instagram</b> <i>Kate Ginsberg</i>	78
<b>Yesterday’s News: Media Framing of Hitler’s Early Years, 1923-1924</b> <i>Katherine Blunt</i>	92
<b>An Examination of Native Americans in Film and Rise of Native Filmmakers</b> <i>Julia Boyd</i>	105
<b>A Framing Analysis of Media Coverage of the Rodney King Incident and Ferguson, Missouri, Conflicts</b> <i>Sarah Bowen</i>	114

# Narcissism and Social Networking Sites: The Act of Taking Selfies

Taylor M. Wickel

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## Abstract

*This study focused on why the act of taking selfies and posting them to the Internet is a factor leading to an increase in narcissistic and selfish behaviors. This study examined whether the Millennial Generation believes the selfie phenomenon is a contributor to the rise in narcissism. A 12-item survey was administered to 93 female college participants. A single open-ended question asked whether respondents found their behavior in posting selfies to be narcissistic. This study found that 55% of participants agreed that posting of selfies to different social networking platforms encouraged their narcissism and selfish behaviors.*

## I. Introduction

Named Word of the Year in 2013 by the Oxford English Dictionary, the term “selfie” has become ubiquitous in the vocabulary of nearly every teen and young adult in the technological world. A selfie is defined as “a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media” (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). For the Millennial Generation (Gen Y), the act of taking selfies and overall usage of various social media platforms are an integral part of life. The Millennial Generation’s comfort with social platforms has given this specific age group a more positive view of how social media might be affecting their lives. Studies, however, link social media use in young adults to various behavior development issues (Noor Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2012).

Millennials, aged from 18 to 33, are hyper-connected, but typically exhibit little awareness of or concern for others except as an audience. A study by San Diego State University professor Twenge shows that narcissism levels have risen steadily during the past few decades, making the Millennial Generation, also known as “Generation Me,” more selfish and self-absorbed than any other previous generation (Firesstone, 2012). Narcissism is typically illustrated as a tendency to believe one’s self to be superior to others’, to persistently pursue admiration from others, and to participate in egotistic thinking and behavior (Panek, Nardis & Konrath, 2013). Taking selfies and sharing photos on popular social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are considered to be one of the biggest contributors to the rise in narcissistic behavior among Millennials. According to a study the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project using a nationally representative phone survey, adolescents in the United States are sharing more personal information than ever on social media.

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**Keywords:** narcissism, Millennial Generation, selfie, social networking, selfish behavior  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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An additional study investigating the relationship between social media use, empathy and narcissism found that for both males and females, posting, tagging, and commenting on photos were associated with higher narcissism scores (Alloway, Runac, Qureshi & Kemp, 2014). Buffadi, a postdoctoral researcher at the Universidad de Dueto in Bilbao, Spain, wrote, "Narcissists use Facebook and other social networking sites because they believe others are interested in what they're doing, and they want others to know what they are doing" (Firestone, 2012).

This study aimed to examine how social media has changed our developmental and behavioral personalities, and how social media, specifically the act of taking and posting selfies, is deemed to be a main contributor to the rise in narcissistic behaviors in recent generations. Additionally, this study explored how the Millennial Generation thinks about the act of taking and posting these self-portraits to social networking sites.

## II. Literature Review

### *Defining and Measuring Narcissism*

Narcissism is characteristically illustrated as an affinity to believe one's self to be superior over others, to incessantly pursue adoration from others, and to participate in egotistical thinking and behavior (Panek, Nardis & Konrath, 2013). Escalations in narcissism prove to be a potential risk to developing young adolescents in terms of their emotional and psychological health. Narcissism is recognized in conjunction with the use of personal communication as a method for self-enhancement and self-promotion, inhibiting individuals from establishing lasting intimate connections (Panek, Nardis & Konrath, 2013). Consequently, this can damage an individual's ability to shape healthy, mutually beneficial relationships (Alloway, Runac, Qureshi, and Kemp, 2014). Additionally, those with elevated narcissism levels tend to be more prone to respond with violent and aggressive behavior after being critiqued. Online relationships often appeal to narcissists, who are characteristically not able to, or unwilling, to form meaningful friendships that demand any time or emotional investment (Carpenter, 2012).

### *History of the term "selfie"*

Despite "selfie" becoming a phenomenon of the 21st century, the act of sharing a selfie with friends pre-dates the Internet. The act of distributing "cartes de visite," or pocket sized photo cards, dates back to the 1860s (The Economist, 2014). In 1880, the photo booth was introduced, which attracted people to take self-photographs just as they still do today. The invention of the self-timer in the late 1880s allowed for any individual taking a photograph to preset their camera and allow themselves 5 to 10 seconds to get into a shot. This is believed to be the inception of what is now known as a selfie, or self-photograph.

In 1948, the first Polaroid camera was sold. This camera could be held at an arm's length, which encouraged individuals to take more intimate self-photos (The Economist, 2013). The slang expression "selfie," however, first appeared in 2002 in an online post from Australia. Since then, society's use of the word selfie has increased 170 times, thus encouraging the Oxford English Dictionary to announce it as Word of the Year in 2013 (Day, 2013).

### *Facebook, Twitter and Smartphones*

The increase in media and technologies that allows society to engage in social media has brought about an increase in the amount of narcissism expressed by Millennials. The growing use of technology, specifically the increase of smartphones, has allowed users to access any type of social networking site with just a few swipes of a finger. Nearly 40% of cell phone holders will use a social networking site on their mobile device at any point in time, and nearly 28% state that they access social networking sites on a typical day. Adolescents, African Americans, Hispanics, individuals with a higher education, and individuals with a greater annual household income are the more likely to use social networking sites on their phones than anyone else (Smith & Zickuhr, 2012). Adolescents are well aware of their online reputes, and tend to actively manage the content and presence of their social networking profiles. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, teens expressed that Facebook is an extension of their social communication and an essential component to their social life. Teens responded that online profiles help determine one's social status. Specifically, teens

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measure their status through the number of “likes” a photo or a status update garners. As a way to acquire the maximum number of likes, Facebook users will manipulate and change their profile content. If users do not achieve the number of desired “likes” on a photo, they may remove the photo from their profile (Duggan & Smith, 2013).

Managing and revising one’s online profile content is a vital aspect of an adolescent’s online identity and “e-personality” (Aboujaoude, 2011). As a way to manage the content on one’s online profile, “59% have deleted or edited something that they posted in the past, 53% have deleted comments from others on their profile or account and 45% have removed their name from photos that have been tagged to identify them” (Duggan & Smith, 2013). In addition, this same study found that nearly 52% of adolescents online express they have had an experience through a social networking site that boosted their confidence (Duggan & Smith, 2013).

In addition to Facebook, Millennials have increasingly relied on Twitter over the past few years to express their desire or curate their online personas. Nearly 24% of online youths used Twitter, up from 16% in 2011 (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Teens who expressed interest in sites, such as Twitter and Instagram, stated that they felt like they could better express their social identity on these platforms because they did not feel the pressure of upholding the same social expectations that Facebook generates (Beasley, B., & Haney). Some Millennials tend to pay more attention to other social networking sites, such as Twitter, as a way to escape the drama and pressure they feel that Facebook elicits. Nevertheless, these same teens still manage to stay active on Facebook, in addition to other social profiles (Smith & Zickuhr, 2012).

### ***Narcissism on Social Networking Sites***

Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, offer an easy way to participate in the attention-seeking, self-important behaviors of narcissists. It is important for narcissists to share their experiences because they believe all of their followers and social networking friends are genuinely interested in knowing what they are doing (Carpenter, 2012). Social networking sites give narcissistic individuals the chance to keep the focus of their profile’s content specifically on themselves. In doing this, they post status updates, comments and pictures that depict only themselves, and not others, perpetuating their self-interested nature (Aboujaoude, 2011).

Research indicates that those who use these types of social networking sites tend to develop their online profiles to achieve a type of social identity they wish to portray (Gabriel, 2014). In doing this, an individual will exaggerate certain character traits, and present a persona that they believe is appealing to the general public (Alloway, Runac, Qureshi & Kemp, 2014). This unrealistic self-presentation is possible through different social networking platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, because each individual has complete and total control of their profile content. Previous research suggests that narcissism may be positively related to posting different types of self-promoting content on social networking platforms (Alloway, Runac, Qureshi & Kemp, 2014).

After completing a literature review, the following two research questions were asked:

1. Does the act of posting selfies on social networking sites, specifically Facebook and Twitter, encourage selfish and narcissistic behavior in teens and young adults?
2. What do members of the Millennial Generation seek to gain from posting self-portraits on social media sites, and how does it benefit them?

## **III. Methodology**

For this survey, the author emailed a link to an online survey to all of Elon University’s on-campus female Panhellenic Greek organizations, which included nine sororities. Female students involved in Greek life were selected after considering that these college students tend to prioritize social interaction and relationships. The supposition here is that this sample of women would have a surplus of experience with taking selfies and tend to have a higher-than-average involvement in their generation with social networking platforms. The email recipients were asked to complete the 12-question survey as honestly as possible to help the author obtain a broad understanding of how the general population thinks in regard to this subject. All participants were promised confidentiality to ensure honest responses.

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### Questions

The survey questions asked if participants think that the selfies they take contribute to potential narcissism, and the extent to which they think that social media encourages such behavior.

Other survey questions include:

How often do you post selfies to social networking platforms?

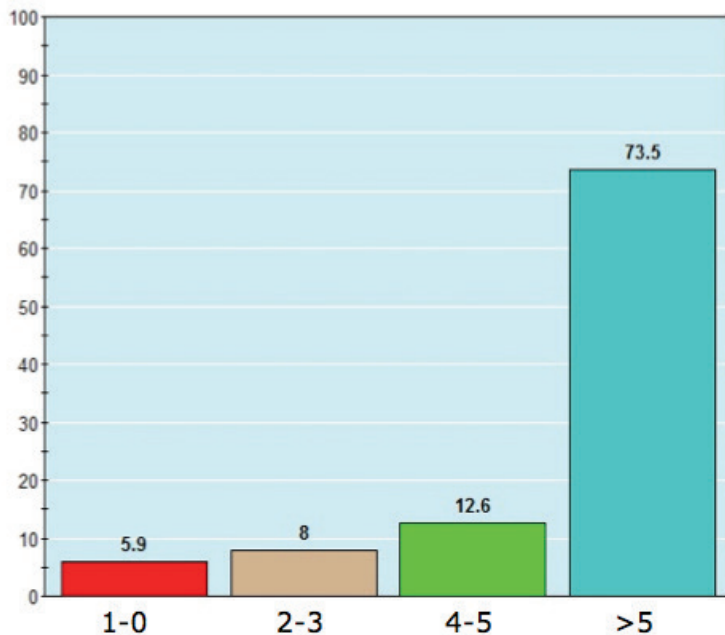
Do you determine a person's social standing and popularity based on how many likes or comments they receive on a photo or status update?

If you do not receive the amount of likes you had hoped on a photo, will you take it off the social networking platform? (For the entire questionnaire, refer to Appendix A.)

One open-ended question -- Do you think that posting selfies to different social networking platforms encourages you to partake in narcissistic and selfish behaviors? -- was asked to elicit participants' personal responses on motives for posting selfies. Each response was coded to determine the most common reasons behind why or why not participants thought that posting selfies to different social networking platforms encouraged their narcissism and selfish behaviors.

### IV. Findings

Asked about their daily Internet usage, specifically their daily use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, 73.5% of 93 Elon University respondents reported that they check or update their online profiles more than five times a day, as shown in *Figure 1* below, followed by those who checked their profiles four or five times a day (12.6%).



*Figure 1.* Number of times the participant checks social networking platforms a day

Nearly all the participants in this survey (97.8%) reported that they determine another person's popularity based on how many "likes" or comments that person's profile picture or status update receives. Additionally, 90.2% of the survey participants reported that they post pictures of themselves to social networking sites for the sole reason of receiving "likes" and comments from their online friends. However, only 15.7% of participants expressed that they have or would take a picture down from a social networking platform if they did not receive enough positive feedback, and the majority of participants (60.3%) said that they would allow the photo to remain on the platform.



When participants were asked an open-ended question if they thought that posting selfies to various social networking platforms encouraged their narcissism and selfish behaviors, the respondents had a wide variety of answers. More than half (55%) answered with a definitive “yes.” Selected answers to this open-ended question included the following:

- “I can honestly say that I am 100% guilty of participating in selfish and narcissistic behaviors when I post selfies to the Internet. My main reason for posting selfies is to let people know that I have a social life and to make it seem like I am constantly doing something fun or cool. I feel like it boosts my social status.”
- “Yes, I believe that the phenomenon of posting selfies to social networking sites has contributed to the rise in narcissism. I personally know that the driving force behind posting selfies to Facebook for me is the satisfaction of getting likes and comments on how good I look in the picture and how pretty I am.”

***There were negative answers, too:***

- “I feel that posting pictures of myself to social media sites are a simply a way of allowing my friends and family to see what I am currently doing in my life. I don’t believe that keeping friends and family up to date in my life would fall into the category of partaking in narcissistic or selfish behavior.”
- “No, I don’t think that posting selfies to social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter encourage potential narcissistic behaviors in myself. I personally post selfies to social media platforms as a way to document my travels and experiences. I use this tool for myself to keep memories, not to gain likes or attention from others, so to speak.”

The author analyzed and coded all the responses of the participants who responded yes to this open-ended question, and found the five most common reasons that these participants believe posting selfies to social networking platforms has increased narcissism and selfishness. As shown in Table 1, the highest number of participants mentioned that they sought to impress their online friends by sharing their social experiences. Participants were also highly likely to post to social media in order to receive as many likes as possible from their audience.

**Table 1. Reasons mentioned that posting selfies increase narcissism and selfishness**

Reason for posting selfie	Number of times each reason was mentioned
Posting a selfie allows their audience to notice their “impressive” social life.	52
Getting the maximum number of likes and comments on their selfie.	43
The participant believes they look attractive in their photo, and they want others to perceive them as such.	38
There is someone in specific (ex. Boyfriend, friend) that the participant is hoping to make jealous.	37
The participant genuinely believes that people are interested in what they are doing.	28

The responses received through this survey were similar to those in the 2013 Pew Research study previously mentioned. Consistent with the 2013 Pew Research study, the findings from this survey suggest that Millennials believe that social networking sites are essential to their social life. Additionally, responses from this survey supported the Pew Research study’s conclusion that Millennials base social status on the number of “likes” their photo receives on a social networking site. As a way to acquire the maximum number of likes, Facebook users will manipulate and change their profile content. This is an indicator of narcissism in that respondents of the survey partake in an incessant need to pursue adoration from others, and to participate in egotistical thinking and behavior (Panek, Nardis & Konrath, 2013).

A recurring reason for posting selfies to their online profiles was that the participants believe they look attractive in their photo, and they want others to perceive them as such. These reasons have been distinguished in various studies noted in the literature review and are an identifier of narcissism and selfish behaviors. Millennials who use social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, often develop their online profiles so that they are able to achieve their desired social identity (Gabriel, 2014). The data in Table 1 supports the idea that narcissism is linked to social networking usage and activity.

Despite the high correlation between selfies and narcissism, many respondents argued that selfies did not promote narcissistic behavior. As shown in Table 2, the most common reason for this belief was that they are simply keeping friends and family up to date on their lives, followed by keeping memories and feeling good about themselves. Contrary to their argument, all three most common reasons can be interpreted as indicators of narcissistic behavior.

**Table 2. Reasons participants offered for responding “no”**

Reasons for posting the selfie	Number of times the phrase or reason was mentioned
Posting selfies allows me to keep my friends and family updated on my life.	20
I post selfies for myself as a way to keep memories.	12
Posting selfies to social networking platforms makes me feel good about myself.	10

Previous studies judged posting images to social networking platforms because users believe people are genuinely interested is an indicator of narcissistic behavior (Alloway, Runac, Qureshi & Kemp, 2014). However, participants may not be aware that they are demonstrating behaviors that are associated with narcissism (Carpenter, 2012). Previous studies suggest that narcissism is recognized in combination with the use of individual communication as a technique for self-enhancement and self-promotion (Panek, Nardis & Konrath, 2013).

The most common reason participants responded “no” was the thought that posting selfies allows them to keep friends and family updated. This reason could easily be noted as an aspect of self-promotion, which correlates with narcissism. As distinguished in the literature review, this reason could be perceived as a way for the participants to keep the focus of their profiles content undeniably on themselves, which is seen as a narcissistic act (Aboujaoude, 2011).

Another common reason, “Posting selfies to social networking platforms makes me feel good about myself,” is an undeniable indicator of narcissism. Regardless of whether the respondents admit to it or not, they are participating in these selfish behaviors. They feel this way because posting selfies to social networking sites boosts their self-confidence and overall thoughts about themselves. This response correlates with the Pew Research study’s conclusion that 52% of adolescents online express they have had an experience through a social networking site that boosted their confidence (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Relying on social networking sites as a way to make a person feel good about themselves indicates self-important behaviors associated with narcissism.

Almost all participants (87.8%) responded that the use of social networking platforms as a way to maintain and build social relationships has changed how society interacts and perceives others. The majority of participants (60.6%) also determined that the Millennial Generation puts too much energy and effort into creating their online persona. Among participants, only a quarter (25.4%) reported that they believe an online profile is a true depiction of a person.

## Conclusion

The Millennial Generation uses social media to generate and maintain not only personal relationships, but also their own idealized personas. With social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter being their main channel for social interaction, it is not surprising to find that many Millennials feel the need to present themselves in ways that attract the most attention from their peers.

Based on a survey with 93 college women involved in Greek life at Elon University, this study addressed the fundamental relationship between narcissism and social media. The survey results showed that the majority of participants believe that taking and posting selfies online encourages narcissistic and selfish behaviors. In addition, the study showed that participants think posting selfies is beneficial to them.

In a new phenomenon, this study reveals the connection between taking selfies and the rise in narcissistic behaviors in the Millennial Generation. Narcissism is characteristically defined as “incessantly pursue adoration from others, and to participate in egotistical thinking and behavior” (Panek, Nardis & Konrath,

2013). As shown in both Figure 1 and Figure 2, the majority of the participants' responses correspond with the definition of narcissism. For participants who responded "yes" to the open-ended question, their reasons for doing so lean toward the incessant need and desire to obtain attention and gratification from their audience. Similarly, participants on the opposite side also responded in ways that can be interpreted as having the egotistical thinking and behavioral aspect of narcissism.

Limitations to this study include the relatively small number of survey participants, as well as the depth of the survey questions. Follow-up personal interviews would have provided a better understanding of how the Millennial Generation perceives the new trend and phenomenon of posting selfies to social networking platforms. Future research might include in-depth interviews, as well as the inclusion of young male participants.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to extend thanks to Dr. Glenn Scott, associate professor of communications at Elon University, for all his help and guidance through the process of this study. Additionally, the author thanks the individuals who took the time to review this article for publication.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

1. How often do you post selfies to social networking platforms?
    - a. 0-1 times per week
    - b. 2-3 times per week
    - c. 4-5 times per week
    - d. more than 5 times a week
  
  2. Do you determine a persons social standing and popularity based off how many likes or comments they receive on a photo or status update?
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  3. If you do not receive the amount of likes you had hoped on a photo, will you take it off the social networking platform?
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  4. Does the potential for positive feedback and number of likes you could receive on a picture encourage you to post your selfie to a social networking platform.
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  5. Does posting selfies on social networking platforms help you feel empowered and important amongst your friends and family?
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  6. Do you think that posting selfies to different social networking platforms encourages you to partake in narcissistic and selfish behaviors? (Open-ended question)
  
  7. Do you believe that the use of social networking platforms as a way to maintain and build social relationships has changed the way we as a society interact and perceive others?
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  8. Do you believe the Millennial Generation puts too much energy and effort into creating an online persona for themselves?
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  9. Do you think that an online profile is a true depiction of who a person really is?
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  10. Have you ever had an experience with a social networking platform that boosted your confidence or made you feel good about yourself?
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  11. Have you ever altered a photo of yourself as a way of making yourself seem more attractive or desirable?
    - a. yes
    - b. no
  
  12. How often do you check or update your online profile?
    - a. 0-1 times per day
    - b. 2-3 times per day
    - c. 4-5 times per day
    - d. more than 5 times a day
-

# The Effect of Technology on Face-to-Face Communication

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## Abstract

*Recent technological advancements have had a drastic impact on the way individuals communicate. In this research, previous studies were analyzed, field observations were conducted, and an online survey was administered to determine the level of engagement individuals have with their cell phones, other technologies and with each other in face-to-face situations. Findings suggest that technology has a negative effect on both the quality and quantity of face-to-face communication. Despite individuals' awareness of the decrease of face-to-face communication as a result of technology, more than 62% of individuals observed on Elon's campus continue to use mobile devices in the presence of others.*

## I. Introduction

Celebrity couple Kristen Bell and Dax Shepard star in a recent Samsung Galaxy Tab S ad that follows them on a day in their lives repeatedly distracted by technology. The couple decides to ditch their plans to go hiking and, instead, spend the day completely attached to their tablets. The commercial highlights the couple playing games on their separate devices at dinner, video chatting each other from different rooms in their house, and missing a black-tie event to watch a movie on their tablet instead. While it seems as though this should be a PSA promoting face-to-face interaction rather than screen-to-screen, it is just another ploy to sell more technology. This ad, along with many others, has emphasized the fact that as the use of devices and technology that allow people to communicate digitally increase, face-to-face interaction decreases.

Little by little, technology has become an integral part of the way that people communicate with one another and has increasingly taken the place of face-to-face communication. Due to the rapid expansion of technology, many individuals fear that people may be too immersed in this digital world and not present enough in the real world. In reaction to the overwhelming replacement of face time with screen time, a Massachusetts family decided to implement an Internet Sabbath each weekend in which no video games, computers or smartphones can be used. The father, William Powers, expressed the difficulty of the weekly detox stating, "It almost had an existential feeling of, 'I don't know who I am with the Internet gone.' But after a few months it hardened into a habit and we all began to realize we were gaining a lot from it" (Adler, 2013). Many others have expressed shared concerns regarding the overuse of technology and its impact on face-to-face communication, so much so that some Los Angeles restaurants have banned the use of mobile devices to ensure customers enjoy both their meal and their company (Forbes, 2013). Throughout this study, the author sought to answer questions regarding technology usage and investigated whether technology affects face-to-face communication negatively.

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**Keywords:** technology, impact, face-to-face communication, awareness, cell phone  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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## II. Literature Review

Before analyzing the effect of technology on face-to-face communication, it is important to understand the rapid growth of various technologies and their current usage throughout the United States. Over the past few decades, technology usage has grown significantly. Per the U.S. Census, 76% of households reported having a computer in 2011, compared with only 8% in 1984 (File, 2012). Of that number, 72% of households reported accessing the Internet, up from just 18% in 1998, the first year the Census asked about Internet use (File, 2012). As of 2013, 90% of American adults had a cell phone of some kind, and for people under the age of 44, the number was closer to 97% (Madrigal, 2013). The drastic increase in technology usage is especially noticeable in younger generations. One study, conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, found people ages 8 to 18 spent more time on media than on any other activity – at an average of 7.5 hours a day (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

Many studies have been conducted regarding technology's effect on social interaction and face-to-face communication since the rise of cellphone and social media usage in the late 2000s. As Przybylski and Weinstein of the University of Essex wrote in 2013, "Recent advancements in communication technology have enabled billions of people to connect more easily with people great distances away, yet little has been known about how the frequent presence of these devices in social settings influences face-to-face interactions" (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012, p. 1).

One study examined the relationship between the presence of mobile devices and the quality of real-life, in-person social interactions. In a naturalistic field experiment, researchers found that conversations in the absence of mobile communication technologies were rated as significantly superior compared with those in the presence of a mobile device (Misra, Cheng, Genevie, & Yuan, 2014). People who had conversations in the absence of mobile devices reported higher levels of empathetic concern, while those conversing in the presence of a mobile device reported lower levels of empathy (Misra et al., 2014).

In another study, Przybylski and Weinstein (2012) showed similar results that proved the presence of mobile communication devices in social settings interferes with human relationships. In two separate experiments, the authors found evidence that these devices have negative effects on closeness, connection, and conversation quality, especially notable when individuals are engaging in personally meaningful topics.

Though much research has shown the negative effects of technology on face-to-face interaction, one study found that cell phone use in public might make individuals more likely to communicate with strangers. In 2011, Campbell and Kwak (2011) examined whether and how mobile communication influences the extent to which one engages face to face with new people in public settings. By accounting for different types of cell phone uses, the study found evidence that mobile phone use in public actually facilitated talking with copresent strangers, for those who frequently rely on cell phones to get and exchange information about news.

Brignall and van Valey (2005) analyzed the effects of technology among "current cyber-youth" – those who have grown up with the Internet as an important part of their everyday life and interaction rituals. The two authors discovered that due to the pervasive use of the Internet in education, communication and entertainment, there has been a significant decrease in face-to-face interaction among youth. They suggest that the decrease in the amount of time youth spend interacting face-to-face may eventually have "significant consequences for their development of social skills and their presentation of self" (p. 337).

Many other authors have focused specifically on technology's effect on personal relationships. In *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other*, Turkle (2012) examined the effects of technology on familial relationships. After interviewing more than 300 young people and 150 adults, Turkle found that children were often times the ones complaining about their parents' obsession with technology. Turkle discovered that many children believed their parents paid less attention to them than to their smartphones, often times neglecting to interact with them face to face until they had finished responding to emails.

Contrary to many researchers' beliefs that technology impacts face-to-face communication negatively, Baym, principal researcher at Microsoft Research, does not share these concerns. Rather, Baym believes that research suggests digital communications enhance relationships and that "the evidence consistently shows that the more you communicate with people using devices, the more likely you are to communicate with those people face to face" (Adler, 2013).

The literature review above dominantly shows that the use of mobile technologies for recreational

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purposes typically affects face-to-face interactions with strangers, acquaintances, and families alike in a negative manner. Based on the review, the following three research questions were asked in this study:

RQ1. How does the use of technology affect people's ability to communicate face to face?

RQ2. Does the mere presence of technology affect people's ability to communicate with individuals in a public place?

RQ3. Has the increase of technology decreased both the quantity and quality of face-to-face interactions?

### III. Methods

The author conducted field observations and a survey to measure the level of engagement Elon students have with their cell phones, other technologies, and each other in face-to-face situations.

The survey was administered to Elon University students who were recruited using a non-probability sample via Facebook and email. Students were asked 11 questions regarding their technology use, habits, perceptions of face-to-face communication in the presence of technology, and engagement both face to face and screen to screen, which would help better answer the question of whether technology has a negative effect on face-to-face communication (For a full list of survey questions, reference Appendix A).

The survey resulted in 100 responses.

Based on the survey findings, field observations were conducted at four highly populated areas on campus, including dining halls. Observations were conducted during heavy foot-traffic times, including in-between classes and during lunch hours, when students would most likely be present and interacting with others. A variety of different interactions between other students and technology were recorded, including those texting or talking on the phone, those interacting with others, and those who did not have contact with devices. (Refer to Appendix B to see a full description of field observations).

### IV. Findings

All 100 respondents owned a smartphone or tablet. When asked how frequently students use their cell phones, 60% of respondents said they use their phone more than 4 hours a day, with 18% of respondents admitting to more than 8 hours of usage a day. Almost all students (97%) bring their cell phones or tablets with them every time they leave the house and only one respondent said they rarely do. Some students (18%) reported that when spending time with friends or family, they always use their cell phone or tablet. The majority of students use their cell phone sometimes when they are with family or friends (74%), and only 8% of students rarely use their phone in the presence of friends and family. No respondents indicated that they never use their cell phone or tablet when spending time with friends or family. Additionally, 46 percent of respondents said they communicate with friends or family more frequently via technology than in person, while 26% said the opposite.

Field observations yielded similar results regarding technology use and habits among Elon students. Of more than 200 students observed, 69% were using technology in one way or another. The author found that 78 of 134 students observed alone (58%) were either texting or holding their phones, 21 (16%) were talking on the phone or wearing ear buds, and only 35 students (26%) were not using any technology.

The author found it important to observe students' technology use and habits while with others as well. The author found that 38 of 100 students (38%) while with others used no technology; 62% were either texting, talking on the phone, or using a computer or tablet.

In an effort to determine what impacts technology has on face-to-face communication, the survey asked students to rank the statement on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree: "It bothers me when my friends or family use technology while spending time with me." Seventy-four percent of respondents said that they either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while only 6% disagreed. Among respondents, 20% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Another survey question asked students whether they believed the presence of technology, while

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spending time with others, affects face-to-face interpersonal communication negatively. An overwhelming 92% of respondents believed technology negatively affects face-to-face communication, and only 1% did not. Only 7% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

A third question regarding the impacts of technology on face-to-face communication asked students whether they noticed quality degradation in conversation amongst the presence of technology. Eighty-nine percent of respondents believed there was a degradation, only 5% disagreed, and 6% neither agreed nor disagreed.

While conducting field observations, similar results found evident degradation in the quality of conversation among those students using technology in the presence of others. One student, observed outside a campus building, was FaceTiming an individual on her iPhone. When a friend proceeded to join her in person, the female ignored her friend and continued her conversation on FaceTime. Many students at Lakeside Dining Hall ate lunch with their friends, but neglected to engage in any conversation. Instead, a large majority of the students in the dining hall sitting with others (73%) spent their time texting or using their computers or tablets.

When asked for additional feedback regarding technology use and face-to-face communication, students provided a number of insightful responses. One student said, "I don't like using my phone when I'm with friends in person, and I don't like it when they use theirs, but if it is used in a way to stimulate conversation – like showing a funny video, or documenting our time together via Snapchat or photos – then I think it is acceptable." Another student agreed, mentioning that whether technology affects face-to-face communication positively or negatively depends on how it is used. A third student shared similar opinions stating, "I don't mind if it's used to enhance a conversation (looking up important information or things relevant to a conversation); otherwise, it typically takes away from the experience in general as you can tell the other person(s) attention is divided and unfocused on the present moment."

Many respondents voiced their concerns that technology is diminishing society's ability to communicate face to face. One student stated, "People have lost the ability to communicate with each other in face-to-face interactions," while another respondent said, "Technology is making face-to-face communication much more difficult because people use technology as a crutch to hide behind." A third student responded, "I think technology impedes our ability to interact with people face to face," and a fourth agreed that technology "both enhances what we share online and decreases what we say face to face."

Other students shared sentiments that using technology to communicate is acceptable, but when used in the presence of others is disrespectful. One student responded, "I think putting away phones and technology is a sign of respect when having a conversation with someone and shows that you have their full attention. Even though it's sometimes hard to have those times when people are not attached to their phones, I think it is more important than ever." Many students mentioned that while spending time with friends or family, they have to make a conscious effort not to use technology. One respondent said, "At dinners with my friends, we do a cell phone tower and the first to touch the tower has to pay." It appears that despite being aware of their own behaviors and habits regarding technology, the majority of students agree that face-to-face communication and the quality of conversations are negatively impacted by technology.

## V. Conclusion

Field observations, a survey of 100 Elon students, and an analysis of previously conducted studies provided evidence that the rapid expansion of technology is negatively affecting face-to-face communication. People are becoming more reliant on communicating with friends and family through technology and are neglecting to engage personally, uninhibited by phones and devices, even when actually in the presence of others. A majority of individuals felt the quality of their conversations degraded in the presence of technology, and many individuals were bothered when friends or family used technology while spending time together. Additionally, nearly half of survey respondents (46%) communicate more frequently with friends and family via technology than in person, indicating strongly that face-to-face interactions have decreased both in quality and in quantity.

Only time will tell what the long-term impacts of this radical shift in communication methods will yield. Will employees be less able to communicate with their employers and, therefore, less able to succeed in the

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workforce? Or will the new skills developed through hours of cell phone use and texting result in a workforce that is more nimble and more qualified to multi-talk? Will Millennials be unable to communicate face to face with their children, or will the new tools available to them bring their families closer together? Will the new technologies bring us closer together as a community, or result in fewer actual friends and a life that is more isolated and less fulfilling? With technology advancing at the speed of light and human interaction changing just as quickly, it may be impossible to predict the results. However, everyone should be aware that human interaction as was once known may have already changed forever.

### **Limitations**

It is important to consider limitations to this study. The survey used a convenience sample, and therefore, cannot be generalized to a greater population. Additionally, the survey used a volunteer sample of self-selected subjects to participate in the study, potentially bringing about biases. Another potential bias is possible because only individuals with a Facebook account had access to the survey, which excluded students who do not regularly check or use the social media platform. There was also an extreme gender bias since 86% of respondents were female, even though females consist of approximately 60% of Elon University's student body.

### **Acknowledgments**

The author would like to thank Dr. David Copeland, A.J. Fletcher Professor at Elon University, for his constant support, guidance, and advice, without which the article could not be published.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questions and Responses

- 1.) Do you own a smartphone or tablet?
    - a. Yes (100%)
    - b. No (0%)
  - 2.) How frequently do you use your cellphone or tablet per day
    - a. 0-2 hours (6%)
    - b. 2-4 hours (34%)
    - c. 4-6 hours (32%)
    - d. 6-8 hours (10%)
    - e. more than 8 hours (18%)
  - 3.) How frequently do you bring your phone or tablet with you when leaving the house?
    - a. Always (97%)
    - b. Sometimes (2%)
    - c. Rarely (1%)
    - d. Never (0%)
  - 4.) How often do you use your smartphone or tablet while hanging out with friends or while spending time with family?
    - a. Always (18%)
    - b. Sometimes (74%)
    - c. Rarely (8%)
    - d. Never (0%)
  - 5.) It bothers me when my friends or family use technology while spending time with me
    - a. Strongly agree (21%)
    - b. Agree (53%)
    - c. Neither agree nor disagree (20%)
    - d. Disagree (6%)
    - e. Strongly disagree (0%)
  - 6.) I communicate more frequently with friends and family via technology than I do in person
    - a. Strongly agree (5%)
    - b. Agree (41%)
    - c. Neither agree nor disagree (27%)
    - d. Disagree (24%)
    - e. Strongly disagree (2%)
  - 7.) I think that the presence of technology while spending time with others affects face-to-face interpersonal communication negatively
    - a. Strongly agree (38%)
    - b. Agree (54%)
    - c. Neither agree nor disagree (7%)
    - d. Disagree (1%)
    - e. Strongly disagree (0%)
  - 8.) I notice a degradation in the quality of my conversations with others when technology is present or being used
    - a. Strongly agree (31%)
    - b. Agree (58%)
    - c. Neither agree nor disagree (6%)
    - d. Disagree (5%)
    - e. Strongly disagree (0%)
  - 9.) Do you have any comments regarding technology use and face-to-face communication?
  - 10.) What year are you at Elon?
    - a. first (0%)
    - b. second (17%)
    - c. third (20%)
    - d. fourth (61%)
    - e. fifth (2%)
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- 11.) What is your gender?
- a. male (10%)
  - b. female (89%)
  - c. other (1%)

## Appendix B: Field Observations

	Alamance	Moseley	Lakeside	McEwen	Total	Total %
Texting/Holding (Alone)	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>33%</b>
Talking/Listening (Alone)	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9%</b>
No technology (With others)	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>16%</b>
Using technology (With others)	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>27%</b>
No technology (Alone)	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Notes:* Alamance represents observations in front of the Alamance Fountain between 12:10-12:25 p.m. on Nov. 11, 2014; Moseley represents observations on the patio in front of the Moseley Center between 2:05-2:20 p.m. on Nov. 11, 2014; Lakeside represents observations inside of Lakeside Dining Hall between 12:10-12:25 p.m. on Nov. 13, 2014; McEwen represents observations on the patio in front of McEwen Dining Hall between 2:05-2:20 p.m. on Nov. 13, 2014. Texting/Holding (Alone) represents the individuals observed who were either texting or holding their phones while alone; Talking/Listening (Alone) represents the individuals observed who were involved in a phone conversation or listening to music with headphones while alone; No technology (With others) represents the individuals observed who were with other people and not using technology; Using technology (With others) represents the individuals observed who were either talking on the phone, texting, or using a computer or tablet while with others; No technology (Alone) represents the individuals observed who were not using technology while alone.

# The Impact of Technology on Music Star's Cultural Influence

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## Abstract

*This research paper addressed how technology has changed cultural relationships consumers have with music. The music industry's business model has undergone substantial change over the last decade, and understanding artists' cultural influence is critical in reevaluating their position in society. After a literature review tracking influence through the decades since the vinyl era, the author conducted a survey to determine how college students interact with music artists on Twitter and how they consume music. The results demonstrated high social connectivity of users to artists through Twitter and high levels of consumption of an individual artist's music through streaming services like Spotify. These findings suggest that modern media give music artists influence over a greater number of people.*

## I. Introduction

Few industries have gone through as much fundamental change as the music business. Technology has altered the structure of the industry, and the role of the artist has shifted as a result. From vinyl records to music streaming, the way society consumes music has changed from generation to generation. The ease of access that modern forms of music consumption provides individuals has also dramatically changed the perception of the iconic celebrity. No longer do powerful record labels have complete marketing control over a musical artist's image. Through contemporary consumption patterns, a teenage electronic DJ can reach hundreds of millions of listeners with digital media; and an unknown band can reach celebrity heights of popularity with a viral YouTube video. By analyzing history, we can now understand the enormous impact that past icons in the music industry have had on culture at the time. Elvis Presley created a youth movement and gave an entire generation its own identity. The influence of the Beatles was so large that it created social movements and political discourse. But the massive marketing efforts that went into the creation of these icons cannot be ignored. It was with great precision and careful execution that the image of these cultural entities became so powerful that they transcended entertainment and became a form of relation for entire social groups. Through a literature review of influential trends and a direct survey, this project examined if the power, influence, and cultural perception of music forces hold true in the current music industry.

## II. Background

Two specific dynamics in the contemporary music industry have changed how society perceives

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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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musical influence in culture: the means of music consumption and the presentation of the artist to the public. These factors have been revolutionized through technology. In past decades, the album concept in music consumption generated hype, creating an event around the release of music. A new vinyl record was a cherished prize for the music fan. But the digital revolution has repeatedly changed this type of consumption. First, mass piracy and digital downloading affected not only sales of an album, but the album itself. While full-length albums were sold in their entirety, new forms of consumption allow the user to cherry-pick individual tracks from an album. Another drastic change arrived with the digital revolution in the newest form of consumption: music streaming. Any artist has the ability to immediately send his or her music through a popular medium, reaching an enormous user base. While this enables more music discovery, whether it boosts or diminishes the influence of that music and its creator needs to be determined.

Similarly, the presentation of the artist has changed greatly with technology. In previous decades, the record label and savvy marketers could control the portrayed image of a music celebrity to mass audiences. Through social media, the freedom of interaction between music artists and their fans has never been greater. The content creator and the content recipient are able to communicate with incredible ease and timeliness. But only a short time ago, music stars were held to a different standard. Passionate listeners perceived music stars in a near divine way. It was more than a form of entertainment; it was a catalyst of political change and cultural identity for large social groups. An integral component of self-identity was the music that individuals dedicated their preference and often loyalty to. (Frith and Simon 429). Treating a music star as a deity was in large part due to a near untouchable sense of connectivity. The media at the time could not provide the direct access that can be seen in our modern culture, thus causing a sense of untouchable allure and heightened celebrity worship. This immediate, personal disconnection from fans gave record labels and music industry executives the ability to build a desired image to market to these consumers, as the messages released to the public could be carefully crafted (Driver 64). However, Twitter and other forms of social media hinder music industry executives who act as gatekeepers between the artist's messages and the public. The music star has now become integrated with the culture, stripping the star of the former godliness and adding a more human element to the star's celebrity status. Through these new forms of interaction, it becomes clear that the relationships between artists and fans have changed.

### III. Consumption Trends

In this section, the author first examined how music adopted different forms, such as tangible albums, downloadable bits of data, and evaporable audio streaming.

#### *Physical Products*

The popular medium for music consumption is a fascinating topic to research because it changes from decade to decade, with each new form having significant impact on both listeners and the music industry. The full album concept was first brought to consumerism through vinyl records and later CDs, and required the listener to commit to an entire collection of tracks. Records became a social commodity which people sought after, much in the way tech products capture the public interest today. The desire to obtain an album as a concrete product was instrumental in creating intrinsic value, shaping culture through a consumer's own desires. Consumerism became paired with the physical record, leading to a Marxian idea of social use value and an enhanced psychological association. The physical product of vinyl records fulfilled humans' desire for tangible ownership (Firth and Goodwin 429). A comparison can be made for today's cultural obsession with smartphones. While the apps and the functional abilities of the phone are our intended use of smartphones, we also desire to possess the phone itself.

