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Communication and Technology in the Classroom

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In recent years, it has been increasingly common for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) teachers to implement technology into the classroom. Despite the inclusion, there is room for improvement. American students are still lagging behind our major global competitors, including Japan, China, Russia, and Singapore, in STEM related courses" (Anderson , 2016). This educational gap can be bridged if more technology is incorporated into American classrooms. Since students frequently use technology outside of the classroom, the willingness to try new and different technologies increases the likelihood of student involvement. Technology also creates better partnerships between teachers and students. Gulek and Demertas, co-authors of an article that appeared in the *Journal of Technology Education* have found that "any form of technology with students considered to be Millennials boosted both concentration and engagement in the classroom (2005, p. 6). This research describes and examines the various innovative types of technology utilized in classrooms, the most effective technology, and how the technology aided the communication between teachers and STEM students.

One of the most useful technological tools utilized by STEM high school teachers and university professors are apps that test knowledge. This new-age of technology has granted various new opportunities for teachers to connect with their students. The simplest and most easily accessible can be utilized with smartphones. According to a Nielsen poll, 98 percent of Millennials, ages 24 and below, own their own smartphone (Nielsen, 2016). Using phone applications has actually been shown to improve social interactions between students and teachers allowing them to be more willing to share knowledge and even construct new ideas (Vygotsky, 1978). One of these applications going by the name WhatsApp instant messaging which is a cross-platform smartphone messenger that employs a users' existing Internet data plans to help them network socially in real time. WhatsApp gives their users access to send and receive media, including videos, pictures, and also recorded audio messages. The software can be used on almost all cellular devices, and created in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton. WhatsApp instant messaging had over 450 million monthly active users, 700 million photos are shared daily, and 10 billion messages are also shared daily (Parmy, 2013). This app creates a safe platform for students and teachers to have effective communication. Even for teachers to monitor the communication that occurs between other students. Teachers are able to create group messages with a maximum of 11 participants (Amry, 2014). The teacher is able to categorize the topic and monitor the conversation making sure that all participants stay on topic and keep the conversation professional. These conversations can occur while in the classroom and outside of the classroom, videos and pictures could be sent to each student's phones allowing the learning experience to become more personal. Another advantage with WhatsApp is a teacher's ability to communicate with students outside of regular classroom hours, so when students are at home with questions pertaining to lessons, they have peers to converse with, but they also have a means of communicating with their teachers. WhatsApp has been shown to increase productivity, community level interaction, and even social presence among students (Amry, 2014).

WhatsApp can be considered an effective means of communication, but WhatsApp is not alone. There is a long list of social phone applications that can be quite effective in a classroom environment, but two have stood out among others. Post-It virtualizes the sticky paper post-it notes that we are all used to and Categorizer allows students to categorize words in two preset categories created by the professor or teacher. Post-It notes are items that most people are aware of and have utilized at some point in their lives. They are great tools for brainstorming new ideas and even getting opinions from others. These ideas are often times written down, collected, and placed in a very visible areas where students can see all the ideas. The Post-It application is able to digitalize this process. The teacher would request for students to create Post-It notes, via their smart phone, with phrases, words, or ideas, that they developed during or after the lecture and they submit the note. Once this note is submitted, it appears onto the screen or video projector so that the entire classroom is able to instantly share idea. The teacher is able to group the post-it notes into categories by colors, sort, or even delete unwanted or irrelevant submissions (Wang, Aanesl, Elvemo, & Gamnes, 2014). This live sharing creates a responsive, collaborative learning environment that allows for active participation and sharing.

Categorizer on the other hand is a post-lecture application. One where the professor or teacher has to come with a set of terms that can be sorted into two different categories that are taught during the lecture. When a student attempts to participate in the game, there will be two categories present on their screen and the student will be tasked with the job of organizing the terms into the correct categories. The creator of the set of terms will be able to see how many attempts it took for participants to get everything organized correctly, thus being able to see where the class was in regards to understanding the lecture that was taught. It is an immediate report to the teacher about student understanding and ability (Wang, Aanesl, Elvemo, & Gamnes, 2014).

While all of these technologies were proven effective in their own separate ways, one stood out more among both teachers and students alike. Research by Wang, Aanesl, Elverno, and Gamnes (2014) supported the effectiveness of the Categorizer phone app because it allowed the teacher to see where students were falling short in class, so that the professor could allot more lecture time to those said terms. In another group, the Categorizer game was used along with lecture material and the response to the game was an outpour of students saying it was fun to use, engaging, challenging, and even attention getting. The teacher even provided feedback stating the games effectiveness in keeping students concentrated (Wang, et., 2014). There were little to no issues with installing or running the application, with the system responsiveness. All that is needed for these applications to properly work is an efficient Wi-Fi network to connect to (Wang, et., 2014).

The downfalls that were created with WhatsApp were the limitation of how many people are allowed into a group at one time, with 11 people being the maximum. With Post-It, the fact that the teacher had to organize the most common ideas by themselves, instead of it being an automated process. All the teachers and majority of the students that responded post usage of the Categorizer application said positive things about it, whereas the backlash that coincided with the other applications, led to a drop off in usage within the test groups. Categorizer has power because it allows students to communicate their knowledge about past, present, and/or future lectures to the teacher or professor that created the group. All these apps have potential downfalls that involve the speed of the game once downloaded, but this problem could be resolved with the students being forewarned that game usage will be implemented into the classroom experience days ahead, so they will be prepared for class, much like many other assignments teachers provide.

Smartphone applications proved to be some of the most easily accessible to students in primary and secondary level education. This is an approachable method because most students are used to having a constant integration of Internet into their lives so it only makes sense for education systems to access students on their level in order to raise attentiveness, willingness to learn, and communication, both among students and teachers. Categorizer application is effective because it creates a visual learning system that is both approachable in its simplicity, yet complex depending on how the professor decides to compose the game. With all of these applications there is an importance that comes alongside, the need for preplanning the usage around lectures in order to see the best end results. When the usage of these applications is well planned and well integrated, it boosts engagement, learning, creativity, focus, attention, social interaction, and of course the main point of this communication between both peers and teachers (Wang, et., 2014).

Within the educational system there is room for improvement, new ideas, new methods, all that contribute to the effectiveness of classroom activity and communication; phone applications just might do the job. It is important for students to have an integrated classroom, a fusion of both technology and the learning environment that we are all used to. Allowing phones to be used, specifically for educational purposes, creates a level of trust between students and teachers that enables, a more effective, communication oriented learning setting. With the use of the Categorizer app the teachers are able to see a cognitive representation of each student's individual learning process and use those results to create lectures that target the problem areas of the students within the classroom. The Categorizer application allows for teachers and students to have the highest level of communication compared to the other applications that were tested. Its effectiveness stems from the teachers willingness to create games that spark creativity and conversation within the classroom. It was shown that the harder the game, the more students communicated with each other, but also the more they felt pushed to communicate with their professors. Categorizer is a great application that really captivates both student and teacher alike, in its ability to create a conversational environment.

Conclusions and Further Research

Each era changes in regards to what would be best to use within the classroom, from chalkboards, to whiteboards, to projectors, to digital screens, and now a more personal approach of utilizing apps. By far, the most popular twenty-first century approach with students has been phone applications, or apps. All three applications, WhatsApp, Post-It, and Categorizer, are easily assessable to a vast majority of students, however studies have proven that the use of the app known as Categorizer is most effective with both faculty and students. There are very few potential downfalls which include problematic internet connections, a student's ability to download the game, or technical problems with the game. There are so many advantages that phone usage creates within the classroom, with of course the best being the communication it creates.

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Communication Dilemmas Faced by the Caregivers of Terminal Cancer Patients

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Every year, loved ones are tasked to become caregivers of terminally ill cancer patients. In the US, approximately 65 million people provide care for a chronically ill family member and more 1.4 million people will be diagnosed each year with cancer and more than 50% will be cared for by a loved one (Waldron, Janke, Bechtel, Ramirez, & Cohen, 2013).

Consequently, effective communication between caregivers and cancer patients is vitally important. This presentation will examine the communication dilemmas faced by the caregivers of terminally ill cancer patients and how to overcome them. The first half of this research will discuss the communication challenges between the physician and the caregiver. The remaining half will elaborate on the communication issues between caregivers and the patients.

Often times a communication dilemmas can occur between physician and caregiver when discussing the best option of care for the terminally ill cancer patient or if the patient should get treatment at all. A study conducted by Dr. Emily Cherlin, Research Associate at Yale University School of Public Health determined that, in some cases, physicians were not forthcoming in divulging the severity of the disease in a timely matter (Cherlin, Fried, Prigerson, Schulman-Green, Johnson-Hurzeler, & Bradley, 2005). In the study, research revealed that 23.5% of caregivers expressed that they were told the cancer was incurable less than a month before the patient's death out of this percent about 34 were told less than 2 weeks prior to the patient's death, 44.1% of caregivers were told 1-6 months before the patient's death, and 32.4% were told 6 months before the patient's death.

In the study 206 primary caregivers were interviewed using mixed methods. Several of the caregivers expressed a desire to be notified sooner regarding the fact that the patients' disease was incurable. Some caregivers were suspicious that physicians knew more that was communicated to caregivers. Conversely, some caregivers appreciated the fact that physicians did not discuss the severity of the patient's condition sooner.

Caregivers who resented that they were not told of the patients terminal status sooner expressed that they would have made different decisions regarding treatment options. For example, caregivers felt that had they known earlier they would have discontinued painful radiation burns as well as nausea and harmful long-term effects brought about by chemotherapy.

Dr. Cherlin offered several suggestions to lessen the emotional and physician burden brought about by delayed prognosis. Reducing delays will provide families to adequately emotionally prepare the patient and families to "say goodbye," financial arrangements, and plan for the "last phases of the patients' life." Cherlin suggests that "patients and families value being able to prepare for death" (Cherlin et al., 2005, p.1183).

Another communication dilemma occurs due to the lack of open communication between the caregiver and the cancer patient. Protective buffering is the avoidance of discussion of fears and concerns in order to protect each other's feelings: Krant and Johnston authors of the article that appeared in the *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* conducted a study and reported that 92% of family members of American cancer patients had thoughts about the possibility of the patient's death, but only 22% discussed this possibility with the patient (1977).

Protective buffering often times results in both parties' unwillingness to acknowledge the patients decline in health. Caregivers use protective buffering to also help themselves cope with the fact that their loved one is going to pass away. According to Dr. Holly Peters-Golden "These caregivers think that they have to always cheer the patient up and keep an optimistic atmosphere" (Peters-Golden, 1982, p. 485).

Being a caregiver of a terminally ill cancer patient demands an extensive amount of time. The more emotionally spent caregivers were—the less they discussed the patients' condition and looming death. In some cases, caregivers will just avoid communication the details about the cancer to the patient to save themselves from the emotional pain.

Being diagnosed with terminal cancer leaves loved ones with the task of becoming a caregiver. Although open and effective communication is a vital part of being a caregiver, often times for various reasons this does not occur. In this presentation, I have outlined the challenges faced by caregivers and their attempt to face them. It is my hope that in the future, the communication between caregivers, physicians, and the cancer patients will become more effective and efficient.

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Fostering Community and Collaboration Among Disciplines in the Arts

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Abstract

A Theatre professor and a Film professor collaborate on a class project to produce three short films with their students. This interdisciplinary partnership results in many lessons learned for students and faculty.

Introduction

It was late in the day. Vast oceans of assignments were awaiting grades. Opening curtains were going up in a matter of hours. One semester was almost over. Another, almost a year away, was just taking shape.

Though it could be the outline for a movie trailer starring professors of any discipline plotting the overthrow of an officious department chair, this was a more pedagogically sound scene unfolding in the office of Shontelle Thrash, then an Associate Professor of Theatre, who wanted to direct a production that combined film and theatre. With the success of previous class collaborations, her obvious choice was Professor Harris, then Assistant Professor of Film at Clayton State. He worked with her to shape a project that would impact many of their courses and almost 100 of their students over the next year.

In many ways, the project was the proverbial "no-brainer." Theatre and film were disciplines ripe for collaboration. Actors would practice their craft in front of the camera, while film students would light them, record their images and their audio. Post-production students would put everything in order, more or less. There would be several performances that allowed for the films and the project as a whole to be enjoyed and critiqued. Though this seemed, even then, to be a bit of an oversimplification of the process of interdisciplinary collaboration, the professors in this scenario put the mechanics and theory of cooperative teaching to the test. They experienced a number of successes, made some significant mistakes, and learned valuable lessons about project design and execution along the way.

There are, of course, a variety of good reasons to collaborate across disciplines on a class project. Solving problems in the world at large or creating a play or a film often requires skills, terminology, and approaches found in different disciplines. Research has shown some of the benefits of working this way for students and faculty. According to Bosque-Pérez et al. (2016), a number of researchers have affirmed the need for more "educational models…that emphasize team-based, interdisciplinary inquiry to hone critical collaborative skills" (p. 478). Students in the study by Bosque-Pérez et al. (2016) reported a high number of positive experiences, perceived an increase in their ability to communicate across disciplines, and rated the project as one of the highlights of their experience in each course (p. 483). Another study by Brown et al. (2015), emphasized the role of interdisciplinary collaboration to allow students to "cultivate both their own discipline, and to look beyond it" (p. 316). A study by Bautista et al. (2015) found that research shows drawing on multiple disciplines when teaching "is more meaningful and less fragmented, improves students' higher level thinking skills and facilitates knowledge transfer" and may also have a positive impact on students' concept of learning in general (p. 612).

Setting and Overview

To prepare for the 10-minute play festival, Professor Thrash sent out a call for submissions in the fall of 2015, focusing on Atlanta playwrights in an effort to celebrate local writers. Out of 20 submissions, she chose 5 plays which would be performed live and 3 which would be filmed and screened between the live performances at the play festival. In selecting the plays for performance/filming, Professor Thrash took great care to pick works that had a significant number of roles for women and only a handful for men due to gender representation in the Theater program. She also looked for a common thread between all the films to shape the production as a whole. Each chosen short play/film had in common an element she referred to as 'disturbia'. In each piece, there was an unbalanced, disturbing element, be it character, society, or an answering machine.

By meeting a year before the play festival was to begin, Professors Harris and Thrash were able to arrange the course schedule so that two of the classes involved in the project would meet at the same time and on the same day. This allowed a great deal of flexibility for the two classes to meet face to face as needed and to foster communication about the process and the needs of each discipline throughout.

The classes involved in production were "Cinematography" and "Audio Recording and Sound Design," two upper level required courses for Film Production majors, and and three levels of play development: "Play Development", Intermediate Play Development and Advanced Play Development. "Cinematography" and each level of "Play Development" met at the same day and time but were scheduled in different rooms. The two classes routinely combined in one of the larger classrooms throughout the first part of the semester as the productions were being planned. The students in "Audio Recording and Sound Design" were involved during production and post-production for each film. "Post-Production II", an upper level required course in the Film Production major, performed the editing and color correction of the final projects.

Some early considerations in adapting these projects for class included casting of the films and plays, and assigning production roles to students for the production as a whole. The "Cinematography" students were divided into three groups of 5-6 students and were required to work during production on one film, though some students volunteered to work on multiple projects. The project was detailed in the course syllabi for each course and discussed throughout the semester as the deadline for shooting drew closer. Dates for the long production days were shared early in the semester so that students could plan their schedules accordingly and were scheduled for Fridays when students were not in class.

The question of locations became important early on. The majority of the first film to shoot, *Fat Dick*, a film-noir parody about a food-obsessed private detective, was shot on campus near the film equipment room in a classroom under departmental control. One scene had to be shot across campus in a lounge that required a room reservation and additional set dressing. Minimal film equipment was transported to the second location due to its location on campus far from the equipment room and from accessible parking.

The second film, *The End*, a story of two women whose husbands had the same name and died on the same day, takes place in a cemetery. Location scouting on a weekend indicated that the location, which was about 10 miles from campus, would be a suitable backdrop for the story.

The third film, *A Sign,* follows what happens to a woman picked up at an airport by a driver holding a sign with her name on it. The film takes place at an airport and in the front seata of a car. The airport location was rented at a local regional airport which allowed shooting in the waiting room and the exterior pickup area. Clayton State maintains a converted airplane-hangar repair facility which now serves as a film studio. The car interior scenes were shot in the film studio. The production students projected a moving background onto a large screen behind the actors relative to the camera. All car driving scenes were filmed in this manner over the course of one full production day.

Timeline

The projects were scheduled to be rehearsed, filmed, and edited all within one 16 week semester. With the opening night of the play festival scheduled in April, the time was shortened to only 13 weeks. Undertaking the production of films, in addition to plays that would be performed live and which were also in rehearsal during the semester, meant that a time intensive workflow had to be packed into the 6 weeks before production. Instruction in the form of lecture, demonstration, and practice had to be modified and truncated due to a shortage of time caused by the impending film shoots and joint class meetings. At the top of the semester, actors came together for detailed table work on the scripts. It was important to unify the group of actors, so they could see that all of the short plays and films were part of a production as a whole. Rehearsal for the films began immediately, since they were the first to shoot. Due to time constraints, some of the techniques that would normally be taught in class, had to be taught in the field during production. The first film began shooting in Week 7 during late February of 2016. By shooting in weeks 7, 8, and 9, the schedule allowed 4-5 weeks of Post-Production on all films with one week off for spring break.

Equipment

Students used Panasonic 4K cameras, Tascam audio mixers, Sennheiser microphones and Arri and Lowell lighting kits on location to record video and audio. Post-production students edited using Adobe Premiere Pro for editing, Audition for sound editing and mixing, and color-corrected using Davinci Resolve software. A 4K master of each film was produced, though an HD version was screened for the play festival due to projection constraints.

Successes

Each production allowed students and faculty to work together closely. Students mentioned how much they enjoyed moment to moment mentoring in the field from both Theatre and Film faculty. Students wrestled with technical questions of craft and aesthetic choices in the field under the guidance of faculty, allowing them to receive immediate feedback on their decisions. Moving out of the relative protection of the classroom and putting techniques to the test in the field in a “real-world” environment was also something mentioned as a success by participants in the project.

Disturbia: a 10 Minute Play Festival, opened as scheduled with live performance interspersed with the three films. The playwrights were present for the first Friday and Saturday night performances. Many of the film students who worked on the projects attended as well that first weekend. Professor Thrash invited a reviewer from the Kennedy Center for American College Theatre to review the production and a number of faculty and students received nominations for their work. Three of the theatre students were nominated for the “Irene Ryan” award for performance. Two Film students were nominated for an “Allied Design and Technology” award for cinematography. Another theatre student was nominated for the “National Stage Management” award and Theatre faculty members Shontelle Thrash and Derrick Vanmeter were nominated for a “Directing” and “Designer and Technologist Award” respectively. The most representative positive quote in a student evaluation for the course read: “The “Disturbia” group project was the highlight (of this course). It was great to get to work with our peers on a bigger project.”

