

Carolinas Communication Annual

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Susan K. Opt and Sharlene T. Richards

"To Make the World So Damn Uncomfortable": W.E.B. Du Bois and the African American Prophetic Tradition

Andre E. Johnson

SPOTLIGHT ON DEBUT SCHOLARSHIP

The Future That Could Have Been: Bayard Rustin, Civil Rights, and Coalition Politics

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Pole-Vaulting in the Archive: A Self-Reflective, Feminist Engagement with One Student's Jump into Archiving

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Moving Interviews into the Digital Age

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The Influence of Poverty on Health: Promoting Conversations in the Classroom

Cody M. Clemens, Tomeka M. Robinson, and Danny Valdez

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Editorial Policy (2017)

The *Carolinas Communication Annual*, the peer-reviewed state/regional journal published by the Carolinas Communication Association (representing both North Carolina and South Carolina), accepts the submission of scholarly articles on an ongoing basis. While articles by authors in the Carolinas and about topics relevant to the Carolinas and the surrounding region are particularly relevant for this journal, the call for submissions is open to authors from around the country and open to a wide range of topics from multiple methodologies and perspectives within the larger Communication Studies discipline. The journal is especially interested in submissions of pedagogical ideas and activities for our GIFTS INC (Great Ideas for Teaching Students in the Carolinas) area, which should be modeled after activity essays published in the journal *Communication Teacher*; submissions of multi-author forums of short thematically or methodologically related position papers or critical arguments; and submissions of “Debut” essays, which are papers written by first-time authors publishing their research in a peer-reviewed communication journal.

Critical essays and “debut” essays should generally be no longer than 6000-7000 words in length (including citations) and should follow the latest editions of MLA, APA, or Chicago style manual, depending on the author’s preference. GIFTS INC essays and activities should generally be no longer than 2000-2500 words and should follow the latest editions of MLA, APA, or the Chicago Manual of Style, depending on the author’s preference.

Authors should submit their essays electronically (in a Microsoft Word file) to the editor by or on **April 17, 2017**. Please include in the submission an author name and institution, author contact information, and an abstract in a separate cover letter to ensure blind review. In the cover letter, authors should also note the history of the submission and indicate, as needed, that the submission meets ethical standards of research (for example, IRB approval if relevant). The editor reserves the right to reject any submission that does not meet the basic standards above or seems to indicate a lack of ethical work. Authors should only submit one work per year to the *Annual* and the submission should not be under review with any other journal. A full call for submissions will be made available after the 2016 Carolinas Communication Association Convention on the Association’s official webpage, membership emails, social media, and CRTNET postings.

The *Annual* became contracted with EBSCO in 2014, thanks to the tireless efforts of the previous editor, Jason Munsell. The journal is now searchable on EBSCO through its *Communication Source* database as of August 2015.

Editor's Introduction

Dear Members and Readers,

As the incoming editor and a Carolina teacher/scholar entering her fourth year of membership in this Association, I am delighted to present the 2016 *Carolinas Communicational Annual*. I owe debts of gratitude to the people who have made this editorial transition smooth and rewarding. Past *Annual* editors Jason Munsell and Jason Edward Black have been ready with encouragement and advice throughout this process, often in ways that may have been unintentional but nonetheless significant. Their generosity and mentorship is quite characteristic of what I have found to be true of the Association's leadership and membership at large. The Executive Board members have, likewise, been a supportive group dedicated to seeing CCA thrive. The Carolinas are in very capable hands.

I must also thank the members of the 2016 *Annual* Editorial Board, several of whom are returning reviewers, but many more who are recently new to both the Association and to the Carolinas. The willingness of these reviewers to serve as careful, expert readers of the competitive number of high-quality submissions the journal received this year made my job easier and pushed the contributors to produce their very best work, as you will see upon reading this year's journal. I would like to especially thank Sean O'Rourke and Caroline Sawyer for their willingness to talk through and listen to my vision for the journal as I began my editorial tenure. In particular, Sean must be commended for making the wise recommendation to reserve a special section of this year's *Annual* for featuring "debut" scholarship. More on that to come momentarily.

In keeping with the journal's publication history, the 2016 *Annual* features scholarship from authors in and beyond the Carolinas, from early career and senior scholars, and on research and on teaching: all of which went through a rigorous double blind-review process. I have featured two exemplary articles this year. Susan K. Opt and Sharlene T. Richards lead off with their essay "Overcoming Infertility as a Hero's Quest: The Paradoxical Implications," a timely study of how celebrities employ certain narrative patterns to encourage women to make sense of their infertility experiences. Andre E. Johnson follows with his rhetorical study "'To Make the World So Damn Uncomfortable': W. E. B. Du Bois and the African American Prophetic Tradition." In this essay, Johnson raises questions about the understudied nature of Du Bois's use of religious appeals in his rhetoric, in contrast with previous readings that mistakenly downplay or ignore these appeals and their significance.

A special feature of the *Carolinas Communication Annual* – and one which caught my eye when I first joined the Association – is the inclusion of GIFTS INC ("Great Ideas for Teaching Students in the Carolinas") essays. The importance and usefulness of including teaching essays alongside critical research essays was not lost on me at the time and cannot be overstated now. The core of our discipline is its teaching tradition, and it is quite right that our scholarship and pedagogy be presented together, rather than apart. The three useful and smart GIFTS INC essays included in this year's *Annual* confirm this belief. Carl M. Cates and Kelly J. Ryan Naranja identify the increasing expectations for jobseekers to be fluent in digital interview processes and, accordingly, provide an assignment to help better prepare students for the communication demands that accompany such expectations and changes. In something of a related vein, Nancy Bressler notes the importance of critical listening skills

across the communication curriculum, and offers an accessible activity that draws from popular culture – Jon Stewart’s *The Daily Show* – to help students examine their own listening tendencies and to cultivate a more critical, nuanced approach to engaging public discourse. Finally, Cody M. Clemens, Tomeka M. Robinson, and Danny Valdez grapple with questions about the intersection(s) of health, poverty, media literacy, and communication. Inviting students to briefly live within their state’s poverty bracket, the authors provide a concrete activity that prompts students to confront and combat class-based marginalization through crafting and adopting best communication practices.

Nestled comfortably between the research articles and the GIFTS INC essays are three “Debut” essays, which marks a new addition to the journal under the first year of my editorship. The quality of these three submissions, coupled with the Carolinas Communication Association’s clear commitment to nurturing young scholars, made it a natural next step to feature debut scholarship; that is, essays written by authors enjoying their first peer-reviewed publication in a communication discipline journal. Kate Stevens was awarded the Mary E. Jarrard Undergraduate Student Paper Award at the 2015 CCA convention in Charleston for her paper “The Future That Could Have Been: Bayard Rustin, Civil Rights, and Coalition Politics,” and I am thrilled to include her essay in this year’s journal. Kate recovers a little-known text by an oft-forgotten Civil Rights activist, Bayard Rustin, and examines why his strategic use of constitutive rhetoric and the rhetoric of victimage, despite his skill and artistry, failed to resonate in its historical context. Catherine J. Bruns follows Stevens, and her essay “Fracking for Fans: The Ethos of *Promised Land*” merges the study of environmental communication with film studies to explore credibility themes within the recent environmentalist film *Promised Land*. As Catherine shows in her thematic analysis of *Promised Land* and its reception, films that deal with environmental controversies face certain challenges related to credibility when they fail to take a critical stance on their subject matter, even if that stance is marginalized or unpopular. Finally, Sarah Mayberry Scott’s essay enters scholarly conversations about archival research. Sarah relays her experiences as an early career scholar, from both the standpoint of archival researcher and archive maker. Her self-reflective close reading of a “Deed of Gift” contract in use for her current archival project offers an opportunity for locating and mapping the stakes for those doing archival work. I know readers will find it heartening, as I did when reading these papers, to see the fine work of our students and early career scholars.

The quality and distinct contribution each essay in this year’s journal makes speaks for itself, and I have done my best to ensure that each essay is error-free and formatted correctly. Many thanks, again, to all who made the 2016 *Annual* possible.

Sincerely,

Melody Lehn
Editor, *Carolinas Communication Annual*
Columbia, South Carolina
September 2016

Overcoming Infertility as a Hero's Quest: The Paradoxical Implications

Susan K. Opt and Sharlene T. Richards

This narrative analysis of Redbook's "Truth About Trying" celebrity video campaign reveals that the celebrities' infertility narratives embody the hero's quest monomyth. Aligning infertility narratives with the heroic quest potentially normalizes the conversation and reduces stigma about infertility. However, the pattern may prompt women to embark on the quest without regard for its various costs, additional stress and stigma for women who become mired in the quest, and restrictions on women's perceptions of themselves as "heroic." The study's paradoxical conclusions raise questions about how women quest and "redeem" themselves to become "heroes" beyond attempting to conceive a child.

Keywords: *Infertility, narrative, hero's quest, heroism*

Infertility affects a significant number of U.S. couples. About 12.3% of U.S. women ages 15 to 44 reported difficulty getting pregnant or carrying a child to term, and 11.3% of women in that age group received infertility services ("Key Statistics," 2015). Compared to men with infertility issues, women indicate they experience greater levels of stigmatization, anxiety, and depression (Slade, O'Neill, Simpson, & Lashen, 2007). Thus, organizations have created campaigns geared to women to address these negative outcomes. One of the most recent campaigns was promoted by *Redbook* magazine, in partnership with RESOLVE, a national infertility organization. In 2011, *Redbook* launched the Truth About Trying (TAT) campaign to increase social awareness and discussion of infertility issues and support women with infertility concerns (Dworkin-McDaniel, 2011). The campaign featured short videos of celebrities talking about their own infertility experiences to encourage other women to speak openly about infertility. In telling their stories, the celebrities abstracted from their experiences to constitute a sense-making narrative. This study analyzes the narrative patterns the celebrities used to encourage women to make sense of their own infertility experiences.

This study argues that to tell the "truth" about their infertility experiences, the celebrities constructed narratives that embodied a common cultural pattern or "truth"—the hero's quest (Campbell, 2008; Nimmo & Combs, 1980). This apparent "truth" potentially has paradoxical implications in the attempt to shift how society talks about infertility. On the one hand, aligning infertility awareness and the search for assistance with a heroic quest could normalize the conversation and reduce stigma about infertility. On the other hand, this narrative pattern might encourage women to embark on the quest

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without regard for the financial, physical, and psychological costs to attempt to achieve “heroic” status. The pattern also could create additional stress and stigma for women who become mired in the quest without ever achieving redemption or restrict the ways in which women perceive themselves as heroic. Thus, a campaign intended to promote open social discussion about infertility may, at the same time, unintentionally close the paths available to women in responding to infertility by creating a quest mandate.

In all, this study highlights an alternative aspect of infertility discourse and of women’s “heroism,” which have gone unconsidered in previous research. It begins by summarizing briefly relevant literature and the study’s approach. Then it presents the narrative patterns underlying the celebrities’ TAT videos. The essay concludes by discussing the potentially paradoxical implications of viewing women’s infertility experiences as a hero’s quest.

Infertility and Hero’s Quests

Recent studies of infertility have focused on various aspects of being involuntarily childless, such as couples’ management of information and privacy about infertility (e.g., Bute, 2009; Bute, 2013; Bute & Vik, 2010; Steuber & Solomon, 2011), the influence of culture and family values on response and treatment choices (e.g., Amason, Wilson, & Rusinowski, 2012; de Kok, 2009; Jennings, 2010), gender and class issues (e.g., Bell, 2009; Bowker, 2001), and infertility support systems (e.g., Epstein, Rosenberg, Grant, & Hemenway, 2002; High & Steuber, 2014; Hinton, Kurinczuk, & Ziebland, 2010; Leite, Makuch, Petta, & Morais, 2005; Malik & Coulson, 2009). Analyses of infertility discourses primarily have emphasized how the culturally promoted “motherhood mandate,” the expectation that women will have children, tends to foster shame and social stigma for infertile couples, especially women, and how its normative ideas are reproduced (e.g., Britt, 2001; Harrison, 2014; Marsh & Ronner, 1996; Steuber & Solomon, 2011).

Regardless of whether the absence of children is involuntary or not, most researchers support Veevers’ (1980) claim that being childless violates expectancies associated with the U.S. culture’s “dominant fertility norms” (p. 6). Douglas and Michaels (2004) have argued that despite the rise of feminism and the belief that women have choices, the media promote “a new momism”—being a mother is valued as “the most important thing a woman can do, a prerequisite for being thought of as admirable and noble” (p. 22). Various scholars have traced the historical development of the “motherhood mandate” (e.g., Britt, 2001, Marsh & Ronner, 1996; May 1995) and indicated the cultural universality of this “imperative” (e.g., Remennick, 2000). In fulfilling the motherhood mandate, the normative child-bearing expectation is one of genetic reproduction, leading Baxter, Norwood, Asbury, and Sharp (2014) to observe, “The importance of biogenetics in creating family is demonstrated by the use of expensive and invasive reproductive technologies to treat causes of infertility” (p. 254).

In the 1960s and 1970s, media and public discourse began emphasizing the physical causes of and medical treatments for infertility (Marsh & Ronner, 1996; Whiteford & Gonzalez, 1995). Infertility became “reconceptualized as part of the medical model with the woman’s body seen as a diseased organ, and treatment focused on the control or removal of the damaged organ” (Whiteford & Gonzalez, 1995, p. 29).

Consequently, a cultural taken-for-granted began to emerge in which women were expected to seek treatment to overcome the “defect” or “disability” of being infertile (Whiteford & Gonzalez, 1995). “In this normative order, the person who desires to be successful is almost *obligated* to take advantage of opportunities,” including infertility treatments (Britt, 2001, p. 71).

The media’s depiction of reproductive technologies has also contributed to the pressure for women to seek treatment. In an analysis of press coverage of in vitro fertilization (IVF) technology, Condit (1994) reported that the portrayals “overinflate the value of biologically related children” and “downplay the importance of other values such as financial solvency, community involvement, and work life” (p. 129). Furthermore, the coverage tended to emphasize only IVF stories with positive outcomes (Condit, 1994). Similarly, Hewlett (2000) found that the media skewed images of IVF by failing to talk about problems with the technology. Likewise, Bute, Harter, Kirby, and Thompson (2010) found that the media shaped perceptions of reproductive choice by including only certain women’s stories, ignoring men’s role in contributing to infertility problems, and failing to consider organizational and structural concerns related to reproductive choice. The researchers noted, “Storytelling is not a benign process—narratives are inherently partial and imbued with cultural values and struggles” (p. 53). One way in which cultural values or “truths” are promoted is through the use of certain narrative patterns, such as the hero’s quest.

Scholars have described the hero’s quest as “a dramatic tale with a distinctive sequence and logic” (Nimmo & Combs, 1980, p. 238). Campbell (2008) identified “the nuclear unit of the monomyth” as a sequence of “separation,” “initiation,” and “return” (p. 23). A person intentionally or unintentionally is separated from his/her community by being called to an adventure, crosses into a space in which he or she faces a succession of trials, and then returns transformed and shares the bounty gained to better the community (Campbell, 2008). Researchers have suggested that as U.S. culture developed, a new kind of hero was introduced—based on Adam before the Fall (Brown, 1970; Lewis, 1955; Nimmo & Combs, 1980). In the U.S. hero’s quest version, an individual begins the journey as an “innocent,” much like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Brown, 1970; Lewis, 1955; Nimmo & Combs, 1980). Similar to Adam and Eve’s encounter with an apple, the person acquires knowledge that results in a “fall,” creates separation from “innocence,” and produces pain and suffering (Nimmo & Combs, 1980). The “fallen” person “descends into darkness,” faces trials, perils, and sacrifices, and if, successful, “emerge[s] from the darkness transformed,” in essence “redeemed” (p. 235-236). Along the journey, helpers in the form of friends or guides may accompany the hero (Nimmo & Combs, 1980). Ultimately, the hero’s quest can end in victory, defeat, or death, although if death, the narrative usually emphasizes the sacrifice’s meaningfulness (Nimmo & Combs, 1980).

Researchers frequently have examined the U.S. version of the hero’s quest in literary and film contexts (e.g., Frentz & Rushing, 2002; Lewis, 1955; Mackey-Kallis, 2001; Ramaswamy, 2014; Scheurer, 2005; Stroud, 2001). Others have explored its influence in social arenas, such the narratives politicians tell about themselves or experience (e.g., Koenig, 2003; Nimmo & Combs, 1980; Rowland, 2010). However, the studies have tended to focus on male heroes and ignored women’s journeys to become heroes. Traditionally, literature and popular media have represented men as heroes and

portrayed women in lesser, supporting roles (Duffy, 2008; Polster, 1992, Smith, 2008). When women are depicted as heroes, they tend to be shown as sexualized action heroes (Brown, 2011; Cronin, 2010; Smith, 2008; Sternadori, 2013). Scholars have suggested that one reason women's heroic quests are overlooked is because the characteristics constituting female heroism differ from the traditional male heroic qualities of being "commanding, strong, and aggressive" (Smith, 2008). Women's heroic acts typically embody the attributes of "equality, support, and interdependence" (Smith, 2008, p. 201). Furthermore, women's heroic acts tend to occur within home and family rather than outside the community (Cronin, 2010; Polster, 1992). Thus, the problem for women "is not in the ability to be heroic but in being recognized as heroic" (Smith, 2008, p. 201). In sharing their infertility stories, the TAT celebrities not only attempt to raise social awareness of infertility issues but also to gain recognition of their own "heroic" status and that of women who confront infertility challenges.

Campaign Background and Approach

Redbook appears to have been one of the first media organizations to use a celebrity narrative video campaign as a way to engage U.S. society in talk about infertility. As Beck, Aubuchon, McKenna, Ruhl, and Simmons (2014) noted, celebrity health narratives are a common technique used to garner public attention to health issues. Besides educating the public, the narratives can inspire "people in the same situation to persevere, fight, keep going, and pursue options" (p. 249). One reason the celebrities likely inspire others is because they serve as today's cultural "heroes" (Drucker & Gumpert, 2008; Robertson, 1980). Their stories may reflect their own heroic journeys.

In October 2011, *Redbook* launched the Truth About Trying video campaign ("Celebrities Support," 2011; Dworkin-McDaniel, 2011). *Redbook* published an article that described the campaign's purpose. "REDBOOK's on a mission to end the shame and secrecy of infertility—and you're about to join it," announced the subhead on the article titled "The Invisible Pain of Infertility" (Dworkin-McDaniel, 2011). The article highlighted the apparent problems of infertility and argued that open discussion about infertility could help women find connection with and emotional support from others facing conception challenges. A key campaign strategy involved posting videos in which nine celebrities spoke about their infertility experiences and invited the public to upload video responses about their experiences. This analysis focused on the celebrity videos only because how the celebrities told their stories might have influenced the response video narratives. As Beck, Chapman, Simmons, Tenzek, and Ruhl (2015) noted, celebrities' "private-turned-public health narratives constitute important contributions to broader conversations about health, wellness, illness, and even death" (p. 1)

To analyze the celebrity videos posted on the *Redbook* TAT campaign website, the authors initially reviewed them independently with a focus on identifying narrative patterns organizing the celebrities' stories. They followed the lead of researchers who have explored personal narrative videos on health-related topics. For example, Chou, Hunt, Folkers, and Auguston (2011) examined narrative syntaxes and themes common to 35 YouTube cancer survivor videos to determine effectiveness of narrative construction. Similarly, Ileş (2012) analyzed 17 eating disorder campaign videos to evaluate effectiveness of persuasive patterns.

Next, the authors compared the narrative patterns they had identified individually and observed a commonality—in making sense of their infertility experiences, the celebrities’ stories tended to highlight attributes of the hero’s quest monomyth as described by Campbell (2008) and Nimmo and Combs (1980). Finally, the authors used Brown’s (1982) rhetoric of social intervention approach to consider the implications of invoking the quest pattern as a means of making sense of women’s infertility experiences. The next section provides the analysis’ results organized by the monomythic sequence of “innocence and fall,” “journey,” and “redemption.”