The association of value with the physical element of the record led to a more fixated listening experience and more devotion to the product itself. Therefore, the psychological draw to the physical album creates a strengthened internal relationship with the music being heard once engaging with the product. Listeners became more engulfed in an artist and the music because of the attachment to the product they purchased.

#### *Digital Downloading*

As digital technology developed, the manner in which consumers listened to music changed. The first

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major threat to the album concept came in the form of digital downloading and widespread piracy issues. In 2005, at the height of the digital downloading era, French collegiate students were examined to determine the effect that digital consumption had on CD purchasing (Bounie, Bourreau, and Waelbroeck 3). The ease in downloading shrank the number of users who would pay for music. Through empirical research and surveys, a study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania (Rob and Waldfogel 60) found that – at the most conservative estimate – users who engaged in downloading were 10-20% less likely to buy an album. This study, which was conducted at the forefront of the digital downloading movement, became the harbinger of the large financial loss that record labels endured. This new phenomenon was expedited by the enormously ineffective ways that a journal article (Huang 48) examined the record labels had been preventing mass piracy.

The ease in downloading also led to a “sampling effect” with more users experiencing more music. However, the study on French collegiate students showed that users began to seek online communities to share and discuss music, shedding light on the digital culture being created.

Since record labels controlled music celebrities, the collapse of the existing business model significantly stripped music artists of power and resources.

Regarding the relationship that fans began to develop with digital consumption, research has found fascinating aspects of consumerism in the digital era that echoed the changing sentiment consumers began to develop (Bahanovich and Collopy 17-20). For example, a survey of 14- to 24-year-olds in the United Kingdom gave insight into the consumption preferences of an Internet-savvy generation. While it found that streaming methods of listening to music were becoming increasingly popular, 89% of respondents stated ownership of music was still important to them. This finding drew parallels to a source of utility, or satisfaction from ownership, which is attributed to the physical copies of music. Although sales of the physical product sharply declined through digital consumption, building a personal library of music is still influential in the psychological relationship that consumers have with music. Although the traditional album concept deteriorates with streaming and MP3 downloading, which allows the user to choose specific tracks, developing a personal catalog of music to claim a sense of ownership remains relevant.

### *Streaming*

Finally, a more in-depth study on the uses and practices of streaming must be examined, as it is the fastest growing form of consumption in our contemporary music climate. Spotify, one of the most popular forms of music streaming, was studied to discover the consumption patterns users showed with the service (Zhang et al. 3). Among other findings, two compelling consumption patterns were found: time spent using Spotify in one session and the total number of sessions throughout a day. Users had a more continuous listening experience when utilizing Spotify through a desktop, but significantly more sessions on the mobile app. Understanding this in the context of today’s society gives a firm understanding of the consumption patterns and the role of music in daily life. The large number of total sessions throughout the day provides evidence that as people are on the move and operating mobile devices, they are continuously engaged with music. Furthermore, a more fixated listening experience occurs when the consumer is engaged in a stationary location through the desktop application.

These two factors help build a theoretical basis to determine the influence of music in contemporary culture. It would appear that while the relationship between listener and medium is not as strong as the era of physical records, the time spent listening to music is greater than ever before due to constant access. With this extensive research into the ways music consumption has changed and affected the industry, a person can shift their focus to the past and contemporary marketing, as well as image, of the music star for their cultural influence.

## **IV. Marketing**

Music has always been an introspective experience that resides internally, yet provides the external opportunity to demonstrate that attachment at events like concerts. While the music itself is the primary form of the relationship, the creator becomes the bodily symbol of the art they are creating. It is with this association that music artists have become the divine cultural icons who have served so many fans as a facilitator of culture, affecting everything from fashion to political beliefs.

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### *The Star System*

The same consumer desires that led to a social attachment to the physical recording of an album also drove the fans to worship those who create the commodity. The surge in recorded music gave life to the grand ideas of advertisers and marketers for the stars, initiated from the very beginnings of the youth culture. Elvis Presley was modeled along the popularity of Marlon Brando and James Dean. And with his success came a further influx of new artists designed to have the same image, ensuring an already established consumer base (Frith and Goodwin 432). Mass consumer habits, which revolve around these stars creating powerful modes of influence through popular music, led the fans to a sense of unity and “a guarantee of community in a world where it is lost” (Frith and Goodwin 436). Through identification with the music star and the music's messages, collections of fans created this sense of a mass audience.

Perhaps no single collection of musician embodied the star system as successfully as the Beatles. Manager Brian Epstein crafted every aspect of their image with incredible detail, including their iconic, boyish haircuts, which first grabbed attention from media upon their arrival in the United States. He sculpted their onstage presence, requiring that they bow after performing and cease smoking and other crude actions while in the public view (Driver 43-45). These actions were meant to mold the Beatles into entities that could be perceived as cultural stars, rather than just artists, giving them the type of coverage to transcend their music alone. The crafted image was skillful enough to land performances on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and other broadcasts, which in turn led to the phenomenon of the band's success.

### *Impact of MTV*

Wide consumer demands for music as a commodity undoubtedly elevated the music star's aura to incredible heights. But another medium was perhaps an equally important factor to this image creation: the birth of MTV. While the potential impact of television implemented within the music industry was first noted with the success of the Beatles on programs like *The Ed Sullivan Show*, this full channel dedicated to entertainment convergence created a marketing strategy that engulfed music artists for a lengthy time.

In the 1980s, MTV became an entertainment staple for a majority of young music fans, whose magnet attraction to these artists gave them significant cultural influence. This sentiment grew so quickly that this new entertainment medium came to affect the entire industry. In one example, A Flock of Seagulls, a band with limited success in its home country of England, came to the United States in the form of a single, titled “I Ran.” While record executives believed it would have minimal impact as a hit single, an interesting music video on MTV led the song to enormous success and eventually broke the top 10 in music charts (McGarth 85-87). Record labels immediately realized the impact MTV had on music charts and addressed their promotional efforts accordingly. This also allowed the music star to transcend a single auditory medium and reach a pinnacle of influence through a variety of consumer trends. No longer was an artist limited to an auditory sense of power; the visual effect of videos gave fans a new method of idolizing the content creator (Ogden 124). Furthermore, adapting visual content to its messages could revitalize the energetic and sexual demeanor of music culture, which had consistently characterized the youth movements of the past. While music in an auditory consumption medium had successfully charged youthful fans with a freely expressed sexually drive, adding a visual element to such latching messages added additional power.

Similarly, the leverage MTV gave music through a cable network produced the first format of a recognizable playlist throughout the country. Forming a national music playlist by broadcasting the same videos to the same areas across the United States revolutionized the previous regional personality for music preference (Jones 85). MTV viewers in Nebraska were exposed to the same music as viewers in New York. Boosting fandom to an increasingly large audience in this manner maximized the reach of influence for an artist and contributed to a further installment of iconic figures with the potential to become recognizable to a nation with a single popular video.

### *Social Media Era*

As MTV shifted its strategy to fewer music videos and more traditional television, the influence of the medium on a song's success shrank as well. And while new media, such as YouTube, preserve the ability to disseminate music videos, the “nationwide playlist” aspect was no longer relevant. But with the rise of the social media era comes a new medium that has interesting effects for the star system and new possibilities for interaction between content creators and recipients. While the past media we have examined lifted music

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stars to heights the ordinary fan presumably could not reach or interact with, social media has positively affected the connectivity between artist and listener. A continuously increasing number of people can tweet at a music star through a single click on a mobile device, providing a means of accessibility that has never before been achievable (Marwick and Boyd 140). "Part of the appeal is . . . the direct access to a famous person, particularly 'insider' information, first-person pictures, and opinionated statements" (142). The direct communication a fan has with the artist and media content they choose to share on social media is more impactful than media such as gossip magazines because it perceivably comes straight from the celebrity. Because of this freedom, a manager with even the savviest marketing prowess cannot control an artist's image in the same way we have examined in the past. With just one regrettable tweet, a music star can sabotage this crafted image instantaneously. This continuous, omnipresent connectivity forces a more authentic, yet often less cultivated, image portrayed to the public.

Although this constant availability for interaction has in many ways provided a less divine aspect to celebrity worship, it also creates a permanent surveillance (Marshall 39). While the overall perception of the music star may not be in as high regard as the pinnacle of the star system, the attention given to the star has never been greater. Rather than just following an artist for the music they produce, daily aspects of life are now a quintessential element followers enjoy and sometimes expect from celebrities through social media. In fact, this ability to stay updated on seemingly ordinary occurrences in an artist's life is a driving factor for its popularity among Millennials. Past studies have shown that following entertainment icons is by far the biggest catalyst driving the contemporary youthful generation to Twitter, amplifying the sense of constant surveillance for music stars (Hargittai and Litt 828). Therefore, the content an artist produces is now more than just music. Fans following artists seek pictures, videos, and tweets of information on their daily lives.

## V. Methods

By analyzing how users interact with music stars and how they consume artists' music, we can find the total influence of music celebrities in modern culture. A survey was conducted with college students to understand artists' current influence with four questions.

Question 1: Do you follow any famous music artists on Twitter?

This question was asked to understand to what degree music celebrities could impact collegiate students. People who follow music stars on Twitter did so intentionally, giving an indication that the celebrity has at least some role in the consumer's life. Simply reading tweets from music stars on a timeline can begin to plant the roots for a level of influence, as the messages released by an artist are constantly on display.

Question 2: Have you ever tweeted at or retweeted a music artist on Twitter?

Tweeting at or retweeting a celebrity further reflects a music celebrity's level of impact. While reading a tweet from a celebrity is entertaining, making the conscious decision to interact with an artist on social media is a strong display of a heightened level of influence. At the same time, tweeting and retweeting can create a trickle down effect. For example, if person P follows artist A, person P's followers will be exposed to person P's interaction with artist A through the former's timeline, even though person P's followers may not directly follow the artist.

Question 3: What is your preferred way to listen to music (iTunes downloads, Spotify, Soundcloud, Pandora, etc.)?

As mentioned earlier, the album concept has suffered due to digitalized downloading and streaming. While past findings gave insight that building a personal music library was still important to listeners because of the desire to have some form of music ownership, we can now test how steadfast that sentiment currently is by comparing it to the usage level of streaming platforms, which do not provide a form of ownership.

Question 4: Do you usually listen to the same artist for more than 20 minutes in one sitting?

While the album as one entire entity may be less desired, this does not necessarily mean the influence of the artist would be lessened. Through building a personal digital library or streaming, consumers have access to large quantities of music from the same artist. In fact, services like Spotify can give the listener access to every song some artists have every created. Therefore, the time spent engaging with an artist's discography is a much better indicator of his or her influence level on a consumer.

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According to The Official UK Charts Company, a collection of music can officially be labeled as an album should it reach at least 25 minutes in time. Upon modernized practices of consumption, 25 minutes of listening to one artist's discography would therefore result in a comparable level of engagement. To account for shorter-playing products like EPs (extended play) and to simplify the survey question, the time length was unified into one measurement of 20 minutes.

The survey was emailed to 151 Elon University students of different demographics. They were randomly selected from various email lists and class rosters to ensure a well-balanced, eclectic mix of Elon students.

## VI. Results

Among 151 students sent the survey, 64 (42%) responded. Among the respondents, 46 (72%) answered that they do follow famous music artists on Twitter. Of these students who choose to follow the distributed messages of celebrities on social media, 33 stated that they had tweeted at or retweeted a celebrity in the past.

Regarding their preferred form of music consumption, Spotify was chosen by 27 respondents (42%), followed by iTunes with 14 respondents; Soundcloud with 8 users; Pandora, 8; 8tracks, 3; YouTube, 3; and Rdio, 1. Spotify, Soundcloud, Pandora, and 8tracks all involve similar streaming models. All except Soundcloud contain free ad-supported versions, in addition to premium services available. However, it should be noted that at this writing, Soundcloud is in the process of adapting the same business model.

Spotify, Rdio, and Soundcloud each offer the ability to journey across the channel, seeking whatever song the user desires. Soundcloud has been more popular among lesser known artists and DJs for its social media-type format that allows quick uploading and efficient access. Pandora and 8tracks are more suited to playlist-oriented abilities. Pandora uses a massive quantity of artists and songs, then pairs them with an internal algorithm to determine their identity and allow users to create "radio" stations of styles similar to an initial selected song or artist. 8tracks allows users to customize and upload their own playlists, giving other users the ability to share and discover them. Finally, YouTube is not solely a music provider, but does have a large catalog of songs and music videos on its website.

Among the 64 respondents, 42 (66%) indicated that they do usually listen to one musician for more than 20 minutes, the approximated minimum album length.

There were interesting metrics resulting from these respondents. Twenty-five answered "yes" to all four questions. Eight respondents answered "yes" to both questions regarding social media. Furthermore, 17 respondents answered "no" to both social media questions, but *did* usually listen to an artist for more than 20 minutes.

## VII. Analysis

The 25 of the 64 respondents (39%) who stated they follow music stars on Twitter, have retweeted or tweeted at celebrities in the past, and usually listen to one specific artist for more than 20 minutes, can be listed as "high influence" user. The music star clearly plays a large role in their lives and has a strong level of influence in their social media interaction and personal listening habits. Consciously interacting with a music star on Twitter hints at respondents' psychological relationship and their followers' indirect relationship with the star through the social trickle down effect. While the allure to the commodity of a physical album is still not present, the time spent within the music is still a character of contemporary fan culture.

The eight respondents (13%) who answered "yes" to questions 1 and 2 on Twitter, but spent less than 20 minutes on each artist, can be defined as "high social influence" user. This category suggests a lack of dedication or interest in a single star's music. Although this would cripple an artist's ability to influence in the past, the draw of Millennials to follow music stars and other entertainment Twitter accounts opens new possibilities for future intensive interaction.

In addition, 17 of the respondents (27%) did not follow or interact with music stars on Twitter, but did often spend more than 20 minutes listening to a single discography, placing them in the category of "high mu-

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sical influence” user. Despite having access to so many different artists with simply the click of a button, these users still dedicate their time to particular artists when consuming music. But despite a high musical influence, they choose not to interact with the same artists socially on Twitter, which evidences that a more classical relationship to the artist is still present. The preferred music platforms of these respondents were divided among Spotify (6 users), iTunes (3 users), Soundcloud (3 users) and others.

Spotify was the overwhelming favorite platform for the entire pool of respondents. Three users for iTunes suggests that the concept of owning music is not as relevant as past studies indicated.

## VIII. Conclusion

These results show that the yearning for ownership established in the vinyl era is now extinct, with streaming services becoming the most popular forms of consumption among college students. Furthermore, the high level of direct interaction through Twitter with music artists suggests that the past perceived divine, “untouchable” state and epic aura around music stars have diminished significantly from their apex.

The previously mentioned study on Spotify users showed listeners engaging in large number of sessions while on mobile devices, and long durations while at a desktop. This allows listeners more time than ever before to consume music. While active and moving throughout the day, users are constantly opening the music app, showing they are constantly engaging in new listening sessions, wherever they may be. When they are stationary, they use the streaming service for long durations of time, showing that they always have a steady access to music. The survey results showed that the vast majority of respondents used some form of streaming service. Applying these two findings, it can be concluded that modern college students are engaged with music more often than ever before because of the total time streaming services allow student users to listen to any of the millions of songs on the app, which have never before been available.

Following the logic of a sharp increase in overall time spent consuming music as indicated in the Spotify study, paired with high rates of interaction between fans and music stars, an understanding of modern influence begins to form. Current marketing and media have humanized the stars to a greater degree than ever before, but the rise in overall consumption of music consumers sustain usually by listening to the equivalency of an artist’s album in one session has created new forms of influence. Therefore, the iconic image of the star is not as relevant as before, but the influence is greater than ever before due to the high rates of social engagement now available, combined with a large base of listeners still consuming an artist’s music for the equivalency of an album length. Social media and the lack of interest in album ownership may take power from the music star. But fans today are heavily invested in the actions of the star and constantly engaged with music. Likewise, the star is now embedded in the culture he or she helps shape through direct contact with followers. Although more human, the influence of the music star has only grown because there are more channels for influence, and the time a listener spends engaged in an artist’s work has not wavered despite the option to listen to any song by any artist on a streaming service with ease.

The music industry, facing a collapsing business model, has searched for a more efficient approach without much success since the rise of the MP3 era (McLeod 522). While royalties from streaming services seem to be at the forefront of the industry’s present struggle, it may be advantageous for both sides to focus on new forms of income by taking advantage of intense relationships between artists and their followers.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Dr. Michael Frontani, associate professor of communications at Elon University, for his constant guidance, advice, and inspiration for the topic discussed. Without Dr. Frontani’s enthusiasm for music and culture, this research would not have been conducted. The author would also like to thank the reviewers for the continual improvement of this project.

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# How Twitter is Changing Narrative Storytelling: A Case Study of the Boston Marathon Bombings

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## Abstract

*Understanding social media, an integral part of 21st century American life, is more important than ever. On the one-year anniversary of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, it is clear that Twitter was a primary source of information for many Americans, despite the vast inaccuracies tweeted by trusted sources throughout the days following the attack. This case study based on content analysis found that 10 authoritative organizations, including five news organizations, provided news and feature stories through their tweets – sometimes at the expense of accuracy to be first on their stories. They also posted tweets that ensured people’s safety during the crisis, enlisted help from the public, and offered perfunctory roles, such as sending out comforting messages for grieving people.*

## I. Introduction

American society is built on a culture of impatience. Americans focus on time — time wasted, time saved, time lost — using every spare moment to prevent missing a beat. The introduction of the 24-hour news cycle has made the demand for constant updates a prominent part of American culture. As social media’s presence in society grows, many news outlets are working to feed the “I want it now” desires of media consumers. In the event of a catastrophe, the demand for information becomes much stronger, but at a cost. The accuracy of breaking news may suffer for the sake of speed. For example, many news sources, including *Onward State* of Penn State University, CBS News and *The Huffington Post*, misreported the death of Joe Paterno hours before his actual death in 2012.<sup>1</sup> This same phenomenon has occurred numerous times in breaking news, and it shows the way society is changing as a result of the speed of news. Twitter is one of many tools changing the distribution of breaking news.

The Boston Marathon bombings on April 15, 2013, were a major event in media coverage and in American society, and the coverage of this event has long since been a topic of discussion. This study explores how social media coverage of the bombings, specifically on Twitter, impacted the storytelling narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Stelter, “Mistaken Early Report on Paterno Roiled Web,” *The New York Times*, January 22, 2012.

**Keywords:** Twitter, Storify, narrative storytelling, Boston Marathon bombings, social media  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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## II. Literature Review

The literature surrounding social media and the Boston bombings centers on three main topics: narrative storytelling, social media in journalism, and stereotypes in media coverage.

### ***Narrative storytelling***

Narrative storytelling has been an important part of history as a whole, moving from oral history to written communication. Jeff Kisselhoff's *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961* is an example of how narrative storytelling can be an effective form of communicating an event or a series of events. The book's description summarizes this idea: "The Box re-creates the old-time TV years through more than three hundred interviews with those who invented, manufactured, advertised, produced, directed, wrote, and acted in them."<sup>2</sup> This form of storytelling is the same form replicated through Twitter – hundreds, thousands, even millions of voices breathing life into a current event by giving their perspectives on that topic. Kisselhoff interweaves interviews and uses them, without any insertion of commentary, to tell the story of how television evolved. This is an incredible form of storytelling because it provides opinions from the era without an author's bias and without an editor picking and choosing what information goes into it. It is straight from the mouths of interviewees, and thus it tells a different story than one writer could manage alone. This intersection of opinions and facts is part of the beauty of Twitter as a source of news and commentary.

Tweeting stories has been a popular form of storytelling since Twitter first emerged in 2006. Storify has also been an important tool in that storytelling. Storify is a service that allows users to curate posts using information gathered from a variety of social media sources, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. This service allows people to select various social media posts and insert them into an online archive to supply greater populations of people with easier access to the information. News sources like the Pew Research Center, NBC News and NPR have done their own narrative storytelling via Storify. The Pew Research Center has used Storify to discuss news and social media through tweets and Facebook posts on how and why Pew's followers and fans get news on social media.<sup>3</sup> NBC News utilized the service for a more hard-news compilation: live updates on the TSA officer who was shot and killed at LAX in November 2013. NBC News mainly used Twitter for live breaking news, but sometimes incorporated other links and Instagram photos into coverage.<sup>4</sup> In 2013, NPR's Twitter account, @TodayIn1963, began documenting what had happened in real-time 50 years prior, culminating in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and its aftermath.<sup>5</sup> All of these are strong examples of how Twitter narratives are becoming more common in media, both in feature pieces and in breaking news situations, and how Storify and other similar tools are preserving those pieces of history in one accessible place.

### ***Social media in journalism***

According to a 2012 report from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, the percentage of Americans who get news from social media increased from 2 percent in 2008, to 7 percent in 2010, and to a whopping 20 percent of those individuals surveyed in 2012.<sup>6</sup> As these numbers increase, it is apparent that social media interaction is a vital part of the news cycle for journalists and for civilians.

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2 Jeff Kisselhoff, *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961* (New York: Viking, 1995).

3 Emily Guskin, "How Do You Use Facebook and Twitter for News?," *Pew Research Center - Fact Tank*, November 7, 2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/11/07/how-do-you-use-facebook-and-twitter-for-news/>.

4 "Live Updates: TSA Office Shot and Killed at LAX," *NBC News*, November 22, 2013, <https://storify.com/nbc-news/shooting-at-lax>.

5 Kat Chow, "@TodayIn1963 Captures Moments From A Historic Summer," *National Public Radio*, June 12, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/06/12/190680446/-todayin1963-captures-moments-from-a-historic-summer>.

6 *Section 2: Online and Digital News*, In *Changing News Landscape, Even Television Is Vulnerable* (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, September 27, 2012), <http://www.people-press.org/2012/09/27/section-2-online-and-digital-news-2/>.

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Twitter is one of the top social media forums in use around the world today and is the 10th most visited website online.<sup>7</sup> Because of the public nature of many Twitter accounts and the sheer number of users, Twitter has become a tool that spurs conversation, disperses information, and even delivers and breaks news. Twitter has been a way for journalists to connect with the masses during large-scale tragedies like the Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013, but it has also been a source of great confusion when those journalists publish incorrect content.

A study by Kwak, Lee, Park, and Moon (2010) states that Twitter is not just a social network, but that the platform may also be a news source. “We have classified the trending topics based on the active period and the tweets and show that the majority (more than 85%) of topics are headline news or persistent news in nature.”<sup>8</sup> If news takes up more than 85 percent of the topics discussed on Twitter, it’s safe to say that Twitter users are being bombarded with news in their feeds. The fact that a growing number of people get their news first from social media shows that Kwak et al.’s categorization of Twitter as a news medium could very well be accurate.

Hermida explains how social networks have changed the function of journalism and the idea of verification in his article, “Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a discipline of collaborative verification.”

“The development of social networks for real-time news and information, and the integration of social media content in the news media, creates tensions for a profession based on a discipline of verification. This paper suggests that social media services such as Twitter provide platforms for collaborative verification, based on a system of media that privileges distributed over centralised expertise, and collective over individual intelligence.”<sup>9</sup>

It is clear, as Hermida’s study states, that Twitter users value a greater number of observations rather than one seemingly reliable source’s information – in a nutshell, users want confirmation by many, instead of taking the word of experts. This ideology has presented a nest of potential problems for journalists reporting on a breaking news event via social media. It also offers a reminder that fact checking is still a worthwhile endeavor in breaking news reporting.

Another clear reminder of this fact is a *Nieman Reports*’ analysis of the interaction between social media and news media in the coverage of the Boston Marathon bombings. While this topic is quite similar to the discussion point at hand, the main difference between these reports and the current research is the act of delving into individual tweets and what they meant in terms of cultural impact as well as journalism. According to Qu, journalists “have three capabilities that are vital to the news ecosystem: broadcasting, credibility and storytelling.”<sup>10</sup> Qu explains that these capabilities come with responsibility and the role of journalists is constantly changing as a result of social media.

The accuracy of tweets is often difficult to determine, although companies like Dataminr are getting better at pinpointing the accuracy of tweets in crisis situations like the Boston Marathon bombings and the explosion that shook East Harlem in March 2014. Ted Bailey, CEO of Dataminr, says aggregate Twitter data is helping reveal what happens on the ground.

“During breaking news events, even a small number of tweets can provide enough data for our algorithms to characterize the event and determine with high confidence the validity, relevance and actionability of rapidly emerging information . . . People acted collectively as an on-the-ground detection and sensory network, depicting the scene with granularity long before first responders or reporters arrived.”<sup>11</sup>

Twitter is undeniably a force in the current landscape of news, but how does it function in the scheme of a large-scale catastrophe like the Boston Marathon bombings?

Social media was not a huge factor in the London Underground bombings of 2005 because it was still

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7 *Twitter.com - Site Info* (Alexa, December 2013), <http://www.alex.com/siteinfo/twitter.com>.

8 Haewoon Kwak et al., “What Is Twitter, a Social Network or a News Media?,” *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on World Wide Web*, April 26, 2010, 591–600.

9 Alfred Hermida, “Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification,” *Journalism Practice* 6, no. 5–6 (March 27, 2012): 659–68.

10 Hong Qu, “Social Media and the Boston Bombings,” *Nieman Reports*, Spring 2013, <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102871/Social-Media-and-the-Boston-Bombings.aspx>.

11 Ted Bailey, “How Twitter Confirmed the Explosion in Harlem First,” *GigaOM*, March 16, 2014, <http://gigaom.com/2014/03/16/how-twitter-confirmed-the-explosion-in-harlem-before-the-news-did/>.

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in its infancy. Reading explored the effects of mobile witnessing in her paper, “The London bombings: Mobile witnessing, mortal bodies and global time.” Mobile witnessing is the phenomenon of using mobile phones to report news as it happens, and “global time arises from two major dynamics at work today: digitization and globalization. Together these dynamics are creating new affective logics within media, culture and society.”<sup>12</sup> With these two frameworks of mobile witnessing and global time in place, it becomes clear how the world is changing due to the digital, global and mobile age. Reading discusses the fact that because of mobile witnessing and digitization, the world is able to engage with what is happening almost immediately, especially when compared to a similar London Underground bombing in 1897. While this story spread internationally, this news did not do so with the urgency or rate that the 2005 bombings did because the spread of information was significantly slower more than a century earlier. Within the last 20 years, and even within the past decade since the 2005 bombings, the speed with which information is disseminated has increased exponentially. Cell phone photos and videos have made an enormous difference in the media’s coverage of both the London Underground and Boston Marathon bombings, and in the live updates of these events.

### ***Stereotypes in media coverage***

Many stereotypes in the media contribute to different framings of conversation in terrorist attacks. In a similar time period, Woods investigated the relationship between the public’s “perceived risk of terrorism” in the four years before and four years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. Woods says, “Articles that associated the risk of terrorism with Islam had greater [perceived] risk levels than articles that did not,” which portrays the prominence of the assumed association between Islam and terrorism, and shows that the media had a strong impact on the image of Islam in relation to reporting on terrorism.<sup>13</sup> It is quite possible that coverage, both on Twitter and in news media, of the Boston Marathon bombings included language stating that Muslims were the culprits in the bombings without any clear evidence. This was one of many misconceptions that confused journalists during the bombings and caused catastrophic mistakes from reporting too quickly without verification.

A great amount of media attention has come out of one particular tweet shortly after the Boston Marathon bombings. Rush, a columnist and occasional Fox News commentator, tweeted the following:

“@erikrush Everybody do the National Security Ankle Grab! Let’s bring more Saudis in without screening them! C’mon! #bostonmarathon.”

According to an article in the *Independent*, another Twitter user asked whether he blamed Muslims for the attack, and he responded, “Yes, they’re evil. Let’s kill them all,” a tweet he later deleted.<sup>14</sup> While Rush maintained that his statement was a joke, some news outlets and individuals were outraged, while others joined the bandwagon, blaming Muslims as well. This shows the power of one tweet to change the direction of a narrative and of a stereotype to fully alter the way some audiences view a crisis.

## **III. Methods**

This case study focuses on the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013, analyzing tweets from 10 Twitter accounts through the frame of social theory, which measures social behaviors and interactions to interpret social phenomena.<sup>15</sup> Using some data gathered by Boynton within the hours shortly following the Boston Marathon bombings, the researcher used several of the top retweeted tweets as a basis for understanding the climate of the narrative. The researcher then created a narrative of the tweets from ten sources, which are as

12 Anna Reading, “The London Bombing: Mobile Witnessing, Mortal Bodies and Global Time,” *Memory Studies* 4, no. 3 (2011): 298–311.

13 Joshua Woods, “What We Talk about When We Talk about Terrorism: Elite Press Coverage of Terrorism Risk from 1997 to 2005,” *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 12, no. 3 (June 28, 2007), <http://ejournals.ebsco.com/Direct.asp?AccessToken=9I5I5IJ8X4J5D4RXKM5ZR XU9UJRJ8I41Q9&Show=Object>.

14 Richard Hall, “‘Muslims Are Evil. Let’s Kill Them All’: US TV Commentator Erik Rush Provokes Furious Reaction with Boston Bombing Twitter Rants,” *The Independent*, April 16, 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/muslims-are-evil-lets-kill-them-all-us-tv-commentator-erik-rush-provokes-furious-reaction-with-boston-bombing-twitter-rants-8575176.html>.

15 “What Is Social Theory?,” *Social Theory Applied*, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://socialtheoryapplied.com/what-is-social-theory/>.

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follows:

*The Boston Globe* (@bostonglobe)

Boston Marathon (@bostonmarathon)

Boston PD (@boston\_police) – handle has now changed to @bostonpolice

Cambridge PD (@CambridgePolice)

CNN (@CNN)

Fox News (@FoxNews)

JetBlue (@JetBlue)

Mass General News from Massachusetts General Hospital (@MassGeneralNews) – Includes all tweets from this period, many of which did not use any keywords

*New York Post* (@nypost)

*The New York Times* (@NYTimes)

These Twitter users were chosen based on their importance as a source of information from a public interest standpoint (Boston and Cambridge Police, Mass General Hospital), their role as a news organization trying – and sometimes failing – to communicate information swiftly and accurately (*Boston Globe*, CNN, *New York Post*, Fox News, *The New York Times*), their position as a corporate sponsor of the marathon itself in an attempt to gauge the behavior of a corporation in a crisis situation (JetBlue) and, finally, their function as the official Twitter source of information on the marathon (Boston Marathon). JetBlue was chosen in particular because it tweeted more than any other corporate sponsor with an active Twitter account during the five-day time period in this study.

These sources are meant to give a variety of perspectives on the issues at hand. These sources' tweets were collected in a Storify collection and were then analyzed as a whole, showing a full picture of the bombings and the subsequent manhunt. The tweets span from April 15, 2013, one hour before the bombs went off at 2:49 p.m. EDT, to the end of the manhunt for the Tsarnaev brothers on April 19. Tweets inserted into the narrative include all tweets by these sources during that timeframe that use any of the following words: "Boston," "marathon," "bombing," "attack," and "manhunt," unless noted differently above.

One tweet was included that is not from the sources on this list. PzFeed Top News (@PzFeed) tweeted during this period: "POLICE AND FBI URGING ANYONE WITH VIDEO OF THE FINISH LINE AT THE TIME OF THE EXPLOSION SHOULD PLEASE COME FORWARD." This was the most retweeted tweet in Boynton's data with 10,275 retweets in the hours following the bombings.<sup>16</sup> PzFeed's tweet only has 142 RTs, making it likely that this account is not the original source of this tweet, a variable that was not included in Boynton's data. However, it is also the only tweet that is found in Twitter's search that matches this phrase.

Because of the enormous influx of people in a small geographic area in this situation, the live-tweeting of this event is different from many other disasters because people in a natural disaster or a more widespread attack would be more evenly dispersed throughout different areas. The sheer number of people at the finish line made the tweets about this attack different than other similar attacks because of the size of the crowd and its central location.

A case study like this one is important to the understanding of interactions on social media, particularly Twitter, in crisis situations. While many studies have been done on crisis reporting and media coverage, few have been recent enough to explore social media's impact on a particular crisis as pressing and timely as the Boston bombings.

## IV. Findings

This is a summary of the hundreds of tweets from the ten sources listed in the methods section. It is broken down by timeframe across the days of the attack and subsequent manhunt, with one exception: inaccurate news reports were categorized separately because of their prevalence in this case.

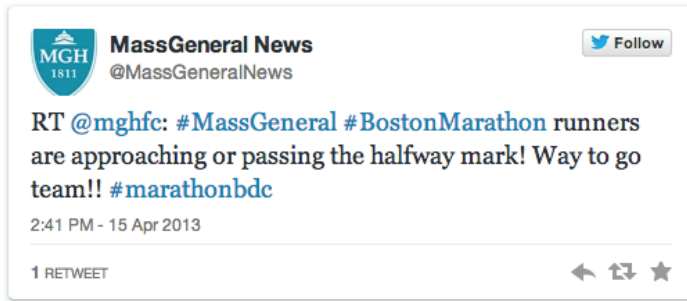
---

16 G.R. Boynton, ed., "Boston Bomb Retweets Summary-Excel," April 15, 2013.

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### Before the attack: An ordinary live-tweeting scenario



Many sources were tweeting Boston Marathon-related tweets during the hours prior, ranging from *The Boston Globe* detailing why one columnist never wants to run a marathon again to a listing of top performers from past marathons. The above tweet from Massachusetts General Hospital shows the enthusiasm of the many live-tweeters at the marathon before the tragedy occurred at 2:49 p.m. April 15.

### Real time of the attack



At 2:57 p.m., the first report from the ten sources listed came in regarding the bombings via *The Boston Globe*. Two minutes later, they fully broke the news.






News teams mobilized immediately, many citing the Globe or confirming their information with sources, like Fox News, which confirmed information with a Boston Marathon spokesman.



Fox News was also the first of these sources to tweet a link to its coverage. CNN tweeted that it had a producer on the scene and that there was live video on TV.






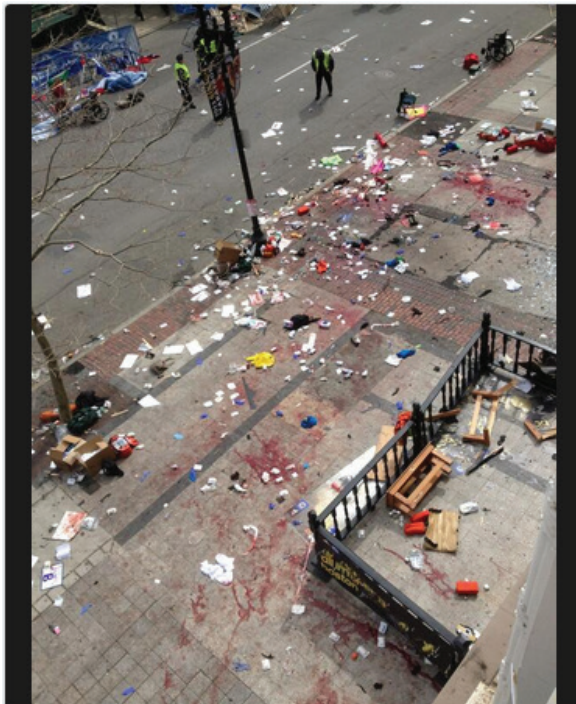
*The Boston Globe* tweeted the first picture among the ten sources.

 **The Boston Globe**   
@BostonGlobe 

**#breakingnews** RT @globedavidryan: boston marathon explosion

3:24 PM - 15 Apr 2013

1,177 RETWEETS 79 FAVORITES   



Following *The Globe's* tweet, the *New York Post* tweeted a much more graphic image of the aftermath.

 **New York Post**   
@nypost 

GRAPHIC photo from the scene at the Boston Marathon finish line  
[pic.twitter.com/mhKTly5aiF](http://pic.twitter.com/mhKTly5aiF) (via @brm90)

3:26 PM - 15 Apr 2013

792 RETWEETS 59 FAVORITES   



The Boston PD tweeted its first official confirmation 50 minutes after the bombing occurred. The Boston Marathon tweeted its first confirmation shortly after.

Many sources began tweeting the number of injured people reported. The figures were wide ranging, estimating 19 to 28 injured and two or three individuals dead. In the end, a total of three people were killed and 264 individuals were injured.<sup>17</sup>

*The Boston Globe's* interaction with the Boston Police on a direct level was apparent from its Twitter feed. Most of their tweets were confirmed with the police.

Boston Police publicized a press conference fairly quickly via Twitter. They then asked for tips, photos and video via Twitter to help the investigation. The Cambridge Police even joined in, telling people to contact the Boston PD with information. The BPD also asked people not to congregate in large crowds following the bombings.

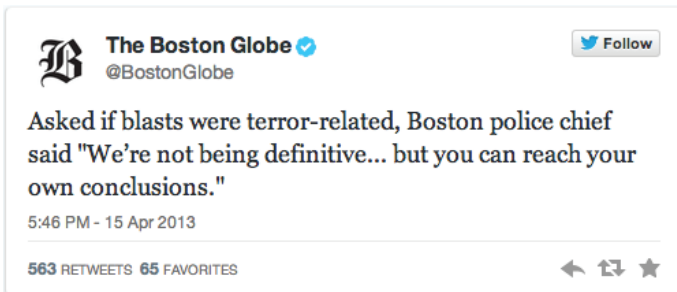
Google's person finder was an important resource because *The Boston Globe* had just retweeted AP's story on the shutting down of cell phone use in Boston to prevent the detonation of more explosives. Many sources tweeted about the topic throughout the day, publicizing it for those who struggled to reach loved ones.

The Boston Marathon's tweets were mostly perfunctory. The source tweeted sparsely – only when information was pressing and immediately useful to people.

17 Deborah Kotz, "Injury Toll from Marathon Bombs Reduced to 264," *Boston Globe*, April 24, 2013, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/health-wellness/2013/04/23/number-injured-marathon-bombing-revised-downward/NRpaz5mmvGquP7KMA6XsIK/story.html>.



### Posts in real time: Sources begin to review the aftermath



MGH (Mass General Hospital) took on a similar role as a perfunctory tweeter — tweeting only when necessary to inform the public of the goings-on.

Despite its occasional misspellings (“play to stay”), the Globe also became a valuable resource for marathoners, by providing more than just information for those who wanted it. The source gave actionable information that allowed people to function more normally in a time that was distinctly not normal.

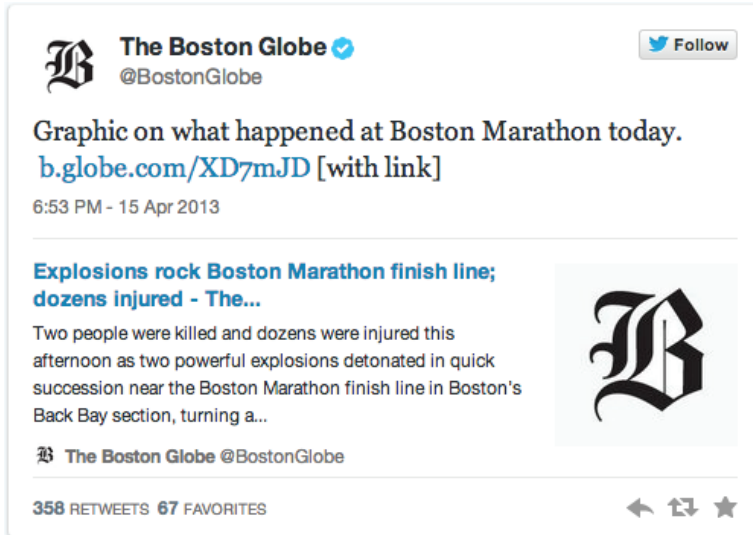
CNN and Fox News soon reported that Obama would make a statement at 6:10 p.m. ET.

This tweet was the first of its kind during the post-bombing time period: It was a quote, and this comment told a story. This led to many sources beginning to do more in-depth reporting on the disaster.

The Marathon’s official Twitter account continued providing perfunctory information like where people could catch buses.

When President Obama’s speech began, many sources tweeted phrases and sentences from his speech. Others started to post stories about individuals who died.

CNN was the first to tweet that one of the victims of the bombing was an 8-year-old child. This story gained further attention as the days continued.