Challenges

Professor Harris noted the difficulty of negotiating between “educational” and “professional” approaches to managing the crew during the productions. The question of when to intervene and when to allow students to make choices that were not optimal in terms of craft or aesthetics was a constant throughout the process. Harris admitted stepping in on a number of occasions to adjust lights, help with audio, etc., to avert visual or aural catastrophes. There was difficulty with this on Professor Thrash’s end as well. Reconciling herself to the fact that certain aspects of some of the films wouldn’t be performance ready was difficult.
After the films were completed, one day before the festival of plays was to open, it was discovered that the projection of the films onto a fabric that covered the set caused some of the images to appear in soft focus. Though the films could be viewed reasonably well and the audio heard, the 4K cinematography, which the students had worked hard to perfect in terms of sharpness and lighting, was not projected at full quality as a result.

McCoy and Gardener (2012) discuss in their article the many things needed for a successful interdisciplinary project. Chief among these is time: “to learn the language and jargon used in the other field(s), and the time it takes simply to collaborate with another individual or individuals” (p. 46). Time, as McCoy and Gardener predicted, was the largest challenge by far for this collaboration. Students working on the projects spent dozens of hours outside of class hours shooting, editing, color-correcting, designing sound, and rehearsing for the films. The first production, *Fat Dick*, took “only” one 14 hour day of shooting to complete. The other two took at least two days of production work to complete. This burst of activity surely improved each student’s skill set and appreciation for the department in which she or he worked. However, the time commitment for some students was excessive. If a student happened to be involved in two or more of the classes working on the projects, then, they had an even larger share of the time commitment. Faculty were likewise stretched to the breaking point to get the three films completed and, in the case of Professor Thrash, put on an accompanying festival of plays. At least one of the faculty members had the flu over spring break directly following the shooting phase for the films and was sick for the entire week.

Recommendations

With additional time, many of the issues faced by the faculty and students would have been alleviated. Shooting the films one semester ahead of when they were to be edited would have provided the same excellent mentoring experience for the students while giving some breathing room to the post-production students who were to edit them. This would have provided additional rehearsal time for the actors as well.

Tackling one short film of 10 pages or less would have improved the quality, energy, and focus from each class. Groups could have been focused on sections of a single film and production could have been staggered across additional days so that students did not become overburdened with extremely long stretches of shooting.

Locations should be selected for proximity to campus and the film equipment and actors. Students should be divided into groups which work collaboratively and are able to stagger their time in working on the projects. If multiple classes work on a film project, faculty should consider ways to lessen the impact on the students in the courses.

Dates and times should be clearly indicated in the syllabus at the outset of the project. Duties should be well-defined as to creative deliverables such as storyboards and shotlists so that these are created collaboratively and work is not duplicated. The student quote that best summed up the negative aspects of the project as executed begs: “Stop with the overambitious projects when we all know we do not have enough time every semester.”

Conclusion

There is no question that working on an interdisciplinary project between Film and Theatre, or among other disciplines, can be a worthwhile endeavor for students and faculty. The students gain invaluable practical experience and immediate, consequential feedback from their mentors. With additional time to spread out production and post-production workflows and rehearsals, the impact on students would be significantly decreased. Allowing the students to work in collaborative groups and limiting student project time if they take multiple classes applying to the project would create a stimulating, gratifying, and rewarding student experience without the negative consequences detailed here.

Under such circumstances, students can explore their own field in an engaging manner, win accolades and awards for their efforts, while building community with students and faculty across disciplines. With these lessons learned and many semesters of students yet to come, Professors Harris and Thrash had to admit: “Yes. We’d do it again.”

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How to Improve Communication Skills in STEM Students

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It has been documented that STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) undergraduate students have difficulty successfully communicating their research to the non-science public. In communication studies, this concern is known as "cognitive gap." Cognitive gap is the inability to successfully communicate a science topic to someone who does not have the same level of competency or prior knowledge of the subject. In order to prevent cognitive gap in STEM undergraduate students, it is important that they improve their communication style. The National Academy of Engineering and National Academy of Sciences stress the importance of strong communication skills and the "ability to communicate convincingly and to shape the opinions and attitudes of other engineers and the public" (Johnston, S., Gostelow, J.P., & W.J. King, 2004, p.55). This research examines the various teaching strategies to improve the oral and written communication skills for STEM undergraduate students.

Professors in Singapore have made progress in utilizing strategies to improve and hone the oral communication skills of their STEM undergraduates. Dr. Christine Chin, Biology Professor at the Nanyang University, in Singapore, surveyed Singapore science teachers that teach 7th grade Science regarding which teaching approach stimulated productive thinking and thus helped students develop better oral communication skills (2007). In the study, traditional and social constructivism teaching methods were compared in order to determine which approach effectively provoked more critical thinking and effective communication.

When participants of the study used a traditional teaching method, the teachers implemented a typical discourse pattern called IRE, which represents initiation of the question, the student's response, and the teacher's evaluation of the student's response. In this approach, the instructor usually asked closed questions only to seek information, which is followed by a student's short answer. This method often discourages students from wanting to continue to participate in articulating their thoughts because the teacher will praise correct answers and offer corrections to incorrect answers without sufficient explanation. Moreover, the traditional method does not encourage the student to think critically or elaborate on their responses. Consequently, Dr. Chin concluded that the "prevalence of evaluative questions of the IRE format in a classroom talk would be counterproductive to students articulating their thoughts" (Chin, 2007, p. 818).

Conversely, questions using the social constructivism method encouraged analytical student responses. According to Dr. Chin, "the kinds of questions that teachers ask and the way teachers ask these questions can, to some extent, influence the type of cognitive process that students engage in as they grapple with the process of constructing scientific knowledge" (Chin, 2007, p. 815). Dr. Chin found that the vast majority of survey participants agreed that asking students analytical questions improved student communication skills while simultaneously exercised the students' critical thinking skills. The use of asking analytical questions prompted students to formulate better ways to elaborate and respond in a detailed sequential way that would promote responses clearer to anyone without a scientific background.

While using the social constructivism approach, a teacher is expected to ask students questions in order to elicit the students' ideas and foster productive thinking. The approach also teachers invite students to provide continuous assessment by replying back to students' responses and asking follow-up questions that encourage multiple student responses. The questions are also referred to as “Socratic Questioning.” The social constructivism method served as a useful practice to stimulate critical thinking in and outside of the classroom setting.

Just as the oral form of communication is vital for STEM student’s communication skills, so is the written form of communication. Dr. Joi Phelps Walker and Dr. Victor Sampson conducted research in order to ascertain which tools help in improving the written communication of STEM students (2013). The study found that the Argument-Driven Inquiry (ADI) was a useful instructional model for improving both oral as well as written communication.

Drs. Walker and Sampson utilized two sections of a General Chemistry I Laboratory at a community college in southeastern United States in order to test the ADI approach. Hence, they utilized three data sources: a performance task, a video recording, and lab reports. The performance-based assessments permitted the evaluation of reasoning skills and understanding. For example, students were given a task to mix certain constant volumes of acetic acid with different amounts of sodium bicarbonate added from a balloon covering the mouth of the flask.

The balloon inflated to a specific volume because of the amount of sodium bicarbonate it contained. In the flask used, a universal indicator was added to determine if the solutions were either basic or acidic with a color change from red to green. Through this performance task, the student was to use the evidence found to justify their choice and later explain their rationale. After the performance task was complete, the students worked on recording their data in their laboratory reports. The laboratory reports required the students to describe the purpose and methods and an argumentation period. The video aspect of this study examined how the students’ knowledge of concept and their ability to exercise critical thinking regarding their arguments.

Oral and written communication provides many benefits for STEM students when particular approaches are implemented. These approaches can positively affect both their education and future careers. The approaches can benefit teachers as well and influence their teaching strategies in the classroom setting.

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Picture Perfect Politics: Image and Advertising in Political Communication

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Spectators, when watching sporting events, are knowledgeable of the game at hand. In an ideal world this would, also, be true for politics. Neil Postman (1985) clarifies this by stating, “if politics were like a sporting event, there would be several virtues to attach to its name: clarity, honesty, and excellence” (pg. 126). Politicians continue to exhaust mass amounts of money, research and time on political advertisements in an effort to create the image that will get them elected. Therefore, political advertisements are a high-value necessity and tool within the political realm. This study sheds light on what it means to be a participant in a democracy. As a free society, becoming more aware of how politicians relentlessly use and manipulate communication to garner the support of the masses is vital to ensuring accountability and maintaining transparency.

Neil Postman was a media visionary in that he recognized the gradual, yet, seemingly abrupt trivialization of serious public discourse that was caused by the inherent biases of pictorial electronic media, such as the television. He described this notion by stating, “In America, the fundamental metaphor for political discourse is the television commercial” (p. 126). Postman means that television commercials have become so prominent in American society, and embedded into American culture that it has influenced the traditional ways of thinking. Similarly, Postman understood the seriousness of the ramifications caused by the intermingling of show business and public discourse within society. He used language that implied western civilization was under attack to describe it, “the television commercial has mounted the most serious assault on capitalist ideology since the publication of *Das Capital*” (p.126). Through the lens of Postman’s work, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, this study examines academic literature relating to how image politics functions within political advertisements and how they, in turn, affect political discourse and political participation. This study will be using a content analysis to identify major themes, of two separate political advertisements from the 2016 presidential campaign that aired before election day.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the effects of an image-based media culture on politics, specifically, how political advertisements affect political participation and discourse. Accordingly, the guiding research question is: How are Neil Postman’s claims about the reality of image politics preserved in modern political advertisements?

Review of Literature:

Neil Postman and Electronic Media

These Neil Postman claims are the basis of the study’s content analysis. Firstly, “What the advertiser needs to know is not what is right about the product but what is wrong about the buyer. And so, the balance of business expenditures shifts from *product* research to *market* research” (p. 128) – in order for politicians to retain the power they hold in office it is important that they use industry and professional communication tactics to attract voters to support their cause. Secondly, “He understood that in a world of television and other visual media, ‘political knowledge’ means having pictures in your head more than having words” (p. 130) – because the medium is the message. Thirdly, "For on television the politician does not so much offer the audience an image of himself, as offer himself as an image of the audience. And therein lies one of the most powerful influences of the television commercial on political discourse" (p. 134)

– people want to vote for a politician that they can identify with, and someone that represents who they are. Lastly, "In the age of show business and image politics, political discourse is emptied not only of ideological content but of historical content, as well" (p. 136). – which is the definitive result when elements of entertainment and show business invade politics.

Neil Postman was a communication expert, who is recognized by many as a leading scholar in understanding media effects. He was critically observant of society's collective transition from a mind that is fundamentally typographic to one that is image-focused in terms of media content. A typographic mind is forced to construct its own image from the written/typed word, while an image-focused mind is provided an image to accept and obey within the framework of the communication. Postman could be described as a media traditionalist, "For him, the eloquence of print culture is rooted in a balance between what is read and what is said" (Strate, 1994, p. 163). This dynamic relationship was immediately put into flux once television entered the playing field and began to replace verbal communication with visual types of communication. Furthermore,

> Postman focuses on the concreteness of the image in comparison with the word's capacity for abstraction, on the inability of pictures to represent propositional statements, on the association between visual communication and pathos as opposed to verbal communication and logos, on the relative accessibility of iconic forms in contrast to the long process of schooling associated with literacy, and, of course, on the image's tendency to amuse, entertain, and ultimately, to trivialize. (Strate, 1994, p. 164)

In culture, education, and politics the image and the number have gradually conquered the word (Strate, 1994). Moreover, "the postmodern world is one in which the image and number have outflanked verbal communication and have emerged victorious in the battle for control of our culture and our collective consciousness" (p. 167). This progression is evident today in politics, and other aspects of society with the rise of the internet as the incumbent electronic medium through which human civilization increasingly communicates.

Image Politics

Warner and Banwart (2016) shed light on the importance of image for politicians seeking election and proposed a new approach to image research by using benevolence, character, charm, homophily, leadership, and intelligence as the different variables that comprise a political candidate's image. Postman knew this, explaining in his book, "Like television commercials, image politics is a form of therapy, which is why so much of it is charm, good looks, celebrity and personal disclosure" (p. 135). The study found that "perceptions of candidate image were significantly associated with voter intention" (p. 275). Thus, a candidate's image, which is who the politician wants the voter to see, is a reliable indicator in determining how successful he or she will be in getting elected. In a representative democracy, using image, instead of relevant information and knowledge regarding political policy, gives the average voter a shortcut when deciding which candidate best represents them. As a result, "Citizens engage in low-information rationality and use image traits as heuristics to simplify cognitive decision making about political representation" (p. 278).

Schill (2012) argues that the political communication process is increasingly, if not completely, dominated by the visual image. This is because current and emergent technology allows politicians to campaign and govern through the use of pictures and graphics rather than words alone. Similarly, the study found that the "visual images' role in political affairs will likely grow as television continues to increase in importance, and will play an equally central role on newer audio-visual channels such as the Internet and video streaming" (p. 133). Political images form the modern political culture in which we live, and therefore determine how we view and discuss political candidates, their policies or our assumptions that are based on limited info and detail. This is because images have replaced words, as Neil Postman accurately alluded to: “By substituting images for claims, the pictorial commercial made emotional appeal, not tests of truth, the basis of consumer decisions” (p. 127-p.128). Therefore, creating a psychological problem for society because television commercials use visual imagery to deteriorate the substance of thought that is demanded when reading or even listening.

Additionally, political communication is strategically cultivated for politicians by media experts using branding practices and techniques, emotion, and authenticity (Serazio, 2017). A prime example of this is when Obama won a globally recognized public relations award for the best marketing campaign during the 2008 presidential election (Holtzberg, 2015). Specifically, Serazio looked at how sign-value (example A represents this, example B represents this) is evoked at the expense of use-value (example A can do this, example B can do this). Sign-value creates an ethical surplus for politicians and opportunities to facilitate audience identification. Also, sign-value helps politicians establish credibility with their audience. Serazio found that “political consultants play a key role in constructing the sign value and ethical surplus of their candidate clients, just as their commercial counterparts’ labor toward similar branded ends for consumer goods” (p. 22). As political communication becomes increasingly emotionally driven, it will perpetuate the cynical nature in political advertisements that exists and thrives on the voting public. Branding, in any setting, has to come off as authentic because it hides the true intent from the shopper/voter, so that it does not require them to make decisions that are educated or based on reason. Postman professed this truth asserting, “And so, while image politics preserves the idea of self-interest voting, it alters the meaning of ‘self-interest’” (p. 135). Thus, branding politics “is a form of power that self-effaces its own intentions – obfuscating the desire to win office and execute policy behind feelings stirred up and symbols that voters can (supposedly) believe in” (2017, p. 24).

Political Advertising

In a study concerning how political campaigns use image and policy communication in advertising to build their own candidate’s image and their opponent’s image, Rudd (1986) found that “commercials were designed to appear as though they addressed specific policy issues, but the messages failed, with one exception, to reveal the candidate's specific position on the issue or specific policy proposal” (p. 112). The policy issues framed as images primarily served as the means to conduct image construction of the candidate and opponent (Rudd, 1986). According to Rudd:

> Because television is the dominant mass medium, one might argue, and thus the most effective medium for reaching large numbers of voters, it has evolved as the principal form of political communication. Since it conveys images and emotions more effectively than information, its use as the principal form of political communication has resulted in political campaigns centered around images rather than issues and information. (1986, pg. 113)

Which makes the study relevant today because it is exactly what Postman perceived. The study concludes that maintaining political power drives the modern political process because politicians have the ability to use the electronic media to control information and propagate propaganda, in an effort to garner the continued support of those they represent without ever confronting the real problems that face them.

Another study examined the effects of distortions in visual imagery, such as editing techniques, special effects or computerized alteration techniques, within political advertisements on television, and if they have any noticeable effect on voters during an election (Noggle & Kaid, 2000). The researchers found that political advertisements with manipulated computer and video distortions result in more positive evaluations for the sponsor and more negative evaluations for the opposition. Furthermore, the effects were not altered in any significant way by the visual literacy of the voter. Political candidates are able to improve their own image and decrease the image perception of their opponent with new technology in such effective ways that makes it possibly damaging to the voter goals of informed decision making during the presidential electoral process.

Kaid (2002) explored political advertising and information seeking by comparing and contrasting traditional television exposure with emerging media exposure, such as the internet. The research confirmed that voting decisions are affected by the medium from which voters use to seek information, although the medium of exposure does not alter the amount of pessimism that they hold for politics. Specifically, that users who were exposed to content through the internet were more likely to seek more information, and to vote in the upcoming election. In contrast, television viewers were more prone to engage in political acts in addition to voting, such as sending monetary donations and working for a campaign voluntarily.

Faber and Storey's (1984) research explored the information viewers retained, in a natural setting, after watching political advertisements that contained issue and image-related content. In general, they found that people rarely recall anything from political advertising. Also, Faber and Storey identified that there was no difference in the recollection of issue information versus image information; they were both recalled just as frequently as the other. Suggesting, "Given that people were as likely to recall issues as images, it would appear that the criticisms and fears that political advertising will fool voters and sell candidates may be exaggerated" (p. 43). However, the study supports the idea that selective attention to information functions in political advertisements because viewers were more likely to remember content that originated from the candidate they preferred, rather than the candidate they opposed.

The purpose of Hsuan-Yi and Nai-Hwa's (2011) study was to understand what message a negative political advertisement sends by examining the effects of different content dimensions. Their focus was particularly centered on the appeal content, appeal importance, and the presence of evidence within political advertisements. Moreover, "this study shows that negative political ads generally evoke negative responses" (p. 290). The researchers found that negative advertisements cause potential voters to see the sponsor and the opponent of the ad more undesirably (2011). In conclusion, when negative political advertisements show evidence to support their claim, the effects of appeal importance rely greatly on whether the advertisements focus on issues or images, which spreads and strengthens the already undesirable political environment.

The specific research questions this study will examine, in order to achieve a better understanding of how image-driven advertisements are operating in the contemporary political world, consist of:

> **RQ1:** What role does image play in Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's political advertisements?
>
> **RQ2:** How do Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's political advertisements impact political participation and discourse?

Methods:

This qualitative study is a conceptual piece and includes aspects of original data collection to support the relevant literature. Also, the study builds further on past research, while giving a refreshing new look into political communication. It uses a content analysis of two political advertisements to answer the proposed research questions, and provides a discussion of the findings. The themes that are the basis of the analysis are Image Politics, and Political Advertising, Participation and Discourse. The study examines one advertisement released by Hillary Clinton's political campaign on August 2, 2015 titled *Family Strong*, and one advertisement released by Donald Trump's political campaign on November 6, 2016 titled *Donald Trump's Argument for America*.