Analysis of the TAT Celebrity Video Campaign

The professionally produced and edited TAT videos, which ranged in time from 2 minutes and 15 seconds to 4 minutes and 47 seconds, opened with identical credits stating that First Response Pregnancy Tests sponsored the videos, completed in partnership with RESOLVE. The campaign consisted of an introductory video that featured all nine celebrities briefly mentioning their experience with infertility (“Celebrities Support,” 2011) and nine individual celebrity videos. The celebrities included TV personalities Garcelle Beauvais, Cathy Ladman, Padma Lakshmi, Rosie Pope, Sherri Shepard, and Marissa Jaret Winokur; book authors Elisabeth Rohm and Marc Sedaka; and the national spokesperson for the American Fertility Association, Brenda Strong. Each celebrity’s video began with a narrative about the person’s experience with infertility and finished with advice about resolving and/or coping with infertility. At the close of each video, the celebrity encouraged viewers to post their own videos about their infertility experiences.

In telling their stories, the celebrities make sense of their infertility experiences by constructing narratives of a “heroic” journey. The celebrities’ tales begin with descriptions of their “innocence” in their initial beliefs about their fertility and their “fall” when they acquire knowledge about their inability to conceive. Their stories highlight the challenges and difficulties they faced and assistance they received on their “journey” to have a child. Their accounts conclude with their “redemption” in the forms of conceiving a child or a re-conceiving of self. The celebrities return from their “successful” quest as heroes who now support others on this quest.

Innocence/Fall

Much like the hero described by Nimmo and Combs (1980), the celebrities are at first naïve but then acquire knowledge and “fall.” Nimmo and Combs (1980) noted that although the knowledge hurts, it gives the hero an impetus to maintain hope and to sacrifice to find redemption. In addition, the celebrities, like the hero, do not embark on quests by choice, but do so with “sore reluctance” (Nimmo & Combs, 1980, p. 233). Their video narratives begin with their tales of “innocence” and then focus on knowledge gained related to age, body functioning, and unexplained or secondary infertility, which leads to their “fall.”

In terms of age, several celebrities described their “innocence” that age could be a barrier to conception. For example, Garcelle Beauvais (2011), who starred on the *Jamie Foxx Show*, said, “You know, you hear, you see all these celebrities getting pregnant after 40, and no one really tells you that it’s hard, and who knows what processes they went

through to actually get pregnant.” Beauvais believed that the media accurately represented pregnant women in their 40s and experienced a “fall” when she realized that this portrayal was inconsistent with statistics that show a woman’s fertility declines in her 30s and 40s. Similarly, Elisabeth Rohm (2011), author of *Baby Steps*, said that she had focused on a career because she thought that the popular belief that the 30s and 40s are the new 20s also applied to conceiving. She “fell” when she learned that because of her age, she would be unable to have children without assistance.

In terms of body functioning, several celebrities described their “innocence” as their unquestioned belief that their body would function without problems when they attempted to get pregnant. For example, Sherri Shepard (2011), a co-host of *The View*, lost her innocence when she found out that she had a blocked fallopian tube. “Everything else is working out in my life but somehow my body’s not working according to how I thought it was supposed to work,” she said. Similarly, Padma Lakshmi (2011), co-host of *Top Chef*, was surprised to learn that endometriosis, which she had been diagnosed with at age 36, is a cause of infertility. Although Marissa Jaret Winokur (2011), star of *Hairspray*, had begun to lose her “innocence” when she was treated for cervical and uterine cancer, she said she was not fully aware of the implications until she married and wanted to have a child. She described her “fall” as the recognition of her inability to carry her own child.

In terms of unexplained or secondary infertility, several celebrities described how they had “innocently” assumed that infertility issues could be easily identified and overcome, or if they had already given birth successfully, a second child could be easily conceived. For example, Marc Sedaka (2011), author of *What He Can Expect When She’s Not Expecting* and the only male celebrity telling a story, said he “fell” when he learned how the diagnosis of “unexplained infertility” impacted his wife’s apparent need to be a mother. “She needed children like she needed air and water, and until I knew that, I couldn’t be as active a partner as I should have been in the process,” Sedaka explained. Both Rosie Pope (2011), star of *Pregnant in Heels*, and Brenda Strong (2011), American Fertility Association spokesperson, experienced secondary infertility after having had a natural and successful first pregnancy. Both had assumed that getting pregnant a second time would be uncomplicated based on their first experience and “fell” when they learned that this was not the case.

Lastly, Cathy Ladman (2011), a comedian on HBO’s *One Night Stand* series, described her “innocence” as believing that she had rejected the “motherhood mandate.” However, Ladman’s surprise came at age 45 when she realized that she wanted a child. Unlike the other celebrities, her “fall” related to her expectation that the adoption process would be simple and low stress and her discovery that it would be long, involved process for her.

In all, these celebrity heroes initially were “innocent” about the probability of infertility for their ages, the ways in which infertility could be present in their bodies, and the ability of science to solve all fertility problems. They “fell” when they acquired painful knowledge that they needed medical intervention, could not carry their own child, or adoption was complicated. Thus, they embarked on a seemingly involuntary quest, perhaps prompted by factors such as the motherhood mandate, the need for a biological offspring, or the expectation that the “defect” needed fixing (e.g., Baxter et al., 2014; Britt, 2001; Whiteford & Gonzalez, 1995).

The Journey

Like the hero described by Nimmo and Combs (1980), the celebrities face a quest that is “destined to produce risks, anxieties, threats, and dangers” (p. 231). For the celebrities, the overall goal is to find redemption by having a child. However, in the journey to reach that end, the celebrities meet with challenges such as stigma, psychological hurdles, and the physical trials and endurance of infertility treatments.

A common peril that several celebrities mentioned encountering was being stigmatized because of their infertility. For example, Shepard (2011) explained that at the fertility clinic where she sought treatment, celebrities entered through a back entrance to hide their situation. She was told to avoid the other celebrities and keep their secrets. Beauvais (2011) said she felt shame that she was unable to conceive like other women. Some celebrities expressed concern that others would believe something was wrong with them or that they would be viewed as not really women because of their inability to conceive (“Celebrities Support,” 2011).

Another common threat that the celebrities discussed facing were psychological hurdles. For example, Rohm (2011) said that she felt broken, unfeminine, and like she needed to apologize to her partner for her inability to conceive. Lakshmi (2011) said she “felt crazy” until she found out that there was a specific reason for her infertility and then anger that she had been diagnosed so late. Celebrities with “unexplained infertility” faced the psychological challenge of not knowing how to solve their fertility problem. Strong (2011) remarked that the hardest part was “not knowing why.” The celebrities also mentioned that they sometimes became jealous or felt inadequate compared to other women who seemed to have no difficulties conceiving (“Celebrities Support,” 2011). Beauvais (2011) said she experienced “follicle envy” when she encountered other women undergoing infertility treatment who had more follicles than she had.

Another danger that the celebrities frequently highlighted were the physical challenges they experienced in their attempts to have a child. For instance, Laskhmi (2011), Pope (2011), and Shepard (2011) underwent surgeries to attempt to correct fertility problems. Pope experienced an ectopic pregnancy that resulted in the removal of a fallopian tube. Shepard noted that her difficult pregnancy included bed rest. In addition, the celebrities warned of the possibility of failing the quest. Pope commented, “At every stage they tell you this will work but every stage gets harder when you find out it’s not working.”

Finally, the celebrities also emphasized the endurance needed to complete the journey. For example, Strong (2011) explained that in her quest to give her son a sibling, “I wanted to exhaust every possible option that I had available to me to do that.” Similarly, Beauvais (2011) said that a friend had asked her how much more she would undergo. She replied, “They say when you can’t hold on any longer, hold on just a little longer and sometimes things change.” Likewise, Pope (2011) remarked that “it’s very hard to see that there could be a happy ending” when experiencing the physical discomforts of infertility treatments.

In all, the celebrities described their heroic quests to overcome infertility as one potentially involving stigmatization, psychological hurdles, physical challenges, and endurance. Yet surviving these risks and completing the journey could lead to redemption.

As Sedaka (2011) advised those on the journey, “Keep your spirits up—know that good things will happen—I know they happened to me.”

Redemption

Lastly, like the hero who finds redemption at the end of the quest, the celebrities describe their own deliverance at their journey’s conclusion. “If the hero’s quest is completed and a symbolic victory obtained then the hero can claim vindication. His quest has been justified, the community redeemed” (Nimmo & Combs, 1980, p. 237). For some celebrities, the triumph is in conception. For others, the reward is discovering an equally meaningful identity. By conceiving a child or re-conceiving self, the celebrity heroes are victorious. Upon their return, the celebrities give back to their community by becoming role models and mentors for other questors.

For the celebrities whose redemption came in the form of a child, their victory was celebrated as the realization of a dream or miracle. For example, Beauvais (2011) proclaimed, “If I didn’t do infertility treatment, I wouldn’t have my boys...Thank God there are ways to make your dreams come true.” Rohm (2011) named her accomplishment as a “sweet” victory. “When you get pregnant finally after such a battle to be able to be a mom, I mean it’s sweet for everybody,” she explained. Despite the physical challenges of endometriosis, Lakshmi (2011) eventually conceived without assistance, as did Pope. However, Pope (2011) noted that whether natural or assisted, all births are “miracles.” For these celebrities, their journey concluded with their transformation into parents.

For the celebrities whose quest ended without a birth, redemption came in the form of a self-transformation. For example, Strong (2011) began doing yoga to relieve the stress she was experiencing during her quest. She became aware that by teaching yoga to other infertile couples, she could help them navigate the “emotional rollercoaster” of infertility treatments. Her self-realization led to her renaming yoga therapy as her “second child.” “My mess would be my message,” she explained. For Winokur (2011) the transformation came in recognizing surrogacy as an equally viable option for becoming a mother. Similarly, Ladham (2011), who initially did not want children, described the transformation she experienced when her quest concluded with a successful adoption: “I so thoroughly enjoy being a mom.”

Much like the hero described by Campbell (2008), upon the celebrities’ return, they shared their bounty to better the community. By telling their stories in the video campaign, the celebrities reinforced their own “heroic” nature by speaking publicly about the “truth” of their infertility experiences. For example, Beauvais (2011) stated, “[W]e need to stop and help each other. I really believe it takes a village, and I really believe that we can talk about it and help one another, and say, it’s ok.” Similarly, Rohm (2011) suggested that “together we can actually empower each other and part of that is through telling the truth.” The celebrities invited viewers to join them in promoting open dialogue about infertility by posting video responses to the celebrities’ videos. “If you’re the one who is struggling, you can upload a video here and help reach out to other women, offer them support, offer them wisdom” (“Celebrities Support,” 2011).

Upon their return, the celebrities also acted as mentors, giving advice about three aspects of the journey—knowledge, options, and hope. The celebrities recommended that

women lose their “innocence” about infertility at an early age and acquire knowledge of fertility testing, facts, and treatments (Laskhmi, 2011; Rohm, 2011; Strong, 2011). Otherwise, they might discover they are “running out of time.” Several celebrities emphasized the knowledge that could be gained by simply talking openly about infertility and making people aware of the difficulties of conceiving. Furthermore, Strong (2011) counseled couples to learn about their reproductive health so they could make choices. Likewise, Winokur (2011), who elected to use surrogacy, said, “I think giving yourself options, realistic options, is the best advice.” Finally, the celebrities advised infertile couples to remain hopeful. “If you truly want to be a parent, you will be. How you become that parent is the journey” (Strong, 2011). Winokur suggested that hope comes in the form of supporters during the journey. “There are amazing people out there who will help you have a child.” In sharing their quest stories, the celebrities demonstrated that maintaining hope could lead to a successful outcome, whether by conception or self-reconception.

In all, the celebrities emphasized how they successfully completed their quests. By sharing their journey and accomplishments via the video campaign, the celebrities fulfilled the final hero’s quest criterion of giving back to the community, in this case, by attempting to change how society talks about and supports those experiencing infertility. In addition, the celebrities’ talk about their realized redemptions might inspire others to undertake the journey.

Discussion/Conclusion

Overall, the TAT celebrities abstract from their infertility experiences to construct narratives embodying the age-old hero’s quest. Although their stories varied in how they lost their innocence, what trials they faced, and how their quests concluded, all of the stories reflected the same overarching, narrative pattern. This claim aligns with Harrison’s (2014) discovery that, in bloggers’ personal narratives about infertility, they reproduced normative ideas. In the case of the celebrities’ stories, the normative idea is the hero’s quest. This narrative pattern for organizing infertility stories also is suggested in Condit’s (1994) finding that media articles about IVF technology emphasized stories of couples that overcame infertility problems and found “a happy-ever-after ending” (p. 220). In essence, the media also featured stories in which couples “fell,” “journeyed” and were “redeemed.”

Furthermore, researchers’ studies about infertility point to a hero’s quest pattern. For example, scholars have examined the narrative disruption, or “loss of innocence,” that occurs when women learn they cannot bear children (e.g., Amason et al., 2012; Britt, 2001; Jennings, 2010; Kirkman, 2003; May 1995; Remennick, 2000). Researchers have investigated the “journey” and its risks in studies on infertility-related stigma, emotional crisis, and support systems (e.g., Bute & Vik, 2010; Epstein et al., 2002; High & Steuber, 2014; May, 1995; Slade et al., 2007; Sternke & Abrahamson, 2015; Steuber & Solomon, 2011). Finally, to a lesser extent, scholars have explored the “redemptive” phase in studies of how women come to terms with infertility—by enacting “autobiographical” revision (Kirkman, 2003) or achieving a state of “static infertility” (Shalev & Lemish, 2012, p. 384). Thus, even research about infertility seems to reflect the key stages of the hero’s quest.

Casting the attempt to overcome infertility as a hero's quest potentially helps to normalize the societal conversation and reduce stigma about infertility. Rather than naming a woman's infertility as a failure, disease, or disability (Whiteford & Gonzalez, 1995), her infertility narratively becomes a "routine" challenge a couple might encounter on the conception journey. Acquiring knowledge about the ability to conceive and seeking treatment become taken-for-granted stages of that "heroic" path. Talking about infertility as a hero's quest draws upon a well-known U.S. cultural narrative with positive associations (Brown, 1970; Nimmo & Combs, 1980), which suggests that the couple's journey should also be viewed positively rather than stigmatized.

Furthermore, adoption of the hero's quest infertility narrative may increase society's awareness of the perils women face on the journey to conceive and their need for supporters during the quest. This recognition could highlight the nature of women's heroism, which often has gone unrecognized because its attributes of connection, community support, and equality differ from those of men's heroism (Polster, 1992; Smith, 2008). As the analysis indicated, the celebrities enacted these female-associated "heroic" qualities in telling stories to support others experiencing infertility and in encouraging others to share their infertility journeys. Recasting the attempt to overcome infertility as a hero's quest potentially adds to the ways in which women might be viewed as "heroes."

Paradoxically, recasting the search for knowledge about and treatment for infertility as a hero's quest potentially increases stress and stigma for those experiencing infertility. Hero's quests are expected to end successfully (Nimmo & Combs, 1980), and this expectation might prompt couples to undertake the journey without reflecting on its costs. Condit's (1994) research hinted at this possibility in her finding that the media emphasized the successful outcomes, or "redemption," of IVF technology and "downplayed the importance of other values such as financial solvency, community involvement, and work life" (p. 219). Thus, couples might feel compelled to embark on a quest to conceive a child to attain "heroic" status, despite disruptions to daily schedules, work, marriages, and social relationships (Remennick, 2000), issues that the TAT videos fail to address. The videos, which feature a racial diversity of women, imply that any woman can undertake this journey, even though the campaign storytellers are all of the "celebrity" class, and so more likely to have the financial and time resources required of the quest.

Of concern is the fate of women who might become mired in repeated "journey" cycles because the hero's quest narrative leads them to expect success eventually, yet they continually fail to find "redemption." Remennick's (2000) interviews with women who ended their IVF treatments without "redemption" found that they experienced a sense of emptiness, waste, and loss. Just as the celebrities' "heroic" narratives backgrounded attention to the potential financial and personal costs of undertaking the journey, so too might the lack of successful outcome aspect of the infertility narrative be silenced if society re-envisioned the attempt to conceive a child as a hero's quest. Because the campaign videos featured attention only to women who found redemption, they imply that all women who journey will find deliverance. Furthermore, First Response Pregnancy Tests' sponsorship of the videos prompts the interpretation that the quest will end in success.

Finally, foregrounding the “heroic” aspects of an infertility narrative paradoxically might create additional stigma for women who choose not to journey or have children regardless of their fertility status. Not only would they be violating the “motherhood mandate” (Britt, 2001; Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Marsh & Ronner 1996; May, 1995; Veivers, 1980), they also would be refusing to undertake an apparent hero’s quest “mandate” to conceive a child. Most cultures consider giving birth a “supreme act of heroism” for women (Polster, 1992, p. 126). Although the celebrities’ narratives highlighted an alternative way to achieve “redemption,” through a renaming of self, the celebrities achieved this “redemption” only by undergoing the heroic journey to overcome infertility. Choosing not to quest potentially could restrict a woman’s ability to become and be acknowledged as a “hero.” Given that the media rarely feature stories about women who choose to be childless (Condit, 1994) and women rarely attempt to counter the infertility stigma by giving voice to their own accomplishments (Remennick, 2000), the overcoming-infertility-as-a-heroic-quest narrative potentially stigmatizes women who choose not to journey and masks attention to alternative ways that women can be “heroic.”

Overall, the TAT celebrity videos encourage women to make sense of infertility as a “normal” and “natural” part of the “heroic” journey to conceive a child. This “heroic” pattern potentially reduces stigma about infertility and highlights women’s heroism. Simultaneously, it may create additional stress and stigma by prompting women to feel compelled to undertake the journey, perhaps repeatedly, at all costs to become “heroes” or by restricting the acts by which women see themselves as “heroic.” Thus, a campaign intended to promote open social discussion about infertility may, at the same time, unintentionally close the paths available to women in responding to infertility by creating a quest mandate.

Because the analysis relied on a limited sample of celebrity narratives, scholars need to expand the types of infertility discourse studied to see if the hero’s quest pattern recurs. Despite the study’s limitations, its initial paradoxical conclusions and the apparent limited scholarly research on the “redemption” aspect of the quest indicate a need to explore in more depth the question of how women quest and “redeem” themselves to become “heroes” beyond attempting to overcome infertility. How might the hero’s quest be re-envisioned so that women can experience “redemption” regardless of whether they choose to attempt to conceive a child? Such a reimagining might offer a way to reduce stress and alleviate stigma for all women. Several TAT celebrities’ narratives point to a “reconception of self” as a way to succeed in the infertility quest. Perhaps the answer lies in renaming “transformation” itself as “heroic,” regardless of whether it came about in the quest to conceive or in the quest to become.

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“To Make the World So Damn Uncomfortable”: W.E.B. Du Bois and the African American Prophetic Tradition

Andre E. Johnson

In the December 1918 issue of *The Crisis* magazine, W.E.B. Du Bois celebrated the end of the First World War with a loud and enthusiastic call for the right of all Americans to vote. Du Bois wrote, “Now that the war is over, we have but one word and one thought—the Ballot. We want that ballot safeguarded by every reasonable and decent limitation, impartially applied; but it can no longer be limited by race and sex (Du Bois, 1983, p. 165). Du Bois not only advocated for the right to vote, but also called for African Americans to utilize their right to vote and participate in democracy as fully-fledged citizens of the United States of America.

Almost forty years later, however, Du Bois’ attitude of voting had changed. In the October 20 issue of the *Nation*, Du Bois lamented,

I shall not go to the polls. I have not registered. I believe that democracy has so far disappeared in the United States that no “two evils” exist. There is but one evil party with two names, and it will be elected despite all I can do or say.... I have no advice for others in this election. Are you voting Democratic? Well and good; all I ask is why? Are you voting for Eisenhower and his smooth team of bright ghostwriters? Again, why? Will your helpless vote either way support or restore democracy to America?....Is the answer the election of 1956? I will be no party to it and that will make little difference. You will take large part and bravely march to the polls, and that also will make no difference. (Du Bois, 1956, par. 4, 8, 10)

While many scholars have examined the life and legacy of Du Bois across disciplinary lines and using multiple methods, important aspects of Du Bois’ use of rhetoric have yet to be studied or accounted for, which is surprising given the copious amount of written and spoken material we have by Du Bois. Anyone studying Du Bois and his use of rhetoric would have to wade through an abundance of material. For example, the Du Bois corpus consists of not only speeches and essays, but also short stories, poems, novels, editorials, and sermons. While there have been volumes devoted to the writings and speeches of Du Bois, there has not been one volume devoted to an analysis of those writings. Moreover, outside of a few dissertations¹ and conference

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proceedings and articles,² Du Bois' use of rhetoric has surprisingly not garnered much attention.