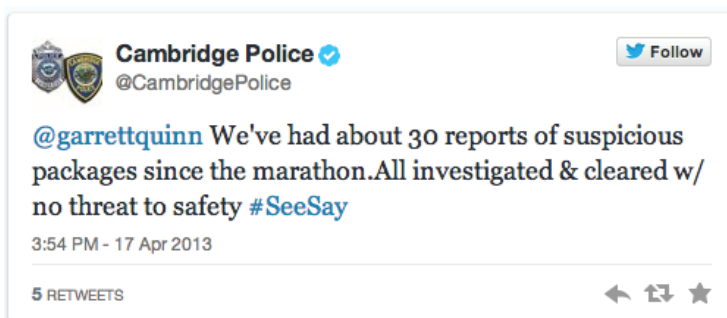
*The Boston Globe* tweeted a graphic of the marathon's explosions and was the first to tweet edited visuals that were not immediately distributed on the scene, like many of the photographs and videos tweeted earlier on the site. The edited visuals beyond the on-site media showed the news source's judgment in the post real-time period. It became clear to many — both because the site provided refined tweets like this and it also took down its paywall to provide even non-subscribers with information — that the *Globe's* newsroom was intently focused on delivering as much accurate news as possible to those who needed it.

witness reports from *The New York Times* and photos from *The Boston Globe*. The tweet below is reminiscent of another narrative-type story that came out the following morning.

Links to more narrative stories began to be tweeted around 7 p.m., with



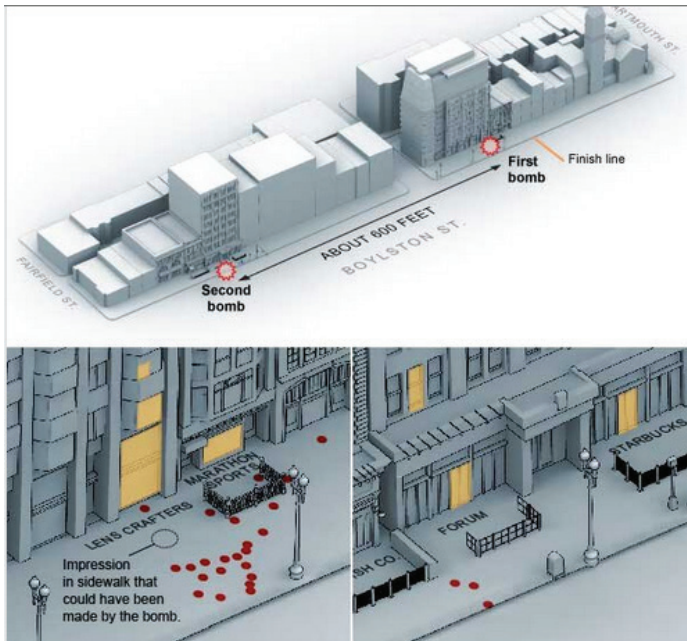
In the day after the attack, columns started pouring in; photos appeared from other newspapers that had paid tribute to the fallen city; and news sources tweeted photos of the home of Martin Richard, the 8-year-old boy who died in the explosion.



The Cambridge Police used their presence to keep people posted about suspicious reports and to remind the public if they saw something, to alter the proper authorities.



JetBlue continued to provide words of encouragement to the community as a sponsor of the marathon. This tweet was in response to a tweet from Robert Oliver, who said, “Thanks for being the best airline out there, standing with #Boston every step of the way. #TrueBlue,” and it was one of several tweets from people who thanked JetBlue for the company’s services.



*The New York Times*, after having more time to get teams together to create new visuals, started publishing interactive graphics, much like *The Boston Globe*'s.





By Andrew Ryan @GlobeAndrewRyan



The Boston Globe  
@BostonGlobe

Follow

MT @globeandrewryan: Woman in Marathon jacket in front pew of cathedral with sunlight streaming through window  
[twitpic.com/ck7ghh](http://twitpic.com/ck7ghh)

9:37 AM - 18 Apr 2013

66 RETWEETS 42 FAVORITES



### The Manhunt: Sources respond to a second breaking news event



Boston Police Dept.  
@bostonpolice

Follow

Do you know these individuals? Contact [boston@ic.fbi.gov](mailto:boston@ic.fbi.gov) or 1-800-CALL-FBI (1-800-225-5324), prompt #3  
[youtube.com/watch?v=M8oDXI...](http://youtube.com/watch?v=M8oDXI...)

5:24 PM - 18 Apr 2013



YouTube @YouTube

6,898 RETWEETS 374 FAVORITES



Throughout the tragedy, news sources on the ground attempted to shine a small light of hope to help raise the spirits of people in the area. The image above is just one of these images. A press conference took place with Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and President Obama in the cathedral a few hours later.

Later that day, the Boston Police posted images of the suspects, asking the public to send tips to a hotline.



In the middle of the night on April 19, CNN posted that the Boston Police were taking part in an investigation, which the department confirmed via Twitter less than an hour later.

The police department tweeted important information, including news on where the press should set up not to hamper the investigation, information on staying indoors in the Watertown area where the manhunt was taking place, and a photo of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the suspect on the run in the manhunt.



The department tweeted the photo out several times throughout the night, but few other news sources tweeted during those hours, except to state the same information: one suspect was dead and the other was armed, dangerous and still at large. *The Boston Globe* tweeted school and public transportation closures in the early morning. Hospitals were also on lockdown, according to *The Globe*.

Information about the suspects was tweeted throughout the day, including license plates of a possible car that Tsarnaev was driving. Even obscure information, like the fact that the suspects “followed [a] Harry Potter-hating Australian sheikh,” was tweeted by sources like Fox News.





An interesting development occurred when the Cambridge Police stopped tweeting because they didn't want the suspect to receive live-updates about what was happening. This was particularly attention-grabbing because, while it stopped some of the narrative storytelling, it showed how aware sources were that the new storytelling form was accessible to anyone, even the suspect authorities were trying to capture.



Sources that did not traditionally cover news provided relevant links for people seeking some sort of solace on Twitter. Mass General's tweets about coping with being stuck inside because of the bombings belong to one such form of non-traditional, but relevant, news.

At 7:05 p.m. on April 19, the first report that the suspect was captured was released on Twitter.



The Boston Police later followed this message up to verify and also sent out this tweet.



All these tweets combined to create a narrative of the Boston Marathon bombings and subsequent manhunt for the suspects who caused the tragedy. Twitter was an important tool for communicating information to the public.

**Inaccurate news reports**

 **New York Post**  @nypost 

**BREAKING: Cops guarding a suspect in Boston hospital after explosions. Watch for updates: [nyp.st/XNzQCF](http://nyp.st/XNzQCF)**

4:30 PM - 15 Apr 2013

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**Terror attack strikes Boston Marathon, more than 130 injured; person**

Police clear the bleachers after two explosions went off near the finish line of the 117th Boston Marathon. (Boston Globe via Getty Images) (AP) Police officers react to a second...

1,740 RETWEETS 71 FAVORITES   

This tweet by the *New York Post* was the first of many inaccurate posts by news media striving to be first to report news. The *Post* soon reported that the Boston PD confirmed another explosion at JFK Library. The police had not confirmed this information, and the “explosion” was actually a fire that was unrelated to the bombings.

At 4:50 p.m., the *New York Post* tweeted the following message.

 **New York Post**  @nypost 

**Breaking: Authorities ID a Saudi national as a suspect in Boston Marathon bombings [nyp.st/XNBHHR](http://nyp.st/XNBHHR)**

4:50 PM - 15 Apr 2013

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**Authorities ID person of interest as Saudi national in marathon**

Investigators have a suspect — a Saudi Arabian national — in the horrific Boston Marathon bombings, The Post has learned. Law enforcement sources said the 20-year-old suspect was under guard...

4,604 RETWEETS 210 FAVORITES   

This tweet was not accurate, nor was a fair amount of information in the link that was tweeted, including “A law enforcement source confirmed to the *Post* that 12 people were killed and nearly 50 were injured in today’s blast,” when only three died. The information tweeted about the Saudi national was false and caused a great amount of backlash from people who believed the inaccurate report to be an instance of racial profiling.




 **New York Post**  @nypost 

**FBI grills 20-year-old Saudi national in Boston Marathon bombings [nyp.st/119z52e](http://nyp.st/119z52e)**

7:27 AM - 16 Apr 2013




99 RETWEETS 11 FAVORITES   

Tweets like the *New York Post’s* serve as a strong reminder that if information is inaccurate, it can make a news source look untrustworthy and inept in the long run. These tweets themselves were not always inaccurate, but they were leading, and they made it easy to point the finger at an oppressed group in American society.

 **The Boston Globe**  @BostonGlobe 

**UPCOMING: Saudi embassy in Washington says US officials have assured them that Revere student is not a suspect in Boston Marathon bombings.**

1:51 PM - 16 Apr 2013

231 RETWEETS 17 FAVORITES   

*The Boston Globe* debunked the *Post’s* reporting later that same day. CNN also stated later, “Investigators have found no foreign or al Qaeda connection to the bombings, U.S. official tells CNN . . .”

**New York Post** @nypost Follow

Authorities circulate photos of two men spotted carrying bags near site of Boston Marathon terror attack  
[nyp.st/101FZVT](http://nyp.st/101FZVT)  
 7:46 AM - 18 Apr 2013

**Authorities circulate photos of two men spotted carrying bags near**

IN FOCUS: Cops are seeking these two men (above) who were spotted near the site of the Boston blasts. (Aaron "Tango" Tang) The man in blue still has the bag...



**New York Post** @nypost

143 RETWEETS 13 FAVORITES

The *Post* is still shrouded in controversy over a non-Twitter transgression. Two men were photographed on the newspaper's cover with the words "Bag Men," which suggested that they were involved with planting the bombs. The men in the photo below were not suspects and had not been arrested or charged with a crime. They were simply identified by police as persons of interest.

The men had willingly gone to police on April 17, the day before this tweet, to explain their whereabouts and tell police that they were not involved. Media Matters for America and *New York Daily News* reported in early October that the Post settled its lawsuit with the two men. Information from these sources said that "neither side would disclose terms of the settlement."<sup>18</sup>

**Fox News** @FoxNews Follow

#UPDATE: Authorities searching apartment in #Boston suburb in connection to bombings [fxn.ws/XDsKhL](http://fxn.ws/XDsKhL) via @janawinter  
 12:06 AM - 16 Apr 2013

**FBI, Boston police say range of suspects, motives remains 'wide open'**

The Boston Marathon headquarters has been locked down after an explosion was reported near the finish line, a spokesman told Reuters.



**Fox News** @FoxNews

386 RETWEETS 49 FAVORITES

Fox News' tweet about an apartment search in relation to the bombings did not lead to any arrests, but it goes to show how intensely and aggressively the media was covering every possible lead that could provide them a story.


CNN's tweet about "five viral stories about the Boston terror attacks that aren't true" was a precursor to a tweet by CNN that was, in fact, a viral story that wasn't true.

**The Boston Globe** @BostonGlobe Follow

BREAKING: Arrest in Boston Marathon bombing.  
[bostonglobe.com/?refresh=true](http://bostonglobe.com/?refresh=true)  
 1:53 PM - 17 Apr 2013

**The Boston Globe**

A leading news source for Massachusetts, breaking news, business, sports, health, arts & entertainment, politics, education, cars, jobs, real estate & more.



**The Boston Globe** @BostonGlobe

847 RETWEETS 64 FAVORITES

**CNN** @CNN Follow

Suspect arrested in Boston terror attack, source says:  
[on.cnn.com/15fo2LB](http://on.cnn.com/15fo2LB)  
 1:58 PM - 17 Apr 2013

1,506 RETWEETS 134 FAVORITES

CNN and *The Boston Globe* both tweeted that a suspect was taken into custody on April 17.

After many news sources retweeted this, it was found incorrect when the Boston PD tweeted that no such suspect had been found.

18 Oliver Willis, "NY Post Settles Lawsuit over Infamous Boston Bombing 'Bag Men' Cover." Media Matters for America, October 1, 2014. <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2014/10/01/ny-post-settles-lawsuit-over-infamous-boston-bo/200974>.



The courthouse where the suspect was to be detained was evacuated shortly after due to reports of a possible bomb threat. A man had left gas cans in his car, which led to suspicion. An FBI briefing scheduled for that evening at the courthouse was then canceled, due to the supposed bomb threat.

These were just a few of many inaccuracies throughout the coverage of

the bombings. Eventually, the media reported matters correctly as the suspects were killed and captured, but many sources misreported news throughout the bombings.

A full compilation of the tweets in narrative form is available at <https://storify.com/marykatebrogan/boston-marathon-bombings>.

## V. Discussion

Several patterns can be found in the narrative of these sources on Twitter. Of the types of tweets found in this data, most tweets can be categorized as one of the following: news, features, safety, informative messages, and perfunctory information.

### News

News sources had a strong desire to be first and many left accuracy at the wayside because of this drive. CNN, the *New York Post* and *The Boston Globe* all had inaccurate reports during the aftermath of the crisis. This shows one of the pitfalls of narrative storytelling through Twitter: not all storytellers will be accurate in their information. But one benefit of the narrative storytelling aspect of Twitter is that others who are interested in a topic will question or correct information that is inaccurate, like the Boston PD did with CNN's mis-tweet about having a suspect in custody.

In an ongoing event like this — with the attack, the aftermath and the manhunt — it was compelling to observe the patterns of news organizations as they reported, and sometimes came to conclusions, on events as they occurred. The nature of this event was different from past crisis situations like Sept. 11 and the London Underground bombings because the Boston bombings were not perpetrated by suicide bombers. These were individuals who had planted bombs and walked away unscathed, which led to some news organizations trying to swiftly place blame on certain parties.

The tweet from Rush (“Let’s kill them [Muslims] all”) mentioned in the literature review is one extreme example of the underlying stereotypes that permeated this narrative in the way that news sources covered it. The *New York Post* has been accused of racial profiling of the plaintiffs in the libel suit the paper recently settled. As news organizations tried to piece together the aftermath and search for subjects, many of the underlying stereotypes of bombers came through in the news coverage of some sources, particularly the *New York Post*.

As Woods addressed in “What We Talk About when We Talk About Terrorism,” articles that associate terrorism with Islam incite more fear than articles that do not.<sup>19</sup> This shows the permeability of racial profiling and stereotypes and illustrates why they are tactics journalists must avoid. This effect was not something that Rush or the *New York Post* seemed to have considered in their coverage of this the bombings.

Other sources simply prematurely tweeted about the capture of a suspect, which was likely a product of several factors: wanting to be first to report the news, providing constant coverage and waiting on a development, and a general desire by the American public — journalists included — for the suspect to be captured. News media outlets often wrote tweets as soon as possible following confirmation of information or sometimes without it. This led to making storytelling more difficult because people were unaware of what was true and what was inaccurate.

<sup>19</sup> Joshua Woods, “What We Talk about When We Talk about Terrorism: Elite Press Coverage of Terrorism Risk from 1997 to 2005.”

While there were many mistakes, this type of narrative was different from past stories because of news sources' different function in this case. Many newspapers sought justice and searched for answers on their own, whether because they wanted more readership or because they felt it was their duty to the public to get to the bottom of the situation. News organizations contributed a great amount to the storytelling narrative of this disaster because of their enormous influence in the public sphere.

### **Features**

In the days following the bombing, national news sources, such as *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*, took it upon themselves to discover gripping, emotional stories about the bombings. Case in point, the *New York Post* published a story about two brothers who both lost legs. There was also a story about Martin Richard, the 8-year-old boy who died from his injuries sustained at the finish line. These stories are different than many of the breaking news updates, but they were certainly valuable in telling the story in a new way that was more humane and that more readers could identify with.

### **Safety**

The Boston Police and Boston Marathon officials worked with news sources to provide information about safety, particularly to make sure that people stay in their homes during the manhunt and not congregate in large groups following the bombings. This safety element is important to telling the story because it shows how authority figures were trying to keep the people calm, collected, and safe. It provides a new angle of storytelling as authorities worked to provide some control over the situation and gives a greater sense of calm to the community.

### **Informative content**

Informational tweets were the specialties of sources like the Boston Police, Cambridge Police, Massachusetts General Hospital and the Boston Marathon's official Twitter accounts. These tweets were not quite as common as news or breaking news tweets, but they provided much-needed site information to people in need.

Massachusetts General Hospital tweeted about giving blood to help others, a tweet that likely went a long way to reaching people who were looking for ways to help. Tweets like this just gave valuable information to help people get through this tough time and move on with their lives as normally as possible— or even just get themselves out of a crisis situation.

### **Perfunctory information**

Several sources provided perfunctory information. For example, a post from JetBlue, a marathon sponsor, said "Our thoughts go out to the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing." Most of these sources' tweets focused on customer service, but they would tweet intermittently that they were trying to do their part for the Boston community whatever way they could. These tweets are important to the narrative because they represent a large portion of the corporate contingent of Twitter, many of whom tweeted their sympathies to those affected.

Marathon sponsors' different types of tweets during the Boston Marathon bombings led to a new type of disaster coverage narrative that had never been used in any situation before. It led to an era of instant fact-checking by groups of individuals and, as Hermida theorized, a value of quantity of verification over quality of the source verifying the information, as even qualified sources, as shown in this study, are apt to be wrong on occasion. It led to a purer form of narrative storytelling with the opinions and observations of millions of individuals swirling about in a single platform, often unedited for the world to see. Speed has begun to combine with accuracy through the tweets of people on the ground who can provide a valuable service by simply telling others what they see or confirming the truth or falsehood of rumors for the good of society. While some media professionals warn that ill-intentioned people may claim to be on the ground and fabricate parts of a story, according to a Dow Jones News Fund copy editing program, professionals can easily clarify the validity of a source's statements in a crisis situation much the same as they have in the past, making sure those individuals are truly on the scene. Methods of verification via Twitter include direct messaging a source to inquire about his or her location and sending a reporter to that area to confirm that the source is there or simply sending a message asking the source to contact a reporter.

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Twitter is changing narrative storytelling by providing users with their own personal outlet to discover and provide information that's important to any current event, including a catastrophe that affects the lives of many. The dawning of the age of Twitter as a source of understanding events as they unfold is still in its infancy, but this study illuminates some of the functions of tweets and how they are changing how stories are communicated to the public.

## VI. Conclusion

Overall, there is a clear value in telling stories through Twitter, because of its permeability in a hyper-connected society. While some of the information may not be the most accurate because news organizations are often striving for speed and sacrificing accuracy, there is hope that more organizations will understand the importance of a clear and accurate social media presence during crises and disasters.

While this study is one of the first to analyze Twitter as a narrative storytelling tool in a catastrophe, it is doubtful that it will be the last. As social media's popularity grows, more and more users will wish to investigate the discussion of news in crisis situations using social media. Future studies may examine the Twitter conversations between sources and regular users on Twitter or may compare social media usage during crises with its use in normal times. Perhaps future researchers will be able to provide further insight into how social media changes news coverage in crisis situations as well.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to extend enormous thanks to Elon University Professors Naeemah Clark, Laura Roselle, and Brooke Barnett, and G.R. Boynton at the University of Iowa for their guidance, inspiration, advice, and assistance, without which this article could not have been published. The author is also thankful to Professor Byung Lee of Elon University for his supervision and help of revision for this article.

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# Faux Activism in Recent Female-Empowering Advertising

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## Abstract

*This study content analyzed six brands from Unilever and Procter & Gamble, whose advertisements promoted both male-targeted products and female-targeted ones. The study examined three female-empowering advertisements and three male-targeted, or “opposition” advertisements. It concluded that companies producing these female-empowering advertisements are not truly supporting the feminism activist movement, but are manipulating consumers for bigger profits with faux activism for feminism. By shedding light on this recent trend of “ad-her-tising,” this study found that not all brand activism is genuine.*

## I. Introduction

Companies have increasingly leveraged feminism as a successful selling tactic in contemporary advertising. What media once painted as unfriendly and negative has evolved into female empowerment. Recently, the term “ad-her-tising” has been coined. Some believe that the overwhelming burst of female-empowering ads is an example of faux activism rather than truly empowering the women they target.

Historically, feminism and female influence in advertising have been utilized as a marketing ploy. In the 1960s, the Virginia Slims campaign leveraged a woman’s independence to sell cigarettes with the “You’ve Come A Long Way, Baby” slogan. In 2004, the Dove Real Beauty campaign offered a modern women-empowering take; in 2014, a decade later, ad-her-tising is more prominent than ever. However, what these companies are really engaging in is not real activism, but faux activism because women are used as little more than objects. The same companies used opposite messages for male-targeted brands. By participating in this trend, companies are taking advantage of feminism as a source of activism. Thus, one advertising strategy used by companies is to make consumers believe they are passionate about a cause, while not necessarily believing in the messages they distribute.

By examining companies that produce several brands—female and male targeted—this study investigated whether these advertisers are merely leveraging a marketing fad. In other words, ad-her-tising may be nothing more than a trend that gets individuals to buy products.

## II. Literature Review

A number of researchers have studied advertising as it relates to females and sexuality portrayals

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**Keywords:** ad-her-tising, advertising, brand activism, female-empowering advertising, feminism  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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or how feminism is portrayed by the media. This paper focused on women portrayed in women-empowering roles in modern advertising, a topic that had not been widely investigated. By examining recent advertising campaigns that promote she-power and how they fit into the modern feminist movement, this paper aimed to explore the validity of corporate activism.

## ***Feminism***

Many feminists today believe that society is in the midst of a third wave of feminism. It is important to understand the goals and components of this current wave of feminism to better understand the current audience to ad-her-tising. As Lueptow wrote in *Everyday Feminism*, an online feminism magazine, what is different about this wave compared to previous ones is that feminists have “different viewpoints on the same feminist issues” (par. 4). Mack-Canty, third-wave feminism researcher also explained, “While third-wave feminism often finds tenets from an assortment of foundational theories useful, it works to begin from the situated and embodied perspectives of different(ising) women” (155).

*Everyday Feminism* has defined the third-wave of feminism as embodying five things: knowledge, linguistics, listening, intersectionality and equality of opportunity. Knowledge of the goal of equality and sharing that knowledge is a crucial part of the movement. Linguistics is popular in the third-wave in the sense of shaping culture through gender-specific vernacular and identification by language. Listening to the cultural messages is one of the most important goals of feminism as well. In the current movement of equality, intersectionality is especially important because without the inclusion of all races, sexualities, genders and lifestyles, it is hypocritical. Lastly, equality of opportunity in the third-wave of feminism aims to shake cultural stereotypes for both women and men. It is important that equality applies to all genders because “feminism is also about men’s issues because patriarchy is detrimental to male-self actualization as well” (Lueptow, Equality of Opportunity sec., par. 14 ).

As discussed in Snyder’s “What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay,” what is different about this current wave of feminism from previous waves is: “Unlike their mothers’ generation, who had to prove themselves, third-wavers consider themselves entitled to equality and self-fulfillment . . .”(Snyder, Moving Beyond Generational Conflict sec., par. 4). With this new wave of feminism, feminists feel entitled to equality rather than making a fighting case for it as previous waves have. Relating this message of third-wave feminism to consumerism and self-fulfillment through empowerment, women may feel inclined to have the empowerment expressed in female-empowering advertisements not be so obvious and instead have it be more natural as if it wasn’t a certain sector of advertising. Overall, with third-wave feminism, rights and equality are expected to be goals already obtained.

## ***Brand Activism***

Cause marketing, which aligns a brand with a cause, is becoming increasingly important for consumers to consider when choosing brands to purchase. According to a 2013 Cone Communications/Echo Global CSR Study, with comparable price and quality, 91% of global consumers are likely to switch to a brand associated with a good cause (“Statistics Every Cause Marketer”). Advertisers have been picking up on this fact and have been aligning with a cause that reflects the brand. Cone, Feldman and DaSilva agreed that brands associated with cause marketing benefit in many different areas: They are more attractive to stakeholders; are able to differentiate themselves from similar brands; “enhance their reputations, deepen employee loyalty; strengthen ties with business partners; and even sell more products or services” (par. 2).

Feminists who see the brand aligned with women-empowering advertisements may be more concerned with seeing change rather than awareness and surface-level activism. In their journal article, “Feminist Consumerism And Fat Activists: A Comparative Study of Grassroots Activism And The Dove Real Beauty Campaign,” Johnston and Taylor argued that “A feminist account of activism may be more concerned with gauging whether and how particular groups subvert the gender status quo, rather than determining whether it can be defined as political” (17).

## ***Female Consumerism***

It is important to understand the female consumer because that is the target of the ad-her-tising ads. The habits of consumerism—defined as “the buying and using of goods and services—and the belief that it is good for a society or an individual person to buy and use a large quantity of goods and services” (“Definition

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of Consumerism”) have little changed among female consumers through the decades. What have changed are the messages that are sent to the consumers through advertising.

As O’Barr explains in his “A Brief History of Advertising in America,” in the twentieth century, 80 percent or more of day-to-day household purchases were by women. In 2011, women accounted for 83 percent of consumer purchases in the United States (Bailik). Females have historically been targeted by ad agencies because consumers were predominantly female. On the other hand, advertisers were predominantly male.

Feminist consumerism has the potential to disrupt gender norms and aid in the evolution of a newer and broader cultural definition of consumerism (Johnston and Taylor). They wrote, as *Deseret News National* writer Chandra Johnson quoted in her news article: “Feminist consumerism tends to obscure and minimize both structural and institutionalized gender inequalities that are difficult to resolve and that might cause negative emotional associations with brands” (Johnson, section, par. 4).

### III. Background and Direction

#### ***Ad-her-tising***

There is little scholarly research about ad-her-tising. It is the topic, however, of popular media, trade publications and online discussions. Essentially, ad-her-tising is defined as female-targeted advertising that exhibits qualities of empowering women, feminism, female activism, or women leadership and equality. The present study approached ad-her-tising through a content analysis. Before that, however, a discussion of ad-her-tising in popular and trade media will provide an understanding of the issues surrounding ad-her-tising.

#### ***Recent Media Discussions of Ad-her-tising***

The genesis of this research began with the recent burst of articles in trade publications, news sources and opinion pieces about ad-her-tising. These articles were especially prominent between April and October 2014. Just about all of these sources had a common theme among them—marketing feminism is a trend.

In a recent article, “How Feminism Became a Great Way to Sell Stuff—A Recent Spate of ‘Feminist’ Adverts Shows Adland Belatedly Discovering Women’s Rights as a Marketing Ploy,” in *The Guardian*, Mahadawi expressed her opinion that the “brave new world of consumer-friendly feminism” is through the approaches of pseudo-psychoanalytical, sad soundtrack based feminism, sexism-positive feminism and radically literal feminism. She also mentioned the term ad-her-tising as it relates to the type of advertising that women seek.

In “Buy This, Empower Women: How Advertisers Use Feminism,” in *Deseret News National*, Polatis reported on the news and opinion articles that have surfaced from the overwhelming influx of feminist adverts. Referencing Mahadawi’s article in *The Guardian*, Polatis summarized the opinions of critics and bloggers that companies are wrong to use female-empowering ads to sell toys—notably GoldieBox’s efforts to make more girls interested in engineering. GoldieBox is a company with the main objective to encourage girls to build and engineer. The company created a main character that is described as “adorable, blonde and skinny” and the building toys are described in the article as being “girly colors” with products including “ribbons and fluffy animals.” The criticism around this GoldieBox product is that it still puts girls back in the “pink aisle” when the product aimed to get them out. This article prompted a blog post in 2014 by the James Madison University Women’s Student Caucus titled “#QuickHit: Using Feminism to Leverage Marketing Strategies.”

In “10 Worst Ways Companies Have Used Feminism to Sell Women Products” in *Mic*, Plank looked at drastic cases, including Virginia Slims, Kellogg’s, Dove and Campbell’s and explained that companies jumping on the feminist bandwagon have not reinvented the wheel. Pantene’s “*Sorry Not Sorry*” prompted Plank to write the article. Discussing the marketing phenomenon, she asked, “. . . why are so many companies these days demanding, as a marketing plot, that women change?” The essence of the article showed that corporate feminism has always mingled with feminism .

In “Brands join new wave of feminism” in *Creative Review*, Williams suggested that the new wave of feminism that has surfaced over the recent years has become mainstream and has been encouraged by advertising agencies. The recent outpour of feminist advertisements also showed that agencies are discovering

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what people might share online and what content might go viral.

In “‘Girl-Positive’ Ad Campaigns Support Feminist Consumer Discourse,” Weaver of PSFK noted that mid-June of 2014 saw a spike in girl-positive campaigns for feminine health and hygiene products. There is some question about whether or not these are a ploy, but the bottom line is that the ads have people talking, watching and listening.

In “Worst sales pitch ever: The ad industry’s shameless history of using feminism to sell products: In the age of ‘empowerizing,’ it’s worth asking whether feminism should be treated as a brand at all,” Zeisler mentioned the recent outpour of female-empowering ads from brands, including Dove, Verizon and Always. Her article suggested that what the brands are selling isn’t exactly clear. The recent push for brands to get behind a cause is prevalent, but the main question now is if consumers who buy based on the advertisements will take further steps to support feminism.

In “How feminism and marketing became bedfellows—and how it’s changing,” Johnson discussed some of the recent advertisements—Dove’s Real Beauty and Pantene’s Sorry Not Sorry—and some of the opinions that have surfaced. Some feel that feminist advertisements are raising awareness about important issues even though their end game is selling a product. Johnson also talked about faux activism and the possibility that feminism could coexist with a commercial goal. She concluded, “Feminism as a marketing tool might be an effective business strategy, but it drastically oversimplifies the issues.”

“Female Empowerment in Ads: Soft Feminism or Soft Soap? Go-Girl Marketing Is the Hot New Trend. But Are These Ads Culture-Changing or Simply ‘Pinkwashing?’” explained that industry experts expect that brands will continue to jump on the female-empowering bandwagon. With increased pressure for brands to get behind a cause and be an activist brand, there was also a concern that female-empowerment advertisements could backfire due to their ultimate goal to make a profit and sell a product.

## **History of Advertising**

According to William M. O’Barr in *A Brief History of Advertising in America*, advertising and media have had a relationship in print media since the 1600s. Advertisements have been an element that has fueled development of media and rise of consumerism. Beginning in Colonial America, advertising was directed at basic products—coffee, spices, porcelain, etc.— from around the world. As the commercial world evolved along with increased globalization, so did advertising. In the 1700s, advertising took a more personal approach and began to tell stories about the products. Newspapers began to be the most cost-efficient way to advertise, and the mid-1800s was the “age of the newspaper advertisement” (10). Moving into the twentieth century, the salesman was the new method of advertising and the slogan became popular.

Branding didn’t come into play until the twentieth century. With branding came a personality to the products. “When branding did emerge as part of marketing, it opened the door for a new kind of advertising—arguing not simply the virtues of the commodity itself but also for a particular brand” (O’Barr 7). As commercial messages became delivered via radio, illiteracy was no longer a hindrance to giving a literal voice to products in advertisements. Television in the mid-twentieth century presented a completely new perspective on how consumers view advertising with sound and sight. When the Internet took control in the 1990s, advertising was completely revolutionized with a new wave of globalization. All traditional advertising outlets have been negatively affected, with some more than others, but have not completely faded out.

In terms of audience, ads have always been female targeted since women make up the majority of consumers. Even though the vast majority of consumers was female, and is still female, it has been the male voice that was behind the selling. How to make housework easier, how to be “proper” mothers and wives, how to be passive and domestic were all messages of twentieth century advertising until the 1970s. “It was not until the rebirth of feminism in the 1970s that advertising began to let women speak for themselves, use women as authority figures, and employ women in decision-making and creative roles in the advertising industry” (18). The shedding of the housewife image and the introduction of a woman authority figure were brought in by a new wave of feminism, changing the way advertisers market to women forever.

## **IV. Methodology**

Content analysis was used to examine portrayals of women in recent video advertisements for six

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brands owned by two different companies, Procter & Gamble and Unilever. These two were chosen for analysis because, according to Forward of *Seeking Alpha*, they are “two of the world’s largest and most successful suppliers of consumer goods” (Forward par. 1). The companies offer large selections of brands that can be used in a research sample. The companies also market gender-specific products. By looking at brands distinctly targeting men and women and the messages their ads send out, this study tried to find out whether companies distribute the same messages regardless of the products advertised or they send out messages just for more profits to the extent that ad-her-tisements represent faux activism.

### **Advertisement Campaigns To Be Analyzed**

The advertising videos from the following six brands were analyzed: two ad-her-tising cases and two male-targeted advertisements from Procter & Gamble and one ad-her-tising and one male-targeted advertisement from Unilever.

- *Ad-her-tising*: Pantene “Not Sorry | #ShineStrong” 2014 and Always “#LikeaGirl” 2014 from Procter & Gamble; and *Ad-her-tising*: Dove “Patches” 2014 from Unilever
- *Male-targeting brands*: Gillette “First Girlfriend vs. First Real Girlfriend” 2014 and Oldspice “Hot Tub” 2014; and *Male-targeting brands*: Axe “The Clean Cut Look” 2014 from Unilever

The ad-her-tising sample above was selected based on articles by *Creative Review*, *Ad Age*, *The Guardian* and *PSFK*, which covered the most prominent ad-her-tising videos between April and October 2014. The male-targeting sample was selected among prominent and notoriously male-targeted brands from the same two companies when their brands were advertised in the same time frame of the corresponding ad-her-tising advertisements. The male-targeted ads of Gillette, Oldspice and Axe have been previously noted for producing advertisements exhibiting the opposite of female-empowering ideals.

### **Research Questions**

Ad-her-tising is nothing more than a trend that gets people to buy products. By participating in this trend, companies take advantage of feminism as a legitimate source of activism. The goal of the companies is to make the consumer believe they are passionate about a cause while not necessarily believing in the messages they send.

In order to examine this thesis, the following research questions were raised:

- RQ1: *Are the parent companies (Unilever and Procter and Gamble) of the ad-her-tising campaigns promoting the same message regarding female empowerment through both female- and male-targeted brands?*
- RQ2: *Are the parent companies supporting gender equality across all advertising messages?*
- RQ3: *How does the answer to RQ2 reflect their motives, morals and behaviors as a company and brand?*
- RQ4: *Are the ads for feminine beauty products that empower women contradicting the messages they send with the products they sell?*

## **V. Findings**

First, the author described how coding was done and what she found through content analysis of the six advertisements.

### **Coding**

After viewing the advertisements, the author saw the following two categories of themes emerge: categories hinting at the stereotypes associated with female-empowering behavior and submissive female behavior/male-dominating behavior. These two categories represent advertisements that manifest empowerment or submissive characteristics as their main themes by incorporating the following undertones:

#### **Empowerment undertones:**

- 1) The woman/women is/are shown in a position of power.
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- 2) The video blatantly shows a breakthrough of traditional gender norms and societal-perceived perceptions.
- 3) The woman/women in the video is/are highlighted for their “natural beauty.”

**Submissive undertones:**

- 4) The woman/women in the video is/are seen as subservient to the man/men.
- 5) The woman/women in the video is/are defined as a prop.
- 6) The woman/women in the video is/are sexualized.

### **Definitions of Terms**

Since the terms are abstract, the author operationalized them for this study.

**1) Position of power:**

Position of power for the purpose of this research is defined as a role in which one possesses a noticeable authority. Positions of power in the professional setting would include top executives, group leaders, top discussants during meetings and top decision makers within a profession. Leading a talk, introducing an idea, or making final decision can indicate this position. A position of power outside of a professional setting is defined as noticeably having the ability to directly influence others’ behavior throughout a course of events. This definition also covers another layer, such as a woman’s power of her own thoughts, body, decisions, actions, feelings, etc.

**2) Breakthrough of traditional gender norms and societally perceived perceptions:**

Traditional gender norms usually follow stereotypes indicated by society. According to *Boundless*, a large online academic resource for multiple disciplines including psychology, “masculine roles are usually associated with strength, aggression, and dominance, while feminine roles are usually associated with passivity, nurturing, and subordination” (Key Points section, par. 1). A breakthrough of these roles is defined as a gender possessing those opposite to their own stereotypical roles. This also includes a breakthrough of societally perceived perceptions and traditional gender norms of women. For example, this happens if a woman changes her perception on a traditional female stereotype about herself or females in general. This includes societal perceptions of women often not regarding themselves as beautiful, lacking confidence or downplaying their intelligence.

**3) Natural beauty:**

Natural beauty, for the purpose of this research, includes personality and internal attributes as well as physical appearance. Natural beauty refers to a woman/women who exhibit(s) beauty through confidence, self-awareness and comfort within her skin. This can be done with the absence of additives to their appearance including excessive makeup or hair care. However, this does not mean that physical upkeep and physical appearance with cosmetic aid dismisses natural beauty entirely.

**4) Subservient to man/men:**

For the purpose of this research, the women/woman portrayed as subservient to the man/men in the video are seen as secondary, submissive, less important, passive, obedient and compliant in relation to the male(s). More specifically, this includes cases where a woman speaks less than the men/man, does what the men/man command(s), modifies her behaviors because of the behaviors of the male, and is blatantly seen as secondary to the male. This also includes a woman being seen as a “prize” or being something the male obtains.

**5) Prop:**

This covers cases where a woman shows little emotion, mimics her actions to the desire of the male, speaks very little to not at all, and uses her body as the main representation of herself.

**6) Sexualized:**

For this study, a woman would be defined as being sexualized in a video if she has minimal clothes such as a bra, underwear, or bikini; tight-fitting clothes, including tight dresses, skirts or shirts; excessive skin exposure, including cleavage from low shirts and dresses, high slits in skirts or dresses or exposed midriffs. This definition includes comments on a woman’s appearance by a male as well and any verbal language pertaining to the sexualization of women, such as desire, lust or irresistibility for a man.

The six video advertisements were analyzed along the six categories. When the theme of each category was manifested through the advertisement, yes (Y) was chosen; no (N) was chosen otherwise; and

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change (C) was chosen if there was a shift in how a person was perceived between the beginning of the video and its end.

**Table 1: Themes of six advertisements from Procter and Gamble (P & G) and Unilever**

	Pantene (P & G; Ad-her-tising)	Always (P & G; Ad-her-tising)	Dove (Unilever; Ad-her-tising)	Gillette (P & G; male-targeted)	Old Spice (P & G; male-targeted)	Axe (Unilever; male-targeted)
1) Position of power	C	C	C	N	N	N
2) Breakthrough of traditional roles	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
3) Natural beauty	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
4) Subservience	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
5) Prop	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
6) Sexualized	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y

## VI. Analysis

The content analysis of ad-her-tising and opposition videos of the Unilever and Procter & Gamble brands answered the four research questions:

Regarding RQ1--*Are the parent companies (Unilever and Procter and Gamble) of the ad-her-tising campaigns promoting the same message regarding female empowerment through both female and male brands?*--the parent companies of the ad-her-tising campaigns are not promoting the same message of female empowerment through both the female and male brands they represent. The ad-her-tising advertisements have strong messages of female empowerment (9 out of 6 areas above) and negation of secondary female roles (9 out of 9 areas), while the male brand advertising displays strong messages of female subordination and negate female empowerment (in all areas). In the Dove "Patches" advertisement, the conclusion of advertisement is with a woman exclaiming, "I'm beautiful, I'm strong, I'm independent, and I can be whoever I want to." Pantene makes similar nods to women empowerment with its "#ShineStrong" advertisement at the end telling women, "Don't be sorry. Be strong and shine." Always similarly says in its "#LikeAGirl" advertisement, "Let's make #LikeAGirl mean amazing things. Join us to champion girls' confidence at Always.com." Both parent companies make blatant efforts to show the strength and highlight a woman's confidence through the messages they send in their advertisements for women's products.

The same parent companies display the opposite themes in advertisements for male-targeted products. In Gillette's "First Girlfriend vs. First Real Girlfriend" advertisement, the brand objectifies women while comparing them to razors. The advertisement says, "At some point every man is ready for his first real girlfriend, just as he's ready for his first real razor." Old Spice's "Hot Tub" advertisement shows a robotic man in a hot tub with three women wearing only bikinis. The point of this advertisement is that one doesn't even have to be a human male to attract women. The tagline, "Smell like a man from head to toes," denigrates a woman's judgment by suggesting they don't know the difference between a real man and a robot because of the smell of Old Spice. Additionally, Axe's "The Clean Cut Look" advertisement for Axe hair products opens the advertisement with a statement that directly negates women empowerment with, "Every single lady on earth is powerless to resist the well-travelled gentleman."

All of the advertisements studied were between the months of April and October 2014, when the current trend of ad-her-tising was at its peak. This means that the parent companies of Unilever and Procter & Gamble do not promote the same messages of female empowerment in their advertisements both for female-targeted and male-targeted brands.

Regarding RQ2--*Are the parent companies supporting gender equality across all advertising messages?*--the two companies do not support gender equality across all advertising messages by exhibiting female-empowering behavior in female-targeted advertisements, and female-disempowering behavior in

male-targeted advertisements.

*Regarding RQ3--How does the answer reflect their motives, morals and behaviors as a company and brand--* it is important to consider brand activism. As discussed in the literature review, Cone, Feldman and DaSilva explained how brand activism attempts to “enhance their [brand] reputations, deepen employee loyalty, strengthen ties with business partners, and even sell more products or services” (par. 2). Any company’s chief motive is to generate a profit and drive sales. Recently, this has been accomplished more effectively by a brand latching on to a cause and promoting activism to increase sales by jumping on feminist themes. This does not mean that they truly believe in the messages they incorporated in the female-targeted advertisements because they send out opposite messages through male-targeted advertisements.

