Comm-Entary
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The Undergraduate Journal of Communication
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Comm-Entary is grateful for the support and participation of faculty and students within the Communication Department. We would also like to extend a special thanks to the Student Press Organization who helped greatly in this year’s funding and the Student Activity Fee Committee and the University Printing Services.
Forward

Comm-Entary is entering its twentieth year in publishing the work of Communication students. There were a number of submissions to read through this year. We would like to thank everyone who submitted. Your excellent work made our jobs exceptionally difficult! We believe that this year’s issue exemplifies what the Communications Department at UNH is all about.

As with every other year, this year’s journal has works from all three curricula in the Communication Department: Interpersonal Communication, Rhetorical Analysis and Media Studies. Unfortunately we received only a few papers for the Interpersonal Communications and Rhetorical Analysis curricula. It is the goal of Comm-Entary to strive for equality in departmental recognition and to push for more submissions within these disciplines next year.

I would like to take this opportunity to give recognition to my Editorial Board. Through their hard work we are able to present an exceptional journal. Also, in his first year as faculty advisor, Jack Bratich helped to lead us down the path to a successful publication. He deserves our thanks. I would like
Submission Guidelines

Comm-Entary, a journal blindly edited and published by Communication majors will be accepting submissions for its 20th year of publication. Comm-Entary will publish short essays reflecting the Communication Department's three areas of study: Interpersonal Communication, Rhetorical Analysis, and Media Studies. Here are the guidelines for submissions:

1. Manuscripts must be typed, double-spaced, and include all notes and citations on separate pages, immediately following the text.

2. A separate, front page should include the following:
   - the title of the essay
   - author's name, address, current phone number, and e-mail address
   - course for which the paper was written

The author's name should not appear anywhere else on the manuscript

3. Authors must submit three copies of the manuscript - each with the information listed in #2. Manuscripts may be dropped off in the Comm-Entary drop box next to the water fountain in the Communication Department, or may be mailed to the following address: Comm-Entary
c/o Communication Department
Horton Social Science Center
20 College Road
Durham, NH 03824

Manuscripts will not be returned

4. If your manuscript is selected for publication, you will be contacted to assist in the final editing process

Please do not submit work considered for another publication or submit research proposals or book reviews.
Interpersonal

The art of everyday conversation and looking deep into every word, every syllable and every breath and micro pause to investigate how these people engage in a conversation and how it is constructed. How do we know the person is asking a question? How do we understand that how something is said or when it is said can completely change the direction of the conversation? We look to the spoken (and unspoken word) to prove to us what is happening.
Jodie Irving

Social Construction of Identity

The general assumption of today’s society is that the individual determines who she is, and projects an image of herself to others. If this were true in our conversations, all of an individual’s conversational counterparts would see her in the same way, with the same qualities, and identity. Clearly, this is not the case. Life is filled with opportunities for each individual to establish her identity. Often more than one identity emerges because, contrary to the popular belief, a person’s identity is socially constructed through everyday conversation. This paper will analyze the rules for conversation, and examine how our identities are socially constructed. After the application of these two communication theories to a true example of how identity is formed through conversation, it will be clear how a person’s identity is not completely under her control, but is constructed through language, social interaction and construction.

As Erving Goffman shows us, each member of a conversation holds very clearly defined rights and responsibilities in their social interactions. He explains:

"we must not overlook the crucial fact that any projected definition of the situation also has a distinctive moral character... Society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way. Connected with this principle is a second, namely that an individual who implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics ought in fact to be what he claims to be" (Goffman 74).

Goffman asserts that society is organized in terms of the rights and duties of individuals. These rights and duties are moral obligations to all members of society. The morality of these responsibilities lay
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in societal guidelines: first, lying is wrong, morally inappropriate, and generally rejected by society, and second, it is also wrong, morally inappropriate, and frowned upon by society for one to completely reject and cut down the presentation of self that another projects over the course of a conversation.

Given society's moral guidelines, the rights and duties of both parties in a conversation become more clear. The speaker has a right to expect to be treated as she presents herself, and not to have her presentation of self rejected by others. At the same time, the speaker has a moral obligation to be the person she claims to be. The speaker is responsible to her conversants for being sincere, and not pretending to be someone that she is not. She has made a commitment to her listeners, and must honor her commitment to being whom she claims.

Similarly, the listener has moral obligations to the speaker. As Goffman points out:

"...when an individual projects a definition of the situation and thereby makes an implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind, he automatically exerts a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect. He also implicitly forgoes all claims to be things he does not appear to be and hence forgoes the treatment that would be appropriate for such individuals" (Goffman 74).

Given the demands, or moral rights, of the speaker, the listener has certain duties imposed on him. When the speaker exercises her right to expect treatment that coincides with her presentation of self, she extends to the listener the moral duty of accepting her presentation; the listener must treat her in a way that acknowledges her position and character. Though the listener has the right to challenge the presentation, he is required initially to treat the listener in accordance with her presentation of self.

While adhering to the rules and rights that a conversation lends itself to, the conversants are in fact constructing the truths they believe, situations that they find themselves in, and worlds in which they live. John Shotter argues that the central assumption of the social constructionist movement "is the contingent flow of continuous communicative interaction between human beings...it is from within this flow of relational activities and practices, constructionists maintain, that all the other socially significant dimensions of interpersonal interaction...originate and are formed" (Shotter 3). Shotter argues, along with many other theorists, that our worlds are not there for us to discuss, but rather that our worlds are constructed through our conversations and our words. He borrows from Billig's theory that "all our behavior, even our own thought about ourselves, is conducted in an ongoing argumentative context of criticism and justification, where every argumentative 'move' is formulated in response to previous moves" (Shotter 4). Social constructionist theory argues that an individual does not simply decide who she is. Through her words and actions, however, the individual is able to construct her identity with the help of others, through, as Billig asserts, "an ongoing argumentative context of criticism and justification". Our worlds, including our images and thoughts of our selves and our own identity, are completely constructed with the help of others, through conversation and words. "We see the world as much through our words as through our eyes". Though we 'see' ourselves with our eyes in a certain manner, with certain attributes and identities, it is through our words and social interactions that these images of ourselves become our true identities.

Klaus Krippendorff also subscribes to the social constructionist theory of identity. He asserts, "as we act meaningfully we exercise our powers and create our identity. Self validation is only possible through meaningful action in a social context" (Krippendorff 62). An individual can think of herself as caring, altruistic and warm, but if her actions and words do not reflect her image of herself, they will not be constructed. She cannot simply will her image of herself to be projected outward; her

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1 This quote, used with permission, was adapted by Dr. John Shotter for use in his Language and Social Interaction (CMN 572) class. The original quote reads "The child begins to perceive the world not only through his eyes but also through his speech." from Vygotsky, L.S. (1987) Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, and E. Souberman (Eds.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
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characteristics can only be validated through her social interactions.
Krippendorff continues:

"Man is a social creator as well as a social creature. By the social exercise of linguistic power man creates his own identity and reinforces that of others. ...identity is simply the measure of power and participation of the individual in the joint cultural staging of self-enhancing ceremony" (Krippendorff 62).

Note that Krippendorff says that man creates his own identity through ‘the social exercise of linguistic power’, not of his own accord. It takes social interactions to establish one’s identity.

Sampson places special emphasis on the importance of the ‘other’ in a conversation as well. He agrees with Krippendorff and Shotter, “The conversations that people carry on together do not simply express the underlying fabric of their social world, but are the very processes by which that fabric is created and sustained or transformed” (Sampson 99). The world is not there to be discussed, but rather it is there because we discuss it. Social realities are created and sustained, or transformed because they are discussed and formed through conversation. Sampson’s emphasis is on how the ‘other’ plays into the conversation. He asserts, “it is the other’s response that completes the triadic social act and constitutes meaning” (Sampson 103). Without the response of the other, the social act would remain unfinished and without meaning.

As far as identity is concerned, Sampson again places emphasis on the importance of the other, “Without the other, our selves would be not only invisible to us but incomprehensible and unutilizable. The other endows us with meaning and clothes us in comprehensibility” (Sampson 106). Not only is the other intrinsically important to the conversation because of the meaning he provides, but also the identity of each individual is dependent on each ‘other’ that they come in contact with. Without social interaction and discussion of identity and personhood, these things would not be the truths for which we search. The very discussion of these topics makes them important. Each person’s identity is constructed through these social interactions, and the meaning that the response of the ‘other’ gives to their presentation of identity.

Sampson asserts, “we are fundamentally and irretrievably dialogic, conversational creatures, whose lives are created in and through conversations and sustained or transformed in and through conversations...The other is a vital co-creator of our mind, our self, and our society” (Sampson 109). Our lives, social realities, and social identities rely heavily, if not completely, on the reaction of the others in our lives. They bring meaning to our actions, and our presentations of identity.

In order to apply these communication theories to a real life situation, I will first recount a situation between my boyfriend Pat, and myself. The theories applied to this situation and the lucidity that this example lends to those theories will give a true-life illustration of how these ideas abound in everyday life.

Pat and I had spent the weekend in my hometown in Massachusetts. We were driving back to school when we had a conversation that changed the face of our relationship. Earlier in the week he had made reference to the fact that we were going to spend the weekend at “my parents’ house”. Though I did not realize it, this statement was causing me to feel unsure of myself, and it was not until the conversation progressed that I discovered why.

Pat and I met at school and never really knew each other out of the context of the UNH life. When we started dating after being friends for two years, however, we began to expand our knowledge of each other by visiting each other’s families, and getting to know each other in depth. He is the first boyfriend I have ever had who is not from my hometown, did not go to my high school, and did not know my family. This was strange for me because I have always been a very family oriented person; leaving home to come to school was a very difficult thing for me to do. The conflict of my sense of self as being very home oriented, and Pat’s response to the socially constructed identity of my self at school, combined with his comment about referring to what I consider my ‘home’ as “my parents’ house” caused uneasiness in our relationship. Though not intentionally, Pat was responding to me in a manner that asserted that my home was the University of New Hampshire because that is where we met and where he is most familiar with me. His notion of my identity caused me to feel uncomfortable because I have always felt very close ties to my original home in Massachusetts. In addition, I became scared and displaced when I began to recognize that he saw my home as UNH; if this was my home, what will happen when we have break, or when I graduate? I felt like he was
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responding to me in a way that negated my own assertion of my identity.

In this sense, the entire conversation started, and the problem was eventually solved, because he violated one of Goffman’s duties of conversation. I was trying to assert myself as a home oriented person who placed a high value on my family and the place where I grew up, regardless of where I spent the majority of my time. The problem arose because he was responding to me as if my home was the university, and I was picking up on his altered notion of my self. As the listener, he was not observing his duty to accept my presentation of self, causing uneasiness in the relationship. His violation of Goffman’s rules prompted a discussion that led to the realization of our mixed notions of my identity. As the speaker, I was presenting myself as comfortable and at home at UNH, while still regarding Massachusetts as my true home, the place where I can always return. When Pat unwittingly failed to accept my presentation of self, it caused unrest in the conversation, and the socially constructed identity of my self was at odds with my presentation of self. As the speaker, I became uncomfortable because I was attempting to present my self as having my home in Massachusetts, and expected Pat to treat me as if that were my home. When he did not accept my presentation, our lines of communication became crossed and it took more social interaction and conversation to straighten them out.