In addition, the few treatments of Du Bois' rhetoric do not examine his use of religious rhetoric. Previous scholarship about Du Bois has downplayed the role of religion in his life, which has in turn influenced rhetorical studies. Biographers have argued that Du Bois was so hostile to religion that others examining Du Bois followed suit and have, thus, rarely examined him through the lens of religion. This however, as scholars such as Zuckerman (2000) and Blum (2007) note, was far from the truth. Du Bois, far from being hostile to religion, was deeply committed to a rational understanding of religious views and though many saw his practice of religion as not ascribing to societal norms, Du Bois found comfort in his construction of religion.

His familiarity with the religious tradition led Du Bois to use prophetic rhetoric as a mode of discourse. In the May 1913 issue of *The Crisis* Magazine, Du Bois, penned a response to Rev. Charles Dole, who believed that *The Crisis* and Du Bois were not patient enough for change to happen regarding the civil rights of African Americans. Du Bois published Mr. Dole's letter and, in the same issue, offered a response. Du Bois grounded his response to "Mr. Dole's notion of gradualism" in the Hebrew prophets of the Bible. "When the Hebrew prophets cried aloud, there were respectable persons by the score who said: 'Unfortunate Exaggeration, Unnecessary Feeling, and Ungodly Bitterness! Yet the jeremiads were needed to redeem a people (Du Bois, 1983, p. 74). In writing about the progression that many believed humanity made during this time, Du Bois reminded his friend that this progress was made possible by the

[S]oul-torn strength of those who can never sit still and silent while the disinherited and the damned clog our gutters and gasp their lives out on our front porches. These are men who go down in the blood and dust of battle. They say ugly things to an ugly world. They spew the lukewarm fence straddlers out of their mounts, like God of old; they cry aloud and spare not; they shout from the housetops, and they make this world so damned uncomfortable with its nasty burden of evil that it tries to get the good and does get better. (Du Bois, 1983, p. 76)

He closed his editorial by reminding Mr. Dole that with the "sainted spirits of such as these *The Crisis* would weakly but earnestly stand and cry in the world's four corners of the way; and it claims no man as friend who dare not stand and cry with it" (Du Bois, 1983, p. 77).

By equating *The Crisis* and his own role as editor in the same spirit of the biblical Hebrew prophets, Du Bois saw his position as more than just an editor and writer of editorials. That is, he saw his role as editor as one divinely given to him, one that he must answer and accept. Du Bois cast himself in the role of a prophet and throughout his life, by using prophetic rhetoric and adopting prophetic personas, he reached out and attempted to persuade his audiences.

In this essay, I briefly examine the prophetic rhetoric of W.E.B. Du Bois. By examining his editorials while editor of *The Crisis* and other writings, I argue that Du Bois employed different types of prophetic discourse grounded primarily within the

African American Prophetic Tradition (AAPT). For purposes of this essay, I specifically highlight Du Bois' use of mission-oriented prophecy as a way to call African Americans to a divine mission of social uplift. In so doing, my aim is three-fold. First, I seek to build upon the fledgling rhetorical scholarship on Du Bois. Second, following Zuckerman and Blum, I seek to (re)introduce to readers and (re)claim Du Bois as a religious rhetor. Finally, I seek to add to the scholarship on prophetic rhetoric.

Prophetic Rhetoric

To talk about the prophetic tradition, we must first talk about prophetic rhetoric—or the language that shapes the tradition. Prophetic rhetoric or prophetic discourse is not easy to define. Part of the quandary may lie in the fact that prophetic rhetoric “does not descend from our traditional, systematized, Greco-Roman model of rhetoric.” Prophetic rhetoric “comes from the Hebraic tradition found in the writings of the Old Testament in which there is no systematic theory of rhetoric.” Indeed, as James Darsey (1999) reminds us about Old Testament prophets, they “left us with a considerable body of discourse, but they were not theorists and were not prone to spend time examining or articulating the assumptions on which their discourse was built” (p. 7).

Perhaps another reason for the difficulty in defining this type of rhetoric may “lie in the unwillingness of some to deem credible anything having its foundation in the Bible, religion, or prophecy” (Johnson, 2012, p. 7). Darsey echoes this point when he writes:

In our everyday usage, we acknowledge the possibility of something like a religious commitment at the base of radical social movements: we talk of revolutionary “faith” and “zeal”; we refer to radical leaders as “prophets”; and we analyze radical rhetoric according to its “God terms” and “devil terms.” At the same time, while we admit of the existence of some blatantly “messianic” or “millennial” or “revitalization” movements that have unmistakably religious roots, we are also victims of our own enlightenment and generally prefer explanations of a more secular order. (Darsey, 1999, p. 8)

Therefore, to understand the prophetic, one has to suspend modern tendencies toward rationalized incredulity and “humble ourselves before what we understand only incompletely” (Darsey, 1999, p. 8).

Elsewhere, I define prophetic rhetoric as discourse grounded in the sacred, rooted in a community experience that offers a critique of existing communities and traditions by charging and challenging society to live up to the ideals they espoused while offering celebration, encouragement and hope for a brighter future. It is a rhetoric “characterized by a steadfast refusal to adapt itself to the perspectives of its audience” and a rhetoric that dedicates itself to the rights of individuals. Located on the margins of society, it intends to lift the people to an ethical conception of whatever the people deem as sacred by adopting, at times, a controversial style of speaking (Johnson, 2012, p. 7).

Moreover, the rights of individuals that prophetic rhetoric dedicates itself to is, especially that of the poor, marginalized, and exploited members of society. It intends to

lift the people to an ethical conception of the Deity (Heschel, 1955, p. 413). In addition, prophetic rhetoric also acts as social criticism because it “challenges the leaders, the conventions, the ritual practices of a particular society” by way of what society deems sacred (Walzer, 1996, p. 33). Prophetic rhetoric becomes, then, a critical rhetoric that “examines the dimensions of domination and freedom as these are exercised in relativized world” (McKerrow, 1989, p. 91).

This definition of prophetic rhetoric also explicates a four-part rhetorical structure. *First, speakers must ground prophetic discourse in what the speaker and the audience deem as sacred.* In short, the speaker must appeal to something that both speaker and audience hold as sacred and that is recognizable. For a speaker to appeal to anything “*sacred* that the audience does not recognize as such would render that message unimportant and meaningless. This means that the prophet is indeed part of the community fabric and understands the beliefs of the audience. Therefore, there is no prophetic discourse outside of community” (Johnson, 2012, pp. 7-8). For people adopting prophetic personas, they must speak out of a recognizable tradition and appeal to those sacred beliefs and values within that tradition. People who adopt prophetic personas cannot do so as rugged individualists, but must root their “prophecy” within communal traditions, beliefs and expectations.

Second, there is an element of consciousness-raising through a sharing or an announcement of the real situation. In short, the proclaimer pronounces what is “already known” and “bears witness to what the speaker believes as truth” (Johnson, 2012, p. 8). Thus, instead of unveiling the hidden, the prophet reveals the hidden in plain sight. In other words, “the prophet goes beneath the surface and states the obvious that others might be afraid to speak. It is consciousness-raising because once it is out in the open; the prophetic desire is that the audience reflects on the situation with the hope of changing its ways” (Johnson, 2012, p. 8).

The third element in the rhetorical structure is the charge, challenge, critique, judgment, or warning of the audience(s) (Johnson, 2012, p. 8). Moreover, the prophet does not just address the primary or initial audience, but the much wider audiences—those that include institutions, governments, and society in general. The prophet usually does this by offering reinterpretations of what is sacred and casting a vision of the world not as it is, but as it could and should be.

The final part of the prophetic rhetorical structure is the offer of encouragement and hope (Johnson, 2012, p. 8-9). There are two types of hopes in prophetic rhetoric. First, there is an *eschatological hope*. It is a hope that things will get better in some afterlife or some other spiritual transformation to some other world. The second type of hope is a “pragmatic hope.” It is a more “this-worldly” and earthy type of hope. It is a hope that grounds itself in the prophet’s belief in the Divine to make right order in this world. It is also similar to what Cornel West calls “tragicomic hope.” About this experience, West (1988) writes,

Tragicomic hope is rooted in a love of freedom. It proceeds from a free inquisitive spirit that highlights imperial America’s weak will to racial justice. It is a sad yet sweet indictment of abusive power and blind greed run amok. It is a melancholic yet melioristic stance toward America’s denial of its terrors

and horrors heaped on others. It yields a courage to hope for betterment against the odds without a sense of revenge or resentment. It revels in a dark joy of freely thinking, acting, and loving under severe constraints of unfreedom. (216)

It is a hope that sees a new day coming—a hope that again grounds itself in the prophet’s deep connection to the Divine—the One that gives the prophet the strength to make it one more day.

Traditionally, critics studying prophetic rhetoric tend to situate the discourse within two primary traditions.¹ The first tradition is apocalyptic prophecy. Barry Brummett offers a working definition of apocalyptic rhetoric by calling it a “mode of thought and discourse that empowers its audience to live in a time of disorientation and disorder by revealing to them a fundamental plan within the cosmos.” Further, he writes that apocalyptic rhetoric is “discourse that restores order through structures of time and history by revealing the present to be a pivotal moment in time” (Brummett, 1991, p. 9). In addition, apocalyptic rhetoric “assumes a position of having knowledge through visions, dreams, or meditations that the prophet/speaker shares with the audience. It is a secret or divine revelation revealed only to the prophet and it becomes the speaker’s job to disclose the previously hidden (Johnson, 2012, p. 10).

For the purposes of this essay, I will focus on the second type of tradition—the jeremiad. The term jeremiad, “meaning a lamentation or doleful complaint,” derives from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, who warned of Israel’s fall and the destruction of Jerusalem. The fall came because of the people’s failure to keep the Mosaic covenant. Even though Jeremiah denounced Israel’s wickedness and prophesied destruction in the short term, he always looked for the day when the nation would repent and be restored (Howard-Pitney, 2005, p. 5).

The jeremiad became part of the American rhetorical tradition around the seventeenth century among the New England Puritans as a way to express their self-identity as a chosen people. Believing that they had a divine plan to “flee from corrupt European religious and social establishment,” the Puritans, as many would later call them, felt the need to establish a “holy society” in the wilderness of America (Howard Pitney, 2005, p. 5). According to Bercovitch (1978), the Puritans, once they settled in America, started to reshape the jeremiad (7). Drawing from the biblical story of the Exodus, the Puritans saw themselves as the “New Israel” leaving the bondage of Europe to come into a new world they believed to be the “Promise Land.” They felt sure of themselves because in being the “New Israel,” the Puritans believed themselves to be the

¹Alan D. DeSantis argues for the inclusion of a third type, Amostic prophecy. Derived from the biblical prophet Amos, this is when the speaker (prophet) speaks as one outside the covenant as she exhorts the audience to live up to their own covenant. See Alan D. DeSantis, “An Amostic Prophecy: Frederick Douglass’ The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 22 (1), 65-92. In addition, I argue that prophetic rhetoric is a genre unto itself associated with the aforementioned four-part rhetorical structure. I see apocalyptic and jeremiad forms of rhetoric as types of prophetic rhetoric or subgenres. See Johnson’s *The Forgotten Prophet* and Robert Terrill’s *Malcolm X: Inventing Radical Judgement*.

“chosen ones” whom God had called and ordained to be an instrument of His will. With the chosen people leading the way, America was to become the “city on a hill” whose light shined for all to see.

When the Puritans fell short of their call and ideal, typically the ministers in the community called the people to task. According to Howard-Pitney,

As Puritan society fell short of its goal of civic perfection, the jeremiad became a ubiquitous ritual of self-reproach and exhortation. Puritan ministers deplored a long list of perceived social failings, denounced the people for their sins and social misconduct, and warned of worse tribulations and divine punishments to come if they did not strictly observe once more the terms of their covenant with God. (7)

The terms of the covenant were spelled out in unambiguous form: God has called us to be a peculiar and special people. We are the New Israel and America is the new Promised Land. We must remember this and act accordingly. When we forget this, God’s judgment will come upon us.

Not only did the jeremiad come with “self-reproach and exhortation when things went wrong, it also had what Bercovitch calls an “unshakable optimism.” In short, what the Puritans believed was that when turmoil and trouble came upon them, it was indeed God’s punishment for sin, *but the punishment was a “corrective” and not for “destruction.”* In other words, God may be angry with them, but He had not replaced them with anyone else. As Bercovitch notes, “Here, as nowhere else, [God’s] vengeance was a sign of love, a father’s rod used to improve the errant child. In short, their punishments confirmed the promise” (8).

In one of the few treatments of Du Bois’ rhetoric, Howard-Pitney suggests that one can situate most of Du Bois’ earlier protest rhetoric within the jeremiad tradition. Du Bois, he argues, began his career with “great faith in the ability of reason to persuade people and foment reform.” He grounded his sacred appeal in scientific evidence and reasoned that his audiences would be appreciative of sound “solid scientific facts” (95). It is with these “facts” that Du Bois would now share his findings and presents the *real situation* in the lives of black folks—in hopes that it would raise awareness about the plight of black folk and hopefully produce some much needed reforms. In Du Bois’ *Philadelphia Negro*, while he “vividly portrayed Philadelphia’s black slum as a center of crime and vice, his reasoning for these conditions “deviated sharply from conventional wisdom” (Howard-Pitney, 2005, p. 96). That is, Du Bois argued that the poor conditions of blacks are not because of an unchangeable heredity, but as a product of the socialization and history of African Americans.

Du Bois’ critiques early in his career focused on challenging black people to rise up and take charge of their own situations. Grounded in the rhetoric of social uplift, Du Bois chastised blacks for their “promiscuity, criminality, and laziness.” Moreover, he lamented over what he felt was a “lack of racial purpose and unity and the ineffectuality of black institutions” (Howard-Pitney, 2005, pp. 96-97). Correction would only come, Du Bois maintained, through “Negro homes,” which he argued must stop being places of “idleness and extravagance and complaint.” While arguing that “White prejudice was not

responsible for all or perhaps the greater part of the Negro problem,” Du Bois suggested that work, be it menial or poorly rewarded, would lead to the road of salvation (Howard-Pitney, 2005, p. 97).

Du Bois’ concluded his prophetic rhetoric during this period calling both Blacks and Whites to do their duty towards each other. Offering encouragement and hope, Du Bois believed that when each race did their own duty, mutual benefit and progress would happen. Du Bois believed in the American covenant system and called both Blacks and Whites to return to its principles and ideals. For African Americans, it was the ideals of hard work, self-help and thrift that would help them succeed, while with Whites, Du Bois gently reminded them of the ideals of liberty, freedom and justice should apply to African Americans as well. The hope to which Du Bois called his audiences grounded itself in the belief that a return to the covenant would produce the peace and prosperity needed in the land.

However, as time passed and as racism gave way to more lynching, deprived more African American rights from Whites, and an ever-increasing bigoted and racist society emerged, Du Bois’ rhetoric changed. While Howard-Pitney has noted this shift, he argues that Du Bois remained in the jeremiadic tradition of prophetic rhetoric. I suggest, however, that Du Bois moved away from the jeremiad and begins to offer a prophetic discourse that we find primarily within the African American Prophetic Tradition— mission-oriented prophecy.

African American Prophetic Tradition

Unlike the prophetic rhetoric of the jeremiad, the African American Prophetic Tradition (AAPT) does not have its origins in freedom. Birth from slavery and shaped in Jim and Jane Crow America, the African American version of the prophetic tradition has been the primary vehicle that has comforted and given voice to many African Americans. Through struggle and sacrifice, this tradition has expressed black people’s call for unity and cooperation, as well as the community’s anger and frustrations. It has been both hopeful and pessimistic. It has celebrated the beauty and myth of American exceptionalism and its special place in the world, while at the same time damning it to Hell for not living up to the promises and ideals America espouses. It is a tradition that celebrates both the Creator or the Divine’s hand in history—offering “hallelujahs” for deliverance from slavery and Jim and Jane Crow, while at the same time asking, “Where in the hell is God?” during tough and trying times. It is a tradition that develops a theological outlook quite different at times from orthodoxy—one that finds God very close, but so far away.

It is, also, a tradition that does not exclusively reside in either the apocalyptic or the jeremiad forms of prophetic discourse. Though African Americans have used both forms of prophetic discourse, the contextual restraints and rhetorical exigencies have not always allowed for an apocalyptic or jeremiadic appeal. For example, what if the speaker does not believe that God will cause a cataclysmic event that will bring in a new age—an apocalypse. What if a speaker does not appeal to a covenant—or for that matter, does not believe the covenant is available to the people—a jeremiad. What if the covenant itself is the problem—can one still engage in prophetic discourse?

For many African Americans, the jeremiad at times posed a huge problem. Inherent in the jeremiad is that its proponents never question the foundational premise of its belief—or in prophetic terms, it never questions the *sacred*. People primarily using the jeremiad never once questioned their belief in America's promise and destiny. They never questioned their belief that they were the New Israel or chosen people or that America was indeed the Promise Land. Whenever calamity happened, the Puritans may have believed it was because they had sinned and deviated from the covenant, but belief in the covenant never faltered. When calamity came, many Puritans interpreted the calamity or judgment as God showing His love as parents do from time to time. Once the people started living up to what the people hold as *sacred*, then the calamity would cease and God would "heal the land." However, many African Americans did not have confidence or think that the covenant would work for them. If African Americans adopted a prophetic persona to appeal to their audiences, they had to find other means.

In my work on the career of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, I identify at least four other types of prophetic rhetoric found primarily, but not exclusively in the AAPT. The first is *celebratory prophecy*. I define celebratory prophecy as a prophecy, typically grounded in a sacred covenant that calls the people to celebrate an event that leads the people to celebrate the sacred (covenant). In other words, before the event, the prophet could not invoke the covenant because the audience that the prophet represents was not included in the covenant. Moreover, the prophet links the event to the will of God, thus it becomes a sacred event worthy of celebration (Johnson, 2012, p. 10).

The second type of prophecy used by African Americans is a *prophetic disputation* or *disputation prophecy*. Disputation occurs when the speaker offers a "quotation of the people's opinion" within the speech context and offers a refutation "which corrects this opinion" (Graffy, 1984, 105). Prophetic disputations function rhetorically by giving the speaker a chance not only to speak about the evils perpetrated by her opponents, but also to do so in a way that creates a sense of empowerment; not only for the speaker, but also for the community the speaker represents (Johnson, 2012, p. 10). In this way, prophetic disputations are similar to Gregg's (1971) ego-function of protest rhetoric because the prophet aims the rhetoric at the "protestors themselves," the ones who are in need of affirmation of their personhood (74). While the prophet aims his rhetoric towards his opponents, the main thrust of his message appeals to his supporters.

Prophetic disputations and, for that matter, prophetic rhetoric in general, do not follow Gregg's view that the speaker needs *self-affirmation* and that the speaker is the *primary audience* of the message. What Gregg assumes is that the speaker also needs "psychological refurbishing and affirmation"—and perhaps in protest rhetoric, the speaker does. With prophetic rhetoric, the speaker needs no such affirmation. With prophetic rhetoric, before the speaker speaks, affirmation comes from the Divine. In other words, the speaker does not need approval or affirmation from anyone to speak. The prophet's ego is in check because the ego, the self—in fact the whole person of the speaker—belongs to God.

The third type of prophecy use by African Americans is a type of prophetic discourse that I call *pessimistic prophecy* or *the prophetic lament*. For many black orators, finding the racism too entrenched and the American covenant ideals not realistic for black Americans to ascertain, they become wailing and moaning prophets within what

I call the *lament tradition of prophecy*. In this tradition, the prophet's primary function is to speak out on the behalf of others and to chronicle their pain and suffering, as well as her or his own. By speaking, the prophet offers hope and encouragement to others by acknowledging their sufferings and letting them know that they are not alone (Johnson, 2012, p. 14).

