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A Case Study of Adopting a Mastery and a Coaching Approach in a Public Speaking Course

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As reflected in most public speaking textbooks, the traditional prescription for constructing a speech includes the following steps: select a topic; develop a specific purpose; conduct research; identify main points; construct a preparation outline; word the speech; write the introduction and conclusion; create visual aids; practice the speech; and, finally, deliver the speech. Courses typically address these topics in roughly the same order, i.e., in a step-by-step fashion. Taking the steps to develop a speech requires many skills. College students, especially first-year students, are often ill prepared to learn the required skills. They have not conducted high quality research, created outlines, spoken purposefully, or created visual aids for presentations. While the traditional approach to helping students learn these skills can be effective, by the end of the course some students have not learned all the skills they need to be excellent public speakers. Instructors complain that there is not enough time to ensure that most students learn every aspect of the basic skills needed to maximize their public speaking abilities. They may end the course not knowing how to narrow a topic, conduct research, cite sources, focus on research relevant to the specific purpose, outline well, make good eye contact, use language effectively, create a useful PowerPoint, or avoid distracting mannerisms. Granted, students who read the textbook, listen well, follow directions, learn from other speeches, and work hard to master the public skills taught using the traditional step-by step approach typically do well, but this approach no longer seems effective for those not fully invested in achieving mastery of all basic skills. First-year courses have students of widely varying abilities, form those with little exposure to skills, like outlining, to those who have given well-received speeches in the past. This raises the question as to whether there is a better approach for teaching public speaking, one that generates buy-in, provides one-on-one support for students who are struggling to master a basic skill, enhances peer-to-peer support, and helps all students improve their abilities, no matter what skill level they bring to the course.

Intuitively, the traditional step-by-step approach to teaching public speaking makes sense. When teaching a skill, starting with the first thing one is likely to need to do (select a topic), then working through each step (until one arrives at practicing and delivering the speech) is how we typically teach processes. However, in practice, no one who teaches the public speaking course works through all of the steps before assigning students to give a few speeches, often speeches of introduction or other special occasion speeches. Instructors want to give students speaking experiences early in the course to help them manage fear and gain some experience learning how to deliver a speech. This early introduction to speaking in class makes sense because some delivery skills should become habits. Managing fear and building confidence also requires experience.

Given the assumption that the step-by-step prescription is what the doctor ordered, are there ways to modify the approach to help ensure that every student achieves to their highest potential in a single course. How can instructors make better use of classroom time to provide one-on-one support, create additional opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring, and help ensure that students' acquisition of skills is more uniform.Two approaches were considered and implemented on a trial basis in a Spring 2019 public speaking course. The two approaches used were the mastery approach (Guskey, 2001; Guskey and Pigott, 1988;

NAMA, 2016) and the coaching psychology approach (Kemp, 2008; Wang, 2013). These two methods are often not clearly defined. They have many variations and are used in a wide range of disciplines other than speech communication. The heart of the mastery approach is that the course has a mechanism in place that prevents a student from progressing onto a subsequent skill until the student has attained some degree of proficiency in the current skill. The mastery approach to teaching and learning is often used in mathematics and STEM courses because students are unlikely to be successful in later, more advanced, steps of problem solving without first mastering the simpler, easier steps. Students in mastery courses that utilize computer programs often work at their own pace, obtain feedback on incorrect answers from the program and instructors, and relearn material as needed before retesting as needed. On the other hand, the coaching psychology approach provides a model whose purpose "must be to facilitate and support clients' achievement of the goals and objectives they set for themselves and by standardizing an empirically supported framework for coaching, it is expected that clients may be better able to progressively and experientially achieve these outcomes" (Kemp, 2008, p. 221). The coaching model suggests ways that coaches of speech and debate teams attempt to develop a strong teacher-student relationships and supply personalized support to individual students as they promote the team as a source of inspiration, advice, and emotional support. Putting the coaching psychology model into practice in the classroom places high demands on student achievement, encourages students to take the initiative, promotes peer-to-peer collaborations, includes practice during class time, and prioritizes warm personal feedback. In addition, coaches should seek to help students enjoy the process of learning how to improve their speeches and praise their accomplishments. These two approaches to teaching a public speaking course may not be theoretically consistent, and is even more complicated to enact if the traditional step-by-step approach is employed too.

When I designed the course, I wanted the course structure to reflect the aspects of the mastery approach that supported individual monitoring, classroom practice time, immediate feedback (especially positive feedback), multiple revisions, and rules that encourage students not to progress to a later stage of the speech creation process until the earlier stages had been mastered. I also sought more personal relationships with students and greater peer-to-peer support. I realized that there were several challenges to implementing this coaching model. First, I needed to help students appreciate the value of being a skillful public speaker (and the need to master all the steps along the way). Unlike many students in the classroom, members of speech and debate teams are highly motivated. Even though I knew I would be interacting more frequently with the students, I understood that they would have to be persistent. Second, some students, I realized, would get frustrated by having to redo their work. In most classroom, students turn in their work, get a grade, and move on to the next task. Third, I knew that some students may not like receiving ongoing feedback or suggestions from the instructor or their peers. They may be embarrassed if the feedback is negative. Finally, I worried about attendance. What would happen to students who missed a day or more of instruction? If the instruction was going to be personalized and if the majority of the instruction occurred in the classroom, how would students who missed classes get caught up?

Since I faced these challenges, I talked with a couple of other speech instructors about my ideas and asked for their advice. One person had used elements of the mastery approach, requiring students to submit an acceptable outline before giving the speech. He noted that this requirement can be challenging but he had made it work. The motivation factor, whether students in a classroom would be sufficiently motivated to take ownership of their efforts was also discussed as a concern for the coaching model. Whether students would attend class

regularly and try to improve upon their efforts until the skills were mastered was discussed. Nonetheless, I decided to pilot the "new" course in the spring of 2019. I designed the best course I could to incorporate the ideas of the traditional, mastery, and psychology coaching models. I noticed that this class shared many similarities to the flipped classroom (see, for example, Hutchings & Quinney, 2015). For years I had been using a democratic model of teaching (Kohl, 1998) in the public speaking classroom, but had never fully flipped a public speaking class.

The course I designed had a short weekly individual or team presentation due every week for the first four weeks of the semester, starting with a eulogy speech, and continuing with a group Shark Tank pitch, a skit, and an elevator speech. The next part of the course design focused on the formal speeches. Students first had to submit topic ideas and research sources for the informative speech. Upon approval, two weeks later, they had to submit the outline and the following week submit the informative speech PowerPoint. They delivered the speech the following week. The persuasive speech also required an outline and a PowerPoint that had to be revised until approved. The speech was then given afterwards. The next part of the course occurred during the last three weeks of the semester. During this time, students prepared for a group presentation (on an analysis of an apology speech) and give a special occasion speech.

I spent some time reflecting on the success of the three parts of the course. There was a higher degree of success during the first part of the course. I attempted to teach what they needed to do to complete the assignments. The first assignment, the eulogy speech, was a written assignment. We watched eulogy speeches, like Robert F. Kennedy's "Remarks on the Occasion of the Death of Martin Luther King" and discussed the structure of the speech. We talked about how various parts of a eulogy follow the ancient Greek pattern of organization: praise, lament and consolation. I hoped that students would understand that creating speeches involved strategically using resources aimed at informing, persuading or entertaining an audience. The speeches the students wrote reflected good research and some sense of how to use language effectively. Next, students had to identify the pattern of organization for the Shark Tank speech. Examples from the TV show were shown in class. Students easily identified what needed to be accomplished in these speeches. We also talked about how the speeches were delivered and adapted to the "shark" investors. The students in groups had to brainstorm, identify a problem, and find a somewhat practical solution to the problem. Students gave their Shark Tank pitch in groups of two or three using at most a single note-card. We discussed what should be accomplished in the brief introductions and conclusions of their pitch. Most groups managed to do this quite well. In the next assignment, involving skits, I provided the class with scenarios they could use to develop a skit. We discussed how the plot should be developed and the importance of building suspense when telling a story. We also discussed how a simple character could be created based upon a single emotion. Students were told they should not write out the play, but should rather identify plot points to follow using an improvisational style of acting. Students were also encouraged to pay attention to and use the environment and pay attention to how actors were positioned in relation to the audience. These skits were fairly good, showing a good understanding of how to begin a short play and end it. They also were able to take on a role and be emotionally expressive. Finally, I this part of the course, students were asked to create an elevator speech, imagining that they would run into someone who could get them a job or internship they desired.

Most of the work on their first four assignments occurred in the classroom. I was able to help the students while they were developing their ideas. I found that I couldn't get around fast

enough to help all the students right away, so I began bringing checklists to class. Each checklist asked if they had accomplished a specific element of what had been discussed. The checklist enabled everyone to be improving their projects while I worked my way around the room. I helped all the students in the classroom, even those who were doing well. This teaching approach is closely aligned with project-based learning. I noticed quite a few of the students were asking for help, which I took to be a good sign. They gave their presentations with little fear and without any reading. Most established good eye contact and vocal variety. By midterm grade time, most students had earned As because their work had been supervised and revised. This was encouraging. There were a couple of absences, but most of the time, I could accommodate those students who often just missed one class and offer a make-up opportunity.

The second part of the course involved preparing for and delivering the informative and persuasive speeches. This part of the course more closely followed the traditional step-by step process, amplifying many of the steps they had learned earlier. We continued to do much of the work in the classroom, rather than at home. Students were required to turn in and revise the outlines and PowerPoints before delivering the speech. Student had to get at least an 80% on those items before they could speak. Many students, even if they got an 80% or a 90% on those items, revised the outlines and PowerPoints and resubmitted them. Thus, the informative and persuasive speeches were typically better organized and had better PowerPoints than I observed in most other public speaking classes I had taught. I continued to use the checklist approach, asking students to work through a checklist as I went around and talked with students about their outlines and PowerPoints.

While there were fewer bad informative and persuasive speeches delivered, there were some problems. Although the students' speeches were better organized and had better PowerPoints than usual, the students relied more on their notes. More students read their speeches than they did in my typical course. Perhaps this was because they had less time to practice due to time spent on revising their outlines or PowerPoints. Or, maybe they simply thought those tangible items were more important to me since we spent less time, relatively speaking, on the speech delivery. Maybe they felt they needed to get these speeches right, even though they all seemed comfortable speaking to members of the audience during the shorter, earlier projects. This was surprising to me since they had established good eye contact earlier in the semester.

Another issue that arose during this phase of the course was that as time went on, an increasing number of students wanted to leave early and work on parts of their speeches at home. It became increasingly difficult to get all students to turn in their outlines and PowerPoints on time. The motivated students liked this approach and got their work done early. They realized that they would ultimately get a good grade if they got feedback on their work and revised it. They seemed to understand that their work could be improved and recognized how any suggestion I made helped them to accomplish their goals. These students were asking for and appreciated the feedback. Some of the other students seemed to listen to my comments, but often did not make the changes I recommended. They did not always take notes as we reviewed their PowerPoints in class. A student or two dropped out—one may be because he did not seem to grasp how to outline. Unfortunately, he did not stick around long enough to get one-on-one help. Nor did he visit the Writer's Studio, which was next door.

It was difficult to determine if the challenges that occurred during this part of the course were caused by the shift from short term to longer term, more complex projects or if the cause was

simply the likelihood that students often get a greater academic workload or increased demands of family or work obligations. Maybe the shift that occurred to the more traditional model was a little boring after the fast pace of the first part of the course.

The third part of the course was designed in the same basic way as the public speaking courses I usually teach. There was a group symposium on some issue during the last three weeks. I decided the project this semester would focus on apology speeches. I asked groups of students to analyze a public speaker's apology using Burke's Pentad and William Benoit's (1995) typology of image restoration strategies. I have always used a coaching approach for helping the teams develop their presentations. I talked to the class about working on a team, the different roles people play on teams, and the procedures that can be used during meetings to help the team accomplish its goals. We also discussed the approaches to use with challenging team members (who don't show up or do their fair share of the work) and how to organize the symposium. I didn't use a handout for a checklist, but I made sure the groups were staying on track, explaining at the start of each class how much progress they should have made, talking about the need to contact absent group members, identifying methods of sharing information electronically, and making sure the groups were summarizing their progress and establishing goals for each meeting. The presentations given by these groups were about the same quality as the groups in most other classes. They followed the prescribed pattern of organization and followed directions closely. There were fewer weak links in the presentations, perhaps because the other team members were more closely reviewing each other's work.

Overall, it seemed that the students' level of achievement in the class was higher, on average, than most of the public speaking classes I have taught. However, there were more Fs. (The overall grades were for this section were 8 As, 4 Bs, 4 Cs, O Ds and 6 Fs.) Half of those students who got Fs would probably have gotten Fs in my regular classes because the reasons they failed were due to circumstances largely beyond their control. Students who failed to attend class consistently, however, had a difficult time staying caught up. In my previous public speaking classes, if a student failed to turn in an outline or did not give a speech, could still pass. A zero on an assignment or two would not drop their grade more than a letter grade. In this class, missing an assignment was more consequential. While I tried to help students get caught up if they missed a class, it was not always easy for them to understand what we had covered.

I wonder if a few of the Fs occurred as a result of a lack of buy-in with the mastery or coaching model of teaching. I doubted that many of their instructors spent so much time working one-on-one with students during class time. Two of the students who earned Fs seemed simply to want to show up for class (or a part of class), do a minimal amount of work in the classroom, and do the rest at home. They turned in assignments late and came to class unprepared. Although I spoke to them about this, it did not seem to help. The feedback that I received about the course was the student evaluations. The course evaluations for this pilot course had averages that were the worst I had ever had in a public speaking class, slightly below average. In the comments section, students gave me quite a bit of praise. There was little negative feedback. Half the students in the class simply did not like the course quite as much as my students usually did.

Even though the pilot course was not a resounding success, I was encouraged by some results. I believe that providing additional outside resources, such as online video instruction as in a flipped classroom, may provide the additional instructional support that is needed. These kinds of resources may help students who miss class or fall behind for other reasons.

I would also like to find ways to continue the momentum built up during the first part of the course. I may need a transition to the longer more formal speeches. Maybe we can read the outlines for a grade or show the PowerPoints without a corresponding speech. This may encourage additional peer-to-peer collaborations and encourage students to submit them on time. Perhaps a shorter informative speech should be used as a bridge between the early projects where delivery was so good and the more formal presentations. It may be that additional thought needs to go into the philosophies of these models, merging the mastery and coaching model into a more consistent approach. Nonetheless teaching the course in this new way was a worthwhile experiment because I learned more about teaching from this course than I have learned from teaching public speaking using the traditional approach.

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Analysis of Narcissism on Instagram

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The accuracy of the assumption that females are more restrained, while males are inordinate, is questionable within the context of current sex stereotypes; however, there is minimal scholarly evidence that the interactions between the two sexes, males and females, has anything to do with the assigned sex at birth. Regardless of individual sex, all people have different personalities and upbringing, since the culture that males and females are born into influences the way they interact with one another. Generally, when it comes to interactions between males and females, males are typically required to make the first move in flirting and dating. If this is an accurate assumption, males need to present themselves differently than females, which might be noticeable in their behavior on social media. Instagram is one social media platform that focuses on photo-sharing since it is an application made for smartphones that assists in self-presentation. Because males seem to be limited in how they portray themselves in an attractive way to flirt with females, they have a greater need of focusing on themselves and showing their independence, successfulness, uniqueness, and strength. Based on this premise, this research seeks to discover the differences between the two sexes' pictorial representation of themselves on Instagram and to answer the question: Are there ways in which selfies on Instagram posted by males are more or less narcissistic than those posted by females?