My identity was not simply a given fact. I had to present my identity, and Pat’s reaction made it a reality. In order for me to have an identity in this social situation, he needed to respond to the notion of my home. Because of the way that he responded, not in accordance with my own notion of self, I had to draw attention to the difference in how we each approached the issue of my home. Pat’s responding to my presentation of self was what defined and gave meaning to the situation. When he referred to what I consider my home, the place I grew up and can always return to, as my parents’ house, it showed me that his response to my presentation was not offering the same definition of my identity that I had tried to establish. Through social interaction and dialogue we worked out what the differences were in our concepts of my identity, and could establish an understanding of how to remedy the situation.

In my situation with Pat, Goffman’s rules for conversation were violated, prompting a necessary conversation in order to realign my socially constructed identity. It is important to note that it was the very discussion of this conversation that made it important. The issue was given meaning through social interaction. I could have failed to recognize Pat’s violation of Goffman’s rules, and the conversation would have been left unsaid, no interaction would have taken place, and there would still be unlabeled tension in our relationship.

Goffman’s rights and responsibilities in conversation, and the social constructionist theory of communication abound in everyday situations. My identity was completely defined in this situation by the interaction that took place between Pat and myself. Without the help of Goffman’s rules, and the underlying themes of social constructionist theory, I may never have been able to identify the tension that arose out of Pat’s harmless comment.


**Media**

Sending out ideas globally to masses of people at once or reading a small local journal in your free time. What goes into these ideas and how are they able to reach people and have an impact? What are they social influences of such wide reaching media- will it bring people together and fuse society into one or break it apart into separate subgroups cut off from one another? Analyze the source and its effects on audience.
Lisa Chang

Reinforcing Gender Roles in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Welcome to the Hellmouth

Over the course of its seven-season run, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* has become one of the most original and controversial series of the past decade. With its witty cast of characters and creative metaphors for teen angst, *Buffy* appeals to a wide range of otherwise-unrelated audiences. Pre-teen fans buy posters of the show; middle-aged writers and intellectuals discuss it over dinner. Internet message boards and chat rooms fill with the opinions of obsessed fans. How has a show that originated as a 1992 box-office flop become so wildly popular? The speculation is as diverse as the audience. Some believe that “we’re drawn to vampire subjects, because people today often feel preyed upon and helpless in dealing with forces they can’t control or understand.” Perhaps the show’s ability to keep viewers interested can be attributed to the way it tinkers with its own framework; stock characters die or become evil, leave for half a season and then return just when you think they are gone for good.

The concept of the show is intriguing in itself. Buffy is the Chosen One, the Slayer, one in a sequence of slayers extending back into the annals of human history. She is called to Sunnydale, a town built on the entrance to Hell, causing it to be overrun with vampires, demons and other monsters of the underworld. Buffy’s lifelong task is to protect Sunnydale and the world from these monsters. In the process, she builds up an impressive group of friends at Sunnydale High School. Giles, the school librarian, is designated as her Watcher, the one who trains her, guides her, and helps her hone her slaying skills. Buffy also meets and falls in love with Angel, a vampire who is cursed with a soul, a conscience, and the memory of the atrocities he committed before the curse was placed. The cast is rounded out by Willow, a self-proclaimed computer nerd and Buffy’s best friend, and Xander, Willow’s friend since childhood.

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3 http://straykitty.com/deargirl/buffy/articles/horror.html
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Despite the fact that the cast is composed primarily of teenagers, Buffy targets a variety of audiences, and therefore invokes a variety of debates about its subject matter. These debates have ranged from the show’s juxtaposition of humor and horror to its treatment of sexual relationships and gender portrayals.

A Question of Gender
This study addresses how Buffy the Vampire Slayer might support rather than challenge traditional gender roles. Previous researchers have touched briefly on this perspective of gender on the show, but have devoted most of their arguments to how Buffy defies the notion of the weak, dependent female. They also claim that Buffy’s combination of street-smarts and physical power undercuts the authority of the males on the show, making them appear feminized. Yet is this supposed gender role-reversal as complete as it seems? Are there elements of her character and of the show itself that may in fact suggest that Buffy is weak and dependent? Although the males do not have Buffy’s physical strength, there may be other ways for them to assert their authority over the women. For example, what role might the relationship between knowledge and power play in reinforcing gender roles? Perhaps the praise of Buffy for her subversion of the female stereotype is not as well-deserved as it seems.

Praise for the “Woman Warrior”
The critical literature about the series is permeated by the notion of Buffy’s character as a refreshing challenge to traditional gender roles. In Reading the Vampire Slayer: A Critical Companion to Buffy and Angel, edited by Roz Kaveney, various essayists discuss why they believe the show has become so popular in contemporary culture. Two of the essays in the book focus specifically on the issue of gender in the series. Zoe-Jane Playden’s essay, “What You Are, What’s To Come: Feminisms, Citizenship, and the Divine,” examines Buffy from a feminist point of view. She finds that “Buffy offers not degrading readings of woman in society, but emancipatory ones.” Playden uses various examples from the show to demonstrate how Buffy undermines the control and authority of Giles, the central male character, whom Playden defines as “feminized male.” She comments briefly on how Buffy might be seen as “another degrading exploitation of the patriarchy,” in the sense that Buffy must serve ends that are not her own. Playden also points out that Buffy is under the supervision of an all-male Council, and that the entertainment industry thrives on her physical characteristics as a way to construct “soft core SM porn.” Yet Playden does not go into detail about this particular aspect of the show, and it may prove to be just as meaningful as her claim that Buffy challenges the ideals of patriarchal society.

Ann Millard Daugherty makes a similar claim in her discussion on the character of Buffy as an icon. She claims that Buffy is a “symbol of female empowerment.” Daugherty begins her article with the assertion that from the very first episode, Buffy negates the “male gaze” of the camera. The idea of “male gaze” was first introduced by Laura Mulvey in 1973. Mulvey argued that traditional Hollywood cinema techniques served to objectify women. As Daugherty points out, there are three “looks” of male gaze. The first is the way onscreen men gaze at onscreen women in a way that objectifies them. A scene where man looks down at a woman, or pans his eyes over her body from head to toe, would be examples of this “look.” The viewer constitutes a second “looker;” Mulvey claimed that the viewer is forced to identify with the objectifying gaze of the onscreen men. The camera constitutes an original third “gaze” in filming the women.

Daugherty mentions briefly how in certain episodes, the issue of the male gaze is introduced, but quickly rejected as Buffy


5 Ibid., p. 124

6 Ibid. p. 124

7 Ibid p. 121


9 Ibid. p. 149
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regains control of the situation. She also refers to the fact that despite her attempts to subvert the male gaze, Buffy’s physical attractiveness is, in itself, objectifying. Like Playden, however, she does not go into detail about how that objectification might serve to reframe the seemingly-transgressive gender roles in the show. She instead glosses over the possible objectification by claiming that Buffy often mocks the male gaze, and that she is the “unquestionable hero” of the show. Daugherty continues her argument by pointing out that patriarchy is largely absent in the series, and that when it does surface, it is not taken seriously. It may be important, however, to explore how the “male gaze” affects the viewer’s perception of Buffy, and the extent to which she is able to negate it. Daugherty seems to underestimate just how much attention is paid to Buffy’s physical attractiveness.

Gender-related discussion about Buffy the Vampire Slayer has also made its way into popular culture journals. In “Staking Her Claim: Buffy the Vampire Slayer as the Transgressive Woman Warrior,” Frances H. Early claims that before Buffy, the few women who achieved “warrior status” in television (such as Xena: Warrior Princess and La Femme Nikita) held that status only temporarily, and that the very idea of a warrior woman was “unsettling to the patriarchal social order.” The value of Buffy, she argues, is that the show represents an attempt to demystify the well-documented image of the male warrior and promote an image of a “just” warrior who happens to be female. Buffy is a just warrior because she “slays” monsters when she has to, but also resolves conflict non-violently, through rationality, compassion, and empathy. Early comments briefly that one might be tempted to see Buffy as a show that supports traditional gender roles, but the bulk of her discussion is about how the show reverses the idea of the male protector. She says little about how that reinforcement might change the show’s narrative. Her overall argument is that the “program can be viewed as possessing subversive elements.”

Susan Owen echoes many of Early’s sentiments about gender representation on Buffy with her article, simply titled, “Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” Owen claims that the series offers “transgressive possibilities for reimagining gendered relations,” yet also claims that the series reinforces other aspects of American culture such as commodification and normative heterogeneous relationships. She discusses the gender reversal between the two main adult characters of Giles and Joyce Summers, Buffy’s mother. Owen found that Giles, the “feminized male,” both instructed and nurtured Buffy. Her own mother’s attempts at nurture, however, are usually naïve and ineffectual. Owen also examines the series from a postmodern perspective and discusses how the show differs from other forms of media in its portrayal of vampires. Owen’s arguments raise question about the definition of “feminized.” She claims that Giles nurtures Buffy but says nothing about how he might serve as a father-figure to her, perhaps reinforcing the concept of patriarchy. She also claims that he instructs her but does nothing to suggest that his knowledge may serve as an example of male authority.

Audience Appeal

Why question Buffy’s approach to gender roles? One reason is because of the show’s increasing popularity among a hard-to-reach demographic of females in their teens, 20’s and 30’s. In its seven-season run, Buffy the Vampire Slayer has developed a devoted cult following. Between the first and second season, Buffy rose from its 14th place to a respectable 67th in the Nielsen ratings. In the second season alone, which comprises the sample for this study, 10 out of 22 new Buffy episodes ranked either first or second out of all the network’s shows. A recent episode entitled “Once More, With Feeling” has even garnered an Emmy nomination for its creative parody of the Broadway musical.

Much of Buffy’s appeal stems from its clever use of monsters and demons as symbols for the fears and heartaches of growing up. The significance of this study therefore also lies in the fact that Buffy targets those most vulnerable to these fears, namely pre-teen and teenage females. On the surface, they see Buffy as a physically strong, demon-fighting heroine, but they can also recognize her

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10 Ibid. p. 159
11 Early, Frances H. “Staking Her Claim: Buffy the Vampire Slayer as the Transgressive Woman Warrior.” Journal of Popular Culture 35:3 p. 17
12 Ibid. p. 18
13 Ibid. p. 24
15 Ibid. p. 25
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struggle to negotiate adolescence. Being the Slayer makes Buffy special, but it also makes her a misfit, an emotion that almost any teenager can identify with. And if they do identify with her, what else might she be teaching females about “appropriate” male and female behavior? The show can ultimately be used to explore the subtle ways in which women are objectified, men are glorified, and how patriarchal society is upheld.

Abiding by the ‘System’

The rationale for this study comes primarily from a study done by Larry Gross and Suzanne Jeffries-Fox on television’s effect on children and youth. In their argument, they acknowledge the “system” of television and claim that it is a tool used by advertisers and corporate organizations to maintain social order:

... television is a cultural arm of the established industrial order... and serves to maintain, stabilize, and reinforce rather than to alter, threaten, or weaken conventional conceptions, beliefs and behaviors. Because media messages are commodities manufactured for sale, their perspective reflects institutional organization and control.