For the purposes of the essay, I focus on the fourth type—*mission-oriented prophecy*. A mission-oriented prophecy is a constitutive rhetoric that calls a people to participate in a divine mission by reconstituting the people from their perceived identities. While a constitutive rhetoric assumes that audiences are already a rhetorical effect and uses that identification to shape the message, a mission-oriented prophecy finds the constructed identities problematic and offers a new vision or identity for the people. Therefore, what the prophet does is to (re)constitute the people in an identity that would fit the divine call (Johnson, 2012, p. 13).

I argue that in his early years as editor of *The Crisis* (1911-1925), W.E.B. Du Bois established a mission-oriented prophecy that attempts to call into being a people who would fight for righteousness and justice and stand firm in the face of trouble. Directed initially at the "talented tenth," Du Bois soon targeted his prophetic zeal to all African Americans as a response to Booker T. Washington's program of accommodation. This *new people* would be emboldened to stand up and speak out and demand their rights afforded to them by the Constitution and by their Creator.

Du Bois' Mission Oriented Prophecy

During the early years at *The Crisis*, to establish his mission-oriented prophecy, Du Bois grounded or appealed his rhetoric to both the religious and secular conceptions of the sacred. As for a secular conception of the sacred, Du Bois readily grounded his prophecy in an understanding of the sacredness of citizenship—of being an American citizen first. He starts an editorial titled *A Philosophy for 1913* by stating, "I am by birth and law a free black American citizen. As such, I have both rights and duties. If I neglect my duties, my rights are always in danger. If I do not maintain my rights, I cannot perform my duties" (Aptheker, 1983, p. 47).

Those sacred rights and duties meant supporting the country during the First World War. Du Bois urged African Americans to support the war effort because, as he argued, "this is our country" and if it is our country then "it is our war." By appealing to the sacredness of citizenship, Du Bois was then able to offer a critique of America as "not perfect," but "its continued existence and development is the hope of mankind and of black mankind" (Aptheker, 1983, p. 160).

Understanding citizenship as a sacred entitlement led Du Bois to support women's suffrage. In his 1914 editorial "Votes for Women," Du Bois called on African Americans to help "bring it to pass." Du Bois argued first, "any extension of democracy involves a discussion of the fundamentals of democracy. Second, he argued, "if it is acknowledged to be unjust to disenfranchise a sex, it cannot be denied that it is absurd to disenfranchise a color" (Aptheker, 1983, p. 80). Finally, he saw women as potential allies in the ongoing struggle for African American civil rights.

In another editorial arguing for equal treatments of all races, Du Bois grounded his appeal in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Golden Rule. In writing about Jesus, Du Bois called the church to live up to the standards espoused by Jesus. By offering a biblical interpretation of Jesus' life, Du Bois situated Jesus within the life of African Americans by way of analogy. After lamenting blacks were not welcome in white churches, Du Bois writes

Yet Jesus Christ was a laborer and black men are laborers; He was poor and we are poor; He was despised of his fellow men and we are despised; He was persecuted and crucified and we are mobbed and lynched.... Why then are His so-called followers deaf, dumb, and blind on the Negro problem—on the human problem. (Aptheker, 1983. p. 69)

In order to establish unity and build camaraderie, Du Bois often recounted the atrocities that African Americans faced throughout his editorial writings. In one, he confessed that he was taking an “indefensible joy” at the “lynching, licking, and mob rule” against some whites that went on during this time in the United States. Then he gives the reason why.

For fifty years you have murdered our men, raped our women, stolen our property and maimed our children's body and soul; and when we told you that this failure of government, decency, morals and mercy was your problem more than ours, you grinned at us pityingly.... But it's coming home, Old Top—it's coming home. (Aptheker, 1983, p. 364)

One of Du Bois' main critiques was against the church—but more specifically the black church and its leadership. In one editorial, after lamenting that “All is not well with the colored church,” Du Bois focused on what he found to be the problems with the church's leadership. In writing about the bishops and pastors of the church, Du Bois argued, “the paths and the higher places are choked with pretentious ill-trained men and in far too many cases with men dishonest and otherwise immoral.” Further he wrote, “the church is still inveighing against dancing and theatergoing, still blaming educated people for objecting to silly and empty sermons, boasting and noise, still building churches when people need homes and schools, and persisting in crucifying critics rather than realizing the handwriting on the wall” (Aptheker, 1983, pp. 34-35).

He also challenged African American churches to “stop building and purchasing new church edifices and start investing the “money of the church in homes, land and businesses and philanthropic enterprises for the benefit of the people.” He called for churches to adopt a cooperative economic model reasoning that if “a group of people can buy and pay for a hundred-thousand-dollar church,” they can purchase a hundred-thousand-dollar apartment house and run it” (Aptheker, 1983, p. 238).

Du Bois typically ended his editorials with encouragement and hope to his readers. After critiquing the country for its negative attitude against blackness, Du Bois challenged his readers to “gird up [their] loins, because a “great day is coming.” Though he reminded them “we have crawled and pleaded for justice and we have been cheerfully

spit upon and murdered and burned,” he closed by writing, “we will not endure it forever” (Aptheker, 1983, p. 17). This spirit moved Du Bois to proclaim hope that one day that society would afford all of the rights and privileges of citizenship to African Americans.

Conclusion

After the NAACP removed him as editor of *The Crisis* in 1934, Du Bois prophetic persona shifted. Though not examined in this essay, Du Bois would later become a pessimistic prophet—critiquing both African Americans and the wider society to live out the meaning of the ideas they espoused. For instance, Du Bois eventually no longer believed that the talented tenth could lead African Americans because they too had capitulated to the rapacious capitalism that he had begun to critique as harmful to Blacks. Moreover, Du Bois also argued that an international socialism would benefit Blacks more.

While earlier in his life, he was hopeful that scientific inquiry and education would solve the race problem, in his book *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace*, he lamented, “It is with great regret that I do not see after this war, or within any reasonable time, the possibility of a world without race conflict” (as cited in Howard-Pitney, 2005, p. 133). Du Bois earlier in his life thought that the First World War would bring the peace and prosperity that many wanted. Later in his life, however, his views on war had changed. He argued for peace with the Soviet Union on two fronts. First, he realized that war was not the “path to the millennium” and second; he argued that war came from capitalists wanting to “stem the worldwide tide toward socialist democracy” (as cited in Howard-Pitney, 2005, p. 133). Marginalized as his prophetic pessimism became stronger, Du Bois still wrote and spoke out until the end of his life—a life that would lead him to Ghana where he died in 1963.

Typically, in my study of the AAPT, prophets start as optimistic prophets—who see themselves as universal prophets for all people; believing that if, their audience would just live up to the ideals espoused by what they hold sacred, that somehow everything would work out. It is also during this stage that the prophet sees America and its covenantal blessings as available to African Americans.

However, as time goes on, African American prophets—finding the racism too entrenched and the American covenant ideals not realistic for black Americans to ascertain—become wailing and moaning prophets within what I call the *lament tradition of prophecy*. In this tradition, the prophet’s primary function is to speak out on the behalf of others and to chronicle their pain and suffering, as well as her or his own. Just a cursory examination of Du Bois life and works would suggest that he also followed this trajectory. Du Bois started as an optimistic prophet believing that if blacks would just return to American covenantal ideals, then African Americans’ living would improve. At the end of his life, however, Du Bois rejected American covenantal ideals as being the harbinger for black success. He began to look toward an international socialism as the only route to a kinder and more meaningful humanity.

In this essay, I first sought to build upon the fledgling rhetorical scholarship on Du Bois. Again, while scholars from other disciplines are doing good work examining

Du Bois, rhetoric scholars simply have not taken advantage of the textual corpus that Du Bois left behind. For example, his editorials in *The Crisis* would make for a good study on any number of themes or topics beyond what I have studied here.

Second, by (re)introducing Du Bois and (re)claiming him as a religious rhetor, scholars may want to examine the large amounts of writings devoted to the topic. While Religious Studies scholars such as Gary Dorrien (2015) connect Du Bois to the Black Social Gospel movement in the early twentieth century, scholars of religious rhetoric may want to study the way Du Bois used and constructed religion in his attempts to persuade audiences. In addition, writings found at WEBDuBois.org, curated by Robert Williams, Associate Professor of Political Science at Bennett College, offer a good starting point for such analyses.

Finally, I wanted to also make a contribution to scholarship on prophetic rhetoric and more specifically, the African American Prophetic Tradition. While there have been studies on prophetic rhetoric in general, until recently, outside of David Howard-Pitney's work, there has not been much in the way of understanding prophetic discourse through an African American lens. Thankfully, this is beginning to change. In addition to my own work *The Forgotten Prophet: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the African American Prophetic Tradition*, there are two others works that center on the African American Prophetic Tradition: Willie J. Harrell Jr.'s *Origins of the African American Jeremiad: The Rhetorical Strategies of Social Protest and Activism, 1760-1861* (2011) and Christopher Hobson's *The Mount of Vision: African American Prophetic Tradition, 1800-1950* (2012). I suggest that studying Du Bois as prophet is another way to understand his life, legacy and challenge to all of us to continue to fight structures, institutions, and governments that continue to oppress—no matter where they may be.

Endnotes

¹ See Carl McDonald Taylor's *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Rhetoric of Redefinition* (1971), Vanessa Wynder Quainoo's "*The Souls of Black Folk*": *In Consideration of W. E. B. Du Bois and the Exigency of an African-American Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1993), and Fendrich R. Clark's *W.E.B. Du Bois and the Rhetoric of Social Change, 1897—1907: Attitude as Incipient Action* (2009).

² See Robert Terrill and Michael Leff's "The Polemicist as Artist: W. E. B. Bois' 'Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others'" (1995) and Aric Putnam's "The Ethos of Pan-Africa: The Rhetorical Visions of Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois" (2008).

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The Future That Could Have Been: Bayard Rustin, Civil Rights, and Coalition Politics

Kate Stevens

In the early 1960's, Bayard Rustin began to explore the effectiveness of the two most prominent protest tactics of the Civil Rights Movement: militancy and nonviolence. He strongly believed that both of these forms of protest were well-intentioned, but would not be entirely effective in the shifting political climate of 1964 and 1965. In his essay, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," Rustin outlined the faults of the two forms of protest in achieving change.¹ He believed that while nonviolence and displays of civil disobedience were effective in directly confronting racism and discrimination, they were not capable of enacting change in the necessary places where radical long-term change would result. In short, civil disobedience could make a short-term spectacle, but would not ensure long-term transformation to institutions at large.

Bayard Rustin believed that militancy was a "matter of posture and volume and not of effect." These predictions proved to be true when a large portion of the general public later discounted the second wave of the Movement² in its entirety because militancy and a radical agenda were synonymous with violence.³ In effect, Rustin advocated a turn towards more political action and utilization of the political power the black community already possessed.⁴ To be effective in the political environment in 1965, in the wake of Lyndon B. Johnson's inauguration, Rustin advocated a coalition of the same groups that supported the March on Washington: "Negroes, trade unionists, liberals, and religious groups" (Rustin 119). By doing this, the second part of the Movement could reach a greater sense of total equality and achieve a "package deal" — "advances in employment, housing, school integration, police protection, and so forth"—because the coalition would have more political power to call for large social and economic reforms than blacks would have as a single group (Rustin 112). Through the lenses of constitutive rhetoric and the rhetoric of victimage, this essay examines how Bayard Rustin constructed a radical vision for the second wave of the Civil Rights Movement to pursue progressive change within the American socio-economic system.

In the first section of my essay, I provide insight into the historical context in which Rustin publish "From Protest to Politics" including the political and cultural

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significance of the time period. Next, I use the lenses of constitutive rhetoric and the rhetoric of victimage to analyze Rustin's essay's historical context and its reception. My essay concludes by showing that the timing of Rustin's publication was problematic given its historical context, thereby allowing the essay to become largely forgotten in the historical narrative of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Nature of the Civil Rights Movement

In a political environment where the historical standard for bringing attention to and gathering support for an issue was protest through demonstrations and civil disobedience, a transition from tactical protest to political tactics was paramount. Many civil rights groups were not sure how to properly approach this new political environment where there was no de jure discrimination, but plenty of societal and economic inequality still present in American society.⁵ But as Jack Bloom points out, the black youth of the second wave of the Civil Rights Movement "grew up with the sense that they were as good as whites and therefore were entitled to equality" (155), and refused to allow any further delay of the realization of their inalienable civil rights.

The Civil Rights Movement was the most influential protest movement to affect the United States since the Labor Movement in the first half of the 20th century (Sugrue). Originally a movement guided by "litigation, the use of mass media, boycotts, demonstrations, as well as sit-ins and other forms of civil disobedience" (The US Civil Rights Movement), the Civil Rights Movement began to change in the latter part of the 1960's when an ideological divide developed between leading civil rights organizations about the Movement's future. SNCC, originally the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, changed its name to Student National Coordinating Committee in 1969 when the organization's leader, James Forman, did not know "how much longer [SNCC] could stay nonviolent," advocating more militancy and intimidation tactics. Other organizations like the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) utilized the same nonviolent tactics as the first wave of the Civil Rights Movement which, due to the changing political atmosphere, were not nearly as successful as they had been in the earlier part of the Movement. Bayard Rustin, a prominent activist and organizer within the Civil Rights Movement, most notably known for organizing the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August 1963, determined that the natural evolution of society, and therefore the problems faced by whites in America, had resulted in a second wave of the Civil Rights Movement where tactics had to change.

The Changing Times

The Civil Rights Movement had obviously affected the United States both socially and politically by February 1965, but after the 1964 presidential election, the political climate began to further change in part because of Lyndon B. Johnson's (LBJ) involvement in Vietnam. Johnson passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August of 1964 and in February and March of 1965, around the same time as Rustin's publication,⁶ LBJ authorized massive bombing raids of North Vietnam (D'Emilio) even though he ran as the peace candidate in 1964 against a "trigger-happy" Barry Goldwater. LBJ's actions

in Vietnam elicited a sense of dissent and betrayal within the newly united Democratic Party. The party began to fall apart after Johnson was elected to office, losing its political influence in national politics, and Republican Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968 (D'Emilio). Rustin's advocacy for new tactics (neither protest nor imposing fear, but political action) highlighted the change within the political environment of the U.S. after the 1964 election; protest, he believed, was no longer the most effective way to enact change. Enacting change required massive social reconstruction programs at the expense of governmental involvement and funds, and politics were the only way to make those programs possible.

While there are no rhetorical analyses of "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," a close reading of this rhetoric within its historical context is thought-provoking for a variety of reasons. Rustin's essay predicted the possible effect of a progressive Democratic coalition, one that could foster widespread change throughout America. While the electoral mobilization of blacks did occur, the liberal majority Rustin envisioned did not; increased black participation in the American electorate provoked a rise in Conservative politics.⁷ As a result, the Democratic platform became more centrist to attract more voters. In effect, black incorporation into politics resulted in blacks' moderation (Tate). By providing a close reading of "From Protest to Politics," effective rhetorical strategies used to establish the second wave of the Movement's identity, which was more focused on socio-economic issues and racial inclusion, will be explored in this essay.

Furthermore, Bayard Rustin was also an advocate and leader in the Civil Rights Movement who was often overlooked or simply ignored because he was a gay (Mustanski), pacifist, former socialist who advocated cooperation with whites and moderates to achieve equality for blacks; that is, he did not have a powerful "social location," one's identity based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc. (Dow). As the American cultural sentiment evolves past hemophilia, it is important to look back and recover those texts, historical figures, and ideas that were metaphorically "pushed under the rug" of history in order to cultivate a better understanding and fuller comprehension of the complexities of a movement as influential as the Civil Rights Movement.

Historical Context

The Civil Rights Movement had made great strides to overcome legal forms of discrimination such as challenging Jim Crow in the South with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, outlawing the poll tax with the addition of the 24th amendment to the Constitution, and later the abolishment of literacy tests with the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And yet, the American legal system, which had abolished slavery and de jure segregation, had failed to rid society of all forms of discrimination. Discrimination was still rampant, and Rustin questioned the value of achieving access to public accommodations when those involved could not afford to use them. Having identified this problem, Rustin believed the second wave of the Civil Rights Movement needed to change directions to target different areas of discrimination, focusing on achieving total racial equality rather than mere opportunity. Once the tactics of the Movement began to change, the nature of problems blacks faced also changed. These problems included "automation, urban decay, [and] de facto school segregation" (Rustin).

The State of the Economy: An Educational Catch 22

Within the economic market, the ability of the average person to achieve the American Dream through conventional methods was increasingly unlikely. Due to the natural evolution of America's capitalistic market and technological advances, automation was overtaking unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. The clearest path to the American Dream was education, but the current American educational system saw 57% of blacks dropping out of high school. The way the system approached education and potential for success was, in effect, barring blacks from achieving the American Dream in the conventional way. Eric Hoffer suggested self-help in the *New York Times Magazine*, an idea Rustin believed was only achievable after a major reshaping of society through massive societal overhauls and political action. Civil rights had come very far, but new methods would become necessary to continue the progress.

The State of Politics: LBJ Changes the Platform

The election of 1964 was pivotal to the political climate for civil rights.⁸ Lyndon B. Johnson was elected in a landslide victory over Barry Goldwater, winning 61% of the popular vote. Ninety percent of registered blacks cast their votes for Johnson because he stood for civil rights legislation (D'Emilio). The power of the black swing vote was apparent in the 1964 election; blacks had finally come together to use their electoral power to put a supporter of civil rights in office. Even though Johnson could have won without the black swing vote (Rustin 121), the fact that blacks had now united electorally instead of demonstrating to support political change like they had earlier in the Civil Rights Movement, was telling of the second wave's potential to enact progress. It reflected a political climate which could have facilitated substantial strides in racial equality in a short amount of time had the Democratic Party not been divided after the election of 1964. Unlike Goldwater, Johnson ingeniously ran as the Vietnam War peace candidate in the election of 1964. His use of one particular advertisement, "Daisy," showed the dramatic result of nuclear war if Goldwater were elected to the presidency. LBJ stressed that he would not send American troops to Vietnam: "We are the mightiest nation in all the world, but that power must be used to prevent a war, instead of starting one" (Johnson).

In 1964, it seemed that the Democrats had come together to support LBJ and his political platform, forming a coalition between "Negroes, trade unionists, liberals, and religious groups" (Rustin 119). That soon vanished when LBJ increased involvement in Vietnam, passing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964 and sending more troops to Vietnam with every passing year throughout the 1960's. The political atmosphere, which had such potential to enact more "radical" programs capable of achieving a higher degree of racial equality, shattered and Republican candidate Richard Nixon was elected in a landslide victory in 1968. The Democratic Party was divided between the priority of domestic (civil rights) vs. abroad (Vietnam) issues (D'Emilio), and the kind of radical action Rustin hoped the political sphere of 1964 would be capable of was no longer possible.

Once Everything Changed

Since Bayard Rustin's plan relied on a political climate that no longer existed, he was subjected to even more public scrutiny than he had been before. As a result, Rustin had to defend his essay in the wake of its publication. Many believed Rustin was a shell of a man for his meager stage presence as a symbolic figure of the Civil Rights Movement (in comparison to the archetypal men demanding change such as Malcom X and Martin Luther King, Jr.), because he was a pacifist and a friend to whites. Essentially, Rustin was "moderate," leaving less of an impression in comparison to the other civil rights advocates of his time. With the publication of this essay, Rustin began to advocate for a different kind of action which was likely prompted by his upbringing, encompassing his beliefs and positions into a different perspective for the future tone and tactics of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Making of an Activist

Bayard Rustin was not the most dynamic speaker, and he oftentimes wrote about his opinions in rhetorical texts that could be later published. "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement" was originally published in the February 1965 issue of *Commentary Magazine*. The magazine catered to a white-liberal audience; it was, at least before the 1970's, "a Jewish liberal...intellectual magazine" (Levine). Rustin purposefully wrote the essay to reflect the rhetorical voice of the audience: straightforward and analytical, not appealing to sentimental ethos (D'Emilio). His writing acted as a channel for him to express his moral convictions about nonviolence which were influenced by his upbringing.