Importance to the Communication Field

Social media and its uses among male and female audiences is a big deal in the field of communication. Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat are all platforms where people spend their time interacting with each other. Interacting through social media is the modern way to communicate, a new technologic world that enables interactions among people of all ages (Ertürk, 2016, p. 2). The majority of millennial and generation Z individuals consume social media more than 30 minutes per day, some even more. For example, the first thing I do in the morning is to go through the feeds on Instagram and Snapchat. I also use Facebook Messenger during lunch time to call my parents. The reason I picked Instagram before Facebook or Snapchat is because it provides such a clear view of how women and men want to be portrayed, which goes hand in hand with the pictures they choose to post. Another reason for choosing Instagram is that it is a fast growing social media platform with 400 million users where "55 percent are between the age of 18 and 29 years" (Stapleton, 2017, p.1). Furthermore, Instagram is the site where pictures are the focus, and not the actual text; therefore, the choice of picture is crucial. This is a contrast to face-to-face interaction. On Instagram, people can pick their best taken picture and portray themselves as they wish. Consequently, pictures on Instagram are apparently significant to Instagram users since each photo is carefully selected and, in some instances, edited.

Research Questions

Following from the research question, "Are there ways in which Instagram selfie photos posted by males are more or less narcissistic than those posted by females? four additional questions emerge: (1) How many photos are posted by males vs. females? (2) What is the focal point of the photo? (3) What are the captions associated with the photos? (4) How much has the photo been edited? Ertürk (2016) talks about the narcissistic personal disorder and its relation to selfies taken to use on social media sites. According to Ertürk (2016), "a person constantly taking selfies to record her or his every moment is a narcissistic fulfillment tool" (p. 11). Also, the author defines 'narcissism' as a "character trait which holds an

exaggerated reflection of the value and the power a person has" (p. 8). In other words, being narcissistic means that individuals live and think of themselves as the most popular, talented, unique, or successful person within their social circles. In fact, "Narcissists are arrogant and egoist, as they consider themselves as the most excellent person" (p. 8). From a narcissistic standpoint, taking selfies and uploading them on Instagram helps narcissists confirm their self-image, which is more remarkable for males, as opposed to females' pictures.

Literature Review

This era has ushered in the rampant use of electronic devices that pull people away from face-to-face interactions. Today, people spend inordinate amounts of time in technologically mediated communication where the interpretation of messages is difficult since nonverbal elements are non-existent, apart from interactions through FaceTime or Skype. There are different platforms in mediated communication, the most common of which are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Tumblr. Most of these platforms allow users to upload imagery as a way to communicate; uploading a selfie, for example, is one common way to communicate on social media. The benefit of imagery is that it includes nonverbal cues, which clarify the messages and makes it easier to understand the context in which they are communicated. Online, there are plenty of platforms available; some are made for business purposes, while others are made for promoting. Entertainment is another purpose of social media, which includes networking platforms such as Instagram. Instagram is one of many platforms that is popular among people of all ages because it is associated with imageries. Instagram is today's fastest growing social media platform and, in 2018, "more than 70% of people between the ages of 12 and 24 [were] Instagram users" (Huang & Su, 2018, p. 1). Roach (2018) furthermore asserts that Instagram today has more than 1 billion monthly users (p. 1) where, on average, 95 million photographs and videos get uploaded on the site every day (Huang & Su, 2018, p. 1). Although females make up the majority of users on Instagram, both males and females use it consistently for a variety of reasons. It is possible that Instagram is successful because users can control their self-presentation. For that reason, regardless of individual sex, users have developed a sense of perfectionism when it comes to sharing their life on Instagram. People choose to portray themselves based on how others are thinking and feeling about the person in question. Furthermore, people are using Instagram to present themselves in ways that can be seen as egocentric. Thus, pictures tend to emphasize the person in question or their skills, but the pictures do not emphasize other people or objects. Instagram has become a platform used for expressing self-love, which is referred to as narcissism. This personality trait has been recognised by young people, adults, males, and females; however, different scholars have implied that males tend to act more narcissistic than females.

The Popularity of Social Media

Through social media platforms, people can communicate with their family, friends, and colleagues for free without any barriers, which is a great tool for interacting with people. Because all nonverbal cues are left out in written mediated communication, individuals can type their messages instead of verbally communicating them, which can be beneficial since it eliminates distractions such as accents or other physical noises. Another benefit of communication through social media sites is that individuals can use it as a means to maintain relationships where frequent face-to-face encounters are not possible. Instagram friends, for example, can keep track of people´s locations, daily activities, and interests. In other words, through social media sites, people can maintain general knowledge about a lot of people at the same time, which encourages people to consume more and more. Another significant reason for the popularity of social media is that people like to portray themselves the way they want to be portrayed. Smith and Sanderson (2015) state, "with the advent of the internet and online communication, people were afforded more control over their self-

presentation, with the ability to engage in impression management virtually, without an audience being physically present to counteract self-presentation" (p. 344). For instance, if an Instagram user plays soccer in a professional league, he/she can emphasize specific strengths as a way to enhance their reputation as a professional soccer player (Smith & Sanderson, 2015, p. 347).

An Introduction of Instagram

In contrast to Facebook, which started as a computer-based website in 2004, Instagram has, since its founding in 2010, been "a cell phone-based photo-sharing application," which means it can only be used by smartphones (Hwang & Cho, 2018, p. 1). Since Instagram is an imagery based website, the only way people can communicate is through images and sending private messages. Jackson (2017) explains that, when posting pictures on Instagram, users can add one to ten pictures to a single post. Along with the images, users can add text up to 2,200 characters, together with hashtags, emojis, the location of the picture, visual effects, tags to the picture, and they can share the post to other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or Tumblr. Besides pictures, Instagram allows users to post videos that are under 60 seconds. When users make their post, their picture(s) or video(s) will appear on the home page, better known as the photo feed. A post can be "liked" or "commented" on by other people´s followers. By using Instagram´s private setting, no one but the users' followers can see the person´s posts, which limits the people that can "like" or "comment" on them.

Although Instagram requires their users to own a smartphone, it does not prevent people from being a member of their user base, since most people own a smartphone. Huang and Su (2018) talk about smartphone growth where "over half of the world's population own smartphones" (p. 1). The authors explain that people, regardless of age or sex, are close to being addicted to their smartphones. "The average amount of time that an adult spent on his or her smartphone per day soared from 15 min in 2008 to 2 hours and 48 minutes in 2015…approximately 8 out of 10 teenagers' check their phone at least once every hour" (p. 1), whereas checking the flow on Instagram is a big reason behind smartphone use and ownership.

The Use of Instagram

Because of the exceptional access for people to own a smartphone, which allows them to be a part of Instagram, this platform fulfils people´s needs to interact, meet new people, express thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Thus, Instagram serves multiple purposes and meets various needs for those who use it. Whether the intent is to showcase a talent, call attention to activities they are participating in, keep up with friends, or simply for entertainment, people use Instagram for their own unique reasons, some of which include self-presentation, self-esteem, to post about and follow athletes, and self- and brand-promotion.

Instagram and Self-Presentation

There are psychological reasons for Instagram's popularity, one of which is self-presentation (Smith and Sanderson. 2015, p. 346). Self-presentation is defined as creating and demonstrating "a personal image and identity" of oneself (Karahanna, Sean, Yan, & Zhang, 2018, p. 742). Smith and Sanderson (2015) further explain that self-presentation on Instagram tends to be more goal-driven than face-to-face interaction; and, self-presentation through Instagram is said to be more controlled than face-to-face impression management (p. 346). Through Instagram, individuals can decide how they wish to present themselves,

the impression they want to put forth, and the persona they wish to display. Whether accurate or not, those using Instagram for self-presentation purposes are able to exercise a great deal of control over what people see and, by extension, might think about who they are. As it can be seen, traditional face-to-face interactions differ from self-presentation on Instagram, since users can control their shared content in a way that makes the pictures more goal-oriented. Basically, sharing pictures allows people to present themselves according to their personal portrayal goals.

Instagram and Self-Esteem

Not only do people use Instagram to manage others' impressions of them; they also use it as a way to make statements about themselves that reveal a great deal about their apparent self-worth. Self-worth refers to people´s generosity and whether they feel respected by others; having feelings of being respected and loved by others means the person has a strong sense of self-esteem. Stapleton, Luiz, and Chatwin (2017) define self-esteem as "an individual's positive or negative appraisal of the self; that is, the extent to which the individual views the self as worthwhile and competent" (p. 142). In general, having a strong sense of self-esteem means that a person experiences a strong sense of self-worth. Self-worth can be influenced by positive or negative life events from a person´s early years; for instance, a child being bullied or encouraged will have impact self-esteem later in life. Another matter that influences a person´s self-esteem is how they consume social media. Stapleton, Luiz, and Chatwin (2017) argue that self-esteem can be influenced by social comparisons on Instagram. They suggest that young people who compare themselves with others on Instagram, through pictures they post and the number of "likes" they get, will see fluctuations in their self-worth and self-esteem (p. 148). In other words, the time people, especially young people, spend on Instagram plays a significant role in how individuals feel about themselves (p. 148).

Instagram and Athletic Prowess

Besides being a personal avenue through which to express the self, users who are also athletes find Instagram to be a useful tool in making their athletic abilities known to others. Smith and Sanderson (2015) researched how professional athletes promote themselves on Instagram. The survey concerned athletic sports that could easily be compared between the two sexes, including basketball, soccer, tennis, track, golf, swimming, baseball, and softball; however, "football was left out of the analysis because while there is a women's football league, many people do not know that the league exists" (p. 347). Based on their survey of 1,353 photographs, Smith and Sanderson (2015) assert the reasons behind athletes' use of Instagram include humanitarian efforts, social connection, affection to family, an illustration of athletic devotion, showcasing sponsors, and displaying personal interests (p. 352). To illustrate, charitable work and community advocacy come through Instagram in posts such as, "Loved being with my fellow athletes & @BillClinton discussing why it is so important to be active. A topic I'm very passionate about #kids and sports.'' Another example of an athlete demonstrating athletic work ethic shows in this Instagram post: ''Warmup in the dark this morning before pro-am @hbscwomensgolf.'' Posts such as this also serve as a means for athletes to promote themselves and their abilities through Instagram.

Inspirational Instagram Posts (#fitspo)

Another way in which Instagram allows users to promote themselves is through the use of specific hashtags (i.e., #) that call attention to themselves or to their brand. People use the platform to present and promote themselves in ways that will benefit them in their personal and professional lives. For instance, some use Instagram to illustrate the type of role model they can be for others. Carrotte & Prichard (2017) assert that the hashtag "fitspiration" or "fitspo" have been increasingly common on Instagram, Tumblr, Facebook, and Twitter. #fitspo is associated with posts including workouts or other physical training exercises (p. 1). The meaning of the hashtag is "fitness inspiration," which aims to inspire people to exercise and be healthy. "Fitspiration on social media allows users to view exercise-related images and videos and communicate with like-minded individuals" (p. 1). By using hashtags like "fitspo," the content on Instagram can be organized and categorized. Using these hashtags makes each post more meaningful. "An Instagram hashtag is a singular word, or series of words, that is marked with a hashtag symbol (#) which is used in a post's description, or comments section" (Roach, 2018, p. 1). The three main purposes of using these hashtags in posts on social media are to gain more likes, gain more followers, and make more sales (Roach, 2018, p. 1). As it can be seen, hashtags are an additional tool in Instagram photos used to describe the poster´s feelings and thoughts about the posts. Toward that end, #love, #instagood, #photooftheday, #fashion, #beautiful, #happy, #cute, #tbt, #like4like, and #followme are the top ten in the list of hashtags that generate the most likes (Roach, 2018, p. 1).

Gender on Instagram

While Instagram serves multiple purposes for individuals, everyone does not use it in the same way. Much of how it is used depends upon whether an individual wishes to promote athletic ability, physical beauty, inspiring imagery, etc. In addition to it serving different interests based on personality and personal and professional activity, there are also differentiations between how women and men tend to use Instagram. Therefore, "gender influenced motives for creating posts more than it influenced motives for looking at posts" (Hung & Su, 2018, p. 8). Huang and Su (2018) assert that the majority of the users on Instagram are females where they, in general, are more active than males (p. 2). Through their research, the scholars detected differences in the way men and women use Instagram. For instance, female students are using Instagram more often to escape awkward situations, in contrast to male students who are more likely to "show off themselves" (p. 8).

In Carrotte & Prichard's (2017) research about the hashtag "fitspiration," they recognized differences between the two sexes as well. In Australia, 31 percent of young people who follow "#fitspiration" are women, and there are twice as many young women who are likely to "like" these pages in contrast to young men (p. 1). Women, as opposed to men, also appeared in more posts containing the #fitspiration hashtag, although males using this same hashtag are more likely than females to show their faces (p. 1). Interestingly, "images of the men often emphasized visible biceps and pectoral muscle," while the women subjects emphasized thinness and weight loss. In pictures that focus on the stomach, men's stomachs nearly always have visible abdominal muscles, while women´s are flatter (p. 1). Finally, Smith and Sanderson (2015) identified differences in how male and female professional athletes use Instagram and Snapchat. According to their research, females, when compared to males, displayed more photos that were somewhat sexual (p. 351); for example, uploading photos that focus on their breasts. Additionally, "males were found less likely to be touching something, and females more likely to be engaged with the casual touch of another person or an object" (p. 351).

Definition of Narcissism

Without question, Instagram is quite often used as an avenue through which people can flaunt themselves, their talent, and call attention to what they believe is special about themselves. Some researchers have argued that social media has ushered in a new era of self-absorption, self-involvement, and egocentrism because more and more individuals are displaying varying levels of narcissism. This characteristic trail is called narcissism, which is a perception of oneself that can be recognized in a person´s action and behavior in many different ways. Lee and Sung (2016) define narcissism as a "personality trait that is marked by grandiosity and an overly positive self-view, especially of the individual's own social popularity and physical appearance" (p. 347). People with a strong sense of narcissism are said to be highly agentic and clever, yet lacking communion skill, which makes them focus on their own positive-agentic qualities, rather than others (Jones & Brunell, 2014, p. 320). In other words, those who are highly agentic will rely on others to direct their behaviors and then blame any behaviorally negative consequences on those who directed them to act accordingly. In this sense, "persons with a high level of narcissism have a positive and inflated self-view, self-love, self-serving bias, sense of entitlement, self-importance, and uniqueness" (Errasti, Amigo, & Villadangos, 2017, p. 999). These characteristics lead them to behave in ways that highly favor them over others, putting them in a position of never doing wrong or, when doing so, having a readymade scapegoat for their actions.

Interestingly, the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud asserted that, in their early twenties, females tend to be more narcissistic than males "based on his assumption that women were more preoccupied with their physical appearance and tend to make object choices in reference to qualities desired for the self" (Grijalva, et al., 2015, P. 262). In contrast, contemporary scholars have claimed narcissism to have close to zero correlation to either of the sexes; thus, Freud´s assumptions have been questioned, which means the narcissism sex difference remains unclear (p. 262).