What is important to note is the change that occurs in the Dove, Pantene and Always advertisements in relation to the first coding category: “The woman/women is/are shown in a position of power.” To make a point of addressing the gender barrier that feminism is trying to overcome, all of the ad-her-tising videos start with a woman/women in a somewhat powerless position and end with her/them in a powerful position. In the Dove “Patches” advertisement, the women feel powerless over their own confidence, strength and beauty. After the two weeks with the beauty patch and through video diaries, the women realize they have power over their own beauty. In the Pantene “#ShineStrong” advertisement, it begins with the statement, “Why are women always apologizing?” This is followed with a series of scenarios of women who lack power, apologizing to men, taking over an arm rest, handing a child over, asking a question, talking at the same time, etc. The scenarios are later replayed with the women asserting power and not apologizing.

Similarly, Always does this by asking women and men to act out scenarios, such as run like a girl, hit like a girl, and throw like a girl. The responses highlight stereotypical gender portrayals with the participants flailing their arms when running, playing with their hair, or pretending to drop a ball. They are asked to do this again at the end after being asked why they exhibited that behavior to portray women. This time they acted as they would do it normally with no stereotypical exaggerations. Looking at this change throughout the ad-her-tisements can relate back to one of the goals of third-wave advertisements discussed by Lueptow. Linguistics in the sense of shaping culture through gender-specific vernacular and identification by language is what this change throughout the course of the ad-her-tisement alludes to.

This finding shows how the brands Dove, Pantene and Always are creating their messages to mimic feminist views of society, but their motives and morals for these advertisements remain the same, that is, to create a profit.

*Regarding RQ4--Are the ads for feminine beauty products that empower women contradicting the messages they send with the products they sell?—*the answer is positive. The feminine stance of the brands analyzed in this study is negated with the products they sell. This was distinctly seen with Dove.

Dove, the brand of feminine beauty products that aim to make women more beautiful with softer skin and smoother and silkier hair, promotes “real beauty,” and sells products to make women more beautiful. At the end of their advertisement “Patches,” it states, “Beauty is a state of mind.” It claims that beauty is a state of mind, but if this is true, why would women need to buy any of its beauty products? This statement directly contradicts the products it sells.

Johnston and Taylor, who addressed this finding in their case study, wrote, “Dove’s approach, which we term feminist consumerism, encourages women to channel dissent and practice self-care by engaging with corporate marketing campaigns and purchasing beauty products. Although broadly accessible, Dove’s critique of beauty ideology is diluted by its contradictory imperative to promote self-acceptance and at the same time increase sales by promoting women’s consumption of products that encourage conformity to feminine beauty ideology. The Dove campaign does not decenter the role of beauty in women’s lives, but rather suggests that beauty and self-acceptance can be accessed through the purchase of Dove beauty products.”

With Pantene, the brand’s “#ShineStrong” advertisement sends women the message to be strong, don’t apologize, and instead take command over situations. Thinking back to the products Pantene sells—shampoo, conditioner and other hair products—are women supposed to achieve confidence and power by using their products? The connection doesn’t make sense because there is no final call to action other than to stop apologizing and also use Pantene’s Pro-V shampoo. Always similarly exhibits this same product-message disconnect.

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## VII. Discussion and Limitations

The content analysis led the author to conclude that the content analysis supports the initial thesis that ad-her-tising is nothing more than a trend that gets individuals to buy products. By participating in this trend, companies are taking advantage of feminism as a legitimate source of activism. The goal of the companies is to make the consumer believe they are passionate about a cause while not necessarily believing in the messages they publicize.

This is especially apparent in examining the male-targeted advertisements in which women are treated as no more than a prop and exhibit vast anti-feminist ideas. Women in the male-targeted advertisements analyzed said no more than one sentence in each advertisement. The women were also either scantily clad in bikinis, presented as a prize in a tight-fitting evening dress, or shown in what is commonly discussed as one of a man's favorite outfits, a sundress. The images of women in these advertisements show the opposite of feminist ideals and contradict their sister-company's efforts to promote female empowerment.

Ultimately, faux activism exists within the beauty industry and even within ad-her-tising. What is important is to recognize that companies practice faux activism and only jump on a trend if it contributes to profits. The trend of brand activism is also elevating the ad-her-tising trend and making it more pronounced as it reached new heights during the summer months of 2014. In the midst of a third-wave of feminism, brands' faux activism can cloud messages that are actually important to the feminist movement in order to gain consumers and larger sales. Arguably, while ad-her-tising does increase awareness of feminism through female-empowering advertisements, which does aid in the third-wave movement, ad-her-tising is indeed more like a marketing trend with little substance behind it.

Ultimately, the findings show that it may not be possible for a company with multiple brands to extend empowerment views across all of them without alienating certain consumers. When the same parent companies manage different brands with different goals, it may not be possible for a brand to have a completely valid stance in activism.

This study has some limitations. As part of requirements for a semester course, this research was conducted in a short time frame of 14 weeks. If more time were allowed, additional data could have been gathered directly from research participants who could testify to consumer projections of ad-her-tising. This information would have aided in defining how consumers perceive the ads and if they think companies are practicing faux activism. More studies on ad-her-tising can be conducted to analyze not only the messages the brands send out and the faux activism they practice, but also their effects on society and the consumer. Of course, the sample size of videos could have been larger for more valid results.

## VIII. Conclusion

Following this study, it can be concluded that while brands seem to support gender equality and feminism through female-empowering advertisements, the companies are actually practicing faux activism. This is seen through the contradicting messages of the brands Unilever and Procter & Gamble promote and the anti-feminist messages their male-targeted brands send through advertising.

The implications of this research is that ad-her-tisement messages do not have a ring of validity to them when the brands send them out to participate in a trend as a tactic to turn a profit. The result suggests that caution should be taken when consumers support a brand solely because of its ad-her-tisement.

While this research does support the notion that companies are jumping on the feminist advertising trend to turn a profit, this study cannot be generalized to all brands that have practiced ad-her-tising as a marketing tactic since this study highlighted only two companies.

## Acknowledgments

This author is thankful to Dr. David Copeland, A.J. Fletcher Professor at Elon University, for his supervision and advice, without which the article could not be published. The author also appreciates numerous reviewers who have helped revise this article.

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# Analysis of Promising Beacon Technology for Consumers

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## Abstract

*To be at the forefront of innovations that push brands forward, marketers and advertisers strive to create seamless experiences amidst the ever-changing landscape of digital and mobile technologies. This research delves into the forward-thinking opportunities presented by location-based marketing technologies. Through a quantitative research survey and a review of literature on existing applications and concerns, the author explored how marketers can make the most of beacon-based communication strategies. Overall, this study found that if brands are wary of consumer hesitation and keep consumer benefits top of mind, strategic and creative location-based implementation has great potential to increase brand relevancy in the digital age.*

## I. Introduction

Cell phones and the emergence of technologies like beacons<sup>\*</sup> present brand marketers with opportunities for location-based marketing, targeting messages based on where the consumer is located. This capability to pinpoint a location may also provide insight into consumers' action, such as shopping, attending a concert or eating lunch. While this innovative technology presents a number of opportunities for strategic communicators, it also presents a number of challenges—the greatest being consumer hesitation to embrace push services that location-based technology relies on. Privacy regulations and mobile phone settings require consumers to subscribe to location-based services in advance so that consumers control push notifications and pop-ups, protecting themselves from being bombarded, especially with irrelevant or intrusive advertisements.

Marketers and communicators walk a fine line between maximizing brand utility and exploiting the invasive potential of this technology. Currently, consumers are required to download beacon applications and “opt in” to beacon services to take advantage of whatever experience is promoted. To overcome this challenge, advertisers and marketers should develop campaign strategies that create consumers' awareness of and increase their engagement in beacon technology, which allows advertisers to reach consumers at the most pertinent time and in meaningful places, with a feature most relevant to them.

This research attempted to help marketers and advertisers understand how to make the most of the potential that beacon technology provides for real-time personal engagement. With an overwhelming amount

<sup>\*</sup> Using the Bluetooth low energy, or BLE, a beacon, a small wireless device, constantly transmits radio signals with a unique identifier to nearby mobile devices. If the devices have Bluetooth capability turned on and have an application that can interpret the signals, the signals trigger an action that is programmed in the application.

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**Keywords:** beacon, location-based, potential, consumers, brand strategy  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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of messages on every platform, and more and more brands fighting for consumer attention, how can this technology be used to provide worthwhile experiences and help consumers navigate purchases? Based on both primary and secondary academic research, this study examined beacon-technology opportunities and introduced strategies that brand communicators can use to build trust with consumers and enable mutually beneficial utility.

## II. Background

While the beacons themselves do not send notifications to enabled smartphones, they send unique location identifiers to apps, which are programmed to respond differently based on the data received. Via these low-power signals received by phone applications, beacons enable catered and strategically targeted push notifications on just about any smartphone as it enters a pre-determined locations.

Beacons usually look like palm-sized air fresheners, or adhesives stuck to walls, shelving units or products. Any number of beacons are placed throughout store aisles, depending on the size of the space and the desired precision of proximity measuring. A beacon, which has a battery life of about two years, constantly emits BLE signals to phones with their Bluetooth capability turned on. Enabling this capability is as easy as turning on Wi-Fi and, despite speculation, there is no concern of battery drainage. When a beacon detects a mobile device, the beacon sends location-aware signals to phone applications, which then act on the data delivered, often assisted by content management platforms. Pre-determined actions can range from coupons and offers to specialized in-app experiences, but the sky is the limit in terms of what this technology looks like and how it is applied.

Although the possibilities of application are broad, most beacon technology marketing efforts currently enable retailers to offer real-time in-store engagement and brand promotions, with accompanying analytics that prove return on investment. For years, e-commerce businesses have been able to strategically target specific consumers by using the power of big data they collected from the Internet. From cookies to targeted banner ads, there is no denying that most have come to at least accept, if not appreciate, the personalized online shopping experience, although many consumers were hesitant and uncomfortable at first. Beacon technology introduces this catered personalization to brick-and-mortar retail businesses.

This technology, which can activate recommendations, insights and support via wave signals, has the power to deliver custom branded content and start a conversation with consumers at a crucial time and location—physically within any given proximity of the product and within seconds of the potential point of purchase.

Apple recognized beacon's potential and introduced its trademarked iBeacon during the company's 2013 summer Worldwide Developers Conference. Any iPhone4 or later comes completely beacon-enabled. It wasn't long before Google followed suit ensuring that any Android OS 4.3 or later is beacon-enabled as well (Laird). Apple and Google made their software compatible with beacon, but don't actually make the beacon hardware. These come from more than 50 third-party manufacturers, with more likely to enter market in years to come (Thomas). Most notably, companies such as PayPal and Qualcomm are even creating hardware of their own. Other main players include Estimote, Sonic Notify, Kontakt, Gimbal, Swirl, Blue Sense and GP-Shopper. Most provide beacon management systems and services in addition to the hardware or software platforms (Danova). These innovative companies are not just factory-like product manufacturers, but rather they are strategic think tanks that will truly determine the future of location-based marketing technology.

Beacon technology is not to be confused with existing, more traditional location technologies. While NFC (near field communication), GPS and QR code technologies have similar location-focused purposes and properties, none are capable of being as widely accessible or strategically location-pinpointed as beacon technology. NFC is powered by the phone and requires an NFC chip, which iPhones do not come equipped with (Evans "What Technology"). And as the name suggests, NFC technologies require almost physical touch, responding only within four centimeters of distance, while beacon has the potential to engage up to 200 feet of distance (Evans).

Consumers are far too familiar with a GPS declaring: "you have arrived," as they hopelessly look left and right at what is surely not the desired destination. While GPS is great for navigating across a state, it does not map precise indoor locations. Maybe one day it will be able to direct consumers to the most optimal

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parking spot, point of entrance and guide up the stairs and down the hallway to a meeting room but, at this point, GPS uses satellites or cell tower triangulation that does not permit the identification of indoor location (Hulkower). GPS and Beacon technology can probably be best differentiated between “determining if someone is in your neighborhood or in a particular aisle, standing next to a specific product in your store” (Brown).

Lastly, QR codes have likely reached their height in usage. This location-based code achieved widespread adaptation and broad usage due to the fact that it could be easily generated for free and was compatible with most smartphones. However, the fact that this code requires consumers to download an application and physically pull data for themselves has minimized opportunity for brands to offer features that can offer personalized targeting and engagement.

NFC, GPS and QR code technologies each demand a pull instead of a push approach, actively requiring consumers to use their mobile phones to seek branded information, offers or experiences. Beacon technology almost entirely implements a push approach, although it requires people’s “opt-in” acceptance in the beginning. It does “push” targeted content to relevant users through a few layers of permissions. Bluetooth must first be enabled on the phone; and the consumer must also download the given brand or campaign-specific mobile app. And as of iOS 8, Apple has also required the app to be open for users to share their location. These provisions protect consumer privacy and prevent brands and advertisers from jumping the gun and pushing boundaries too close to “beacon-based spam.” (Beacon V. IOS 8).

The real challenge is building a strong foundation of consumer trust so that app users, shoppers, and all different types of consumers are receptive to brands’ efforts to create mutually beneficial relationships and enhance customers’ experiences by leveraging the power of beacons.

### III. Literature Review

Many articles explored beacon technology’s potential, discussed the aspirational applications, and analyzed current beacon-enabled campaigns. Scholarly and business-focused studies have delved into what this technology and intelligence means for today’s consumer-oriented culture. Business Insider Intelligence, a research service, named beacon technology “the most important retail technology since mobile credit card readers” and predicts a five-year compound annual growth rate of 287%, with 4.5 million active beacons overall by 2019 and 3.5 million of these in use by retailers. Senior Business Insider Intelligence Analyst Cooper Smith is optimistic about the success of this technology, reporting that 72% of retailers plan to be able to identify a customer when they walk in the store. However, Smith still expresses that retailers need to be wary of privacy issues. (Smith)

A number of sources, primarily technology-, business- or marketing-focused, have covered the emergence of beacon-enabled campaigns and applications. While in the experimental stage in late 2013, Tony Danova from Business Insider Intelligence began to cover the applications being contemplated across a variety of industries. He listed retail, payments, events, content delivery, transportation and in-home applications. Danova named retail the first and most obvious market for this technology and provided encouraging data from mobile marketing firm, Swirl, which reported that already 67% of retail shoppers had received an in-store alert, and of those shoppers, 81% opened or read the alert, and 79% made a subsequent related purchase. Some analysts have suggested that the best way to approach the app development would be to partner with established lifestyle or shopping apps. Swirl’s data also suggests that shoppers are most likely, at 65%, to trust their favorite retailers with their location-based data (Danova).

Scholarly articles also covered the two-fold mutually beneficial potential of beacons. Digiday explained the opportunities at hand for stores and brands to collect consumer data and also to combat the practice of “showrooming,” currently hindering brick-and-mortar sales as consumers check out products in person and then pull up better deals right on their phones in store to place orders on sites such as Amazon. Another potential feature being discussed for this technology’s application is for stores to push notifications up to brands for bidding, meaning that they allow the brand that offers the highest profits to present its offer to the target consumer at the most crucial point of decision making—right in the aisle, before the purchase choice is made—via Beacon technology (McDermott).

*Chain Store Age* published a relevant piece about the evolution of consumer trust and how brands should be navigating the latest technological opportunities. This article also encourages companies to use

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consumer feedback acquired from beacon-based initiatives to redesign stores, to rethink staff interactions and in-store guidance, and to reinforce the relevance of app integration and omnichannel experiences. This article also examined a very fundamental truth emphasizing that consumer trust is the most crucial element to successful applications of new technology. Declaring that relationships are key to taking risks and making bold business decisions, this source advises that brands “communicate the benefits, deliver a quality experience, and keep building trust through proactive tech security and strong responses to any breach” (Beacon V. IOS 8). The conclusion of this article is that prioritizing relationships with consumers is key to successful beacon application.

The existing beacon-related literature has successfully started the conversation about the various opportunities and potentials for brands and advertisers to make the most of this technology. This study aimed to analyze these existing applications and present an overview of how marketers and advertisers can build beacons into their future strategic campaigns to increase the relevancy of communications in this digital age.

## IV. Analysis of Applications

Since 2012, most high-end smartphones, including those manufactured by Samsung, Apple, Microsoft and Nokia, have come readily equipped with BLE technology. So it may be surprising that this technology hasn’t already become a global tech trend. Well, some individuals may argue that it has (Evans “What Technology”).

Most big name early adaptors have started by trialing this technology throughout a rather small percentage of their national footprint. All but an unlikely suspect—Major League Baseball—that has placed iBeacons in 28 of 30 ballparks across the country. As fans’ check-ins of the brand’s app more than doubled after the first season, the league’s content strategy and implementation can be interpreted as a homerun (Kharif).

Based on the user’s exact location within the park, the app offers utility such as the ticket barcode pulling up a gate bar as the user approaches the gate and once inside and a mapping feature accurately directing them to their seat. As the app follows the user through the stadium, it even provides educational fun facts about historical plaques or events (Brown). Of course, it includes a social media element, as well as promotes concession and souvenir sales. The app also gathers analytics about fan behavior in stadium so that it will enable marketers and franchises to strategically enhance these users’ ballpark experience (O’Donnell).

Starwood Hotels & Resorts has implemented iBeacon in 30 hotels to help concierges greet VIP arrivals by name. Using this kind of application can help service-focused industries immediately identify loyal consumers and provide rational benefits, such as expedited check-ins as well as just greeting guests by name, prompting relevant conversations, and providing a more specialized catered experience (Kharif).

A museum in Antwerp, Belgium, has applied beacon technology to provide visitors with customized experiences as they explore at their own leisure with a very well-versed tour guide in hand (Brown). The idea of using beacon-technology for educational exhibits and walking tours is one of the least intrusive and most hesitation-free applications, with a transparent and obvious function of education as opposed to solicitation of product choice. Location-based apps can provide the opportunity for more brands beyond museums or educational institutions to really get creative and establish engaging experiences

As of Sept. 2014, Miami International Airport became the first airport in the world to commit to a comprehensive installation of beacon technology. “Miami has made it easy for airlines, and other partners working at the airport, to take advantage of iBeacon technology and provide information that is relevant to the passenger’s location or stage of the journey,” says Jim Peters, SITA chief technology officer. “And, of course, it is not just for passengers; beacons can be used for staff notifications and to spread operational information—such as temperature, noise levels, vibrations, etc.—throughout the airport to allow efficient operational management” (Garcia). The potential of using beacon technology in today’s airports was examined by Sita Lab, an airport technology research team that reported the potential for multiple airlines to share beacons that are carefully managed by the airport at a relatively low cost (“Beacon Technology”). It might seem ironic for one of the highest security-aware industries to embrace and accept beacon technology before others, especially those that hesitate over the sharing of information, but it also makes sense that consumers see a very clear utility from airports implementing these technologies. This application showcases the opportunities for multi-company partnerships that may be relevant for any type of business that collaborates with many others, such as any other sort of transportation service, as well as shopping malls and resorts.

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Hillshire Brands was able to recoup a measurable return on investment to its location-based marketing experiment, which implemented iBeacons in 10 U.S. test cities and pushed messages via relevant apps such as recipe service, Epicurious. The brand was able to report that recipients exposed to this targeted location-based marketing initiative were 20 times likelier to buy its American Craft sausages, deeming the campaign a success (Kharif). Large corporate brands are most willing to experiment with bold technologies at a smaller scale, achieve success such as that experienced by Hillshire, and then expand and intensify installations across the world.

The possibilities of BLE technology really are endless, and when creatively put to use, it is applicable to bettering communication initiatives by embracing digital strategy throughout a diverse portfolio of industries. Noah Bass, co-founder of Aisle 18, a Toronto-based retail-app developer, envisions supermarkets encouraging consumers to create in-app grocery lists, then incorporate beacon technology to help shoppers navigate the store, and send reminders about certain items they listed that are nearby or on sale. “People don’t just want to save time and money; they want to find products that they need or want” (Brown). The key to optimizing beacon engagement is to prove to consumers that this technology increases their productivity, savings and overall experience in any given space.

The connected home is well on its way with mobile apps that provide consumers with control over music volume, thermostat temperature and whether or not their garage door is closed—all right from the couch or all the way from the office. BLE has the potential to take this technology to the next level by offering custom-programmed connected behaviors, minimizing even having to think about such routine tasks that could be automated from users’ phone and based on their location within the home (Brousell).

Talking about connected technologies, a Boston-based startup, ByteLight, has collaborated with GE Lighting and Philips Lighting to create a technology that combines lighting figurations with BLE capabilities. Each bulb is location-aware and when installed in-store, helps track and pinpoint target shoppers via iBeacon, potentially indicating that retailers may not need to buy separate hardware (Kharif). Gerben van der Lugt, business development leader at Philips Lighting, said: “The beauty of the system is that retailers do not have to invest in additional infrastructure to house, power and support location beacons for indoor positioning. The light fixtures themselves can communicate this information by virtue of their presence everywhere in the store” (Meyer). The possibility that every light bulb of the future could potentially be beacon-enabled and location-aware indicates the opportunity for incredibly vast accessibility and reach, also contributing to this technology being very likely accepted in years to come.

British department stores House of Fraser and Bentsalls are trialing beacon-enabled mannequins. Shoppers who have downloaded the app can receive information about fashion and offers within 50 meters (Vizard). This application, in particular, has been criticized for providing a robot-like futuristic experience as opposed to retailers implementing the technology to promote more engagement between sales associates and shoppers. An alternative solution has been recommended to use beacons to provide sales associates with instantaneous, relevant and personalized information, such as what’s on shoppers’ wish lists, what their purchase history is, and what an average transaction for each individual may look like, in order to help sales associates offer a unique and efficient in-store experience. This is one way to work around spam-weary shoppers while still leveraging the big-data capabilities.

“Retail is struggling and I think the way you fix retail is by creating experiences in a physical store environment that you can’t replicate without being in the store, and I think beacons can play a role in that,” reports Asif Khan, president and co-founder of the Location Based Marketing Association (LBMA), an international group dedicated to fostering education, collaboration, innovation and effective implementation of location-based marketing solutions (Laird). Khan explains that retailers often blame technology, critical of showrooming as smartphones in store create a screen for price comparison. Instead, he suggests embracing the opportunities this technology presents and providing a more personalized, emotional and connected in-store experience.

With more than 75% of North American retailers saying they’re working to identify customers the moment they enter the store, why not also pull up their wish lists and purchase history to send them in the right direction? Or provide a special offer they won’t be able to resist (Beacon V. IOS 8)? Retailers can also use beacons to track patterns of customers and provide data to product suppliers about their dwell-time near certain areas of the isle, to more accurately price high-traffic shelf space or be cognizant of an area of the store that doesn’t get much foot traffic. This big data could change the brick-and-mortar business to benefit the consumers and all those invested financially.

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Steve Cheney, senior vice president at Estimote, an iBeacon hardware and software developer, is proud of the many partnerships they've solidified with high profile companies across the country. "We have half of Fortune 500 developing with us," he said (Kharif). While corporate brands, advertisers and marketers are on board and ready to go, it's obviously shoppers who will take the most work to convince. One study suggested that only 16% of consumers are prepared to give companies more information in order to see more relevant advertising (Davies). The statistic is not impressive and the fact is that broadly speaking, customers are still not completely sold.

### **Analysis of Concerns**

When cookie tracking was first introduced back in the 1990s, consumers resented the tracking of their online behavior. However, today it is a successful and acceptable practice that both consumers and businesses benefit from. Ads are usually relevant to consumers and items that follow prove to eventually end up in shopping carts (Laird). Similarly, the acceptance of beacons in retail is predicted to occur after a stage of resistance, fueled by anxiety over the collection of data and information. This will require marketers, advertisers, brands, and app developers to thoughtfully ease into the use of beacons, while recognizing the fact that invasive implementation could be detrimental to consumer trust.

Although the beacon-enabled, location-based apps require that users "opt-in" before the location based marketing is actually activated, there has been controversy over whether or not some of the agreement terminology is specific enough to communicate the amount of data consumers are agreeing to share. "Brands have to figure out the boundaries for their shoppers and mitigate risk in advance" (Beacon V. IOS 8). A recent study by a location-based retail app company reported that 71% of mobile app users do not like the idea of being tracked in-store, and 56% say they are not interested in push notifications while shopping (Laird). However, the number of smartphone and tablet users who would be willing to allow brands they like to send them offers to their devices based on their location increases 8% when asking just ages 16-24, indicating Plural to Millennial generations' higher acceptance (Hulkower, Sender).

Asif Khan of the LBMA suggested that retailers should be responsible for ensuring fair messaging strategies and relevant beacon applications. "There's a lot of data science that needs to go into the back end of what we do with these beacons and what types of messages we push and how frequently we push them," he said, proving his point by stating that just because he walks by a hotdog stand doesn't mean he's hungry at all— never mind for a hotdog (Laird).

In time, beacon-enabled tools will likely become cost-effective alternatives to paper fliers. But for now, the cost may prohibit small retailers from making any bold moves. Though individually inexpensive, businesses are looking at a \$10,000 - \$1 million investment to install and integrate with the store's sales and inventory systems (Brown). Although there have been successful applications by innovative brands and the beacon is on its way to potentially being the cost of a light bulb, for now, beacons are only in less than one percent of U.S. stores. Most companies are still warming up to the idea and consumers aren't quite sure how to feel (Kharif).

### **Analysis of Perceptions**

To understand how consumers feel about beacon applications, the author of the current study distributed an online survey through social media among a convenience sample of recruiters. They were asked three questions: their age, incentives they look for in return for location apps' access to their location, and their feeling toward location-based apps.

Among 76 individuals who responded to the survey, 55 (72%) were Millennials aged between 18 and 23, followed by 11 (14%) aged over 50; 9 (12%) aged between 30 and 50; 1 (1%) of aged between 24 and 29. The following shows their answers to the question.

Regarding a question about, "How do you feel about smartphone apps being aware of your location?":

- Only 3% of respondents were "completely in favor," indicating that this technology has a long way to go before consumer trust is a norm and location awareness is *not* perceived as irrelevant or invasive.
  - However, 45 respondents (59%) indicated being in favor of smartphone apps than can be aware of their location if the apps use this information to help them. This is a promising and encouraging statistic for brands and marketers, even though this could also be interpreted as a curios-
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ity and eagerness for consumers to learn more about how smartphone apps could help them when they are willing to allow location awareness.

- Twenty-three respondents (30%) were against the collection of location-based data, showing no interest in giving brands or advertisers the opportunity to prove why this awareness could be beneficial. This group will pose a challenge for communicators if the conversion of their mind is demanded.
- Five respondents (7%) were indifferent to location awareness, implying the need for education that could show value and prove utility.
- One respondent selected the “other” category after writing: “It’s big-brotherish, but if it helps me out and doesn’t invade my privacy I’m cool wit[h] it.”

Considering that the Millennial generation has grown up in the age of digital footprints that are impossible to delete, they generally more accept big data collection. “Brands have to tread lightly and be transparent,” said DDB mobile director, Dirk Rients. “But consumers are open to sharing certain data with brands and advertisers as long as you’re providing some value to them” (McDermott). While not necessarily in favor of privacy invasion, this generation is most willing to accept that some information collection could be worthwhile and make certain aspects of their lives easier. To find success models, brands and marketers have to communicate accompanying benefits and prove that benefits outweigh any associated risk.

### ***Understanding Opportunities for Brands and Advertisers***

In the same survey, the author asked the types of incentives that would lead respondents to allow smartphone apps to access their location. When they asked to select all choices as location-based incentives they look for in return for allowing smartphone apps to access their location, 54 (71%) of 76 respondents chose coupons and offers, followed by 37 (49%) for news and information; 10 (13%) for scheduling and organizational tools; 8 (11%) for games and entertainment. Eleven (14%) responded that nothing would incentivize them to give location information to apps or brands.

Given that most consumers indicated interest in coupons and offers even when they were not hinted at the benefits of location-based notifications in the realm of shopping, the result is good confirmation that this technology can be applied in appropriate categories of businesses. It also implies that consumers are going to permit businesses to access their location data only with appropriate compensation.

Some suggested that brands and retailers would leverage beacons as a good non-invasive strategy for internal communications, for example, providing a front-desk manager or store employee with information about the consumer, helping facilitate more organic engagement, and improving face-to-face interactions. It is, however, unlikely that this would be successful as a main goal of a beacon strategy, as consumers might be hesitant to provide personal data to help sales people handle their jobs. Rather, this would probably best serve as an additional feature and benefit for providers. While the consumers themselves do not identify emotional benefits as conversion factors, brands and advertisers will find that the emotional benefits are crucial to campaign success and mutually beneficial utility.

There are other beneficial opportunities besides coupons and offers. For example, loyalty programs that reward customers for their behavior within a store, such as shopping with friends, just walking into the store or completing a purchase, would encourage app engagement (Smith). Also, 55% of consumers who don’t use mobile shopping apps are hesitant, believing the apps would slow down rather than speed up the trip to the store, identifying an opportunity for brands and marketers to create features that make the shopping trip more efficient and be sure to communicate this utility. (Smith)

The most obvious form of location-based marketing is the usage of GPS-like maps to track and direct customers very accurately, even indoors. This opportunity should be leveraged to help shoppers maximize their time spent in store. It would be interesting to explore communication of “beacon technology” in association with indoor and more accurate GPS technology – given that GPS is a technology consumers are comfortable with and trust, especially highlighted in this study’s online survey as again, 5% expressed this without prompt. Value could also be added by providing additional features to the actual beacon technology itself, as opposed to the individual mobile application it communicates with. For example, some vendors are adding more advanced features to their beacons such as Wi-Fi capabilities appreciated most by consumers. Providing consumers with access to these additional features could potentially make them more open to the capabilities that drive revenue (Smith).

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Advertisers might also strategize how to leverage connecting beacons with popular social apps, such as Facebook and Pinterest, to send personalized shopping recommendations based on brands or products their users have already liked, shared or engaged with online (Smith). So relevancy is key. In a study conducted by Swirl, 41% of the shoppers who did not open in-store alerts said they ignored the alert because it was irrelevant to their shopping experience, while 16% claimed the alerts were annoying (Danova). Relevancy of messages is something brands and advertisers must prioritize, especially considering the potential of this technology to effectively pinpoint and target consumers. This requires strategic qualifications for messaging and implies a commitment to ensuring that irrelevant messages are not delivered in order to build and maintain consumer trust. Among those who ignored the in-store alerts, 6% chose to not opt-in and 37% claimed that not enough value was provided (Danova). These numbers should be encouraging for brands and advertisers, but prove the necessity for strategic communications plans and very targeted campaigns that put valuable messages in front of the right audience at the right moment.

## V. Conclusion

Beacon manufacturing and in-store mobile marketing companies continue to target brands and advertisers with their technologies, confident that the budget will soon be allotted by companies. Swirl Networks, an iBeacon marketing platform provider, published a study indicating that 79% of those consumers who received a push notification to their smart device over six months time, made at least one purchase as a result (Charness). With such indicative potential to drive purchases, the industry is confident it won't be long before beacons are part of our mainstream American life.

Content creation and content marketing are trending among consumers and in high demand within agencies. Beacon technology presents a new channel marketing opportunity with need for great creative content. Further exploration should consider that display and video will be the fastest-growing mobile ad formats, expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 96% and 73%, respectively, between 2013 and 2018 (Hoelzel). It is yet to be discovered how beacons can support video streaming and bandwidth delivery, but given that video is where the ad spend will be, it surely won't be long before beacon investors find a way to include location-based marketing channels where advertisement money is spent. These companies will also be able to leverage the knowledge that in-app mobile ads perform much better than mobile web ads with click through rates averaging .56% compared to .23%. Beacons present a channel to deliver video in-app, and many individuals don't think it won't be long at all before advertisement dollars come knocking at the door.

Once the initial investment is made, it is really up to brand communicators to determine whether shoppers will adapt to "appreciate the service or resent the intrusion" (Brown). The opportunity is there, but it is worth recognizing that the most successful applications were rewarding due to their creative, strategic, non-invasive implementation and mutually beneficial opportunities for the brand and consumer.

"People are already comfortable with the idea of a content strategy for social [media]," said Chad Rodriguez of beacon manufacturer, Sonic Notify. "Beacons will simply require a new content strategy for your physical space." It's up to marketers and advertisers to strategically and creatively determine what's next. For those ready to build that content strategy and invest in this innovative opportunity, it is absolutely crucial to build consumer trust, ensure relevancy and effectively communicate branded utility, especially as the BLE technology and brick-and-mortar shopping experiences come together to change the way consumers navigate stores, make purchasing decisions and digitally engage with brands.

## Acknowledgments

The author thanks Dr. George Padgett, associate professor of communications at Elon University, for without his support, encouragement and valuable direction, this paper would not have been published. In addition, thanks to Pete Sena, ECD and founder of Digital Surgeons for the introduction to beacons; thanks to BBDO New York—specifically Daniel Charness, digital strategist and the author's 2014 summer internship supervisor—for providing a foundation of understanding as to the applications and opportunities; and, lastly, thanks to Asif Khan, president of the Location Based Marketing Association, for coming to BBDO New York this summer and showcasing incredible location-based marketing work being brought to life, inspiring the author's curiosity.

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# How Luxury Fashion Brands Utilize YouTube to Engage Consumers and Promote Brand Identity

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## Abstract

*As the world becomes more technologically advanced, the demand for two-way communication between brand and consumer has become stronger. This study tried to develop a relationship between the rise in new media and luxury brands by content analyzing Chanel, Dior, and Burberry's YouTube channels that aims to categorize their video content into the following three categories: musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes footage. The study found that as social media becomes more prevalent in today's society, these three luxury brands are steering away from brand advertisements and now promoting brand entertainment to engage consumers. Companies across all industries can utilize these findings to create advertising content that is entertaining, which will help them better reach their target consumer.*

## I. Introduction

The rise of new media has significantly shaped how society shares and receives information. Companies are now looking to social media as a means to engage and communicate with their target consumers. Online applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram, are taking over the social media world. As the traditional communication tactics of print media and pure word of mouth are slowly enfeebled, more and more companies are turning to social media to spread news about their company in an entertaining and engaging format.

This study focused on how luxury fashion brands are utilizing YouTube to communicate with high fashion consumers. According to Reyneke (2011), not only do luxury brands have a unique customer base with a set of specific characteristics, but they are also defined by a unique set of features:

“luxury brands evoke exclusivity,”

“they have a well known identity,”

“they enjoy high brand awareness and perceived quality,”


“they retain sales levels and customer loyalty” (Reyneke, 2011)

A recent article published in *The Wall Street Journal* supports the belief that luxury fashion companies are turning to YouTube to market their brand (Shields, 2014). A study by OpenSlate, a YouTube brand analytics company, revealed that the top three most influential luxury fashion brands on YouTube are (1) Chanel, (2) Dior, and (3) Burberry (see *Figure 1*). This research examined how the three brands utilize YouTube to engage with consumers. This study discussed what communication strategies these companies are using in terms of brand entertainment to connect with their audiences via YouTube.

**Keywords:** social media marketing, brand entertainment, luxury brands, Chanel, Dior, Burberry, YouTube  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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Data provided by **OpenSlate** 

Brand Logo	Brand Name	SlateScore	Influence	Engagement	Consistency	Subscribers	Monthly Views
	<b>CHANEL</b>	624	9.3	7.8	7.1	271,222	6,261,300
	<b>Dior</b>	620	9.2	6.7	7.0	149,875	8,924,640
	<b>burberry</b>	592	9.1	7.1	7.0	117,951	1,651,140

Figure 1. OpenSlate Study on Luxury Fashion Brands and YouTube (SlateScore is out of 10 total points)

## II. Background

To understand the impact that YouTube has had on how consumers now engage with their favorite brands, an individual must consider how drastically the demand for these interactive and entertaining social media platforms has grown over the past decade.

YouTube was started in 2005 with few followers as one of the many websites that introduced video sharing (Burgess & Green, 2009). The creators of YouTube—Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim—aimed to create a video-sharing interface that was extremely user-friendly for consumers with little to no technological knowledge. A year after it was launched, Google bought YouTube in 2006 for \$1.65 billion dollars. According to Burgess & Green (2009), just three years after its launch, website and data analytics companies deemed YouTube to be one of the top ten most consistently visited websites around the world. Today, YouTube is the second-most searched website in the world (Qualman, 2013). According to YouTube's "Statistics" page, more than 1 billion users visit YouTube each month ("Statistics").

The popularity of YouTube spread like wildfire due to its user-friendly interface and its ability to spread news in an entertaining format. Because it is so expensive to run commercials on television, companies rely on YouTube as a way to release video content for their target consumers and get people conversing about their brand (Burgess & Green, 2009). In terms of luxury brands, YouTube is a platform where companies like Chanel, Dior, and Burberry can post videos under the advertising strategy of brand entertainment that help build a special relationship between the company and the luxury consumer.

The luxury market is now in the maturity stage of the business life cycle, according to Kim and Ko (2010). They suggest that this stage is characterized by the ability to cater to a wide variety of consumers and a significant increase in the number of consumers. With the combination of platforms such as YouTube and the success of the luxury market, these brands have turned to brand entertainment to reach the consumer. This term, which is also referred to as "Madison and Vine," is defined as "a reference to continually converging advertising and entertainment coined from the names of two renowned avenues that represent the two industries, respectively," (O'Guinn, Allen, Semenik, & Close, 2012, p. 213). This marketing communications vehicle has resulted in a shift in how brands are choosing to market their product.

The author investigated how Chanel, Dior, and Burberry have utilized YouTube and brand entertainment to communicate, engage, and build long-term relationships with their consumers.

## III. Literature Review

Although social media marketing and the luxury consumer have been researched separately, the direct relationship between both was rarely studied, especially between the platform of YouTube and luxury brands. The author examined studies that have examined social media marketing, YouTube/Web 2.0, luxury brands, and the luxury consumer.

### *Understanding Social Media Marketing*

A study performed by Kim & Ko (2010) analyzed the use of social media marketing (SMM) and the impact it has on luxury consumers and overall brand equity. They specifically studied Louis Vuitton's social media platforms and measured their content against five separate categories related to social media marketing. The categories included "entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth" (Kim & Ko, 2010, p. 3). The study focused on how SMM affects specifically customer equity and the overall intent to purchase a luxury brand product after their social media marketing is viewed.

Through an in-depth study of Louis Vuitton's social media, these two authors found that SMM has an extremely positive effect on luxury brands. The results of this study uncover the following:

Luxury brand's SMM entertains customers because it is free and allows them to choose what information the consumer wants to process.

SMM allows for luxury brands to create interactive content that is often passed on through word-of-mouth.

SMM goes deeper than typical marketing as it focuses on making the consumer aware of the values of the brand and its products.

Luxury brands focus their SMM on more "hedonic and empirical values that can be reached by indirect brand experience" (Kim & Ko, 2010, p.1)

Kim & Ko concluded that a luxury brand's social communications positively impacts the consumer because it attempts to reach the customer in a way that is unique and more personal.

Another study published in the *Life Science Journal* explained that companies that do not have a social media strategy will not survive in the new, more digitally focused society of today (Saravanakumar & Lakshmi, 2012). The authors stated that this increase in social media has drastically changed how companies communicate with consumers because it has allowed them to "intensify" their engagement. Unlike Kim & Ko's study (2010), Saravanakumar & Lakshmi (2012) found that while SMM lets the corporation correspond with the consumer, it also allows for the consumer to communicate with the company. This open form of two-way communication allows for customers to communicate with the company and vice versa. This has many implications for companies, as their SMM strategy must be consistent with their brand identity.

### *Understanding YouTube and Web 2.0*

Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, and McKenzie (2008) chose to focus on how YouTube is an effective way for these brands to communicate and engage with their target audience. This study examined how brands can enhance promotional strategies through Web 2.0 and social media. Web 2.0 goes beyond the one-way communication of Web 1.0, allowing users to engage with the media through commenting, sharing, liking, etc. The study concluded that brands should use Web 2.0 to communicate with their consumers for two reasons. The first is that marketing via social media platforms allows the consumer to engage with the brand instead of passively a company's marketing efforts (Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, & McKenzie, 2008). This makes consumers feel that they have a more personal relationship with the company. Second, marketing via Web 2.0 allows for a marketing message to spread more rapidly because it sparks word-of-mouth marketing. For example, Chanel published a short video for the No. 5 fragrance on their YouTube channel, entitled "The One that I Want," starring model Giselle Bündchen. Due to social media marketing and word-of-mouth effect, it had nearly 4.3 million hits on YouTube in just over two weeks. Although this study focused on applying aspects of Web 2.0 to health practitioners, the same idea can be applied to any brand in any field since it can benefit from incorporating social media marketing into its promotional tactics. As the world becomes more technologically advanced, the demand for two-way communication between brand and consumer becomes stronger.