When placed in the context of this argument, Buffy “sells” traditional gender roles because they are part of a stable and profitable package. The fact that viewers are attracted to the show because of its supposed subversion of traditional roles suggests that this attempt at control is more implicit than explicit. Aside from the business aspect of traditional gender roles, it is a generally accepted idea that television has the potential to teach people lessons about themselves and their world. This is perhaps why violence on television has been so widely researched. It is therefore important to consider what Buffy is teaching its audiences about gender representation.

Definition of Terms

In order to determine the extent to which Buffy maintains the status quo, it is necessary to give meaning to the idea of traditional gender roles. A “traditional male role” is defined as one in which the male serves as a protector in some sense, in which he is portrayed as a hero, and in which he holds authority. Male characteristics include knowledge, reason, education, and emotional strength. A “traditional female role” is one in which the female is objectified in some way, in which she is dependent on males and defers to their authority. In a traditional female role, the female also generally has less understanding of the world around her. Female characteristics include emotional weakness, empathy, irrationality, and physical attractiveness. For the purposes of this study, “male gaze” refers to the way the camera “looks” at Buffy in an objectifying way. “Patriarchy” refers to a social system or situation in which the males have the bulk of the authority. In addition, “reinforce” and “transgressive” elements are defined as those which respectively support or subvert the traditional gender roles outlined above. A transgressive grammar variable, for example, would be one that suggests women have the power and that the men are largely ineffectual. With respect to grammar terms, a “low angle shot” is one in which the camera is placed below a horizontal plane and therefore looks up at its subject. A “close shot” is one in which the subject’s face fills the entire frame.

Deconstructing the Slayer

This was an analytical study with a strong descriptive foundation because it is a contradiction to what is generally believed about the show. I used the second season of Buffy in its entirety as my sample, a total of 22 episodes. I focused on the male characters of Giles and Angel. The primary female characters were Buffy, her best friend Willow, Buffy’s mother Joyce. From a broad perspective I examined the content for evidence of the idea that Buffy might

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reinforce rather than challenge traditional gender roles. The specific questions and ideas generated by that basic concept are as follows:

1. Are the males on the show portrayed as vehicles of knowledge and information? If so, does that imbue them with a sense of authority? Do the females ever display a lack of understanding to contrast this?

2. Is there evidence of a patriarchal relationship between Buffy and Giles? In what ways is she dependent on him? Does he ever treat her the way a father might treat his daughter? For example, does he scold her when she breaks his rules, set boundaries for her, and try to protect her? Does Giles give Buffy advice on non-Slayer related issues such as school, adolescence, and her friends?

3. What grammar variables reinforce traditional gender roles? Is Giles ever filmed in a way that suggests authority, such as a low camera angle? How is Buffy objectified by the “male gaze” of the camera? For example, is she ever shown in close shots that bring the viewer closer to her physical attractiveness?

4. Is Buffy further objectified by her style of dress? What body parts are accentuated or covered? Are her clothes tight or loose? How many outfits does she wear in the course of one episode?

An Analysis of the Second Season: Results

I approached the idea of the males as vehicles of knowledge with Giles in mind as the primary example. As Sunnydale High School’s librarian, Giles is shown surrounded by books in nearly all of the 22 episodes in the second season. The school library serves as a “headquarters” for Buffy and her gang; she and her friends meet with Giles to discuss the latest demon at least once in every episode. They meet in Giles territory, the place where he holds the authority. Whenever Buffy finds she cannot defeat a vampire or other demon on her own, she often goes to Giles for help, confident that he will be able to find an answer in his books. Giles as “the hero” is a recurring pattern throughout the season. He often has to come to the group’s rescue because he is the only person who “knows” how to help them. In the episode entitled “Halloween,” for example, Buffy and her friends begin to take on the natures of the costumes the are wearing and chaos ensues. Willow runs to get Giles, who knows precisely which book contains a counterspell, and saves the day. In a later episode, Giles again comes to the rescue by reversing a love spell gone horribly wrong.

I found that Giles’s knowledge was not restricted to the intellectual sense. He also seemed to possess a subtle, more poignant knowledge about the human condition that also served to enhance his authority. In the first episode, for example, the viewer learns that Buffy was in fact killed by a demon and then resuscitated by Xander at the end of the last season. When Buffy returns from summer vacation in “bitch-mode,” snubbing her friends and making snide remarks, Xander and Willow tell Giles that she must be possessed by a demon, and that “there is no other explanation.” Giles, however, offers the much more mundane suggestion that Buffy’s experience with the demon was “very traumatic,” and that she is overcompensating for her fears by acting as though nothing bothers her. Later, as Buffy stands over the demon’s bones weeping and smashing them with a hammer, the viewer is left with a sense that Giles was right all along.

The character of Angel constituted another unexpected example of male knowledge and authority. Angel frequently serves as the group’s “informant” for the vampire world. Because he is still technically a vampire, he has special access to the Hellmouth and therefore knows about the vampire’s plans before Giles can even reach for a book. While Buffy and Giles are researching Spike’s background, for example, Giles dismisses the idea of Spike as a threat until Angel appears with his own information:

Giles (to Buffy): He can’t be any worse than anything else you’ve faced.

Angel (appearing from the shadows): He’s worse. Once he starts something, he doesn’t stop until everything in his path is dead.

In a sense, Angel is the ultimate expert on vampires because he is one, an asset that not even Giles can claim. Interestingly enough, Giles never once questions Angel’s judgement.

I found that Buffy was surprisingly not the best example of a traditional female in the sense that she lacks understanding about the world around her. She and Giles instead seem to work as a

17 Kaveney, Roz. Reading the Vampire Slayer p. 240
On one level, Buffy depends on Giles for guidance so that she can be a better Slayer. More importantly, however, she depends on him for moral and emotional support, and Giles feels responsible for her safety. In “School Hard,” people try to stop Giles from going to help Buffy, to which he frantically replies, “Let me explain something to you. I am her Watcher. I have to look out for her!” Although Buffy is physically stronger than Giles, she still feels the need to protect her.

The reinforcement of traditional gender roles was emphasized by certain grammar variables used in the production of the show. The school library, for example, has a raised platform that overlooks the rest of the library, almost like a shallow balcony. Giles was frequently shot from a low angle while standing on this platform. He subsequently appears more powerful and more authoritative. This shot structure not only conveys the idea that Giles has control, but is also suggestive of an “all-seeing” and “all-knowing” capacity.

Another grammar element is that Buffy is objectified by the “male gaze” of the camera. A scene in the very first episode, for example, takes place at the local dance club. The camera cuts to a shot of a car door opening, and then pans downward as two stiletto-heeled feet step onto the ground. The camera then pans slowly up as the feet begin to walk, lingering on the legs, and over the rest of the body, eventually revealing the owner of the legs to be Buffy. There are two other scenes in this particular episode that use Buffy’s legs as a means of introducing her. Each episode also contains several close-ups of Buffy, which not only makes viewers identify with her, but also brings them intimately closer to Buffy’s physical characteristics. With her blue eyes, coiffed blonde hair and clear skin, Buffy is physically attractive, and the frequent use of close shots frames her the way males want to see her.

In addition to the grammar variables that objectify Buffy, there are certain content elements that serve the same purpose, namely Buffy’s clothing style. The primary elements of her wardrobe are sleeveless shirts and short skirts. Her shoulders are almost always exposed except for when she puts on a jacket, and her legs are almost always revealed from the middle of her thigh down to her ankle. In the first half of the season alone (11 episodes), Buffy is wearing something sleeveless or backless in 20 separate scenes. She is wearing a short skirt or dress in 15 different scenes. As these numbers imply, Buffy also changes her outfit 3-5 times per episode,
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even when the episode only covers one day. In addition to the sheer number of outfits Buffy goes through, the clothing she wears is always skin-tight. What makes Buffy’s style of dress stand out so much is that the other characters, even the other females, are not nearly as scantily-clad as Buffy is. Her best friend Willow tends to wear bulky sweaters and jeans. On the rare occasion that Willow puts on a skirt, it is never tight and she usually wears a pair of colored tights, making it hard to tell where the skirt ends and the skin begins. The contrast between Buffy’s wardrobe and that of the rest of the characters is not an accident. The clothing Buffy wears draws attention to her body, and it therefore objectifies her.

Staking the Female Stereotype

In light of the results generated by this study, we return to the question of what Buffy might be teaching its audiences about appropriate male and female behavior. While Buffy’s subversion of male authority is not as extensive as once argued, it also appears that the reinforcement of gender roles is also not as total as I assumed it would be. The show instead sits on some kind of middle ground; the males are not entirely empowered, yet elements of weak, dependent stereotypical female can still be recognized. Although Buffy is objectified by the camera and frequently seeks parental approval from Giles, there are still several instances where she proves to be physically stronger, invents her own way of fighting a demon, or finds some other way to undermine Giles’ authority. She does her slaying in a way that is very James Bond-esque; she never gets dirty, never muzzles her makeup, never gets a hair out of place. The resulting mixed message to the audience is that females are capable of subverting male authority, but good looks and a little flirting will ultimately triumph over evil.

The results of this study also imply that the female stereotype needs to be redefined. Has female representation in television evolved as much as we think it has? If so, then why is the “male gaze” still so prevalent in a series that showcases a female as its heroine? The answer may be that a new female stereotype has emerged, one in which the female is useful to the patriarchy but is still not totally free from its control. As the group’s resident computer nerd, for example, Willow often helps Giles assess a situation, but is never considered a primary source of knowledge. Buffy can hold her own in physical fights with vampires, yet must abide by the rules of an all-male Watcher’s Council. In short, Buffy has not revolutionized gender roles on television, but instead represents a step along the way.

Delimitations

This study addresses only one season of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and so my conclusions may not necessarily apply to every episode. As Buffy matures in subsequent seasons, for example, her wardrobe becomes more sophisticated and less revealing. The stock cast of characters is also somewhat homogeneous – almost all of the important characters are white, upper-middle class suburbanites who, aside from the fact that they live on the entrance to Hell, do not have a lot of pressing issues. Although Buffy endured a parental divorce before she moved to Sunnydale, her mother now has a cozy job as an art gallery curator and Buffy is well-provided for. This study is also limited by the fact that it focuses only on this one series, and does not address other shows that feature female heroes.