Three Dimensions of Narcissism

Scholars Errasti, Amigo, and Villadangos (2017) state that narcissism can be divided into three dimensions (p. 999). First, there is the Leadership/Authority (LA) Narcissist, which refers to a person who wants assertive control over relationships with others (Moon, Lee, Choi, & Sung, 2016, p. 22). Those people like to have a leadership role in the group, which is a person who makes decisions based on their own will. Second, the Grandiose Exhibitionism (GE) Narcissist, which refers to a person who experiences superiority and likes to be the center of attention (p. 22). The third is the Entitlement/Exploitative (EE) Narcissist, which refers to a person who believes they deserve everything such as love, attention, or items simply for being who they are (p. 22). This type of narcissism "includes a sense of deserving exaggerated respect and a willingness to manipulate and take advantage of other people" (Errasti, Amigo, & Villadangos, 2017, p. 999). In fact, grandiose exhibitionism (GE) is asserted by Errasti et al. (2017) to be the dimension of narcissism Instagram users are possessing (p. 1009).

Narcissism on Instagram

Some scholars have called narcissism today´s "epidemic" of "the modern urban dweller" for people in America and Western Europe (Errasti, Amigo, & Villadangos, 2017, p. 999). Narcissism is not considered a mental illness as it has no biological underpinnings, nor is it evolutionary; rather, it is a sense of self-importance that demonstrably has become the norm for how people look at themselves. One significant reason behind the development of narcissism among people comes from the way most people today are communicating, which

takes place over the internet and social media. "Social networks are an excellent media for expressing narcissism, since they make it possible for users to display themselves before a large number of people even though their relationship with those people may be purely superficial" (p. 999). In a similar manner, Moon, Lee, Lee, Choi, and Sung (2016) declare people who spend a lot of time on Instagram tend to have higher levels of narcissism, compared to people who are not regularly consuming Instagram (p. 24). Errasti, Amigo, and Villadangos (2017) also state that young people with narcissistic leanings tend to use social media more than the average person, and they frequently update their status to obtain as many Facebook friends as possible (p. 1007). Thus, people that belong to the narcissism type of grandiose exhibitionism (GE) are the most suitable personality type for Instagram, whereas young users were found to express their emotions in a remarkable way (p. 1009). Although Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are different social media platforms, all three are similar enough to be counted as the same since people´s narcissistic behavior does not change across different social media platforms. Overall, grandiose exhibitionism is the kind of narcissism that occurs most.

Selfies on Instagram

Taking a selfie and uploading it to any social media site is one of the most common ways to post a picture. Selfies are defined as pictures individuals take of themselves so they can upload to, and share them on, social media sites (Bansal, Pakhare, & Gary, 2018, p. 1). This form of social media communication has grown and become one of the most common modes of self-expression; "about 1 million selfies are clicked per day in 18- to 24-year-old demographic" (p. 1). Lee and Sung (2016), on this same issue, discovered a correlation between narcissism and selfies among females and males between the ages of 19 and 39. According to the scholars, frequent selfies taken for Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram usually means that the person has a strong sense of self-esteem and has the characteristic features of a narcissist (p. 347). The results from their research revealed that "72 percent of the respondents reported that they post everyday/ordinary selfies" (p. 349) where their primary reason behind the selfie was self-promotion (p. 349).

      Ertürk (2016) suggests that the development of selfie taking is the result of high self-esteem among people who like to post selfies on social media sites (p. 34). Since the origin of selfies in 2002, the popularity of selfies has been the same among both men and women. Based on Ertürk's study, 33 percent of selfies are taken to remember a happy moment, 34 percent to eternalize an entertaining moment, 15 percent to document a dress, 14 percent to show off a pretty hairstyle, and 13 percent are simply because the person feels confident (p. 34). The author further explains that Instagram, like other social media platforms, can be seen as similar to face-to-face interactions because all of them are about self-presentation and the confirmation of its existence. Therefore, when a person experiences loneliness, one optional way to feel better is to take a selfie and upload it.

Differences in Narcissism between the Two Sexes

Selfie taking is one way of expression on Instagram, which has been proven to be a trail of narcissistic behaviours. Scholars have moreover suggested some differentiations in narcissistic behaviors based on individual sex (Arpaci, Yalçın, Baloğlu, & Kesici, 2018, p. 73). These differences reveal themselves through the types of selfies taken, the places where selfies are taken, and the lengths individuals will go when taking selfies. Additionally, levels of narcissism vary and appear to correlate with an individual's sex.

Males and Narcissism

When it comes to selfie taking, males, as compared to females, tend to engage in riskier behaviors to get that "perfect" selfie, (Bansal, Pakhare, & Gupta (2018), p. 831) a quality that may be related to higher degrees of narcissism. Arpaci, Yalçın, Baloğlu, and Kesici (2018) suggest that there is a correlation between men´s selfie taking and narcissism (p. 73). In fact, males today are acting riskily when taking selfies, which, unfortunately, has sometimes resulted in death. The term "selfie-death" has, since 2014, become a common search word on Google (p. 828) due to the fact that so many people have died in the process of taking a selfie. For example, "certain road accidents while posing for selfies are reported as death due to Road Traffic Accident" (p. 828). Selfies taken while standing on a slippery rocky edge reveals another example of high risk behavior mostly common among males (p. 829). India, Russia, the United State, and Pakistan have all been made aware of death cases that occurred as a result of risky selfie taking behaviors. Most all selfie-related death have been accompanied by risky behavior, which mostly concerns males. Of 259 reported selfie death cases, 72.5 percent of them were male. In addition, the age range of 20 to 29 had the highest amount of deaths occur when taking a selfie (p. 829).

Research also suggests that males exhibit more assertiveness, having a desire of leading others, and being the authority, which can be recognised in male´s way of self-presenting on Instagram (Grijalva et al., 2015, p. 280). Based on the same research, it was claimed that males were scoring a quarter of a standard deviation higher than females in a narcissism test (p. 280). Although this assumption does not refer to Instagram behavior, it can still be applied to male´s pictures.

Females and Narcissism

Since narcissism is a personality trait that concerns both the sexes, females are acting narcissistic on social media as well. Sorokowski et al. (2016) state that females tend to post more selfies online placing "a higher priority on creating a positive picture of oneself online" (p. 371). Females' high numbers of selfies have, for that reason, been associated with a higher need for self-presentation than males (p. 371). According to the same scholars' research, young females were twice as likely to upload pictures taken in beautiful surroundings in contrast to young males (p. 371). Other research suggests that, when online, females "communicate in order to establish affinity and rapport with others," while males communicate in order to build control and "social standing" (Arpaci, Yalçın, Baloğlu, & Kesici, 2018, p. 73). It has also been claimed that females are more concerned with developing personal relationships and social groups. In contrast, males seek ''more recognition and social approval" than building personal relationships (p. 73).

It is, therefore, suggested that males possess a higher degree of narcissism than females, and this can be recognized on Instagram in the choice of pictures males are posting. While males tend to post high-risky selfies, along with a self-presentation that emphasises authority, females are more concerned with belongingness. For instance, females tend to follow or "like" pictures associated with #fitspo, since they are more concerned with developing social groups and personal relationships. In contrast, males tend to be more concerned with showing themselves off, in terms of selfie-taking; thus, the picture´s background is not a priority. Again, this demonstrates narcissism among males more than females.

Methodology & Procedures

To answer the question of the level of narcissistic behavior related to Instagram posts by women and men, a content analysis was conducted. Baxter and Babbie (2003) explain that the assessment of human communication in the form of books, videos, pictures, and the like can best be accomplished through content analysis (pp. 232-233). To emphasise, any research that does not collect data directly from people is strongly associated with content analysis. Specifically, content analysis is one of two "primary methods that quantitative communication researchers employ when they want to enumerate the details of communication messages – their content, their function, their form or structure" (p. 231). As can be seen, content analysis is the most suitable method for this research since it is about analysing Instagram, a form of recorded human communication. Additionally, as an unobtrusive type of study, content analysis is suitable for this research since it is not necessary that participants give their permission for the research as Instagram pictures have no copyright. Although content analysis is time consuming, it is a necessity to gain all the data needed to assess narcissistic tendencies in Instagram posting.

Instagram

To summarize and reiterate, Instagram is considered the "fastest growing social media platform" (Smith & Sanderson, 2015, p. 342) where, in 2018, "more than 70% of people between the ages of 12 and 24 [were] Instagram users" (Huang & Su, 2018, p. 1). Furthermore, research shows the differences in how women and men use Instagram is notable where self-expression varies based on the sex of the person posting on Instagram. Some scholars argue that men post on Instagram to show themselves as unique, important, and self-loving, while other scholars suggest it is women who post for these reasons. In fact, based on Grijalva et al's. (2015) research, males scored a quarter of a standard deviation higher than females on a narcissism test (p. 280). In contrast, Sorokowski et al. (2016) assert, in their research, that females tend to post more selfies online than males do, whereas females "place a higher priority on creating a positive picture of oneself online" (p. 371). Female´s high numbers of selfies are therefore associated with a higher need for self-presentation than male's selfies (p. 371). Based on this contradictory information, this research seeks to discover ways in which women and men use Instagram, considering the degree to which such uses are similar or different in nature. And, since Instagram, along with other social media sites, is used by so many people, this topic is strongly connected to the study of communication.

Research Question(s)

The main question explored is, "Are there ways in which Instagram selfie photos posted by males are more or less narcissistic than those posted by females?" The supporting sub-questions of interest are: "How many photos are posted by males vs. females?" "What is the focal point of photos posted by males vs. females?" "What are the captions associated with photos posted by males vs. females?" and "How much photo editing has been done on posts made by males vs. females?"

Definition of Terms

Before beginning the content analysis, it is necessary to define the terms used in the analysis. Specifically, individuals considered narcissistic possess a "positive and inflated self-view, self-love, self-serving bias, sense of entitlement, self-importance, and uniqueness" (Errasti, Amigo, & Villadangos, 2017, p. 999). Adhering to this definition, the following

descriptive elements were identified and defined as a demonstration of different degrees of narcissism in Instagram posting:

1. The picture´s focal point is natural objects
2. The location is provided
3. The person (behind the post) is smiling
4. More than one person is in the post
5. Only the person is in the picture
6. The picture´s focal point is the person(s)
7. The picture´s caption (text) is about themselves
8. More than one picture is in the post
9. The picture looks like it has been edited (used filter)
10. The photo is a selfie (arm's length)
11. The person is not facing the camera
12. The picture has hashtag(s) that refers to themselves or what they are doing.

First, the picture's focal point refers to the object(s) in the picture that draws the eye of the viewer to the most important part of the picture or the area that the person wants to highlight. Thus, the picture focus is on natural objects and not people. Second, the location is provided means if the post had the location inserted along with the picture in order to emphasize where they were. Third, the person (behind the post) is smiling means if they appeared to express happiness. Fourth, more than one person is in the post refers to if there were more people visible than the individual posting. Fifth, only the person is in the post, which is an opposite element to number four, and means that no one was visible but the person. Sixth, the picture´s focal point is the person(s) means the person or the people, and not natural objects, is the picture highlight. Seventh, the picture´s caption (text) is about themselves means that the post´s additional text refers to the person behind the post. Eighth, more than one picture in the post means the person chose to include more than one picture in the same post. Ninth, the picture looks like it has been edited (used filter) refers to whether the picture´s appearance has been changed before publishing the post. The general recognition of a filter is whenever the picture´s color appears different than normal. A filter can appear different depending on what filter has been used. For instance, change in brightness, vignette, or saturation are all appearance changes that affect how the viewer experiences the pictures. Tenth, the photo is a selfie (arm's length), which means the photo was taken by the person by holding the camera facing themselves. Eleventh, the person is not facing the camera refers to when the person behind the post was visible in the picture but did not look into the camera lens and take the picture themselves. Twelfth, the picture has hashtag(s) that refer to themselves or what they are doing; as an illustration, #horesboy, #aldrigvila (never rest), #illusionist, #helleniushorna, #twins, and #chess.

Development of Coding Instrument

The process of creating the coding was a long and time-consuming process that considered hours of careful analysing of people´s pictures on Instagram. This process was essential for the research since the establishment of the four sub-groups, along with the coding instrument, set the standard for the whole research. By using Errasti, Amigo, & Villadangos (2017) definition of narcissism, saying "persons with a high level of narcissism have a positive and inflated self-view, self-love, self-serving bias, sense of entitlement, self-importance, and uniqueness" (p. 999), recognizing narcissism in these pictures was untroublesome. The definition made it possible to establish the coding instrument, which referred to three levels of narcissism, sub-group 1, 2, 3, and 4. In addition, the coding instrument consisted of twelve statements that could either be answered yes or no. None of the 60 pictures matched with all of these statements, which was predictable since the coding was adapted to be able to recognize differences in the level of narcissism. The first of the

four sub-group was called self-aware (SG1) which referred to pictures where its focal point was natural objects, the location was provided, the person (behind the post) was smiling, and more than one person was in the Instagram post. The second sub-group was called self-centered (SG2) which was pictures where only the person was in the picture, the focal point was the person(s), the caption (text) was about themselves, more than one picture was in the post, and the picture looks like it had been edited (used filter). The third sub-group was called self-loved (SG3) which was pictures where the photo was a selfie (arm's length), the person was not facing the camera, and the picture had hashtag(s) that refers to themselves or what they were doing. Lastly, the fourth sub-group was called extreme self-loved (SG4) which referred to pictures that had clues from SG2 and SG3, but nothing from SG1.

As an illustration, if any of the 60 picture from the research would have scored 100% of the SG1´s four coding instruments, the picture was seen as thoroughly self-aware. As can be seen in figure (1:1), the picture´s focal point is surely the children and not the actual person behind the post who furthermore is smiling. This illustrates a picture that scored 50% of the coding instruments SG1 where neither SG2 nor SG3 were in question. Thus, figure (1:1) belonged to sub-group self-awareness. In contrast, figure (1:2) illustrates a picture that had the location provided, the person was the only one in the picture, the focal point was the person, the caption was about herself, the person did not face the camera, and hashtags were included, which referenced herself or her life. Here, figure (1:2) belonged to sub-group self-love since it scored 25% for SG1, 60% for SG2, and, most important, 67% for SG3. Therefore, this picture emphasizes the person and the love for herself. The process of analysing the two pictures above was how each of the 60 sampling pictures was analysed.

Figure (1:1) – Male picture nr. 48

Figure (1:2) – Female picture nr. 37

Data Population

100 Instagram picture accounts, also known as the units of analysis, were examined for the presence or absence of narcissistic elements. The pictures were chosen based on a convenience sampling process, meaning they were those accounts to which researcher had access. By using stratified random sampling, meaning the participants got grouped together according to their sex (Baxter and Babbie, 2003, p. 154), the 100 sampling pictures got divided into equal amounts. By having this 50 female and 50 male pictures, a random number generator was applied to finally select 30 pictures for each sex. This number generator worked according to the sampling method, simple random sampling, which made the selection of pictures unbiased since none of the pictures could have been predetermined to be selected. To clarify, the research provided an equal amount of female and male pictures, which was a necessity in order to create an accurate and unbiased comparison between the two sexes.