Content Analysis:

Hillary Clinton – Family Strong

Hillary Clinton's *Family Strong* commercial advertisement is comprised entirely of images that are complemented by light background music and narration. The main theme is centralized around cherishing family. It begins with pictures of Clinton's mother as a young girl and adult. Then, the ad quickly transitions to a voice-over of Clinton speaking about her mother's perseverance, strength, and influence on her as a child that made standing up for children and families such an important part of her life. Next, through the use of another narrator, Clinton begins to focus on her political resume by showing: an image of her and Bill Clinton during their time in law school; an image of Clinton working for the Children's Defense Fund when Bill was Governor of Arkansas – how she specifically fought for Arkansas school reform; her time as First Lady – how she helped get healthcare for eight million kids, while showing her touching the hands of a child; and her time as Secretary of State in President Barack Obama's cabinet "because when your president calls, you serve." The last image Hillary Clinton brings forth is of her, as a grandmother, because she wants to relate back to how she started the advertisement, which is concentrating on family. Showing her speaking, she closes by saying "I believe when families are strong, America is strong; it's your time," which reinforces her campaign slogan: Stronger Together. Throughout the advertisement, still images and video are used to represent Clinton's past and help resonate with the viewer.

Donald Trump – Donald Trump's Argument for America

Donald Trump's commercial advertisement *Donald Trump's Argument for America* is completely constructed with images that are supplemented by soft background music and narration. The main theme is centralized around replacing the existing political establishment. The advertisement starts by showing images of Trump supporters, the American flag, and examples of the "corrupt political establishment" James Comey and Hillary Clinton. Trump transitions to speaking about how "global special interests" have been the main concern for the establishment, while flashing images of Wall Street, The Federal Reserve, Hillary Clinton, Janet Yellen, and George Soros. Next, Trump speaks about several problems: "disastrous trade deals" – showing images of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama; "massive illegal immigration" – presenting images of illegal immigrants walking on a street; and "economic/foreign policies" – displaying images of Hillary Clinton with foreign leaders. He continues talking about how these problems have led to the mass exodus of jobs, and how they are hurting the working class; simultaneously, showing images of closed factories, and close-ups of people's faces with stern and unhappy expressions. Trump is seen speaking momentarily about his voters being the only people who can stop the political establishment at one of his rallies, and shows different images of his supporters cheering. The advertisement concludes going back and forth between Trump and his followers, as he makes his call to action to make America great again. Throughout the advertisement, a multitude of frequently changing images and videos are shown to represent the ideas Trump is speaking about and to further support his argument.

Discussion:

Image Politics

To answer the question [RQ1], what role does image play in Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's political advertisements: image, and their extensive use of, is the main component in each of their political communication. Postman's claim: "What the advertiser needs to know is not what is right about the product but what is wrong about the buyer. And so, the balance of business expenditures shifts from *product* research to *market* research" (Postman, 1985, p. 128), can be seen in Hillary Clinton's advertisement in how she promotes family. Not once was there any mention of policy or information on why she should be elected President of the United States – the product, other than that she believes in strong families and the values that cultivate them. Clinton is visualizing what matters most to the people – the market. Considering the epidemic of dysfunctional family problems and the excruciatingly painful divorces that follow, she is doing exactly what Postman stated by using what is wrong with modern families to her advantage and presenting herself as a gleaming beacon of hope. On the other hand, Donald Trump's advertisement uses the same strategic method of advertising. Trump does not clearly discuss any policy that would make an argument for him to be President of the United States – the product. Instead, Trump uses a populistic approach and visualizes the government corruption that has led to the frustrations of the people he wants to vote for him – the market. Postman's claim: "He understood that in a world of television and other visual media, 'political knowledge' means having pictures in your head more than having words" (Postman, 1985, p. 130), is blatantly obvious considering that both of the political advertisements are made solely from images that are accompanied with audio description. Clinton and Trump want their respected viewers to keep in mind: the images that they show, when they decide who to vote for, rather than any intellectual or substantiated political composition.

Political Advertising, Participation and Discourse

To answer [RQ2], how do Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's political advertisements impact political participation and discourse: through the heavy use of image in their political advertisements, they attempt to stimulate political participation in their favor by subverting political discourse to reflect the image-based nature of electronic media, instead of the typographic media of the past. Postman's claim: "For on television the politician does not so much offer the audience an image of himself, as offer himself as an image of the audience. And therein lies one of the most powerful influences of the television commercial on political discourse" (Postman, 1985, p. 134), is preserved by Clinton and Trump because of their execution of modern and homophilic advertising techniques. Postman means that politicians will do anything to get elected. They are more acceptable by the masses if they project a broadly appealing image that is less conflicting with the general audience. This rationale is opposed to maintaining an authentic character or dignified stance on a topic that might not be favorable or easy to discuss, which is widespread in American politics. Explicitly, politicians use image warfare to discredit or disprove their opponent rather than actually using logic and reason. Image-based media erases historical context by being significantly centered on the present. Accordingly, the grammar used in television discourse illustrates this notion because of its disregard of the past tense and focus on the present tense. Postman quotes, American journalist and political commentator, Bill Moyers to emphasize this truth: "'We Americans seem to know everything about the last twenty-four hours but very little of the last sixty centuries or the last sixty years'" (pg. 137). Finally, Postman claims: "In the age of show business and image politics, political discourse is emptied not only of ideological content but of historical content, as well" (Postman, 1985, p. 136); this is identifiable in that Clinton and Trump's advertisements provide absolutely no conceptual discussion with any extensive and substantive historical context. Rapidly changing images that flash across the screen are accompanied with minimal dialogue and have together replaced methodically thought-out political discourse.

These results show that each of Neil Postman's claims are applicable and relevant in, both, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's political communication. Among a plethora of other politicians, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's image-based political advertisements prove that Postman was accurate in his assessment and predictions about electronic media in the age of show business. Additionally, these findings are significant because they identify how today's politicians unceasingly implement strategic communication tactics in an effort to undermine rational thought processes that lead to fundamental political participation and discourse.

Conclusion

The overarching purpose of this study is to give insight to the reality of what happens when society conjoins an image-based media culture with politics. Precisely, how political advertisements effect political participation and trivialize discourse through the use of images in replacement of credible arguments, ideas, and policies. Noam Chomsky could not be more accurate in his evaluation of political advertisers, "they want to create an uninformed electorate, which will make irrational choices, often against their own interests" (Holtzberg, 2015, 59:36). The study found that Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump use image as the foundation of their political advertisements and as the basis of their political communication, in general, to get elected President of the United States. Political preferences aside, the study highlights why it is of immense importance that people in a free democracy understand what messages they are receiving and how to decode them efficiently. Moreover, how communication is implemented and manipulated in the age of show business. The relationship between entertainment and image politics has created a perverse political landscape that can only be addressed with the application of education by people who are willing to pursue accountability and transparency from those who seek power in America's democracy. The implications of this study are crucial to upholding the values that comprise a free and autonomous society.

The strengths of the study consist of: ample academic literature on the topic of research, an in depth analysis of political communication, and an appropriate discussion of the findings and conclusions. The limitations of the study include: the number of political advertisements reviewed, and the lack of academic literature that pertains directly to the 2016 presidential campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. In regards to the study's findings, future research should attempt to include more academic literature, and analyze all political advertisements that are associated with the politicians involved.

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Political Projects in Public Speaking and Communication Classes

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Fourteen public colleges and universities in Georgia participate in the American Democracy Project (ADP). As stated on the ADP website's "About Us" page, "The goal of the American Democracy Project is to produce college and university graduates who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences they need to be informed, engaged members of their communities." Given the state of our democracy in 2018, it can be argued that the goal promoted by the ADP in 2003 has never been more important. This raises the question: How do we, as teachers, help our graduates become informed, engaged members of their communities? Teachers from many disciplines should participate, but communication scholars have a special obligation (given the role of communication in elections and their expertise in the study of rhetoric) to promote political literacy and help students become informed, ethical leaders. A fairly obvious way for communication scholars to contribute to ADP's goal is through the study of elections in the public speaking class.

Matto (2016, p. 194) states: "Elections at all levels of government offer an excellent context for enhancing students' political learning and serve as an opportunities to foster not only political knowledge but also civic skills and attitudes." Elections are complex and dynamic. This makes them interesting. They can be a rich source of informative and persuasive messages suitable for analysis. My personal experience suggests that students enrolled in first-year general education classes such as Public Speaking, know little about how elections work at the local, regional, state, and national levels. Their understanding of how government works and how is running for office, even those running for president is often limited. Few students seem to appreciate the consequences of elections, even when the impact of voters' choices are likely to have a direct impact on their lives. Fortunately, the interest of youth in civic life seems to be increasing, and once exposed to the study of an election, student often become engaged and share their knowledge with others.

Inquiry based learning (IBL) offers a sound theoretical approach for accomplishing civic engagement objectives in an introductory communication class, like public speaking. Blessinger and Carfora (2014) provide a definition of IBL when they state: "Broadly speaking, IBL is an approach to enhance and transform the quality and effectiveness of the learning experience by adopting a learner-centered, learner-directed, and inquiry-oriented approach to learning that puts more control for learning with the learner" (p. 5). For students to develop civic skills, change their attitudes, and get engaged, they have to listen carefully, think critically, and reflect on their own values and experiences. Teachers trying to accomplish these outcomes have to provide the structure students need for learning to occur. Instructors need to be more of a facilitator than a content expert, although a basic introduction to government is often necessary.

Group projects provide the conditions under which student learning can be transformative. In a well-structured group project, students take responsibility for their own learning, interact with others, question their own values, and learn real-world applications of communication theories (such as the persuasive techniques used by political candidates). Group projects in communication classes also provide students with the opportunity to develop their organizational, interpersonal, presentational, and critical thinking skills.

Projects tend to focus on analysis, evaluation, or problem solving. In a project focused on the election, there needs to at least one clear goal, such as writing a paper and/or giving a presentation. This task provides the foundation for the structure the groups need. In communication classes, my preference, when having students work on a group project, is the presentation. It requires students to work together and provides the opportunity to utilize many different skills.

I emphasize that the presentation should be a symposium. The members of the group are told to provide evidence to convince the audience that their analysis of the “text” and evaluation of the communication artifacts and/or their solution to the problem is accurate, reasonable and enlightening. The groups, I suggest, must not assume the audience knows anything about the topic they are discussing. So, the groups must provide background information, explain any theories they use, and, most importantly, provide the evidence and arguments necessary to support their overall evaluation.

Examining political campaigns provides students the opportunities to reflect on their role as a citizen and to interact productively with others who may not share their beliefs. Students should be prompted to keep an open mind and be good listeners. They should remember that the evaluation they provide is not an evaluation of the group members’ or candidates’ belief systems but is rather an analysis of communication artifacts and their effectiveness at persuading an audience. Students should realize they can admire the commercials of a candidate they dislike or criticize a website produced by their favorite candidate. It may be challenging for some students to separate the media they are examining from their personal beliefs. In time, those students may realize that they have to understand first before evaluating. They need to understand how the candidates convince specific audiences to vote for a particular candidate whether they like the candidate or not and whether they relate well with the target audience.

Students learn a great deal about the rules by which our government operates by focusing on a specific election. Questions naturally arise as students ask how political parties came into existence, how politicians become candidates in the first place, how politicians obtain money to pay for commercials, how the electoral college functions, how run-offs work, how people have been denied the right to vote, etc. A major benefit of focusing on a topic like an election is that it gives students relatively in-depth knowledge of something else besides the major focus of the course in the same amount of time. Even when the group project is brief, I may draw other examples from campaigns to illustrate my points. As students learn about public speaking, they also learn how to apply communication theories, they learn to question their own belief system, and they consider who they should vote for in the election.

Group projects, of course, is a commonly used approach to teaching. One of the best things about this method is that teacher often learn a great deal themselves. As they move from group to group and listen to the discussions, new information is shared and new questions arise. Classes are spontaneous. Students take charge of their own learning. Most students respond well to this kind of environment.

The primary constraint for instructors to consider in designing this kind of experience is the amount of available time. The group project may last a single class period or two or they may take several weeks or may be developed over the course of an entire semester. Thus, the rest of the paper is divided into three parts, reflecting short, medium, and long terms group projects relating to elections. In these three sections, there is an overview and at least one example of what I have done along with basic instructions about how the various group projects have been structured. Every time I teach these classes, however, I change things around.

An Election Project for One or Two Class Periods

Campaign commercials tend to be short with have fairly simple messages. This makes them ideal for an analysis that can be conducted relatively quickly. Competitive races for the state legislature, the governor, and for Congressional office work well. Candidates provide interesting websites and they produce numerous television commercials often developed around a few themes. In a short time frame, the class can be split into groups of four or five individuals focusing on the advertisements in one race with each group given one commercial to analyze. Each person in the group can be given a task: identify the type of ad, determine the ad's primary audience, explain the persuasive technique used, describe how language is used, analyze the symbolic use of images, or ask the groups to talk about whatever you have already discussed in class. One of the nice things about commercials is that an entire TV spot can be shown to the rest of the class, and if each person in every group speaks for one minute, four or five informal group presentations can be given in half an hour.

To prepare for a short term group project using campaign commercials, ensure that enough interesting commercials are readily available to students. Once a competitive campaign is underway, you will probably be able to find six or seven ads for each major candidate on their website or on YouTube. I ask students to bring their electronic devices to class, and I send them the links via e-mail. An alternative approach to using a current campaign is to use a campaign from the past. If, for example, you wanted your students to analyze a past presidential election, there is a useful website that provides a comprehensive collection of television ads called the Living Room Candidate at the following URL: http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/. This site provides presidential campaign commercials in a user friendly format going back to 1952.

It is generally a good idea to model the behavior you wish your students to exhibit in their presentations. I explain any theory I want them to use before the time arrives for the group project. For example, when I talk about the target audience in preparation for persuasive speeches, I can illustrate how commercials have a target audience. A simple set of nonpolitical TV advertisements to analyze can be found on YouTube. It is a compilation of older commericals called "Persuasive Commercial Assignment": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ptlhoV1aLw. Print ads from magazine ads may be easier to understand. You can ask the class which magazine they would choose to promote a product and talks about demographics.

If there are a couple of class periods available, instructors may be able to provide a more involved theory for the group to use. For example, instructors can explain that ads can be classified in three ways, show examples of each type, and then discuss Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's hierarchy can be used to help explain how the ad attempts to motivate the target audience. It is generally a good idea to provide the information the group needs in writing:

I. What are the types of advertisements?

A. Promise: An ad that claims if you purchase the product, you will receive a benefit; in a campaign ad, the promise is made that if elected, the candidate will bring about some positive changes.

B. Identification: An ad that suggests people should purchase a product because someone else endorses it; in a campaign, you are asked to vote for the candidate because the candidate is like someone else you admire.

C. Positioning: An ad that argues or suggests that the product is superior to other comparable products in some specific respect; in a campaign, the candidate's position on an issue is better than the other candidate's.

D. Semiotic: This type of ad uses metaphor to help enhance the image of a product; in a political campaign, the candidates often tries to associate powerful positive images (or negative images about their opponents) in people's minds.

2. Does the commercial make an argument? Does the ad provide reasons to vote for the candidate? What evidence is provided? Are there any fallacies?

3. How does Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs help explain which audience is targeted by the campaign ad? What need(s) does the ad addresses? Which demographic in terms of wealth, age, race, religion, gender, etc. will most likely be motivated/persuaded by the commercial's appeal? Which demographic/psychographic may be turned off by this ad?

After we work through the information, I give the groups a presentation outline that looks like this:

Presentation Outline:

Introduction

A. Get the audience's attention.

B. Provide a little background Information about candidate.

C. Explain why the candidate created this particular ad?

D. State the thesis: Is this an effective ad or not?

E. Preview the presentation.

Main Body

F. Introduce commercial(s)

G. Show the commercial(s) to the class

H. Analyze the commercial

Provide evidence for type of ad

Summarize any argument or provide evidence for the emotional appeal

Note Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Do a demographic analysis

I. Evaluate the success of ad at motivating a target audience to vote for the candidate

Conclusion

J. Summarize

K. Suggest future campaign ads for candidate(s)

This presentation is quite involved in a way, but if students are given the necessary background information before the group projects begin, they can get the job done. A commercial is only 30 seconds long. If the group project is kept informal, it moves quickly. I generally do not grade the short term projects. But, I save a little time for the class to ask questions. I explain to the students that I expect a thoughtful report, not a polished symposium.

Political projects requiring several weeks of time

Group projects that require several weeks of time seem to be best completed at the end of the semester. Using group projects at the end of the course, where students themselves end up becoming the teachers, agrees with an open or democratic approach to teaching (Kohl, 1998). If instructors are teaching about democracy, it is consistent for them to employ democratic teaching principles in their classroom. Even though the project occurs at the end of the term and should be the primary focus, my experience has been that giving student entire consecutive class periods to work on their projects does not make good use of their time. Some groups will quit early and most groups need something new to focus on when the time is right. Be aware that students left to their own devices and given multiple free periods to work, will often ask to leave or promise to get together with their group members at a later time, but that rarely seems to happen. Groups need help and using some of the time allotted for class ensures that they can all meet. Groups need help in first-year level public speaking classes, at least, to develop agendas, summarize what they have agreed to do, ask for advice, and learn how groups function best.

On the first day of the project, I typically ask the students about their experiences working in groups. They generally report mostly negative experiences for the reasons you would expect, the most common complaint being that the workload was not equally shared. The class then discusses what is commonly found in public speaking textbooks about interdependence, the roles people play in groups, developing agendas, taking notes, etc. Basically, I explain some best practices and state why they are important to achieving the group’s goal. I often explain how these best practices help to minimize the chances for having bad group experiences many shared at the outset. I tell the class more about the theory they will be using and give them the instructions. I ask the group members to introduce themselves, get acquainted, exchange e-mail addresses, and decide upon their topic. I tell the group what I think they should do to prepare for the next meeting. At that next meeting, students will often know enough to talk about the topic and divide up the task. This is often takes an entire class period I move from group to group, listening and contributing or encouraging groups on occasion, but I do my best to leave the discussion and the decisions in the hands of the group members. In subsequent days, I use some of the time to talk about things they need to consider when speaking in a group, for example, I talk about how they are going to present themselves when showing a PowerPoint slideshow to avoid looking totally disorganized. I often use part of a class period a day to review for the final exam or talk about a remaining individual speech. I keep up to date on the progress the group is making, so I can give them the amount of time they need. I save one day for the students to rehearse the delivery of their group project. Most of the groups manage to get the group project done in time to rehearse if you help to ensure that they are making progress every day they meet, but if they are not done yet, they can rehearse on their own.