Born on March 17, 1912 in West Chester, PA, Rustin was raised Quaker. The Quaker faith's strong religious subscription to nonviolence led Rustin to reject military service by not registering for the draft, and he consequently spent three years in a federal penitentiary for his convictions. Even though Rustin stated that his Quaker beliefs made him unwilling to serve in the military, he also refused to serve in a segregated military, which suggests he had more than enough justification for refusing the to join the draft. Rustin saw a country whose history was so deeply rooted in racism and prejudice from both blacks and whites that simple legal action was not enough to overcome the innate discrimination and intolerance. Rustin knew that the next wave of the Civil Rights Movement had to be different to be successful; political action was necessary to gain social, economic, and political equality.

A Man and His Message, Forgotten

Rustin's forgotten essay can teach us a lot about the Civil Rights Movement, but the reception of his rhetoric offers even greater insight into the state of America at that time. By closely reading a text, a rhetorician can rediscover it in its context and draw conclusions about its meaning and impact then and now. Rustin's background and beliefs no doubt influenced his writings, apparent from his use of constitutive rhetoric and the rhetoric of victimage. But to go further, I will go beyond the rhetorical text itself and analyze Rustin's social, cultural, and historical significance within the broader Civil

Rights Movement. By reinjecting Rustin and this particular rhetorical text into the Civil Rights Movement conversation, we can gain further understanding of the rhetorical strategies he used and gain insight into his persistent absence from our history books.

Constitutive Rhetoric

Establishing a Community

Rhetoricians seek to bridge the gap between a rhetorical text and its audience by creating a sense of community through “integration: the putting together of parts of the self, parts of experience, parts of language, into meaningful wholes... and putting together people into communities.” This kind of “constitutive rhetoric,” first coined by James Boyd White, is a key strategy utilized within Bayard Rustin’s persuasive essay “From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement.” In his essay, Rustin utilized the dichotomy of two points of view in an attempt to more readily persuade his audience to his opinion. White rightfully questioned this rhetorical technique and its supposed intent in *When Words Lose Their Meaning*: “What shifts or transitions does a particular text assume will pass unquestioned, and what does it recognize the need to defend?” (12). By bringing attention to certain ideas and leaving others to their own devices, Rustin can manipulate inductive and deductive reasoning (12).

Employing two keys points of view, Rustin attempts to rhetorically establish a community between himself, his ideas, and the essay’s readership. Advocating a literal Democratic coalition as the community, the use of collective pronouns (we, our) establishes a sense of community and self-identification, where the reader inadvertently assumes Rustin’s intended political direction for the second wave of the Movement. Rustin attempts to bring the audience closer to the issue by establishing a more casual, personal relationship with the audience, appealing to the readership. By doing this, Rustin establishes a sense of trust within the community, where he explains his persuasive intentions in a way that all readers can understand and will not feel misled and will, therefore, be more readily supportive of his mindset.

In the beginning of the essay, Rustin uses a collective “we” when referring to the necessary actions the readership (the potential coalition) needs to take for the new direction of the Civil Right Movement, and by doing so, creates an inescapable sense of group solidarity⁹ and an “all in this together” mentality.¹⁰ It is an effective rhetorical strategy for establishing a real coalition within the essay’s readership, because the audience is not left to feel pressured to do what Rustin then advises later on in the essay. Instead, they are motivated to heed Rustin’s later calls to action from a place of established community.

But as the essay progresses, Rustin more frequently switches to the first person point of view, thereby distancing himself from the collective and illustrating his credibility to lead the group. Whenever he switches to first person, Rustin either summarizes his intentions¹¹ or outwardly states his personal opinions.¹² By strategically using the two tenses, Rustin rhetorically separates his ideas from the actions of the Movement, thereby giving his essay more persuasive impact because it clearly, and intentionally, respected the audience by not forcibly imparting his ideas in a way that could be detected or exclusionary.

Giving Words Meaning

A consistent theme throughout “From Protest to Politics” is the clarification of misunderstandings within the Movement and the nature of the black struggle. Rustin acted as a guide, a seemingly validated and powerful voice within his “social location” (Dow 246) who could objectively inform *Commentary*’s readership. Rustin attempted to illustrate the complex nature of the problem by redefining “revolutionary” within the context of the second wave of the Movement as something that does not “connote violence; it refers to the qualitative transformation of fundamental institutions, more or less rapidly, to the point where the social and economic can no longer be considered the same” (Rustin 118). White acknowledges that words have the ability to change meanings, and for that reason, cannot be reduced by the reader without proper context: “[Words] meanings [reside] not in their reducibility to other terms but in their irreducibility; it resides in the particular ways each can be combined with other words in a wide variety of contexts” (White 11). Within society, the term “revolutionary” had become synonymous with violent groups and militancy, so Rustin had to redefine the term to give it new meaning, and a more palpable connotation for the essay’s audience.

Going further, Rustin sought to rhetorically illustrate the need for further reform by “calling [the Movement’s] very name into question” (Rustin 115). Rustin had already redefined certain key terms associated with the Movement to better express its nature and intentions, but he went a step farther by calling for a new name altogether. By discarding the Movement’s most iconic and instantly recognizable feature—its very name—Rustin was illustrating how the Movement had to adapt to be effective in the second wave, which found blacks seeking “advances in employment, housing, school integration, police protection, and so forth,” in addition to civil rights (Rustin 112).

Rustin also attempted to impart the importance of evolving tactics, but historically fell short. The essay was not well received, possibly due to a misuse of constitutive rhetoric. As White points out, “a speaker may find that he no longer has a language adequate to his needs and purposes, to his sense of himself and his world; his words lose their meaning” (White 7). In a case like this, no amount of rhetorical craftsmanship could rectify the disparity between the position Rustin tried to employ as leading voice for the future of the Civil Rights Movement and the position he actually held due to his “social location” as a gay, black man in the 1960’s. That said, Rustin’s essay can be analyzed from a different rhetorical perspective, where Rustin attempted to use his social location as a black man to his advantage rather than have it be his shortcoming.

Rhetoric of Victimage

Drawing upon the rhetoric of “victimage,” Rustin portrayed immoral youth as trapped, demoralized victims of a villainized American society. By doing this, Rustin tried to elicit a sense of guilt from the audience, seeking to increase peer determination to squash racial discrimination. Michael Blain helps us understand this strategy when he writes, “The chief social function of vilification [of an opponent, and hence self-victimization] is the creation and maintenance of in-group solidarity through hostility toward out-groups, or what Kenneth Burke calls congregation through segregation” (Blain 820). The use of vilification allowed Rustin to advocate for a political coalition

amongst all those affected by American society's inability to help its citizens reach full equality.

In his essay, Rustin attempted to draw more support for the Movement by making the group of victims, those impacted by the villainized socio-economic order, larger. He showed that not just blacks were being affected, but also the poor¹³ and uneducated workers going into an industrializing market where "an individual [was] no longer about to start at the bottom and work his way up" (Rustin 114); the issue, thus, had to transcend race to gain support from other groups. In so doing, Rustin portrayed American society as the villain, and its citizens (only those affected) to be the victims of "society's failure to meet not only the Negro's needs, but human needs generally" (Rustin 115). After showing how American society had hurt a significant portion of its citizens, Rustin would then paint participants of the Civil Rights Movement as "heroic, moral protagonists locked into battles with villainous antagonists" (Blain 806), attempting to show how the Movement had positively impacted other groups in the United States. As an example, he cited how the quality of education increased for all children once blacks "assaulted *de facto* school segregation in the urban centers" (Rustin 117). This two-part strategy allowed Rustin to identify those other groups who were struggling in American society and then show them how to help themselves by persuading them to support his envisioned coalition.

In addition to making the definition of victims more inclusive and arguing for the Movement's positive impact more broadly, Rustin used the rhetoric of victimage to justify the actions some blacks had been forced to take because of an aggressive society. He remarked that, "some of the healthiest Negro youngsters I know are juvenile delinquents" (Rustin 114). The ingenuity of some black youths helping themselves by resorting to illegal action as a way to achieve materialism was unavoidable, and Rustin stated, "...we must understand that demoralization in the Negro community is largely a common-sense response to an objective reality" (Rustin 114). Rustin rhetorically justified the criminal actions of blacks by invoking the rhetoric of victimage, which in effect both accredits and forgives the moral misconduct. Rhetorically, this strategy might have been useful in uniting blacks and former criminals together, but could have not worked when trying to persuade the audience of *Commentary* magazine given the magazine's target demographic. Rustin used victimage to appeal to the audience's morality, forcing acceptance of all black wrongdoings, even though this strategy may have been misused in this particular case.

Rustin said, in reference to the riots in both Harlem and Philadelphia in the summer of 1964, "Last summer's riots were not race riots; they were outbursts of class aggression in a society where class and color definitions are converging disastrously" (Rustin 113). In the essay, Rustin supported the method to succeed in a society which blocked blacks from inheriting their rights as American citizens, even though "any effort to combat demoralization and apathy [was] desirable" (Rustin 114). Immoral issues would resolve themselves once a villainous American society gave blacks a reasonable chance at advancing their places in society through conventional means. To be clear, though, Rustin carefully drew a distinction between validated, healthy forms of lashing out (as a result of victimage), which could lead to democratic deliberation, and the kind of lashing out meant to seek "revenge." Society had forced blacks to lash out, and as Jeremy Engels later observed, "such rhetorics transform the conversation, making

democratic deliberation less about finding consensus and more about achieving expiation, less about giving reasons and more about plotting revenge” (304).

Importantly, Rustin believed “militancy [was] a matter of posture and volume and not of effect” (117). More militant groups like SNCC, he argued, meant to “frighten white people into doing the right thing” (117) thereby misplacing their validated feelings of anger and “isolation” (117) into non-progressive avenues, ones that “[lacked] a realistic strategy for achieving [fundamental change]” (117). Engels remarks on this idea of misplaced feelings of anger when he writes, “When rhetorics cultivate hostility toward the perceived cause of suffering, they become deeply problematic—especially when one is not really a victim, or when one has identified the cause of suffering incorrectly” (304). Some blacks believed the hypocrisy of whites was the cause of blacks’ stagnant place in society, when in reality, the main enemies “[were] Eastland and Goldwater,” the politicians who were against civil rights, the war on poverty, Medicare, etc. (Rustin 120).

Using the rhetoric of victimage, Rustin was thus able to identify the true villains: American socio-economic institutions and the politicians who controlled them. By making this identification, he sought to put all conflicting ideas within the Movement to rest. Rustin established a common enemy, and therefore could suggest a plan to combat the now obvious threats to American citizens and their rights. Utilizing anaphora in the final paragraph of the essay, Rustin emphasized what the newly established coalition needed to do:

We need to propose alternatives to technological unemployment, urban decay, and the rest. We need to be calling for public works and training, for national economic planning, for federal aid to education, for attractive public housing – all this on a sufficiently massive scale to make a difference. (122)

He realized it was a difficult journey, but believed that by “[agitating] the right questions by probing at the contradictions which still stand in the way of the Great Society,” (Rustin 122), a Democratic coalition had the potential to fundamentally alter the American socio-economic institutions to such an extent that all citizens would have racial, social, and economic equality.

Responses

Even though Bayard Rustin had experience within the sphere of civil rights and protest movements, he had less experience within the sphere of rhetoric. Some voices have more power and privilege because of their social location, but Rustin was a relative outsider within the grander framework of the Civil Rights Movement because he was a pacifist and a gay man, both of which limited his power and credibility within the Movement. Those features did affect the reception of his essay. At least one response, discounted the seriousness of his radical stance due to his support to create a coalition. Staughton Lynd’s “Coalition Politics or Nonviolent Revolution” attacked Rustin’s legitimacy to call for radical change. He referenced Rustin’s attempt to get the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) to accept token seating in Atlantic City in August 1964 and Rustin’s attempt to stop a March on Washington protesting the

Vietnam War as reasons for Rustin's illegitimacy as a radical. Both of these instances were, contrarily, examples of Rustin's political savvy. He believed that accepting token seats in Atlantic City would have meant the MFDP had made progress through a political compromise, and sighted the Party's rejection of the seats as one of its biggest political blunders. Having just seen the Civil Rights Act passed and with the Voting Right Act still in the works, Rustin knew that alienating President Johnson could dampen support for civil rights legislation. Even though Rustin was Quaker and a steadfast pacifist, he did not openly object to the Vietnam War, at least at the time of Lynd's writing.

Nevertheless, Rustin tried to establish the Movement's credibility by denoting its intentions as moral. By doing so, Rustin believed the second wave of the Civil Rights Movement could more palatable and more widely accepted by the US population. The Movement had already established its credibility in the first wave when its work went on to pass the Civil Rights Act and the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. The Civil Rights Movement was primarily known for its demonstrations, and the newly emerging second wave needed to establish its credibility by appealing to the morals upon which the movement was initially founded. Reverting back to the original principles of the Movement, largely driven by Christian values, Rustin was able to establish the second wave of the Movement as credible because it was not so different from its successful predecessor.

In a time when a majority of Americans were religious, appealing to a grander sense of morality which transcended race (and most religious) differences allowed the Movement to be more widely accepted. Rustin believed that the general population would be driven by steadfast, socially inarguable subscriptions to morality, thereby freeing blacks from society's forced demoralization and desperate situations. The seemingly inevitable wide-spread acceptance of the second wave of the Civil Rights Movement (largely due to society's enthrallment with religious teachings) was key to the potential advancement of blacks in the American socio-economic society. Rustin, consequently, believed there were no other viable paths to achieving equality. Radical change had to take place, and would only occur if the Movement was widely accepted as credible by a larger portion of the American population.

America was originally founded on Protestant beliefs with an emphasis on freedom of religion, evident in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Even though this was and remains the case, it was socially unacceptable to be non-religious, or against organized religion in 1965 when "From Protest to Politics" was published by Rustin, a known homosexual. Since the U.S. Census Bureau did not ask questions about religious identity, this statement is difficult to prove on a national scale. "The influence and membership of Protestant and other traditional denominations declined in the liberal social climate of the 1960s and 1970s," (Mauk 125), and a Gallop poll in 1975, 10 years after the essay's publication, showed 68% of Americans having a "great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the Church or organized religion" (Mauk 135). Thus, it is possible the essay's publication in 1965 came at a relatively turbulent time in America's attempt to grapple with its relationship with religion. Supreme Court case *Engel vs. Vitale* (1962) outlawed the requirement to recite the Lord's Prayer, Bible verses, and prayers while in school. Yet, in 1963, the Supreme Court allowed religion to be taught in public schools as long as it was objective and not promotional (Mauk 133). At the essay's time of publication, and given the publication source (a historically Jewish *Commentary*

magazine), the readership and other American audiences were sensitive to issues regarding church and state.

Conclusion

Acting as a seasoned activist worthy of providing a warranted political commentary on the tactical change for second wave of the Civil Rights Movement, Bayard Rustin utilized radical rhetoric to illustrate a changing political atmosphere where a call for massive social programs and political involvement and was necessary for blacks to achieve racial equality within American society. Showing that the black struggle was not finished after the legal barriers of discrimination had been dismantled, Rustin endeavored to demonstrate the scope (socially and economically, as well as racially) of inequality. By doing this, Rustin gave the Movement, and those affected by it, justification to strive for large governmental intervention in the institutions that make up American life and the American Dream. In its historical context, "From Protest to Politics" illustrated the liberal idea of the time that was never quite achieved. Rustin saw the potential for a liberal majority, capable of enacting fundamental change to American institutions, but that never happened.

Rustin's strategic use of constitutive rhetoric and the rhetoric of victimage was well intentioned, but ineffective in its historical context. An example of radical rhetoric which appealed to religious morality, given by a black, openly gay man during the second wave of the Civil Rights Movement (a time when homosexuality was still illegal), was not publicly received very well. Rustin used victimhood and his constitutive voice to make a Democratic coalition seem appealing to the American public, but in both cases, it backfired. Some could assign Rustin blame for the Democratic Party's loss of political powers, while others could make the culprit the specific political atmosphere and national sentiment at the time of the essay's publication. Even so, Rustin's rhetorical strategies showed the importance of giving one's argument credibility, which would in turn, give one's agenda credibility. Every aspect of Rustin's essay meant to establish some sort of credibility or justification for the essay's existence, only strengthening the existence of the Movement and its intention for achieving equality for all American citizens. For these reasons, Bayard Rustin should not remain forgotten in either Civil Rights history or our rhetorical studies of that history.

Notes

¹ Rustin's essay "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement" can be accessed in at least two different places: Rustin's book *Down the Line* and in the online *Commentary Magazine* archives. For this reading, the edition in *Down the Line* was used. When compared to the edition in *Down the Line*, a few grammatical and clarification points were altered, with only one sentence being removed from the original *Commentary* essay. The main source of biographical and contextual information comes from John D'Emilio's *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*, a book written in 2003. The book is generally well-researched, is not obviously biased toward one particular ideology, and comes long enough after Rustin's main action (allowing time

to pass so nothing is sensationalized due to its immediacy). There are a few scholarly articles on Rustin's work, but none focus on "From Protest to Politics" or Rustin's radical rhetoric within the Civil Rights Movement. There are two responses to Rustin's essay which employ a strongly negative connotation, accusatory statements, and sweeping generalizations. John D'Emilio includes a review of Lynd's article in his book *Lost Prophet* and reduces Lynd's response to "slash-and-burn, take-no-prisoners style of leftist debate" (410).

² The second wave of the Civil Rights Movement showed a divergence from the first wave in that young people were less willing to accept living in a society driven by white supremacy. Roughly beginning with the Greensboro Four sit-in on February 1, 1960, the second wave was characterized by "an intensifying spiral of activity that took in broader and broader layers of people that challenged more and more of the ideology, customs, and practices of white supremacy" (Bloom 155). In addition, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee became synonymous with militancy (becoming the Student National Coordinating Committee) in the late 1960's in a political climate where "the boldness of these youth proved unsettling to the political world that they entered" (Bloom 155).

³ Rustin goes as far as to define "revolutionary" and "radical" in "From Protest to Politics," which is strange given the *Commentary's* relatively politically savvy audience and readership.

⁴ Rustin references the power of the black "swing vote" in the 1964 Presidential election, where 90% of blacks voted for Johnson, a supporter of civil rights legislation. Rustin also recognized the "potential political power base" created by the continued spread of urban ghettos (119).

⁵ Many people assumed once all legal barriers of discrimination were removed, blacks would be automatically incorporated into society. In actuality, the socio-economic system was so burdened with historically accepted discrimination that achieving total equality immediately after desegregation was impossible (Rustin 112).

⁶ "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement" was published on February 1, 1965 in *Commentary Magazine* (D'Emilio).

⁷ The North, which had historically been more Democratic, began to change when race issues, like race riots and busing, migrated north (Tate).

⁸ Johnson won on a platform that sought to keep Social Security, and Rustin believed this proved economic interests were more fundamental than racial prejudices because non-black voters elected Johnson even though he supported civil rights legislation (Rustin 122).

⁹ "...we hit Jim Crow precisely where it was most anachronistic, dispensable, and vulnerable" (Rustin 111).

¹⁰ "the continuing growth of racial slums, spreading over our central cities" (Rustin 113).

¹¹ "Let me sum up what I have thus far been trying to say" (Rustin 115).

¹² "I believe that the Negro's struggle for equality in America is essentially revolutionary" (Rustin 117).

¹³ "[the Movement] was compelled to its vision beyond race relations to economic relations" (Rustin 112).

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Fracking for Fans: The Ethos of *Promised Land*

Catherine J. Bruns

In 2012, the environmentalist film Promised Land failed to make a critical or financial impact at the box office. This study explores whether media talk about Promised Land may have contributed to its failure by examining discourse before and after the movie's release. A sample of 77 reviews, articles, and op-eds associated with the film were analyzed with regard to the film's ethos, or trustworthiness. Three themes were identified: credibility of makers, credibility of message, and credibility of measure. Findings suggest that Promised Land's refusal to take a stance on hydraulic fracturing diminished its credibility as a trustworthy environmentalist film. Implications consider the role of ethos as a determinant of film success or failure.

Keywords: Promised Land, *ethos*, media discourse, fracking

In 2012, blockbuster movie stars Matt Damon and John Krasinski wrote, produced, and starred in the environmentalist film *Promised Land*. The fictional movie explores the controversy of hydraulic fracturing and examines how far industry leaders and environmentalists are willing to go to influence farmers and landowners in small town America (Damon & Krasinski, 2012). Prior to its release, oil and gas companies criticized *Promised Land* for its portrayal of the domestic energy industry (e.g. Ahmad, 2013; Brady, 2013; German, 2013; D. Gilbert, 2012). The film's reception was further complicated after it was revealed that it had been partially financed by a United Arab Emirates production company, Image Nation Abu Dhabi (e.g. Berlinger, 2012; Hargreaves, 2012; Laylin, 2012; Markay, 2012). Upon reaching theatres, the movie made little profit, received mixed reviews, and was generally considered a failure (German, 2013).