Another aspect that made the sampling even more accurate and unbiased, the researcher came up with some limitations. First, all the pictures had to be within the timeframe October 11th to October 25th (14 days). Second, an equal number of pictures from males and females were selected. Third, no more than one post per person was included. Fourth, no more than five celebrity pictures per sex were included. Fifth, no pictures from any fan-account, ads, nor organizations like #emmanuelcollegega, #bodyweighttraining #avicii, or #mercedesbenzusa were included. In addition, since Instagram is a public social media platform, it was not necessary to gain account holder permission to access and analyze posted photos. Nonetheless, as Baxter and Babbie (2003) assert, it is important to act ethically when conducting research (p. 89); therefore, no account holder names were identified. As can be

seen, the process of selecting the sampling pictures was time consuming but ensured that the sampling was made unbiased, accurate, and in an ethical way.

Data Collection

The way the data was collected was through analysing each of the sexes 30 pictures. This can be seen in figure (1:3), where each picture was matched with the twelve coding elements. If the picture matched with the element, it got marked with a (y), which stands for "yes." For instance, female picture nr. 37 matched with six of the twelve elements. This is how each of the pictures got analysed, which created the research data. This is visible in figures (1:3-4), where the percentages of the coding elements and the sub-groups are provided, and this clarified the result and made it easier to compare the two sexes' narcissistic tendencies.

Data Analysis

Based on the percentages of coding elements and sub-groups that the coding scheme provided, the analysis of the data is simplified. For sub-group 1 which was named self-awareness, males were the dominant sex who scored the highest of 56%, which compared to females, who scored 57%. For sub-group 2 which was named self-centered, females were the dominant sex who scored 50%, while males scored 36%. For sub-group 3 which was named self-loved, males were the dominant sex who scored 24%, whereas females scored 22%. For sub-group 4 which was named extreme self-loved, females were the dominant sex who scored 10%, while males scored 7%. By comparing male and female percentages for the sub-groups like this, this method was suitable for concluding the differences between the sexes' narcissistic behaviour, which would prove that males are expressing themselves more narcissistically than females.

Results

This research's primary focus was to compare the two sexes´ behavioral tendencies on Instagram, which was based on sixty randomly selected pictures from a sample of one hundred pictures. Based on the coding scheme´s twelve elements, which illustrated different degrees of narcissism, four sub-groups were established in order to clarify each of the pictures´ overall degree of narcissism. First, sub-group 1 (SG1) stood for self-awareness, which referred to pictures where the focal point was natural objects, the location was provided, the person (behind the post) was smiling, and there was more than one person in the picture. In particular, SG1 referred to a picture where the person did not empathize themselves or their skills. Second, sub-group 2 (SG2) stood for self-centered, which included pictures where the person was the only one in the picture, the picture´s focal point was the person(s), the picture´s captions (text) was about themselves, more than one picture was included in the post, and the picture looked like it had been edited (filter has been used). SG2 referred to pictures where the focal point was the person themselves. Third, sub-group 3 (SG3) stood for self-love, which had pictures where the person was the focal point but did not face the camera; hashtag(s) was added to the picture and referred to person or their actions, and the text was boastful or expressed praise for oneself. Indeed, SG3 referred to pictures that emphasized the person and their love for themselves. Fourth, sub-group 4 (SG4) stood for extreme self-love, which was a sub-group where the pictures had clues from SG2 and SG3, but nothing from SG1. In particular, pictures that had no evidence of empathy for others, but included evidence that made the person the center of the attention and emphasized their own worth. These pictures exemplified extreme self-love.

As mentioned earlier, the research sample consisted of one-hundred Instagram photos, fifty of which were male and fifty female, whereas thirty male and thirty female pictures were chosen by a random number selector. After each of the sixty pictures was analysed, the coding scheme showed remarkable differences between the two sexes. As can be seen in figure (1:3-4), the sex that had the most pictures and related to sub-group 1 (SG1) was male. The maximum amount of related pictures for SG1 was 120 (4x30=120), whereas the males' pictures scored 56% and the females scored 48%. Then, for sub-group 2 (SG2), the maximum amount of related pictures was 150 (5x30=150), which was 30 pictures more than SG1. In fact, SG1 had four coding elements, while SG2 had five; however, females had 50% pictures related to SG2, in contrast to the males that had 36% pictures. Thus, the female was the sex with most pictures related to SG2, which was the sub-group with the largest amount of pictures. In contrast, for sub-group 3 (SG3), males had the most pictures related to the sub-group. Thus, males had 24% related pictures; whereas, females had 22%. Since this sub-group only consisted of three coding elements, the potential maximum amount of pictures was 90 (3x30=90). In addition, for sub-group 4 (SG4), there was only one coding element, which said, "The person has clues from SG2 and SG3, but noting on SG1." SG4 can be seen as an additional sub-group that takes into account if any picture did not include any clues from SG1. Since each sex consisted of 30 participants, the maximum amount of pictures for this sub-group was 30. Notably, females had 10%, unlike the males, who had 6.7% of related pictures to the sub-group.

	Picture Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	30 Male Participants:	41	15	40	3	37	49	13	29	6	30	19	42	45	47	44	36	48	33	50	24	14	35	8	32	46	25	21	4	39	7
SG1	The picture´s focal point is natural objects	y				y			y	y	y			y	y	y			y			y	y			y	y				y
	The location is provided	y	y	y	y	y	y		y			y	y		y	y				y		y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
	The person (behind the post) is smiling	y		y	y	y				y		y		y		y	y	y	y			y		y	y				y		
	More than one person in the post	y	y	y	y	y						y	y			y	y	y		y			y		y	y					
SG2	Only the person is in the picture				y	y		y				y						y		y						y	y	y	y
	The picture´s focal point is the person(s)	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y			y	y	y		y	y		y			y	y			y		y	y	y	y
	The picture´s captions (text) is about themselves	y			y			y	y			y							y			y	y	y	y	y	y			y	
	More than one picture in the post	y											y							y		y		y							
	The picture looks like being edited (used filter)	y	y			y						y						y												y
SG3	x			y		y		y						y													y				
	The person is not facing the camera				y						y			y				y	y	y						y	y			y	
	The picture has hashtag(s) that refers to themself or what they are doing							y		y								y		y	y	y				y			y	
SG4	The person have clues from **SG2** and **SG3**, but noting on **SG1**					y														y											

Figure (1:3) – Data male´s pictures

	Picture Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	30 Female Participants:	13	25	17	49	46	45	11	5	37	40	31	18	41	15	29	14	21	19	47	42	3	35	2	12	28	20	10	8	34	38
SG1	The picture´s focal point is natural objects	y			y									y	y				y		y		y	y	y			y	y	y
	The location is provided	y		y	y	y	y			y			y	y	y	y	y	y		y	y		y	y		y			y		y
	The person (behind the post) is smiling	y				y		y		y		y	y				y	y	y	y			y			y				y	y
	More than one person in the post				y	y		y				y	y	y			y	y	y	y					y					y
SG2	Only the person is in the picture	y	y	y	y			y		y	y				y	y				y	y	y	y			y		y			
	The picture´s focal point is the person(s)		y	y		y	y	y	y	y	y		y	y		y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y		y	y			y
	The picture´s captions (text) is about themselves	y	y		y	y	y		y	y	y	y			y	y				y				y			y	y			y
	More than one picture in the post								y				y	y			y	y	y	y			y			y	y				y
	The picture looks like being edited (used filter)				y	y								y			y	y		y	y	y		y		y	y				
SG3	The photo is a selfie (arm's length)		y		y		y			y			y	y		y		y		y		y	y		
	The person is not facing the camera	y		y	y	y		y		y		y			y								y						
	The picture has hashtag(s) that refers to themself or what they are doing									y																				
SG4	The person have clues from **SG2** and **SG3**, but noting on **SG1**		y						y																			y			

Figure (1:4) – Data female´s pictures

In addition to the given results, females had the overall largest amount of pictures that were related to any of the coding elements. The maximum amount of related pictures for the whole sample was 360 (12x30=360). As can be seen in figure (1:6), females had 152 (42.2%) related pictures to all of the coding elements, while male pictures had 143 (39.7%). The result also shows that the female sex had the largest amount of pictures for all of the coding elements of SG2. As an illustration, "Only the person is in the picture," "the picture´s focal point is the person(s)," "the picture´s captions (text) is about themselves," "more than one picture in the post," and "the picture looks like it has been edited (used filter)" were all associated with female pictures. In the same fashion, male pictures had the largest amount of pictures for SG1. Thus, all of the four coding elements, "the picture´s focal point is natural objects," "the location is provided," "the person (behind the post) is smiling," and "more than one person in the post," were associated with male pictures. In contrast, the result of SG3 suggests that male pictures were only two pictures more than female; and, for SG4, females had only one picture more than males.

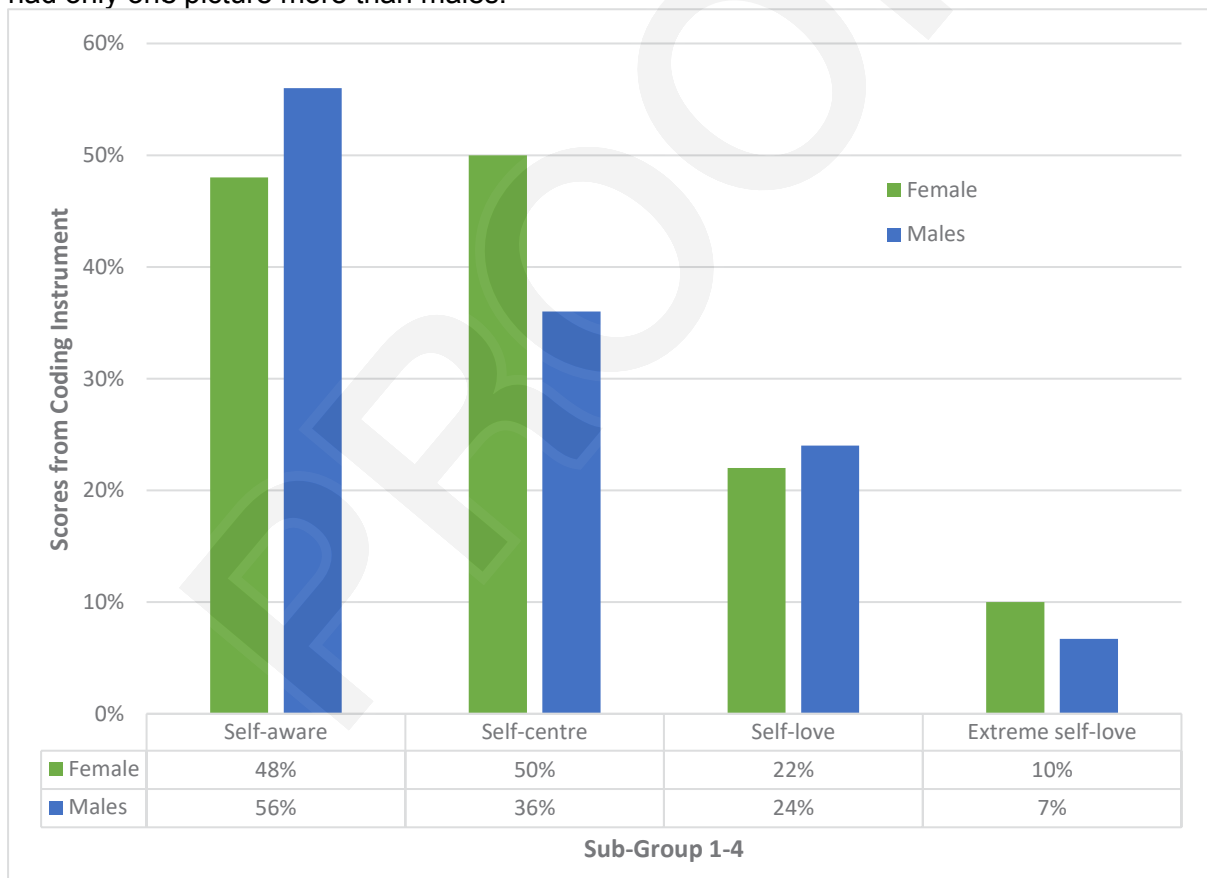|	Self-aware	Self-centre	Self-love	Extreme self-love
Female	48%	50%	22%	10%
Males	56%	36%	24%	7%

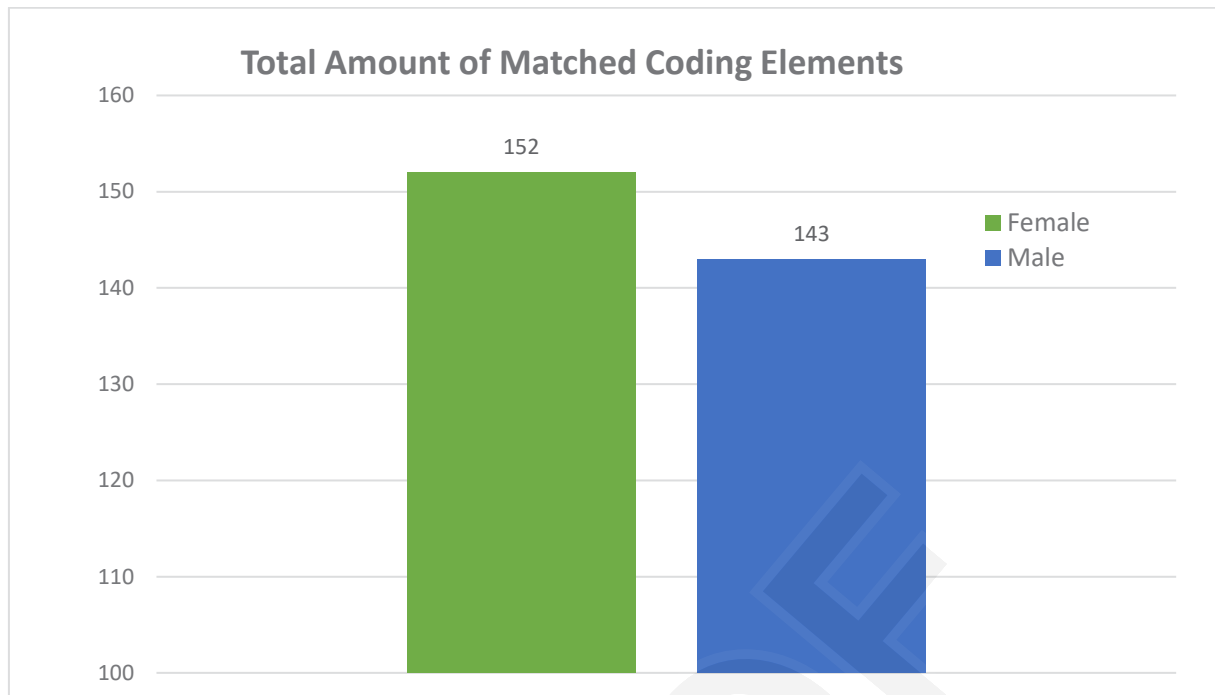**Sub-Group 1-4**

Figure (1:5) – Result of sampling

Figure (1:6) – Total amount of matched coding elements

Discussion

This study is important for the field of communication because it affirms the differences between how females and males use Instagram. Scholars have identified three dimensions of Narcissism whereas Grandiose Exhibitionism (GE) is associated with Instagram users. GE refers to people that are experiencing superiority and like to be the center of attention, which this research confirmed since the majority of the Instagram pictures scored highest on sub-category self-centered. Narcissism has also been said to not be a mental illness as it has no biological underpinnings, nor is it evolutionary; rather, it is a sense of self-importance that demonstrably has become the norm for how people look at themselves.