Here is an example of instruction I have given the group:

> In this group project, your group will give a symposium using a modified form of Neo-Aristotelian criticism. A symposium involves a number of speakers giving related speeches on the same topic. Your topic is to analyze and evaluate the rhetoric of a prominent presidential candidate in the upcoming election. Since the project is ultimately evaluative, the nature of your collective speech is persuasive. Your group must develop evidence to support your positive or negative view of the candidate's rhetoric. Remember, your study of the candidate's rhetoric is tied to the effectiveness of the campaign's strategies not its content. So, your group may totally disagree with a candidate's positions yet argue that the rhetoric is effective. Or, your group may love the candidate and the positions the candidate has taken, but find the rhetoric to be ineffective.
>
> Your group will have four to five members. The speaking parts in the presentation should be balanced. The following components should be included in the presentation.
>
> Presentation Outline
>
> Introduction
>
> THE SPEAKER: Background (reputation, image, experience)
>
> THE SITUATION: The Exigency (event, problem, issues the country is facing)
>
> THE SITUATION: The Audience (who is the target audience, what is the candidate trying to accomplish with this audience? How is this candidate positioning him or herself?
>
> THE SPEECH: Invention, Arrangement, Style, Delivery, and/or Memory (The rhetoric of one or two speeches, debate performance, etc., given by the candidate)
>
> EVALUATION: Effects and Effectiveness (the impact of the speech on the audience)
>
> Conclusion
>
> The candidate makes choices in what they say and how they say it. They also make choices as to what they do not say. The candidates are trying to sell the audience on a perspective and vison for the country, and they try to convince us to vote for them because they can achieve that vision. They make some rational arguments, they appeal to our emotions, and they attempt to position themselves as the ones who can satisfy our needs as well as the needs of the country. Along the way, they have to defend themselves and attack others. Your job is to uncover the strategies the campaigns are

using and convince the audience as to how effective the candidate is at “selling” her or himself to the electorate.

Students generally perceive the end of semester project to be fun. In their other classes, they are probably having to write papers or study for tests on top of keeping up with new material. In this class, much of the work is done during class time and they can depend on each other if they need help.

Political projects that continue throughout the semester

Ongoing projects are more complicated than projects that are set aside and are largely devoted to accomplishing a specific task. In ongoing projects, instructors have to continue to teach the course content and meet the objectives of the course while helping students to learn about something else, in this case an election. In a public speaking class, an obvious starting point is to make each student speech about an election. I chose to have the students speak about the presidential campaign of 2016. I decided that the first speech they would give would be a recitation speech, where they recited a minute or two (word for word) of a candidate’s speech. I made sure that the students were reciting the speeches given by all the major candidates. I hoped that their listening to candidate speeches to find a passage to use would be a good introduction to the candidates and would help inform the rest of the classes about the kinds of speeches all the candidates were giving. In the second speech, I asked the class to pretend they were at a rally introduce the candidate. I hoped this would help them learn about a special occasion speech and recognize the need for adding the emotional elements to a special occasion speech that suit the occasion. The third speech was an informative speech where the students were asked to tell the audience about a campaign issue. The fourth speech involved doing research on one candidate’s target audience for a campaign ad, and the fifth speech was a persuasive speech aimed at evaluating one candidate’s campaign strategies. For the last speech I asked the students to predict who would win the presidency. There was a symposium at the end where groups working on one candidate synthesized the information they had collected during the semester and had one speaker serve on a panel that talked about several of the candidates to another class that was also reviewing the election.

During this time, students were also asked to work in groups to write articles about the candidates for the Bent Tree, Clayton State University’s student newspaper. The groups were created with about four members each with each group assigned to write about the candidate they spoke about. These writing assignments paralleled the speeches students gave, but were aimed at informing other college students. Hopefully, this approach solidified what they had learned in developing and listening to speeches and gave them a real audience.

I used a textbook that focused on civic engagement: *Public Speaking and Civic Engagement* by Hogan, Andrews, Andrews and Williams, and we discussed what had happened in elections every day at the beginning of class. The class occurred in the spring of 2016, which started at the time of the Republican and Democratic debates, and was followed by the primaries, so there was quite a bit to discuss. It was certainly an interesting time to study an election, but other times have been memorable as well. When Barack Obama ran against Hillary Clinton in the primaries, for example, we had some interesting discussions.

It may be easiest to understand how this particular class was structured by looking at the course syllabus. I have included the relevant parts of the syllabus as an appendix. Overall, the class was rewarding and the student comments were overwhelmingly positive. They not only learned to be good speakers, they also understood the importance of being an informed, engaged citizen. Here is an example of what one student wrote in her first paragraph of a self-reflection essay:

> Communications 1110 has been a very positive experience. The knowledge I gained in class will aid me in analyzing politics and public speaking for the rest of my life. I now have a greater understanding of politics along with civic engagement. Learning effective public speaking skills and the proper use of rhetoric has helped me become a better Broadcast Journalism student. I truly enjoyed the opportunity to write Bent Tree articles and our political discussions in class.

Another student's first paragraph was this:

> When I first signed up to take this class, I didn't know what to expect but was looking forward to being involved in a service program. In my first self-reflection, I said that "the most important thing I've learned is that it is indeed true that anyone can run for president". At the end of the course, it is still pretty important, however, some bigger lessons have impacted me. I learned that as citizens, we are far too uneducated about our own country; how it is being run, who our leaders are and what the future holds if things do not change. Democracy comes with responsibility. If we want the freedom to vote for whoever we choose, it our duty as citizens to know, really know, what a candidate is offering and can bring to the table.

Although students were appreciative and the outcomes were excellent, it took quite a bit of effort to organize this particular class. Arrangements had to be made with the Bent Tree. I needed to read every day to keep up with current events and the political news, I needed to watch the debates, and see the televised campaign events. I had to create and use doodle polls to ensure that the class was speaking and writing about all the major candidates. Adjustments had to be made. Many candidates dropped out and some entered the race late. Fortunately, I had the help of a peer mentor to help make sure that the stories that were written for the Bent Tree were prepared, submitted and edited as directed. On balance, the effort was worth it. This class helped shape some students' lives in a positive manner.

Resources

There are many high quality online resources to use relating to the study of elections. A source that provides links to many additional resources is on the edutopia website. Matt Davis wrote a blog entitled, *Election 2016: Lesson Plans and Digital Resources for Educators* https://www.edutopia.org/blog/US-election-teaching-resources-matt-davis. There are quite a few good ideas contained within for short term projects or for full blown studies of an election within a public speaking course. The fall semester of 2018 will provide another wonderful educational opportunity for helping public speaking students to become better communicators and more engaged citizens. There will be quite a few interesting races in Georgia.

References

Blessinger, P. & Carfora, J.M. (2014). *Innovative approaches in teaching and learning*, In Blessing and Cafora (Eds.) Inquiry-Based Learning for the Arts, Humanities, and Social Science. Emerald Publishing Limited: Proquest.

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Kohl, H. (1998). *The discipline of hope: Learning from a lifetime of teaching*. New York: The New Press.

Mato, E. C. (2016) *The American electoral process: A never-ending "teachable moment." EJournal of Public Affairs 5(2)* doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.21768/ejopa.v5i2.141

Appendix: Course Syllabus

COMM 1110: Spoken Communication (PACE)

Peer Mentor

Ms. Peer Mentor Name

Textbook Information:

Public Speaking and Civic Engagement (3rd), Hogan, Andrews, Andrews, and Williams (Pearson)

Service Learning

This class is part of Clayton State's PACE (Partnering Academics and Community Engagement) program. The goal of PACE is to foster student-community interaction and to assist students in learning the material by applying knowledge learned in the classroom to the outside world. Service learning involves three kinds of engaged activities: relevant and meaningful service to the community, enhanced academic learning, and purposeful civic learning (see definition by Edward Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning at the University of Michigan).

In this course, we will be accomplishing the three goals of service learning by focusing on the 2016 presidential campaign. We will learn about the presidential candidates and the issues facing our country and applying that knowledge in a way that serves the needs of the university and the larger community. Specifically, we will work in groups writing a regular column on the rhetoric of the presidential campaign for the online Clayton State University Student Newspaper (the Bent Tree), and we will attend or present our overall findings at the CSU Civic Engagement conference held at the National Archives-Atlanta.

The Presidential Campaign

A democratic government requires informed and engaged citizens to function properly. Candidate speeches, debates, press releases, websites and electronic communications are some of the ways in which citizens learn about the character, experience and goals of those running for election. Through these varied forms of communication and commentators' reactions, citizens form impressions of the candidates and learn how they plan to address the issues facing the country. Rhetoric is the study of the means of persuasion—the strategies and ethics—used by speakers to influence the audience. The presidential campaign provides an ideal opportunity to understand pubic speaking techniques, the speaker-audience interaction, and the effects of various rhetorical strategies on different audiences. This course will provide students with the opportunity to improve their own speaking abilities by providing them with examples drawn from ever-changing real world examples found in the realm of politics. It will also help students to become better informed citizens who understand how our democracy works. By sharing their knowledge of the rhetoric of speeches, students may help others to make more informed choices about who should represent them as the president of the United States.

Self-Reflection

Learning that involves service to the community needs to be reflective to foster intellectual development. Thus this service project requires two reflection exercises, one at the midterm and the other at the end of the semester. These two reflection activities will be essays scored according to a rubric provided to students. The PACE program requires these reflective essays in order for the university to measure its progress towards accomplishing its Quality Enhancement Plan, which is necessary for reaccreditation.

PACE Course Spoken Communication Learning Outcomes

After completing this course successfully, students should be able to:

1. Analyze the rhetoric of campaign speeches and other political discourse.
2. Use proper research techniques to find reliable information about political candidates and controversial issues.
3. Write and edit interesting articles on the presidential campaign using the appropriate style
4. Create effective PowerPoints
5. Understand how to apply rhetoric theories to media in contemporary society
6. Demonstrate a working knowledge of the performance skills associated with the five basic components of effective individual oral presentations: content, organization, physical expression, vocal delivery, and language.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of group dynamics—task roles, social roles, cohesiveness, norms, group problem-solving skills, negotiation skills--that contribute to effective team work.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of the process for composing and structuring information appropriate for a particular purpose, listener and occasion.
9. Select, analyze and develop messages with particular listeners in mind.
10. Deliver speeches effectively.
11. Demonstrate a familiarity with strategies for effectively using a computer-operated visual aid.
12. Write successful student media appropriate for inclusion in the Bent Tree.
13. Participate in the presentation of a symposium on campaign rhetoric.

Evaluation

- Self-Reflection essays 2 @ 10 (ea)	20
- Reciting a politician's speech	10
- Speech of Introduction (political candidate)	20

- Informative Speech #1: Short Informative speech on campaign issue 20
- Bent Tree article #1 (group project) 20
- Informative Speech #2: Candidate's background and image 20
- Bent Tree article #2 (group project) 20
- Informative speech #3 on a candidate's rhetoric 30
- Bent Tree article #3 (group project) 20
- Persuasive speech #1 on the effectiveness of a candidate's rhetoric 30
- Symposium Presentation at National Archives (panel) 20
- Bent Tree article #4 20
- Persuasive Speech #2 prediction 30
- Quizzes (4 at 15 points each) 60
- Special Occasion Speech (during final exam period) 20
- Additional in and out of class assignments 0-20
- Attendance/participation 60

Course Schedule

The tentative course schedule for COMM 1110, Spoken Communication, is provided in the table below. Text chapter references are to Hogan, et. al. *Public Speaking and Civic Engagement*.

Week	Date	Topic	Text Chapter	Speeches/Exams
1	Jan 11/13	Democratic Citizenship	1	
2	No class Jan 18 MLK Jan 20	Responsible and Productive Research Speaking with Confidence	6 3	
3	Jan 25/27	Speaking on Special Occasions	16	Recitation Speech Quiz One: Chaps. 1, 6, 3, 16
4	Feb 1/3	Speaking to Inform	13	Speech of Introduction
5	Feb 8/10	Delivering Your Speech Effectively	11	Informative Speech #1

6	Feb 15/17	Speaking and Deliberating in Groups Supporting Your Ideas Visually	17 2	Bent Tree #1 Quiz Two: Chaps. 13, 11, 17, 2
7	Feb 22/24	Diverse Audiences Developing Significant Topics	4 5	Informative Speech #2
8	Feb 29 March 2	Persuasive Speaking	14	Bent Tree #2 Self-Reflection Essay 1
9	March 14/16	Arguing Persuasively	15	Informative Speech #3 Quiz Three: Chaps. 4, 5, 14, 15
10	March 21/23	Rhetorical Theory	provided	Bent Tree #3
11	March 28/30	Supporting Your Ideas	7	Persuasive Speech #1
12	April 4/6	Organizing Your Ideas Using Language Effectively	8 10	
	April 8	Civic Engagement Conference		Symposium
13	April 11/13	Listening and Speaking	12	Bent Tree Article #4 Quiz Four: Chaps. 7, 8, 10, 12

14	April 18/20			
15	April 25/27	Speaking on Special Occasions	16	Persuasive Speech # 2
16	May 2			Self-Reflection Essay #2
	Final Exam Period: May 9 at 12:30			Special Occasion Speech

Descriptions of Assignments

Recitation Speech: In this short presentation, find a short clip or small amount of significant test (roughly 1 minute long) of a presidential candidate's speech, debate performance, voiceover for a campaign ad, etc. The heart of your presentation is a recitation of what the candidate said (word for word). To deliver this speech, give the audience a short introduction (when and under what circumstances it took place), show a picture of the candidate at that performance and deliver about 60 seconds of exactly what the candidate said. You may improve upon the candidate's delivery, but you may not change the words. The entire presentation should be no more than 2 minutes long.

Quizzes

Most, if not all, quizzes will be taken online using D2L. The quizzes will focus on the material found in the textbook. This material may or may not be covered during class. Please ask questions about any material you are unsure about. Most, if not all questions, will be multiple choice or true/false questions.

Speech of Introduction of a Candidate: In this speech, choose a candidate running for the president of the United States and imagine that you are introducing the candidate at a campaign rally. Give a 2 minute speech of introduction.

Informative Speech #1: In this speech, you will be assigned to work on one aspect (history, problem, liberal solution, conservative solution) of 6 assigned issues, such as immigration, terrorism, college affordability, the shrinking middle class, terrorism, and global warming) In approximately 2 minutes, your presentation should summarize the basic facts and the views on these problem taken by one candidate.

Bent Tree #1

The people who worked on the same issue will work together to construct one informative essay, following journalistic guidelines, to be submitted for publication in the Bent Tree. The essay will be revised as necessary. Please note, your group is publishing this and other essays; provide proper citations.

Informative Speech #2: In this speech, talk about some aspect of one of the six front running candidate's background and today's image. The candidates will be the frontrunners (e.g., Carson, Clinton, Cruz, Sanders, Rubio, and Trump). The speech should be organized in chronological order. The aspects of the background to speak on should include: parents/family, early accomplishments, later accomplishments, and current image). This speech should include information new to the audience or make the information fresh. This is a two minute speech. You should include full screen pictures using PowerPoint. Credit the source of the photos. Upload the PowerPoint to GeorgiaView.

Bent Tree #2

Working with a group of students who spoke about the same candidate, write an article for the Bent Tree. Make this an article suited for a college audience, giving information that would give the readers insights into the candidate that would help them to decide about how they should vote in the upcoming election Revise essay as needed.

Self-Reflection Essays

These two essays are used to provide students with the opportunity to critically analyze what they have been learning in this course focusing on the three aspects of community engagement. A rubric will be used to score the essays.

Informative Speech #3

In this speech, conduct research on the polling data for one candidate. Try to characterize the audience that the candidate has the greatest appeal for. Who are the candidate's strongest supporters? Then identify the audience that the candidate needs to appeal to generate additional votes. Who is the candidate's target audience? Look at one campaign ad. Is the candidate trying to get donations, appeal to undecided voters, take votes from another candidate, position her/himself for the general election, etc.? This speech should be 4-5 minute long and include clips or quotes from the chosen ad, using PowerPoint.

Bent Tree #3

Working in a group, synthesize the information you have provided about the candidate's polling data and the target audience of the candidate you have chosen. Describe the campaign ads and explain who the target audience is. Revise essay as needed.

Persuasive Speech #1

Using one or more rhetorical theories, describe the campaign strategies of one of the presidential candidates. Consider the rhetoric of the candidate. How is the candidate trying to win the presidency? What techniques is the candidate using to motivate the audience? What are the candidate's strengths and weaknesses? How effect do you predict the strategies will be? This is a 4-5 minute speech.

Symposium

The symposium at the National Archives will be a panel presentation. Not every member of the group will be able to present, but all members of the group should select one member to represent the group and should help the presenter design an 8-10 minute presentation that summarizes the work of the group members in the previous speeches. The goal is to defend an analysis of the candidate's campaign rhetoric, providing background information on the candidate and other data to support a clear position the group takes on the motivation and strategies used by the candidate to try to win the presidency.

Bent Tree #4

Adapt the information your group provided in the symposium presentation to a written style suitable for publication in the Bent Tree. Edit as needed.

Persuasive Speech #2

In this speech, you will make a prediction about who will win the presidency of the United States. After having researched, spoken about, and listened to the presentations by your classmates, argue who is the most likely candidate to win the election. This is not about who you would like to win the election, but is a justification, based upon the evidence you have learned, about who is best positioned to become the next president. This is a 4-5 minute speech. Submit outline for this speech and use PowerPoint to help illustrate your points and provide evidence for the audience to view.

Special Occasion Speech

This is a 2 minute speech suitable for any type of special occasion speech except a speech of introduction.