A similar study published by Cormode & Krishnamurthy (2008), which compared and contrasted Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 to identify key differences between the two, showed how marketers can adapt to this new form of two-way communication. According to them, the consumer solely acted as a passive consumer in Web 1.0, whereas in Web 2.0, any individual is able to create, post, and share content that he or she has created. *Figure 2* depicts the paths in which content travels from the creator to the consumer in Web 2.0. YouTube is shown as the least intrusive way to distribute macro-content from the content creator to the content consumer.

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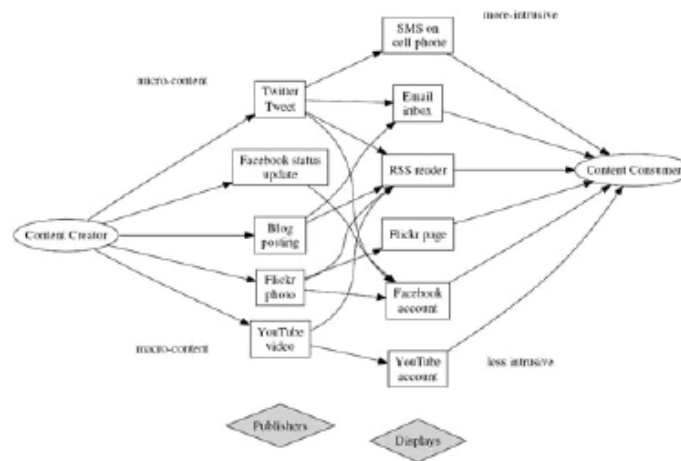


Figure 2. Paths from content creator to the consumer in Web 2.0

### Luxury Brands and the Luxury Brand Market

As discussed earlier, luxury brands are defined by being exclusive and well known, having high brand awareness, and maintaining consistent loyalty among their customers and high sales levels (Reyneke, 2011). Luxury brands are also characterized by a need for omnipresence on a global scale. The demand for luxury brand goods is growing steadily as developing countries are becoming more industrialized because it produces more wealth for consumers to buy luxury goods.

Although luxury brands typically possess a secure sector of the marketplace, marketers must understand how to strategically engage consumers with their luxury brand to maintain luxury brand consistency (Reynke, 2011).

### The Luxury Consumer

Hader's study examined the interplay of social media marketing, Web 2.0, luxury brands, and the luxury consumer. Marketing specifically to the luxury consumer requires consideration of their psychology, habits, and beliefs. Hader (2008) examined habits and desires of those individuals who are classified as luxury customers. The author found that the scope of the luxury market has widened significantly in the past decade because wealth has spread, and that the typical luxury consumer has a different set of needs and motivations, which has resulted in a restructuring of the luxury market. The article categorized luxury consumers into three main segments: 1) ultra- high net worth (i.e. Bill Gates), 2) wealthy (i.e. stars, actors, musicians) and 3) aspirational (i.e. typically affluent but not always).

Harder (2008) found that although luxury consumers are divided into three tiers based on the magnitude of their wealth, they share four different characteristics that influence their use of luxury items. First, buying luxury products is about "indulgence and expression." Luxury consumers vary their fashion choices in order to express their style as an individual. Because these individuals are engaging with multiple brands to put together a look, marketers must take this into consideration.

Second, consumers value the luxury "experience" more than the actual product. This is crucial in understanding how to market to the luxury consumer because it allows the marketer to understand that they don't just want a surface level advertisement of a new product. These luxury consumers want something that permeates the surface level advertisements and makes them feel as though they were getting an exclusive sneak peek or behind-the-scenes look into a luxury brand.

Third, Hader (2008) pointed out that for a luxury consumer to indulge or splurge, it must be "worth it." Although these consumers are in the upper tier when it comes to money, they still evaluate and weigh their purchases in their mind. This characteristic drives marketers to provide consumers with a reason to buy a luxury product.

Fourth, luxury consumers expect an "emotionally rewarding and affirmative experience" (Hader, 2008) with every single interaction they have with the brand. Marketers are shifting their advertising focus to content



that is interactive and allows for the consumer to feel as though they had a stake in or relationship with the brand itself.

Hader (2008) concluded that sales and loyalty will follow strategic brand engagement. The more luxury brands provide a consumer with an experience that elicits emotion, the more successful the company will be, and the more brand-loyal the customer will remain.

Based on literature review, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What is the overall strategy in which luxury brands communicate with their consumers via YouTube?

RQ2: What are the key differences among the three luxury brands' execution of these strategies?

RQ3: Is the brand's overall communications/SMM strategy consistent with the brand identity?

## IV. Methods

This study used the content analysis to analyze Chanel, Dior, and Burberry's YouTube channels. Content analysis is a tool to guide research where something specific such as an article or case study is quantified and its meaning is related to the culture to which it belongs ("An Introduction to Content Analysis"). Analysis of three brands' channels showed the category of their content as brand entertainment. According to O'Guinn, Allen, Semenik, & Close (2012, p. 383), brand entertainment is defined as, "embedding one's brand or brand icons as part of any entertainment property in an effort to impress and connect with consumers in a unique and compelling way." Chanel, Dior, and Burberry's YouTube channel all have video content that aims to provide the consumer with a special experience. The most apparent ways in which the three brands chose to market their brand was through brand entertainment using three forms: musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes footage.

This study analyzed the companies' YouTube videos to determine how effectively they used the three forms listed above to satisfy consumers with a unique brand experience. The category under musical performances is defined by videos that showcase a musician performing. The historical narratives content is defined by videos that are centered on promoting brand history through accounts of the historical significance of various attributes of a brand. Behind-the-scenes videos are defined by any video content that provides the viewer with a raw and intimate peek into the thought process of something the brand created.

## V. Video Content Analysis

Review of the three luxury brands' YouTube channels put nearly all of the video content into the category of brand entertainment. The overwhelming majority of video content on these luxury brands' channels was not advertising any specific product or service, but was instead providing the consumer with entertainment-based footage. Whether it was a behind-the-scenes segment, a tutorial, a music video, or a mini film, each brand focused on making its YouTube channel a place for luxury consumers to come and feel as though they viewed something intimate about the brand.

Chanel, Dior, and Burberry all chose to convey their brand entertainment videos in relatively similar ways, with some variations in their levels in the three forms: musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes videos. While the categories are different in terms of the tactic used, they are all belong to the bigger category of brand entertainment that helps to engage the viewer and foster a relationship between the brand and the consumer.

### *Brand Entertainment through Music by Burberry*

While many of the brand entertainment videos on all three channels incorporate music, Burberry has an entire playlist dedicated to showcasing British acoustic artists. This page, entitled "Burberry Acoustic," is the largest *and* most viewed playlist on their YouTube channel with 85 videos and 1,195,962 views as of February 3, 2015, on this playlist alone. This playlist is a series of British artists performing a song, all while sporting Burberry attire. These artists do not directly advertise a specific product; however, at the beginning of

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each video the artists name is depicted in the classic Burberry font. Introducing themselves, artists say they are playing for “Burberry Acoustic.” Besides that mention of Burberry, there is barely any direct advertisement of a Burberry product in this strategy.

By using music entertainment as a way to communicate and engage with their viewer, Burberry is not only marketing their heritage, but also the Burberry lifestyle. These videos communicate British heritage and the relaxed yet luxurious brand image that Burberry portrays. By showcasing Brits in the British brand’s clothing, the user is able to get a glimpse at the lifestyle that people who own the luxury brand’s clothing follow.

More than the other two forms of brand entertainment that luxury brands used to engage consumers, music has scientific implications on the brain and its processing of information. Because Burberry chooses to showcase its heritage and portray its lifestyle through music, the viewer is more likely to learn and remember these videos. Many studies have been conducted to reveal that music enhances one’s ability to learn. A study performed in 2002 by Campabello, De Carlo, O’Neil, and Vacek aimed to examine the correlation between music and students’ ability to learn. After conducting this study, they concluded that adding music to a stimulus not only increases students’ ability to learn information, but also increases emotional involvement with what they were learning (Campabello, De Carlo, O’Neil, & Vacek, 2008).

Burberry’s strategy of incorporating music into its brand entertainment videos is strategic because when one hears a song that is featured on the company’s YouTube channel, they will associate it with the Burberry brand. Even deeper than associating the brand with a song, the music allows the viewer to become emotionally involved with a brand, thus strengthening Burberry’s relationship with its target audience. Below is a screenshot taken from the Burberry YouTube channel that shows how popular this playlist is.

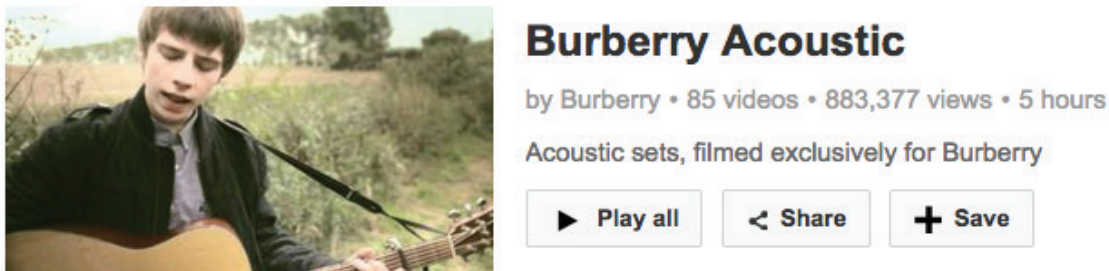


Figure 3. Screenshot taken from “Burberry Acoustic” YouTube playlist

### *Historical Narratives by Chanel*

More than Dior or Burberry, Chanel emphasizes and illustrates the history of the company in its brand entertainment videos. The best example of this historical approach is their widely known “Inside Chanel” videos. Although this page is the third largest playlist in terms of number of videos it contains on their channel after No. 1 “Fashion” and No. 2 “Makeup,” the “Inside Chanel” playlist has more views than any other playlists. These short videos all document a specific aspect of the Chanel brand and link it to the company’s history. From the childhood of Gabrielle Chanel to what the symbol of the lion represents to this iconic brand, these historical narratives captivate the viewer. The “Inside Chanel” videos aim to provide the viewer with deeper insight into the historical aspects of this timeless brand. The image below is a screenshot of the header on the “Inside Chanel” playlist.

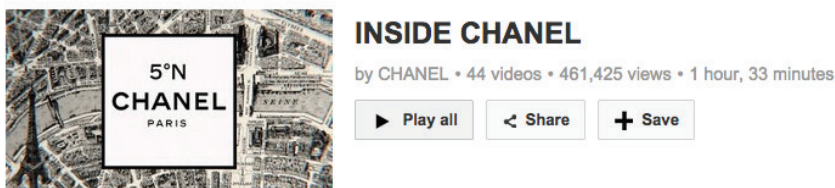


Figure 4. Screenshot taken from “Inside Chanel” YouTube playlist

While the “Inside Chanel” videos strive to entertain and inform the viewer, there is a deeper mean-

ing behind the brand's emphasis on history. By providing the viewer with meaning and history behind various symbols, colors, and famous icons of Chanel, the company aims to foster an emotional relationship and personal connection between the consumer and the brand. The "Inside Chanel" videos help to enrich and enhance the meaning behind details of the brand, thus making the consumer more aware of and engaged with Chanel's antiquity.

Neither Dior nor Burberry places the same emphasis on history that Chanel does on their YouTube channels. Because Dior and Burberry do not choose to highlight the history of their brands, the viewer is left not knowing how either brand came to be or what aspects of each brand represent.

The strategy of providing brand history to the consumer is extremely important because knowing the history of something enriches its meaning. Without knowing where a product came from, its consumer would feel hard to associate a greater significance with a product or brand. Because Chanel focuses on the history of the brand, the customer is able to understand the significance behind the product, thus fostering a deeper relationship with Chanel. This strategy of providing the consumer with historical narratives allows the consumer to gain insight into the true heart of the brand.

### *Behind-the-Scenes Videos by Chanel, Dior, and Burberry*

The communication strategy under brand entertainment that all three brands utilize on their YouTube page is providing the viewer with behind-the-scenes videos. Chanel, Dior, and Burberry have all posted videos that give the viewer sneak peeks at what is happening backstage at one of their fashion shows, or the thought process used to create advertising campaigns.

Chanel chooses to focus its behind-the-scenes videos on two main subjects: advertising campaigns and fashion shows. To give the audience a peek at creating one of Chanel's mini movie campaigns, they provide the viewer with a video on each aspect of the ad. For a recent ad campaign for the infamous Chanel No. 5 fragrance, Chanel posted eight separate videos that all focused on a different aspect of the making of the ad. These behind-the-scenes videos included the subjects of "The Director," "The Costume Design," "The Cast," "The Film Behind the Film," "Making of the Film," "The Song," "The Fragrance," and "The Locations." Each of these videos contains interviews and behind-the-scenes footage that shed light on different aspects of the creation of a Chanel ad campaign. Chanel also provides ample footage on depicting what is happening backstage at their fashion shows. They show footage of the models going on and off the catwalk and often interview them. Both of these behind-the-scenes categories provide the viewer with a more real, intimate, and raw look into the brand instead of only viewing footage that has been edited.

Similar to Chanel's behind-the-scenes content, Dior also utilizes YouTube as a means to provide the viewer with a glimpse into the making of its advertising campaigns. Dior has multiple videos that start with "Making-of" and then reveal the creation behind one of their ad campaigns, such as the "Be Dior" campaign or the "Diorskin Star" campaign. They also share footage of a behind-the-scenes look at their fashion shows; however, they center these videos specifically on the creation and actual construction of the set. On the other hand, Chanel focuses these videos on the actual show.

In congruence with Chanel and Dior, Burberry also posts behind-the-scenes content to make the YouTube viewer feel as though they were getting an intimate look into the happenings of the brand. Burberry focuses their behind-the-scenes videos more on the company's fashion shows than on the creation of its advertising campaigns. They post videos on the inspiration behind their clothing lines. They also post videos that are centered on revealing their main guests of their shows including famous fashion models or editors in chief of the most famous fashion magazines.

Behind-the-scenes films are the one category of brand entertainment videos that Chanel, Dior, and Burberry all post on their YouTube channels. These videos are extremely important and crucial in establishing a relationship between the luxury companies and their luxury consumers. This type of video goes beyond the traditional and edited brand image of a company and provides the viewer with a story behind the product.

## **VI. Discussion**

This study found that luxury companies are effectively using the interactive and digital platform of YouTube to engage their target audiences. The recent increase in social media marketing has led to a change

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in video content to promote luxury brands (Burgess & Green, 2009). While Chanel, Dior, and Burberry all thrive in the category of engaging followers via their social media platforms, each chose to entertain their consumers through different means on their YouTube channels. When looking at the video categories of musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes videos, one can find that each brand flourishes in their own way. Chanel places great emphasis on promoting the antiquity behind the brand through videos that document brand history. Burberry promotes its cultural heritage through showcasing British musicians donned in the luxury attire. Dior's sophisticated brand entertainment videos and behind-the-scenes footage reiterate the brand's concentration on refined elegance.

This study demonstrates that the tactics of music and historical narratives have high entertainment value. These videos are more production based than a behind-the-scenes video, and therefore are more aimed at captivating the viewer. While Chanel and Burberry focus on using music and history in their video content, all three brands, of course, do not forget to provide the viewer with a behind-the-scenes experience. Because all three brands are high-end luxury brands, documenting raw and more intimate footage makes them more approachable to the viewer. After analyzing each brand's YouTube content, the behind-the-scenes tactic appears to be the most effective in providing meaning to the brand.

This research also concluded that each brand stayed true to its brand identity in the way it showcased itself on YouTube. Chanel is famous for infusing brand history into its brand identity, while Burberry is known for displaying British customs and brand heritage. While the focus of Dior's brand identity is less blatant than Chanel or Burberry, Dior is known for representing sophisticated French luxury, remaining consistent through its behind-the-scenes videos that showcase the lavishness of the brand. Chanel, Dior, and Burberry all stay true to their brand identity in regards to image and the overall tone in which they communicate through YouTube.

This new marketing concept of brand entertainment has shifted the focus of what is being advertised and has placed the product in disguise (Hudson & Hudson, 2010). A study published in the *Journal of Marketing Management* concludes, "Branded products are no longer just 'placed'; they are woven into entertainment content making a stronger emotional connection with the consumer" (Hudson & Hudson, 2008, p. 1). This is why luxury fashion companies are redirecting the focus of their social media marketing efforts from pure brand advertisement to brand entertainment. This new tactic not only engages the consumer, but also deepens and intensifies the relationship and connection that the consumer has with the product or brand.

## VII. Conclusions

As shown in this study, luxury brands are effectively utilizing YouTube as a means to engage their target audience and reiterate their brand identity. By breaking the mold of posting traditional product advertisements, and by instead creating clips that are rooted in brand entertainment, a company can leverage its content to absorb the viewer in a deeper and more compelling manner. Brand entertainment videos have the ability to go further and develop a relationship that a traditional advertisement cannot.

Future studies in this area may use human subjects to help categorize the content of these videos and see what they believe the most prominent brand entertainment categories among what luxury companies depict on YouTube channels. Future studies may also look at other markets beyond luxury companies to see if the former are utilizing brand entertainment in their advertising efforts as the latter have done.

## Acknowledgments

The author of this study would like to thank Dr. Don Grady, associate professor of communications and associate dean in the School of Communications at Elon University, for his mentorship and for overseeing this work. This study could not have been completed without his unyielding patience and expertise in the field of communication research. The author is also thankful for Associate Professor of Communications Dan Haygood and his advertising knowledge and assistance in her content analysis categorization.

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- Note: All YouTube images were taken as screenshots from [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com)
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# Instabranding: Shaping the Personalities of the Top Food Brands on Instagram

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## Abstract

*Instagram is a growing social media platform that provides a means of self-expression and communication through creative visuals. Businesses are responding to this trend by using it as a cost-effective marketing tool. This paper examined the accounts of the leading food brands on Instagram: McDonald's, Taco Bell, Shredz, Ben & Jerry's, and Oreo. Photos were classified according to 11 elements: product, person and product, people and product, humor and product, world events, recipes, campaign with no products, user-generated, regram from a celebrity, and video. They were further analyzed along five dimensions of personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Results presented common themes revealing that brands are using Instagram to promote their products and, more significantly, to colorfully express their personalities.*

## I. Introduction

One of the newest forms of social media to influence modern-day culture is Instagram. This mobile photo and video sharing application channels the inner-photographer in users. It grants users the freedom to publicize their personal memories and interests through their edited photos. According to Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati (2014), "Since its launch in October 2010, it has attracted more than 150 million active users, with an average of 55 million photos uploaded by users per day" (p. 595). Instagram has been so successful because it appeals to society's values and needs by providing a means of communication that can conveniently and uniquely express users' personalities.

This platform presents an effective and engaging way for brands to reach consumers. Bob Marshall (2012), a social media strategist for SocialLogic Marketing, explains that "brands are viewing social media as a crucial piece in the overall marketing strategy . . . and the food and beverage industry is leading the race in finding cost effective ways to mobilize an enthusiastic audience" (as cited in Bui, 2014, p.7).

This study explored how food brands are using Instagram as an inexpensive, yet effective marketing, communications, and branding tactic. The researcher analyzed the official accounts of the top five most popular food brands on Instagram: McDonald's, Taco Bell, Shredz, Ben & Jerry's, and Oreo. Because all of these brands have different personalities and values, this analysis allows for a reasonable exploration of the photo elements used by each account. The researcher aimed to investigate the type of photo content the brands are using and how it helps to express and shape its brand identity.

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**Keywords:** food, advertising, branding, personification, Instagram  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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## II. Literature Review

In order to gain a complete understanding of Instagram, one needs to have a background on the growing popularity and influence of social media before delving deeper into this specific platform.

### *Background*

Social Media has gained so much popularity because it serves as a free means of self-expression and communication. Specifically, Instagram is a growing platform, as a Pew report reveals, because “photos and videos have become the key social currencies online” (Hu et al., 2014). Instagram provides a glimpse into every user’s life, colorfully allowing users to share their personal stories and interests with the network. Through filters and captions, users can personalize their content and create their own unique photo galleries. Long (2011), a writer and photographer for Macworld, explains, “Instagram images tend toward abstraction, and are more powerful to viewers because they have to work harder to interpret the images. And, as they do so, viewers escape to whatever feelings, memories and experiences the images evoke” (Bui, 2014, p. 5). Viewers can effortlessly share these emotions with others through comments, “likes,” and direct messages. Instagram encourages users to “follow” others to maintain these relationships, bringing people together from all over the world. Instagram represents the shift to user-driven media forms. Accordingly, a discussion of audience-oriented media theory can help to set proper grounding for this study.

### *Uses and Gratifications Theory*

Many mass communications researchers often explain the success and growing interest in social media using Uses and Gratifications theory. This theory suggests that individuals seek out communications outlets and media that fulfill their needs and will lead to gratification” (Whiting, 2013, p. 362). According to Park et al. (2009), “the major uses and gratification factors of [social media] users are: socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information (Gallion, 2014, p. 3). These needs are easily satisfied due to the instantaneous communication, personalization, and representation offered on social media. In particular, Instagram fulfills such needs due to its freedom of self-expression. Users’ personal profiles serve as virtual representations of themselves, expressing their individual interests, personalities, and values. Instagram allows users to creatively portray themselves in the ideal way in which they would like to be seen by others.

Gallion (2014) suggests that the digital connections and relationships formed on social media gratify users’ socializing needs. Instagram allows users to effortlessly interact and converse with each other through photo content and comments. They can easily track and follow appealing accounts by searching content-specific hashtags, such as #food. These hashtags can bring users with similar interests together, forming smaller niche communities within the platform.

According to the first published, in-depth study of photo content and users on Instagram, there are eight major content categories. Using computer vision techniques, researchers studied the photo contents of a random sample of Instagram users. The eight categories were: self-portraits, friends, activities, captioned photos (pictures with embedded text), food, gadgets, fashion, and pets (Hu et al., 2014). This categorization was influenced by the type of accounts that focused on posting a specific type of photo content. These accounts were owned by the early innovators who are responsible for diffusing this trend of Instagram’s content-specific photo categories. Among many significant categories, this paper focused on food photos posted on Instagram, also referred to as “foodstagramming.”

### *Foodstagramming*

Foodstagramming complements the rise of the community of “foodies” in society. Coined in 1980, “foodie” has become a regularly used term describing individuals obsessed with food. They view food as a type of art that has a deeper spiritual and personal meaning, having the ability to shape individuals’ identities (Poole, 2012), and therefore, Instagram serves as a way to display this form of “art.” Experts are recognizing this trend and formulating theories about why people are photographing their food. Possible theories explaining why society finds food photography so appealing are: people begin each meal by “eating with their eyes”; photos serve as a way to “share” food with others; or the photos help to establish users’ social media hierarchy (Broyles, 2010). Whichever theory is more valid than the others, each reveals that foodstagramming is affecting today’s culture and social experiences. In addition, food brands are reacting to this trend and begin-

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ning to utilize Instagram as a marketing and branding tool.

### *The Effects on Brands*

During 2013, brand engagement grew 3.5 times as 55% more brands started using Instagram (“Study,” 2013). Social Business and Digital Advisor Mirna Bard explains that it “has given us the possibility to put our finger on the pulse of our customers, which is absolutely priceless” (2010, p. 6). Instagram is a direct link into the lives of consumers—showcasing their interests, passions, values, and personalities. Brands are, therefore, able to better understand, target and communicate with them. Brands are creating lives of their own through the “visual storytelling” aspect of Instagram (Momentfeed, 2013). Through their galleries of photo and video content, they can feature and promote real experiences—such as the social eating experience. As a result, brands can illustrate the quality and type of experiences consumers will have by purchasing their products. This finding suggests that through Instagram, brands can present how they can add value to the daily lives of consumers.

In 2014, Bui conducted an in-depth study that applied Uses and Gratifications theory to Instagram, exploring how this platform can be beneficial to mobile food vendors. The study investigated the ways in which Instagram users characterize an effective photo and their current engagement with brands. Although the brands are reacting to the foodstagram trend, they did not limit their content to only food photos. According to Bui’s content analysis and survey of 111 users, “social-integrative and tension release components present in Instagram posts were more likely to activate engagement from users” (p. 25). Social-integrative content includes photos portraying a sense of belonging with brands and the community, while tension release posts consist of funny or creative content. Additionally, Bui’s focus group of 10 participants ages 20-28 revealed that in order to be considered an appealing account, brands must have a variety of relevant content in their feeds (p. 23). Bui suggests that brands should categorize these planned posts to maintain Instagram’s organic promotional influence (p. 26). This finding suggests that brands’ photo content should go beyond their products, and entertain, engage and connect with consumers.

Goor (2012) further explored the effectiveness of Instagram as a marketing tool through a content analysis that investigated 100 photos of 20 brands. The brands were categorized by function, and the photos were coded for specific characteristics of strategy: “persuasion, sales response, symbolism, relational, self-efficacy, and emotion” (p. 19). The study found that brands that represent product, those strongly associated with a certain product or product attribute, “mainly use persuasion, relational and emotion strategies, by applying branding, making the emotional connectedness with the brand most important, and using slice-of-life scenarios in their photos” (p. 31). Goor’s same study also found that the persuasion strategy is typically evidenced through photos with the brand logo or colors. Relational strategies connect a product to its brand identity and personality, while emotional strategies are evident when products are shown with the emotions that brands intend their consumers to feel when using the products. Goor found that, in particular, Ben & Jerry’s was a brand that evinced these two strategies by featuring feelings of happiness and their values of peace and love.

Goor (2012) suggested that brands should clearly express identity by “using the profile section on the brand feed, and making the brand name, product or brand related events visible in the photo they are posting” (p. 32). Goor also noted that brands must find a balance between establishing relationships with their followers and advertising their products.

These findings support Bui’s recommendation that in order to build strong brand names on Instagram, the accounts must post diverse photo content. Such content can highlight the multidimensional nature of brands, presenting their brand personalities, which “refer to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Aaker (1997) suggests that there are five dimensions of brand personality: sincerity (honest, genuine, cheerful); excitement (daring, imaginative, spirited); competence (reliable, responsible, efficient); sophistication (glamorous, pretentious, charming); and ruggedness (tough, outdoorsy, strong). The researcher used this study to further analyze how brands are using Instagram.

This paper addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. What kind of photo elements do leading food brands use on Instagram as a marketing and communications tactic?

RQ2. What kind of brand personalities do the photos posted by these brands portray?

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### III. Method

#### *The Sample*

This study analyzed the photo elements used in the accounts of the top five food brands on Instagram. According to TOTEMS List, a site that ranks the most popular brands on Instagram, the top five food brands in the United States are Taco Bell, McDonald's, Ben & Jerry's, Shredz, and Oreo ("Most Popular Food Brands on Instagram," 2014). This ranking is based on the number of account followers and the number of posts on their hashtag—for example, the number of times #TacoBell is used on Instagram. These accounts all have at least 200,000 followers and 600,000 hashtag posts, revealing that consumers are currently engaging and interested in their brand and photo content. This sample was chosen to represent the ways in which food brands are using Instagram.

On October 16, 2014, the researcher analyzed 500 photos each for all accounts except for McDonald's, which only had 156 photos to sample. McDonald's is currently the top food brand on Instagram, so the researcher decided it was beneficial to still investigate the company's account despite its lack of posts.

#### *Analysis*

A quantitative content analysis was used for this study because it investigates the frequency of specific characteristics and elements of these photos. Krippendorff (1980) states that a content analysis is "a way of understanding the symbolic qualities of texts, by which he means the way that elements of a text always refer to the wider cultural context of which they are a part" (as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 85). This method allowed the researcher to examine the frequencies of photo elements used by the leading food brands. These insights may be limited because this method is solely based on content, and therefore, it disregards any of the underlying thoughts of its producers (Rose, 2012, p. 102). To further explore the brands' personalities, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis that identified, analyzed, and reported themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "there are six phases to conducting a thematic analysis: (a) familiarizing yourself with the data; (b) generating initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and naming themes; and (f) producing the report" (as cited in Chang, 2014, p. 29).

#### *The Protocol*

The researcher conducted six phases of a thematic analysis Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested. First, the sample of photos were analyzed for 11 elements: product, person and product, people and product, humor and product, world events, recipes, campaign with no products, user-generated, regram (repost for Instagram) from celebrity, lifestyle, and video. Every photo was coded according to the content definitions code (see Table 1). The findings were tallied and organized on a coding sheet. The researcher treated posts that include products and campaigns as a sign of promotional tactics, while posts that incorporate elements of humor, world events, recipes, user-generated content, and lifestyle as evidence of the brands' personalities. To further explore these personalities, the researcher applied Aaker's (1997) five dimensions of brand personality in her analysis: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, and marked any similarities and differences between each brands' content. This analysis was done to find overarching themes and the types of content that brands are posting to positively promote their products, engage consumers, and shape their brand personalities and identities.

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**Table 1. The 11 Photo Element categories.**

Photo Element	Exemplary photos	Photo Element	Exemplary Photos
1) Product – A brand product with no people.		7) Campaign with No Products - Promoting a campaign without featuring brand products.	
2) Person and Product – A brand product with only one person.		8) User-Generated-Content created by a consumer that has been reposted by the brand.	
3) People and Product – A brand product with a group of people. Portrays the theme of socializing.		9) Regram from Celebrity - Content created by a celebrity that has been reposted by the brand.	
4) Humor and Product – A brand product is presented in a silly or humorous manner.		10) Lifestyle - Content that is not directly promoting a product, but is related to the brand.	
5) World Events - Content about a world event.		11) Video - 15-second long video clip.	
6) Recipes – A dish that incorporates a brand product in a creative way.			

## IV. Findings and Analysis

### McDonald's

According to TOTEMS List, McDonald's is the No. 1 most popular food brand on Instagram; however, its Instagram account only had 156 photos to sample. Despite this lack of content, McDonald's had the most evenly distributed content. McDonald's is known for being an inexpensive food brand that appeals to a large target population; therefore, posting a variety of photos suggests that the brand is responding to its diverse consumer market. Furthermore, the brand appeals to its global consumer audience by posting 13% of its photos about "world events" (Refer to *Figure 1 in Appendix I*).

The two most popular categories were "person and product" and "people and product." This content suggests the brand's values of the social and cultural aspects of food. The photos show consumers

enthusiastically socializing while eating McDonald's—suggesting that the brand brings all ages and types of people together through its products. The brand's content suggests a personality of sincerity and excitement: genuinely trying to unite consumers over its food in a positive and light-hearted manner (Refer to *Figure 2* in Appendix I).

### *Taco Bell*

The majority of Taco Bell's Instagram profile consists of promotional product photos. Twenty-eight percent of its account is dedicated to promoting traditional menu items and the latest featured specials. These product shots reveal Taco Bell's value of presenting its food in an enticing, yet simple manner. The brand only features teens in its photos, suggesting that Taco Bell is using Instagram to target its Millennial consumers. Twelve percent of its content consists of "people and products," emphasizing the brand's social aspect (Refer to *Figure 3* in Appendix II).

These photos feature male and female teens undertaking different activities outdoors with Taco Bell nearby. When presenting this demographic inside the restaurant, the brand promotes it as the ideal place for "date night," or the "after party." These situations promote that the perfect "hang out" includes Taco Bell. This content suggests the dimensions of sincerity and excitement of the brand's personality. It displays the genuine social element of its brands and products as well as its fun and easy-going nature (Refer to *Figure 4* in Appendix II).

### *Shredz*

As a supplement brand, Shredz focuses on the user-experience and health benefits of its products. Twenty-six percent of its account consists of user-generated content, featuring real Shredz users sharing their transformation stories and product reviews. This content suggests the brand's values of empowering and inspiring users to push themselves toward their fitness goals. These powerful visuals show other users that a healthy transformation is possible with the use of Shredz (Refer to *Figure 5* in Appendix III).

The brand dedicates 21% of its posts to "lifestyle" content, which includes workout tutorials and inspirational quotes. Dedicating this much of its account to this category suggests the brand's belief that in order to achieve results, users must make an entire lifestyle change. Through the photos, the brand provides both visual and textual inspiration and support for users, serving as a quick, yet impactful way to present this information. This content suggests the brand's role as an inner coach, powerfully conveying its motivation, compassion and dedication to its fans.

Unlike the other food brands, Shredz does not post any "people and product" photos. Instead of promoting the social element of food, the brand focuses its account more on consumers' individual relationships with food. This content suggests that Shredz uses Instagram to express a more serious and determined brand personality. The images convey strength, efficiency, and reliability highlighting the brand's dimensions of competence and ruggedness (Refer to *Figure 6* in Appendix III).

### *Ben & Jerry's*

Ben & Jerry's dedicates 52% of its Instagram account to user-generated content. These photos consist of users holding their ice cream in different locations. Sharing this content suggests Ben & Jerry's inclusive nature and appreciation for its community and fans. Through this approach, the brand engages with consumers, strengthening relationships and brand loyalty. This approach serves as free publicity as it encourages followers to share their own photos in hopes of being reposted on the brand's account (Refer to *Figure 7* in Appendix IV).

These user-generated photos are simple and unprofessional, suggesting the brand's laid-back and welcoming nature. This content highlights its sincerity—honestly portraying its products and genuine appreciation for its consumers. It shows Ben & Jerry's value of sharing its products with a diverse audience and uniting together over the universal love for ice cream. The variety of backgrounds in these photos highlights the idea that Ben & Jerry's can be taken anywhere—suggesting the versatility, diversity, and creativity of the brand. These elements suggest a dimension of excitement in Ben and Jerry's brand, displaying its products in imaginative and fun ways (Refer to *Figure 8* in Appendix IV).

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### *Oreo*

Compared to the previous food brands, Oreo posted the least amount of product photos. Instead of using Instagram mainly for product promotion, Oreo used it as a way to convey its fun, quirky, and social personality. Thirty-nine percent of Oreo's account consists of user-generated content, suggesting its value and dedication to its loyal consumers. It dedicated 13% of its account to both "recipes" and "humor and product" content, sharing creative and funny ways to use its products (Refer to *Figure 9* in Appendix V).

Although this technique is somewhat promotional, these photos present unique ways to go beyond the basic uses of its products. This content highlights the personality dimensions of sincerity and excitement. It suggests that Oreo is promoting its creative and multidimensional personality, which has made its not so "cookie-cutter" brand name so popular (Refer to *Figure 10* in Appendix V).

### *Video*

Each brand used videos in less than 10% of posts in their accounts. Shredz, McDonald's, Ben & Jerry's and Taco Bell dedicated the majority of their posted videos to product promotion, whereas most of Oreo's videos incorporated elements of "humor and product." This finding further suggests that Oreo is using Instagram to promote its fun and creative personality with consumers. Although the brands only dedicated a small amount of their accounts to video content, this tactic served as a way to express more information and personality with it.

## **V. Conclusion**

Although marketing on this platform has been explored in the past, this study was the first to analyze Instagram's five leading food brand accounts. One of the major themes found was product promotion by all of the brands, which dedicated a significant amount of their accounts to showcasing their products in appealing ways. These promotional photos demonstrate Goor's (2012) finding that product-representation brands use persuasion strategies through applying branding to their photos, although the ways in which the products were presented in the posts varied among the brands. Photos that only featured products seemed promotional; however, when people were included, the photos conveyed a more inclusive and inviting feeling. This type of content highlighted the theme of socializing. Featuring people in the images offers a more organic approach of encouraging consumers to purchase their products. Brands that highlighted people socializing with their products suggest their values of promoting the social and cultural characteristics of food. These photos support Bui's (2014) finding that brands should include social-integrative components in their posts to engage consumers.

Previous research suggested that brands should share a variety of relevant photo content to keep consumers entertained and connected. All of the accounts in this study shared content from multiple of the coded categories, suggesting that they stand for something more than just their products. This finding is evidence that the brands are using Instagram as more than simply a marketing tool.

This variety of content suggests that brands are using their personalized profiles to showcase their multidimensional personalities. Goor (2012) proposed that these identities are evidenced when the product, brand name and product related events are featured; however, this analysis suggests that it is possible to portray these attributes without featuring products, such as through lifestyle content. This type of content presents aspects of their brands that would not be seen through the product posts, and allows for further brand individualization. The lifestyle posts suggest a more in-depth depiction of brands' identities by presenting content about their personal interests, values, and activities. Their accounts share a visual and engaging glimpse into the lives behind their brand names, presenting themselves as loyal friends, social butterflies, inspirational coaches, and quirky creatives. These findings highlight the theme of personification, suggesting that they are using Instagram to seem more "human" in the eyes of consumers. This approach creates the opportunity for a more genuine, relevant, and meaningful relationship to be formed with consumers.

Creating these identities suggests a theme of approachability, offering a way for brands to connect and communicate with consumers on a more intimate level: evoking emotions, laughter and curiosity. Through this emotional connectedness, the brands are able to form their own communities of followers within the platform. This sense of community suggests a way to gratify users' socializing needs Gallion (2014) mentioned.

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Connecting with consumers on this level could ultimately influence their buying behavior and brand loyalty.

Key limitations of this study include a rather small photo sample size due to fact that some brands are relatively new to Instagram. A larger sample could have revealed additional effective photo elements that brands are using on Instagram. Future researchers should also take into account user engagement expressed through the number of “likes” and comments on each photo. Lastly, researchers should investigate whether brands are monitoring the types of photo content their target users are posting. This insight could present new photo elements that brands should incorporate into their posts to reflect the taste of their consumers.

## Acknowledgments

The author is grateful for Dr. Glenn Scott, associate professor of communications at Elon University, for his guidance, inspiration and patience, without which the article could not be published. The author also appreciates Byung Lee, associate professor of communications at Elon University, and the anonymous reviewers who have helped revise this article.

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## Appendix I: McDonald's

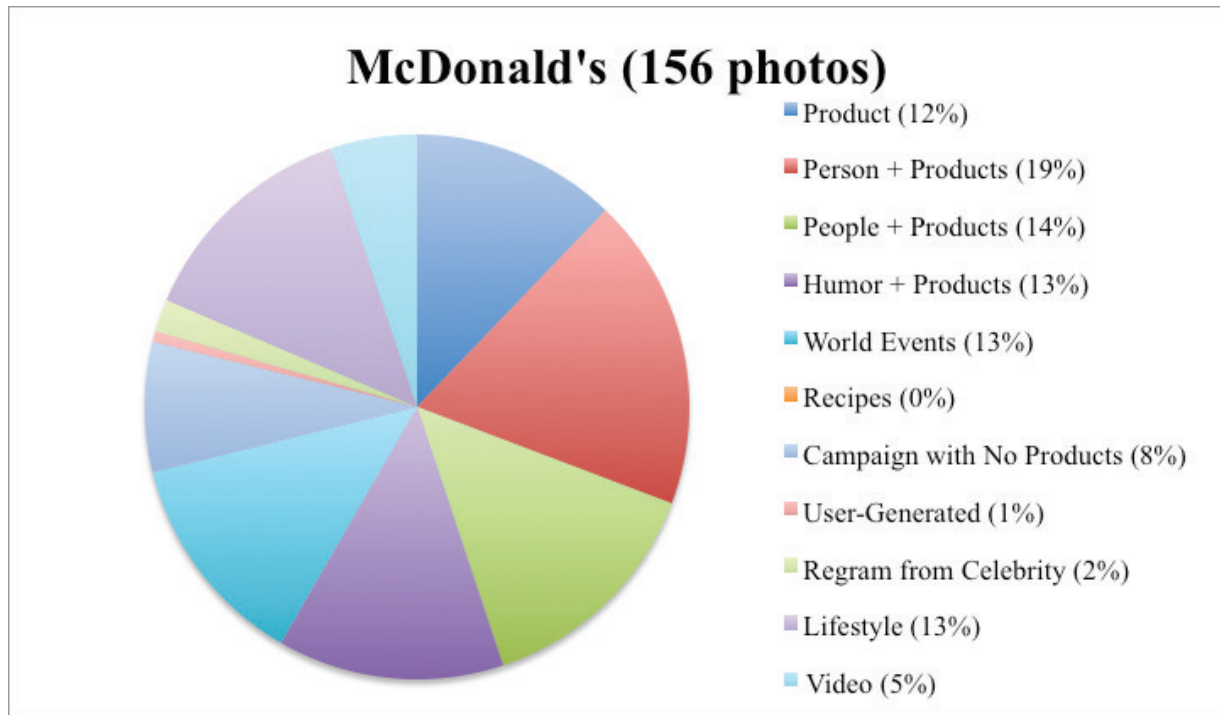


Figure 1. Photo elements featured in McDonald's Instagram account.