The number of environmental messages present in films has increased significantly since 2002 (Murray & Heumann, 2009). However, because environmental messages draw attention to important ecological issues, the repercussions of failed environmental films such as *Promised Land* extend beyond traditional critical, financial, and award-based factors (Simonton, 2009). Specifically, an environmental film's failure not only hinders a valuable message from reaching its audience, but also threatens industry and audience trust in producing and viewing future environmental films. Thus, this essay proposes that ethos, or a film's credibility as a trustworthy movie, is an important factor in predicting and determining an environmental film's success or failure.

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This essay argues that audience distrust of *Promised Land*'s identity as an impartial film negatively impacted its ethos and contributed to its failure. To understand the *Promised Land* ethos, this study examines media discourse before and after the film's release to explore how media talk constructed the movie's ethos and how that construction may have contributed to its failure. After reviewing previous literature and examining a method, a thematic analysis is used to identify trends in the critique and review of environmental films. Findings and future implications are then discussed.

Literature Review

To understand *Promised Land*'s position in the film world, previous research on environmentally engaged cinema and factors of film success must be considered.

Environmentalism and Film

Activists have used film to bring attention to environmental issues since the early years of cinema. However, an increase in environmental movies and documentaries in the late 1990s resulted in the creation of the genre environmentally engaged cinema (Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010). Environmentally engaged cinema is composed of two subgenres: ecocinema and environmentalist films (Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010). Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) describes ecocinema as "films that overtly engage with environmental concerns either by exploring specific environmental justice issues or, more broadly, by making 'nature,' from landscapes to wildlife, a primary focus" (p. 9). Ecocinema films also include a call to action and are often accompanied by websites or "activist toolkits" that provide viewers additional information (Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010, p. xi). The subgenre encompasses many film types, including short fiction, experimental, and documentary movies such as *Gasland*, *DamNation*, and Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010).

Ingram (2000) defines environmentalist films as movies in which "an environmental issue is raised explicitly and is central to the narrative" (p. vii). Environmentalist films are not required to be "serious, coherent, or complex" and do not have to demonstrate a "clear intellectual position," meaning that an environmentalist movie may not offer a solution to an environmental problem (Ingram, 2000, p. viii). Additionally, although environmentalist films may impact public perception of an ecological issue, the subgenre's primary focus is entertainment rather than activism (Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010). Environmentalist films include any movies in which the environment is secondary to human emotion, such as *Erin Brokovich*, *The Day After Tomorrow*, and Damon and Krasinski's *Promised Land* (Ingram, 2000).

Although largely understudied, previous research on environmentally engaged cinema can be related to one of four environmental themes: nature, Western nostalgia, disaster, or environmental justice (e.g. Brereton, 2005; Ingram, 2000; Murray & Heumann, 2009; Rust, Monani, & Cubitt, 2013; Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010). Within these themes, scholars have generally relied on textual analyses of individual films or general surveys of a small number of related films (Ingram, 2000). Individual film analyses have primarily focused on *An Inconvenient Truth*, which is recognized as one of the first ecocinema films to successfully foster "political discussion, social commitment,

and personal conversion among the skeptical and usually apathetic” (Olson, 2007, p. 91). Because of *An Inconvenient Truth*’s astounding popularity, previous scholars have examined how the film succeeded in generating public interest in climate change (e.g. Beattie, Sale, & McGuire, 2007; Lin, 2013; Nolan, 2010; Olson, 2007; Rosteck & Frentz, 2009).

Scholars have also analyzed movies related to the oil and gas industries. One of the first ecological films, 1896’s *Oil Wells of Baku: Close View*, has been examined for its powerful use of visual footage in portraying oil drilling (Murray & Heumann, 2009). Ingram (2000) has also noted that popular environmental films such as *Free Willy 2*, *The Pelican Brief*, and *On Deadly Ground* often portray the energy industry as manipulative and greedy. *Erin Brokovich*, a film whose plot focuses on a lawsuit against a major energy company, has also received academic attention, although research has chosen to overlook the movie’s environmental subplot in favor of its portrayal of feminism and sexuality (Roth, 2004). Most recently, research has discursively analyzed the popular anti-fracking documentary *Gasland* (Vasi, Walker, Johnson, & Tan, 2015). Holistically, scholarship examples such as these often unpack themes of partiality or prejudice towards environmental issues or related industries.

Indicators of Film Success

Although scholars agree that the commercialization of Hollywood can impact environmental films (Ingram, 2000; Rust et al., 2013), research has yet to closely examine factors related to the potential success or failure of environmental movies. However, researchers have proposed at least three factors that tend to influence general films’ success or failure: financial performance, critical evaluation, and audience reception.

Financially, research has suggested that a large budget and high cost are indicative of a film’s future monetary success (Prag & Casavant, 1994; Simonton, 2005a, 2005b). Although wide screen distribution has been known to positively impact a film’s financial success (Litman & Ahn, 1998; Litman & Kohl, 1989; Simonton, 2005b), signing with major distributors has led to either no effect or negative effect on a film’s monetary performance (Litman, 1983; Litman & Kohl, 1989). Research on the monetary benefits of using well-known actors has been mixed, causing scholars to consider star-power an unreliable predictor of a film’s financial success (Elberse, 2007; Simonton, 2009).

Critically, a Christmas release date is a film’s best chance at achieving awards recognition (Simonton, 2007), and movies about true events or historical figures have been known to generate more critical acclaim (Simonton, 2005a). Movies in the dramatic genre are also more likely to be considered artistic (Holbrook, 1999) and do best with movie critics (Litman & Kohl, 1989; Prag & Casavant, 1994; Simonton, 2005b). Similarly, an R-rating is sometimes perceived as a stamp of artistic integrity and can increase a movie’s likelihood to receive praise from reviewers (Holbrook, 1999; Simonton, 2005b; Holbrook, 1999). Even choices as simple as crediting a director with co-writing a film’s script have been known to positively impact a movie’s critical reception (Simonton, 2005b).

Another way that scholars have explored factors contributing to a film's success or failure is by looking at audience reception. Wyatt and Badger (1984) found that both mixed and negative film reviews significantly decrease audience reception of a film, while positive reviews increase audience reception only slightly. They argued that exposure to film reviews cannot supersede an audience's natural inclinations towards a movie completely, but they can impact audience evaluation of a film within a reasonable boundary (Wyatt & Badger, 1984). In a 1987 study of audience interest in and perception of movie reviews, Wyatt and Badger concluded that audiences rate film reviews based on interest and credibility. They also determined that audiences perceive positive reviews and informative non-reviews to be more interesting than mixed and negative reviews, but not necessarily more credible (Wyatt & Badger, 1987). Wyatt and Badger's (1987) study also found that an informative non-review paired with a mixed review is just as effective at garnering interest in a film as a positive review paired with a negative review.

In summary, previous research has established the genre of environmentally engaged cinema and analyzed its relationship to themes such as nature, Western nostalgia, disaster, and environmental justice (e.g. Brereton, 2005; Ingram, 2000; Murray & Heumann, 2009). Additionally, factors related to traditional film success have been examined (e.g. Simonton, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Wyatt & Badger 1984, 1987). Although scholars have agreed that the relationship between Hollywood and environmentally engaged cinema can impact the creation and delivery of a film's message (Ingram, 2000; Rust et al., 2013), research has yet to consider the role that ethos plays in predicting an environmental movie's success or failure. Thus, the role of ethos will be examined as a factor contributing to the failure of *Promised Land*. To provide necessary context about the film, the next section will account for the origin of *Promised Land*.

The Creation of *Promised Land*

Promised Land tells the story of an oil company's attempts to persuade a community to allow hydraulic fracturing and the reactions of townspeople whose lives will be impacted by the decision. Although the film's pro-fracking main character ultimately reevaluates his corporate attitude, those involved with the film remained adamant that the movie was not intended to take a stance on the environmental issue (Rubinkam, 2013). In articles about the film, John Krasinski argued that *Promised Land* was about "American identity" and the working people who are sometimes marginalized as a result of the country's political climate (Baron, 2012, para. 21). Matt Damon also maintained the movie's devotion to characters first and fracking second ("Matt Damon On," 2012, para. 3-5), elaborating in an interview,

We just thought this was a really great, life-affirming, pro-community, pro-America, pro-democracy type of message... It's also about hope... and the idea of stewardship, that we're not the last generation, that we're not the last ones, that whatever decision we make, we have to apply to long-term thinking ("Matt Damon Shares," 2013, para. 36-37).

Despite these assurances, the film's creation elicited controversy (Berlinger, 2012).

Energy industry leaders primarily objected to the film's representation of fracking and industry ethics (e.g. Ahmad, 2013; Brady, 2013; German, 2013; D. Gilbert, 2012). Some opponents responded by buying ad time before the movie (Brady, 2013) and distributing pamphlets and scientific studies to film critics and viewers (Goldenberg, 2012). The public relations branch of the Independent Petroleum Association of America also launched a campaign against the film that parodied the movie's use of narrative by sharing pro-fracking stories from "real Americans" (Ahmad, 2013, para. 6).

Promised Land was also questioned for its association with Image Nation Abu Dhabi (e.g. Berlinger, 2012; German, 2013; Hargreaves, 2012; Markay, 2012). Founded in 2008 as a subsidiary of Abu Dhabi Media, Image Nation's funding of the film linked it to the UAE, a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and the world's third-largest oil exporter (Berlinger, 2012). Although some opponents of *Promised Land* argued that the production company had a personal stake in the success of an anti-fracking film (Markay, 2012), others contended that Image Nation might have considered the movie to be a good financial investment because of its impressive cast (Hargreaves, 2012).

Promised Land was shot in 30 days for \$18 million (Radish, 2013). After opening in limited release on December 12, 2012, the movie expanded to over 1,600 theatres on January 4, 2013, where it debuted in tenth place, pulled in a mere \$4.3 million, and attained "middling reviews and a B CinemaScore" (Kaufman, 2013, para. 9). *Promised Land* garnered slightly over \$7.5 million before closing on January 24, 2013, making its theatrical release length 28 days ("Promised Land," 2016). Taken together, *Promised Land*'s short time in theatres, lack of box office earnings, and mediocre ratings and rankings suggest that the film was generally unsuccessful.

Promised Land's narrative plot and secondary environmental focus position it as an environmentalist film. However, controversy surrounding the movie prior to its release raises issues related to the movie's ethos, indicating that the fate of the environmentalist film may have been threatened before it even reached theatres. *Promised Land*'s background thus raises the question of how perceptions of the film's credibility may have contributed to its failure.

Methodology

To understand why *Promised Land* failed to achieve success, focus was directed at how the media depicted the movie's ethos. Ethos was defined as the film's credibility as a trustworthy, impartial movie about hydraulic fracturing. A constant comparative analysis of media discourse prior to and immediately following the film's release was performed.

Data Collection

Media (Wyatt & Badger, 1984, 1987) have been known to influence film reception. For the purpose of this study, discourse of *Promised Land* was limited to media talk, such as national movie reviews, editorials, op-eds, and news articles. Data were obtained through a NewsBank search of "promised land movie." Because media talk surrounding a film begins prior to its release and continues past its emergence in

theatres, data were collected from a period of eight months, or four months before *Promised Land*'s release and four months after its release. A best match search between September 2012 and April 2013 yielded 3,175 results. General collection continued until results became saturated. A collection of approximately 100 results was narrowed to a final collection of 77 after repeated results were weeded out.

Media talk surrounding *Promised Land* was most prominent during December 2012 and January 2013. Within this period, discourse related to the film was highest during the last week of December and the first week of January, correlating with the film's wide release. Additionally, some media talk was present during April 2013, correlating with the film's appearance at the 2013 Berlin Film Festival.

Data Analysis

Following the grounded theory framework set forth by Glaser and Strauss (1967), collected data were analyzed for themes. To do so, data were organized chronologically and read for coherency and understanding. Data were then read again with attention being given to how the ethos of *Promised Land* was portrayed within media talk. Media talk was coded for key words and phrases that revealed how *Promised Land*'s message and environmentalist film identity was discussed in reviews, articles, interviews, and op-eds. Coding resulted in the emergence of three themes: credibility of makers, credibility of message, and credibility of measure.

Ethos Themes

In talking about *Promised Land*, movie reviewers and critics constructed three themes related to the film's ethos. The following section elucidates those themes and offers examples to support their constitution.

Credibility of Makers

The Washington Examiner explained in early December 2012 that "star-wattage aside, 'Promised Land' is really a quiet little movie," suggesting that the weight and credibility of *Promised Land* was attributed and evaluated in part because of the cast and production crew it was associated with ("*Promised Land*: Most," para. 1). Specifically, media talk surrounding *Promised Land* discussed the film's credibility in relation to its creators' previous blockbuster successes, critically acclaimed works, and Hollywood reputations.

Promised Land's credibility was implied by its relationship with big-name actors and a well-known director. Media talk of the film's cast focused primarily on Damon. Many interviews and reviews mentioned Damon's early success in *Good Will Hunting*, a critically acclaimed film he wrote and starred in with actor Ben Affleck (e.g. Longsdorf, 2013; Martin, 2013; "Matt Damon Shares," 2013; Simon, 2013). *Good Will Hunting* earned Damon an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor and an Academy Award win for Best Original Screenplay, both of which likely contributed to the credibility of *Promised Land*. Talk also mentioned Damon's role in the blockbuster *Bourne* franchise as well as his then-upcoming role in the expensive sci-fi movie *Elysium*, positioning him

as a well-known and well-respected Hollywood actor (e.g. Baron, 2012; “Matt Damon, John,” 2013; “Matt Damon Shares,” 2013). Media talk of Krasinski focused primarily on his success as Jim Halpert in the television series *The Office* (e.g. Baird, 2013; Baron, 2012; G. Darling, 2013; Grimm, 2013). Though Krasinski’s star power did not match the level of Damon’s (G. Darling, 2013), Damon’s agreement to partner with Krasinski for *Promised Land* suggests that Krasinski did have some blockbuster appeal (Baron, 2012).

Media talk of actors Hal Holbrook and Frances McDormand and director Gus Van Sant offered *Promised Land* an element of critical credibility. References to Holbrook attached him to his Academy Award-nominated performance in 2007’s *Into the Wild* as well as his portrayal of Preston Blair in the Steven Spielberg drama *Lincoln* (King, 2012; Owsley, 2013). Damon furthered Holbrook’s critical credibility in an interview by expressing that the actor was ideal for *Promised Land* because he “could be simple, commanding, and believable and speak of what the country used to be” (King, 2012, para. 13). McDormand was primarily linked to her Oscar-winning performance in *Fargo* (Larson, 2013; Tady, 2013). One article also mentioned that Damon and Krasinski wrote McDormand’s *Promised Land* character with her in mind, portraying her as a credible actress whose past critical success was recognized by other actors (“Matt Damon Shares,” 2013). Van Sant was often referenced as the director of *Good Will Hunting* as well as the director of socially influential films such as *Milk*, *Elephant*, and *Gerry* (e.g. Beifuss, 2013; C. Darling, 2013; Martin, 2013).

The Hollywood reputations of those eminent figures involved with *Promised Land* also impacted talk of the film’s ethos. Many reviews and articles commented on Damon’s honesty and influence, with one interviewer describing him as “one of Hollywood’s highest-paid actors with a reputation for straight talking” who “has made little secret of his willingness to confront thorny political and social issues” (Goddard, 2012, para. 1). Similarly, an interview with Holbrook noted that he has “never been afraid of tackling tough subjects in his TV and film roles” and later quoted him as saying, “I sort of like controversial things” (King, 2012, par. 1-2). Interviews with Krasinski, Van Sant, and Damon described their involvement with *Promised Land* using language and phrases such as “a much richer and deeper feeling of ownership” (Baron, 2012, para. 13), “stakes” (Baron, 2012, para. 10), and “edgier, more provocative material” (Lewis, 2013, para. 34), suggesting that the film’s creators were known for pushing the envelope and making a difference.

Yet, these reputations also negatively impacted *Promised Land*’s credibility as a trustworthy film. Despite cast and crew members who expressed that the film was intended to provoke a discussion about stewardship and morality, *Promised Land* was simplified in media talk as “Damon’s ‘fracking’ movie” (Simon, 2013, para. 4) and “Damon doing an issue movie” (Wirt, 2013, para. 4). Others commented that the creators’ relationships with socially influential films reduced the authenticity of *Promised Land*, with one reviewer stating bluntly, “You don’t think a Gus Van Sant movie is going to side with a corporation, do you?” (Macdonald, 2012, para. 2). Even media talk that believed the movie’s credibility questioned its larger purpose, with one writer inquiring whether *Promised Land*’s creators genuinely valued what the film stood for or merely created it so that “Damon’s generation of Hollywood actors can look good with another political score” (Simon, 2013, para. 8).

Credibility of Message

Besides linking the film's ethos with its makers, media talk also examined the film's credibility in regards to its content. Specifically, media talk surrounding *Promised Land* discussed the film's focus on hydraulic fracturing, saying the movie was one-sided, weak, or simply not a fracking movie.

Much of the discourse related to *Promised Land* echoed the concerns of oil and gas industry leaders and argued that the film's environmental stance was heavy-handed and inaccurate. One reviewer explained that "You can't play 'dumb' and 'morally compromised' when you can't say 'I'm a good guy' like you don't quite believe it" (Moore, 2013, para. 7). Another commented on the film's "rhetorically stacked deck" (Mohan, 2012, para. 4), demonstrating that some media distrusted *Promised Land's* attempts at equal representation. Although some discourse portrayed the film's agenda as unfair to the opposition, a few reviewers argued that the movie's forcefulness damaged audiences more because it inhibited critical thinking (Johnson, 2013). Others acknowledged that the film tried to remain impartial yet ultimately failed, with a reviewer from *The Blade* explaining, "Its message about the perils of fracking to the environment and to those lives is almost always at the film's fore, yet the overall presentation is more dismissive finger wagging than damning rhetoric" (Baird, 2013, para. 2).

In comparison, a large portion of media talk doubted the film's trustworthiness because its message was not strong enough. Many reviews commented on the film's lack of detail and general oversimplification, with one reviewer going as far as to say, "It doesn't provide much for the opponents to work with since no one will believe it anyway" (Larson, 2013, para. 15). Some argued that *Promised Land's* message was "messy," making it difficult to determine the movie's stance (Grimm, 2013, para. 1). Discourse also criticized the movie's indifference as a wasted opportunity to educate and "enlighten" audiences on a controversial subject ("Promised Land Is," 2013, para. 7). "The film itself doesn't dig deep enough to fulfill its potential," one critic explained, suggesting that at least some reviewers, interviewers, and potential audiences had expected that the environmental movie would take a stand (Gettell, 2012, para. 2).

However, media talk supported *Promised Land's* ethos by praising its refusal to devolve into a traditional message movie. Movie critic Joe Neumaier (2012) explained,

There's a lot to admire about 'Promised Land,' starting with the fact that this issue-based movie is as casual as a game of darts in a small-town bar on Saturday night. You'd never guess that what was on its mind was awakening consciences about a very divisive issue (para. 2).

In the same vein, some discourse commented that the film's lack of stance was one of its greatest strengths. One reporter even joked that she would not have known that there was a controversy surrounding the film if the media had not covered it as such, saying, "If I had no knowledge of the fracking debate, the gas industry's efforts would certainly make me want to see it" (S. Gilbert, 2013, para. 11). Reactions such as these indicate that some talk picked up on *Promised Land's* intended identity as an impartial film and perceived it as increasing the movie's trustworthiness.

Credibility of Measure

Promised Land's credibility was also considered in relation to measurable film standards. In essence, media talk linked the film's ethos to the publicity surrounding it—the more positive the buzz sounded, the more trustworthy the film was considered. Media talk of the film discussed its financial potential, controversial nature, and general likeability.