Important Campaign Dates (Source, Wikipedia)

- January 14
  - Sixth Republican debate to be held in North Charleston, South Carolina
- January 17
  - Fourth Democratic debate to be held in Charleston, South Carolina[52]
- January 28
  - Seventh Republican debate to be held in Iowa

February

- February 1 - Iowa caucus (both parties)
- February 6 - Eighth Republican debate held in New Hampshire
- February 9 - New Hampshire primary (both parties)
- February 11 - Fifth Democratic debate held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- February 13 - Ninth Republican debate held in North Carolina
- February 20 - Nevada Democratic caucuses and South Carolina Republican primary
- February 23 - Nevada Republican caucuses
- February 26 - Tenth Republican debate held in Houston, Texas

- February 27 - South Carolina Democratic primary

March

- March - Eleventh Republican debate held
- March - Northern Marianas Democratic caucus
- March 1 - Super Tuesday: Primaries/caucuses for both parties in several states
- Democratic primaries/caucuses in Alabama, American Samoa, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and for Democrats Abroad
- Republican primaries/caucuses in Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming
- March 5 - Democratic primaries/caucuses in Kansas, Louisiana, and Nebraska; Republican primaries/caucuses in the aforementioned states plus Kentucky and Maine
- March 6 - Maine Democratic caucuses and Puerto Rico Republican primary
- March 8 - Democratic primaries/caucuses in Michigan and Mississippi; Republican primaries/caucuses in the aforementioned states plus Hawaii and Idaho
- March 9 - Sixth and final Democratic debate held in Miami, Florida
- March 10 - Twelfth Republican debate held in Florida
- March 12 - Washington D.C. and Guam Republican caucuses
- March 15 - Democratic primaries/caucuses held in Florida, Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina, and Ohio; Republican primaries/caucuses held in the aforementioned states and in the Northern Marianas
- March 19 - Virgin Islands Republican caucuses
- March 22 - Democratic primaries/caucuses held in Arizona, Idaho, and Utah; Republican primaries/caucuses held in American Samoa, Arizona, and Utah
- March 26 - Democratic primaries/caucuses held in Alaska, Hawaii, and Washington
- March 29 - Colorado Republican caucuses

April

- April 5 - Democratic and Republican primaries in Wisconsin
- April 9 - Wyoming Democratic caucuses
- April 19 - Democratic and Republican primaries in New York
- April 26 - Democratic and Republican primaries/caucuses held in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island

May

- May 3 - Democratic and Republican primaries in Indiana
- May 7 - Guam Democratic caucuses
- May 10 - West Virginia Democratic primary; Republican primaries in the aforementioned state and in Nebraska
- May 17 - Democratic primary in Kentucky and Oregon; Republican primary in the latter
- May 24 - Washington Republican primary
- May 26–30 - Libertarian National Convention

June

- June 4 - Virgin Islands Democratic caucuses

- June 5 - Puerto Rico Democratic caucuses
- June 7 - Democratic primaries/caucuses held in California, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota; Republican primaries/caucuses held in aforementioned states except North Dakota
- June 14 - Washington, D.C. Democratic primary

July

- July 18–21 - Republican National Convention
- July 25–28 - Democratic National Convention

Self-Reflection Essay (draft)

Community Engagement involves three types of activities: relevant and meaningful service to the community, enhanced academic learning, and purposeful civic learning (Edward Ginsberg). Please write an essay about each of these three aspects of community engagement. First, explain the most important things you have learned about how the election process works within our democratic form of government (civic learning). How has this changed your way of thinking about our government? Second, how has analyzing the presidential election and political rhetoric affected your ability to learn public speaking skills (enhanced academic learning)? Third, how has communicating your and your group's ideas to the class and more importantly to the Clayton State University community enhanced your ability to participate in the democratic process and enable others to become more responsible citizens (community service)?

Rubric

	Absent or Developing	Satisfactory	Proficient
Civic Learning			
Academic Learning			
Service Learning			
Writing Style			
Originality, Thoughtfulness			

Salvaging Sean Spicer: A Case Analysis of the Rise, Fall, and (Attempted) Redemption of a Former White House Press Secretary

Christopher J. McCollough
Columbus State University

Abstract:

Scholars in Public Relations have discussed the value of reputation management to internal communication, client management, stakeholder management, community relations, crisis communication, media relations, as well as individual practitioners. A growing body of scholarship in political public relations offers another context in which practitioners connected with government and political figures need to make effective use of reputation management for both operational and political benefit. This paper and presentation will explore the individual reputation management practices of Sean Spicer, where he is successful, where he has failed, and what he is doing now to rehabilitate his career prospects. In discussion, the presenter will offer an assessment of Spicer's efforts, couched in current scholarship.

Spicer's Path to the White House

Sean Spicer's path to White House press secretary was a path less controversial than his tenure. He went straight from college to working on several political campaigns in the Republican party in the 1990s, before serving as a press representative for several House Committees in the early 2000s. He worked his way to a communication staff role in the Office of the United States Trade Representative in the Bush Administration in 2006. It was in this role where he volunteered to portray the now parodied Easter Bunny role during annual White House Easter Egg Rolls held by the Bush administration.

After the end of the Bush administration, Spicer left government and went to work in the private sector as a partner in a firm he co-founded that specialized in representing foreign governments in lobbying ventures called Endeavor Global Strategies in 2009. Over two years, he worked with the government of Colombia in establishing better trade agreements in spite of public controversy over potential human rights violations.

He left his firm in 2011 to go to work for the Republican National Committee, and proved his acumen as a versatile, strategic political communicator. Following the defeat of Mitt Romney in the 2012 Presidential election, it was clear that the Republican Party needed to update tactics in connecting with voters. He expanded the RNC's social media operations, constructed an in-house television production team, and established a rapid response team for responding to political attacks. After his work on these fronts, he was given the role of chief political strategist for the Republican Party in February of 2015.

After assuming the role of chief strategist, Spicer was actually critical of Trump's comments about Mexicans and Senator John McCain. As he supported Trump after earning the nomination, the he was able to earn a position along with other key members of the Republican Party in the Trump White House, being named the new Press Secretary in December of 2016.

Two days after being named Press Secretary, he assumed the role of Communications Director after the sudden resignation of nominee Jason Miller.

Before entering the White House in January of 2017, Spicer was interviewed by Politico's Jake Sherman about President-elect Trump's position on media access during his administration and offered this perspective on the importance of media access :

> "Look, there's a big difference between a campaign where it is a private venue using private funds and a government entity. I think we have a respect for the press when it comes to the government. That is something you can't ban an entity from. Conservative, liberal or otherwise, that's what makes a democracy a democracy versus a dictatorship. I think there is a vastly different model when it comes to government and what should be expected, and that's on both sides" (Presidential Transition, December 16, 2016).

While the interview occurred a week prior to assuming the Press Secretary or Communication Director's role, it is an important comment given the nature of the relationship he established and maintained during his brief tenure in the White House.

With a brief history of Spicer's political career put forward, the paper will now discuss past scholarship relevant to exploring the relationship between Spicer and the White House Press Corps.

Literature Review:

This study is a reputation management case analysis of former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer's brief, ill-fated role in the Trump Administration and some of his early efforts to recover from his stint as Press Secretary and Director of Communication. The following literature review will begin with a brief discussion about the media relations context as it has evolved in the federal government between agency public relations specialists, commonly titled public information officers (PIOs) and the press that covers them.

PIO-Journalist Power Struggle

Public sector organizations and communicators have long struggled over the message that reaches the public. Government communication and the work of PIOs began with lobbying legislators and interest groups (Turney, 2009), then shifted focus to propaganda work during and after World War I (Bernays, 1928). Walter Lippmann (1922) led the response of journalists in calling for greater scrutiny, objectivity, and detachment in covering government because of the critical role that news media play in informing the public and because of past abuses of the news media and public manipulation by governments through inaccurate information and weak reporting on governments and military actions during World War I.

As the century progressed, PIOs embraced dual roles as information brokers to the public and reputation managers of their organizations. Governmental agencies would provide greater media access for emerging radio and television technologies, but they also controlled access to information (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Hallin, 1986; Schudson, 1989). Government agencies during the Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations managed media coverage through leverage of media access and perceived respect for the authority figures of the era (Gitlin, 1980; Hallin, 1986).

For journalism, rising social trends of cultural dissent in the 1960s and 1970s gave rise to watchdog journalism (Gans, 1979; Hallin, 1986; Tuchman, 1978). The efforts of journalists during the Watergate scandal built tremendous public trust in journalism and distrust in politicians and government (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). Journalism was perceived as filling a "fourth estate" role in government, overseeing the three branches of government on behalf of a concerned public (Cook, 2005; Hulteng & Nelson, 1971).

Watchdog journalism prompted an evolution from PIOs in their strategic approaches to media relations and public relations in general in the 1980s and 1990s. Emphasis among PIOs and practitioners shifted to relationship building, open and honest communication, and engaging citizens in ethical, two-way communication (Foster, 1984; Garnett, 1992; Graber, 1992; Grunig, 1992). PIOs obtained greater media access and public trust through honesty and by cultivating mutual respect (Garnett, 1992; Graber, 1992). Scholars in public relations began to emphasize strategic identification of publics and message crafting (Grunig, 1997; Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and to focus on building relationships with publics over message crafting and dissemination (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; Ferguson, 1984). Changes in economics and technology at the beginning of the 21st century have also opened the door for more symbiotic relationships (Cho, 2006; Howard, 2004; Sallot & Johnson, 2006).

Characteristics of the Journalist-Practitioner Relationship

Early scholarship noted that journalists viewed the relationship with public relations practitioners as antagonistic, based on misperceptions about the practice of public relations (Aronoff, 1975a, 1975b). Jeffers (1977) found that journalists perceive that practitioners lack professionalism and ethics. Chief issues cited by journalists for the antagonism is the lack of transparency, withholding information, a lack of ethics, a lack of professionalism, a lack of understanding of news values, and a lack of objectivity in providing news content to journalists (Sallot & Johnson, 2006).

Another source of antagonism is journalists' ignorance about the work of practitioners. Kopenhaver, Martinson, and Ryan (1984) found that editors at Florida newspapers viewed public relations much more negatively than public relations practitioners viewed the practice of journalism. Previous negative professional experiences promote these perceptions and the adversarial relationship between journalists and practitioners. Journalists cite previous negative experiences with unethical practitioners and a sense that they are "used" by practitioners (Jeffers, 1975, 1977; Ryan & Martinson, 1988). Practitioners acknowledge their role in the antagonistic relationship. Ryan and Martinson (1988) found that practitioners suggest that their inability to police themselves created the antagonistic environment in which they work with journalists. Ryan and Martinson (1988) also found that practitioners believe that part of the negativity is due to their work understandably focusing on clients rather than on the needs of journalists.

Practitioners applying new technologies may be mitigating antagonistic relationships. Shin and Cameron (2003a) found that journalists were receptive to email news releases, home pages, and Web site pressrooms. Journalists rated these tools and the practitioners utilizing them as useful, influential, credible, ethical and professional (Shin & Cameron, 2003a). Shin and Cameron (2003b) found that both journalists and PIOs see the Internet as a potential means of developing a positive, ethical approach to providing information and reporting on the news. They suggest that shrinking newsrooms, increased demand for news content, and reduced editing time may all have a positive impact on the practitioner-journalist relationship. Personal relationships are also proving essential for practitioners to successfully enhancing media relationships (Cho, 2006; Jo & Kim, 2004). Howard (2004) confirms this, but emphasizes the importance of paying attention to journalistic norms, routines, and needs.

This study examines the interaction of the most prominent PIO in the federal government with the White House Press Corps, the response of the press corps to his actions, and its impact on the relationship with journalists. This is important, given the unique context of federal government and PIOs' explicit roles as public servants that must inform the public and their shared responsibility with journalists in co-creating an enlightened citizenry. Understanding the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners provides an understanding of the factors that shape media relationships over time.

To analyze the actions of Spicer, the researcher makes use of Relationship Management Theory (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). The following section is a breakdown of the core theory and its components.

Relationship Management Theory

The focus on work relationships between PIOs and journalists is in keeping with public relations literature of the past 30 years. Scholars including Ferguson (1984) and Grunig (1992) called for public relations practitioners to emphasize building and maintaining relationships, rather than message craft, dissemination, and control. Relationship Management Theory (RMT) offers a body of research that puts the focus of practitioners squarely on the building and maintenance of relationships between organizations and their publics. RMT scholars posit that practitioners must fill a mediator's role between an organization and its publics in order to most effectively build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships over time (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Practitioners must not only create a sense of organizational concern for each public, but also help the organizations they represent understand each public and how their actions impact them and the relationship they share. This requires practitioners to work diligently to earn the trust of both the strategic public they interact with as well as the principals in their organization.

Similarly, PIOs are liaisons between an agency and its publics. It is critical to develop productive relationships between themselves, the agency, and the publics they interact with for long-term success. If the agency fails to meet the demands of its wide array of constituents, or it fails to communicate how it is meeting the needs of its constituents, the organization is more susceptible to scrutiny and penalties from the legislative bodies that set budgets and policy for the agency, and the governor who appoints agency administrators.

A critical public for PIOs on a daily basis is the news media representatives covering government. The news media are a body of information conduits where the public regularly obtains their information. A failure to attend to the needs of the media could result in a misrepresentation of facts on agency practices, and future antagonism between the PIO and media reporters.

Researchers commonly offer two interconnected definitions of relationship management that come from different perspectives. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) offer a definition that links relationships and impact: “[An organization-public relationship is] the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political well-being of the other” (p. 62).

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000) offer a transactional perspective with their definition of organization-public relations: “Relationships consist of the transactions that involve the exchange of resources between organizations . . . and lead to mutual benefit, as well as mutual achievement” (p. 91).

Both of these definitions pose an interesting challenge for PIOs when considering how they interact with the publics. Journalists play a critical role in helping PIOs and government agencies get information to the public, and ultimately help shape the reputations of agencies or governments with the public. So, PIOs must be conscious of the relationship and the impact of that relationship on their reputation over time. One means by which both parties succeed is through providing access to the other, respectively, as the second definition suggests.

The growing body of RMT literature demonstrates that its application is effective across diverse contexts pertinent to this study. RMT principles have proven effective in aiding public relations practitioners in crisis (Coombs, 2000), in preemptive work to aid issue management (Bridges and Nelson, 2000), and in conflict resolution (Huang, 2001).

Another growing area of research on the topic concerns community relations. Bruning, Langenhop, and Green (2004) found that relationship building and maintenance are essential in maintaining effective city-resident relationships. They called for a need for interactivity from public relations practitioners in order to fulfill the needs and expectations of both the organization and its publics. Ledingham (2001) cites John Dewey and suggests that public relations have the capacity to serve as a community-building instrument and ultimately improve civic life by mediating the relationship between the organization and the citizens that are directly affected by the practices of the organization. Ledingham (2001) suggests that practitioners can educate both their organization and the specific publics about each other’s perspective on specific situations, coordinate events where the organization and the public can interact with each other, and be an advocate for the community within the organization they represent throughout the decision-making process and on-going communication.

RMT also has its applications in media relations, the strategic practice in public relations at the heart of this dissertation. Ledingham and Bruning (2007) make note of the “antagonistic” relationship between practitioners and journalists (Aronoff, 1975a, 1975b). Ultimately, delivering on promises, being honest and forthcoming, and working with the needs of journalists in mind all help improve the working relationship and can help to change the culture of antagonism once so prevalent in the media relations context (Ledingham & Bruning, 2007). Each of the practical contexts studied here is relevant in the workload of most PIOs. Testing these contextual differences in the context of media relations between state government PIOs and journalists will prove important in determining how RMT principles apply in this unique context.

RMT provides a means of identifying how PIOs fill mediators' roles between agencies and publics, including the media. A key aspect in building and maintaining relationships is being attentive to each public proactively and adapting to their needs as they evolve over time. Also, an essential consideration of the potential effectiveness as a mediator is the PIOs principals' openness to adaptation or advice from the PIO. Both elements will weigh in heavily in the summative analysis of efforts.

Method

To perform this analysis, the research gathered news coverage of the White House press briefings on four particularly notable dates that were influential on the Spicer's reputation and ability to build and sustain a productive relationship with the press covering the White House. The researcher limited the examination to the four highest volume days of coverage because of the level of salience the events raised, and because of their applicability to media relations as it relates to the journalist-practitioner relationship and RMT principles.

January 21, 2017: Public Humiliation before Introductions

The morning following President Trump's inauguration and two days before his first official press conference, Spicer made a critical statement to the press about the media. He claimed that they had underestimated the size of the crowds for the inauguration. He claimed that the ceremony had drawn the "largest audience to ever to witness an inauguration, period – both in person and around the globe". But as many sources immediately pointed out, that claim was false (Cillizza, 2017).

Spicer stated that the press had altered images of the event to minimize crowd sizes (Bennett, 2017). He blamed floor coverings over the grass for a visual effect that made the audience look smaller, and falsely claimed that they had never been used before despite the fact that they had been used in 2013 for the last inauguration (Helsel, 2017). Spicer also used incorrect figures to claim that Metro ridership was higher during Trump's inauguration than during Obama's inauguration, when in fact it was lower than during either of Obama's inaugurations (Siddiqui, 2017). Spicer took no questions after his statement, and later defended his previous statements by saying "sometimes we can disagree with the facts" (Donald Trump's press, 2017). It was subsequently reported that Spicer had made the statement on direct orders from Trump, angered with what he considered unfair press coverage of his inauguration (The First Days, 2017).

The press responded in a fashion previous scholarship on media relations (Jeffers, 1975) would predict. In response to the briefing, conservative political analyst Bill Kristol wrote: "It is embarrassing, as an American, to watch this briefing by Sean Spicer from the podium at the White House" (Stelter, 2017). A Vanity Fair piece on the briefing described Spicer's statement as "peppered with lies" (Makarechi, 2017). The article further referred to the "Trump administration's needless lies" and noted that Spicer's statements appeared to involve a "deliberate attempt to mislead" (Graham, 2017). Glenn Kessler of The Washington Post gave Spicer's claims four Pinocchios, writing that he was so appalled by the press secretary's performance that he wished he could have given him five Pinocchios instead of the maximum number of four (Kessler, 2017).

January 23, 2017: Dippin' Dots, Melissa McCarthy, and The First Presser

Two days later on January 23, 2017, Spicer held his first official White House press conference and finally took questions from reporters. When Spicer was asked about attendance at the inauguration, he said that his definition of a viewing audience also included individuals who watched the event on television as well as on social media online. He claimed that online viewership must have been in the "tens of millions" (Johnson, 2017).

Spicer's argument was based on the reported figure of 16.9 million people who began streaming the inauguration on CNN's website. This argument has been criticized because the 16.9 million streams included people who started the stream and then left (Bump, 2017).

While Spicer was trying to establish his relationship with the press, his initial briefing on January 21 had consequences that would undercut his credibility on other fronts. The day before his press briefing, Twitter users having spent time scrolling through his prior posts to the social networking site discovered that Spicer had an ongoing feud with Dippin' Dots, the novelty ice cream vendor (Hughes, 2017). The traffic mocking him for this Twitter feud made him the object of jokes, and even prompted Dippin' Dots to issue a letter to the press secretary asking "to be friends rather than foes" and offering to host an ice cream social at the White House. Spicer responded a day later apologizing for a slow response, as suggested doing some great for public servants and first responders instead (Sanders, 2017).

In the week following Spicer's first briefings and the Dippin' Dots story, comedic actress Melissa McCarthy performed a surprise sketch on Saturday Night Live parodying his first briefing. In the performance, she berated reporters and apologized for past actions in equal manner, while offering farcical claims about the president and his achievements during the sketch (Khatchatourian, 2017). The performance was an instant hit, and would prompt several subsequent performances during Spicer's tenure. A point revisited later in the paper, much to the chagrin of Spicer and Trump. Most notably, the president did not help matters by noting the gender of the performer was something he specifically disliked about McCarthy's performance (Cillizza, 2017).