Figure 2. Examples of McDonald's cheerful and spirited personality.

## Appendix II: Taco Bell

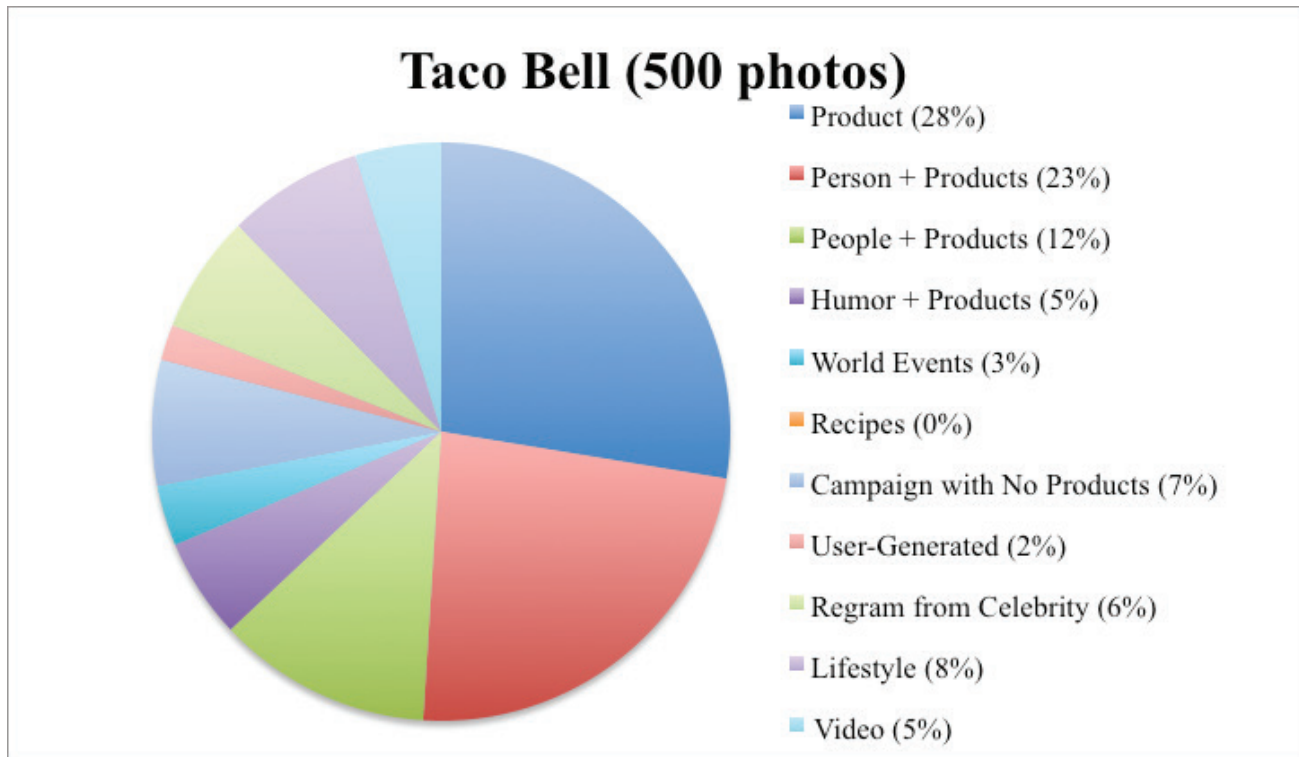


Figure 3. Photo elements featured in Taco Bell's Instagram account.

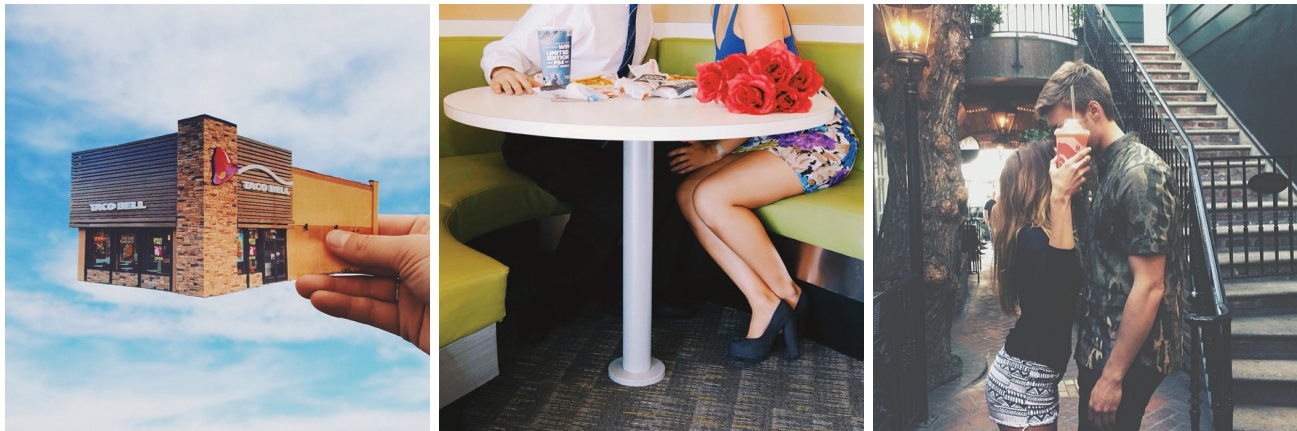


Figure 4. Examples of Taco Bell's genuine and imaginative personality.



### Appendix III: Shredz

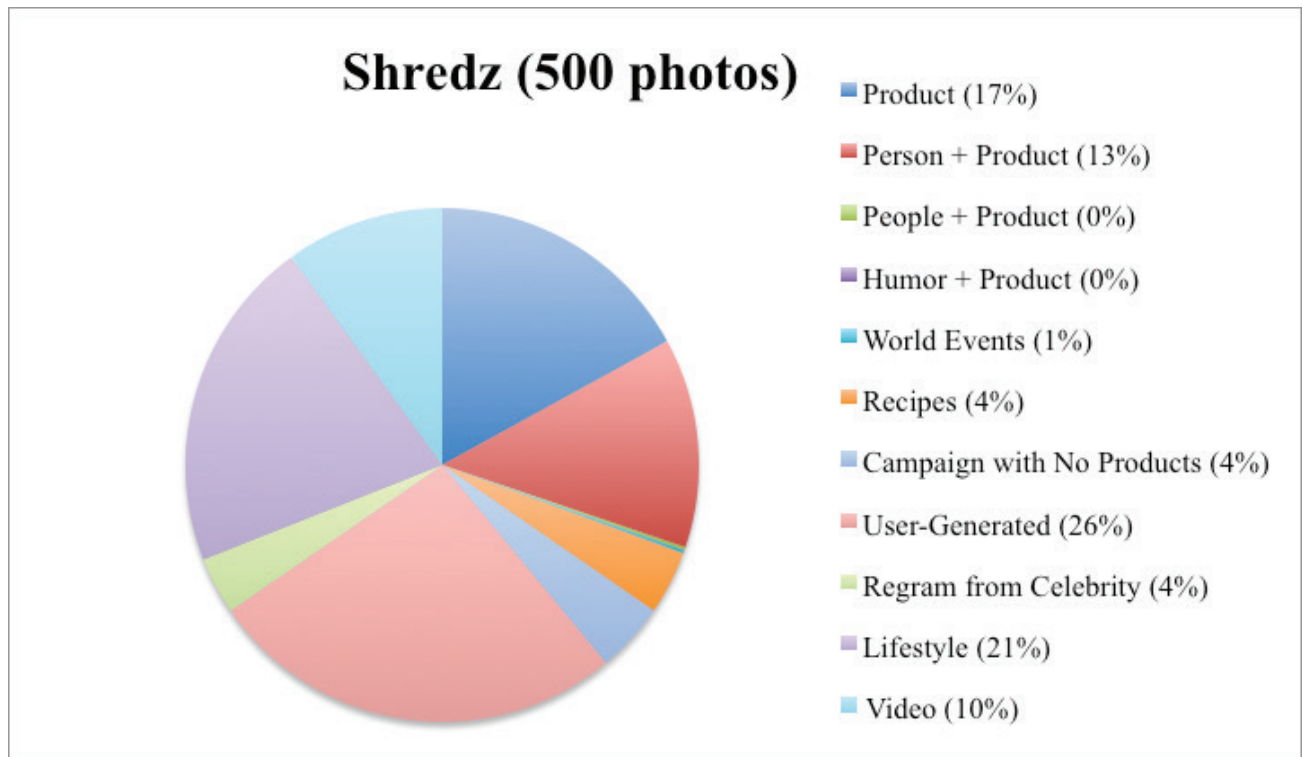


Figure 5. Photo elements featured in Shredz's Instagram account.

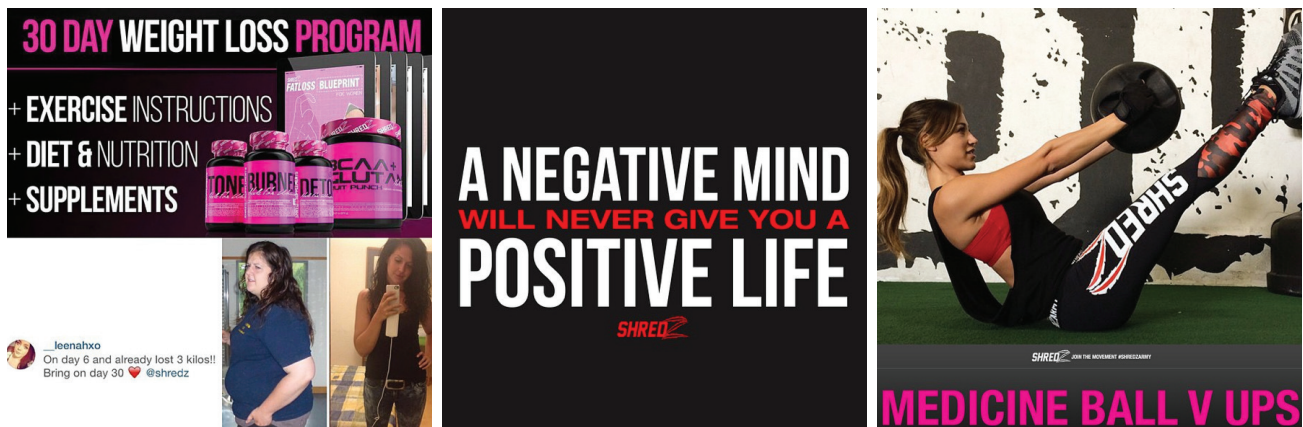


Figure 6. Examples of Shredz's tough and reliable personality.

## Appendix IV: Ben & Jerry's

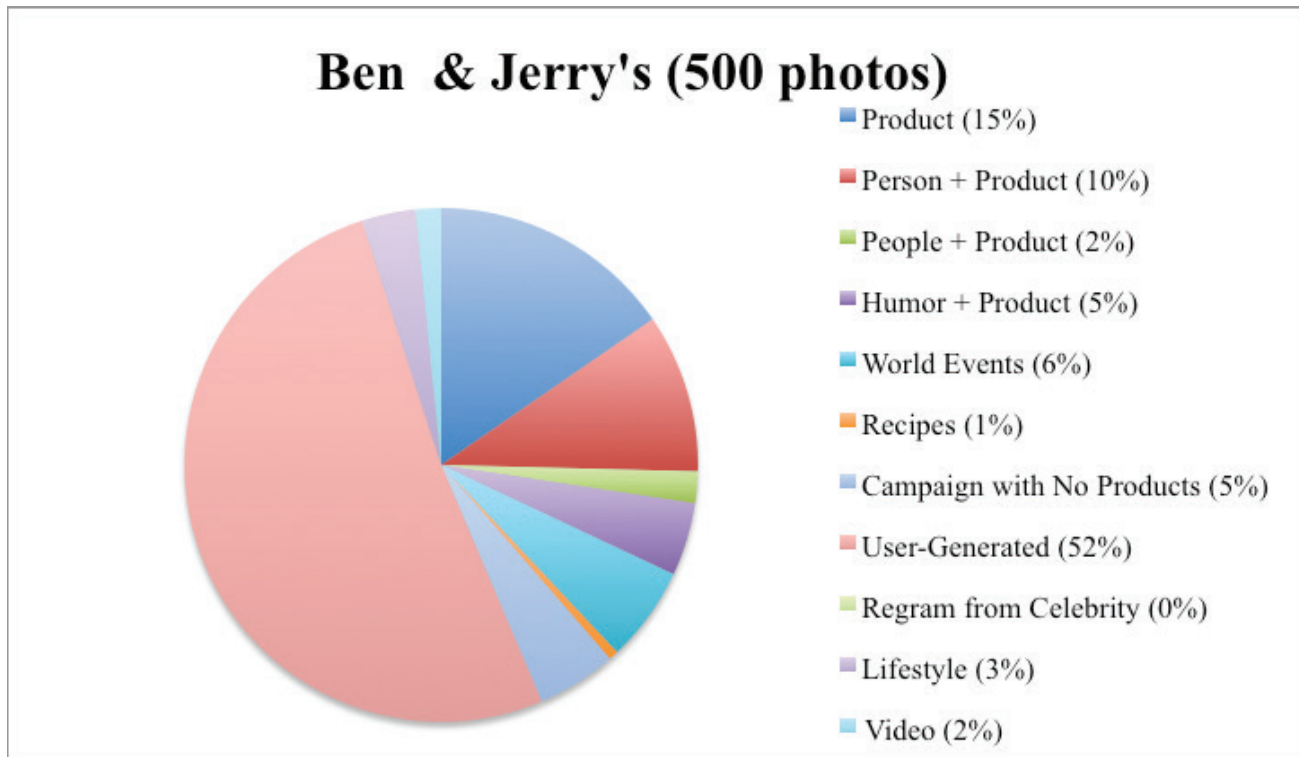


Figure 7. Photo elements featured in Ben & Jerry's Instagram account.



Figure 8. Examples of Ben & Jerry's honest and light-hearted personality.

## Appendix V: Oreo

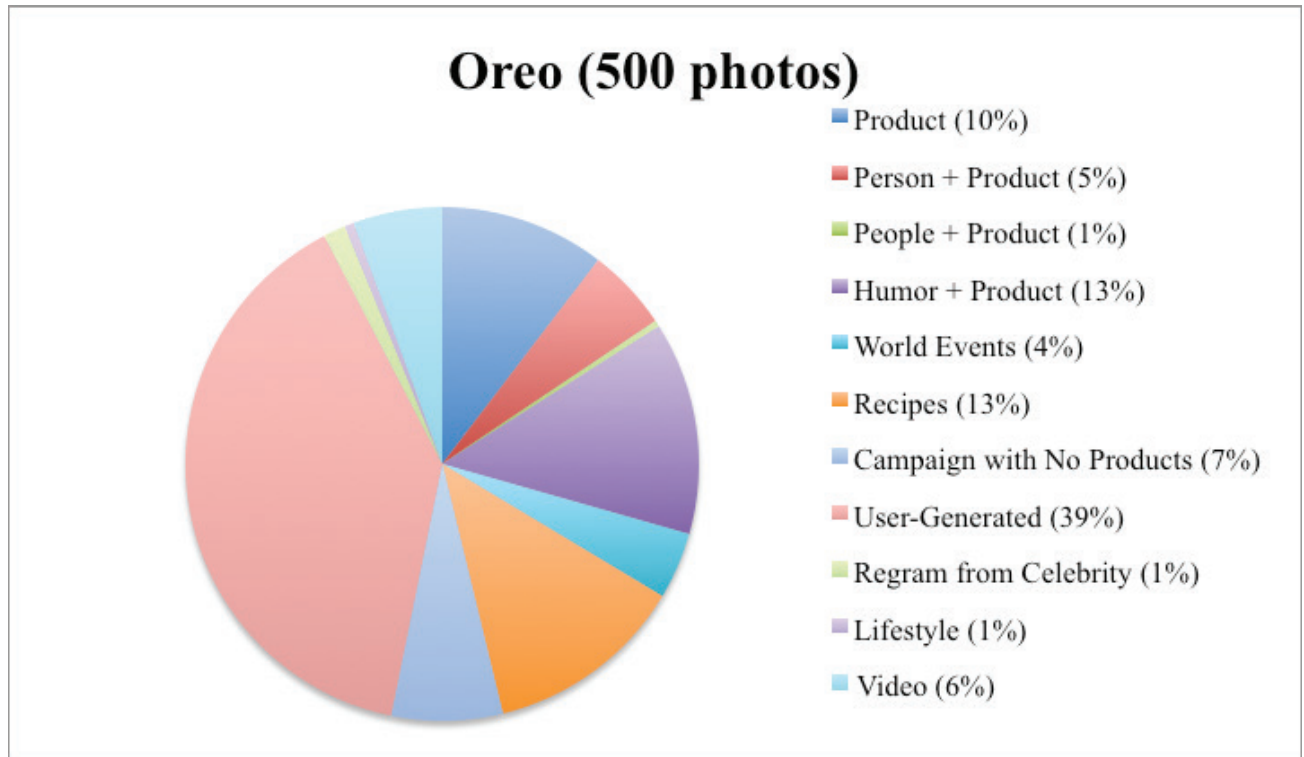


Figure 9. Photo elements featured in Oreo's Instagram account.



Figure 10. Examples of Oreo's genuine and imaginative personality.

# Yesterday's News: Media Framing of Hitler's Early Years, 1923-1924

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## Abstract

*This research used media framing theory to assess newspaper coverage of Hitler published in The New York Times, The Christian Science Monitor, and The Washington Post between 1923 and 1924. An analysis of about 200 articles revealed “credible” and “non-credible” frames relating to his political influence. Prior to Hitler’s trial for treason in 1924, the credible frame was slightly more prevalent. Following his subsequent conviction, the non-credible frame dominated coverage, with reports often presenting Hitler’s failure to overthrow the Bavarian government as evidence of his lack of political skill. This research provides insight into the way American media cover foreign leaders before and after a tipping point—one or more events that call into question their political efficacy.*

## I. Introduction

The resentment, suspicion, and chaos that defined global politics during the Great War continued into the 1920s. Germany plunged into a state of political and economic turmoil following the ratification of the punitive Treaty of Versailles, and the Allies watched with trepidation as it struggled to make reparations payments. The bill — equivalent to 33 billion dollars then and more than 400 billion dollars today — grew increasingly daunting as the value of the mark fell from 400 to the dollar in 1922 to 7,000 to the dollar at the start of 1923, when Bavaria witnessed the improbable rise of an Austrian-born artist-turned-politician who channeled German outrage into a nationalistic, anti-Semitic movement that came to be known as the Nazi Party.<sup>1</sup> American media outlets, intent on documenting the chaotic state of post-war Europe, took notice of Adolf Hitler as he attracted a following and, through their coverage, essentially introduced him to the American public. This research examines the way the American press portrayed his early activities in an effort to understand why Americans either recognized his political potential or considered his actions those of an insignificant extremist who was merely an irritant to the Weimar Republic and an oddity to the Western world.

This research uses media framing theory to assess newspaper coverage of Hitler published in *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Washington Post* between 1923 and 1924. Nearly 350 articles contained at least passing mentions of Hitler, and of those articles, about 200 offered substantial information about his activities and influence and warranted closer examination. An analysis of the selected articles revealed “credible” frames that emphasized Hitler’s persuasive and oratorical ability, popular support,

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<sup>1</sup> William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 61.

**Keywords:** media framing, Hitler, The New York Times, The Christian Science Monitor, The Washington Post  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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military capability, diplomatic efforts, influential relationships, and, in some cases, the illegality of his actions. It also revealed “non-credible” frames that undermined his credibility by focusing on his non-German citizenship, artistic background, lack of popular support, lack of military capability, political impotency, and, in other contexts, the illegality of his actions. Prior to Hitler's trial for high treason in 1924, however, the credible frame was slightly more prevalent than the non-credible frame. After his conviction in the spring of that year, the non-credible frame dominated coverage, for reports often presented Hitler's failure to overthrow the Bavarian government as evidence of his lack of political skill and frequently emphasized his Austrian heritage and his artistic background as proof of his supposed incompetence.

## II. Theoretical Context

The power of mass media to inform public opinion has fascinated scholars for decades. Grounded in cognitive psychology and sociology, media framing theory offers a way to determine how the organization and content of media texts and images affect cognitive processing of information. Goffman, who pioneered the framing method, posited that individuals employ a multitude of frameworks, or “schemata of interpretation,” to “locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms.”<sup>2</sup> Though Goffman didn't focus exclusively on media effects, his work demonstrated that frames exist within language and communicating texts. Other champions of the framing approach, including Gitlin and Tuchman, used Goffman's conception of frames to determine how news media provide a sketch of reality for media audiences.<sup>3</sup> From their seminal works grew media framing theory, a theory that acknowledges media's effect on the masses while taking into account the factors that influence individual interpretation. Like other social constructivist theories, it attempted to strike the middle ground between the hypodermic and minimal effects models. Several subsequent studies determined the particular effectiveness of news frames related to sociopolitical issues,<sup>4</sup> leading Gamson and de Vreese to argue that news media “dominate the issue culture for most people on most issues” and contribute to the shaping of public opinion and political socialization.<sup>5</sup> Operating on this assumption, Gamson and Modigliani defined frames as interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue and emphasized the complexity of the process by which journalists and individuals construct meaning.<sup>6</sup> Entman further clarified the meaning of media frames by defining them as aspects of a perceived reality that are made salient to the receiver in a communicating text.<sup>7</sup>

This study employs Pan and Kosicki's linguistic approach to determine the presence and prevalence of certain frames within the articles included in the analysis. Comprehensive and objective, the linguistic approach analyzes the syntactical, scriptural, thematic, and rhetorical dimensions of news text and is well suited for inductive frame analysis. Although the selection of newspapers may seem somewhat narrow, it is possible to gain ample insight into the national discourse using these sources. Daily newspapers reached more than 22.4 million people in 1910, and the number continued to grow as World War I drew to a close, illustrating both the popularity and pervasiveness of print journalism.<sup>8</sup> Of the three dailies included in this study, *The Times* offered the most coverage of Hitler and Europe in general. Its weekly and Sunday circulation numbers reached

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2 Erving Goffman, *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974), 21.

3 Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 1.

4 Russell Neuman et al., *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

5 Claes de Vreese, “News Framing: Theory and Typology,” *Information Design Journal* 13 (2005): 51-62; William Gamson, “A Constructionist Approach to Mass Media and Public Opinion,” *Symbolic Interaction* 11 (1988): 161-174.

6 William Gamson and Andre Modigliani, “Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach,” *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1989): 2-3.

7 Robert Entman, “Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993): 51.

8 David Copeland, *The Media's Role in Defining the Nation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 130.

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327,275 and 499,924 in 1920, and each grew by several thousand by 1930.<sup>9</sup> *The Monitor* had achieved a daily circulation of about 120,000 at the start of the 1920s, and the number increased throughout the decade.<sup>10</sup> Though *The Washington Post* failed to achieve the same influence during the course of the 1920s,<sup>11</sup> *The Post*, as well as *The Times* and *The Monitor*, carried stories provided by wire services, including the Associated Press and United Press International. The Associated Press expanded the size of its network during the first decades of the twentieth century, and by 1920, it supplied news to about 1,200 newspapers.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, United Press International had 745 newspaper customers.<sup>13</sup> The three papers' coverage, combined with the wire service reports that reached readers nationwide, provided a broad sample of news coverage of Hitler during the 1920s. This research builds on Henson's study of American and British news coverage of the National Socialist party between 1922 and 1933 and takes into consideration the historical arguments put forward by Lipstadt, Leff, and Klein, particularly those relating to American anti-Semitism and *The Times*' willingness to cover news of Jewish persecution.<sup>14</sup>

### III. Historical Context

During the 1920s, mentions of Hitler appeared largely within coverage of two related issues: the fall of the mark, and the French occupation of the Ruhr, an industrial zone in western Germany that supplied four-fifths of Germany's coal and steel after Poland laid claim to Upper Silesia.<sup>15</sup> The American press took particular interest in Germany's economic state; as the mark fell, many questioned whether Germany could continue to pay its war debts. In fall 1922, Germany was already struggling to make payments, and that winter, it defaulted on timber deliveries, causing the French Premier Raymond Poincaré to order the occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923. Workers there declared a general strike, further devastating the German economy, and the government's campaign of passive resistance was met with arrests and deportations carried out by the French.<sup>16</sup> The occupation dealt the final blow to Germany's ailing economy. An economic depression, along with widespread anger at the Allied nations and the Weimar government, gave rise to a number of extremist factions that spanned the political spectrum. Hitler's National Socialists were generally regarded as one of many groups that wished to repudiate the Treaty and restore Germany's former power, and he appeared most often in articles regarding Germany's economic and political stability.

On January 2, 1923, a lengthy analysis by Lincoln Eyre, then a Central European correspondent for *The Washington Post* and *The New York Herald*, began on the first page of that day's *Post* edition. The article listed and explained in detail four overarching issues that threatened to destabilize the fledgling Weimar Republic: anti-republicanism, inflation, the occupation of the Ruhr, and a rise in the price of food and fuel.<sup>17</sup> Eyre's story can be classified as an issue story rather than an action-oriented story, for he cited a number of different events, sources, and propositions in an effort to support his hypothesis that a host of political ills plagued Republic and undermined its strength.<sup>18</sup> He dedicated two subsections to political unrest in Bavaria and Hitler's emergence as a leader "foremost among the anti-republican agitators." In Bavaria, he wrote, hundreds of thousands of people were joining political and military associations in an effort to destroy democracy across Germany. Inspired by, but not altogether similar to, Mussolini's blackshirts, he wrote that these extrem-

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9 "Adolph S. Ochs Dead at 77; Publisher of Times Since 1896," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1935.

10 Steven Vaughn, *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 99-100.

11 *Ibid.*, 576; *Advertising & Selling 29* (Advertising and Selling Co., Inc., 1920), 33.

12 Vaughn, *Encyclopedia of American Journalism*, 508.

13 *Ibid.*, 555.

14 Andrew Henson, "Before the Seizure Of Power: American and British Press Coverage of National Socialism, 1922 to 1933," (Master's thesis, Clemson University, 2007); Gary Klein, "When the News Doesn't Fit: *The New York Times* and Hitler's First Two Months in Office, February/March 1933," *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly* 78; Lauryl Leff, *Buried by the Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

15 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 61.

16 *Ibid.*, 61.

17 Lincoln Eyre, "Sees German Government Powerless in Face of Ills Economic and Political," *The Washington Post*, January 2, 1923, 1.

18 Zhongdang Pan and G. M. Kosicki, "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse," *Political Communication* 10 (1993): 60.

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ists could be called fascisti “for the want of a better term.” He cited an instance where 7,000 armed men marched in military formation under protection of the Bavarian government to the applause of the Bavarian populace, a demonstration that could be explained “only as a move toward reactionary revolution.” Using the anecdote to segue into a brief description of Hitler, Eyre wrote that he had “openly proclaimed the intentions of his cohorts some day to pit themselves against the forces of the republic if resistance is offered to his dictatorial aspirations.” He noted that Hitler’s “fascisti” were intertwined with a number of militarist and monarchist groups both secret and “legal.”

Contained in Eyre’s analysis are many of the frames and subframes that appeared in articles involving Hitler and his party throughout the duration of the decade. To assert that “hundreds of thousands” of Bavarians wished to destroy the republic quantifies support for Hitler and Hitler-like factions while simultaneously undermining the political potency of his specific organization, one intertwined with a number of other groups. Eyre’s hesitancy to fully employ the term “fascisti” and his use of quotations when describing such reactionary factions as “legal” suggests Hitler and his followers were quasi-Fascist, quasi-legal militants who enjoyed some popular and governmental support but could potentially undermine the stability of the republic and its ability to pay the reparations outlined in the Treaty of Versailles.

A number of rhetorical structures constituted subframes of the credible and non-credible frames, including quotations, quantification, context, metaphors, lexical choices, exemplars, depictions, and catchphrases.<sup>19</sup> Articles that supported the credibility frame examined Hitler’s politics more frequently than they explored his personality or tendencies, and articles that supported the non-credible frame examined his personality, habits, and sanity about as often as they explored his political ideas. Of course, these frames are not mutually exclusive; issue stories, such as Eyre’s, demonstrate how both can exist simultaneously within a given text. But a dominant frame emerged from most articles that warranted analysis, particularly action stories.<sup>20</sup>

#### IV. Hitler as a Non-Credible Political Power

On January 4, 1923, another lengthy analysis of the political turmoil in Bavaria appeared on page four of *The Post*. Written again by Eyre, this issue story differed slightly from that published on January 2. In his lead paragraph, he noted that Bavaria was “literally infested with political and military organizations, animated by animosity toward the republican regime and all it represents, including the acceptance of the Versailles treaty.”<sup>21</sup> With this, Eyre implicitly identified Hitler’s National Socialist German Workers’ Party as one of many groups of extremists vying for power and influence, but in a subsequent paragraph, he again asserted that the party was “foremost among antirepublican groups.” Eyre dedicated nearly half of the article to coverage of Hitler, who he called the “most outstanding figure today in Bavaria, if not all of Germany.” Hitler, he wrote, was “a sign painter with a gift for demagogic oratory, limitless energy, and an education self-acquired but extensive.” He likened him to a German Mussolini, one whose followers possess the same “fanatical patriotism” and potentially the same amount of political strength as the Italian fascist party. However, he tempered that assertion by noting that a fascist uprising in Bavaria would not likely spread throughout the rest of Germany. As this was an analysis, rather than a brief, subsequent paragraphs both reinforced and qualified subframes introduced in Eyre’s initial description. He quantified the strength of Hitler’s forces as nearly 100,000 and wrote that “there is no doubt whatever” that Hitler is backed by certain industrialists, including Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, and Hugo Stinnes, a German mining magnate and founding member of the conservative German People’s Party, illustrating the range of people to which the party supposedly appealed and suggesting that Hitler had fostered connections with some influential individuals. After twenty minutes of Hitler’s “vocal incendiarism” at a party meeting in Munich’s Hofbrauhaus, Eyre observed, his audience was so inflamed it probably would have followed him to Paris and back.

Such descriptions attest to Hitler’s popular support, military capacity, influential relationships, and oratorical skills, but ultimately, the non-credible frame dominated the story. Eyre’s depiction of Hitler as a “sign

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19 William Gamson and Andre Modigliani, “Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach,” *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1989): 1-37; Pan and Kosicki, “Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse,” 55-76.

20 Pan and Kosicki, “Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse” 60.

21 Lincoln Eyre, “German Republic Opposed by Political and Military Organizations in Bavaria,” *The Washington Post*, January 4, 1923, 4.

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painter” with a “gift for demagogic oratory” suggested a certain superficiality that undermined Hitler’s political efficacy, and Eyre later wrote under the subhead “Hitler a Trick Orator” that “his foes say he is a shallow demagogue whose ruthless lack of scruple is a danger to the community. The truth seems to be that he is a mob leader par excellence, an opportunist who has sensed the spirit of the moment and many [sic] yet make it carry him far, but who is without that constructive genius requisite to lasting political achievement.” The lexical choices used in these descriptions — “demagogue,” “shallow,” “mob leader,” “opportunist,” “trick orator” — may have discredited not only Hitler’s political intelligence but also that of his followers. Eyre mentioned he made a call to Hitler’s headquarters, a “suite of dingy rooms in a café,” and was greeted by “lowbrow” party adherents, further discrediting the party’s influence.

Eyre’s analyses demonstrate how both frames can exist, to some extent, within a single article, for he produced some of the most explanatory coverage of Hitler that appeared during the 1920s. Shorter articles allowed for fewer nuances and often contained just one of the two frames. A *Monitor* editorial published March 13, 1923, explored the Nationalist movement in Bavaria, the “home of peasant proprietors” who remain “boorish, superstitious, good-natured, and politically backward element[s] of Germany.”<sup>22</sup> In this “milieu,” the editorial argued, the National Socialists were able to gain influence under the leadership of Hitler, a “Viennese decorative painter imitating the mannerisms of Benito Mussolini.” In this context, the reference to Hitler’s artistic background seems to discredit his success, and use of the word “imitating” suggested he had less political wherewithal than his supposed Italian counterpart. The notion that he gained a following among the “politically backward” further eroded his credibility.

Other articles discounted Hitler’s influence almost entirely. A review of an analysis of the “European situation” by Max Kemmerich, a German author, published in *The Post* in May 1923 predicted that Hitler would soon lose control over his party.<sup>23</sup> In response to Kemmerich’s assertion that Germany was on the brink of civil war between the extreme right and the extreme left, the writer noted that Hitler’s “fascisti” movement was believed to be dying because the nationalists had decided that “an excitable little person of insignificant origin is not worthy of the leadership of such a movement as nationalism has grown to be.” The nationalist movement, according to the article, had “become a veritable Frankenstein that will probably wipe Hitler off the political map in the near future.” The allusion to Hitler’s Austrian nationality detracts from his political credibility, and the depiction of him as “little” and “excitable” may have helped to support the notion that he was defenseless against the larger nationalist movement. The subject of Hitler’s citizenship surfaced again the following month in *The Times* as part of a series of updates about the situation in Germany. The brief stated that Hitler had become a Bavarian citizen by naturalization. An Austrian by birth, it said, Hitler had been made “the target of considerable ridicule because of his posing as the exponent of 100 per cent Germanism,”<sup>24</sup> a statement that may have undercut reports of his prominence in the nationalist movement.

Articles consistent with the non-credible frame appeared intermittently throughout the first half of 1923 and increased in prevalence at the end of September when Chancellor Gustav Stresemann ended passive resistance in the Ruhr and authorized the resumption of reparations payments. Anticipating revolt from both sides of the political spectrum, Stresemann had President Friedrich Ebert declare a state of emergency, which placed executive power in the hands of Minister of Defense Otto Gessler and Reichswehr Chief Hans von Seeckt.<sup>25</sup> Bavaria responded by declaring its own state of emergency and appointed Prime Minister Gustav von Kahr state commissioner with dictatorial powers. Much coverage of the shift conveyed the idea that Kahr’s appointment severely limited Hitler’s political power.<sup>26</sup> A *Times* editorial published September 29 went as far as to argue that Hitler’s “reactionary Bavarians” had been quieted for the time being, and that the “rantings of the blond Aryan chosen people who represent the German variety of Fascism can hardly offer much attraction for any large portion of the population.”<sup>27</sup> October saw a similar rise in the number of articles that

22 “The Bavarian Reaction,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), March 13, 1923, 18.

23 “Predicts Reign of Terror in Germany Starting Soon; Sees Great Nation Arise,” *The Washington Post*, May 20, 1923, 40.

24 “Berlin to Munich, 400 Miles, for \$2.50 Rail Fare — German College Rules Lightened,” *The New York Times*, June 17, 1923, XX5.

25 Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 64.

26 “Hitler Virtually Eliminated,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 1923, 2; “Extremist Party in Bavaria Gets Severe Setback,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), September 29, 1923, 1; “Bavaria’s Teeth Had Been Drawn,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1923, 2; “All Bavaria Quiet, Berlin Resumes Talk with Entente,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1923, 1.

27 “Communism by Consent,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1923, 6.

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supported the non-credible frame.<sup>28</sup> An analysis that appeared on the front page of *The Times*' special features section on October 14 described in great detail the economic and political turmoil Germany faced. Anne O'Hare McCormick, then a foreign correspondent who covered the rise of Mussolini and other European affairs, wrote that German citizens would "follow any leader, like Hitler in Bavaria, who promises any change, but what they really want is a brave, upstanding, ruthless, ultimatum-breathing autocrat like Mussolini. . . . Hitler is no Mussolini, either, and his attempt to organize Bavaria on the Fascist plan lacks the drama, poetry, the sheer physical courage and daring that swept the Italians into power."<sup>29</sup> This description contrasted Hitler and Mussolini, thereby contradicting the "Bavarian Mussolini" catchphrase so often used in articles that supported the credibility frame.

Reports documenting growing political unrest in Bavaria and other parts of the Reich marked the beginning of November.<sup>30</sup> By November 5, rumors that Hitler might stage a coup in Bavaria and then march on Berlin began to circulate. But a number of articles suggested that such claims should not be taken seriously.<sup>31</sup> *The Times* wrote that the "Bavarian rumblings have a suggestion of stage thunder" and that government officials in Berlin were "disposed to dismiss the Bavarian troop concentrations on the Thuringian border and the Fascist's threatened advance on Berlin as a typical Hitler bluff and are informed that the units there constitute what they call the 'rag-tag and bob-tail' of Hitler's youthful guard."<sup>32</sup> The descriptors used here — "stage thunder," "typical Hitler bluff," "rag-tag and bob-tail" — contrast the notion that Hitler posed any real threat, and in this context, "youthful guard" may have connoted inexperience. But Hitler was not bluffing about his intentions. On the evening of November 8, 1923, Hitler and his storm troopers charged into the Buergerbraukeller in Munich where Kahr was reading a manifesto against Marxism to a crowded hall while Otto von Lossow, commander of the Bavarian Reichswehr, and Hans Ritter von Seisser, former chief of the State Police, stood by. With 600 armed men behind him, Hitler jumped onto a table, fired his revolver at the ceiling, and announced that the Bavarian and Reich governments had been overthrown and that he would form a new government with Ludendorff, a prominent World War I general who secured German victories in several major battles. He forced Kahr, Lossow and Seisser into a private room and attempted to persuade them to join his efforts to create a new Bavarian government. Nonetheless, the three men refused to cooperate, and when the meeting in the main hall began to break up, they managed to slip away. Hitler was arrested two days later.

American media correspondents descended upon the chaos. For days, Hitler's failed coup was featured prominently on the front pages of *The Times*, *The Monitor*, and *The Post*. Once the dust settled, the number of articles that portrayed Hitler as politically impotent increased as the number of articles that portrayed him as a legitimate political force decreased, signifying that the putsch indeed constituted a tipping point in American media coverage of his rise to power. More than half of the November 10 front page of *The Times* carried articles that described the putsch and speculated on its implications for Germany and its neighboring countries. Brown, in a full-column article, wrote that in the aftermath of the "craziest farce pulled off in memory" Hitler and Ludendorff were "down and out and thoroughly discredited, even if they should get light sentences for treason."<sup>33</sup> He reiterated this point in a later paragraph by stating that the "amateurish and abortive putsch . . . clears the air and definitely eliminates Hitler and his National Socialist followers as well as Ludendorff." Brown noted at the end of the article that the bulk of Bavarians considered Hitler and Ludendorff to be "interlopers, outsiders, and non-Bavarians," and he had used the term "rebellious outsiders" to describe the pair in an earlier paragraph. He argued that the failed coup gave power to the "real reactionaries" of Bavaria, a Catholic and monarchist state. "Now that Hitler and Ludendorff are removed, the real show has a chance of starting on clean lines," he wrote in conclusion.

Brown's article contains several subframes found in a large number of articles and editorials published after the putsch, many of which ran in *The Times*. The depictions of and lexical choices used to describe Hitler (rebellious outsider, non-Bavarian, interloper) and his failed effort (craziest farce, amateurish, abortive) called into question his political legitimacy and wherewithal and, to some degree, his sanity. The 28 "Bavarian workers looking to Berlin," *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), Oct. 1, 1923, 2; "Dr. von Kahr, Bavaria's Nominal Dictator, Shows Resolve to Clash with German Reich," *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), Oct. 3, 1923, 1; "Berlin files objections," *The New York Times*, Oct. 10, 1923, 2.

29 Anne O'Hare McCormick, "Germany, Seeking a Moses, Turned to Dr. Stresemann," *The New York Times*, Oct. 14, 1923, XX1.

30 "Monarchist forces at the Thuringian line," *The New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1923, 3.

31 "Bavarian Fascist Impatient," *The New York Times* (Associated Press), November 7, 1923, 1.

32 "Stresemann may Act without Cabinet," *The New York Times*, Nov. 5, 1923, 3.