A Step Further

A possible way to further examine the results of this study would be to analyze a more recent season of Buffy. Now in its seventh and most likely final season, high school is ancient history to the main characters. Buffy’s mother Joyce passed away at the end of the fifth season, and Buffy now acts as the legal guardian for her sister Dawn, who also appeared after the second season. Confident that he has taught her all he can, Giles has returned to London permanently and is no longer a regular on the show. It might be interesting to see if the characters new responsibilities have altered the power dynamics between them, and if the gender portrayals are therefore different. Another study might explore how African-Americans are portrayed on the show. For example, of x number of vampires, how many are of a different race? Where are all of Buffy’s African-American friends? Another way to test the conclusions might be to compare Buffy to other “women warrior” shows such as Xena: Warrior Princess and La Femme Nikita, and explore whether gender roles are in fact reinforced on those shows as well.
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Conclusion

This study has posed a challenge to the notion of Buffy the Vampire Slayer as a show that subverts traditional gender roles. It has argued that the gender representations on the show are in many ways more reinforcing than they are transgressive. It examined elements of the show such as the role of knowledge and authority, the patriarchal relationship between Buffy and Giles, and the content- and grammar-related ways in which Buffy is objectified on the show. The results suggest that Buffy in fact lies somewhere in the middle of the spectrum of female empowerment, in a position that does not reserve authority exclusively for males, but ultimately does not abandon the ideals of a patriarchal society. It remains to be seen whether or not future shows that focus on a female heroine will continue to redefine the female stereotype.

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David Miller

Loving *The Sopranos* For All the Wrong Reasons: An Introspective Analysis On *The Sopranos*

Three years ago in January of 1999, a television series took the market sweeps by storm; an hour long television show that has captured the hearts and lives of millions across America, involving a Sunday night session with friends and family. The television show that I am referring to is *The Sopranos*, an HBO hit series based around the modern day New Jersey mafia. Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) plays the lead character and in episode after episode, brings the viewer into both his personal and professional life. Posing as a waste management consultant, Tony is able to cover up his real life job, which consists of thievery, adultery, extortion, and murder. He is a man who cheats on his wife, puts out hits on people's lives, and divides most of his time between a psychiatrist's office, sleeping until noon, and drinking at a strip club. It is a safe bet to assume that Tony Soprano is not your model citizen, husband, or father - and yet somehow, we feel drawn to this person. How is it that we are so moved by this character? And what technical production strategies are used that allow us to “forgive” Tony Soprano?

In this analysis you will learn about different production variables, such as camera shots and angles that are used to portray a mobster in an understanding light. We will see how the content of the show blends with the director’s shooting style to allow us to associate with someone whom we should hate, be scared of, and who should be behind bars.

Any devoted *Sopranos* fan can tell you that they would be at a loss if Tony were ever to be killed. It should seem a bit interesting that we could even feel one ounce of sympathy for a man who behaves this terribly by doing things like screaming at his family, his friends, and even his therapist. No one is unaffected by Tony Soprano, not even the audience. There are key elements to, what Joshua Meyrowitz calls, “Para-Proxemics” found throughout the shows. Para-Proxemics is how we define the relationships between characters on screen. It is the physical distance we observe through camera distance that allows the viewer to determine character relationships; it is what develops subconscious interpersonal...
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relationship with the viewer and character. This allows us to say that “space speaks” (Meyrowitz 256). In other words, if you are shown a scene where the actual characters on screen are twenty feet from one another, but the subjective shot, from their point of view, is of a close-up on one other’s faces, you subconsciously feel a closeness between them. Another crucial piece to this puzzle comes from the mixing of our “front” and “back” regions. These are the regions that divide our personal from our professional life. A front region would be what I allow you to see - perhaps an image of authority or respect. My back region may consist of the complete opposite - a life of comedy or irresponsibility. When the two regions are mixed, we are able to put together what we consider to be the “real” person. From the article The Rise Of “Middle Region” Politics, by Joshua Meyrowitz, he speaks about how political programs on TV can allow the viewer to see both sides of someone’s life. In the case of the Sopranos we are introduced to both his private (family) life and his business (mafia) life. This enables us to consciously balance the good with the bad, having been exposed to many facets of Tony’s life. If we knew only his bad side, there would be no mistaking how we felt about him. In being able to see how he lives his personal life, we permit ourselves to make justifications for his actions.

These variables allow the viewer to make a connection with the characters. The show is an introduction into the daily lives and household of the Sopranos’ family. As you are watching each episode, which stresses family loyalty, you are sitting in your own living room with your family and friends by your side. This situation creates the atmosphere of acceptance and comfort. You create your own personal Sopranos set while watching the show. I will explain how all of the aforementioned techniques can be applied to the first season of the Sopranos and why this show has created such a stir.

METHOD

I spent one week and 680 minutes watching the entire first season of the Sopranos. After thirteen episodes I am able to explain how and why we connect to the show the way we do. I have played and rewound scenes over and over again to make sure I am aware of most of the variables used. I considered a combination of production techniques as well as content issues, and observed how they applied to each episode. Because each episode was directed and written by someone different, there were different styles used throughout the season. Unfortunately I was only able to discuss a few of the scenes, because of how many episodes there are. I focused on a few scenes that I found best explain my theory and help demonstrate these concepts. To date, I was unable to find any other sources of research dedicated to The Sopranos, in reference to how people related to the characters and story.

RESULTS

Tony Soprano is the main character that the audience associates with. In the opening of the show we are sitting in the back seat of his car as he drives towards New Jersey, via the New Jersey Turnpike. The creator of this opening scene used the production technique known as the “shaky camera” for some of the shots. This allows the viewer to feel as though he/she is sitting in the car with Tony. There is also the use of fast motion in order to create a sense of impatience. This foreshadows the high-paced, high-stressed lifestyle of Tony Soprano. The director wanted to enforce the idea that the show was taking place in New Jersey and not New York, mainly because most mafia-related productions have been set in New York. That is why the opening focuses on a distant New York City and Tony driving through the Meadowlands into New Jersey and to his home. This opening sets the stage for our relationship with Tony and brings the viewer to the driveway of his home, giving us a backstage pass to the life of Tony Soprano.

The first episode, filmed in a residential New Jersey home, was actually the original pilot show that helped the series get its start. The first scene is a shot of Tony, waiting in a room. We are not told where he is or what he is doing there. The next few shots bring us into a Dr. Melfi’s office. As his psychiatrist she will soon become the staple source of inner reflection for Tony. This episode uses Tony’s narrative placed on top of the scenes he is describing. The shots used in the first part of the therapy session are all from a medium distance. This allows the viewer to slowly “feel out” the relationship between Dr. Melfi and Tony. There are several pauses in dialogue throughout this scene, reflecting what a real psychotherapy session may be like.
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An important silence is broken with a question from Dr. Melfi. She asks Tony what he does for a living. At this moment there is a close-up on Tony’s face and he responds, “I’m a waste management consultant.” Then there is a close shot on Dr. Melfi’s face. This series of close-ups makes Dr. Melfi’s skepticism tangible to the viewer. You know that Tony is lying right from the beginning. This skepticism later plays out in the office when Dr. Melfi interrupts Tony to tell him about patient/doctor confidentiality. She tells him that everything is kept in confidence, unless she was “to know that a murder for example was going to take place.” The tension in the room is intensified by low lighting. The set makes you feel almost dark and nervous for what Tony is going to say. This beginning immediately allows you to enter the back region of Tony Soprano’s life. You are sitting in the most intimate of rooms with an affiliate of the mafia, and so begins an interpersonal connection with him. It allows you to feel privileged. In a sense, we, the viewers are taking that same patient/doctor oath with Dr. Melfi and Tony.

The writers of this episode don’t waste any time in establishing the type of person Tony is. He starts explaining a story about some guy and “an issue over an outstanding loan.” This is the moment where Dr. Melfi had stopped him and explained the confidentiality rules. Tony looks at her and says “we just had coffee.” The scene cuts to one showing the man that owes Tony dropping his coffee and running. The song “Doo-Whop” comes on and there is a comical chase scene between Tony, (in the car), and this man, (Alex), on foot. Tony has a big smile on his face as he chases Alex down and bystanders jump out of the way. The majority of the shots are subjective ones; either from within the car or what Alex sees when he looks behind him. This style places the viewer in the scene. Tony drives onto the sidewalk and sidestrips Alex. The cheery 1950’s style song really makes the scene seem comedic. You almost can’t help but laugh at how recklessly Tony is acting. Tony gets out of the car, walks over to Alex and asks him if he is alright. Alex is screaming about his broken leg and that the bone is coming through. Tony very calmly looks as if he is going to help Alex and then starts punching him in the broken leg and cursing profusely as he demands his money. The camera quickly goes from a medium shot to a close shot of Tony’s face. While he is punching Alex you don’t actually see Tony hitting him. The camera flashes to a subjective shot of a fist hitting Alex and then takes a low angle perspective on Tony, making him seem big and powerful over Alex. Tony starts kicking the man’s body but once again you don’t see Tony’s face. All you see is his lower half. These subtle shots prevent the viewer from connecting the action of a man getting hit with a car and then beat up, with the man we have come to know as Tony Soprano. Even though this scene occurs only ten minutes into the first show, you are already able to justify Tony’s actions. The writers cleverly add a line right before Tony drives off to give the end of the scene a comical twist. The attack takes place right outside of Alex’s work place, which happens to be US/HMO. As Tony is leaving, he points to the sign of the company and says “what are you crying about, HMO, you’re covered, you pric... degenerate fucking gambler.”

Another key element in this scene is how the audience develops an immediate respect for Tony’s intensity. Someone owed him money, and he went to collect it. Nothing about that seems too unreasonable. I noticed that for most of the violent scenes in the series, there is a strong comedic undertone that plays through. Whether Tony has a big smile on his face or someone gets beat up with a telephone handle, the shows makes most of the violent scenes funny. You also rarely see a lot of gore. There is blood in many of the shots but you never see anything too graphic.

Before the chase scene, there is an even more important one that includes what I refer to as a “character establishing moment.” These moments are in every show and film, and help to define the roles of the characters and how we relate to them. In this key scene, Tony Soprano is in his back yard looking into the woods because he hears something. All of a sudden the silence is broken when a small family of ducks come out of the woods, walk over to the pool, and jump in. Tony smiles like a little child and gets on his hands and knees to feed them with bread. He then gets into the pool, bathrobe and all. Placing this scene before his violent scene was structurally important. Because of the innocence behind the duck scene, we feel a wonderful connection between Tony and this wildlife. The camera shots are either of a close-up on Tony talking to the ducks about building them a ramp (to get in and out of the pool) or of a medium shot with the ducks very close to him. This is part of the content aspect of the show that allows you to see an endearing side of Tony. It establishes a personality or a side of the character that you can relate to, a big tough-looking Italian man talking to a family of ducks, in his bathrobe. Tony’s family, who is inside the house
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watching, are unmoved by the ducks. The kids’ lack of excitement is not far from most teenagers’ reactions to a father acting the way Tony was. Their lack of support for his happiness makes you want to be happy for him, regardless of whether or not you like animals. What interests me about this scene is the ability of the viewer to see Tony as being “playful” or “sweet.” Other scenes throughout the series build his character like this and they all contribute to his loving side.

A prime example of this comes from a scene in the third episode. Tony’s friend, Artie, had a restaurant that burnt down (ironically Tony was the arsonist.) Artie had not yet been given the insurance money and was constantly breaking down over the loss of his restaurant because it had been in the family for three generations. Finally Tony had had enough of Artie complaining and screamed at him, telling him to get over it. Artie, in a rage, throws a piece of raw bacon at Tony and it sticks to his forehead. The scene goes silent and a nervousness comes about you (the viewer.) An unpredictable Tony stands there waiting. Tony curses at Artie and then throws a cork at the top of his head. They spend the next scene engaged in a laughing food fight. The ability for Tony to go from a character who kills people to one who can get into a food fight, further intensifies our relationship with him.