Previous studies have explained that Instagram is a platform for self-presentation, which is a more goal-oriented behavior than face-to-face interaction. People´s self-esteem and feeling of self-worth is impacted by social comparison on social media, and young people are greatly influenced by this. Moreover, research has reported that people between the ages of 19 and 39 possess a high level of self-esteem and high self-esteem paired with frequent selfie-taking correlates to narcissism as well. 33% of selfies are supposed to emphasize happy moments from peoples' life. Scholars have further stated that females take more selfies than males, and this statement was confirmed according to this research. Based on the sampling of the 30 pictures of the two sexes, 33% of the female pictures were selfies, while only 17% of the male pictures were selfies.

Likewise, different studies have implied that females are the sex that is using Instagram the most; for instance, women are twice as likely to "like" pictures that include the #fitspiration. Speaking of hashtag(s), researchers have proposed females to include the most hashtag(s); however, based on the result, 27% of the male pictures included hashtag(s) that referred to themselves or what they were doing compared to females who only scored 3%. Thus, the result of the research contradicts previous research, since males were the ones who included most hashtags.

As has been previously noted, researchers have affirmed that males are the sex that post more high-risk selfies. Males have also been proven to show themselves off by taking selfies where they are more likely to emphasize visible biceps and pectoral muscles, compared to females, who are more likely to emphasize thinness and weight loss. Since the research´s coding instrument did not point out any specific appearance in selfie-taking, there is no research to confirm the other scholar's declaration about that. However, by focusing on the research sub-group 3 (see figure 1:3-4), it claims males to be more self-loving than females, which confirms that males are more likely to show-off their muscles. For instance, 17% of males' pictures included selfies where the male did not face the camera, compared to females, who only scored 3%. This implies that males tend to look at their body or muscles when facing the camera, while females were more likely to face the camera.

It has also been claimed that females are more concerned with developing personal relationships and social groups than males are. While male pictures have been said to not emphasise the picture´s background, young females are twice as likely to upload pictures that were taken in beautiful surroundings. Although this has been said, this research proves the opposite. According to the sampling, 57% of males´ pictures had its focal point on natural objects, compared to 40% of females'. Thus, according to this research, males were more likely to post pictures that focused on natural objects or landscape.

For future research, the sampling process could be more unbiased. The units of analysis, which consisted of 100 Instagram pictures, were chosen based on a convenience sampling process, meaning they were those accounts to which the researcher had access. Hence, all of the pictures were taken from the researchers' following friends, which potentially could mean that all of the accounts had similarities; for instance, the unit of analysis could be from the same cultural background. For that reason, the choice of the participants can be selected from an Instagram account to which the researcher has no personal relation. Another improvement that the research did not include was additional coding elements regarding facial expressions when taking selfies. Since selfie-taking has been proven to be commonly used when posting pictures on Instagram, future research could focus more on this aspect. Since scholars have proposed differences between the two sexes in the way they are acting when taking a selfie, this is an important aspect that future research could include.

Conclusion

The analysis of the two sexes' behavior on Instagram was unexpectedly different. As the results demonstrate, males, as compared to females, tend to post more pictures that are associated with self-awareness (SG1), which is the mildest degree of narcissism. Males were also scoring the highest on self-love (SG3) and extreme self-love (SG4), which confirms the hypothesis that males tend to be more narcissistic than females. Sub-group 2 (SG2), however, provided the most surprising results. For this sub-category, females scored 50%, while males scored 36%, which puts females into the second mildest degree of narcissism: self-centered. Interestingly, SG2 regarded the largest amount of coding instruments, which meant it covered the largest amount of pictures. Hence, being self-centered is the definition of narcissism that best represents people´s behavior on Instagram, which was dominated by females.

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The Case for Gratitude: Including Gratitude Research in the Interpersonal Communication Course

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Since the early 1990s, the positive psychology movement has transitioned from a theory to a well-established perspective on the study of human behavior and cognition. The Positive Psychology Movement was initiated by Dr. Martin Seligman during his term as President of the American Psychological Association, although its roots are traced to Abraham Maslow's theory of motivation. This movement has sought to move the study of psychology away from a focus on mental illness toward one on healthy processes and to understand.

Hefferon and Boniwell (2011) stated that positive psychology

> aims to 'understand, test, discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive' (Sheldon et al., 2000). Positive psychology focuses on wellbeing, happiness, flow, personal strengths, wisdom, creativity, imagination, and characteristics of positive groups and institutions. Furthermore, the focus is not just on how to make individuals happy, thereby perpetuating a self-centred, narcissistic approach, but on happiness and flourishing at a group level as well. (p. 2)

One of the facets of positive psychology involves understanding the role of gratitude as a state and trait and of grateful expressions on human behavior, attitudes, and thinking. Although a robust evidence base exists now in the psychology field regarding gratitude, this prong of research is coming late to the communication discipline. This paper argues for the inclusion of research on gratitude in classes in Interpersonal Communication taught in higher education. It will do so by explaining the author's impetus for studying gratitude, examining the dearth of material in communication publications on this subject, and connecting the psychological research to the interpersonal communication course curriculum.

Motivation for This Study

The author became interested in gratitude research for several reasons. The most immediate reason arose from a research project she is conducting on expressions of thanks from students to their instructors. She administers a "thank-a-teacher" letter program at her institution as a service project and as an extension of work that began with her dissertation, completed in 2015. The letters were so well received by faculty and (now) staff colleagues and so fascinating as data

that she received IRB approval to systematically investigate their impact on faculty. Even more, she is interested in what behaviors students note as the impetus for their expression of thanks. This research has shown parallels to research on Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETs) and other topics in faculty development and teaching and learning. In looking for theoretical grounding, she was led to gratitude research.

However, despite her personal and scholarly interest, the author was surprised and not a little dismayed to find that the textbook she is using for COMM 2110, Interpersonal Communication, does not include even minor references to gratitude as a psychological trait or state (emotion) or as a communication behavior. On investigating another recently published textbook from a reputable educational publisher, she discovered the same—no mention of gratitude or gratefulness in interpersonal communication. She found this puzzling, especially since gratitude research has been connected to many types of positive outcomes in physical and mental health, and the author of the textbook she uses is a scholar in the connection of health to communication practices.

Literature Review: Gratitude as a Construct

Gratitude is studied as a psychological construct because it is understood by self-reports of various kinds (surveys, qualitative methods) and cannot be observed directly. "The idea that psychological kinds [of constructs] are socially constructed – socially agreed upon definitions – is more common in the social sciences. Emotions, personality domains or mental disorders do not carve nature at its joints: they are *produced*, not *discovered*" (Fried, 2017, p. 1). Various researchers have defined "gratitude" in different ways, depending on their orientations, research purposes, and whether they are focusing on gratitude as trait, state, or behavior (verbal expression).

For example, Wood, Froh, and Geraghty (2010) defined gratitude as "an interpersonal emotion" that "is caused by receiving help that is appraised as costly to provide, valuable, and altruistically offered" (p. 891). Kaczmarek et al. (2013) defined the construct in these terms: "Gratitude occurs when an individual attends to the benefits and gifts that are attributable to the kindness of others" (p. 805). In both these cases, gratitude is seen as state, or emotion.

Other research focuses on gratitude as a trait. In their 2010 meta-analysis of gratitude research, Wood, Froh, and Geraghty stated that, in this approach, "gratitude is part of a wider life orientation towards noting and appreciating the positive in the world" (p. 892). Scholars want to distinguish gratitude toward a person for a particular act, benefit, or gift (state) from gratitude as a way of being and feeling that may or may not involve a response to a particular act or person. For example, a person might be grateful or feel gratitude for a condition, such as that rain has stopped, but not attribute that to God.

One can see, however, that in terms of its status as trait, gratitude would be closely tied to other life orientations, such as religiosity and happiness. Gratitude is a vital part of most faiths, for example. Indeed, one of the challenges of researchers, and a challenge not always surmounted, is to disaggregate gratitude from other traits or to design their research so that control groups are not influenced by other experiences that would work in the same way as gratitude.

Gratitude as a trait and state are often studied through the use of "gratitude interventions." These methods can be journals over a several-week period that require the subject to write about grateful experiences and emotions; people, gifts, or events for which they are thankful; or their own times of expressing thanks and being thanked by others. Another type of an intervention involves expressing thanks to another, either in reality or only as an exercise. For example, the person might be asked to write a thank you letter to someone but not send it. On the other hand, the person might be asked to mail the letter, or go directly to a person or persons and express thanks face to face.

Strong correlations have been found between gratitude, as measured on reliable and valid, well-tested inventories such as The Gratitude Questionnaire, Six Item Form (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002), and happiness and life satisfaction. The research to this point shows strong correlations with positive mental health outcomes and with desirable physical health outcomes. Specifically, gratitude is negatively correlated with stress and depression, and it is positively correlated with satisfying and restful sleep and even with cardiovascular health (Wood, Maltby, Gillett, Linley, & Joseph, 2008; Wood, Joseph, Lloyd, & Atkins, 2009; Jackowska, Brown, Ronaldson, & Steptoe, 2016).

Although the connections between gratitude as a trait and state and physical, mental, and emotional health have been fairly well established, the question remains for psychologists to track how gratitude works. Does gratitude have a direct effect, a mediating effect (i.e., serving as an intermediate state between other emotions or traits) or is it the effect and not the cause? Wood et al. (2008) examined these possible one-way, two-way, and mediated pathways through two longitudinal studies and concluded "gratitude seems to directly foster social support, and to protect people from stress and depression, which has implications for clinical interventions" (p. 854).

Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, (2010). argued that there are essentially four theoretical approaches to understanding gratitude's functioning. First, as schematic processing, or a way of perceiving the world; as coping, in that gratitude leads us to engage socially; as positive affect, or that the general benefit of gratitude is the protection of positive emotion); and broaden-and-build processes. In this last, it is proposed that the state of gratitude leads to the trait of gratitude because "each positive emotion has a unique evolutionary purpose" (p. 902).

The State of Gratitude Research in the Communication Discipline

To those who study interpersonal relationships and communication, the effect of gratitude, either as emotion or trait, on those entities is a concern. Does gratitude improve communication? The evidence so far suggests yes, although the criticisms of gratitude research that are waged on psychological studies applies to that in the communication discipline. A search in early 2019 for articles in the Communication and Mass Media database with the words "gratitude," "thankfulness," or "gratefulness" in the abstracts yielded 208 sources, but most of these were editorial "thanks" of some nature to readers and staff. Of the 39 that addressed those subject words from a research standpoint, many were about marketing or linguistic expressions in other languages. Only a handful of articles were peer-reviwed empirical studies of the effects of gratitude in communication and interpersonal relationships as published in communication journals (Amaro, 2017; Franks, 2015; Yoshimura & Berzins, 2017; Raggio & Folse, 2009). This probably indicates why so little (i.e., almost no) mention of the subject is made in the leading textbooks on Interpersonal Communication.

Borrowing on work in psychology as well as communication journals, the following benefits of gratitude in interpersonal relationships have been supported:

- Greater communal strength (Lambert et al., 2010). "At the end of the study, perceived communal strength was higher among participants in the expression-of-gratitude condition than among those in all three control conditions."

- Improvements in relationship insecurity (Park, Impett, McDonald, & Lemay, 2019). "Our results indicated that perceived, rather than a partner's self-reported, gratitude expressions were critical to buffering insecurely attached individuals' daily dissatisfaction"

- Promotion of pro-social behavior (Grant & Gino, 2010) "Gratitude expressions increase prosocial behavior by enabling individuals to feel socially valued."

- Prediction of satisfaction in marital relationships (Gordon, Arnette, & Smith, 2011) "Consistent with hypotheses, results indicate that one's felt and expressed gratitude both significantly relate to one's own marital satisfaction. Cross-partner analyses indicate that the individual's felt gratitude also predicts the spouse's satisfaction, whereas surprisingly his or her expressed gratitude does not."

- Increase in perceived social support for women suffering from metastatic breast cancer (Algoe & Stanton, 2012).

- Negative correlation between loneliness and gratitude (Caputo, 2015).

In trying to understand how gratitude works in interpersonal relationships, Algoe (2012), working with a variety of colleagues on diverse research projects, proposes the "find, remind, and-bind" theory. She stated,

> Moreover, the find-remind-and-bind theory posits that rather than primarily helping us understand how we might come to trust a stranger, gratitude is probably best understood as a mechanism for forming and sustaining the most important relationships of our lives, those with the people we care about and count on from one day to the next. (p. 456)

In other words, gratitude's primary role, in Algoe's thinking, is in already established relationships rather than as a tool for initiating them. Gratitude is a mechanism for energizing more mutually responsive connections and interactions between two persons, one of whom is a seen as a benefactor and the other of whom sees the benefit as worthy of gratitude.

All this is not to say that all scholars of gratitude see only positive aspects. Some warn of "the dark side" of gratitude (Wood, Emmons, Algoe, Froh, Lambert, & Watkins, 2016) in that a victim in a dysfunctional or abusive relationship may feel gratitude inappropriately because of the partner's controlling or even cruel treatment. Others, coming from a more philosophical/ethical perspective, ask whether we should really consider gratitude as a moral good to teach in the educational system or to encourage in the clinical setting (Carr, 2015; Carr, 2016; Carr, Morgan, & Guilford, 2015).

This author argues that gratitude is woefully understudied in the communication discipline and consequently substantially unaddressed in the Interpersonal Communication classroom. She proposes how to remedy that in the next section.

The Placement of Gratitude in the Interpersonal Communication Course

The author proposes that gratitude can be incorporated into the interpersonal communication course curriculum in the following ways.

1. As part of the chapter on emotion (for example, Chapter 8 in Kory Floyd's *Interpersonal Communication*, third edition). Here the instructor could discuss the differences between states and traits in interpersonal communication and have students reflect on how they

experience the state of emotion and how they might build gratefulness as a life orientation (trait) with positive personal outcomes.

2. As part of the chapter on building relationships (for example, Chapter 9 in Kory Floyd's *Interpersonal Communication*, third edition). In this case, the research on how expressions of and experiencing gratitude build greater communal strength, predict marital satisfaction, and decrease relationship insecurity can be discussed. The instructor might choose one of the journal articles (see References) that explore these connections.

3. As a method of growing students' understanding of the research process in communication. Students could be engaged in a gratitude intervention as is done in much of the literature. For example, they could take a gratitude inventory as found in the literature, engage in a few weeks of journaling or purposeful expressions of gratitude to others, and then retake the inventory. This could lead to fruitful discussions on how research is designed and carried out, factors that might intervene in the research process, and the results of the study.

4. As a method for reflection. A week-long gratitude journal could be a rich source of class discussion on theories explored in the textbooks, for example, relationship stages, especially in light of Algoe's "find, remind, and-bind" theory

Conclusion

This article has sought to give an overview of the psychological literature on gratitude, substantiate that more work on gratitude in communication should be done, and to encourage the instructor of an interpersonal communication course to include units, subunits, discussions or exercises involving the research and students' owned lived experience of gratitude. The following references include not only what is cited here but other articles that could be a starting place for exploring gratitude as a construct, as a force in communication, and as an influence in teaching and learning.

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The Politics of Black Hair: An Autoethnographic Analysis of a Hair Journey

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I have come to accept that Black woman has a personal relationship with her hair – it can be either a good relationship or a bad relationship. I have yet to see anything in-between.