33 Cyril Brown, "Brief Battle Ends Revolt," *The New York Times*, November 10, 1923, 1.

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supposed contrast between Hitler and the “real reactionaries” of Bavaria may have further delegitimized his political power and supported the idea that he was “thoroughly discredited.” *The Monitor* ran an editorial on the same day that supported the idea that Hitler and his followers were rather anomalous in Bavaria. Though the piece did not speculate on whether his prominence would endure, it distinguished his National Socialist party from the more powerful conservative elements in a state where political change depended largely on the peasantry and the Catholic Church. Bavaria was not at heart “revolutionary,” the editorial claimed, and that it had become “the base of two such ill-matched leaders as Gen. Eric von Ludendorff, the former chief of the German army staff, and Adolf Hitler, originally a Viennese scene painter but now an imitator of Benito Mussolini, results from exceptional circumstances.”<sup>34</sup> The editorial noted that Hitler’s band — composed mainly of Munich students, Bohemians, adventurers, and young commercial employees — had weak roots in the Bavarian countryside, where the peasantry subsided, a point reiterated in *The Times* at the beginning of January.<sup>35</sup> The subframes found within *The Monitor* editorial echoed those found within the paper’s March 13 editorial. Again, the reference to Hitler’s artistic vocation likely undermined his political credibility, and the depiction of him as an “imitator” suggested he didn’t naturally possess Mussolini’s political prowess. The depiction of his followers as young (students, commercial employees) and non-Bavarian (Bohemians) supported the “rag-tag and bob-tail” and “non-German” descriptions found in articles previously discussed. The “non-German” subframe continued to proliferate that month.<sup>36</sup>

A *Times* editorial published November 10 reinforced the non-credible frame and several of the subframes found within Brown’s front-page article that day, for it clearly portrayed Hitler as politically incompetent and directly questioned his sanity. The editorial writers expressed agreement with President Ebert’s declaration that the failed coup was “the work of lunatics” and called the effort a “crazy movement inspired and directed by persons better fitted for the comic opera stage than for a serious effort to overthrow the Berlin Government.”<sup>37</sup> A December 2 article again highlighted the “comic opera aspects” of the putsch.<sup>38</sup> As Hitler led Kahr, Seisser, and Lossow into a room adjacent to the beer hall, the article reported, one of his officers yelled to the crowd, “Stay here, gentlemen, and — drink beer!” The article’s headline and deck — the most powerful framing devices of an article’s syntactical structure<sup>39</sup> — contained this purported utterance as well, and may have decreased the likelihood that readers would take seriously Hitler’s political intentions and influence.

A five-judge panel chaired by Georg Neithardt presided over Hitler and Ludendorff’s trial, which began in Munich on February 26. The proceedings afforded Hitler a considerable advantage over the prosecution, an indication of his political influence. But many press reports downplayed that aspect of the trial and focused more closely on Ludendorff, a well-known figure even beyond the German border, an angle that sometimes relegated Hitler’s status to that of a co-conspirator — or even a follower — of Ludendorff. Others paid greater attention to the derisive remarks launched at Hitler and Ludendorff by the prosecution, German newspapers, and certain political circles.<sup>40</sup> The court issued its verdicts on April 1. Ludendorff was acquitted, and Hitler was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment in the Landsberg fortress with the possibility of parole after six months. Later that month, *The Times* published on the front page of its special features section a lengthy interview with Count Harry Kessler, a German economist, diplomat, and former Minister to Poland, who had been in the United States at the time. In the lede, writer Russell Porter acknowledged the “anxiety with which many people in America and Europe are looking forward to the Reichstag elections,” but noted that Kessler saw “no danger to either the German Republic or to the Dawes program for the economic settlement of Europe.”<sup>41</sup> Porter wrote that Kessler, who resembled “the athletic type of golf playing American business man much more than the typical German diplomat or politician,” spoke “excellent English and has acquired the American

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34 “The Political Background in Bavaria,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), November 10, 1923, 20.

35 Joseph Gollomb, “Peasant Ruled Bavaria Wants Monarchy,” *The New York Times*, January 6, 1924, XX5.

36 “Hitler a Bavarian Agitator,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1923, 2.

37 “Bavarian Opera Bouffe,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1923, 12.

38 “Beer Hall Scene Gave Comic Opera Touch to Hitler ‘Coup,’” *The New York Times*, December 2, 1923, XX5.

39 Pan and Kosicki, “Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse,” 59.

40 T.R. Ybarra, “Ludendorff’s Talk at Trial Dismays His Party,” *The New York Times*, March 2, 1924, 1; T.R.

Ybarra, “Marx Denounced Ludendorff,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 1924, 3; T.R. Ybarra, “Two Dozen Parties in Reichstag Race,” *The New York Times*, March 15, 1924, 4; T.R. Ybarra, “Bavaria Worries Reich,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 1924, 23; “Woman Peace Delegate Holds German Monarchy Impossible,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), April 21, 1924, 5.

41 Russell Porter, “Kessler Expects German Republic to Stand,” *The New York Times*, April 27, 1924, XX1.

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viewpoint in many things.” Kessler, in the interview, asserted that the trade union movement and the Catholic Church dominated German politics and would not lend their support to an anti-Republican movement. The angle from which Porter approached the interview attests to the fact that Americans were largely concerned about the effect extremist groups might have on the stability of the Weimar Republic and its ability to repay its debt to the Allies. But the fact that Kessler, framed from the outset as an educated and knowledgeable source, saw little reason to fear political gains by the National Socialists and other groups likely tempered readers' perception of Hitler's influence. Porter's comparison of Kessler to an American businessman who held an “American viewpoint in many things” probably reinforced Kessler's credibility in the minds of most American readers.

In early July, it came to light that Hitler had ostensibly resigned as head of his party because he wished to use his time at Landesberg to work on a book (later revealed to be *Mein Kampf*), leading to reports throughout the summer and fall that Ludendorff, not Hitler, would from then on lead the National Socialist movement, which — along with other extremist parties — had been losing ground.<sup>42</sup> On November 9, a year after the attempted coup, *The Times*' magazine published an interview with Mussolini in which the Fascist dictator denied any association with Hitler and his party. “One of them, I forgot who, even came here and asked me to receive him,” Mussolini told the interviewer. “I refused, of course, to have anything to do with them.”<sup>43</sup> The direct quotes from Mussolini regarding his perspective on National Socialism contradicted the “Bavarian Mussolini” catchphrase frequently used to describe Hitler during his political ascent in 1923 and likely served to undermine any credibility it may have conveyed. Hitler, who was released on parole on December 19, found the political climate much changed since his entrance into Landesberg. *The Times* reported that he left for Munich a “much sadder and wiser man” than he had been during the spring and that his behavior during his imprisonment had convinced the authorities that he, like his political party, was no longer to be feared.<sup>44</sup> According to the article, “it is believed that he will retire to private life and return to Austria, the country of his birth.” The mention of his Austrian nationality again reinforced the non-German subframe and dealt another blow to his credibility as 1924 drew to a close.

## V. Hitler as a Credible Political Force

The French occupation of the Ruhr on January 13, 1923, was just the event Hitler needed to arouse the nationalist and anti-foreign sentiment so central to his party's agenda. From the outset, journalists covering the effects of the occupation noted that the sheer quantity of Hitler's forces demonstrated both his political appeal and a real, widespread contempt for the French occupation.<sup>45</sup> At the end of January, Hitler attracted the attention of the writer of “The World's Great Capitals,” a weekly feature in *The Monitor*. The paper devoted half of its “This Week in Berlin” subsection to Hitler's growing popularity. According to the article, his appeal to both the masses and the middle class enabled him to carry out his “real intentions, which are, in the words of the Fascisti, the overthrowing of the present democratic regime to make way for a dictatorship after the fashion of Signor Mussolini in Italy.”<sup>46</sup> Emphasis on his wide appeal, coupled with the comparison of his plans to those of Mussolini, contradict the non-credible subframes that cast doubt upon his influence and his similarity to the Italian dictator.

As tensions in the Ruhr intensified, an “illegality” subframe emerged in several articles that supported Hitler's credibility. At the end of January, *The Times* reported the situation caused by the occupation had

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42 “Hitler Asks Leisure for Writing,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), July 8, 1924, 4; “Ludendorff shelves Hitler; Heads Party,” *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), July 8, 1924, 4; “Germany Feels Good Effect of London Parley,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), August 19, 1924, 1; “Asks Jarres to Act Against Racialists,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 7, 1924, S6; “Liberal Press Warns Bavaria Against Split,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), November 8, 1924, 1.

43 Oscar Levy, “Mussolini says ‘Live Dangerously,’” *The New York Times Magazine*, November 9, 1924, SM7.

44 “Hitler Tamed by Prison,” *The New York Times*, December 21, 1924, 16.

45 Cyril Brown, “German Protest now World Wide,” *The New York Times*, January 13, 1923, 1; “Bavarian Fascisti to Turn Out,” *New York Times* (Jewish Telegraphic Agency), January 19, 1923, 2; “Hitler Activities Grow in Germany,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), January 20, 1923, 3.

46 “The World's Great Capitals: This Week in Berlin,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), January 26, 1923, 2.

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entered a “critical phase,” for the French had taken measures to separate the Ruhr from the rest of Germany.<sup>47</sup> In spite of the Bavarian government’s orders for him to lie low, Hitler proclaimed that nothing would stop him from launching an attack on those he called the “enemies of November 9, 1918,” and that he “did not give a damn” whether the government or the police liked it. The article noted that “the Munich government, which once encouraged Hitlerism, is now, according to a correspondent of the Catholic Germania, actually frightened at it, for it has penetrated all public offices, even the police and the army, and may prove stronger than the Cabinet itself.” The attribution of quotes to Hitler and facts to the German correspondent constituted a syntactical framing device that heightened the credibility of the information presented and the depiction of Hitler as a forceful leader who had little respect for the law. Other articles presented similar observations.<sup>48</sup>

As Hitler’s prominence increased, *The Times* and other papers published a number of articles that affirmed Hitler’s immense persuasive and oratorical abilities, perhaps one of the most impactful subframes that supported Hitler’s credibility. On January 21, *The Times*’ special feature section carried an article headlined “Hitler New Power in Germany,” a syntactical framing device that explicitly affirmed Hitler’s credibility as a political power. The piece was an account of one of Hitler’s speeches according to a correspondent for the conservative *Kölnische Zeitung* (Cologne Gazette). A reporter for a conservative publication in the Ruhr area likely harbored a biased perspective toward Hitler and his followers, but regardless, *The Times* carried his full description of the meeting and published nothing to qualify or contradict his observations. While sitting in a meeting hall waiting for Hitler to arrive, the correspondent took note of his neighbors. On his left sat “an old aristocrat, a general in the World War,” and on his right sat a Munich worker whose “honest eyes alone redeem his desperate face.”<sup>49</sup> The worker told the correspondent that he had once been a committed Communist, and that “only through Hitler [had] he learned to feel himself a German.” The hall erupted in applause when Hitler entered and took the platform. Unimpressed at first, the correspondent initially found Hitler’s ideas unremarkable and similar to those held by many prominent government officials. But gradually, he wrote, “one is gripped as much by his strictly logical construction as by what one may almost call the overpowering strength of his conviction . . . In astonishment I note that the condescending look of the old General on my left is gradually making way for an expression of wrapt [*sic*] attention . . . and at every slight pause in the speaker’s address, [the Communist] roars his approval with all his might.” After a two-and-a-half-hour speech, the general and the communist walked “fraternally” to a table to enroll in the National Socialist Party. “No college instructor can excel this man in the unshakeable logic of his construction or the power of his conviction,” a professor told the correspondent as they exited the hall. The thematic and rhetorical structures found within this action story support the credible frame first introduced in the headline. Thematically, the piece contained a great number of the journalist’s observations and quotes from Hitler’s followers. Many of his observations contained rhetorical elements that supported the overall theme of the piece, most notably the juxtaposition of the old aristocrat and the former communist. Two men that once occupied opposite ends of the political spectrum were able to walk “fraternally” to enroll in the same party, a demonstration of Hitler’s wide appeal.

The three subframes discussed above — strength of forces, illegality, and persuasive abilities — provided a foundation for news coverage found throughout the rest of 1923.<sup>50</sup> The prevalence of each subframe depended on the situation in the Ruhr, the political environments in Bavaria and Berlin, the health, or lack thereof, of Germany’s economy, and, come late September, Hitler’s proposed plans to overthrow the Bavarian government. On Sedan Day, a holiday commemorating Germany’s victory in the 1870 Battle of Sedan, political rallies held in Nuremberg on September 2 allowed Hitler to issue a call for “revolution, bloodshed, and a dictatorship” to a crowd of 200,000 assembled by Ludendorff,<sup>51</sup> and when Stresemann ended passive resis-

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47 “Hitler Threatens Munich Outbreak,” *The New York Times*, January 26, 1923, 2.

48 “Hitler Loudly Cheered,” *The New York Times* (Associated Press), January 28, 1923, 2; “Bavaria gives in to Hitler threats,” *The New York Times*, January 28, 1923, 2.

49 “Hitler New Power in Germany,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 1923, XX12.

50 Cyril Brown, “2-Million Mark Train to Disprove a Rumor,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 1923, 1; “Hitler Issues Warning Against Invading Bavaria,” *The Washington Post*, February 15, 1923, 1; “Bavarian Reaction Still Holds Red,” *The New York Times*, February 18, 1923, E5; “Say French Imitate German Capitalists,” *The New York Times*, February 25, 1923, E5; “War Talk Heard at Berlin Meeting,” *The New York Times*, February 18, 1923, 3; “Royalist Movement Grows,” *The New York Times*, March 12, 1923, 2; Cyril Brown, “Hitler Organization Declared Illegal,” *The New York Times*, March 17, 1923, 14; “Plot in Bavaria Laid to Cabinet,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 1923, E7; “Links Ludendorff to Plot to Overthrow Bavarian Government,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 1923, 1.

51 “Ludendorff Hails Prince as Ruler,” *The New York Times*, September 2, 1923, 1.

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tance in the Ruhr at the end of the month, Hitler continued his call for revolution. As Bavaria entered a state of emergency and Kahr assumed the role of state commissioner with dictatorial powers, Hitler "demanded civil war in Germany" and called for fourteen mass meetings, leading some to anticipate "at least a little bloodshed," if not war, according to an article in *The Times*.<sup>52</sup> Another *Times* article that appeared the same day explained that it had long been considered "only a question of time" before Hitler and his reactionary followers sufficiently centralized their power to overthrow the Berlin government, an event the Munich press had long foreseen.<sup>53</sup> In an effort to mitigate the chance of an uprising, Kahr forbade all fourteen mass meetings.<sup>54</sup> Hitler professed his intent to ignore the order, claiming it was his right to "act as he saw fit," supporting the idea that he considered himself above the law.<sup>55</sup> The next day, the front page of *The Post* carried a photo of Hitler, "Germany's stormy petrel," that showed his head and shoulders.<sup>56</sup> The two-column photo was the first image of Hitler to reach the United States in an American newspaper and accompanied an article that cited a "military source" who said his strength was serious. Hitler could raise 10,000 men easily and equal the strength of the German government, according to the article, but had lost some followers as a result of the national government's efforts to curtail his plans of revolt. Though reports of actions taken by both the Berlin and Bavarian governments may have tempered the American perception of the threat Hitler posed, the quantification of the strength of his forces coupled with the publication of his photo likely added a tangible quality to the nature of his influence in Germany. At the end of the month, *The Washington Post* ran a standalone photo depicting Hitler at a demonstration in Nuremberg attended by 50,000 of his supporters, again illustrating his movement in a way readers could see and understand in terms of size and power.<sup>57</sup> *The Monitor*, perhaps in response to readers' increased interest in Hitler and his activities, secured an interview with the "Bavarian Mussolini" and published it, along with a description of his headquarters, on the front page of the October 3 paper. The correspondent noted that Hitler had "a potential armed strength not to be taken lightly and which the writer is informed Dr. von Kahr does not regard lightly."<sup>58</sup> The next day, *The Times* reported that *The Daily Mail* sent a correspondent to Hitler's headquarters and found that his party of "dangerous fanatics" had "plenty of rifles and machine guns," despite an apparently lack of a clear ideology, suggesting that Hitler and his supporters had the physical and mental wherewithal to accomplish their goals, if not a cohesive means of doing so.<sup>59</sup>

November opened with reports of Hitler's storm troopers and other militant groups amassed at the Thuringian border, perhaps with the intent to march on Berlin, and on November 5, rumors of a putsch surfaced.<sup>60</sup> Three days later, the rumored putsch materialized. News of the coup dominated the front pages of American newspapers for days. Much of the initial coverage either explained the chronology of the event and its aftermath or speculated on whether Hitler could retain any influence in the wake of his failure. Though many articles asserted he could not, some supported the credible frame by describing and sometimes quantifying the support he managed to maintain after the putsch.<sup>61</sup> An Associated Press article that appeared in *The Times* a week after the conflict reinforced the idea that Hitler retained at least some semblance of power during his confinement to the Fortress of Landsberg, a prison about thirty-six miles outside of Munich, where his guards had been "selected for their powers of resistance to [his] magnetic personality." The article stated that "everyone who had had the Bavarian fascist leader under close observation agrees that he radiates a

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52 "Grave Crisis Now at Hand in Germany," *The New York Times* (Associated Press), September 27, 1923, 1.

53 "Long Bavarian Agitation," *The New York Times*, September 27, 1923, 2.

54 Cyril Brown, "Hitler Coup Forestalled," *The New York Times*, September 28, 1923, 1.

55 "Kahr Prohibits Meetings," *The New York Times* (Associated Press), September 28, 1923, 2.

56 "Great Military Coup in Germany Prevent Civil War, is Belief," *The Washington Post*, September 28, 1923, 1.

57 "Pictorial Section," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 1923, 89.

58 "Ruhr Should Vanish from the Earth since it 'No Longer Belongs to Us,' Declares Bavarian Mussolini," *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), October 3, 1923, 1.

59 "Hitler Storms at Foes," *The New York Times*, October 4, 1923, 3.

60 "Monarchist Uprising Against Republic Planned for Wednesday, Berlin Hears," *The New York Times*, November 5, 1923, 1; "Revolt in Germany by Monarchists is Set for Wednesday," *The Washington Post*, November 5, 1923, 1; "Berlin Foodshops are Stormed by Hungry Populace," *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), November 6, 1923, 1.

61 "Munich Mobs Defy von Kahr as Hitler Raises New Forces," *The Washington Post*, November 11, 1923, 1; "Bavarian Riots Continue," *The New York Times*, November 12, 1923, 1; "Herr Hitler in Munich Regarded as Having Been Made Scapegoat," *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), November 13, 1923, 2; "Military Academy Closed," *The New York Times* (Associated Press), November 14, 1923, 2.

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personal influence that his almost hypnotic.”<sup>62</sup> The lexical choices used here — “magnetic” and “hypnotic” — along with a number of firsthand observations of his oratorical giftedness bolstered the “persuasive abilities” subframe found throughout earlier coverage of his activities and later coverage of his trial in 1924.

Reports regarding Hitler’s whereabouts and activities appeared infrequently in December, and articles that appeared in January 1924 generally supported the non-credible frame. But by mid-February, reports that Hitler maintained a strong base of followers despite his imprisonment resurfaced and continued to appear throughout the spring. Hitler and Ludendorff continued to be mentioned in association with the formation of new nationalistic and anti-Semitic groups, and it was rumored that Hitler’s remaining followers would attempt another putsch if he was tried for treason.<sup>63</sup> A lengthy issue piece that appeared in the Sunday magazine section of the February 17 *Times* explained in great detail the appeal Hitler’s party and other nationalistic organizations held for thousands of German youth. The journalist, Joseph Gollomb, opened the piece by noting that both Matthias Erzberger, a key figure in the signing of the 1918 armistice between the Germans and the Allies, and Walter Rathenau, a key figure in the signing of the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo, had been assassinated in plots orchestrated by young German students. In regard to the assassinations, he suggested the incidents weren’t unrelated, but in fact “the ripe fruit of what is being inculcated today in the minds and hearts of three-quarters of a million children and adolescents, the generation which in ten years will be Germany’s teachers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, civil servants, public officials, and political leaders” — a foreboding observation, given the strength Hitler had amassed by 1934. Gollomb recounted his visits to a number of German high schools, where he observed teachers — many of whom deeply resented the Republic — attempting to teach despite a dearth of books, shabby school supplies, and meager salaries. The Weimar flag was conspicuously absent from the walls, Gollomb noticed, and history lessons tended to emphasize nationalism and the greatness of pre-War Germany, a set of beliefs many of the children’s parents harbored as well. Outside of the classroom, thousands of military officers rendered jobless by the shrinking of the Germany army were “professionally engaged in recruiting youths in the cause of monarchy,” according to the article. These former officers guided “the spirit and the propaganda of the Hitler swastika chapters” and other nationalistic groups deemed illegal by Republican officials. Though not explicitly related to Hitler’s party, the incidents noted in the lede suggested that German youth — many of whom pledged allegiance to the National Socialists — saw violence as a means of accomplishing their goals, much like the older leaders of the nationalistic parties they joined. In this sense, the German youth seemed to disregard the laws enforced by Republican authorities, emboldened by anti-Republican teachers, parents who had fallen on hard times since the end of the war, and military officials who continued to “guide the spirit and propaganda” of Hitler’s party, despite his isolation from the public sphere. This depiction of youthful National Socialists stood in stark contrast to the depiction of the young “rag-tag and bob-tail” that constituted Hitler’s guard just prior to the putsch, a shift that likely bolstered Hitler’s credibility and suggested these youngsters could and would follow him and other nationalists for years to come.

Journalists who covered the opening of Hitler and Ludendorff’s trial in Munich on February 26 witnessed a confident, seemingly imprudent Hitler who enjoyed widespread support from many who attended the event. From the outset, the trial proceedings invariably favored Hitler. Neithardt, who chaired the five-judge panel, identified with the patriotic fervor of the National Socialist cause, and a journalist who witnessed Hitler’s first speech in the courtroom heard one judge exclaim, “What a tremendous chap, this Hitler!”<sup>64</sup> Hitler took full advantage of the panel’s leniency. He appeared in a suit adorned with his Iron Cross, First Class, rather than prison garb, and he frequently launched politically loaded questions at the defendants.<sup>65</sup> Because the panel showed reluctance to interrupt Hitler’s testimonies, the trial quickly became a means for him to disseminate his ideas and rally his followers, who flocked to the proceedings daily. In the United States, events of the trial often constituted front-page news.

The American correspondents in attendance cabled home reports that supported the credibility frame by highlighting Hitler’s lack of concern for the possible legal consequences of the November putsch and the oratorical tactics he employed upon taking the stand.<sup>66</sup> As the trial progressed, it became increasingly evident

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62 “Hitler a Prisoner in Landsberg Fort,” *The New York Times* (Associated Press), November 15, 1923, 2.

63 “Bavarians Reluctant to Try Monarchists,” *The New York Times*, February 18, 1924, E3; “German Railroads Oust Republicans,” *The New York Times*, February 10, 1924, E7.

64 Ian Kershaw, *Hubris: Hitler 1889-1936* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1999), 216.

65 *Ibid.*, 216.

66 “Guilt Admitted by Adolf Hitler,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), February 27, 1924, 1; “Ludendorff Cool as Trial Begins,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 1924, 19; “Unconcern Marks Ludendorff Trial on

that a great number of Bavarians were actively demonstrating support for Hitler. In mid-March, *The Post* ran a blurb from *The New York Herald* that reported swastika jewelry had become "all the rage as a feminine adornment" since the beginning of the trial. The writer had noticed "an increasing number of noblewomen [had] been attending the sessions wearing elaborately fashioned brooches, necklaces and chatelaines of hand-carved gold and silver in the form of a 'hakenkreuz,'" an emblem "used to designate the Hitler fascist troops."<sup>67</sup> The piece reinforced the idea that women, too, had become politically involved in Hitler's cause, and the fact that these were "noblewomen" who could afford hand-carved jewelry suggested the National Socialist party no longer appealed exclusively to those whose bank accounts had been ravaged by hyperinflation. Hitler and Ludendorff defended themselves in court one last time on March 27, and each played off the other in a way that earned them a standing ovation from the Bavarian audience members.

Hitler's supporters grew more vocal as the trial neared an end. Three days before the court was expected to issue a verdict, T.R. Ybarra, the top reporter in *The Times*' Berlin bureau, reported riots and parades in Munich led by bands of Hitlerites that had "secretly organized" by "masquerading as sport and social associations."<sup>68</sup> These bands, "ready for troublemaking," had "managed to offset the consequences of suppression of the Government of the Hitlerite newspapers by organizing a highly efficient news and courier service, whereby all members of the secret bands are kept thoroughly informed on anti-Government activities of their leaders." Ybarra noted that the "seriousness of the situation" in Munich could have been gauged by the fact that an ardently anti-government and pro-Hitler newspaper sold between 30,000 and 50,000 copies each day, "an enormous sale for a city of Munich's size, each edition being snatched up by eager Munichers the moment it appears on the street." If Hitler and Ludendorff were not acquitted, Ybarra reported, violent action would be expected. The "secret organization" of the bands, as well as their ability to obtain information about Hitler and maintain a popular news service, suggest that Hitler not only enjoyed widespread support, but also enabled his bands to operate above the law, just as he appeared to do. The quantification of pro-Hitler newspaper sale figures reinforced the credible frame.

The court's verdict thrilled Hitler's supporters and enraged the Republicans, for the Weimar Constitution stipulated life imprisonment as punishment for high treason.<sup>69</sup> American correspondents observed that many Germans considered Hitler's light sentence a joke and a victory for the anti-Republicans.<sup>70</sup> The reports made clear that despite his conviction, Hitler's followers saw light at the end of the tunnel and continued to pledge their support. Reports of Hitler's popularity continued to appear throughout May.<sup>71</sup> At the end of the month, *The Times* reported that one of Hitler's admirers had interviewed him at Landsberg. At the prison, according to the article, the visitor found "postcards on sale everywhere with Hitler's picture and evidence of the prisoner's immense popularity with the inhabitants." The interviewer called Hitler "a man who some day will be reckoned among the greatest of his people," confirming that Hitler managed to maintain an enormous amount of support at the beginning of his prison term.

But the number of articles that supported the credibility frame decreased significantly throughout the remainder of the year. Starting in June 1924, reports on the National Socialists' activities focused more heavily on Ludendorff than on Hitler, suggesting Hitler held a secondary position within the party.<sup>72</sup> Aside from the occasional report that Hitler's party had gained followers or staged some kind of demonstration, regular readers of the three papers would have had little reason to believe Hitler remained influential after his release from prison in December 1924, due at least in part to the upturn in the German economy during the second half of that year. Inflation had eased, the Dawes Plan had been implemented, and the French had begun to Treason Count," *The Washington Post*, February 17, 1924, 4; "Reichswehr Arms Given to Hitler's Men," *The New York Times* (Associated Press), March 5, 1924, 3; "Arms Plot Told in Trial at Munich," *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), March 5, 1924, 3.

67 "Swastika' Jewelry Popular in Germany," *The Washington Post* (*The New York Herald*), March 15, 1924, ES19.

68 Thomas Ybarra, "Munich in Ferment," *The New York Times*, March 29, 1924, 6.

69 Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 78.

70 Thomas Ybarra, "Ludendorff Freed, Acclaimed as Hero by Rapturous Crowds," *The New York Times*, April 2, 1924, 1; "Verdict Called April Fool Joke," *The New York Times*, April 2, 1924, 1; "Ludendorff Free, Hitler Convicted," *The Washington Post* (Associated Press) April 2, 1924, 3.

71 "Ex-Kaiser Joins Fascisti," *The New York Times*, May 19, 1924, 3.

72 "Ludendorff shelves Hitler; Heads Party," *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), July 8, 1924, 4; "Asks Jarres to Act Against Racialists," *The New York Times*, Sept. 7, 1924, S6; "Extremists Meetings Again in Germany," *The New York Times*, January 18, 1925, W16.

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relinquish the Ruhr.<sup>73</sup>

By the end of 1924, it became clear that Hitler no longer factored prominently into American media coverage of the political situation in Germany. A man who had appeared regularly on the front pages of *The Times*, *The Post*, and *The Monitor* prior to his conviction in April 1924 generally appeared only in the middle and back pages of each paper for the remainder of the year. The shift in frequency and placement of his coverage accompanied a shift in the nature of his coverage. Though credible and non-credible frames appeared simultaneously in 1923 and 1924, Hitler's front-page news status during those years added additional weight to the credible frame, characterized by its focus on his political capabilities. But after 1924, articles about Hitler and his activities almost always supported the non-credible frame, often characterized by its focus on his sanity and his non-German citizenship. The shift from political to personal frames helps to explain why Americans may have regarded Hitler as a political nonentity in the mid-1920s and provides insight into the way American media cover foreign leaders before and after a tipping point — one or more events that call into question their political efficacy.

## VI. Conclusion

This analysis shows that readers of *The Times*, *The Post*, and *The Monitor* during 1923 and 1924 would have had little reason to regard Hitler as a credible political power following his failed beer hall putsch. Though credible and non-credible frames often appeared side-by-side in all three papers during the two-year period of study, the non-credible frame generally appeared more frequently than the credible frame, especially in the wake of his trial for treason in spring 1924. Though media framing theory emphasizes the role frames play in an audience's understanding of a given news text, it also acknowledges that interpretation varies between individuals, thereby rendering it impossible to conclude that all readers regarded Hitler as a political nonentity by the end of 1924. But the methodological breakdown of the frames within the 200 articles included in this study revealed differences in rhetoric, structure and frequency that lent greater emphasis to the non-credible frame and likely had significant impact on American public opinion of Hitler in the 1920s. At the end of the decade, when his party entered into municipal elections and began laying the groundwork for his takeover the chancellorship in 1933, the American press would have had to reorient its coverage of a man who would one day trigger World War II and reevaluate his significance for readers who had long forgotten the goals of his movement.

## Acknowledgment

This author is thankful to Dr. Copeland, A.J. Fletcher Professor at Elon University, for the advice he provided throughout the research and writing process. The author also thanks the reviewers who offered constructive feedback on this article.

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<sup>73</sup> Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 112.

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# An Examination of Native Americans in Film and Rise of Native Filmmakers

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## Abstract

*This paper explored the role of Native Americans in the Hollywood film industry and their actions to establish authentic representations of their population and culture in the media. Using academic literature, film analyses, and contemporary film reviews and articles, the author created a synthesis of the history of Native Americans in film. The author concluded that by becoming producers, directors, and writers of their own stories, American Indians have regained control of their images and been able to combat stereotypes and the exclusion of Native Americans in the creative process. Positive social change for minority populations can be optimized when these populations are in control of their own images in film and media.*

## I. Introduction

One can use art, music, literature, television and film to trace patterns in society. Since the invention of moving images in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, film has been a particularly powerful medium. Films have served as escapist fantasies, allowing audiences to enter astonishing worlds and encounter wild and colorful characters. Movies have also been used to convey truths about society that are more easily digested in a fictional format. Difficult topics such as the nature of humanity, love, and war have all been explored with film as the tool that disseminates these themes into the consciousness of the masses. With the rise of mass media and popular culture came the onset of a collective consciousness that could be shared by people all over the world, rather than people of a particular culture relying on their own ancestry and specific history. George Lipsitz wrote in his book, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, "Instead of relating to the past through a shared sense of place or ancestry, consumers of electronic mass media can experience a common heritage with people they have never seen" (Lipsitz 5). This shared cultural experience and spread of information, essentially the enlightenment of disconnected cultures to the activities of one another through mass media, would seem, on the surface, to enrich understanding across lines of ancestry and heritage. Yet basing one's knowledge solely on images viewed in the media comes with great risk when members of these cultures are misrepresented in a stereotypical, inaccurate, or skewed manner.

With increased ability to disseminate information comes the responsibility of presenting images that are accurate and factual. Lipsitz continues to write, ". . . [consumers] can acquire memories of a past to which they have no geographic or biological connection" (Lipsitz 5). His statement brings to mind the sharing of cultures through film, but in America, the culture most frequently depicted is that of the white majority. Many

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**Keywords:** Native Americans, creative control, minorities in film, stereotyping, redface in film  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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images of this segment of the population have been transmitted over the past century. Yet minority populations have been woefully underrepresented or misrepresented within the cultural sharing taking place in mass media. When one surveys popular films over the years, it is readily apparent that Native Americans have been often been stereotyped or left out entirely. Native Americans have been inaccurately represented in film throughout history, but contemporary Native filmmakers have found a solution by taking creative control in film production and crafting their own images.

## II. Early Stereotypes

Throughout history, Native Americans have remained one of America's most marginalized minorities. As with any minority population, the American Indian population's challenges, struggles and progressive strides are reflected in popular culture. Hollywood and the American film industry have long represented Indians unfavorably. In much the same manner that American colonists forced Indians off their native land, filmmakers have often relegated Native American characters to roles wherein they have been typecast as minor characters displaying stereotypical, historically inaccurate behavior. That is not to say that American Indians have not been present in film. On the contrary, they existed as staple characters for a large portion of the twentieth century, especially in the popular Western genre. This marginalizing of the population has been manifested in the creation of harmful and one-dimensional stereotypes. The American government recognizes 562 Indian tribes, and while 229 of them are based in Alaska, the rest are located in 33 other states (NCAI 2). With each of these tribes come distinctly different traditions and histories that cannot be generalized, but are repeatedly compressed to one ambiguous culture for the purposes of film. Additionally, realistic and whole images of Indians and their stories are drastically underrepresented in films throughout history and in present day. American Indian filmmakers have had to fight to create an artistic voice for themselves and carve a space for expression through film.

Native American characters in twentieth century films have ranged from stereotypes including the bloodthirsty, raging beast to the noble savage. Still other Indian characters, be they heroines, villains, or neutral, were flat characters with little to no character development or dynamic range in their personalities. These stereotypes have their origins in popular American literature dating as far back as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, author of *Celluloid Indians*, notes that popular stories centered on Native American savagery served as outlets for violence and pent up aggression in an early American society that prided manners and respectability. In these stories, the Native American population was seen as bad, though individual members could be represented as good. These stereotypes continued for years. One author, James Fenimore Cooper, began publishing a series of stories titled *The Leatherstocking Tales* in 1841 (LOC). Kilpatrick emphasizes that Cooper is the main creator of the two traditionally most pervasive stereotypes: the noble savage and the bloodthirsty savage, or more generally and simplistically, the good and bad Indian (Kilpatrick 2). The bloodthirsty savage is a vicious, animalistic beast, attacking white men and kidnapping white children. The noble savage is a wise, exotic being unfettered by society and at one with nature. Dan Georgakas acknowledges in his essay *They Have Not Spoken* that the emergence of the noble savage stereotype was an improvement over the rabid savage character, but only at the "lowest level," as it tells the audience nothing about real Native American culture (Georgakas 26). These two stereotypes grew from their literary origins to become icons in visual art, and thus the progression to filmic imagery was natural and likely inevitable.

Modern Indian filmmakers have made positive progress with representation of native peoples since the days of popular Western films featuring cowboys pitted against or aided by one-dimensional Indian characters. Georgakas posits that Indians have so often been the vicious villains in the beloved Western epics because those characters are used to reveal the evil and bestial human nature that white culture refused to ever portray or acknowledge about Indians, a theory backed by Kilpatrick. Georgakas further explained that the guilt of the white majority is often demonstrated through one white villain who wants to massacre the native population or execute some otherwise dastardly deed (Georgakas 26). Yet such a blatantly deplorable portrayal of racism and persecution of American Indians fails to address real and nuanced issues of race and culture that existed and remain in present day.

Furthermore, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's book, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, discusses the noble savage convention and elaborates on the habitually harmful practices of casting and portraying Native Ameri-

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can characters. For example, the Indian character may be portrayed in films as wise and peace loving, yet that same character would also be taught important skills by an Anglo hero (Shohat and Stam 194). The authors reference the sympathetic film *A Man Called Horse* in particular, pointing out the absurdity that the white character would teach the Indian about a bow and arrow, a weapon used by Native Americans for decades (Shohat and Stam 194). Repeatedly, Indians and Indian culture are discounted in this manner and audiences learn nothing that is culturally accurate about this population.

Though it may be simple to argue that the stereotypes of noble savage and bloodthirsty savage are a relic of the distant past and now widely seen as outdated, it remains important to recognize that James Fenimore Cooper, author of the previously mentioned series *The Leatherstocking Tales*, wrote *The Last of the Mohicans*, which was subsequently made into a popular film in 1992 (Kilpatrick 3). As Kilpatrick writes, the nineties were considered a time of “heightened sensitivity and new sensibilities” regarding race, yet the one-dimensional depictions of Native people were still very much present (Kilpatrick 3). In *Native Americans on Film: Conversations, Teaching, and Theory*, the author wrote, “Because the power of First Cinema drives the film market, imbuing viewers with perceptions of what Native film should look like, the need to refuse stereotypical representations of Native peoples still exists in North America” (Marubbio, Buffalohead 2). Certainly in present day, the notion that Native Americans are either noble or evil savages has been shown to be inarguably false and a gross misrepresentation. Mass consciousness has evolved to the point where those stereotypes are not assumed. Therefore, the question must be asked, what does society know about real Native American culture? From many films that have had box office success and popular appeal, the answer would be regrettably little. Contemporary popular representations of Indians such as *Pocahontas* (1995) or *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) put the spotlight on Indians, but there is still very little valuable or authentic information about the history or culture of contemporary Native Americans.

### III. Revisionism and Representation

One major challenge for Native Americans in film is not just representation, but accurate representation. Faye D. Ginsburg, in her essay “Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media,” provides further evidence that the impact of images depicting specific populations on film is historically widespread (Ginsburg 39). She cites *Nanook of the North* (1922) as proving that “the current impact of media’s rapidly increasing presence and circulation in people’s lives and the globalization of media that it is part of . . . are not simply phenomena of the past two decades” (Ginsburg 39). *Nanook of the North* was promoted as a documentary about indigenous people in the Arctic, yet in truth was a largely fictional movie with scenes set up by the director. The film created an impression among its large viewing audience wherein people developed a false idea of how the Natives lived. Considering *Nanook* was made almost a century ago, this problem is deeply rooted in cinema history.

Certainly, many scholars and members of the Native community have spoken out about this issue throughout the past several decades. Lumping together the facets of multiple tribes into one flat image of a Native American has had ramifications ranging from over-generalized movies to tipis and drums being sold as children’s toys, despite the fact that only Plains Indians ever lived in tipis and those are just a selection of tribes from the 562 in existence (NMAI). Activist and author Ward Churchill uses his book *Fantasies of the Master Race* to elaborate on issues concerning American Indians, particularly in the context of literature and cinema. Many scholars today feel that he is inflammatory and some Native people do not accept him in the movement, but Churchill continues to be prevalent in the literature surrounding this topic. He refers to what Hollywood has done in terms of melding Indian culture together and ignoring regional differences as a “space/time compression” (Churchill 172). He posits this has been done so repetitively that it has had numerous negative consequences (Churchill 172). Churchill refers to this compression as revisionism, but the term revisionism does not always necessarily carry negative connotations, and it is heavily employed by many in the discussion of Native Americans in film.

In fact, revisionism can also refer to the films that inverted common plotlines and narrative structures to give Native people nuanced and more accurate likenesses and stories in Westerns. Scholars Margo Kasdan and Susan Tavernetti analyze revisionism in the 1970 film *Little Big Man*, identifying the concept as a positive notion. While still definitively part of the Western film genre, *Little Big Man* turned convention on its head and showed the Cheyenne tribe as a dynamic and cooperative society retaining many realistic tradi-

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tions, and alluded to the harsh treatment and displacement of their people committed by white society (Kasdan and Tevernetti 121). The film constantly draws comparison between the functional Natives who are in tune with nature and the cyclical seasons and the white people who by comparison are more savage and less functional. Of course, this film is a standout among many less progressive and more typical films of the era. As Native filmmaking has progressed, it has become increasingly apparent that Native filmmakers are the key to changing the narrative, in effect, rewriting the story that has been told hundreds of times.

#### IV. Whitewashing

An additional facet to changing the story lies in the visual aesthetic of the film, which inherently includes the actors. A problematic stereotype arises from the physical appearance of Indians in film. Whitewashing, meaning the casting of white actors as characters of non-white races, has long been a pervasive problem for many minority actors and filmmakers. Shohat and Stam point out that because of white cultural dominance and Anglo ethnocentrism, white beauty is often held as the standard in even majority non-white countries, existing as “the mythical norms of Eurocentric esthetics” (Shohat and Stam 322). Casting white actors in Native American roles, ignoring the talent and contribution of Indian actors, has been occurring for decades. In an essay by Ted Jojola, “Absurd Reality II: Hollywood Goes to the Indians” found within *Hollywood’s Indian*, he addresses how absurd these casting practices became, especially in the mid-1980s (Jojola 15). In a film titled *The Legend of Walks Far Woman* (1984), Raquel Welch, an actress of the time widely regarded as a sex symbol, played the lead role of Sioux warrior Walks Far Woman (Jojola, 15). The connection to what Shohat and Stam write about Eurocentric beauty in the casting of Welch is obvious, and it also relates back to box office numbers and commercial interests. Jojola goes on to reference the film *Outrageous Fortune* (1987) in which famed comedian George Carlin plays an Indian scout (Jojola 15). Though these examples date back a couple decades, this practice is still employed today. One can reference the *Lone Ranger* reboot of 2013, in which white actor Johnny Depp plays Tonto, engaging in what many critics call “redface.” Depp has long been considered a versatile actor, but this casting choice crossed the line in what was considered by many a racist and inappropriate decision. It ultimately boils down to another white person cast as non-white character. Still, *Time* reporter Lily Rothman reported in an investigative culture article that Comanche film advisor Wallace Coffey was not offended by the choice, but rather pleased to see a Native American character in a mainstream film with a huge studio budget (Rothman 2013). Though some members of the Comanche population may have accepted Depp in this role, the fact remains that audiences learn nothing about present-day Indian culture and do not see an Indian actor in a role they are qualified for. By casting white people over Indians consistently, Hollywood sends a clear message about whom they value. Additionally, Jojola explains how Hollywood often appropriates and blurs the lines of Indian culture through revisionism, in which the traditions of completely different tribes are mixed and oversimplified and attributed to the wrong people (Jojola, 13). This practice has since influenced Natives as they have had to play into these stereotypes to contribute to an in-demand tourist trade, creating a strange dual reality for the modern population.