The food fight scene was done with a long shot. The importance of this set up would be best described by Michael Gillett. He wrote an article called “The Comic Distance”, in which he explains how, in order to create a comedy scene, a director must use a long shot to capture the full body. “Comedy is an external art. Although there are comic characters, the humor results from their interactions with their environment, not from their internal workings. Also, much humor is only funny if we have distance from it” (Gillett 17). I found this theory to work for many of the scenes involving humor. The director(s) chose this option of the long shot to allow the audience a comfortable distance from the characters, and the ability to see the full body in comedic motion.

As I mentioned earlier, another very important applicable theory to the show is that of Para-Proxemics. This relationship between camera distance and actual distance in the show, ultimately defines how people are intimately connected. “This framing variable creates a mediated distance between the viewer and the content of the image” (Meyrowitz 258). The theory of Para-Proxemics is best seen in situations where Tony is vulnerable. The times where he is either emotionally exposed or fighting a moral dilemma is when this theory works best. The interesting thing about Para-Proxemics is how it ties into another concept created by Dr. Meyrowitz, the concept of “front” and “back” regions. This theory blends the roles of Tony Soprano. To give further examples of how these theories are applied I have chosen two scenes.

The first of these scenes takes place in the fourth episode, when Tony comes home from his mistress’s house very late at night. Everyone has gone to bed except his son Anthony Jr. who is sitting on the floor playing the video game Mario Cart. Tony sits down next to his son and starts playing the game against him. Anthony is beating his dad and telling him that he is “kicking his ass.” Tony casually starts asking his son how everything is going in his life and asks him how school is. He doesn’t respond so Tony covers Anthony’s eyes to beat him at the game. Both Anthony and Tony are laughing as Tony takes the lead in the game and beats his son. Tony then tells Anthony to “focus through distractions.” They give a brief goodnight and the scene ends with a subtle smile on both their faces. This interaction is an effective example of how we can be brought into the “back” region of Tony’s life. We witness a mob boss sitting on his living room floor, playing video games in the middle of the night. These back regions allow us to see a part of Tony’s life that would not have otherwise been disclosed because he only presents them to certain people.

The writers include a scene like this for two reasons. The first one would be for the viewer to connect with Tony, Anthony Jr., or both. The second reason is due to the nature of the content. Stereotypical mafia families are very close to one another and a scene like this reinforces those expectations. In a way Tony acts as the ideal, playful father. The shot structure was tight and created the sense that there is a great admiration from both the father and son. Even when Tony gets up to leave and is about ten feet away from his son, the shot is a low angle close up. This puts Tony in a high-powered position as well as emphasizes closeness to his son. The director uses the close-up to create intimacy and explain the relationship between both characters. Other scenes exploring the back region of Tony include: him taking his daughter on college tours, watching his daughter play soccer, taking his wife out to dinner, and cooking at barbeques. There are scenes like these planted throughout the series and they each do their own part in exposing his back region as a family man.
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An example of “front” region application comes at the end of episode six. All of the family mob men are sitting around a dinner table at a restaurant and Tony gets up to give a speech. He addresses his Uncle Jr. and congratulates him on his new position as head boss. This example reinforces the strength and role of Tony. We see his “front” region responsibilities as a mafia member, who must perform in front of the other men. Tony is dressed appropriately for the occasion and his mannerisms are on point as well. This is a perfect example of how he is seen by the other mafia members and how the viewer understands his professional relationship to his job.

CONCLUSION

The outcome from this study has hopefully cast a new light on how production variables are able to manipulate the viewer. These subtle, yet powerful techniques, can be the difference between a great show and a terrible one. Although I did my best in describing the scenes I based my study on, in order to apply these theories to them, it is best to get a first-hand encounter with the show.

My study does not go without flaw however. There are other variables that I would have explored in my research. A follow up study on the use of music would be an interesting one, as well as further examination on how the use of light and filters changes the mood of the scene. My study is also limited in that I didn’t examine other shows or films about the mafia. Perhaps a study on how a film is shot would differ from how a television series is shot.

Shannon Robinson and Day Evans performed a similar study to my own, on grammar variables used in the movie Platoon. One of their limitations included the difficulty in separating the issue of content with that of grammar variables. “A second problem intrinsic in the study of grammar is the inability to separate the content of the movie from the grammar being analyzed” (Robinson/Evans 45). It is important to understand that content cannot and should not be separated from grammar variables. These are so important because they work together in shaping the viewer’s perspectives. Robinson and Evans found that it was difficult to separate what we see as content versus how the grammar variables were used. They ran into the same problems I did in terms of studying one without the other. Although I had some difficulty in choosing what I wanted to focus on, in the end I was pleased that the results of my research answered my original key questions. Through this research material I discovered that grammar variables do indeed affect the viewer’s perceptions of character relationships. These variables shape the way we interpret television.
Commentary

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Adam Mordecai

If They Stop Us in Seabrook...The Clamshell Alliance and its Impact Upon the Public Discussion

The Clamshell Alliance, a grassroots, anti-nuclear group committed primarily to preventing the installation of a nuclear power station in Seabrook, New Hampshire and generally to impeding the proliferation of nuclear power throughout the United States, was formed in July of 1976 after the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued a permit for the construction of two nuclear reactors in Seabrook. The establishment of the Clamshell Alliance came on the heels of years of protests, hearings in front of the NRC, aborted legislation, and thwarted legal maneuverings all intended to halt the issuance of a license for construction of a nuclear plant to the Public Service Company of New Hampshire (PSCo). Having failed to effect the desired change through the traditional methods of dissent, the frustrated founders of the Clamshell Alliance met in Rye, New Hampshire, and decided to create an organization dedicated to employing civil disobedience in the fight against nuclear power. Thus, on August 1, 1976, only a few short weeks after the founding of the Clamshell Alliance, eighteen New Hampshire residents walked onto the proposed nuclear site in Seabrook in the first collective act of nonviolence and civil disobedience in the relatively short history of the United States' antinuclear movement.18

Principally a New England organization, the Clamshell Alliance, faced tremendous adversity and opposition throughout its existence. PSCo, a relatively small power company by national standards, was unyielding in its quest to install a nuclear reactor in Seabrook and the New Hampshire state government, especially then-Governor Meldrim Thomson, was staunchly supportive of the project. Additionally, the citizenry of New Hampshire, and much of the New England population, was uninformed (and often misinformed) or largely unfamiliar with either the risks or benefits of nuclear power. As a result, when PSCo applied to the NRC in May of 1968 for permission to begin construction on a large nuclear

18 Pamphlet, “What is the Clamshell Alliance?,” Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.
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power station in Seabrook, the only resistance came from a select few concerned citizens, many of whom later became founders of the Clamshell Alliance. Confronting these obstacles would prove to be a daunting task, especially in the small, conservative Republican state of New Hampshire. The Clamshell, recognizing this, embarked upon a unique drive to educate the public through providing citizens with information concerning the dangers of nuclear power and presenting them with feasible alternative energy choices. Consequently, the Clamshell founding documents all espouse this desire to "reassert the right of citizens to be fully informed and then decide the nature of their own communities." 19

Following the action of the original eighteen "occupiers," on August 22, 1976, only eleven days after the first walk-on, 180 New Englanders, cheered on by a supportive rally of over 1,200 people, went onto the Seabrook site in further protest. 20 This remarkable growth, coupled with the support of the local townspeople who, in March of 1976, had voted 786-632 against the construction of the nuclear plant, encouraged the Clamshell and prompted many of those involved to deepen their commitment to the cause. 21 The Clamshell quickly established an office in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and began solidifying its positions, structures, and founding tenets. First among these beliefs, aside from the obvious commitment to preventing construction of a nuclear plant in Seabrook, was the concept of consensus. "The structure of the Clamshell Alliance is not fixed," explains a pamphlet detailing the history of the organization, "but the first and essential arrangement has remained: the various segments communicate back and forth until a general consensus is reached." 22 The model for the internal composition of the Clamshell was borrowed from the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers) and provided a nonviolent way for people to relate to each other as a group. 23 The Clamshell was an entirely decentralized, grassroots organization (its office in Portsmouth merely acted as a clearinghouse for information and coordination), thoroughly committed to consensus decision-making. Indeed, its structure mandated that "the group take no action that is not consented to by all group members." 24 Essentially, the Clamshell Alliance was comprised of hundreds of small groups, borrowing the name "affinity groups" from the Quaker model, consisting of a small group of people, usually five to twenty, who worked together as a unit. The division of participants into these small groups allowed for the involvement of a geographically separated membership and it encouraged people at even the most rudimentary level to contribute. Each of these groups has a spokesperson who would report to weekly meetings at the office in Portsmouth, voice the ideas and concerns of their particular affinity group, report the discussion and resulting proposals back to the affinity groups, and finally return to the central Portsmouth office again to establish consensus or discuss further concerns. The process was complicated, but was governed by an explicit set of rules:

1. The problem/situation needing consideration is discussed, and a clear idea of what decision needs to be made is formulated. A proposal can then be made.
2. People who are not present and who have not communicated any interest in the matter may be assumed to have no strong feelings on the matter.
3. After adequate discussion, instead of voting, it is asked if there is any opposition to the suggestion stated.
4. If there are no strong objections to the decision at this point, the suggestion can be formally stated and adopted.
5. Any one person can state opposition to the proposal and this will block the group's adoption of the proposal.

19 "Clamshell Founding Statement, Draft," July, 1976, Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1.
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21 Renny Cushing, "A Short History of the Long and On-Going Fight to Stop the Seabrook Nuke," from Turning the Tide, 1979, Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.
22 Arnie Alpert, "Clamshell Alliance History and Philosophy," Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.
24 Ibid.
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6. If there is an objection blocking the group, the objection must be worked out before the proposal can be adopted.

7. If the objection can be met, a sense of the meeting can be taken again. If there are no other objections at this point, the suggestion can be adopted.