– Althea Prince, *The Politics of Black Women's Hair*

Can a simple hairstyle represent the complexity of the relationship of self-expression, self-definition, and political ideals? For Black women, the answer is yes. Black women use hairstyles to define a connection to blackness, creativity, and self-definition within the confines of hegemonic standard of white beauty. For many Black women, hair is more than "just hair," her hairstyle represents are cultural signifiers, political statements, self-esteem, and symbols of strength. Black women often struggle to understand the delicate relationship between expressing how she sees herself and how the society defines her beauty. Black women struggle with the quest to feel beautiful/significant because the marginalizing and oppositional binaries (natural/unnatural, good/bad, and authentic/inauthentic) associated with hairstyling (Thompson 2009). These binaries create divisions that induce marginalization within an already gender and racially oppressed group. The oppressive nature of policing Black women pressures us to make a hairstyle choice based on political or personal reasons.

This paper questions whether hairstyle choice is personal, political, or a combination. I use autoethnography as a way to explore my hair journey to analyze my motivations for hairstyles within the early stages of my hair journey. I offer insight on the collective work of Black women body politics, feminist autoethnographic writing, and identity development. As a Black female academic employed at a predominantly white institution, I suffered from pressures to assimilate during the hiring process and interactions with colleagues within the academy. From this perspective, I started to question why I chose certain hairstyles and if hairstyle choice was a valid concern for other Black women. Using representational identity theory, I will show my hairstyles were a result of my collective experiences and seen as personal for me, but politicalized by others.

Politics of Black Hair

Before I start to explore if hairstyles choice are personal or political, a discussion on how Black hair is political warranted. The discussion on black hair is not new or revolutionary. Scholars explored black hair within the context of workplace advancement, media, government, health, and identify (Thompson 2009; Opie and Phillips 2015; Brown 2014; Gill 2015; Jeffries and Jeffries 2014; Versey 2014). Instead of recounting the history of black hair or a theoretical discussion of how it is political, I want to reframe the discussion on black hair politics with a metaphor the actual hair strand. A hair strand is made up of the root (closes to the head), shaft (middle of the hair) and tip (end of the hair). In particular, the discourse on hair can be described from what women learn about their hair from route to tip. The roots serve as a metaphor for the inherent ideologies created from the internalization of the white standard of beauty. The shaft represents the ongoing process of understanding, loving, and appreciating hair texture. The tip metaphor represents the manifestation of how black women wear their hair based on these root ideologies and processes. By focusing on the hair strand, the discussion is a tangible representation of how Black woman struggle to understand the effects of negative ideologies has on hairstyle choice. The issue facing Black hair does rest not in the discussion of what is being said that makes black hair political; it is the collective understanding and appreciation of Black hair.

Black women's hair is personal and internal that seeps into the psychology and emotional well being of Black women. Harris-Perry (2001) notes, "the internal, psychological, emotional, and personal experiences of black women are inherently political" (120). The root issue of how hair is a complex puzzle of personal experience and political implication are based on the polarization of a good versus bad, natural versus unnatural, or authentic versus non-authentic dichotomies. Early on in life a black girl hears the "grade" her hair through her interactions with her mother or caregiver. The intimate times of hairstyling with a mother and daughter teaches the lesson of how to understand and accept black hair. hooks (1993) warns the possible toxicity of the mother-daughter relationship and her discussion of "telling it like it is." What hooks described as truth telling explains how black women hide themselves on telling harsh truths that are disguised sometimes hurtful and demeaning comments on black hair.

However, the consequences of these truths can have negative consequences on the psychological and identity development of young black girls. A harmful ideology disguised, as a "truth" is the soft texture straight silky hair is more manageable and desirable is deemed *good* hair. Counter to this belief, tightly coiled texture or unmanageable hair is considered *bad* hair. The delineation of good versus bad becomes part of the thinking that translates to a truth or belief. Hooks (1993) equates to a negative thinking of black hair with a white supremacist thinking influences the black psyche to negate the beauty of black curly textured hair. Coupled with the truth telling from mothers/caregivers to the negation of black beauty, black women feel shame and frustration in an effort to be accepted in the dominant society.

Following the metaphor from root to shaft is the emotional acceptance or denial of black hair. This in-between the root and tip is where many black women embrace her real hair which is seen as *authentic* compared to those who wear hair extensions, weaves, or wigs that are

delineated as *unauthentic*. Early on Black women denied any use of extension or weaves because the impersonation of white ideals of beauty enhanced the illusion of the "long hair, don't care" attitude. The paradox of authentic and unauthentic divided the hair community because those who wear weave or extensions are seen as more progressive, but those who do not are seen as less or behind.

Beyond the shaft is the tip that represents the practice of transforming one's hair by chemically straightening, relax (perm) black hair. The dichotomy of *natural* versus *unnatural* manifest as the practice of how certain black women chose to display or manage her hair. It is not uncommon for some Black women to relax a child's hair as early as three years old. To straighten ones hair served as a right of passage for teen girls because it was seen as acceptable and preferable (Prince 2009). Comparatively, black women who rejected the rooted ideology that silky hair is preferable, many decided to not chemically straighten their hair and "go natural." The natural hair movement offered women the opportunity embrace the natural state of black hair by changing the way black hair is managed and manipulated.

The metaphor from root, shaft, and tip represents how the ideology of hair is rooted in white hegemonic standard of beauty thinking that leads down the shaft of self-hatred that manifest in the practice of chemically manipulating the hair. The division of good and bad, authentic/unauthentic, and natural/unnatural create rifts within an already marginalized group and creates further complication for whoever is not on the right side of the equation.

Marginalization of Hair

To frame the discussion of marginalization within the hair community, I simplified the categories coded as "acceptable" to include good, natural and authentic compared to "unacceptable" to represent bad, unauthentic, and unnatural. In terms of marginalization, acceptable would be considered the dominant group and unacceptable would be the oppressed group. Cohen (1999) defines the basic concept of marginalization to mean those who are outside the dominant ideologies are oppressed. If a person is seen as an outsider, she lacks the privilege of participating in the benefits of the dominant culture. Within these marginalized spaces is the lack of opportunity to participate fully in the dominant group, but outside group members experience exclusion and oppression (Cohen 1999).

The acceptable hair group is those who posses real manageable soft hair texture hair. These women are often light-skinned Black women with loose curly real hair. The acceptable haired women are privileged and considered the standard of beauty and success within the black community and mainstream media. Women outside of the acceptable classification experience secondary processes of marginalization by becoming targets within an already oppressed community. Secondary processes of marginalization occur when more privileged members of a marginalized group manage the policing and identity of the group. The term policing refers to regulations and management of the behavior, attitudes, and public image of the group (Cohen 1999). Often Black women with unacceptable hair are policed to assimilate to the standard.

Black women in corporate positions police younger women entering the field to not to wear their hair in braids or dreadlocks (unacceptable) to not give the impression to supervisors they have "radical" or rebellious political views (Harris-Perry 2011, 120).

The warning of appearing radical is a manifestation of the consequences of the acceptable/unacceptable division. The fear of being considered radical or resistant to the standard caused many Black women to change how she felt about hair. Revisiting Cohen (1999), the major consequences of marginalization are altered world-views, development of support networks, and strategic resistance efforts. Within the context of acceptable and unacceptable hair, the oppressed group found ways to cope with the policing that shifted the hair discussion to more political terms.

Women with unacceptable hair started to identify with the black-identifies visual aesthetic as a way to reject the standard within the black community of chemically straightening hair. Byrd and Tharpe (2014) explains hair is a visual statement of the rejection of oppression. Many women used their hair to show a visible connection to black appreciation and nationalism. Once hair became a visual and social marker, it became political. Woman started to change how they felt about black hair with slogans like "Black is beautiful" to encourage other oppressed women to alter the view on black hair. As this altered view of black hair increased, hair communities began to flourish to support these shifting ideologues.

Gil (2015) discussed how the online natural hair community "defined, cultivated, contested, and policed in the world of digital beauty." Gil explains that natural hair blog served as a space to support and education women on natural hair. The article goes on to note the mobilization of resistance with the use of hashtag activism like #teamnautral. This hashtag further mobilized the message of embracing natural hair and encouraging more women to embrace unacceptable hair.

To this point, I have established how there is a divide created because of acceptable hair preference over unacceptable hair. The cleavages create between these two opposing ideologies separates Black women in an already marginalized group. Examining the roots of the issue that manifest in trying to obtain white standards of beauty, to the process of loving and understanding one's hair that ultimately culminates to the decision to perm or wear hair in the natural state is the heart of the political discussion. Mercer (1994) reminds us all Black hairstyles are political in that they each articulate responses to the panoply of historical forces. The root of this issue is historical and hairstyle choices often have symbolic meaning and significance even when we are not cognizant or aware.

To offer a way to be aware of the motivation of hairstyle choice, I question is hairstyle choice political, personal, or a combination. To answer this question, I borrow Boylorn (2013) method of autoethnography. As a feminist scholar, I learned autoethnography allows me to use myself as

the subject of study, used my lived experiences as data, and analyze my experience with theory. Reminiscent of Boylorn, I use my blog entries. Blogs are online journal entries shared with the general public that incorporates cultural, political, and/or social components with commentary from the writer. I used my blog to document my journey and reflection with my relationship to my hair. I used the calendar years of 2010 and 2011 because I explored different aspects of acceptable and unacceptable hair.

Autoethnography as a Method

Autoethnography uses the first person to tell personal stories that disclose hidden details with a single case that should not or cannot be generalized. The snapshot approach of a lived experience is an alternative approach to traditional qualitative research. Bochner (2012) explains, "by emphasizing the stories people tell about their lives; these writers construct narratives as both a means of knowing and a way of telling about the social world" (155). The telling of stories to analyze social situations is why so many feminists use autoethnography as an approach to systematically using personal experiences in juxtaposition of the cultural experiences (Raab, 2013). The exchange of using oneself as the focus enables the researcher to use autoethnography as both a process (doing ethnographic research) and product (writing an ethnography).

There are several documented approaches to autoethnography from reflexive ethnography (research changed has as a result of doing fieldwork), personal narratives (stories about the author focused on different facets of life), narrative autoethnography (presents texts as stories that incorporate the researcher's experiences into ethnographic description and analysis), and analytic autoethnography (researchers is used as the subject of the study, a member of the culture studied, encourages reflexivity, engages the reader directly and uses theory to learn from and about the situation) (Ellis, et al. 2011). I chose to use analytic autoethnography because the method is grounded feminist standpoint. Analytic autoethnography allows the researcher to be situated within the context of the story and culture, as well as, use her position to analyze the culture.

The opportunity to use myself as the subject of study allows me to analyze my unique standpoint to understand why I chose certain hairstyles from my individual perspective. Intemann (2010) notes standpoint theory involves situated-knowledge (asserts that social position shape and limits one's understanding of experiences) and thesis of epistemic advantage (the standpoint of marginalized groups have an epistemological advantage). Meyers (2012) reports feminists use standpoint theory to analyze knowledge that is socially constructed, but more importantly, is the theory used in examining power and subordination. Hill-Collins (2000) extends this notion described by Intemann and Meyers claiming Black women have a unique perspective to analyze culture concerning power with Black feminist thought and intersectionality.

Black Feminist Thought to Intersectionality to Representational

Identity Theory

Black feminist thought posits Black women have access to alternate views of oppression because of the combination of being Black and female. This unique position is not a universal truth or reality, but a wider perspective. Collins (2000) insists the usefulness of identifying and using one's standpoint in conducting research to produce a descriptive analysis of race, gender, and class is essential to understanding power and culture. Black feminist theorists use intersectionality coined by Crenshaw (1989) to articulate Black women's unique perspective on race, gender, and class. Crenshaw used feminist theory to argue that Black women experiences cannot be contained as simply being a woman or Black, but the intersection of these two marginalized groups. The construction of the intersection is greater than the sum of racism and sexism. Intersectionality positions itself as a theoretical advance from Black feminist thought. The concept not only discusses the oppression of marginalized groups but extends the tradition of articulating the identity development and struggles of the multiple oppressive positions Black women reside (Nash, 2008).

Intersectionality as a concept offers a perspective separate from racial and feminist observations because Black women are "burdened." In a later discussion on intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991) refines her idea of "burden" by explaining the intersection of race and gender creates urgency and need to understand how the social world is constructed. The burden to move beyond just race and gender to include experience. Brown (2014) pulls from black feminist theory and intersectionality to articulate a more complex view of how Black women legislators make decisions. Instead of focusing only on the intersection of race and gender, Brown contends representational identity theory shows how Black women are connected, defined, and entwined in culture, more importantly, the theory takes into "account the collect nature of identity and emphasizes that Black women use their intersectional identities and individual experiences as Black women to influence behavior" (2014, 7).

I reject the idea, just as Brown, that Black women decisions are made solely on the intersection of race and gender. By reducing Black women to this narrow space, the restriction eradicates the value of experience and personal preferences. I use representational identity theory to analyze my hair journey to explore what influenced my decisions. It can be argued my findings are not generalizable to the public, however my intent is to create a space for reflection and conversation. By sharing my personal experience, I offer a view in to the complexity of hairstyle choice and the affects of secondary marginalization.

My Hair Journey

I started journaling when I was ten-years old. My writing was private until I started writing poetry and performing spoken word poems. My hobby as a writer was therapeutic. I started a blog in 2009 that focused on inspiring others and life lessons. I started my "Shine on" blog as a way to

support myself and other women struggling with self-acceptance. The follow blog posts were selected from the onset reconsidering my relationship with my hair. My hair journey began when I was six and my mother relaxed my hair because it was "nappy." I wore perms for many years without the economic means to weave or wigs. In 2010, I got my first set of braids with synthetic hair. The first blog post is the background to my hair journey.

Friday, January 29, 2010 -- Unbe-weavably-gone

I guess I am not a weave girl. You know those women who can endure a sew-in, glue, fussing, or some form of braiding. These women have a walk with "long hair and don't care." I liked the experience of having hair really long and silky but I guess I needed to go though weave 101 because I killed so many on the first week it was crazy. I mean I committed the ultimate sin - I used a brush.

I made the comment that I brushed on my micros and I was given absolute looks of horror, disgust, and disbelief from my follow weave wearers. I have deducted that I am not meant for weave. I found the upkeep was just as demanding as natural hair. At least I can brush my own hair without losing a few helpless braids. So it did what every unbeweavable woman dreads....I took them out. I sat in front of my television and removed each precious creation. I put in a movie and set to deconstruct my magical unbeweavable hair.

The weave 101 flunky in me subconsciously thought that if I took my time, I would not damage my own hair. I worked, worked, and worked to find I did indeed damage my hair. I did not properly take care of my divine silky hair during my weave wearing. I thought that if I wore a weave I could transition into "going natural" meaning I would not perm my hair again. Ummmm....let me clarify for you. I had an ongoing inner struggle of wanting to join the confident strong Black women I see with natural hair. The beauty oozing out of these women is intoxicating, so I wanted to take a sip of this elixir of natural hair confidence.

But, after those braids came out ALL I could hear were drums and tribal music under the debris of weave. I look crazed, wild, and not so intoxicating. Well maybe a hungover after Mardi-Gras. So I laid to rest that struggle of natural vs relaxer. I totally submit to the chemical crack aka relaxer. I like my hair permed. I make my own money, so I can get my hair done. End of discussion. Those women who are natural, you are divine in your own crown of natural glory, but I will continue to submit to the relaxer so I do not have to revisit the soundtrack of African drums in my head.

I am on a journey to lay to rest my weave experience. To make myself feel better, I got a great haircut a few days later. It was delightful to style my own hair and use a brush without ridicule, disgust, or murder.