On February 7, 2017, CNN reported that, "President Donald Trump is disappointed in Spicer's performance during the first two weeks of the administration." Trump was also upset at White House chief of staff Reince Priebus for recommending Spicer, the network reported. Trump "regrets it every day and blames Priebus," a White House source told CNN (Acosta, 2017). His role as temporary communications director was filled by Michael Dubke on March 6, 2017. It was clear in the first two weeks that Spicer's relationship with both the press and his principals were damaged.

February 24, 2017: Attacking the Free Press via Gaggle and a Word From Earnest

After a month of conflict at press briefings, Spicer added fuel to the fire when the White House selectively blocked several news outlets—including the BBC, CNN, The New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Politico—from an off-camera briefing, or press gaggle with Spicer, a move that prompted strong objections from the outlets concerned, as well as by the White House Correspondents' Association (Gold, 2017).

Not surprisingly, the press responded negatively in coverage. The Washington Post wrote that the barring of the outlets was "a rare and surprising move that came amid President Trump's escalating war against the media." (Farhi, 2017). Reporters from the Associated Press and *Time* magazine were admitted to the briefing, but chose not to attend in protest of the exclusion of other journalists.

April 11, 2017: Alternative History and the Ghost of Easters Past

On April 11, 2017, Spicer addressed the Khan Shaykhun chemical attack in Syria. He said that Russia should not support the Syrian government. He went further and inaccurately commented that in World War II "You had someone as despicable as Hitler who didn't even sink to using chemical weapons" (What House Press Briefing, 2017). However, hydrogen cyanide, the active component of Zyklon B, which was used to kill people in Hitler's gas chambers, is identified as a chemical weapon under the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (Hydrogen Cyanide, 2010).

His remarks drew strong criticism, especially given the fact that the timing of the remarks coincided with the Jewish holiday of Passover (Tani, 2017). Spicer offered a clarification saying he was not trying to deny that Hitler used lethal gas during the Holocaust, instead that he was trying to compare how Assad dropped bombs on population centers to how Hitler used the gas. Amid calls for his resignation, Spicer apologized the next day.

At the same time, images of Spicer's stint as the Easter Bunny during the Bush administration began to make the rounds in news coverage, and continued to undermine Spicer's credibility as press secretary. The mockery reached its fever pitch on Easter weekend with the return of Melissa McCarthy as Sean Spicer on Saturday Night Live, emerging from an Easter Egg in a bunny suit, lambasting the press corps and leaning into a parody of Spicer's ill-conceived comments about World War II and the chemical attacks (Framke, 2017).

Summer 2017: Fade to Black and the Fallout

As the spring progress, Spicer's presence at press briefings shrank at Sarah Huckabee Sanders began to assumer press secretary duties and handled the daily press briefings on a growing basis. In June, when holding briefings, Spicer banned cameras from all but four of the press briefings. The press responded with public criticism of the chilling effect on the fourth estate. CNN took it another step further, opting to send Supreme Court sketch artist Bill Hennessy to sketch the daily briefings in late June (Stelter, 2017).

With his capital with the press and the president exhausted, Spicer's time in the role was bound to come to an end. On July 21, 2017, Spicer announced his intention to resign as White House Press Secretary. He made his decision known immediately after President Trump appointed financier Anthony Scaramucci as White House communications director. In the weeks leading up to the resignation announcement, Spicer had sought "a more strategic communications role" in the White House (CBS News, 2017).

Trump had reportedly been dissatisfied for some time with Spicer's performance as White House Press Secretary (Acosta & Diamond, 2017). According to The New York Times, Trump asked Spicer to stay on, but Spicer announced his resignation after telling the President he "vehemently disagreed" with the appointment of Scaramucci. In a tweet, Spicer said that it has been "an honor and a privilege" to serve Trump and that he would continue his service in the White House, through August 2017. His new position was not identified (Thrush, 2017). Sarah

Huckabee Sanders was announced as the new White House Press Secretary the same day. Spicer would drop out of the public eye for the next two months.

September 18, 2017: The Emmies and Immediate Reaction

After his hiatus, Spicer made a cameo appearance at the presentation of the Emmy Awards on September 17, spoofing his own image by predicting that the Emmys broadcast would garner "the largest audience to witness an Emmys, period". The following week he gave an interview to The New York Times and appeared on Good Morning America (Thrush, 2017).

The public reaction to Spicer's appearance was less than positive, as Twitter users spent much of the evening the producers and host Stephen Colbert for inviting the disgraced press secretary to the proceedings, given his role in deceiving the American public. Among the most common comments were pleas not to normalize Spicer (Saad, 2017).

While Spicer's appearance was his first attempt at reputation repair, Colbert and the show's producers publically noted the idea was a last-minute addition to the program. Further, they noted that the surprise laughs would be worth the trouble his presence may cause. In short, Spicer was a comedic prop (Bradley, 2017).

Analysis Through Relationship Management Theory

Sean Spicer offers a clear example of how not having the trust of your principals inhibits your ability to broker a viable professional relationship with any key external public (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998). In this case, the president's public conflict with the press made it impossible for Spicer to put his comments on press collaboration prior to assuming the job into action.

There was no effort to attend to the needs or the press, or even demonstrate a reasonable level of civility with the press corps. Exacerbating matters was a consistent effort to decieve the press or openly spread false information in the daily press briefings. The outcomes of his efforts are nothing new in media relations scholarship (Aronoff, 1975a ; 1975b ; Jeffers, 1977). The press corps was in open conflict with Spicer two days prior to his first official briefing, and this did not change over the course of his eight months of work.

Worst of all, strategically speaking, it is clear that Spicer's efforts at the president's behest to selectively address or restrict press outlets to achieve more beneficial coverage or limit criticism respectively failed, and only amplified the criticism on Spicer and the Trump administration. The subsequent banning of cameras only further solidified the criticism surrounding Spicer.

The impact on Spicer's tenure is evident, but even more interesting is the relative struggle he is experiencing in finding footing following his role in the White House. Administrative staff leaving the White House is not uncommon, but what is uncommon is the struggle so many of those departing are experiencing in finding lucrative opportunities following their tenure. To date, Spicer's been unable to land a stable role on cable or network news (Atkinson, 2017, September 19).

There is a viable path of scholarship in looking at the impact on individual reputation working for this administration has on political and corporate professionals. Given Spicer's trouble after leaving the White House, we also see other members of his staff struggling in transitioning to other career paths following their term of service. In short, the toxicity of Trump's brand may do damage to professionals working for in public service roles in his administration. Specifically, research on reputation management and image repair might yield viable knowledge on what differentiates the successful from those who disappear from public life after leaving the Trump White House.

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Spectacle in the Aftermath of Hurricane Maria: An Analysis of Colbert's #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief Campaign

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On September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria struck the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico and surrounding islands as a high-end category 4 storm causing catastrophic damage to the island's infrastructure and plunging its more than 3 million residents into chaos. According to FEMA (2017), estimates immediately following the storm indicated 100% of the island was without power, 56% of residents were without potable water, and only 5% had cell phone access. In subsequent months, the U.S. government reported approximately 64 deaths related to the storm; however, estimates on the ground indicate the number of storm-related deaths may exceed 1,000 (Robles, Davis, Fink, & Almukthar, 2017).

Maria was the third major storm in a highly active and destructive 2017 hurricane season to make landfall in the U.S. in slightly more than a one-month period (Belles, 2017). Within hours of receiving damage reports from Maria, longstanding relief organizations such as the American Red Cross, already stretched thin by the previous hurricanes that had devastated parts of Texas (Hurricane Harvey) and Florida (Hurricane Irma), released calls for monetary and food donations to assist Puerto Ricans in what was anticipated to be a very lengthy recovery. Additionally, five former U.S. presidents—Jimmy Carter, George Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama—created the One American Appeal fund specifically to benefit victims of hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria that impacted residents in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, respectively (GBPLF, 2017).

Perhaps lesser known, and the focus of this analysis, was a disaster relief campaign initiated by CBS talk show host Stephen Colbert, who used his show, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, as a platform to raise awareness of the campaign and solicit participation. Although Colbert's campaign was likely well-intended, using Neil Postman's main arguments from his classic text *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, I argue that the spectacle Colbert built into the fundraiser did more to distance us from the seriousness of Puerto Ricans' plight than to connect us to it. The guiding research question for this analysis asks: To what extent and in what ways does electronic media coverage of catastrophic events promote spectacle over substance?

Amusing Ourselves in the Aftermath of Maria

In times of tragedy, we frequently turn to our media for authoritative information and guidance as we attempt to grapple with the enormity of a situation. How members of the media frame a serious event goes a long way toward enlightening or anesthetizing us to a situation's seriousness. It is this latter effect that concerned Postman regarding the tendency of audiovisual media in general and television in particular.

Postman's Critique of Television

In 1985, media researcher and scholar, Neil Postman published the now classic text *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* in which he articulated an unabashed critique of the electronic media with an emphasis on television, the dominant medium of the day. Postman's critique can be concisely summarized in this quote from the book, "TV serves us most usefully when presenting junk-entertainment; it serves us most ill when it co-opts serious modes of discourse—news, politics, science, education, commerce, religion" (Postman, 2005, p. 159).

Much of Postman's critique rested on analyzing the biases of audiovisual media relative to print media. Whereas print media are linear and analytical, requiring focus and critical analysis on the part of the reader to process the information for understanding, audiovisual media are nonlinear and emotional, encouraging passivity with little-to-no analysis on the part of the viewer. With television, the viewer is immersed in a stream of rapidly changing images with no time to pause for reflection; for to pause is to remove oneself from the flow and, thus, to artificially break connection with the content. Because television routinely compresses time, and its subjects, into 30- and 60-minute episodes that are frequently interrupted by commercial breaks, serious topics in areas such as politics and science are given, at best, superficial treatment because the time constraints and the format of television demand this. Hence, Postman argued that television is an excellent medium for entertainment and a poor one for portraying matters of serious public discourse. Even if one made a sincere effort to use television in the service of serious discourse, the entertainment biases of the medium would always render the final product a paler, trivialized version of its original self. Thus, a category 4 hurricane passed through the entertainment filter of television emerges looking more like a harmless child's hand-held windmill.

Colbert's #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief Campaign

According to Stephen Colbert, host of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, the #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief campaign was launched "spur-of-the-moment" on September 27, 2017 during an interview with actor Nick Kroll, who was promoting his upcoming Netflix cartoon series, *Big Mouth*, a show focusing on the awkwardness of puberty (Colbert, 2017, September 27). As part of his pitch, Kroll was soliciting puberty photos of celebrities to enhance audience appeal for the series. Toward the end of the interview, Colbert proposed the idea of having celebrities send their awkward puberty photos to Colbert via Twitter using the hashtags, #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief. For each qualifying photo received, a donation of $1000 would be made to the One America Appeal campaign to benefit the residents of Puerto Rico. The donations would come from Colbert's Americone Dream Fund that collects proceeds from the sales of Colbert's Ben and Jerry's ice cream flavor by the same name. In subsequent shows, Colbert would share some of the photos with the viewing audiences and update them on the campaign's progress.

Based on the preceding discussion of Postman's critique regarding television's limited capacity to portray matters of serious discourse in anything but an entertaining context, the specific research questions examined in this analysis include:

> **RQ1:** What are the specific trivializing elements, if any, of Colbert's televised #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief fundraiser?
>
> **RQ2:** Considering the serious consequences suffered by millions of Puerto Ricans in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, what is the ultimate audience take-away from Colbert's fundraiser?

Methods and Analysis

A qualitative content analysis was conducted to assess the themes and patterns highlighting the role of spectacle in the televised portion of the campaign. Videos were obtained via a keyword search on Colbert's *Late Show* YouTube channel using the terms "#PuberMe" and "#PuertoRicoRelief." A total of eight segments were identified. These segments aired between

September 27 and October 6, 2017, ranging in length from approximately 2 to 11 minutes, with a total running time of approximately 47 minutes. All segments were analyzed.

Summary of Episode Segments

Episode 1 included the interview with Nick Kroll and the original formulation of the #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief campaign, as well as a promotional for Colbert's Americone Dream Fund as the source for the proceeds (Colbert, 2017, September 27). Episode 2 began with a promotional for Colbert's new book, *Stephen Colbert's Midnight Confessions*, as well as another promotional for Colbert's Americone Dream ice cream, which lead into a recap and update on the relief campaign. During this segment, Colbert characterized the campaign to the viewing audience as, "We thought we'd have a little fun with this." Then he showed the first qualifying celebrity puberty photo of comedian Sarah Silverman followed by a few others with Colbert making witty comments on each image to generate audience laughter (Colbert, 2017, September 28). Episode 3 started with another plug for Colbert's Americone Dream ice cream as a lead-in to another campaign recap and update sharing puberty photos of talk show host Jimmy Kimmel and others, along with more humorous commentary by Colbert (Colbert, 2017, September 29). Episode 4 began the way of Episode 3 and included displaying a variety of celebrity puberty photo submissions, such as HBO *Last Week Tonight* host John Oliver; however, this episode departed from the structure of the previous episodes by featuring toward the end a cameo appearance of astrophysicist and rising media celebrity Neil DeGrasse Tyson, who "just happened to be walking by" the studio (Colbert, 2017, October 2).

Episodes 5 – 6 followed the same basic structure of episodes 1 – 3. Examples of puberty photos included former President Bill Clinton, TV host Conan O'brien, and actor Steve Martin (Colbert, 2017, October 3 & 4). Episode 7 served as the grand finale for the campaign in which Colbert reported the final dollar amount collected using a "But wait, there's more!" infomercial style to slowly build up suspense among viewers before revealing the grand total. The amount earned from the original campaign based on celebrity photo submissions was $233,000. From there, the amount was increased to $333,000 then $666,000 then $999,000, and involved a call-in cameo from Kroll, who competed with Colbert in upping the ante on the final donation amount. Just $1,000 short of a million, the star from the play *Hamilton*, Lin-Manuel Miranda, made a surprise guest appearance eliciting uproarious applause where he mugged for the camera while promoting sales of the song *Almost Like Heaven*, stating the proceeds would raise additional money for Puerto Ricans. In a highly scripted dialogue, toward the end of the segment, Colbert asked Miranda if he happened to have a puberty photo to share with the audience, to which Miranda replied that he did not have a photo but he did have a puberty video of himself, which was immediately shared with the audience to their great amusement. This prompted Colbert to donate from the Americone Dream Fund the final $1000 needed to bring the grand total for the #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief fundraiser to $1 million, while the audience erupted in thunderous cheers and applause (Colbert, 2017, October 5). The final episode served as a recap of the past week's events, which included a short segment of humorous highlights from the disaster relief campaign (Colbert, 2017 October 6).

That's Entertainment…

The themes and patterns that emerge when watching these #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief segments include entertainment, humor, campiness, self-promotion, and product promotion all of which, I argue, contributed to an atmosphere of spectacle and superficiality thereby trivializing the seriousness of Hurricane Maria's aftermath for the viewing audiences. This is not to say that Colbert's intentions were disingenuous, far from it. However, by using television and his celebrity status to raise awareness of a catastrophe, the entertainment filter of television as both medium and industry diminished the seriousness of the plight of Puerto Ricans by swaddling it in upbeat music, flashy graphics, scripted dialog, thinly veiled advertisements, and campy acting. Viewers were placed into the difficult experience of cognitive dissonance by being asked, on the one hand, to enjoy the spectacle of celebrities publicly sharing embarrassing adolescent photos of themselves "for a good cause," while, on the other hand, trying to keep foremost in their minds the suffering of millions of fellow citizens who were lacking in the most basic of needs and, in some cases, dying from this lack. When faced with the choice between experiencing pleasure or pain, humans typically privilege the former.

Continuous promotion of Ben and Jerry's Americone Dream ice cream coupled with repeated plugs of Kroll's *Big Mouth* Netflix series and Miranda's grand finale ads for the song *Almost Like Heaven* transformed the campaign from that of disaster relief to that of product placement. I find it particularly disturbing that charity efforts increasingly use a give-to-get approach to secure donations, as in donate a certain amount of money and in return you'll receive a tote bag, a towel, a coffee mug, a bucket of ice water dumped on someone or, in this case, a star-studded song or a pint of ice cream.

Throughout the campaign, emphasis was placed on getting the laugh (and, hence, the ratings), whether this was achieved by showing celebrity puberty photos or engaging in campy banter or the transparent play-acting of the cameo guests. Not once in the campaign coverage did Colbert provide an update on Puerto Ricans' status; rather, he resorted to using generic catchy phrases, such as "Do the right thing" and "There's still plenty of time. There's still plenty of need." Perhaps most egregious was Neil DeGrasse Tyson's cameo in the fourth episode. Here was a prominent astrophysicist, who is highly qualified to talk about climate change, waltzing onto the stage to riotous applause claiming, "I heard you were looking for embarrassing celebrity puberty photos…So, I just happened to be walking by [all the while laughing at the farce of his being there] … with one such photo of me mounted on cardstock." Nothing was said about climate change and its relationship to intensifying storms, a serious topic affecting all life on this planet. Instead, the conversation focused on adolescent awkwardness while Colbert jokingly referred to his guest as Neil "DePube" Tyson. In this moment, we witnessed firsthand the entertainment filter of television transforming a professional scientist into a celebrity, rendering him trivial and mute.

With respect to the campaign's success, it was clear from watching the televised segments the audiences were thoroughly entertained, especially with the cameos by Tyson and Miranda. Financially, the puberty photo submissions generated $233,000 with the bulk of the final $1 million being contributed by others, meaning less than half of the total donations came from the original campaign. In contrast, the One America Appeal campaign, to which the #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief funds were donated, raised $42 million dollars by the time it concluded its fundraising on December 31, 2017 (GBPLF, 2017), and with far less fanfare. The overarching take-away from Colbert's campaign seemed to be, "Laugh at others' adolescent awkwardness, and the rest of the world's problems fade from view."

Conclusion

The purpose of this analysis is to offer an alternative interpretation of what, on the surface, may have appeared as a clever and impactful campaign to raise awareness of and money for the victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. When viewed through the lens of entertainment, #PuberMe #PuertoRicoRelief succeeded in generating widespread celebrity participation and audience engagement. Viewed through the lens of serious discourse, however, the campaign succeeded in diverting our attention from the seriousness of Puerto Ricans' plight as well as larger climate issues by amusing audiences with awkward puberty photos of our favorite celebrities.