8. If all objections are not met, the group continues in accordance with its last consensus relating to this matter, until a suggestion can be found that is not blocked. Where the group has not previously made a decision to do something, the consensus is to take no action as a group.25

In addition to this dedication to the use of consensus building, the Clamshell Alliance was strongly committed to the principles and ideologies of nonviolence. "Although not all Clams are committed to nonviolence as a philosophy or way of life," wrote member Arnie Alpert in describing the values of the Clamshell, "everyone must agree to adhere to a nonviolent discipline throughout their participation in Clamshell sponsored events."26 Indeed, the organization mandated that everyone participating in a Clamshell action, whether he or she was involved in a rally or an occupation, receive extensive training in practicing nonviolence.27 This proved especially important during the larger rallies in which hundreds of demonstrators were arrested and dragged off the Seabrook site, all while practicing their lessons in nonviolence. Furthermore, part of the rationale behind the Clam’s decision to observe nonviolence in all of its actions came from its belief that nuclear power is a violent technology; by opposing it nonviolently, they would be able to make it clear that the real “nuclear terrorists” were the people and institutions who were perpetuating that technology, not those who were working to stop it.28

Establishing these guiding tenets was an important step in creating the Clamshell Alliance, but without the proper message and the means to disseminate it to the larger public, the rhetoric of the organization was doomed to be ineffectual. For the Clam, a group founded by individuals bound by a shared determination to eliminate nuclear power, drafting a mission statement was relatively simple. The crux of its message was to revolve around preventing the construction of a nuclear plant in Seabrook, but would often be generalized to cover a wider public and was outlined clearly in their founding charter:

We therefore demand:
1. That not one cent more be spent on nuclear power reactors or nuclear weapons, except to dispose of those wastes already created and to decommission those plants and weapons now in existence.
2. That our energy policy be focused on developing and implementing clean and renewable sources of energy in concert with an efficient system of recycling and conservation.29

The Clamshell Alliance, created to coordinate protests against the construction of a nuclear reactor in Seabrook, has always been an oppositional group and thus its message has been faced with resistance from nearly every part of society. In an effort to overcome this resistance and further promote its cause, the Clam, in spite of its complex decision making process, developed a unique model through which its members would direct and shape its message. This model, which derived much of its inspiration from the very structure of the Clamshell, focused its attention largely on the five publics the group identified as most important for furthering their message: the Clamshell’s membership, local residents, law

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26 Arnie Alpert, “Clamshell Alliance History and Philosophy,” Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.
27 “Seabrook ’78: A Handbook for the Occupation/Restoration beginning June 24th,” Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 8, Folder 1.
28 Ibid.
29 “New Hampshire Clamshell Alliance Charter,” Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1.
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enforcement, the media, and Governor Meldrim Thomson.30 "The strength of the Clamsheh's public relations," wrote media coordinator Catherine Wolff, "is its internal and external integrity, coupled with a real respect for all its publics, true consensus decision-making, and common sense."31 In appealing to these different key publics, the Clamsheh would have to alter its message and its delivery tactics in order to ensure successful communication. The five publics the Clamsheh's rhetoric targeted would respond very differently to the ideas which the group sought to propagate and thus the "packaging" or rhetorical "spin" that accompanied the communication was of vital import. Authors William Gamson and Andre Modigliani provide a framework through which one can approach the study of public discourse surrounding nuclear power in the United States in their article, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach." "Rather than a single public discourse," they argue in keeping with the Clamsheh Alliance's approach to public relations, "it is more useful to think of a set of discourses that intersect in complex ways."32 They contend that four distinct discourses exist in the public dialogue concerning nuclear energy: the specialist's discourse, oral discourse, oppositional discourse, and the media discourse.33

In order to be successful in its mission to halt the construction of the Seabrook power plant, the Clamsheh Alliance would have to persuade the public — beyond just the town of Seabrook — to join in its protest and demand that their elected government change its position. For this to occur, the Clamsheh would need to appeal to all aspects of society; the use of Gamson and Modigliani's nuclear discourses would assist in achieving this end. The first, the specialist discourse, was employed primarily as a response mechanism. PSCO issued a number of press releases and pamphlets extolling the technical virtues of nuclear energy and attempting to quell any general fears. These texts generally quoted scientists, provided statistical information, and often explained

nuclear power in a very technological way. As a result, the Clamsheh was forced to respond to these publications by releasing their own technical documents, focusing on the negative environmental impact the Seabrook station would have, the potential dangers of nuclear reactors, and the increased energy costs associated with the construction project. One such pamphlet highlighted a few of the most commonly cited technical problems the Clamsheh had found in the nuclear plant's design:

**Drawbacks to the Seabrook site:**

- The plant is located on an earthquake fault;
- The cooling system threatens to destroy the fishing and tourist industry;
- New Hampshire does not need the power;
- Ratepayers cannot afford the nuke;
- Other energy alternatives are available.34

Much of the Clamsheh's energy, however, was dedicated to use of oral discourse on the issue of nuclear power. Since the Clam was fundamentally a grassroots organization, it depended a great deal upon word of mouth and local support. The very composition of the group was predicated on the notion that oral discourse was of primary importance. Members of the Clamsheh, from the main office and from the local affinity groups, would frequently hold public educational forums, hearings, and would often appear at town meetings. They spoke to audiences around the state of New Hampshire and New England and relied heavily upon the public to attend these gatherings and listen to their antinuclear message. The Clam had great confidence in the notion that "the people of the nation, given true access to the facts, are more than capable of making decisions about our energy resources and production with the public in mind."35 The Clamsheh utilized oral discourse heavily as a means to provide the public with the information necessary for

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31 Ibid., 22.
33 Ibid., 2-3.
34 "A Ten Year Fight...Continues!" pamphlet, Clamsheh Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.
35 "First draft of the Declaration of Nuclear Resistance," Clamsheh Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1.
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making an informed decision about Seabrook and nuclear power in general.

However, as important as the oral discourse was to the Clamshell, it was only one of many tools the organization used in directing its message. At the heart of the Clam, present in its founding documents and inherent in its very existence, was its adherence to the oppositional discourse. The Clamshell Alliance was formed in direct opposition to the nuclear industry which they viewed as “a collusion of private interests, government and the utility companies...embarked upon a course of energy development which is dangerous to persons and to the environment and which concentrates energy resources into the hands of a powerful few.”\textsuperscript{36} In protesting the construction of the Seabrook nuclear plant, the Clamshell was forced to develop a full oppositional campaign dedicated to propagating its message of resistance. Many different methods were used in expanding upon this oppositional orientation, but most sought to clearly define the different sides and extol the virtues of the Clamshell. Pamphlets were often released containing the “cast of characters” in the Seabrook debate in an effort to personalize their rivals; individuals such as Governor Meldrim Thomson, conservative Manchester Union-Leader publisher William Loeb, PSCO President William Tallman, State Police Chief Harold Knowlton, Rockingham County prosecutor Carleton Eldredge, New Hampshire Attorney General Thomas Rath, and New Hampshire National Guard head General John Blatsos were all named as part of the opposing “establishment.”\textsuperscript{37}

The fourth and final discourse, perhaps the most important in terms of the actual communication of the Clamshell’s message, was the use of the media discourse. As an oppositional group, the Clamshell Alliance was severely disadvantaged in regards to media coverage and access. Generally, the media tend to get the majority of their information from official sources and they tend to privilege these sources above others. Consequently, the Clamshell was forced to invest a great deal of time and energy in garnering the proper attention of the media and ensuring that the resulting coverage was even and informed. To achieve this goal, the Clam generated endless news releases and worked tirelessly to gain some standing with members of the local press. They would alert the media well in advance of any Clamshell-sponsored actions and would work to provide the press with easy access to any such events. Furthermore, press releases were drafted in a very media-friendly style, due in large part to media director Wolff’s previous experience in journalism, they were filled with historical information, and they were generally devoid of any biased rhetoric.

These four discourses on nuclear power, while not necessarily explicitly employed by the Clamshell Alliance, were instrumental in shaping public opinion. Rarely is an oppositional organization successful in effecting a noticeable change on public opinion, but the Clamshell seemed able to perceptibly alter New Hampshire’s assessment of nuclear energy. Some of this shift in opinion can be attributed to the geographic immediacy of the reactor being constructed in New Hampshire’s own saltwater marshland, but the majority of this transformation of opinion was the result of the Clamshell’s ability to connect with the citizenry through identification of the five major publics and successful implementation of Ganser and Modigliani’s nuclear discourses. While ultimately the Clamshell did not prove triumphant over nuclear power (Seabrook Station has been providing New Hampshire with electricity since 1990), it was an effective demonstration of how a grassroots, oppositional group could provoke a tangible change in public opinion.

One of the most striking examples of the Clamshell’s success in changing public opinion can be found in its handling of the June 24, 1978 Occupation/Restoration attempt and the resulting media coverage. After the occupation of April, 1977 in which 1,415 people were arrested and held in National Guard armories for thirteen days, the Clamshell began planning for its next occupation of the Seabrook nuclear power plant site.\textsuperscript{38} The nearly two weeks they spent as prisoners in the state’s armories gave the occupiers time to organize many of the future activities that the Clamshell would undertake in addition to affording the Clam a great deal of media coverage. The group planned the occupation meticulously and prepared for a weekend-long rally of up to 20,000 people coupled with an occupation in which those walking onto the site would attempt to set up a self-sufficient community and “reclaim” the land...

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} “Seabrook ’78: A Handbook for the Occupation/Restoration beginning June 24,” Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 8, Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{38} Pamphlet, “What is the Clamshell Alliance?” Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.
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by planting vegetation.\(^{39}\) Believing that the April, 1977 occupation had focused too much media attention on the resulting arrests, the Clam devised ways to “get the issues spelled out rather than the details of our arrests.”\(^{40}\) Cultural icons such as Doctor Benjamin Spock and Pete Seeger were scheduled to appear at the rally supporting the occupation and displays would be erected along the site’s boundaries demonstrating feasible energy alternatives.\(^{41}\)

Renny Cushing, a leading figure in the Clamshell Alliance, addressed a letter to the Governor and his Executive Council alerting them to the upcoming demonstration, assuring them that it would be nonviolent, and requesting a meeting to further discuss the issues at hand.\(^{42}\) The news media were provided with press releases detailing the activities scheduled and the nature of the occupation; in addition, these releases invited the press to attend and offered to assist them in covering the event whenever possible.\(^{43}\)

The state responded to the Clamshell with a proposal, referred to as the Rath Proposal after its author Attorney General Thomas Rath, that invited the Clamshell Alliance to participate in a legal occupation of the Seabrook site. The Rath Plan would permit the Clamshell to hold a legal demonstration on PS-Co’s Seabrook property, but severely limited the time allowed for the protest and the permissible activities. The Rath Plan was seen as deflating and demoralizing for the Clam; if they were to accept the proposal, they would no longer be participating in acts of civil disobedience, but would rather be taking part in a state-sponsored protest. The plan while clearly upsetting to the Clam, was viewed by many as a “brilliant” act by the state in its ability to alter the public’s perception of the Clamshell. Alden Meyer, another leading Clamshell figure, wrote that the proposal “has the potential to paralyze the Clam process and perhaps create serious divisions within the Clam, just weeks before the start of the most complex and massive action [the Clamshell Alliance has] yet to [undertake].”\(^{44}\)

Conscious of the tenuous position of the Clamshell in the public’s mind, he further argued that “it is important that any counter offer we make be perceived as reasonable by the people of New Hampshire, that we not allow ourselves to be portrayed as inflexible, irrational, or dedicated principally to breaking the law.”\(^{45}\)