Tuesday, February 1, 2011 -- A New Journey....On the road again.

I decided yesterday, February 1, 2011 to transition from relaxed to natural. If you read my previous blog called "My Unbe-Weaveable Experience" than you may remember me killing a few braids with a brush to conclude the serious thoughts of:

Ummmm....let me clarify for you. I had an ongoing inner struggle of wanting to join the confident strong Black women I see with natural hair. The beauty oozing out of these women is intoxicating, so I wanted to take a sip of this elixir of natural hair confidence.

But, after those braids came out ALL I could hear were drums and tribal music under the debris of weave. I look crazed, wild, and not so intoxicating. Well maybe a hungover after Mardi-Gras. So I laid to rest that struggle of natural vs relaxer. I totally submit to the chemical crack aka relaxer. I like my hair permed. I make my own money, so I can get my hair done. End of discussion. Those women who are natural, you are divine in your own crown of natural glory, but I will continue to submit to the relaxer so I do not have to revisit the soundtrack of African drums in my head.

I confess I was ignorant that natural hair is beautiful, manageable, and an adventure. I was ignorant of what I could accomplish with my natural hair. I have always had "good hair" that was easy to style and manage. I loved to curl it. I calculated that I have relaxed my hair since I was sixteen years old. That is 19 years at 4 perms each year which amounts to about 76 perms a year. That is a lot of chemical going into my brain.

After, I took my braids out I got a perm. Then I waited for a few months and got more braids. I loved them. Instead of straight hair, I got curly hair. I was in bliss.... I took them out after the summer and permed my hair for the start of school. I felt secure and confident with my perm. I THOUGHT I was more of myself. I was wrong. I started to get tired of my hair breaking, no luster or shine. I did not want to blame it on age, so I will go with diet. My hair was just not healthy.

To stop stressing my hair, I tried new adventures such as quick weaves, wigs, and braids. I felt exhilarated. I could try new textures, lengths, styles. I went crazy! As I started to explore protective styles, I started to rethink my stand on natural hair. I started to do research on transitioning, products, and styles.

So, now I start my journey to natural. I will not do the big chop, but I will do protective styles, braids, and wigs until my natural hair is a comfortable length. I will keep you posted...this is going to be a great journey and I look forward to it.....

Wednesday, May 11, 2011 -- My journey is an amazing one...

I have been transitioning from relaxed to natural officially since Feb 1 2011. My last perm was November 1, 2010. I dove in head first.... literally. I love my hair. I absolutely love it. I have started to see that I am beautiful regardless of how "nappy", big, wild, or crazy it is.

I am in a fork in the road. Daily I am tested daily to not feel myself, strong, or in control. I lose focus that I am worth loving and amazing just being me. But when I do my hair I feel exhilarated and happy. I mean really happy. When I do someone's hair (roller set, two

strand twist, or something) I feel happy. Happier than I do when I am doing my job. I feel strong and happy.

Granted this road to natural has not been all roses. I have had a few bad experiences but I am learning my hair and how to keep it health and strong. My only regret is I did not do this sooner.

I am amazing and I am loving this journey!!!

Thursday, August 11, 2011 - Just a little straighter...

"What the Hell is wrong with your head!" This is a horrible thing to hear when you are transitioning from relaxed to natural hair. My mother did not fully embrace the hair I was rocking or could not wrap her mind around why I would stop relaxing my hair in the first place.

So, I expected negative comments and guess what - you get what you expect. She tolerated my hair, but I felt her eyes on the back of my head. My mom finally complemented my bravery for going natural, even though she does not understand. Secretly, I struggled internally on wanting her approval. I have always had my mother's love but her criticism weighs heavily on my self esteem. I braced myself for rejection, I receive tolerance...small victory.

Then, I went to work with a fresh twist-out hairstyle. I worked hard on it. I had butterflies (insert giggle here) just like I did when I was a kid because of the first day of school butterflies. You know, so excited to see everyone, catch up on our summer adventures, share in the enthusiasm of the new academic year. My hair was amazing and I felt amazing. I got a warm reception and a few "what the hell" looks.

I had fellow Black female faculty member asked me actually said "what the hell happened to your head!" She went on to tell me how unprofessional my twist-out afro was and students will not respect me with a afro. She finished her insult with "who are you trying to be, Angela Davis?" I tried to appear like it did not hurt my feelings, but I was devastated.

Sunday, December 4, 2011 -- Now I'm Shining

Ouch, damn, ouch again. My head hurts from the painstakingly task of taking out 10 weeks micros. My hair has grown so fast and I am quite pleased with my natural process. On August 10, 2011 I cut all the relaxer of my hair. Small victory for me. Now I am on the learning and growing the hair God gave me.

Now I'm shining, so I thought. My problem is application is harder than research. Here is an example, I transitioned (slowly moving from relaxed to natural) with braids, wigs, and micros. So I was not really learning the process of taking care of my hair. Mind you, I did countless hours of Youtube and message board research, but when you are faced with detangling 2 week old hair...your spirit is tested. Now, I am micro free and I am going to

wear my own hair for a while. Slowly, I am realigning my view of myself and my beauty. To learn that my hair will not be uniformed or neat. It is wild and unruly...like me.

Analysis of my Hair Journey

Drawing from the earlier hair metaphor, the root of my hair journey started with my misunderstanding of my hair. I never learned how to take care of my hair or understand how to maintain healthy hair. The negative relations with my hair fostered even more negative feelings of what I thought my hair represented. I falsely correlated natural hair with negative connotations of blackness. Byrd and Tharpe (2014) described how Black slaves were manipulated and forced to imitate whiteness to be accepted. The brainwashing to despise all forms of black expression or African roots manifested in the negative thoughts I referred to as "African drums" and "looking crazy." In 2010, I never questioned my negative views of natural hair because I sat in the middle of realigning my views of blackness.

The decision to transform my misconceptions of natural hair, I moved to the strand portion of the hair metaphor. As I started to refocus my viewpoints, I wore wigs and braids to experiment with different looks and hair maintenance techniques. By the time I entered the middle of my process, I stated to appreciate and understand the versatility and beauty of my hair. I experienced what Opie and Phillips (2015) describe as workplace dominance when a black female college ridicules my hair. I immediately felt ashamed and angry. My lived experienced is congruent with the Opie and Phillips (2015) finding that Black women express higher dominance from other Black women in the workplace in regards to acceptable hairstyle choice in the workplace.

At the tip of my journey, I fully embraced my natural hair as acceptable for me. I chose to reject perms and unauthentic methods. My realignment of how I perceived myself falls in line with how those who are oppressed in secondary marginalization resists with altered worldviews and creating support networks. By the end of the year, my decisions were personal for me with political considerations from others.

After analyzing the conversation with my mother, I learned my negative assumptions of hair from my mother telling me how my hair was unacceptable. This lived experience exemplifies Jeffries and Jeffries (2014) claim that Black family has major influence on are a Black female identity formation and attitude toward hair. From my mother words, I internalized the unacceptability of my hair to mean I was unacceptable. The reconfiguring this worldview was highly personal that was instrumental in my future hairstyle choice.

Furthermore, I gained this insight from my interaction from my Black female colleague who equated my afro to the revolutionary rebellious spirit of Angela Davis. By politicizing my afro, she made my hair choice a rebellious expression. It was not a conscious choice to be rebellious on my behalf. As I reshaped my idea and view of my hair, my confidence increased. I was stronger to handle criticisms from family members and co-workers. Framing my analysis in with representational theory, my hair choice was based on my personal experiences, not political objectives.

Conclusion

It has been my intention of this paper to explore if hairstyle choice was personal, political, or a combination. Using my own hair journey, I conclude that my experience along with the intersection of my race and gender made my choices personal, but political for others. My

choices came from wanting to accept all parts of who I am, appear confident like other Black women I idolized, and reconfigure my ideas of Black beauty. Rarely are Black women subjects of large studies to investigate self-acceptance and self-love. My autoethnography serves as baby steps to fill the gap and encourage others who struggle with accepting a simple strand of hair. Thompson (2009) explains Black women are unique because we are marginalized by white standard of beauty so much we negate our natural beauty. By exploring hair from root to tip, we have a better understand of the process to love and accept our natural beauty.

It can be argue a limitation of this paper is I did not explore the division within the subcultures of natural hair. Gil (2015) mentions how there is policing within the natural hair community of how to take care of hair with organic products to the authenticity of wearing wigs or weaves. Again, drawing from Cohen (1999), marginalized group member's policing in-group members in effort to legitimize those who are not acceptable to the dominant culture. As social media and hashtag use increase, more research on secondary marginalization within the subcultural of natural hair should be studied to get a better idea of the effects of this practice. Second, the delineation of acceptable to mean good, authentic, and natural compared to unacceptable to represent bad, unauthentic, and relaxed warrants further exploration to explore if these a salient categories for other Black women.

Finally, the representational identity theory is in its infancy stages of development. Although the theory originated within the political science discipline, it has interdisciplinary implications in regards to offering insight to understanding the complexity, motivations, and decision making of Black women. As long as Black women are represented as a byproduct of only the intersection of race and gender, we will continue to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and discount Black women's choices. As Black woman share similar experiences and stories, we can collectively reshape our love and understanding of Black beauty.

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The Southern Version of The American Dream

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This paper is a preliminary study to explore how Americans in rural South Georgia feel about the 'American Dream'; how they interpret the phrase and express it (if at all) in their lives as a cultural concept for creating self-identity. It contributes to the body of knowledge by evaluating research on the perceptual filters Southerners use to create a sense of self-identity and how they approach self-improvement based on the concept of the American Dream as a cultural influence. The inquiry began by reviewing research on the American Dream in academic publications to find relevant sources and identify new areas for research. The goal was met – there was little information on how the Southern, rural part of the United States interprets the concept of the American Dream as part of individual and cultural identity. The most significant results revealed participant belief that education contributed to individual realization of the American Dream by providing opportunities for better pay through better jobs, and that home ownership created opportunities for happiness by offering a safe environment for individuals and their families. The next paper will develop research questions on how rural Southerners define, identify with and act on the Southern version of the American Dream – the Southern American Dream – as part of their individual and cultural identity.

Introduction: Cultural Identity

Individual identity is shaped by cultural environment and the American Dream has been a powerful cultural force across American history, so it was important to understand how this concept originated and how it continues to change. People form and share persuasive messages based on their cultural foundation. These in turn create change in their communities. This cycle means identity creation is constantly taking place as people interact with each other. Originally promising equality for citizens, today the American Dream seems to focus on material prosperity, echoing concerns for physical security and encouraging stronger social identities that divide 'us' from 'them'. Division in the South is reflected in poverty and civil rights issues with gun violence and discrimination as offshoots of this cultural separation. With violence and uncivil discourse growing, and community engagement decreasing, Americans could use the American Dream to produce contented, satisfied citizens. In the rural South, current regional life changes continuously create a new, Southern version of The American Dream.

Since the South is part of the United States it is important to gain an overview of The American Dream as expressed across the history of the country and how the interpretation has changed as it has been acted on by citizens. The idea that became the American dream existed before Europeans discovered the continent. Dreams of paradise and concepts of Eutopia, Eden, and Arcadia grew from stories people told about paradise on earth, giving them hope for the future. These stories were shared collectively but defined individually, providing motivation for the immigrant population that built the United States. Since it is a cultural concept, the American Dream has changed as the culture that created it changed, influenced by individuals who brought their cultural expectations with them. It began as a way to separate American identity from its cultural ties to Europe and it evolved into a cultural expression of identity. Growing and diversifying as the country grew, the concept provided a goal that people could strive for by providing a metaphor of translation as America moved away from European tradition and toward a new, perfectible, society. (Stiuliuc, 2011)

This perfectible society was envisioned by the founders as a continuous process. They developed governmental structure designed to change as the country grew, and that growth was influenced by the American Dream. James Truslow Adams was the first to use the phrase the American Dream to name and define the vague concept that has been an unconscious influence on American mentality. Born during the Great Depression, this stamp of cultural identity summarized the elements of a functional democracy: it provided social order, created opportunity for people from all social ranks, offered financial security, and created opportunities for public recognition. (Adams, 1931, p. 404; Stiuliuc, 2011, p. 364) Since this first expression the American Dream has been a constantly shifting cultural signifier, defined by individuals through wide-ranging, personal, immigrant narratives (Stiuliuc, 2011). Adams presented an enticing ideology that offered social structure while motivating citizens to follow their dreams, but that dream has become harder to realize, particularly in the South. Most discouraging – if you want to achieve the American Dream, move to Finland, Sweden, or Japan where you have more opportunities (Barber, 14Oct2011). This observation is supported by research. In 2018, the United States scored 84.78/100 points or 25th of 146 countries with low scores in personal safety (70.34/100), health and wellness (71.97/100), inclusiveness (61.49/100), and access to advanced education (76.98/100). When studied by regions, the South was at the bottom of the list.

Despite the odds, American culture has increasingly pushed high expectations and belief in following your dreams, with success usually determined by personal happiness. Lauren Sandler (15March2011) argued "the pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence was changed from the American Dream to the American Expectation – happiness achieved through entitlement and monetary wealth. The recession deferred some of the dream, but Americans still imagine that someday they will have a better life and that will make them happy. If they adjust expectations and balance pleasure with sacrifice, it might be possible to have an honest conversation about when to chase the dream and when to let it go. Tchiki Davis (17May2018) stated that losing the American Dream means we lost hope in hard work, which no longer buys security. Struggling financially contributes to lower happiness, possibly because it creates chronic stress. Economic stressors make positive social resources extra important for individuals to be happy, but today American lifestyle offers fewer opportunities to find friends or romantic partners, or even share a moment with a friendly stranger, then in the past. These cultural conditions can push people to dysfunctional adaptations. Significant stress can trigger individuals to form stronger social identities with extremist groups who see 'our people' as better than people with other identities, causing stress to the targeted group. Experiencing prejudice, violence and discrimination based on one's group status is a significant stressor and creates new problems rather than bringing happiness into American society. There is evidence of this behavior across the United States and across the South. Riots over Confederate symbols, such as statues of Confederate heroes, is one example.

Education is often linked with achieving the American Dream because it is seen as a path to a better job and better paycheck. This paper examined aspects of the American Dream that might motivate students to go to college and how likely they are to be satisfied with the outcome as determined by their measure of overall satisfaction with their life situations. The focus is on undergraduate students in the rural southeast who are most likely to work in the agricultural industry. These students are often first-generation college students, nontraditional students with families, working students, and other students who are making an extraordinary leap of faith by returning to school. While all students invest time and capital to secure an education, these students generally pay a higher price because they have less of both to invest so it is a greater sacrifice for them. When asked, students in the classroom usually say they want to find a job so they can have more money to buy things and to have a well-paying job (usually in a profession)

with benefits, so they live a better life, which reflects the goals expressed in the American Dream. These students have pinned their hopes on achieving a cultural Nirvana. If students and their families, and educators, understand the cultural concept and expectations they should be in a better position to take advantage of an educational experience.

Studying a widespread, cultural concept is like searching for Nirvana – the value will be in the journey because the destination cannot be reached. But the journey should illuminate what value students can gain from attaining an education, allowing them and educators to improve their satisfaction with the experience. Learning (at least from a Liberal Arts standpoint) involves more than absorbing facts and learning skills. It includes learning new habits that students can use to build a new way of life. These lifestyle patterns should continue to grow across their lifetimes. This Liberal Arts outcome also fits nicely with concepts of citizenship and the American Dream.