#### V. Native Filmmakers Taking Control

A major reason why these indigenous voices are sparse in film is because Native filmmakers have traditionally been few and far between. White males have long dominated the film industry, and since they are at the creative helm, they have served their own interests, told their own stories, and been bound to popular commercial demands. Yet, Indian filmmakers have been on the rise in recent decades. These storytellers have headed up successful documentaries with accurate facts and integrity in artistic voice, and have moved into more narrative storytelling as they have gained traction, as exhibited by successful films such as *Smoke Signals* (1998) and *Powwow Highway* (1989). The future of Native American cinema exists in veteran writers and directors, like documentary filmmaker Sandra Osawa, who have paved the way for rising young storytellers, such as director Sydney Freeland, whose 2014 film *Drunktown’s Finest* premiered at Sundance Film Festival. These creators will strive to tell truthful and multifaceted stories that allow Native Americans in film to not be defined solely by a stereotype or their racial identity, but rather to represent a complete experience of a human being who has lived within that culture.

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In the second half of the twentieth century, Native filmmakers took control of their portrayals in media and started a wave of production for their own films. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick's book *Celluloid Indians* looks at Native Americans in film and provides a breadth of historical context for the period she discusses. As detailed by Kilpatrick (1999), throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a wave of Native American activism hit America as these activists worked to improve their social conditions. Beginning in the 1960s, Kilpatrick writes that "civil rights issues had become a major focus of the media and of legislators, and Native Americans were beginning to be considered one of the oppressed minorities in America" (Kilpatrick 66). She then explains in regard to their rights and liberties, "Instead of other people and institutions saying what the American Indian needed or wanted, they were determined to say for themselves what was best for them" (66). The same statement applies to Indians taking agency over their own cinema. Agency is one of the most important facets of social change. An individual must first feel that they have the capacity and power to effect change in a larger context in order to produce social progress. This idea certainly holds true in the context of social movements, and it is important to view film and imagery in popular culture as a tool to effect social change. As a mirror for society, popular culture is also subject to social change. Creating a political and social dialogue about American Indians goes hand-in-hand with achieving greater representation.

Documentaries became and have remained a powerful medium for Native American creators. Beige Luciano-Adams wrote an article for the International Documentary Association, titled "Their AIM is True: Native American Filmmakers Look to Define a New Era," that synthesizes the trajectory of trailblazing filmmakers in the sixties and onward with the path of modern filmmakers. Luciano-Adams references Native American Public Telecommunications, a minority consortia organization that received a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1976 (Luciano-Adams). In the years since, NAPT has remained crucial to the Native media industry and today maintain an important resource: a website titled Native Telecom, where thorough and categorized information regarding Indian filmmakers and films, past and present, can be found. The website contains an extensive database of such work and remains a valuable industry resource, both for people involved in production as well as scholars. Luciano-Adams includes revolutionary filmmaker Sandra Osawa in her discussion (Luciano-Adams). Osawa produced a documentary series for NBC in the seventies called *The Native American Series*, which was "the first to be produced, acted, written and researched by Native Americans in the US" (Luciano-Adams). Native filmmakers were facilitated in getting involved with documentary film production in large part because of the support for NAPT from PBS, and because documentary was issue-driven which corresponded well with the political and social movements of the time (Luciano-Adams). In more recent years, Luciano-Adams notes a shift to narrative film, which is significant because while documentary is an extremely valuable medium, narrative films usually draw larger audiences and are often distributed more widely than documentary pieces. Narrative work can have a widespread positive influence on perceptions of Native American stories by spreading accurate depictions of Native peoples to audiences that may otherwise never seek access to such information (Luciano-Adams).

## VI. Contemporary Native American Films

Several relatively recent films that have been garnered critical acclaim exemplify the shift to narrative film. *Smoke Signals* (1998), a feature film written by Sherman Alexie and directed by Chris Eyre, is widely regarded as the best example of contemporary Native filmmakers taking agency over their own story. Amanda J. Cobb wrote an essay for the 2003 edition of *Hollywood's Indian* titled "This Is What It Means to Say Smoke Signals" in which she discusses the films' impact. She writes that the film, the first feature to be written, directed, acted and co-produced by Native Americans, "is an achievement because it exists at all" (Cobb 206). Joanna Hearne's book *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western* posits that the film is a breakthrough because of the extent of Native control over a studio-backed feature that ended up appealing to Native and non-Native audiences alike, all while being a Native production in a Native location (Hearne 267).

The primary themes of *Smoke Signals* are father-son relationships and identity, which results in a story that, while told by American Indians, is widely relatable. John Mihelich wrote "Smoke or Signals? American Popular Culture and the Challenge to Hegemonic Images of American Indians in Native American Film" and uses his appreciation for Alexie's work and interest in how it impacted popular perception of Indians to base his essay around a series of questions about the film that he posed to young students. His essay is unique in that it takes an almost survey-like approach to generating information about cultural impact. Interestingly, his

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students identified the alcoholism plot line as negatively impacting Indian image, so he draws mixed conclusions from his research (Mihelich 134). Students found the film enlightening because of its realistic portrayal of reservation life, while they also found it to reinforce the modern stereotype of rampant alcoholism on Native American reservations. Other scholars interestingly pinpoint the stereotypes in *Smoke Signals*. *Seeing Red: Hollywood's Pixeled Skins*, a book edited by LeAnne Howe, Harvey Markowitz, and Denise J. Cummings, spends each chapter analyzing a specific movie with Indian characters, so naturally they include a chapter on *Smoke Signals*. Howe writes about how she grew up surrounded by Indians who held diverse occupations and that she was never exposed to alcoholism, thus she wishes the film relied less on some stereotypes such as alcoholic, absent fathers and abused mothers (Howe 115). Still, it remains accepted by scholars that *Smoke Signals* is a seminal work for Indian filmmaking.

## VII. The Sundance Institute's Native Film Program

Another major development in Native cinema in the last twenty years has been the creation and evolution of the Sundance Institute's Native American and Indigenous Program, commonly referred to as the Native Film Program. The Sundance Institute is one of the foremost outlets for independent filmmakers and works to support them both financially and creatively (Sundance). The Institute famously organizes the annual Sundance Film Festival, one of the most renowned independent film festivals in the country, a place where talented filmmakers showcase their films and potentially acquire distribution opportunities that would not otherwise be possible. Sundance Founder and President Robert Redford has a long-standing commitment to supporting indigenous filmmakers and believes wholeheartedly in the program because "Native American and Indigenous filmmakers are rooted in a long and deep tradition of storytelling" (Sundance). Redford's commitment underscores the fact that, perhaps more than any other group, Native Americans are generally most equipped to be expert filmmakers because storytelling is so entrenched in their culture.

Beverly R. Singer, author of *Wiping the War paint Off The Lens*, quotes scholar and art curator Rick Hill of the Tuscarora tribe as saying that creating visual art "comes from our ancestors to which we are bound to add our own distinctive (traditional) patterns" (Singer 9). The oral tradition is an integral part of Indian culture. Stories are passed down through generations to teach history and morals to young members of the tribes. Logically, oral tradition would be crucial in a time before technology or even a written language, and as technology evolved, filmmaking and visual art would follow suit as a powerful medium to share stories and aspects of a culture that drastically need to be preserved and have their integrity retained. Many generations of Native Americans grew up in an era where they were faced the dual nature of what they knew to be true about their cultures and what Hollywood told the masses was true. Since the beginning of the Sundance program, Redford has relied on Native American filmmakers to lead the institute. Larry Littlebird and Chris SpottedEagle, two highly respected Native filmmakers, have held leadership roles since the program's inception (Sundance). Littlebird is an actor and director as well as a storyteller in the art of oral tradition, and he believes that "the word is what we hold precious" (Bezdek). Chris SpottedEagle is a documentary director, and these two men were at the forefront of a surge in Native films in the eighties and nineties. The current director of the Native Film Program, N. Bird Runningwater grew up on the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico (Sundance). During his time as the head of the program, Runningwater has taken the Native Film Program's initiative and gone global, establishing filmmaking workshop and labs for indigenous filmmakers in New Zealand and Australia (Sundance).

While *Smoke Signals* earned well-deserved praise and status as a major and oft-cited example of Native film, the fact remains that the film was released in 1998. Thus in 2014, sixteen years after *Smoke Signals* hit the mainstream, it is important to continue to reshape the collective consciousness as new Native works are created. Younger generations have taken up the mantle of the older, trailblazing creators. *Drunktown's Finest* is a more recent example of successful Native cinema, having been released in 2014 at Sundance through the Native Film Program. This film is especially timely because 2014 marked the twentieth anniversary of the program. The anniversary was celebrated by a film exhibition at New York City's Museum of Modern Art in July 2014, titled "Carte Blanche: Sundance Institute's Native American and Indigenous Program" (Michelson). *Drunktown* is one of the films that premiered at "Carte Blanche" and while it received mixed reviews, its existence inarguably makes it a success in Native filmmaking. Thirty-four-year-old director Sydney Freeland identifies as both Native American and transgender, which influenced the narrative of her

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film (Michelson). *Drunktown* follows three protagonists: an alcoholic young father, a transgender woman with self-esteem issues, and a college student dealing with her adoptive parents while yearning to discover her biological family (Rapold). Freeland is quoted as saying that she was inspired to make this film because she did not see realistic representations of her people growing up, and she wanted to tell a story that she could relate to (Michelson). This film is important because it achieves the goal of telling a human story that is set in the context of Native American lives. Journalist Simon Moya-Smith writes, “Demons, discovery, humiliation, redemption—there have been plenty of films that offer stories on the complexities of the human condition, but very few have put a Native face to it” (Moya-Smith). This sentiment sums up the larger picture of Native representation in popular culture. When the creators themselves are American Indians, this representation becomes possible.

*Drunktown’s Finest* is not without its critics. Several noted that the acting seemed flat, and the complicated plot required a more intricate telling than was presented. But Redford, for one, stands behind this movie, stating that “it’s a tough movie, but it’s a tough life” (Moya-Smith). *Drunktown’s Finest* and other recent films that follow in the same vein show the complexities of life for Natives on and off the reservation, a subject that films did not address until Native creators like Freeland took control of the cinematic narrative.

## VIII. Conclusion

Native peoples have worked hard in the past decades to create narrative stories in the context of their culture. Kristin Dowell explains in her journal article, “Indigenous Media Gone Global” for *American Anthropologist*, “A burgeoning field of scholarship on indigenous media has examined how media technologies are appropriated and transformed to meet the needs of local indigenous communities” (Dowell 377). The digital age has created many new opportunities for filmmaking in general, all of which American Indian directors and storytellers can take, and have taken, advantage. Today, an individual can buy a relatively low-priced digital single-lens reflex camera to shoot footage, use professional editing software on a personal computer, and choose from one of many sharing platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo to share a product with the world. Because the means of film production and distribution are more accessible, a greater number of Native filmmakers are able to tell their stories using film as the medium. These films sometimes even depict stories traditionally used by elders to teach moral lessons to youth and transform them into dramatic narrative pieces, thus employing multiple aspects of their culture in the media space Indians have created (Dowell 378).

Images of Native Americans in film throughout American history have told a great deal about the social position of the population. Ugly stereotypes persisted for years, yet waves of activism and a newfound sense of agency allowed Native filmmakers to take control of telling their own stories. The Native film world has flourished in recent years, and trends indicate an encouraging incline in Indian film production. Society must support Native people as they push for more true and accurate representation and foster a climate in our nation where popular culture represents the interests, cultures and lives of every member of its population.

## Acknowledgments

The author extends sincere thanks to Dr. Michael Frontani, associate professor of communications at Elon University, for his guidance, support, and help with revisions, without which this paper could not have been published. The author is also thankful to Dr. Clyde Ellis, professor of history at Elon University, for his advice and recommendation of additional resources, which greatly influenced the trajectory of this paper.

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# A Framing Analysis of Media Coverage of the Rodney King Incident and Ferguson, Missouri, Conflicts

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## Abstract

*This study explored how news organizations presented the Ferguson, Missouri, story in comparison with a similar Rodney King incident that happened two decades ago. The purpose of this study was to analyze if and how the mainstream news media have progressed in covering racially sensitive news stories. Background research on the concept of media frames enabled the author to conduct a comparative analysis on eight newspaper articles, two broadcast segments, and two magazine covers. Overarching frames focused on the conflict between the public and authorities, black hardship, and black male youth hardship. These frames influence public reaction to stories such as the tragedy in Ferguson, Missouri.*

## I. Introduction

The news media have been vital to informing the public and shaping public opinion in America for centuries. These “gatekeepers” of the news hold incredible power in the selection of news stories and the manner in which they are told.

In recent events, news stories have become more inflammatory and politicized. As the public becomes more aware of different organizations’ underlying political values and the media’s motivation for presenting stories in certain ways, viewers have opted to seek news that is catered, or framed, to support his or her own views. While framing is not intentional by the media, it is the inherent result of the manner in which writers and producers choose to present the facts on controversial cases.

In light of recent racially charged news stories detailing the conflict in Ferguson, Missouri, a retrospective look at how a similar story such as the Rodney King incident was presented in another racially tense time period may give insight into the progression of media frames. A comparative analysis of these stories sheds light on changes in media framing that have occurred over the last two decades. The following research will explore the concept of media framing and how public opinion has been shaped on racially charged stories in the past compared to today.

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**Keywords:** media framing and bias, agenda setting, race, mainstream mass media, public opinion  
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This undergraduate project was conducted as a partial requirement of a research course in communications.

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## II. Literature Review

### *Framing theory and history*

Media framing is the manner in which information is presented to audiences at its most basic form. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) laid the groundwork for this concept by defining framing as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (p. 3).

There are many different types of frames and many different approaches to theorizing framing. The line between this concept and other concepts such as “agenda setting” and “priming” are often blurred. Agenda setting is how the mass media chooses to focus attention on specific topics. Priming is the process of determining which factors are important regarding specific topics (Iyengar, Kinder 1987). Gamson (1988) argues that social movements are created when the mass media wrap their positions into “holistic issue packages,” which are composed of many signature elements.

All of these theories boil down to the concept that these cognitive schemas ultimately enable an individual to efficiently classify and process information encountered in social environments. Frames simplify complex issues in different ways. Some frames are composed with persuasive intent; some might emphasize causal or moral aspects. While none of these different types of frames might tell the whole story, any story shared about a complex issue will always be incomplete. Frames satisfy society’s need for explanation and prescriptive action and facilitate the public to make informed decisions.

Mass media have a strong impact by constructing social reality “by framing images of reality . . . in a predictable and patterned way” (McQuail, 1987, p. 331). But audiences do not uniformly react to media messages because individuals construct their own meaning based on the messages they receive rather than being passive audiences. Of course, journalists develop and crystalize meaning of reality and contribute to shaping public opinion.

### *Mass Media Evolution: framing in the 1960s to present day*

Historically, mass media have selectively gathered information about current events, framed it into news stories, and distributed it through various news platforms. The government has historically adopted a hands-off policy based on “the belief that diverse owners will produce a broad array of views, sustaining sound democracy” (Baker, 2007, p. 15).

However, America has experienced a trend toward deregulation, definitively marked by the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. This led to rapid consolidation in the media industry and a focus on commercialization and financial soundness.

Now the explosion of the Internet and rise of the 24-hour cable news model have led to broader content and more ideological orientations than in the past, argues Shapiro (2011). Search engines, blogs, and social networks allow individuals to look for information on a specific topic and not have to scan news sources. Users have come to expect personalized information rather than accept standardized offerings. This has forced the news media to cater to users’ desires and deliver content that they are looking for. The result is news information that is framed to cater to specific audiences with the objective of increased profits. Many scholars argue “much of today’s partisan news verges on ‘propaganda’ masquerading as objective facts and analysis” (Pavlik, 2008).

### *Present day framing effects on race relations*

America reached a watershed in its history of race relations on November 5, 2008, with the election of the country’s first African American president, Barack Obama. Racial considerations continue to play a significant, at times defining, role in shaping public opinion across a broad array of politics (Shapiro, 2011). The commercialism of today’s media along with the public’s demand for personalized content drives mass media. There is a consistent “racial divide” between opinions on Whites and African Americans across a broad range of policy areas, both race-targeted and non-targeted (Kinder and Winter 2001).

Shapiro (2011) states that there have been three key developments in substantive areas of interest regarding race and the media. He argues that the dramatic demographic transformation since the 1960s, technological innovations, and evolving substantive interests in identity, institutions, and the boundaries of

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politics have shaped present-day race and media relations.

The mass media's heightened awareness and focus on race leads to targeted agenda setting and resulting framing. These frames fuel social stereotypes and create a "cultural representation of the individual, as well as a mental representation within the individual" (Scheufele, 2004).

After understanding the way that news stories are packaged and presented in frames and understanding the capitalistic nature of modern mass media, it becomes apparent that there is much to explore as to why and how the mass media influence race relations and the public's perception of race in America. The way that racially charged news stories (both hard and soft) are framed has the potential to influence public opinion and race relations on a large scale.

### III. Methodology

In order to explore the progression of media coverage of racially focused news stories, a comparative analysis has been performed on coverage of the Rodney King incident in 1991-1992 to the more recent incident of the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Given the time and space limitations of this study's research, the breadth of news sources analyzed was limited to newspaper articles, broadcast, and magazine covers.

Eight print articles, two broadcast segments, and two magazine covers are cross-referenced—an equal number of sources from each incident. These two events were chosen for comparison based on their factual similarities and the two-decade time span between the two events. Similarities and differences in the coverage of these two events may reveal trends in media framing of these types of events over the past two decades.

The first two *New York Times* articles were selected for comparison based on each article's date of publication—each was published immediately after each incident. This comparison aims to gauge initial mainstream print media reaction to each incident. Articles 3 and 4 were selected from *The Wall Street Journal* based on the article's subject of the aftermath of each incident. This comparison aims to analyze the framing of the resulting riots and unrest of each incident from a historically conservative news source. Articles 5 and 6 were selected from *The New York Times* based on the article's subject of the public reaction and racial tensions resulting from each incident. This comparison aims to analyze the framing of race relations from arguably one of the world's premiere news sources. Articles 7 and 8 were selected from *The Washington Post* based on each article's focus on the authorities' perspective on each incident.

Next, the initial ABC broadcast coverage of the Rodney King incident is cross-referenced with a more recent ABC broadcast coverage of the Ferguson, Missouri, incident.

Lastly, two *Time* magazine covers are compared based on imagery and language used to present the two stories and subsequent unrest.

As detailed in Appendix 1, the Rodney King incident was covered by Articles 1, 3, 5 and 7, along with broadcast Segment 1 and magazine Cover 1; while the Ferguson incident was covered by Articles 2, 4, 6, and 8, along with Segment 2 and Cover 2.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze if and how the mainstream news media has progressed in covering racially sensitive news stories. For this purpose, the following four research questions were formulated:

RQ. 1: How did media present the Rodney King incident?

RQ. 2: How did media present the Ferguson, Missouri, incident?

RQ. 3: What are the similarities of coverage between the two events?

RQ. 4: How has the media framed the public reaction and riots of these two events?

## IV. Findings

### *Print media coverage of Rodney King story*

#### **Wording:**

The wording of a lead paragraph of a hard news article reveals a lot about what the story will cover as well as the tone and frame in which the story will be shaped. The wording an author chooses sets the tone and style in which the reader will receive the message.

Article 1 covers the initial story of the beating of Rodney King using phrases such as “jarred,” “failed,” and “official abuse of minorities” in the lead paragraph. These words grab the reader’s attention because they pull the reader into a larger concept than just the facts of this specific incident.

Articles 3 and 5 also include inflammatory phrases such as “outraged,” “threat,” “racial discrimination,” “brutality,” and “theft,” which paint a larger picture of the incident at hand and contribute to an overarching theme of racial tension.

#### **Frame of black hardship:**

In Article 1, King is described as “speaking from a wheelchair and wearing a cast on one ankle.” King is first quoted in the article, making his viewpoint the most salient. He is quoted as saying, “I’m just glad I’m not dead.” This use of King as the initial primary source of the article shifts the focus towards his personal plight and the frame of black hardship.

More quotes from King include, “I was scared for my life, so I lay down real calmly and took it like a man.” The author uses a total of five quotes from King and only one from the police chief and one from a firsthand witness.

Article 5 illustrates King’s hardship, but also demonstrates his desire for protesters to cease violent activity in response to the incident. By directly quoting King’s remarks, *The New York Times* gives incredible potency to his words. His statement, “We’ll get our justice. They won the battle, but they haven’t won the war. We’ll have our day in Court, and that’s all we want,” contributes to the frame of black hardship because by using the word “we,” King is implying that Blacks as a whole lost this symbolic battle.

Article 1 includes another description of King that adds to this frame of black disadvantage. Including the fact that King was unemployed right before stating that he was hospitalized for two days, instills a sense of sympathy in the reader that he might not be able to afford the hospital visit. Including the fact that he was last released from prison only a few months prior, makes that fact less important.

#### **Civil rights leaders’ frame versus authorities’:**

An author’s subtle wording can reveal much about his or her intentional message buried under the facts of a story.

The majority of attributions included in Article 1 come from civil rights leaders and King himself. The majority of quotes serve one of two purposes: to demonstrate King’s misfortune or to demonstrate the Los Angeles Police Department’s wrongdoing.

For example, the author says, “Civil rights organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union and black and Hispanic advocacy groups joined in the public condemnation, saying there was a pattern of violence and racial abuse among Los Angeles law-enforcement agencies.” By including this statement prior to saying that the police chief “insisted that the beating was ‘an aberration’” pits the two parties against each other.

The next sentence further establishes this frame. By following the police chief’s statement with a contradictory statement from witnesses of the event, this further demonstrates the conflict between the public and the authorities because it persuades the reader to choose sides.

Article 7 from *The Washington Post* presents a starkly different perspective on the incident. Instead of focusing on King’s persona, this author presents the story from a police perspective saying, “the mere fact that King would not stop created an atmosphere of danger and suspicion.” This statement casts the story in a very different light than most other stories, which focused on police wrong-doing. One of the final sentences from the article highlights the frame of conflict. “Perhaps the greatest paradox of all will be seen in the days to come, when, in spite of feelings so strong as to defy logic, those who are so critical of the police will not hesitate to call on them for help when danger looms.”

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### *Print media coverage of Ferguson, Missouri, story*

#### **Wording:**

Articles 2, 4, 6, and 8 are all characterized by each author's factual and unemotional tone. However, the frame of Articles 2 and 6 become evident with quotes, such as "in an explanation that met with outrage and skepticism in the largely African-American community," and "The killing, on a residential street in Ferguson, set off weeks of civil unrest — and a national debate — fueled by protesters' outrage over what they called a pattern of police brutality against young black men."

The inflammatory tone in these articles is taken on by the quotes from Brown's parents and civil rights groups. In Article 2 the authors set the frame with sentences such as "the heightened tensions between the police and the African-American community were on display." Then quotes such as "No justice, no peace!" from protesters are used to support the authors' frame.

Meaning can be found in the authors' words in Article 2 regarding the police's account of the story. They write that "[the police] released what they said was the fullest account of the shooting that they could provide." By including the phrase "what they said" the authors imply that the police may or may not be releasing the fullest account they could provide. This causes the reader to think along the same lines as the authors.

#### **Frame of black male facing youth misfortune:**

In the wake of similar stories such as Trayvon Martin and Emmett Till, the facts of this story fall into this frame of an innocent black youth whose life ended too soon. Article 2 emphasizes Brown's innocence by saying he was "planning to begin college classes on Monday" and protesters were "leaving behind teddy bears and balloons" to memorialize the eighteen-year-old. The authors also included the detail that "he had been walking to his grandmother's house when the shooting occurred," which has youthful implications.

The most significant factor contributing to this frame in Article 2 is the quote from Brown's mother, Lesley McSpadden: "You took my son away from me. Do you know how hard it was for me to get him to stay in school and graduate? You know how many black men graduate? Not many. Because you bring them down to this type of level, where they feel like they don't got nothing to live for anyway. 'They're going to try to take me out anyway.'"

#### **Frame of Blacks versus authorities:**

The authors' description of Brown's father's sign, which read, "Ferguson police just executed my unarmed son," illustrates this frame in Article 2. The subsequent statement from Chief Belmar that "the genesis of this was a physical confrontation," demonstrates conflicting perspectives on the story.

The conflict between the two parties in Article 2 is highlighted in the authors' paragraph concerning the 'heightened tensions' between the police and the community. "A crowd estimated in the thousands flooded the streets near the scene of the shooting, some of them chanting 'No justice, no peace.' They were met by hundreds of police officers in riot gear, carrying rifles and shields, as well as K-9 units."

Article 6 utilizes this framework heavily with quotes such as "protesters [are] outrage[d] over what they call a pattern of police brutality against young black men." The author never provides any further facts or details supporting the protesters' allegations. Quotes such as this give voice and validation to protesters from the media, yet by not substantiating these claims with facts, this may give protesters a false impression.

Article 4 takes on this frame in a different way, using tweeted photographs of the riots as they took place. These photographs depict protesters holding their hands up, displaying the 'Hands up, don't shoot' movement and police using tear gas to break up rioters. These tweeted images display this frame of conflict much differently than other articles.

#### **Theme of discrepancy over facts versus witness testimony:**

Articles 2, 4, 6, and 8 all contained a common theme of a discrepancy over the facts of the shooting of Michael Brown. Article 8 exemplifies this theme by including the varying accounts from multiple witnesses. The author includes the fact that "a friend initially asserted that he had seen Brown get shot in the back." However, the author also includes the forensic evidence that showed that Brown was not shot in the back.

Article 6 also features an image of a protester holding his hands up as a part of the 'Hands up, don't shoot' movement. However, the transcripts released from the investigation in Article 8 include interviews with witnesses, none of whom agreed that Brown had his hands raised during the altercation.

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### *Broadcast media coverage of Rodney King story (Refer to Segment 1 in Appendix II)*

ABC's 1991 initial coverage of the Rodney King story is presented by a middle-aged White male anchor, who uses a neutral and factual tone. The segment is one minute and thirty-two seconds long and presents the facts of the incident first, followed by commentary from community members.

After the anchor introduces the story, the famous footage from an eyewitness showing LAPD officers assaulting Rodney King is played. This footage was rare and eye-opening in 1991 because of the newness of video cameras. The violent footage speaks for itself and demonstrates the LAPD's wrong-doing clearly. Interviews with N.A.A.C.P. member Jose de Sosa further contributes to this frame. He said, "We no longer want to have to wake up each morning not knowing what fear to expect next. Today we are not assured that the police are there to protect us".

Next, an interview with the police chief reveals the facts of the case. He said, "In our review we found that one of our officers struck him with batons between fifty-three and fifty-six times. One officer rendered six kicks and one officer one kick." This quote demonstrates the LAPD's accountability and transparency.

Subsequent footage of the LAPD interacting with protesters and the Watts riots illustrates ABC's frame of the public conflict with the authorities.

### *Broadcast media coverage of Ferguson, Missouri, story (Refer to Segment 2 in Appendix II)*

ABC's coverage of the Ferguson Missouri story is presented by a young White male anchor, who uses a concerned tone. The segment is two-and-half minutes long; the first half details the riots and unrest resulting from the shooting and the second half presents the facts of the case. By presenting the story in this order, this places more importance on the public reaction to the story rather than the facts of the incident.

The first half of the segment features dramatic footage of police in riot gear setting off tear gas and addressing protesters. There is also footage of protesters marching on the streets of Ferguson during the day, holding signs that read "Stop the violence" and "Peace and Prayer for Non-Violence, Michael Brown."

The second half of the segment delves into the specifics of the incident. First, an image of Michael Brown wearing headphones is shown as the reporter explained, "The chief of police telling ABC his officer was hurt in the incident authorities say either Brown or his friend fought with the policeman before the shooting." This pits the innocence of Brown versus the police officer who says he was injured.

Next, there is footage of the police chief giving an interview with the reporter voiceover saying, "He (police chief) says he and his officers are getting death threats daily and says he won't release the name of the officer involved in the shooting unless his officer is charged with a crime or a court makes him, and then he could always appeal. Prosecutors say it could take weeks before they decide if the shooting is a crime." This gives less importance to what the police chief said and more importance to what the reporter discussed.

Lastly, exclusive video of the crime scene with subtitles from a witness is shown. ABC's publication of this video implies a level of trust and credibility to this source. This is powerful footage, however using the subtitles, which include poor grammar and profanities, raises questions regarding ABC's sources' credibility.

### *Magazine covers*

#### **Cover 1**

Rodney King and the 81-second video that sparked race riots in Los Angeles for weeks was the subject of both *Time* magazine's cover and seven cover-related stories in May 1992. The cover of a majorly circulated magazine such as *Time* not only sums up the issues of the day, but the content is presented in a way to sell as many copies and gain as many subscribers as possible.

This particular cover depicts a blazing fire, presumably a result of the riots that occurred as a result of the civil unrest following the acquittal of the police officers who assaulted King. There are also six figures running toward the blaze, possibly insinuating the public's propensity to 'fan the fire' of the tense race relations during that time.

The headline of the cover reads "Can we all get along?" and the subtitle reads "Rodney King May 1, 1992." This message implies that society is not getting along and points to the Rodney King incident and subsequent unrest as the agitator for not getting along.

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## Cover 2

The September 2014 *Time* magazine cover is strikingly similar to the May 1992 cover. This cover also features bright dramatic lights of a protest. However, what's even more striking about this cover is the subject: a dark person on his or her knees with their hands raised up. The headline reads in a smaller understated font, "The tragedy of Ferguson."

There are many assumptions a reader could make from this cover image. A less informed reader might assume that this photo was taken at the incident and that the subject is Michael Brown himself. A more informed reader might assume that the photo was taken of a protestor, who could be found among many protest participants who marched the streets yelling, "Hands up, don't shoot!"

Alternatively, this photo could have been staged to depict the protesters' message and highlight the ongoing conflict between the public and the authorities in Ferguson, Missouri.

Regardless of the reality, the image on the cover is a powerful one. The contrast of light and dark can be interpreted metaphorically or literally depending on the eye of the beholder. The solidarity of the subject is also quite ironic, based on the reality of the situation, which involves thousands of people, if not the entire American public.

The photographer, Scott Olson, was one of the many photographers arrested for documenting what was taking place in the troubled town.

## V. Discussion

Upon careful analysis of newspaper articles, broadcast, and magazine covers depicting both the Rodney King incident in 1991-1992 and the more recent Ferguson, Missouri, incident, notable differences between timeframes became apparent and several overlapping frames became noticeable.

First, almost all print articles contain wording that highlight the conflict and unrest in both situations. Words such as "outrage," "skepticism," and "controversy" inundate these articles. This is notable considering that articles for both stories were published soon after each incident. Considering the limited amount of time for public reaction between the time of the incident and time of publication, this raises the question, 'Did these phrases describe the reality of the public's initial reaction to each situation? Or did the media guide readers to believe this was the prescribed reaction to such events?'

This leads to the discussion of several overlapping frames discovered in many articles. Articles 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 utilize a frame centered on black hardship. Article 1 and 5 utilize primary quotes from King, focusing on his side of the story and his own personal hardship. The fact that King was unemployed can be seen as a pathos appeal to persuade the reader to feel sympathy for the victim who might not have had the means to pay for his hospital stay. Mention of King's previous second-degree robbery conviction also fits in with the black hardship frame.

In comparison, Articles 2, 6, and 8 read much more factually than Article 1. The lead paragraph of Article 2 includes the classic five W's of journalism: who, what, when, where, and why. In contrast, the lead paragraph of Article 1 paints a picture of conflict and violence with broad statements, such as "alleged pattern of police brutality" and "official abuse of minorities."

An overlapping, yet distinct, frame became apparent in Article 2. In the wake of several similar situations to the shooting of Michael Brown, the frame of black male youth misfortune has become salient in mass media. This frame can be seen as a more specific subset of the more general black misfortune frame analyzed in Articles 1 and 7. This frame is characterized by a focus on the innocence of the black male victim and the tragedy of the individual's unfair and untimely death. The final quote from Brown's mother in Article 2 illustrates this relevant frame: "Do you know how hard it was for me to get him to stay in school and graduate? You know how many black men graduate? Not many. Because you bring them down to this type of level, where they feel like they don't got nothing to live for anyway."

Lastly, the most overarching frame the researcher found was focused on the conflict between the Black community and authorities. Every media type analyzed for both stories emphasized the opposition between the Black public and the authorities. What's different among media types and between two timeframes is the persuasion, or lack of persuasion, to choose one side of the conflict.

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There is a clear difference in the framing of the two broadcast segments. ABC's coverage of the Rodney King story in 1991 is factual in tone and presents the hard facts and footage of the incident. In contrast, ABC's more recent coverage of the Ferguson, Missouri, story focuses on the riots and backlash from the incident with dramatic footage of police confronting protestors with tear gas. This focus on the conflict in Ferguson and the criticism of the police takes precedence over the facts of the story in the broadcast segment. There is an evident shift from the reporting style in 1991 versus the framing and reporting of the Ferguson story.

Both Time magazine covers portrayed the events in similar ways. Both images depict bright, dramatic lights that indicate conflict and unrest. Cover 1 is more inflammatory with the statement "Can we all get along" compared to the more general caption, "The tragedy in Ferguson," on Cover 2.

The differences in the print articles are significant in that coverage in Articles 1, 3, and 6 is focused on victim's side of the story and the clearly defined wrongdoing by the authorities. Whereas the coverage in Articles 2, 5, 7, and 8 is more balanced with all facts from each incident and quotes from both witnesses and the police. Articles similar to Article 1 lead the reader to empathize with the victim and resent the authorities, whereas articles similar to Article 2 articulate both the police and the public's perspective on the incident, but strongly persuade the reader to side with the public.

This analysis was limited to three types of mass media communication and 12 total items. While there are many more aspects to consider regarding this topic, time constraints restricted the researcher to the analysis of 12 sources in total.

## VI. Conclusion

News media serve as a powerful mode of communication and have incredible power in influencing public opinion on controversial topics. Agenda setting and framing are inherent to the process of communicating news to the public. These aspects of reporting are necessary to the news process and enable the public to make sense of seemingly unrelated events. For example, individual cases of suffering may be inserted into a larger story to illustrate the nature of the problem in human-interest terms.

This analysis demonstrates the changes and progression of the media's framing of two similar stories that occurred in different contexts. All types of news media utilized an overarching frame focused on the conflict between the public and authority. The print articles and broadcast segments also utilized frames of black disadvantage and used the specific facts from each story to contribute to a larger theme.

These frames are all a part of a broader framing pattern by media. Each news organization and medium handles stories differently than others; however, media consolidation and commercialization impact the message the public receives. Consequentially this impacts the way the public reacts to controversial stories such as the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to extend thanks to Dr. David Copeland, A.J. Fletcher Professor at Elon University, for his guidance, inspiration, and advice, all of which this article could not be published. The author also appreciates numerous reviewers who have helped revise this article.

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## Appendix 1: Sources of stories

### *Print Articles:*

- Article 1) New York Times, "Tape of Beating by Police Revives Charges of Racism," (March 7, 1991)
- Article 2) New York Times, "Grief and Protests Follow Shooting of a Teenager," (August 11, 2014)
- Article 3) Wall Street Journal, "RODNEY KING VERDICT: THE AFTERMATH: Deciding Moment of the Trial May Have Been Five Months Ago," (May 1, 1992)
- Article 4) Wall Street Journal, "Ferguson in Tweets: Violence Erupts Again in Missouri," (August 16, 2014)
- Article 5) New York Times, "Rodney King Speaks Out: 'Can We All Get Along?': A Plea for Calm," (May 2, 1992)
- Article 6) "New York Times *Protests Flare After Ferguson Police Officer Is Not Indicted*," (November 24, 2014)
- Article 7) The Washington Post, "The Rodney King Case Through Police Eyes," (April 4, 1991)
- Article 8) The Washington Post, "Prosecutor releases more Ferguson documents," (December 13, 2014)

### *Broadcast Coverage:*

- Segment 1) ABC, Coverage of Rodney King story
- Segment 2) ABC, Coverage of Michael Brown story

### *Magazine Covers:*

- Cover 1) Time Magazine, May 1992
- Cover 2) Time Magazine, September 2014

## Appendix II

### **Segment 1:**

*ABC Coverage of Rodney King story from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW1ZDIXiuS4>*

*Transcript*

*Anchor:* "And now the story that might never have surfaced if someone hadn't picked up his home video camera. We've all seen the video of Los Angeles Police Officers beating a man they had just pulled over. The city's police chief said today he will support criminal charges against some of the men. Here's ABC's Gary Shepard."

Cue amateur home video of incident

*Reporter:* "Stopped a 25 year old black man last night, then beat him, kicked him, and clubbed him, unaware that an amateur photographer was recording the incident. Gates believes 'assault with a deadly weapon will be one of the charges'

Cue footage of Gates' police statement of the facts.

*Gates:* "In our review we found that one of our officers struck him with batons between fifty-three and fifty-six times. One officer rendered six kicks and one officer one kick."

Cue footage of LAPD, fire of riots, black police officer.

*Reporter:* "Civil rights organizations say the LAPD has a history of brutality and misconduct that goes back a quarter of a century including one incident that sparked the Watts riots. So far this year there have been over 125 complaints of police misconduct filed with watchdog organizations

Cue interview with Jose de Sosa, NAACP.

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*de Sosa*: “We no longer want to have to wake up each morning not knowing what fear to expect next. Today we are not assured that the police are there to protect us.”

Cue reporter

*Reporter*: “But Chief Gates today called the LAPD a model department and said he has no plans to resign.”

## **Segment 2:**

*ABC Coverage of Ferguson story from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khQf4mCzFqU>*

*Transcript*

Anchor: “There’s violence in the streets of St. Louis and incredible pictures are coming in.

Cue video of tear gas and riots.

Anchor: “Police are in riot gear and firing tear gas to break up protesters angry over the shooting death of an unarmed teenager. The police chief is weighing in on whether or not to reveal the officer who shot him.”

Cue reporter.

Reporter: “There are many people here who believe the police could be using a much lighter hand; they arrested two reporters last night and an elected official because they didn’t move fast enough. A state senator said she had tear gas thrown at her and she approves the budget for state patrol. Even president Obama has been briefed on the developments here.”

Cue video of tear gas explosions.

Reporter: “Overnight protests turned violent again on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri. Police responded with tear gas and the crowd went running.”

Cue video of protesters marching.

Reporter: “As civil rights groups protest the police shooting that killed 18 year-old Michael Brown, and the lawsuits mount. [cue picture of brown, 1:05] The chief of police telling ABC his officer was hurt in the incident authorities say either Brown or his friend fought with the policeman before the shooting.”

Cue interview with police chief.

Police Chief: “His face was swollen so he’d obviously been hit or punched or something like that.”

Reporter: “He says he and his officers are getting death threats daily and says he won’t release the name of the officer involved in the shooting unless his officer is charged with a crime or a court makes him, and then he could always appeal. Prosecutors say it could take weeks before they decide if the shooting is a crime.”

Cue police department member giving public statement.

Police member: “We have difficulty reaching a lot of witnesses. We’re having trouble locating them.”

Cue video of community members interacting with police.

Reporter: “They are talking with Dorian Johnson who was walking with Brown when he says the officer tried to get them off the street.”

Johnson: “He tried to thrust his door open but we were so close to it that it ricocheted off us and it bounced back to him and I guess that got him a little upset.”

Cue exclusive video from the scene: covered body in middle of street.

Reporter: “Police say he started shooting from inside the vehicle. Listen as this neighbor describes what she saw. Subtitles: ‘the first shot he shot out of the car. The other shots he stood over him and pow pow pow pow pow.’ “

Cue video of tear gas.

Reporter: “For now the concern is that racial tensions here are about to explode.”

Cue video of reporter.

“There’s been a lot of talk that Michael brown had a record which his family feels is an offensive question, but this morning St. Louis County says no; no arrests, no convictions.”

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