The Clamshell did eventually submit to the state’s proposal, but included in its agreement the caveat that “all construction at the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant site be suspended immediately.”\(^{46}\) This, however, was seen by many, including the majority of the public, as a rejection of the proposal by the Clamshell. Indeed, Governor Thomson said he would be “preparing for the worst... because the Clamshell Alliance has not responded to a state offer to allow limited anti-nuclear protest.”\(^{47}\) Further, local coverage of the upcoming event tended to exclude the Clamshell after the perceived rejection of the Rath Plan and instead focused on the negative aspects of the Clam, such as the figure that “last year’s demonstration cost the state almost $400,000.”\(^{48}\) Further, local coverage picked up on items such as Rath’s request to the legislature for a “blank check” for expenses incurred as a result of policing the protest.\(^{49}\) As a result of the rejection, media coverage was generally so negative that even liberal outlets could be found backing the state plan and supporting conservative Governor Thomson. “By appearing more than ready to let energy alternatives be advertised in Seabrook’s shadow,” argued one local editorial, “PS-Co is simply reiterating its conviction that what it is building is necessary, safe and workable. And the national media, which will be watching Seabrook closely, cannot fail to be impressed with PS-Co’s evenhanded outlook... Meanwhile, all of us can breathe a bit more

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39 “Seabrook ’78: A Handbook for the Occupation/Restoration beginning June 24’,” Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 8, Folder 1.
40 Ibid.
41 “Schedule for Legal Public Rally, Sunday, June 25,” Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 7, Folder 13.
42 Renny Cushing, letter addressed to the G&C, May 3, 1978, Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 8, Folder 2.
43 Press release, June 20, 1978, Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 7, Folder 13.
46 “Proposal approved by the Coordinating Committee,” June 4, 1978, Clamshell Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 8, Folder 1.
48 Ibid.
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easily and for that, we have Governor Thomson to thank."30
Recognizing that they had lost nearly all control over the media
coverage they were garnering, the Clamshell was forced to accept
the Rath Proposal and drop the stipulation calling for the suspension
of construction at Seabrook. This action, coupled with an increased
barrage of Clamshell-generated pamphlets, press releases, and a call
for the public to participate in what was now a legal demonstration,
saved the Clamshell Alliance from a certain and immediate failure.

The scheduled protest eventually took place and 20,000
people attended the legal rally on June 25, 1978.51 The success of this
protest, together with the Clamshell’s rapid reaction to the negative
press they had been receiving, resulted in a major shift in public
opinion towards both nuclear energy and the Clamshell Alliance.
Illustrative of this remarkable transformation, the same newspaper
which had only one week earlier staunchly supported Governor
Thomson and PSCo, was now in admiration of the Clamshell. “It is
totally possible,” the editorial read, “that Seabrook ‘78 will become
a benchmark in the protest movement. Seabrook may change the
course of serious mass protest for years to come... the demonstrators
were taken seriously by the establishment. The Clamshell Alliance
leaders, recognizing they were being taken seriously, dropped the
planned law-breaking and concentrated on the belief that had
brought them.”52

This change in media coverage clearly demonstrates that the
Clamshell was able to convey its message to the general public and
effect a change in their collective opinion. By continuously utilizing
the oppositional and media discourses, the Clamshell Alliance was
successful in altering the media coverage they received and the
opinions of both the public and many state officials. Indeed, at one
point a speaker at a pro-nuclear rally in Manchester, New
Hampshire fearfully told a crowd that “if they stop us in Seabrook,
they will stop us everywhere.”53 Without a doubt, the Clamshell
Alliance was successful in bringing nuclear power into the public

discussion and providing the citizenry with oppositional
information and viewpoints. While ultimately they were not
successful in stopping the construction of Seabrook Station, the
Clamshell was able to raise the consciousness of the New Hampshire
public and present a serious challenge to the established powers.

30 “Thomson’s Sense,” Foster’s Daily Democrat, June 18, 1978,
A1.

51 Pamphlet, “What is the Clamshell Alliance?” Clamshell
Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.


53 Renny Cushing, “Proposal,” January 12, 1977, Clamshell
Alliance papers, Series 1, Box 8, Folder 2.
Pat Skahan

Becoming No One—Being Everyone

In a Postmodern era mediated by newer technology everyday, the individual can no longer consider him/herself to be one specific social subject. In this postmodern era the individual as a social subject is now multiple, fragmented and diffused. The individual must now adjust every moment in accordance with the subject position to which discourse calls them to adhere. However, the discourse used may call for the individual to take only one subject position in the moment or many subject positions at once. In addition, since agency (action, power, means) is no longer, “…proximate—or attached to a person…” (Stone 400), subjectivity now becomes, “…everywhere and somewhere and nowhere…” (398) simultaneously. In other words, since agency and subject position can no longer be pinpointed, the subject must adjust to each and every situation that discourse, society and culture throws at them.

Foster expands on this multiple subject theory. He says since subjects are always mediated by language, and since this mediation takes the form of “interpellation,” then the subject position is never closed, but rather made unstable, excessive and multiple. (Foster 79). What Foster means here is different discourse forces us to become different subjects. We, as subjects can no longer say we live life embracing only one subject position. Hence, the individual should necessarily refer to him or herself using the royal “We,” rather than using I. If a subject says, I am a student; he is defining himself as being only a student. If he wanted to be more theoretically correct, he should say; at this point in time, discourse tells me that “we” are a student, but we are also a son, friend, roommate, American, and so on. This view of the individual as a multiple subject is very contradictory when compared to early positivist concepts.

Positivism only deals with natural phenomena or the properties of knowable things, together with their relationships’ coexistence and succession as occurring in time and space. In other words, positivism deals with the real and the here and the now. However, at this point in our studies we are dealing with postmodern theory and the postmodern condition. In accordance to postmodern ideals, we have already established there is no longer a
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concept known as the “real.” Plato’s cave has been closed and has imploded, trapping the real outside of the cave and inside where our society is stuck, we are left with only representations of the real to construct our reality. The newer theories of postmodernism we are dealing with give us new reasons to disprove the positivist concepts. The new theories focus more on discourse, and in a sense the technology given to us by the machine. More specifically, the discourse and the new theories surrounding cyber-space.

Since we have already eliminated the real, the subject is no longer limited to being in the here and now. Cyber-space theory has expanded on that and fragmented the subject even more. For instance, in cyber-space theory I could tell another user, who is also in cyber-space, that I was a 45 year old woman who lives in Kansas, whereas in the positivist here and now, I am a 20 year old male college student in Durham. Knowing that when it comes to postmodern theory my subject position is fragmented and multiple in relation to newer technologies, I can take on a whole new created set of multiple subject identities, unknowing to other subjects. The positivist science has been replaced by postmodern theory and new, growing technologies.

Technology has given us many new subject positions and has also made the physical aspect of communication practically unnecessary. Newer communication has made it possible for the individual to seem co-present, when in fact they are not, (i.e. e-mail). Technology now functions, as Sandy Stone would say, as a prosthetic of our individual subjectivity. In other words, technology takes the place of individuality and also creates and distributes subjectivity for us. No longer do space and place matter to the individual because, as stated above, technology allows the subject to be somewhere, nowhere and everywhere all at the same time.

Even older technology has been improved upon to further fragment the subject. For example, if one looks at databases with a critical postmodern eye, it can easily be seen how they contribute to the multiplicity of subjective positions. When a social subject is reduced to a mere numerical statistic or a check box, that social subject has the risk of “running into yourself,” or in other words, coming into contact with a subject position one previously had no idea he or she had. For example, one could be a very wealthy citizen, but if someone steals that citizen’s credit cards and exceeds the monetary limit on each one unknowingly, the unknowing victim of a theft can be looked down upon by the credit card companies as being in serious debt. In reality, the wealthy person is far from being in debt, but according to the databases at the credit card companies they are in trouble. Another example in which databases fragment the subject position is found in surveys. Surveys of any type fragment the subject because one is forced to choose a specific subject position from a list of options even if their true subject position is not present among the list. And in choosing a subject position that best fits your identity, one is creating yet another social subject position that can be added to the “We” of an individual.

Finally, new subjects can be created within technology itself. This notion sums up and furthers the idea that this new form of subjectivity is created and lived through technology. Sandy Stone and Sherry Turkle call these new subjects “BOTS.” The science fiction world would call them AIs. A BOT is a computer program, a product of technology that is seemingly a thinking human being with a personality. As if technology doesn’t fragment the living/breathing subject enough, it has also created in itself new positions. The degree to which new subjectivity is created and lived through new technologies is extremely obtuse. Technology has also given the individual a chance to change and alter his or her own personal identity.

Through technologies such as cyber-space and databases, our personal identities have become extremely unimportant, if not wiped out entirely. How can one person pinpoint his or her own identity when technologies such as cyber-space and databases allow them to create and alter it themselves? The only true identities we have left are given to us by location technologies, if we can even correctly call them technologies. Our only concrete identities are construed through addresses, social security numbers, phone numbers, drivers licenses and so on. These are the only true identities we have left, yet they say nothing about us as actual human beings.

Our day-to-day identities are found in cyber-space, which allows us to play out and create identities of any chosen fantasy, and in databases that have whittled our identities down to mere statistics. In our postmodern society governed by technology, it seemingly feels that no one has any true identity left. Through cyber-space, identity becomes meaningless and can be imaginative, especially due to the fact that it is no longer possible for a person to

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54 In reference to Plato’s “Allegory of a Cave”
power is lost, just as the true real is lost; only representation is left of both to construct reality. As many possibilities that the post-information society creates, these possibilities live inside of the cave with society. What’s left outside of our imploded society is the real and power, and with each technological advance, they are becoming more and more impossible.

This new subjectivity of the post-information society is empowering, disempowering, liberating and oppressive all at the same time. We, as social subjects, are granted liberating powers by technology and yet are oppressively disempowered by that very same technology. We now have the power to ignore space and place completely. We now have the power to be anyone, everyone and no one at the same time. It is now possible to become free of the restraints of society and our true identity, which in turn gives the individual (any social subject) a sense of power; but at the same time this is a false reality. We cannot actually be everywhere, nowhere and somewhere; or be anyone, no one and someone. We are always someone. We are always we. We, at least our atoms, are always physically somewhere. It is this impression of this power that is liberating. We have no real power over technology, unless we know and fully understand the complete discourse about technology, which is impossible. Even if someone did understand the full discourse and tried to overpower it, inevitably he or she would be caught in the act of electronic civil disobedience and be punished. So, even if the full discourse of technology is understood, does one have any power at all? In reality, technology disempowers and oppresses us. We cannot access all the information that is in cyberspace, and if we cannot access information, there is power behind it. We actually have no power over technology; rather we have the impression of power. We are oppressed by technology. If Marx were still alive in this postmodern society, I would love to ask him this question: Where is the revolutionary class now? The only plausible answer is postmodernism at its finest. The revolutionaries are anyone, someone and everyone and can be found nowhere, everywhere and somewhere. But where am I in this postmodern mess?

The postmodern age has inevitably succeeded in reducing me to mere atoms. My personality is so fragmented and multiple that when I think about it, I don’t really know who I am anymore. I have power and yet am powerless at the same time. I can only passively sit through life, waiting for discourse to call on me to enact
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a specific subject role, and I always unconsciously answer it. In the physical sense I am just a pile of atoms stuck in Plato’s cave. In the postmodern sense I, or we, can be anyone, anywhere.