Feasibility Study

This study is primarily a literature review to determine the feasibility of the research premise and to allow development of an effective qualitative methodology through survey questions. It also created an opportunity to see what research already exists on the topic so this project could attempt to fill any existing academic holes. Research was conducted by using key terms to search the Galileo database available to the University System of Georgia. Initial research found numerous studies on the definition, background, and impact of the American Dream but very little on how the concept might change based on regions in the United States. There are studies describing how the ideals expressed in the American Dream have been successfully exported around the world, influencing other cultures to adopt the outward appearance of American values. The most transportable concept seems to be acquiring a home by borrowing money, even in cultures that have traditionally rented homes. Borrowing can place the borrower and lender in a precarious situation, but buyers are often willing to take that risk in pursuit of happiness and safety for themselves and their families. A home provides an environment where these things can happen.

A Google search of the term "Southern American Dream" provided articles from news publications, including *The Atlantic* and *The New York Times* as well as blogs and history sites. Many articles feature topics about economics, race, and the Civil War. While there was a lot of information about the South and Civil War culture, most was not relevant to this research project, especially when the primary focus was directed on academic sources.

Literature Review

Research has strongly indicated that the American Dream is deteriorating, reflecting the decline in people's ability to fulfill the three Social Progress Index dimensions, and indicated specific causes. Michael Green (October2014) described how the Social Progress Index (SPI) can be used to measure societies across the three dimensions of social well-being that matter; 1) basic needs for survival, 2) building blocks to improve their lives, and 3) a chance to pursue their goals, dreams and ambitions free of obstacles. These opportunities speak directly to 'The American Dream' and student aspirations. In these categories, the US was compared to 146 other countries to determine social progress. In the 2018 Social Progress Index, posted at socialprogress.org, the US ranked 25th of 146 countries, and scored 84.78/100. Of the three categories, the lowest score was opportunity, ranked 79.16/100. (See Appendix A) In regional performance, Socialprogress.blog reported that the US Southeast demonstrated the worst

performance of any US region. Data show that social progress is strongly linked to poverty, with higher poverty rate states generally reporting lower social progress. Unemployment was also linked to lower social progress, but the relationship was weaker than the one between poverty and social progress.

Poverty, and how to avoid it, is expressed as neoliberalism in the American Dream. In this normative model, citizens are expected to engage in constructionist learning to become market actors, with the moral and political obligation to act as disciplined entrepreneurs by taking steps to meet their own needs and taking responsibility for their resulting situation by planning for contingencies. It assumes market behaviors can be learned by individuals and by state institutions, and therefore allowed to benefit themselves. (Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2009) This fits nicely with the individualistic assumptions of the American Dream, where equal opportunity means everyone takes responsibility for meeting obligations, and hard work will be rewarded with the promise of upward mobility and success. In this scenario, the everyday hero and model citizen is a diligent, optimistic, self-sufficient, resilient, ambitious person who is devoted to family and can afford material goods (Bostrom, 2001). Family devotion makes the promise of security and comfort through hard work particularly alluring. It promises security for the individual and ability to care for family, and the intergenerational promise that children will go farther and climb higher than their parents will, which is particularly appealing to immigrants (Lucio, Jefferson, & Peck, 2016, p. 361).

Aiming high creates opportunities to fail, and part of dream ideology is that achievement of the dream is also an opportunity to fail. A central tenant of the American Dream is the "[e]qual opportunity to become unequal, to succeed (or fail) because of what one does, not who one is" (Hochschild, 2001, p. 35). The American Dream is bought through hard work, planning, and sacrifice. The more someone invests in the struggle, the more that person can lose and the harder it will be to recover. While American culture celebrates successes, failure can be ignored or blamed. If someone is not successful, the fault is all one's own (Peck & Gershon, 2006). This habit of assigning blame to the 'victims of circumstance' has allowed the country to ignore those who tried and failed through no fault of their own. Ehrenreich (2009) identified the unforgiving push toward positive thinking that dominates mainstream American culture as the context that allows the nation to see individual failures as personal. However, failure can be caused by institutional and structural barriers that repeatedly inhibit access to some opportunities for persons of different incomes, races, and ethnicities (Feagin, 1975; Kluegal & Smith, 1986).

The dual aspect of the American Dream creates the mystic that creates its power, by being simultaneously universal but still exclusionary. A dream must be "very selective" Stoll (2009, p. 402) said, because "[i]f it included all the discordant details of existence, it would not be a dream." Cullen (2003) elaborated, saying it

> would have no drama or mystique if it were a self-evident falsehood or a
> scientifically demonstrable principle. Ambiguity is the very source of its mythic
> power, nowhere more so than among those striving for, but unsure whether they
> will reach, their goals. (p. 7)

The American population also faces increasing economic gaps between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. The Great Recession (2007 – 2009) and its aftermath caused many Americans to lose their hard-earned wealth through losing their homes, falling home prices, and long-term underemployment and unemployment. People have also become more aware of increasing income inequality, and the material and psychological toll poverty places on a population and possibly causing them to question the fairness of a market-driven system. Still, the values instilled in the American Dream of hard work, optimism, personal responsibility, equal

opportunity, and faith in the power of individual drive to succeed have remained fairly constant (du Bois, 1955; Ehrenreich, 2009; Gillin, 1955; McGinnis, 2009; Ortner, 2006; Lucio, Jefferson, & Peck, 2016).

Chasing a dream may have emotional appeal, but most Americans have found the American Dream to be more myth than reasonable expectation (Chinoy, 1992; Davis, 1986). Discrepancy in public funding allocation created and implemented by more advantaged social class members is an example, particularly as reflected in funding for public schools. While Americans believe in the ideal of equal access to quality education there is a big gap between this belief system and policies the public is willing to support. Specifically, people do not want to support increased investments in education and social services if they believe the investment will take resources away from themselves or people like themselves. (Hochschild, 2001).

Evidence indicates we would all benefit if we support each other. Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) argue that high levels of income inequality detract from the quality of life for all residences of a country, even the privileged elite. They found countries with unequal distribution of income were sure to have severe problems with health, crime, education, social mobility, and other social problems. Greater inequality seems to heighten people's social evaluation anxieties by increasing the importance of social status. They found one simple measure of inequality is the ratio of income of the top 20 percent compared to the bottom 20 percent of the population. Their findings apply to the United States. The Statistical Atlas (statisticalatlas.com/United-States), updated September 4, 2018 shows Household Income Interval Means for households in the United States to be $200k for the top 20 percent and $12.2k for the bottom 20 percent – an impressive income gap.

Not surprisingly, income strongly influenced how individuals pursue their dreams. Lucio, et al (2016) found several elements of the American Dream and related values were shared across class lines, but the scope of those dreams and the path necessary to reach them was decidedly different between those from disadvantaged and those from advantaged backgrounds. The disadvantaged heads of households shared the dominant value system and moral goals of the middle class, but their material aspirations were modest, reflecting the reality of the low-wage job market and the difficulties associated with pursuing education and advancement. In their interviews, Lucio, Jefferco and Peck found disadvantaged respondents hoped the future would be better for their children and mentioned education as one way to achieve it. Many respondents, particularly most immigrant respondents, said they wanted "the best" for their children – an unrelenting theme that transcended class lines. Overall, respondents' dreams were

> not unusual or grand. For the most part they wanted to be able to pay bills, get out of debt, have "extras" for their children, safe places to rest their heads, and higher education for their children. (Lucio, Jefferson, & Peck, 2016, p. 374-5)

Rising debates about rising income inequality, spurred by the foreclosure crisis and Great Recession, have made Americans increasingly aware of the plight of low income and middle-class families, which represents a significant part of the Southern population. Decades-long trends of stagnant wages, increasing inequality, and limited class mobility translated into class injustice. Peck and Gershon (2006) described the disconnect between the 1996 welfare reform which was presented as creating a foundation for reaching the American Dream for people who needed assistance while obscuring the reality that low-wage jobs were waiting for them at the other end. Morgen and Gonzales (2008) demonstrated that welfare recipients were aware of the injustice of their situations and their struggles to leave the low-wage employment trap, set against the more severe mandates they were expected to meet (Lucio, Jefferson, & Peck, 2016,

p. 362). This can be partly explained by the differences in public schools which vary radically based on zip codes. The advantaged have access to better education for their children while the disadvantaged often do not.

Happiness and Achieving the American Dream

American citizens have less social support and fewer close relationships, indicating the subjective well-being of the population has been dropping at the same time materialistic values were rising. Changes in happiness over the decades indicate change in how the American Dream is perceived in a cultural timeline. Research by Twenge, Sherman, and Lyubomirsky (2015) show the definition of the American Dream and the people who feel they have reached it varies based on age, historic timeline, and generational differences, and based on membership in privileged or underprivileged groups. Before 2000, adults over 30 indicated greater happiness than adolescents aged 13 – 18 years but after 2000 the gap narrowed. Recently adolescents say they are happier and more satisfied with their lives than adolescents in past decades and generations but those over 30 report less happiness than in past generations. When minority and female groups were identified in the samples, results were found to differ by sex and race, with more reliable increase in happiness reported by adolescent males and less by adolescent females. Black adolescents and adults report increased happiness in recent years. This would seem to indicate that cultural changes affect race and gender groups differently, allowing some to experience greater happiness than others. (Twenge, Sherman, & Lyubomirsky, 2015) These calculations can be applied to specific populations by finding demographic information on regions through the US Census. It would be a practical way to determine cultural conditions.

A Majority-minority Nation

America can be the land of opportunity, but many citizens and immigrants begin life with significant challenges that build over time, dooming disadvantaged, poor, unhealthy young people to grow into disadvantaged, poor, unhealthy older people (Ferraro and Shippee, 2009). This includes Millennials (born between 1982 – 2004) and younger US generations. The Pew Research Center (2014) reports, "Millennials experience higher levels of student loan debt, poverty, unemployment, and lower levels of wealth and personal income than any other generation at the same stage of life." Millennials are, with 83.1 million people, the largest living cohort in the country. They are also more racially and ethnically diverse than earlier generations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). At almost twenty years behind the baby boomers, they are a far larger cohort and as a group are less likely to be prepared for retirement and old age. They are also a demographic most likely to attend college. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) reported that in 2015, the 66.9 percent of Georgia students enrolled in college were 24 years old or younger, with 30.1 percent 25 to 49 years old, and students 50 or older accounting for the remaining 2.9 percent.

Millennials and younger generations currently provide key services in the often-overlooked services contributed by family caregivers. There are already nearly 100 million Millennial caregivers, and their numbers are expected to swell as the population continues to age. Millennials who are caregivers are most often 27-year-old adults taking care of 60-year-old female relatives, usually a parent or grandparent. Sometimes they are also caring for spouses, siblings, aunts, uncles, close family friends, families of choice and their children as well. They typically work thirty-five hours a week and either live with or live within 20 minutes of the people they care for. (AARP Public Policy Institute and National Alliance for Caregiving, 2015) This issue is not going away. American and world populations are facing issues related to longevity and aging in their societies. Increasing health and longer lifespans will require generations to work together to build the American Dream for younger generations while helping older ones recognize at least part of theirs. (Accius & Yeh, 2017)

The dynamic between the two generations illustrates the population change in the US, as the country simultaneously grow older and becomes more diverse. Older and younger Americans need each other. Baby boomers are increasingly reliant on Millennials for care and support. Millennials, who see their prospects changing with the changing economy, will be strongly impacted by which social policies are enacted now and so could use help from their elders, who are predominately white. Each generation faces different circumstances that influence their social and economic condition as they approach old age. For Millennials and younger, the aging experience has been shaped by the results of decades of unequal investments in social infrastructures and support systems. In order to recover, we need to find opportunities to redirect resources in a way that generates cultural approval strong enough for individuals to willingly make short-term sacrifices in favor of long-term community good. (Accius & Yeh, 2017)

Conclusion

The rural Southern United States received the lowest scores on the Social Progress Index as compared to the rest of the country, with strong indications that poverty is a driving force (Socialprogress.blog), yet research shows that the American Dream still motivates people to try to improve their circumstances for themselves and their families even when they feel they will fail (Lucio, Jefferco & Peck, 2016). If people are trying, why are they still poor? Research by Peck and Gershon (2006) indicated that current social support systems will not lift most

underprivileged participants out of poverty, but prepares them for future low wage jobs, instead. If rural Southerners want to invest in the future these people need to be supported, which highlights another possible change in the American Dream – the concept of rugged individuality. American culture has used this as an excuse to blame individual failure (Ehrenreich, 2009) even in the face of unavoidable circumstances such as the Great Recession (Peck & Gershon, 2006) rather than taking responsibility and lending a hand through increased investments in education and social services (Hochschild, 2001). Achieving the American Dream does not happen in a vacuum. While Americans like to deny it, every successful person got at least some help from someone else, and most successful people got a lot of help from a lot of people. The process of achieving and maintaining personal goals must take place within a culture, and cultures with high levels of income inequity lower the quality of life for everyone by creating conditions for severe health, crime, education, and other social problems (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Each dreamer shapes his or her coculture in some way, which in turn influences all related, interlocking cocultures. Therefore, it makes sense to support individual expressions of the American Dream, particularly in the rural South.

Part of breaking the poverty cycle must include supporting young people seeking educational opportunities and financial assistance, otherwise these disadvantaged, poor, unhealthy youth will become the disadvantaged, poor, unhealthy older people of the future (Ferraro and Shippee, 2009). The Pew Research Center (2014) specifically reported Millennials experiencing higher student loan debt, and higher levels of poverty and unemployment, than any other generation at this stage of life. One way to help is to offer families financial advice in relevant areas, particularly education (Lucio, Jefferson, & Peck, 2016) and home ownership (Chinoy, 1992; Davis, 1986), which were important goals associated with the American Dream. For example, counseling before taking on a student loan debt or home mortgage to ensure they better understand their options and obligations would be transformative for families considering these long-term, financial responsibilities if it helps them avoid a downward credit spiral.

Future Research

This inquiry was to test the premise that the Southern, rural part of the United States would offer a different cultural interpretation of the American Dream than other regions of the US and provide a basis for research questions on how rural Southerners define, identify with and act on the American Dream – the Southern American Dream – as part of their individual and cultural identity. The purpose would be to identify perceptual filters Southerners use to create a sense of self-identity and how they approach self-improvement based on cultural influences. The next step is to develop research questions and create a survey to collect statements from participants describing how they approach achieving happiness as part of their personal quest for the Southern American Dream.

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Appendix A
2018 Social Progress Index
United States

The Social Progress Imperative is a global nonprofit based in Washington, DC. The group provides quality data on the social and environmental health of world societies.

2018 Social Progress Index
United States
Score – 84.78/100
Rank – 25/146

GDP PPP per capita - $53,445.371
Rank – 8/146

Dimensions
- BASIC HUMAN NEEDS – 90.85
- FOUNDATIONS OF WELLBEING – 84.33
- OPPORTUNITY – 79.16

Highest component scores
- Water and Sanitation   99.40
- Nutrition and Basic Medical Care   97.73
- Shelter   95.94
- Personal Rights   92.15
- Access to Basic Knowledge   91.87

Lowest component scores
- Inclusiveness   61.49
- Personal Safety   70.34
- Health and Wellness   71.97
- Access to Advanced Education   76.98
- Environmental Quality   83.89

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