Over the course of *Promised Land*'s run, media talk mentioned that the movie's box office success would likely determine its long-term influence (Slothower, 2013). Although media mentioned the film's impact in communities where fracking occurred, many articles noted that the movie was turning out small crowds on opening day or was too small to be shown in local theatres (e.g. Benshoof, 2013; Kelly, 2013; O'Connor, 2013). During *Promised Land*'s opening weekend, discourse commented on the film's "slow start" (Slothower, 2013, para. 23) and "pathetic" box office intake ("Mixed Greens," 2013, para. 2), ultimately labeling it a "flop" (Cocklin, 2013, para. 14). Additionally, although media talk initially framed *Promised Land* as an awards contender, later discourse countered that its chances for acclaim were slim (Larson, 2013). Talk around the time of the Berlin Film Festival mostly accepted the film's fate while remaining somewhat hopeful that it could receive recognition (e.g. "Damon's Fracking Drama," 2013; "Promised Land Has Premiere," 2013).

Discourse surrounding *Promised Land* also linked the film's ethos to the controversy surrounding the movie's production. Some reviews and articles mentioned the movie's connection to Image Nation Abu Dhabi, though talk often recounted Damon and Krasinski's responses when they learned of the film's partial financial backer ("Matt Damon, John," 2013). Media discourse also discussed the film's intervention into an environmental controversy, with NPR's Jeff Brady explaining, "Environmentalists are giving 'Promised Land' a thumbs up. Those in the natural gas industry are giving it two thumbs down," thus exposing the tension the film experienced with audiences ("Drilling," 2013, para. 2). Media talk noted the many campaigns and "pre-butts" against *Promised Land*'s theatrical release, often linking it to the previously controversial ecodocumentary *Gasland* (Drajem, 2013, para. 2). Coverage also talked of rallies inspired by the film and initiated by both pro- and anti-fracking groups.

However, the greatest amount of talk surrounding *Promised Land* discussed whether it was a movie worth seeing and evaluated it based on generic criteria of movie likeability, such as storyline, character development, and acting. Some talk was bitterly harsh, including a *Boston Herald* review that noted the film's "generic title," "gimmicky twists," and "paper-thin characters" before culminating with, "Shouldn't this be on the Hallmark Channel?" (Verniere, 2012, para. 1). Others found issue with the movie's cheesy and sometimes confusing script, with another reviewer explaining, "If only the script hadn't pushed so hard, we might have had a genuinely intriguing moral exploration" (Martin, 2013, para. 11). Many of those who had found issue with *Promised Land*'s bias felt that its agenda deadened its impact, resolving it to a life of mediocrity rather than greatness (Carpenter, 2013). Cumulatively, this negative media talk may have contributed to *Promised Land*'s ethos by equating its identity as a bad film with a general lack of credibility.

Yet some media talk argued that *Promised Land*'s greatest strength was that it was a genuinely good film. Numerous reviews and articles complimented the film's ability to raise questions and get audiences thinking about a divisive issue. Furthermore, some contended that the movie's cast and surprisingly humorous script were "exactly the right formula" to allow it and its message to be well received by audiences (Neumaier, 2012). Much of the positivity surrounding the movie expressed approval for its portrayal of the American identity, with one reviewer describing it as "a fascinating look at America's evolution and how life here has changed – especially in small towns" ("Damon Looks," 2013, para. 10). In this way, media talk considered *Promised Land*'s authentic portrayal of rural America as contributing to its identity as a credible, trustworthy film.

Discussion

In its entirety, the ethos of *Promised Land* was dramatically inconsistent. The film was considered a hopeful success with renowned creators, but also a manipulative attack on big business. Its themes and messages were praised, picked apart, and punted for later discussion, and its identity as an environmentalist film was both regarded for taking a stand and slammed for being weak. Even on the surface, comments about the movie's script and acting varied, and its role in larger societal discourse was associated with the controversy of its production and release. Therefore, it is essential to consider how these conflicting depictions of *Promised Land*'s ethos may have contributed to its failure.

Initially, determinants of film success related to financial performance, critical evaluation, and audience reception all appeared in media talk surrounding *Promised Land*. When considering factors related to these criteria, it is likely that budget, artistic collaborators, release date, distributor, size of screen release, MPAA rating, and market competition played a significant role in *Promised Land*'s label as a failed film. The presence of these criteria and factors within *Promised Land*'s discourse suggests that environmentalist films are measured by the same standards of success as traditional films. However, because environmentally engaged cinema productions are often smaller scale, independent films that discuss non-traditional or controversial themes, films such as *Promised Land* face an uphill battle to attain the label of success. It is crucial that environmental filmmakers be made aware of the criteria by which their films are evaluated in order to ensure that a "failure" label does not undermine the message that is being portrayed onscreen.

Audience response to *Promised Land* also aligns with research from Wyatt and Badger (1984, 1987). Reviews of *Promised Land* were mixed if not primarily negative, and many critics commented on the lack of audience turnout during the film's opening weekend. However, Wyatt and Badger (1984) noted that although movie reviews can impact audience interest in a film, they do not overpower an audience's initial inclinations toward a film. In the case of *Promised Land*, although negative press likely did not help, it is probable that audiences were never completely sold on the film to begin with. Furthermore, Wyatt and Badger (1987) noted that informative non-reviews paired with mixed reviews could increase audience interest in a film, meaning that *Promised Land*'s sheer variety of coverage may have actually increased interest. Unfortunately, the informative media talk surrounding *Promised Land* often focused on the movie's

controversial production. Therefore, when audiences were not reading a mixed review of the movie, they were reading information on the film's mixed creation, so any garnered interest in the film remained focused on the controversy surrounding the film rather than the controversial story told within the film itself.

Most significant, *Promised Land* struggled to gain credibility as a trustworthy, impartial film. *Promised Land* is not the first film to discuss hydraulic fracturing, and considering that past movies on the topic have drawn criticism, backlash to *Promised Land* was likely unavoidable. However, media talk surrounding *Promised Land* is unique in that criticism of the movie was not exclusive to the film's controversial issue, but extended to include the film's position, or lack thereof, on the issue. Attempts by the film's creators to label *Promised Land* a provocative conversation-starter were largely rejected in media talk and replaced with an identity of a biased film that either refused to embrace its bias or was too ignorant to know that it *was* biased. This suggests that moviegoers not only distrust films that fail to choose a side, but also that there is an expectation that controversial films should have to "show their cards." Not only does this audience perception make it difficult for controversial films to succeed, but it may also make choosing a side—even the less popular side—a safer bet for future films on divisive topics.

Conclusion

This study is not without its limitations. First, considering the amount of media talk surrounding films, the data sampled for analysis were moderately small and the time period relatively confined. Additionally, organizing the data by best match may have unknowingly resulted in a grouping of biased data. To further the analysis, future research could utilize a larger data sample or include data from other sources, such as Google News. Future scholars may also consider how interpersonal, WOM, or social media communication contributed to the creation of *Promised Land*'s ethos.

Although *Promised Land* failed as an environmentalist film, its attempted intervention in a societal controversy has lasting implications for the role of ethos in determining film success. The film industry spends billions of dollars each year casting, filming, and marketing movies that it believes will be successful. However, a film's credibility can neither be bought nor controlled, but rather, is constructed in media talk that has the potential to influence its public reception. According to the creators of *Promised Land*, the film's purpose was not to tell audiences what to believe, but rather to demonstrate the many layers of a divisive topic ("Matt Damon Shares," 2013). Unfortunately, the film's attempt to depict an environmental issue impartially resulted in the topic being ignored and the film's trustworthiness becoming the center of attention. The failure of *Promised Land* thus presents an interesting dilemma and important line of inquiry for future studies: how can an environmentalist film spark discussion on a controversy without *becoming* the controversy?

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Pole-Vaulting in the Archive: A Self-Reflective, Feminist Engagement with One Student's Jump into Archiving

Sarah Mayberry Scott

It's a hot and humid Friday evening when I finally get to speak to my first interview participant, Earl Holmes Bell. I have known Earl for over nine years, but until this evening, I am not sure the two of us have ever been alone in a room together. I meet Earl at Bell Athletics, a pole vault training facility on the outskirts of Jonesboro, Arkansas, and I realize I have never seen the inside of the building when no athletes were training and the lights were out. The main door to the facility is left unlocked for me. With no air conditioning, inside feels no cooler or less humid than outside. The place is dark, but the radio was left on so rock music meets me at the door. I proceed up the stairs to the apartment inside Bell Athletics. The three bedroom, two-bathroom, air-conditioned apartment was originally built to house elite athletes who would help run the training facility. Since Earl's divorce, he has lived in the apartment himself. Earl's already there, beating me there by mere minutes from the golf course. We sit in the newly renovated living room that used to be the third bedroom. It now contains a large flat-screen television and a sofa and loveseat with built-in cup-holders. On the television is the Golf Channel, muted, and in Earl's hand is a Coors Light, salted and limed. He begins talking before I can even ask a question, and he doesn't stop for several hours.

It was this initial oral history interview with Earl Holmes Bell that catapulted my leap into the archives. I was introduced to Earl almost ten years ago when I moved to Jonesboro, Arkansas, to support my husband's career as a professional pole vaulter. Earl is my husband's coach. For many years I thought Bell Athletics was ripe with scholarly potential, but felt that tapping into that potential was almost too easy. However, since my initial oral history interview, this project has evolved into a full archiving project that is serendipitous and fun, but definitely not easy. Other scholars, such as Susan J. Douglas, recognize the "absolute importance of serendipity to successful archival work."¹ Douglas also advances the idea that in order for scholars to do archival work, sometimes that means creating an archive. Creating an archive "allows you to see evolution as opposed to revolution,"² claims Douglas. While creating an archive gives scholars a place from which to write and research, one problem Melody Lehn identifies is that, "[a]rchives are not always announced as such."³ Sometimes, Lehn argues, "the discovery of the text precedes the recognition"⁴ of the archive. Such too, is the case with this archival project. Serendipity, relationships, and hard work brought me to the archive as the place of invention,⁵ but I was still unsure how to write from within the archive and my archiving experience.

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In *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, Kate Eichorn finds that even years after the archival turn in the humanities and social sciences, the concept of “archiving women” has “less to do with women archiving than with women being archived.”⁶ It is important to understand women not only as potential subjects of archival work, but also as “central agents of the archive.”⁷ The archival turn in feminism, coupled with what Charles E. Morris III identifies as the “archival turn in rhetorical studies and/or the archive’s rhetorical (re)turn,”⁸ places the feminist rhetorical scholar in a unique situation to be able to write from within the archives. Angela G. Ray, in “Rhetoric and the Archive,” claims “all projects are archival, just as all projects are historically situated.”⁹ Ray, through the “shared notion of the *archive*,”¹⁰ is able to show the interdependent nature of rhetorical inquiry and archival engagement. It is within this place of interdependence and blurring of boundaries that my essay is situated.

In this essay, I focus on a contractual agreement entitled “Deed of Gift” as my text of analysis. I chose this artifact because of its importance to my archival project at large. The Deed of Gift is the contract participants must sign before their oral history will be placed in the archive collection. For collections that archive interviews of living persons, the Deed of Gift is a vital step in the archival process. Until the contract is signed, an interview participant may, at any time, stop the interviewing process. And since the Deed of Gift is not signed until the interview has been transcribed and reviewed by the participant, perhaps weeks or months after the initial interview, the participant has additional time to change her mind. A refusal to sign the contract would render all of the previous work with this participant ineligible to be used, preserved, or retained in any way. Focusing on this artifact, I attempt to navigate the politics and the practices of archive creation and development. This essay asks, thus: what are the ethical implications at play when the rhetorician is constructing, inventing, and writing in/on – rather than researching in – the archive?

A feminist close reading of the text drives this project. Choosing a feminist reading partially attends to one of Eichorn’s concerns on the archival turn in feminism – the focus on women as subjects rather than women as agents of archival invention – by allowing for the process of one-woman rhetorician-turned-archivist to be rendered visible. This essay also provides some self-reflective thoughts, a hallmark of feminist rhetorical practices. And finally, research that is driven by relationships and serendipitous moments is often considered a feminist pursuit. This essay provides a framework for a feminist rhetorical exploration into writing in the archives. Through this critical approach, I will show that my own experiences in making/writing from an archive show certain truths and raise certain questions that have implications for rhetoricians.

Archival Twists and Turns

The archival turn in feminism intersecting with the archival turn in rhetoric provides a fruitful place for research for the feminist rhetorical scholar. With these two turns in archival research, the archives cease to be simply a repository to store information and become what Barbara Biesecker calls a place of invention.¹¹ Douglas Booth, in his call to refigure the archive, claims that “refiguring does not mean abandoning,”¹² but archives need to be understood as sites of power, not simply as sites of knowledge. These sites of power also serve as places to create shared memory¹³,

according to Ryan Ireland. The tension between history and shared/public memory, claims Sean Patrick O'Rourke, can be complicated by rhetoric.¹⁴ For O'Rourke "[h]istory is the fluid, the lifeblood of civic culture, and rhetoric is its method."¹⁵ In order to meet these tasks, Booth suggests opening up the archive to critical inspection.¹⁶ The rhetorician is uniquely qualified to do such work.

Rhetorical inquiry, what Angela Ray calls a "multi-faceted art,"¹⁷ allows for a pluralist and polyvocal understanding of the archive. Susan Zeske and Sarah Jedd suggest expanding the types of texts that have traditionally been defined as rhetorical texts and texts worthy of rhetorical criticism.¹⁸ For Shawn J. Parry-Giles, a rhetorician can help establish historical context surrounding a rhetorical act.¹⁹ Biesecker has established that understanding the archive as the scene of invention serves as an invitation for rhetoricians to write rhetorical histories,²⁰ and Ray similarly acknowledges the multitude of research foci that rhetoric supports, including in this case, the close reading of an individual text.²¹ Rhetoricians, to Morris, are all called to be "archivist-rhetors,"²² and to use the tools of rhetorical criticism to refigure the archive, because according to Ray, "rhetoric makes sense of that." Archive research, however, is not without its own unique set of problems and complications.

Some of the problematizations at play in the archive include attending to the silences and providing access. Attending to the silences in archiving and in the archives means recognizing the archive as a site of power. What gets put into an archive? And who decides? What types of materials are worthy of preservation, representation, and display? Whose life is deemed worthy of archiving? Booth claims there is a "reluctance to discuss archival silence"²³ in a field (history) that lauds complete stories – complete narratives. Feminist and queer scholars, among others, recognize the absence of marginalized voices in the archives. Karlyn Kors Campbell, in her renowned collection, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, searched existing archives to resurrect and recover work in women's public address.²⁴ Campbell focused, in this compilation, primarily on textual recovery. For rhetorical scholars Zeske and Jedd, however, the return to the archive is not just a process of recovery, but also of discovery. As a process of discovery, Zeske and Jedd advocate "searching for collections and documents that have been dismissed as irrelevant or unimportant."²⁵ The result is a trend heavily influenced by feminist practices in the archives and libraries to take seriously and to value works done by and about women. To attend to the gendered gaps – the gendered silences – in the archives, Rachel Moseley and Helen Wheatley suggest expanding the archive to include "the ordinary and the exceptional, the everyday and the newsworthy."²⁶ Similarly, Morris and K.J. Rawson call into question the Society of American Archivists' definition of "archives" as "non-current records of individuals, groups, institutions, and governments that contain information of 'enduring value.'"²⁷ It is the vagueness of "enduring value" that suggests to Morris and Rawson that "archiving can never be a neutral or objective practice because value is *always* political and subjective."²⁸ What individuals, texts, and artifacts are deemed to have "enduring value" is always a cultural, societal, and political reflection. Archiving some artifacts is to imprint them into cultural and public memory, and not archiving other artifacts is perhaps, intentional or otherwise, to quiet them into silence – a process of forgetting. However, marginalized "other" voices are not the only things silenced in the archives.

In searching the presidential libraries, Kathleen Turner shares frustrations about intentional “sanitization” of archives.²⁹ The purposeful deletion of information that is deemed classified, restricted, or offensive often creates additional silence in the archive. This makes the task of working within the archives even more arbitrary. The process of sanitizing an archive is also problematic because “what one generation deems irrelevant and irrational, another, under different circumstances, regards as perfectly relevant and rational.”³⁰ Martin Johnes, in response to Booth’s call to refigure the archive, however, believes this process is not necessarily problematic. For Johnes, the weeding of material in the archive is necessary for a multitude of reasons, and trained historians and archivists should be trusted to make those professional judgments. As Johnes states, “the mechanics of data gathering in history are hidden.”³¹ While not problematic for Johnes, the result are more gaps – more silences in the archives. The goal then, should be to allow for a plurality of voices speaking within and through the archives. Inclusivity however, cannot stop with allowing more voices to be heard in and through the archives. The question then changes from who gets *representation in* the archive to who gets *access to* the archive?

The ease with which digital materials can be shared could be appealing to researchers like Rachel Moseley and Helen Wheatley who identify access to research materials as a deciding factor in determining what types of scholarly projects to undertake.³² David Houck, in his essay, “Textual Recovery, Textual Discovery: Returning to Our Past, Imagining Our Future” argues that digital access will not only make scholarly work more accessible to additional scholars, but it will also aid in the process of recovery and discovery.³³ However, digitalization is not without critics. As Keith Breckenridge notes, “the critics of digitization as being a manifestation of imperialism have insisted that the most important issues at stake are social and political ones...digitization will sustain long-established imperial structures of knowledge and power.”³⁴ This digitizing power operates like heritage theft when resources become more accessible to “foreigners” than to “citizens.”³⁵ While digitization might address Booth’s call to move beyond the fetishization and cult of the archive, it brings with it new political considerations. The benefit of quick dissemination of information is always foregrounded with having the technological requirements necessary to digitize and store digital material, and the ease of replication makes verifying ownership and establishing authenticity virtually impossible. While these access issues appear to be problematic for archivists, Breckenridge is optimistic that these problems are also opportunities for archivists to expand their traditional roles into the digital era.

Making Archives: Where Personal Becomes Professional

As the creator of a particular archive, I am uniquely qualified to examine the rhetorical historicity of its conception. As a rhetorician creating – rather than researching in – an archive, I am critically positioned for self-reflexivity. I believe self-reflection is necessary in order to be my most ethical and authentic self as a person and as a researcher. Because this type of self-reflection calls into question personal judgments and decisions that have been/are being made in one’s own research – typically my own worst critic – this process can be as painful just as it can be enlightening.

For my feminist rhetorical analysis, I am using a framework generated from an anthology collection. *Beyond the Archives: Research as Lived Process*, edited by Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan, is a collection of essays of personal stories, experiences, and difficulties with researching in the archives, especially when the archive process becomes personal. The book is not devised to be a theory for archival research, but rather offers thematic starting points that, together, can offer a critical approach/framework for performing self-reflexivity as archival practice. In addition, *Research as a Live Process* is not a self-proclaimed “feminist” work, and features essays from men and women, but as Christine Sutherland notes, “closeness of this kind [in research] is associated with feminist practices.”³⁶ Due to the nature of this project, as a woman doing archive creation and research, writing from within the archive, and guided by a healthy dose of self-reflexivity, I draw heavily from the feminist tradition as I analyze my texts by drawing upon the following five themes, as identified in the introduction: 1) *expanded notions of the archives*, 2) *curiosity and serendipity*, 3) *cultural memory and identity*, 4) *virtual, historical, and lived experiences*, and 5) *untold stories, untapped resources*.