Works Cited


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Rhetoric

The uses of symbols and signs to influence another. The creation of change within an audience to a new idea or concept. How are people persuaded and what are the outcomes of such influences within our society? Anything from speeches to pictures to buildings can have an impact and critically investigating these modes of influence will allow us to see how this can influence daily perceptions and ideas.
Kristin Beltramini
Untitled

World War II consumed the resources of every major power in the world. It destroyed millions of lives, created a lost generation, and cost more money and lives than any other conflict before or since. Civilians were bombed nightly in London and throughout England. Pearl Harbor was bombed, and the world was changed forever. There were two victories that were needed to finally end this worldwide horror. The first was a victory in Europe. V-E Day, which was commemorated with speeches by both Harry Truman, the President of the United States, and Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain. The second, V-J Day, would not follow for another four months. V-E Day was a moment of huge celebration for the Allies, allowing them to concentrate their resources on the fight against Japan.

Looking at the responses made by Harry Truman and Winston Churchill, they seem extremely different and without comparison. But by examining them through the theories of Lloyd Bitzer, it is possible to compare them and to examine their effectiveness. The rhetorical situation, as defined by Lloyd Bitzer in his article, "The Rhetorical Situation" consists of four separate parts: the exigence, the audience, the constraints, and the concept of the fitting response. The first three elements provide a platform for the discussion of a speech based on their effective manipulation, and the result is a fitting response. "The Rhetorical Situation" was presented as a public lecture at Cornell University in November 1966 when Bitzer was an Associate Professor of Speech at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The concept of the rhetorical situation is used to produce and evaluate effective speeches.

The exigence is defined as "an imperfection marked by urgency." In the case of these two speeches, this exigence was V-E Day, the day that Germany surrendered at the end of World War II. More than just the date, this exigence was the people's response to the situation, the joy that they felt in addition to the destruction they saw around them, and the still ongoing war against Japan. The effective capture and treatment of the people's response to this exigence was extremely important to transferring their joy over victory towards their resolution to defeat the Japanese and finish World War Two. For Churchill, the imperfection that existed was
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turning his country’s mind away from the victory against Germany
and towards the on going war against Japan. For Truman, the
imperfection was asking his country to continue to fight, to not give
up their mission, and to use this victory not as an excuse to pause,
but as a push to continue.

The audience, as defined by Bitzer, was not described as the
physical audience of the speech, but instead was defined as, “those
persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of
being mediators of change,” (Bitzer). In this sense, the rhetorical
audience is not contained or controlled by the physical audience
of the speech. The rhetorical audience can consist of part of the
physical audience, or people who did not hear the speech first hand,
but later as either a recording or a text document. The rhetorical
audiences for these two speeches were different because the goals
for each speech were different.

Churchill’s speech was made to a group of people
congregated outside of the Ministry of Health in London, but his
rhetorical audience far surpassed those within earshot. London was
decimated by German air raids. Londoners spent every night in the
fear and darkness of the blackout. Churchill knew this fear, but also
knew that this fear was an aside to the power of the British people’s
resolve to win this war. He fed off of this resolve, “Did anyone want
to give in? Were we down-hearted? The lights went out and the
bombs came down. But every man, woman and child in the country
had no thought of quitting the struggle.”

Churchill created his rhetorical audience out of civic pride,
out of a pride stemming from each person’s hardship and toil. His
rhetorical audience became the entire British population, not just the
people listening to him. He demanded that they look past this day
of victory towards the next fight, against the Japanese. He vilified
the Japanese, calling them “a foe stained with cruelty and greed.”
He had to turn the nation’s attention away from Hitler and the
victory that was at hand, and focus their attention towards a foe that
had not attacked them personally. In turning their attention, he
created an audience of change. This was an audience of public
opinion, an audience that must turn their minds away from victory
and to the continuing struggle.

Churchill sought to create his audience through a sense of
togetherness along with their enormous sense of civic pride. He
declared, “This is not victory of a party or of any class. It’s a victory
of the great British nation as a whole.” This sense of unity became

extremely important when Churchill shifts his speech to the “large
portions of the British Empire” that the Japanese occupy. London,
and all of England, had been consumed by the German air raids for
so long that Churchill had to use this opportunity to shift their
attention to the rest of the British Empire, and he uses the sense of
togetherness that he had established in the beginning of the speech
to do this, which is the second way that Churchill creates his
rhetorical audience. In the minds of the London audience, he
created a sense of unity with the rest of the British Empire, and from
that unity sought for them to change their way of thinking about the
day, from a day of celebration to a day of continuance of the fight.

While Churchill created his rhetorical audience out of a
sense of togetherness, and a sense of civic pride, Truman took a
different approach. Truman had no physical audience; he had no
masses chanting in front of him when he makes this speech. This
was a radio address, and in that sense, the physical audience was
much wider. This address was listened to by every American with a
radio, eager to hear that the end of the war in Europe had finally
come. While Churchill rejoiced at the defeat of Hitler, and the end of
the air raids against the British Isles, Truman saw the war as being
only half over. The enemy that had attacked his audience, the
Japanese at Pearl Harbor, had not been defeated and still remained a
threat. Truman sought to create an audience of change in which the
audience took the hope from this victory to continue its fight. He
stated, “I call upon every American to stick to his post until the last
battle is won.”

Truman’s rhetorical audience was created in this speech
through a sense of what was still left to be accomplished. “We can
repay the debt which we owe to our God, to our dead and to our
children only by work – by ceaseless devotion to the responsibilities
which lie ahead of us.” With four months before the Japanese would
finally surrendered, Truman’s rhetorical audience was created for
the purpose of perseverance. Truman needed the American people
to take this victory as a stepping-stone towards a complete victory,
one that would not come until the horrors of the atomic bomb were
released.

While Churchill sought to congratulate his people on
persevering through such hardship, and to look beyond their own
personal toils, Truman wanted to push his rhetorical audience
ahead, to stop them from dwelling on this victory. To do this he
said, “The job ahead is no less important, no less urgent, no less
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difficult than the task which now is happily done.” In the same way that Churchill attempted to create an audience that would change the direction of thought of the people, Truman aimed to create an audience who looked only to the future, who did not see this as the final victory.

Bitzer defines the constraints of the rhetorical situation to be “the parts of the situation... that constrain the decision and action needed to modify the exigence.” They are the roadblocks that the orator must deal with to have a successful speech. The constraints that were present for Churchill included the distance that now existed between the fighting and his newly created rhetorical audience. During the fight against Germany, Churchill and the English people were daily reminded of the horror of the war they were fighting. They could see, hear, and feel the results of that war. They could not see, hear, or feel the threat that Japan posed to them. Japan had never bombed them, had never attacked their homes, had never forced them into darkness the way the Germans had done. But Churchill was forced to connect his rhetorical audience with this threat. He did so through the sense of oneness that he created at the beginning of the speech. “My dear friends, this is your hour.” He proclaimed the victory against Hitler a victory won by the people themselves, not by the might of the army. In doing so, it followed then that they would still be needed in the fight that was still left unfinished. “We must turn to ourselves to fulfill our duty to our own countrymen.” Churchill fed off of the sense of country and unity that he had established, and drew the English audience towards the battlefields of the Pacific.

Another significant constraint for Churchill was the ecstasy of the crowd to whom he was addressing. They were rejoicing and celebrating a war that they had each personally toiled in. Nothing must have been further from their minds than the idea of continuing to fight, but continue they must. Churchill could not discredit this ecstasy, for fear of loosing that rich emotion from which he could build. Instead, he demanded that they hold onto it. “I rejoice we can all take a night off today and another tomorrow...” but in the same breath demands that they keep fighting, “after that... we must turn ourselves to fulfill our duty to our own countrymen.” Churchill gracefully overcame this constraint, and used it to reinforce the sense of unity that he was trying to create with this speech.

Truman’s most basic constraint, and one that was extremely obvious when comparing his speech with Churchill’s, was that it was not a public address. In this sense, Truman could not feed off of his audience. He could not know what they were thinking, or how they responded to each of his statements. Because of this, he seemed more distant from his rhetorical audience than Churchill. This constraint was not well managed. Even without the physical separation that the radio address presented, Truman’s words were far more distant from his audience than Churchill’s. While Churchill created a sense of unity between himself and his people, Truman did not. He sermonized to his audience, “And now, I want to read to you my formal proclamation of this occasion.” Because of the constraint of the radio address, and perhaps because he was a significantly less charismatic orator, Truman could not feed off of the emotions of his audience, rhetorical or otherwise. This void of emotion could have been filled, leading to a significantly more successful and powerful speech.

Another constraint that Truman faced was that he was not president during much of World War Two. In the same way that he did not connect emotionally to his audience because of his lack of physical presence, he could not connect with the audience as a leader through this hard time. Franklin Roosevelt had been their leader, and while Truman acknowledged this, “I only wish that Franklin D. Roosevelt had lived to witness this day,” he did not attempt to place himself within the realm of this fight. He said, “General Eisenhower informs me that the forces of Germany have surrendered,” in a way that suggests that he wasn’t phased. While he was seeking to move his audience to look past this victory towards defeating Japan, by completely bypassing it emotionally, he was missing an opportunity to raise the emotions of his rhetorical audience to increase their effectiveness as a mediator of change. Emotion plays an enormous role in persuasion, and while Churchill grabbed the reins to lead his audience towards the change that he desired, Truman missed the opportunity completely.

Both speakers had a lot going for them when they began their speeches. Their audiences were expecting a response to this hugely important event. They were open to the speakers, and both speakers were held in the high esteem of their audiences. When seeking to pass judgment on the effect each of these speeches had on its rhetorical audience, it is important to return to Bitzer’s three points of the rhetorical situation.

Winston Churchill manipulated the exigence masterfully. He created his rhetorical audience through civic pride and unity,
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and demanded of them measures that were becoming of these virtues. His rhetorical audience was well created, and was led through both reason and emotion towards the changes Churchill sought for them to make. He took the possible constraint of high emotion towards other events and carefully shifted that emotion towards his exigence without losing any of the fervor of his rhetorical audience. With regards to these characteristics, Churchill’s speech was extremely effective.

Truman handles the exigence successfully, though not as gracefully as Churchill. He created an audience on the idea of what must still be done. While this would be an audience based solely in change, Truman did not ground it in anything in the present. By missing the huge opportunity of working with his audience’s emotions, he could not successfully ground the change he was looking for in the reality of the day. The constraint of not being president for much of World War II showed through his speech, as it was dull, slow, and void of emotion. The speech, it seems, was effective despite itself. While missing a large portion of what Bitzer requires for an effective rhetorical situation, Truman managed a mildly successful speech solely because his audience wanted to hear it. The exigence of the situation was the success of the speech far more than anything Truman said. The urgency that the people of the United States saw in the fight against Japan was the real power behind Truman’s speech, not his words.

Bitzer demands that not all situations are rhetorical, but there is no question that V-E Day was one. Winston Churchill and Harry Truman addressed their respective nations at a time when it was extremely necessary to focus attention on the continuing fight against the Japanese. While Churchill easily created his rhetorical audience, and led them towards the exigence despite his constraints, Truman remained on the radio, speaking to an audience who was willing to listen, even though there was nothing new to hear.

Works Cited