In thinking through the logic of the campaign, what was the point of having celebrities submit puberty photos as a requirement for Colbert to donate money out of his Americone Dream Fund? He knew, at least generally, how much was in the fund when the campaign launched, which means he also knew how many celebrity photos could “qualify” for inclusion based on the $1000/photo criterion. Why not simply make the donation to One American Appeal using the available money in the fund without the spectacle? One answer: Because, as Postman observed, the medium of television and the way we have become conditioned to use and consume it demands that all content, regardless of its seriousness, be packaged as entertaining. The caution here is that we may be in the process of becoming a society that makes amusement or reward a prerequisite for compassion. If this is the case, I suspect Postman would not be amused, and neither should we.

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Using the Poem “Where I’m From” as an Icebreaker

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Background

Icebreaker activities are often used in the instructional setting to help the students and the instructor get to know each other better and to help participants feel more relaxed. Icebreakers can also be used to introduce course concepts and set the stage for the rest of the semester. As DeSilets (2008) points out, the term “icebreaker” is an apt term as an “icebreaker is a ship intended to clear a passage so that communication channels stay open (p. 292)”. Garber (2008) makes the case that icebreaker activities are a good fit in communication courses as they cause students to see the communication process in a different light.

Incorporating poetry into a class icebreaker activity can provide a backdrop for students to express themselves creatively and increase a sense of classroom community from the very start of the semester. A poem that lends itself well for an icebreaker activity is Georgia Ella Lyon’s (1999) poem *Where I’m From*. Kentucky’s poet laureate from 2015-2016, Lyon explains on her website (georgeellalyon.com, n.d.) how the poem grew out of her response to Tennessee writer Jo Carson’s work that highlighted her roots and sense of place.

Along with Minneapolis writer, teacher, and activist Julie Landsman, Lyon started the *I am From Project* (iamfromproject.com):

> (T)he poem as a writing prompt has traveled in amazing ways. People have used it at their family reunions, teachers have used it with kids all over the United States, in Ecuador and China; they have taken it to girls in juvenile detention, to men in prison for life, and to refugees in a camp in the Sudan. (georgiaellalyon.com, n.d.)

Objectives

This Georgia Ella Lyon writing prompt can be adapted as an icebreaker for a communication class to assist in achieving several objectives:

- To provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their personal background.
- To foster cultural awareness by highlighting the fact that the students in the class come from varied backgrounds.
- To reduce student anxiety about starting a new course.
- To get a better sense of the students’ written and oral communication skills.

Instructions

This activity can be used during the first week of an introduction to communication or public speaking course to help break the ice and build a sense of classroom community. The activity is based on the *I am From Poem* worksheet (Santa Ana Unified School District, n.d.). This template can be accessed online (https://www.sausd.us/cms/lib/CA01000471/Centricity/Domain/3043/I%20Am%20From%20Poem.pdf). The instructor will want to provide a copy of this worksheet for each student. The template can be handed out in hard copy form or posted in the learning management system for the class.

To begin the activity, the instructor should ask students to read the original poem by Georgia Ella Lyon that is featured on the worksheet. Once they have read the original poem, the instructor can then point out a model poem by a teacher that is also featured on the worksheet. This will help students understand that Georgia Ella Lyon's words can be used as an inspiration to create one's own personalized poem to help others learn more about where they are from.

The next step for this icebreaker is to ask students to write their own *I Am From* poem. The handout provides a template students can use to write their own poems. The template provides phrases to begin each segment of the poem and then blank spaces and prompts to assist the student in writing their poem. For example, the first line begins "I am from…" and the writer is instructed to think of a "specific ordinary item" related to their family's roots and insert that into the sentence. The instructor should allocate about 20 minutes for this portion of the activity.

The final step of the icebreaker is to ask each student to read their *I Am From* poem out loud. By sharing their poem with their classmates, they will be providing a glimpse into their origin story and helping the instructor and fellow students gain a more nuanced understanding of who this student-poet is. If time allows, the instructor should follow the student readings by sharing their own version of the poem. This portion of the activity has the added benefit of giving students a low-stakes, ungraded public speaking opportunity. Because students are reading from a script, they may feel less anxiety than if asked to give a formal presentation.

Depending on the length of the class period and the number of students in the class, this icebreaker activity could be completed in one session. Other timing options could involve introducing the poem in one class period and then asking students to fill in the template to bring back to the next class period to share with others.

Variations

This activity can be used in many different ways. Besides using it as an icebreaker for an introductory communication course or a public speaking class, it could be used early or later in the semester in an intercultural, interpersonal, or small group communication class to highlight the cultural backgrounds of the students in the class. The student poems can be used to launch a discussion about cultural diversity and the role it plays in communication interactions/relationships.

The *I Am From* assignment could also be utilized in a performance-based course. For example, the poem could serve as the first formal speeches students give in a public speaking class. They would be given delivery tips and time to rehearse to ensure strong presentations. Students could also use their poems for an oral interpretation exercise with the possible twist of having them enact the poem of a classmate to learn how to interpret and convey another's cultural experience.

An instructor could adapt the assignment for a media production course. The individual poems could be used as scripts for short, personal videos or a narrated slideshow.

The assignment also lends itself well to team-taught and/or special topics courses. For example, the authors of this article used this activity successfully the first week of a team-taught course for an honors program that tied together health communication and expressive writing therapy.

The assignment can also be easily adapted for an online or hybrid course. Students can post their poems and classmates can provide feedback through an online discussion board. Dixon, Crooks, and Henry (2006) stress that icebreaker activities for online courses can eliminate the perceived distance in the learning environment.

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Why do the Walking Dead Like to Eat Brains and Protest? A Research Paper

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Introduction:

On an October Sunday in 2008, a group of individuals dressed as zombies and numbering near 2,500 gathered in a park in Toronto, Canada. Not too long after the gathering initiated, the enormous group started to move as part of a so-called "Zombie Walk" (Peake, 2010, pp. 53-54). "'BRRRAAAAAAIIIIIIIINNNNNNNSSSSSSS,' an ambiguous corporeality of zombie flesh, wounds, and blood moaned, as it writhed together in an endless sea, each of its fragments an individual attacking the Cartesian dualism that instantiates the very realm we cavorted'" (Peake, 2010, p. 53). As the group staggered its way through the streets of Toronto moaning and groaning, Bryce Peake dedicated his essay to describe how the time spent as an active participant in the walk "fuels the ability to slip into a trance, as the unconscious is triggered by metaphors of its own existence" (Peake, 2010, p. 55). From its inception in 2003, the Toronto Zombie Walk has not only experienced a rise in participation, but their website mentions the "plague" spreading across Canada, entering the United States, and has traveled as far as Australia. Additionally, the now annual event has grown to incorporate a film festival and even a Halloween parade ("About TZW," n.d.).

Despite the *Toronto Zombie Walk* website's stance that zombies "have such unity as a mass in death" as well as being fun, Peake provides a reminder of what these zombie walks ultimately represent outside of ways for groups to collect dressed as members of the walking dead. As Peake (2010) concludes,

> The Zombie Walk is more importantly a form of social protest, a protest is at once a floating signifier of a signified form of exploitation or oppression and simultaneously a grounded signified – whose signifier lies it its dichotomous opposite – of desire to know life through experience of death. (p. 66)

A survey of news articles focusing on the last decade provides an abundance of instances where people have dressed as zombies as part of a protest movement. Interestingly, from the materials collected, most do not mention any violence occurring during the protests taking place. This lack of violence seems quite the opposite of the flesh-seeking monsters made famous by filmmaker George A. Romero. It was in Romero's iconic and symbolic films, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead*, and eventually *Day of the Dead*, that a new paradigm for zombies was presented, as horrific masses of flesh-crazed monsters (Bishop, 2010, p. 100).

Specifically, for Romero's piece *Dawn of the Dead*, the film poignantly comments on America's consumer-driven culture, communicated in the movie by the hordes of zombies concentrated around a shopping mall while the four main protagonists take refuge inside (Bishop, 2010, p. 144). After the series of zombie-themed social commentaries by Romero debuted, it appears the use of zombies transferred to demonstrators dressed as the walking dead as part of social movements. From this, as well as the collection of news reports detailing accounts of protestors, questions arise about the history of zombie culture as well as how and why it has become so popular for people to participate in social movements while dressed and acting like zombies. Therefore, the intent of this paper is a research-based exploration of the zombie metaphor and its use in protest. From the research performed, the hope is to address why zombie-themed protests rose in popularity as well as if zombie-themed protests were used only for specific causes and lastly, how might zombies metaphorically represent the voiceless and the controlled.

Literature Review:

To understand zombie-themed protests as the political metaphor as they are used for currently, it is worth reviewing historical accounts of zombie culture, representation in popular culture, as well as political and social movement with adaptations of zombies. Importantly, these texts help to illustrate the evolution of zombie as a metaphor for "otherness" as well as how assuming the zombie guise has such appeal across various social and political movements. Alternatively, Jeremy Strong (2013) argues how "[i]n the collective sense, zombie narratives could represent our repressed or misunderstood desire to alter modes of production" (p. 4). In this sense, the desire to make change happen due to acts of social injustice, political tensions, or times of economic struggle manifests itself through the embodiment of the collected walking dead. After the decline of zombie culture in the 1980s, it would later resurrect in the 1990s, the representation of zombie as a monster and "other" would shift a recognizable, and even sympathetic, representation of society.

Outside of Popular Culture: A Historical View of Zombies

Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (2017) relay accounts in South Africa dominating newspaper headlines and leading to an investigation by the Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders by the North Province administration into the prevalence of occult violence and great fear of zombie figures (p. 787). Interestingly, the authors conclude that while witchcraft and occult activity are widespread in the region, the zombies referred to in the article are not the dead come back to life per se, but the overworked laborer. This "brutal reduction of others… to instruments of production" stems from the severe chasm between "persons of conspicuous wealth" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2017, pp. 787-788). They write, "In a world of flextime employment, it is even said that some people are made into 'part-time zombies,' whose exhaustion in the morning speaks of an unwitting nocturnal mission, of involuntary toil on the night shift" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2017, p. 787). The workers remain hidden from public view until they are released from their spell of work, walking the streets in dazed confusion due to long hours and poor working conditions. As a metaphor, the overburdened worker embodies the characteristics which align them with the characteristics of the walking dead. Comaroff and Comaroff describe how these workers as zombies are "[s]peechless and unspeakable [these] apparition[s] fades away as soon as [they become] visible and knowable. It is a mutation of humanity made mute" (2017, p. 787). As victims of the marketplace, they are called upon and controlled by, the wealthy upper class monopolizing the workforce and gaining profits from the efforts of the zombified enslaved workers.

Predating the appointed of the Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders in 1995 as reported by Comaroff and Comaroff, Scott Thompson (2016) analyzed the effects of the Canadian National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) passed in June of 1940. Thompson summarizes the efforts of this legislation to compile data of individuals meeting age requirements and categorize their availability for service. He writes,

> These data were then analyzed by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and lists of individuals who were deemed to be "available," having been found not to be employed within one of the government's 200 "necessary" industries, were passed on to the National Registration Officials who were then charged with the conscription, or "mobilization," of these men into the Armed Forces. (Thompson, 2016, p. 472)

The issue at hand became the former understanding these men would not be deployed overseas (Thompson, 2016, p. 472). However, those enlisted through the NRMA were scrutinized by those who had voluntarily enlisted to serve their country. To those who had enlisted, these men were "'foreign'" or "'not real Canadians'" (Thompson, 2017, p. 476). This furthering between soldiers and men under the NRMA fostered a sense of otherness. Additionally, the classification as part of the NRMA left these men with little authority or say in their assignments, i.e., deployments. Thompson writes how "[w]ithin popular parlance, however, the label of 'Zombies' quickly caught on culturally, and in short became how these men were identified" (2017, p. 475). The performance as a zombie NRMA soldier, as Thompson describes, forced the hand of these men to choose to convert to GS soldiers due to negative stigmatization (Thompson, 2017, p. 478). Moreover, Thompson concludes how as a political action, the self-identified Zombies rallied together to challenge the court upon learning 16,000 of their ranks were to be installed in Europe for combat (2017, p. 483). Ultimately, the classification furthered these men from any former association with their country and thus perpetuating otherness through the zombie metaphor.

In addition to Thompson's account of the zombie as a metaphor through forced performance in the military, Ilija Tomanić Trivundža (2015) illustrates the representation of zombies as a political metaphor as he surmises the use of this tactic in the political uprisings occurring in Slovenia during the winters of 2012-2013. Through the use of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Trivundža analyzed the protests' adoption of the zombie metaphor as well as how the media framed the events surrounding the movements. Citing Lakoff and Johnson's groundbreaking work which postulates individuals live their lives using metaphors, as well as previous case study of zombie metaphor in these same events, Trivundža aims to "[introduce] the concept of a *transmodal metaphor* to expose the shifting role and changing manifestations of the zombie metaphor during the three months of protests" (2015, p. 31). Taking a more in-depth consideration of intent behind the protests, Trivundža concludes that the adoption of the zombie metaphor was appropriate for these events due to two factors: as a signifier for the people or the political elite of which they were opposing.

As a metaphor, Trivundža asserts how "it was either playfully *embraced* and worn as a badge of pride or *inverted*, claiming that the 'real' zombies were members of the political elite" (2015, p. 33). In either instance, the divide between the two groups could not be understated. Whether the metaphor creates a sense of unity between the protestors or demonized the political parties they were rallying against, the metaphor emphasizes othering of the people in Slovenia. As a unit, the people have come together based on a collective understanding and shared feelings against the government. They are moved to action by their emotion. On this, James M. Jasper (1998) writes how emotions "pervade all social life, social movements included" and "[w]ithout them, there might be no social action at all" (p. 398). Therefore, for the people involved in this protest, as well as others, the collective and shared emotional reaction to the government elite in Slovenia became a driving force behind the people to engage in their protest.

Simone do Vale (2010) succinctly writes on the successes of zombie protests as she recounts the inspiration behind the first Zombie Walk in Toronto, Canada and within three years, the acceptance of this walk globally (p. 1). Though Zombie Walk does not have an exact purpose and is open to the public, events like this are characterized more as a collected theatrical performance with tactics lifted from flash mobs and a representation of zombie invasion into society reminiscent of George A. Romero's popular zombie films. However, with the incorporation of the appropriated flash mob elements, these walks become something distinct and all their own (do Vale, 2010, p. 2). As a symbol, the zombie metaphor works well as a method of protest due to the "supposedly untamable animality that resists to the perishing concept of human, a return of the repressed… [I]t is also a representation of the fear of disintegration, of contagion, and hence the trespassing of boundaries, the plague, and, consequently, isolation" (do Vale, 2010, p. 8). Thus, this representation allows for all oppressed individuals to employ the idea of their social, cultural, and societal grievances. Despite such inclusion where anyone and everyone can become part of the mob, as do Vale concludes, these Zombie Walk gatherings run the risk of becoming commodified (2010, p. 9). The incorporation of flash mob maneuvers, matched with the lack of distinct purpose behind the events, these walks and other similar zombie-themed protests may be losing some of their dramatic effect and symbolic message of oppression.

Along similar lines, Tavia Nyong'o (2012) retells her encounter with the combination of the zombie metaphor as well as flash mob tactics during the Occupy London movement. As part of this scene, she describes how the protestors gather to learn the choreography of Michael Jackson's hit song "Thriller" which featured animated zombies dancing, and don Guy Fawkes masks associating this movement with the activities hackers known as Anonymous (Nyong'o, 2012, p. 137). They would later carry banners reading "'Dancing on the Grave of Capitalism'" and "'This Has Just Begun'" as part of their demonstration (Nyong'o, 2012, p. 137). Nyong'o brilliantly compares the scenes of these demonstrations with those happening in the States and how these demonstrators are embodying the zombie metaphor through different means than the previously mentioned essays. By Nyong'o's account, "to *perform* the zombie is to experiment with the pleasures of terror, shock, and surprise. It is, paradoxically, a form of *dezombification*, particularly when it gets you out into the streets dancing" (2012, p. 142). Essentially, Nyong'o illustrates how the frustrations and anxieties built up by vicious economic tensions are freed using choreographed dance. She writes the "release of energy should be seen as a *transfer* of energy, as itself evincing, if it is not too paradoxical to speak of this: a *surplus of time*" (Nyong'o, 2012, p. 145). Thus, per Nyong'o, the dance is a means for those to cope with the mundane and routine (Nyong'o, 2010, p. 145). It gets people moving and shakes up the mundane routine they find themselves playing a part in each day.

Adding to the theatrical nature of zombie protest, Rebecca Schneider (2012) similarly writes about the use of performance and the Occupy Wall Street movement. Relying on interviews with movement participants, Schneider articulates how the march focused on Wall Street bankers and financiers and seeking to echo the allegory of their behavior (2012, p. 152). She writes how "[w]e can take [the interviewee] to mean that the protesters, acting zombie, intended to bounce zombieness back onto those who, classically, live off labor without care for infrastructural means of accountability" (Schneider, 2012, p. 152). The labor spoken about in this instance refers to the middle and working classes instead of those who fund the production, i.e., capitalists (Schneider, 2012, p. 152). The performance is meant for those who frequent the Wall Street area and particularly those "global hoarders themselves" as the protestors dress up as money-munching zombies (Schneider, 2012, p. 153). However, Schneider gives a reminder of how theatrics and resistance are by no account new. Additionally, she asserts, "the theatrical zombie makeup has been many times deployed in 20th-century popular visual culture to illustrate the addictive ills of consumerism" (Schneider, 2012, p. 154). Though Schneider is framing her argument as an entryway into an analysis of death in the live performance (i.e., the live theater), her points about zombie protest should not be ignored. As Jasper states, the "ability to focus blame is crucial to protest, and it differs according to the perceived ultimate causes and the direct embodiments of each threat or outrage" (1998, p. 410). Therefore, the use of corporate zombies as a metaphor for the corporate dead excellently plays into the broadness of adopting zombie as a form of protest.

Zombies in Popular Culture: George Romero's New Zombie Trope

As a form of entertainment, zombies were introduced to Americans using devices such as movies. Per Kyle William Bishop (2010) in his work *American Zombie Gothic*, cinematic creations such as the "first true zombie movie" Victor Halperin's 1932 movie *White Zombie* became the next highly anticipated big-screen monster (p. 64). Capitalizing on the successes of travel literature coming from Europe as well as the Caribbean, the previously unfamiliar zombie became a cinematic monstrosity. He asserts how "[m]ainstream Americans were becoming increasingly aware of voodoo, African mysticism and ritual, and the legends about native priests who were able to kill their enemies and bring them back from the dead as mindless servants – the so-called *corps cadavres*, also known as the 'walking dead'" (Bishop, 2010, p. 64). The success of such a film inspired other zombie-centric movies to follow, *Ouagna, Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), *King of the Zombies* (1941), *I Walked with a Zombie*, *Zombies of Mora-Tau* (1957), and *The Plague of Zombies* (1966) (Bishop, 2010, pp. 64-65). Perpetuated in such films were the stereotyped representation of forward-thinking Westerners against the otherness represented by the "'backward'" natives who, under imperialist domination, became muted suppressed zombies (Bishop, 2010, p. 65).

Despite the rise in popularity, Bishop argues how George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* created a new archetype for the representation of zombie as other by its incorporation of metaphor for American society of the late-1960s. Bishop writes how "no short fiction, novels, or films featuring hordes of flesh-eating zombies predate 1968, Romero appears to have authored a wholly original text" (2010, p. 94). Unlike the predecessors, these new versions of zombies have no affiliation with the Caribbean or the practice of voodoo, vastly outnumber the remaining living, crave human flesh, and are infectious (Bishop, p. 94). Romero's pivotal work leaves the exotic for something normal with the walking dead becoming a reanimated version of people who were once living. The horror, in this case, is no longer far removed in some distant or strange place but placed in modern America's backyard thus "attacks American where they live" (Bishop, 2010, p. 138). Unlike the beforehand mentioned films, as well as the other science fiction movies featuring aliens, vampires, and so on in which the monsters can assume a human-like appearance, these zombies represent the uncanny (with the notable exception of Frankenstein's monster). On this, Bishop concludes how zombies "clearly look dead – pale skin, vacant stares, hideous wounds, and decaying flesh – and have lost the power of speech, which makes them even less human and all the more terrifying" (2010, p. 110). Additionally, with the narrative situated in the late-1960s, Romero calls attention to, as well as upsets, the standard representation of the nuclear family, increasing autonomy for women, as well as racial tensions of the Civil Rights Movement and the abhorrence of the Vietnam War (Bishop, 2010, p. 121). Characteristics such as these, matched with the setting in rural America, Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* is nothing short of social commentary.

Shifting to the late-1970s Romero's follow-up zombie narrative *Dawn of the Dead* continues with social commentary but this time, of consumer culture. Bishop contends how Romero's "metaphor is simple: Americans in the 1970s are the true zombies, slaves to the master of consumerism, mindlessly migrating to stores and shopping malls for the almost instinctual consumption of goods" (2010, p. 130). Brilliantly, this "pervasive consumerism" as Bishops calls it, is echoed by the main setting of the film, a shopping mall sitting in the middle of a desolate parking lot. Referring to Bishop's previous distinguish between the earlier zombie films and the iconic films by Romero, *Dawn of the Dead* follows the story of four very human protagonists matched with hordes of very dead but very animated zombies. Interestingly, as Bishop points out, the main protagonists embody the very metaphor that Romero was illustrating by this film consumerism. As they take refuge within the confines of the mall, they engage in activity reflective of the imperialist superiority reminiscent of the earlier mentioned zombie films. On this notion, Bishop writes,

> In a disturbing parallel to the invading imperialist forces seeking commercial gain from the lands they are colonizing, four surviving humans from the city arrive at the rural mall to invade and plunder an existing, exotic location, "securing its borders" before wiping out the "indigenous population" in a bloodbath of reckless violence. (2010, p. 146)

While in the mall, the protagonists solidify living quarters on the top floor and thus elevating themselves away from the dangerous "other." The mall provides them with food, clothing, weaponry as well as affords them opportunities to try on expensive clothing and even allows for a proposal complete with an extravagant diamond ring which, given the post-apocalyptic setting, has no value (Bishop, 2010, pp. 150-152). It is not until the introduction of other humans that this idyllic and somewhat reminiscent of a typical lifestyle comes to an end as the loss of two members leads the remaining survivors to flee their stronghold for another safe place (Bishop, 2010, p. 177). It appears their needs and wants were not theirs for the keeping. The goods they amassed while holding up in the mall became the desire of another group.

Modern Protest Adaptations Around the World

As the previously mentioned articles demonstrate, the zombie metaphor has become an easily adaptable form of protest. To provide a further example of this adaptability, a survey was conducted compiling various instances of zombie-themed protests to happen within the last decade. Though this sampling is relatively small (about 15 articles), the reasons behind the marches vary widely from calls for health-care reform to unreasonable testing standards for students. Most the items sampled focused on protestors marching in opposition to the use of nuclear energy. In June 2016, an anti-uranium demonstration by the Desert Liberation Front interrupted foot traffic at Rundle Mall in Adelaide, Australia as the nearly dozen members participated in a choreographed flash mob. In the article, writer Erin Jones (2016a) describes how "[m]ore than 500 protesters, musicians and activists are expected to converge on Roxby Downs for a 'party at the gates of hell' outside the BHP Billiton mine" ("Zombies Flash Dance in Mall Nuke Protest"). Apparently, participants in the protest came from as far as Spain and Poland to join the cause (Jones, "Zombies Flash Dance in Mall Nuke Protest," 2016a). In another article about the same protest, Claire Campbell (2016) adds a bit more detail to the event outside the mall. The article includes how the anti-nuclear campaigners were dressed as 'zombie mine workers' and danced to the Imagine Dragon's hit song "Radioactive" (Campbell, "Anti-Nuclear Zombie Dance Protest Flashmob hits Adelaide Mall," 2016). In July 2016, Erin Jones illustrates the environment surrounding the first day of protests at the BHP mine. Police forces were present at the event as a precaution and to help escort mine workers from the location. She writes "[Police Assistant Commissioner Bronwyn Killmier] said officers were not wearing weapons as protestors were acting peacefully and respectfully" (Jones, "Zombies, Giant Sea God Join Large Anti-Nuclear Protest at Olympic Dam," 2016b). Even with the dynamic group present, the environment remained without arrests for the first day of protests.

In another event related to the anti-nuclear protest of Adelaide, Australia, Global Justice Now released an article in late October 2016 telling of a plan for demonstrators to meet at the London office of the European Commission for a Halloween-themed protest. A banner brandishing the words "'Stop CETA rising from the dead – Toxic trade deals belong in the grave'," along with protestors dressed as the undead were to protest a trade deal between Canada and the European Union ("Zombie Protest to Call on EU to Stop CETA from Rising from the Dead," 2016). Additionally, a November article from the same year detailed a singular protest by council member Lu Mei-ling at a city council budget meeting in Keelung City, Taiwan. In the article, Mei-ling "appeared with zombie makeup applied to her face to dramatize her concerns about the proposal to allow the import of food from radiation-affected areas of Japan" ("Keelung Councilwoman Wears Zombie Makeup to Protest 'Radioactive' Japanese Food," 2016). Claiming that her skin would start to resemble that of a zombie after three months' worth of consuming contaminated food, Mei-ling inquired as to why the health bureau lacked plans to educate the public about the issue. Additionally, 19 members of the council reportedly shouted: "'don't eat or buy'" and "'no nukes, protect Taiwan'" during a press conference ("Keelung Councilwoman Wears Zombie Makeup to Protest 'Radioactive' Japanese Food," 2016).

Outside of nuclear protest, and as previously mentioned in the literature review, protestors as part of the Occupy movements dressed as walking dead corporate zombies to highlight the reactions to capitalism. In October 2011, the *Daily Mail* released an article covering the global spread of marches against Wall Street as "planned protests around the world in a show of anger over the wobbly economy and what they see as corporate greed" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2011). The article reports how demonstrators were urged to "dress in business wear with white faces and blood, and will march while eating monopoly money" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2011). Apparently, as part of the protests which occurred in New York, nearly 700 demonstrators were arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge for charges of disorderly conduct and blocking a public street. The arrests of protestors led to the confiscation of New York City buses to transport the detainees and thus a lawsuit from the bus drivers against the New York City Police Department for commandeering the buses (Daily Mail Reporter, 2011).

The topic of education has also seen its fair share of zombie-themed protests. In November 2013, students from Chicago Public Schools dressed as zombies paraded from the school district headquarters to the office of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel at city hall to protest standardized testing. As reported in an article by Ashlee Rezin (2013), "[e]xcessive testing is taking the life out of education" thus leading to the organization of students as the "'learning dead'" ("CPS Students Dress Like Zombies, Protest the 'Death of Public Education'"). Despite the attempt to reduce the amount of standardized testing given, students still feel testing eats up significant instruction time and unfavorable impacts the quality of their education (Rezin, "CPS Students Dress Like Zombies, Protest the 'Death of Public Education'," 2013). In October 2015, another protest in Chicago focused on plans to expand charters schools. Per an article by Ashoka Jegroo (2015), students, as well as teachers, walked out of Thomas Kelly High School to demonstrate their disfavor for the 13 proposed charter schools by the Noble Network of Charter Schools. Additionally, zombie-dressed anti-charter protestors from the Chicago Teachers Union appeared outside the Chicago Public Schools headquarters while students of Kelly High held a rally outside the office of local politician Alderman Edward Burke, a supporter of charter schools, wearing face paint reminiscent of that worn for Mexico's Day of the Dead (Jegroo, "Chicago's Charter School Expansion Draws Ire of Zombie Protesters," 2015).

Most recently, California state college students gathered as the "Walking Debt," a play on the popular zombie-themed AMC television show *The Walking Dead*, to protest a proposal to increase tuition. Per the *LA Times* article by Rosanna Xia (2016), the site of the November 2016 protest took place outside the location where the California State University Board of Trustees convened to discuss the proposal. In addition to the protesters, tombstones representing the 23 California State University system campuses were erected. Per Courtney Yamagiwa, one of the protesters at the event, "'We're going for something big, something visual... It's important for students to come out and fight this'" (Xia, "As Students Protest, Cal State Trustees Seek More State Funding to Avoid Tuition Increase," 2016). Yamagiwa happens to be a member of Cal State Long Beach's Associated Students as well as the Students for Quality Education, the grassroots activist group which directed the protest. Interestingly, and unlike the previously included sources, the article reports how this protest did elicit sympathy from some of the trustees at the meeting. Particularly, Trustee Lateefah Simon commented how she "'deeply appreciate[s] the voices outside, and we should let these young people know that we hear them'" (Xia, "As Students Protest, Cal State Trustees Seek More State Funding to Avoid Tuition Increase," 2016). Despite the sympathy, the $270 tuition increase proposal was approved by the California State University Board of Trustees in January 2017 ("CSU Trustees Approve Tuition Increase," n.d.).

Zombie Protests, A Timely Affair:

Outside of the recently discussed articles, other zombie-themed protests around the world had focused their attention on topics from upset over freedom of expression when an Ohio resident was fined $13,500 for his zombie-themed Nativity scene to the absence of R18+ rated video game ratings in Australia (Grasha, 2016; Pauli, n.d.). Furthermore, in 2009, protestors took to the streets of Chicago as zombies to demand a public option for healthcare as part of a movement called "Universal Single Payer Health Care is the Only Way to Stop the Zombie Apocalypse" (Greiner, 2009). From these selected protests, there appears to be no shortage of reasons to dress up as zombies to dissent or to stand up for a cause. In fact, the seemingly overuse of the zombie-theme demonstrates the commodification do Vale asserted in her work.

Similarly, David McNally (2016) argues that "[t]he problem with prevailing images of apocalyptic zombie capitalism, however, is that they have lost sight of its most subversive underside: the zombie laborer" ("Zombies: Apocalypse or Rebellion?"). Emerging out of Haiti, the zombie laborer came about during the time of American occupation of the territory. Once the "world's largest slave colony," the workers of Haiti became synonymous with the walking dead as they were stripped of their individuality while forcibly slogging at the advantage of others (McNally, "Zombies: Apocalypse or Rebellion?," 2016). Despite Romero adapting zombies to make commentary about modern consumerism, it is without the hard work of others (willing or not), that products are available for purchase and materials produced for Americans to consume. As McNally concludes, "all this manic consumption is impossible without the millions of workers who feed the machinery of profit with their labor" ("Zombies: Apocalypse or Rebellion?," 2016). To McNally's point, the attention shifted from compulsory labor to the dramatized metaphor on the visual narrative.

Much attuned to the thoughts presented by McNally and Bishop, Sarah Lauro (2015) (criticizes the saturation of zombies in popular culture and society as part of the introduction to her book *The Transatlantic Zombie*. As she contends,

> It was this phenomenon, the zombie walk, inaugurated in 2003 in Toronto, Canada, that solidified for me that I wasn't imagining it – the way you learn the etymology of the word *brazier* and then see them on every corner – something bizarre was happening; zombies *were* everywhere. Though participants may have claimed that the zombie walk wasn't a form of protest but was just for fun … it is difficult not to see the act of playing dead as having significance. (Lauro, 2015, p. 1)

The understanding of what the word zombie is meant to imply has lost its right, or more accurately, historical meaning. For Lauro, the zombie is now the property of the movies and with it, the image of those who were once human now "lumbering stiffly across the cinematic landscape; a mob of moaning, half-rotten people greedily devouring the entrails of their friends" (2015, p. 3). The image associated with the word zombie is inextricably linked with the George A. Romero and his cinematic version of the walking dead.

Mentioned earlier, Kyle William Bishop thoroughly chronicled the domination of zombie movies after the debut of Halperin's *White Zombie* in 1932. Then, after the racially charged films gave way to the development of a new zombie trope by Romero, the zombie shifted from a symbol of otherness to a social commentary on consumer culture. However, it would not be long before zombie films would again change. Bishop summarizes the transition from the object of horror to object of mockery when films such as *The Gore-Met Zombie Chef from Hell*, *I Was a Teenage Zombie* or even Michael Jackson's music video for his hit song "Thriller" premiered (2010, p. 181). Paradoxically, it was these so-called "zombedies" which shifted transformed the interpretation of zombie into a more personal narrative (Bishop, 2010, p. 181). Bishop states how "these films deflect horror of the zombies through both humor and satire, they humanize the creatures and make it easier to relate to them" (2010, p. 181). Thus, the focus became less on identifying as the struggle to survive humans but to the formerly living which again roam the earth.

This transition of the zombie image, which happened during the 1990s, possibly came about due to a variety of factors, including a change in political climate. Americans no longer seemed interested in the grotesque but instead focused their interest the campy and over-the-top exaggerations of the zombie narrative. As Bishop concludes,

> The United States of the 1990s was perhaps too financially secure, too politically stable, to foster socially and culturally critical or fear-inducing films, and the allegorical zombie quickly suffered its own death at the hands of its brain-eating kin … It took the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and George W. Bush's new America to change the cultural landscape enough to make the zombie's return not only inevitable but also vital to the culture. (2010, p. 180)

Jasper writes how "[t]here would be no social movements if we did not have emotional responses to developments near and far" (1998, p. 405). For the time before the attacks on September 11, 2001, it would appear social movements, or commentary in the form of foreboding zombies was usurped by the pathetic and the humorous, only to be called upon when needed.

For demonstrators, this seems to be the case as well. As showcased by the previously mentioned articles and news reports, the metaphor of the walking dead can easily be adapted to meet the needs of those engaged in the protest or suffice as a theme for people to gather and partake in a stroll for amusement. From this, it could be argued that the symbolic reference for oppressed and voiceless Haitian slaves has now transitioned to become an easily recognizable disguise for people to wear at their convenience. Ironically, Bishop asserts how "the most terrifying aspect of the zombie, as established by its folkloristic characteristics, becomes the depiction of a human subject as nothing more than an object, *a dumb tool to be used and abused by others*" (2010, p. 131, emphasis added). The use, misuse, or overuse of the zombie metaphor as a form of protest seems to be the case given the plethora of appearances zombies have made from marches, film festival celebrations, pub crawls, and the like.

Conclusion:

Due to the pervasive nature of zombie cinematic narrative, there seems to be an oversaturation happening. With so many appearances of zombies on television, in the movies, and with reenactments to protest or only to have fun, the zombie has not lost its allure. However, the symbolic meaning behind the walking dead has been lost. Indeed, any large grouping of people dressed as the walking dead and stumbling down the streets of any modern metropolis can be a cause for alarm, or at least, a reason to stop and stare. However, it is the idea of what the walking dead genuinely represents what has been overshadowed by current events. As a social movement, these protests are not just a grouping of people but an orchestrated spectacle attempting to become the object of focus while adding an extra element of drama. For Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1998), "through their impact on popular culture, more, and tastes, social movements lead to a reconstruction of processes of social interaction and collective identity formation" (p. 10). They are not separate individuals any longer but instead an amorphous blob of figurative zombies.

Though explicitly focusing on music, Eyerman and Jamison speak extensively on how social movements transform culture. They conclude how "social movements challenge dominant categories of artistic merit by making conscious – and problematic – the taken-for-granted frameworks of evaluation and judgment" (1998, p. 10). Experimentation and creation of new aesthetic practices both fall under this way of looking at social movements. For Romero, using the zombified representation of culture and its addiction to the purchasing and collecting material goods worked well for the time when it debuted. On the other hand, Eyerman and Jamison also state how "social movements utilize media of artistic expression for communicating with the larger society and, by doing so, often serve to (re)politicize popular culture and entertainment" (1998, p. 10). During its time, *Dawn of the Dead* became a visual metaphor for modern consumer culture and an uncanny representation of the desire for material goods. Then, as culture changed, so did the zombies. They became less something to be feared and more recognizable, and identifiable, human. Bishop concludes how Romero's latest work *Day of the Dead* changed to foster sympathy with the undead in the narrative. He writes "instead of simply seeing their own potential death in the familiar visages of the walking dead foes, views are being encouraged to sympathize with the zombies, recognizing them as fully realized individual characters and even rooting for them in their narrative plight" (Bishop 167). Through the smart usage of camera and editing techniques, aligning the audience with the point of view of the zombies puts the audience in the place of the zombie and thus, allowing them to experience what it is to be a zombie.

In refocusing the audience to identify less with any of the surviving humans, Romero reminds viewers that these walking dead were previously human. Perhaps this identification can help to explain why zombies have been embodied in protest countless times. While each of the mentioned movements has an individual cause, they all have a commonality. From matters of health care to education to the production, trade, or disposal of nuclear waste, these causes have a very human element to them. By marching under the guise of the walking dead, the protesters may be attempting to elicit sympathy from onlookers and officials alike. Spectators can watch from afar as the mob moves and yet, much like Romero's work, can see themselves in the faces or dress of the participants. Arguably, while the modern perception of what is represented by zombies is far removed from its Haitian origins, the representation of oppression and the voiceless attempting to find some semblance of a voice transcends time. It is not certain why the zombie metaphor is popular today. Blame the current addiction to technology, the rising cost of education along with increasing amounts of student debt, or the looming uncertainty brought by the current political climate; it has been done before. For the social movements of today, on the other hand, they are indeed exemplifying the diversity and adaptable nature of the zombie metaphor.

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