To *expand the notions of the archive* means to pay attention to how “our family, social, and cultural history is intertwined with more traditional notions of history and culture.”³⁷ This area has to attend to voices that have been silenced or ignored. It recognizes that original and important scholarship can come from the “personal, cultural, and scholarly aspects”³⁸ of our lives. In other words, it calls for us to locate and temper our own impulses and the biases underlying those impulses when attending to marginalized – different, unfamiliar, *other* – voices in the archives. It is with a sense of *curiosity and serendipity* that scholars are able to move “away from a hunch, a chance encounter, or a newly discovered family artifact to scholarly research.”³⁹ This aspect is inextricably tied to geographical location and the careful avoidance of “presentism.” *Cultural memory and identity* realizes that archives can “re-inscribe power structures and imperialist discourse”⁴⁰ and suggests how to “find ways to ‘speak back’ to the archives, to resist imperialist discourse.”⁴¹ *Virtual, historical, and lived experiences* seeks to consider how “historical actors and context act on the culture now,”⁴² as well as how they evolve as the researcher and the world around them change. And finally, *untold stories, untapped resources* draw all of these pieces together to show that “the best scholarly research is vital, exciting, done for its own sake, and – most often – results in more meaningful and reflective lives.”⁴³

Using these themes as starting points for critical inspection, I analyze one text of the archive that I have recently created in conjunction with Arkansas State University’s Dean B. Ellis Library. My text is a Deed of Gift contract that participants must sign before the transcript of their oral history (or any other materials) can be admitted into the archive. While an unusual text, somehow it illuminates the problems and opportunities embedded within making and working with/in archives. A close reading of this text will allow me to locate or reveal gaps in the current archiving process at this particular institution, but will also provide an opportunity for a more generous reading that will allow me to provide a feminist imagining of archival work for rhetoricians. Following the feminist tradition,⁴⁴ I use a self-reflexive approach that allows for engagement of a particular text, but also with the research process itself – as a lived, embodied, and individual process.

First, a brief, and general understanding of the archival work already underway is in order. This project is an intensely personal one. So, by necessity this paper is personal as well, as it is impossible to separate my experiences from the processes, texts, and realities it produces. This paper is therefore, by necessity, self-reflexive and also a learning process for me. As a rhetorical critic recently new to archival work, I am especially attentive to the importance of the understanding the intricacies and nuances of archival work not only for the present, but also the future.

The archive in which I am so personally invested is actually a compilation of three special collections that I created in conjunction with the archivists of Arkansas State University.⁴⁶ The three special collections of this archive include one for Earl Bell, one for Bell Athletics, and one for the Olympic and Olympic-hopeful athletes that have trained at Bell Athletics since its inception in 1991. I find it imperative to give a brief introduction into the archive that raised these questions about the ethics and politics of archive making and archival researching. Earl Bell is a three-time Olympian and former world-record holder in the pole vault. He was raised in Jonesboro, Arkansas and attended, competed for, and graduated from Arkansas State University. His father Dr. William K. Bell, now 94 years old, also holds several world records for pole vaulters for ages 80 and above. The first special collection centers on the Bell family. Materials already donated to the archive include seven scrapbooks created and maintained by Dr. Bell that record newspaper articles, personal letters, medical records, and school report cards about Earl Bell beginning in the 1970s and continuing through Earl Bell's prestigious career. These artifacts are glued onto brown-paper bags folded to resemble pages in a book, placed into stacks between two carpet squares that serve as book covers, and bound with wood molding and screws to keep the entire scrapbook in place. In sum, there are seven of these scrapbooks that have been donated to the Earl Bell special collection. They are being deconstructed, scanned and digitized, preserved and maintained in the archive collections, and then one "mock" scrapbook will be created to allow viewers and researchers to see and interact with the scrapbook in a similar fashion to how they were originally constructed. In addition to the scrapbooks, this special collection is open to accepting memorabilia from the lives of Earl Bell and Dr. Bell, as the family would be interested in making those items available. The only other existing artifacts in this special collection are two oral history interviews I conducted last summer with Dr. Bell and Earl Bell. The audio files and transcripts will be later added to this collection.

The second special collection is on Bell Athletics. Bell Athletics is a pole vault training facility, situated among the soybean fields on the outskirts of Jonesboro, Arkansas. The facility has trained thousands of high school, collegiate, and professional pole vaulters. This special collection is particularly interested in business information pertaining to Bell Athletics. This special collection is the one with the least artifacts, to date. The reasons for this are two-fold: first, there were questions about the prioritization of what would be, potentially, artifacts of more use and interest to researchers, and second it requires time and cooperation from Earl Bell, the business owner, to identify materials for submission and possible inclusion in the collection.

The third special collection is dedicated to the Olympians and Olympic hopefuls who have trained at Bell Athletics since its opening. To meet this definition, athletes must have: 1) moved to Jonesboro, Arkansas, no matter the duration, to specifically train with Earl Bell at Bell Athletics in pole vault, and 2) obtained at least a B-standard pole vault

jump during their training at Bell Athletics. The standard pole vault jumps that I am referring to here are determined by the National Olympic Committee (NOC) and are the minimum qualifying heights for Olympic competition. Of the thousands of pole vaulters who have trained at Bell Athletics, these criteria narrow the population to approximately thirty individuals, male and female, of various nationalities. This special collection was developed to house audio, video, and transcripts of oral histories conducted with every Olympian and Olympic-hopeful who has trained at Bell Athletics. I am conducting these oral histories and, with the assistance of a graduate assistant, transcribing them. This special collection could potentially also include memorabilia from these athletes, as he or she is willing to donate.

As a rhetorician who believes firmly in the embodied and situated experiences of individuals, the oral history interviews were, and will continue to be for future interviews, conducted within Bell Athletics – the physical space where these athletes trained and, sometimes, lived. Arkansas State’s institutional review board has approved the interview process. Since, to me, it is crucial to interview individuals in the rhetorical space, funding is crucial to this project. I have applied for grant funds to cover travel costs for bringing athletes back to Bell Athletics for interviews. In the meantime, interviews are being conducted with individuals still in the local area. I have elected not to conduct interviews at a distance, thus far, hoping to procure funding that would allow for face-to-face interviews to be completed within the rhetorical space of Bell Athletics. Before an interview, an individual must sign the informed consent form. Additionally, after the interview is complete and has been transcribed, the individual must sign the Deed of Gift contract before the oral history (audio, video, or transcript) can be placed in the archive. Using a feminist close reading analysis, I will weave the threads between the language of these contracts and the practices my analysis provides as a useful framework for the rhetorical scholar.

The Deed of Gift agreement is a contract between two parties, in this case the subject of the oral history interview and Arkansas State University. The title of the document reads, “Deed of Gift Agreement,” so it is literally a legally binding contract whereby one party “gifts” something to the recipient. A gift is given without the expectation of receiving something in return. An agreement could be viewed as a legally binding arrangement or the acknowledgement that both parties have the same views of the arrangement. The donor is gifting his or her oral history to Arkansas State University. The materiality of the donation is the audio file of the interview, the video recording (if one was made), any photographs taken during the oral history interview, and the transcript that is created from the interview. The material donation is being made to Arkansas State “to have and to hold the same absolutely and forever.” “To have and to hold” conjures up notions of wedding ceremonies and images of two individuals, in our culture, willingly and joyfully entering into the institution of marriage. The vows exchanged here, rendered silent by the medium in which the message is transmitted, are not exchanged verbally and triumphantly in front of witnesses, but rather in the hush of the library, yet rendered none-the-less binding “absolutely and forever.” Absolutely is for the here and now, without restriction or qualification; forever is for the future, whomever may come after. The material will be made available for “historical and other academic research and public dissemination.” The oral history interviews, photographs, videos, and audio will all be available to other scholars and the public. This contract gives Arkansas

State permission to distribute the materials to a wide public audience. In this particular case, these oral histories are going to, eventually, be made available in an online digital archive. The donated material might also be used for other purposes.

The contract mentions neither specific individuals nor the respective titles of individuals who may make decisions for Arkansas State University. The language of the contract is “we” as the donors and “they” as any individual making decisions about the material on behalf of Arkansas State University. For instance, when talking about the ways the material might be used the contract states it may be used for “purposes they see fit” without identifying who “they” is. Is “they” the archivists, the primary researcher, the librarians, or the scholars? The “they” seems to give decision-making power to no one person while granting it to everyone attached to the university. The donor(s) are mentioned by name only in the first sentence and thereafter are referred to as “we.” “We” is typically followed by a qualification by what the donor(s) do or do not “have.” For example, “we have or may be deemed to have,” appears several times in the artifact, as does, “we have not.” The two times “we” appears followed by action is “we relinquish” and “we herein warrant,” actions that imply a voluntary authorization of transfer of ownership of materials. These materials also come with rights for the university.

The donor(s) are giving up control over all “legal title and literary property rights,” as well as “right, title, and interest in copyright.” These statements encompass a multitude of individual rights, including all property rights to the donated materials including, but not limited to, “reproduction, distribution, preparation of derivative works, public performance and display.” The donor(s) acknowledge that they are giving over rights now or in the future for any literature, museum display and/or motion picture based on the existing works (i.e. the donated materials). Relinquishing these rights seemingly commodifies the individual’s oral history – his or her story. The last sentence of the agreement lists the “only conditions...placed on this unrestricted gift.” It is ironic that an “unrestricted gift” which should be available to use for any purpose without the expectation of anything in exchange would have any conditions. The one condition guarantees “right of first use” to Sarah Mayberry Scott (me). After signed and dated by both the donor(s) and the “agent” for Arkansas State University (the archivist) the document becoming legally binding. It seems that, from this examination, that the contract could easily be viewed as consistent with the imperialist, capitalist, colonialist ideologies the archives have been accused of reinforcing. However, the feminist archive lens provides another interpretation.

In the first step of the journey involving the expansion of notions of the archive, Kathleen Wider urges scholars doing archival work to “settle for a partial and ongoing modification of our understanding.”⁴⁷ In this case, the oral histories that are being collected are conducted in forty-five minutes to two hours in duration. Of course, it is not possible to surmise the totality of a person’s life in this amount of time. The things individuals choose to talk about, elaborate on, mull over, or breeze right past are part of how they tell their own story. It will always be partial. Some individuals might allow for ongoing interviews, which will allow the narrative to expand, but will also mean it is constantly changing and evolving. In this particular case, the archive is currently relatively small. Every artifact added to the collection changes the landscape of the entire archive. Each new oral history co-mingles with its contemporaries to reshape the story. In expanding the notions of the archive in this example, the subjects are not ones that “no

longer speak back.”⁴⁸ These participants are alive and actively participating in the creation of materials for preservation. Because of this unique situation, it is possible to view the Deed of Gift as expressing actual agreement – two parties who have the same views on the subject. The donor(s) willingly and knowingly enter into a contract with one another. While a gift implies there is no expectation of reciprocation, the knowledge that one’s legacy – one’s story – will live on is a pretty large gift to the donor(s). Their story, and the rights to it, is being contracted, but only the story the donor(s) agreed to have placed in the archive as specified in the informed consent. In collaborating with live participants, the individual gets to decide or determine what is donated, which takes the burden off the researcher to determine how that individual’s story gets told and remembered.

With a disposition of curiosity and serendipity, the second area for critical engagement, we must be able to be curious and allow for family and personal connections to serve as places of meaningful scholarship. This curiosity can sometimes lead firmly to the trap of wanting to tell a complete story. And yet, this trap can cause missed chances or missed serendipitous moments under the false pretense of painting a complete picture. Researchers must realize that, as Wendy Sharer reminds us, the figure we are studying did not keep everything, and not everything they did keep will be chosen for inclusion in the archive. Choices that archivists make, for a variety of reasons, can seemingly limit the scope of the story. In this case, the ability of the subject to edit the transcript of their oral history interview, as well as to choose what materials they are donating to the archive, drastically changes the story. But, as rhetoricians, we should realize that we are not “objective, disinterested, or even innocent,”⁴⁹ and that any “narration of [a subject’s] life would be as biased and subjective as [his/her] own narration.”⁵⁰ Attending to those places, however, of gut instinct, can lead to scholarly production that advances cultural memory.

Moving into the third part of the process, Gesa Kirsch notes that it is “interesting to observe that a single decision made by archivists – whose papers are worth collecting under his or her own name – can greatly influence accessibility and coherence of materials, as well as the recognition accorded to an individual’s achievements and contributions to public life.”⁵¹ These decisions affect cultural memory and identity. While it may be impossible to tell an objective history, as rhetoricians that is not necessarily the goal of archival research. It is important to attend to the silences, to examine what they did save, and by acknowledging both the “light and dark dimensions” that make up a life. In this vein, Kirsch and Rohan encourage scholars working in the archive to find a way to “speak back to the archives.”⁵² Speaking back is a strategy to avoid re-inscribing “power structures and imperialist discourse.”⁵³ Speaking back to the subjects, in this case, involves a phone call rather than a historical imagination. A luxury not afforded to many working in the archives, the ability to communicate directly with the subjects allows for their wishes to be upheld. It also makes understanding their lived experiences a bit easier.

The fourth step on our path through the archives leads us to virtual, historical, and lived experiences. This steps involves a careful tacking of past and present to understand how “[h]istorical actors and contexts act on the culture now.”⁵⁴ Sutherland suggests “[g]etting in touch – as much as possible – with the physical context”⁵⁵ in which the subjects lived and worked. Part of the reason I chose to embark upon research with these athletes in this place is because I am physically living in the same city where they all

lived and trained. This process helps to avoid “presentism” by “entering as far as possible into the physical world of our subject.”⁵⁶ Not being an athlete myself, I am entering this other world and making it as much my own as I can. Following the advice of Kirsch and Rohan, I understand that “personal connection can make all the difference in our scholarly pursuits: it brings the subject to life and makes us more likely to pursue hunches, follow leads, and spend extra time combing through archival materials than we wouldn’t without a ‘personal attachment.’”⁵⁷ It is only through these personal and serendipitous moments that untold stories can be discovered.

The final piece of this scaffolding is finding untold stories and untapped resources, which leads to an affective experience felt by the researcher. Kirsch and Rohan call this “giving our game away.”⁵⁸ Elizabeth Birmingham remembers leaving out what she deemed important primary sources from her undergraduate thesis for fear that her “interest in a thing so dismissible would reveal [she] wasn’t really a scholar.”⁵⁹ Birmingham felt like she had to build knowledge like the published scholars who came before her did. To do otherwise, she was told, was “suicide.”⁶⁰ Sharer, likewise, challenges scholars to show how “research is connected with the lived, and often affective, experiences,”⁶¹ and that “researchers should seek out these experiences and make them known in a spirit of enthusiasm.”⁶² I humbly accept this challenge with my archiving project and dare to say that my participants are embracing it with a spirit of enthusiasm as well. I believe that they are eager to proclaim “to have and to hold” in committing themselves to the archives of this particular institution.

For any scholar, but particularly as a friend and family member to the individuals with whom my scholarship involves, I believe it is necessary to logically think through the politics and power at play in our research choices. Working with living subjects does not make the archiving process any less political or its implications any less serious, however it does change the concerns. An individual’s reputation, for instance, is perhaps less of a concern for those who no longer depend on it for their livelihood. Legal implications of libel or slander are real considerations for scholars publishing about live subjects. All scholars should approach their subjects with an ethics of care, but that responsibility might only be further enhanced when our subjects are still living, working, acting within their community.

While the beginning of what I hope to be a long engagement in the archiving journey, this essay identified some of the problems of traditional archival work and suggested a possible framework against which archival materials can be viewed. Through this lens, I analyzed a Deed of Gift contract and provided some self-reflective thoughts. It is through this archive journey that I am in the fortunate position to share others’ stories, others’ narratives, others’ lives. As Jerome Bruner says in an apt metaphor, “[narrative] not only shapes our ways of communicating with each other and our ways of experiencing the world, but it also gives form to what we imagine, to our sense of what’s possible. With its aid, we *pole vault* beyond the presently expectable”⁶³ With permission, I pole vault with both feet still firmly on the ground into my life in the archives.

Notes

- ¹ Susan J. Douglas, "Writing From the Archive: Creating Your Own." *The Communication Review* 13, no. 1 (2010): 7.
- ² Douglas, "Writing From the Archive," 9.
- ³ Melody Lehn, "In Defense of Crap Archives: Archival Possibilities for Researching First Ladies," *Carolinas Communication Annual* 31 (2015): 13.
- ⁴ Lehn, "In Defense of Crap Archives," 13.
- ⁵ See Barbara A. Biesecker, "Of Historicity, Rhetoric: The Archive as Scene of Invention," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 124-31.
- ⁶ Kate Eichorn. *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 2.
- ⁷ Eichorn, *The Archival Turn*, 2.
- ⁸ Charles E. Morris. "The Archival Turn in Rhetorical Studies; Or, The Archive's Rhetorical (Re)turn," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 113-115.
- ⁹ Angela G. Ray, "Rhetoric and the Archive," *Review of Communication* 16, no. 1 (2016): 50.
- ¹⁰ Ray, "Rhetoric and the Archive," 45.
- ¹¹ See Biesecker, "Of Historicity, Rhetoric."
- ¹² Douglas Booth, "Sites of Truth or Metaphors of Power? Refiguring the Archive," *Sport in History* 26, no. 1 (2006): 93.
- ¹³ Ryan Ireland, "Public Libraries as Rhetorical Devices: Reimagining Print, Dewey, and Memory as Invention in the Digital Age," *Public Library Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2013): 306-318.
- ¹⁴ See Sean Patrick O'Rourke, "Listening for the Dissonant Voice: The Southern Archive as Cacophonous Song," *Carolinas Communication Annual* 31 (2015): 5.
- ¹⁵ O'Rourke, "Listening for the Dissonant Voice," 5.
- ¹⁶ See Booth, "Sites of Truth or Metaphors of Power?"
- ¹⁷ Ray, "Rhetoric and the Archive," 45.
- ¹⁸ See Susan Zaeske and Sarah Jedd, "From Recovering Women's Words to Documenting Gender Constructs," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 184-202.
- ¹⁹ See Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Archival Research and the American Presidency," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 157-75.
- ²⁰ See Biesecker, "Of Historicity, Rhetoric."
- ²¹ See Ray, "Rhetoric and the Archive."
- ²² Morris, "The Archival Turn," 147.
- ²³ Booth, "Sites of Truth," 98.
- ²⁴ See Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her: Vol. 1: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric, 1830-1925* and *Vol. 2: Key Texts of Early Feminism, 1830-1925* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989).
- ²⁵ Zaeske and Jedd, "From Recovering Women's Words," 185.

²⁶ Rachel Moseley and Helen Wheatley, "Is Archiving a Feminist Issue?: Historical Research and the Past, Present, and Future of Television Studies," *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 3 (2008): 153.

²⁷ Cited in Charles E. Morris III and K. J. Rawson, "Queer Archives/Archival Queers," in *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, ed. Michelle Ballif (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 74-89, see 77.

²⁸ Morris and Rawson, "Queer Archives/Archival Queers," 77.

²⁹ Kathleen J. Turner, "The Presidential Libraries as Research Facilities: An Analysis of Resources for Rhetorical Scholarship," *Communication Education* 35, no. 3 (1986): 247.

³⁰ Booth, "Sites of Truth," 101.

³¹ Martin Johnes, "Archives, Truths and the Historian at Work: A Reply to Douglas Booth's 'Refiguring the Archive'," *Sport in History* 27, no. 1 (2007): 133.

³² See Moseley and Wheatley, "Is Archiving a Feminist Issue," 153.

³³ See Davis W. Houck, "Textual Recovery, Textual Discovery," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 109-32.

³⁴ Keith Breckenridge, "The Politics of the Parallel Archive: Digital Imperialism and the Future of Record-Keeping in the Age of Digital Reproduction," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 3 (2014): 501.

³⁵ Breckenridge, "The Politics of the Parallel Archive," 501.

³⁶ Christine Mason Sutherland, "Getting to Know Them: Concerning Research into Four Early Women Writers," in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 28.

³⁷ Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 3.

³⁸ Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 3.

³⁹ Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 4.

⁴⁰ Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 6.

⁴¹ Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 6.

⁴² Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 7.

⁴³ Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 9.

⁴⁴ See Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012).

⁴⁶ I have to also acknowledge the participants of my research as active and eager co-creators of this archive, for they are vital to its inception and its success

⁴⁷ Kathleen Wider, "A Treeless Landscape: A Research Narrative," in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 71.

⁴⁸ Gesa E. Kirsch, "Being on Location: Serendipity, Place, and Archival Research," in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan (Carbondale: Southern University Press, 2008), 20-27.

- ⁴⁹ Wider, "Treeless Landscape," 71.
- ⁵⁰ Wider, "Treeless Landscape," 71.
- ⁵¹ Kirsch, "Being on Location," 21.
- ⁵² Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 6.
- ⁵³ Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 6.
- ⁵⁴ Kirsch and Rohan, "Introduction," 6.
- ⁵⁵ Christine Mason Sutherland, "Getting to Know Them: Concerning Research into Four Early Women Writers," in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, 2008, eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 29.
- ⁵⁶ Sutherland, "Getting to Know Them," 28.
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- ⁶⁰ Birmingham, "I See Dead People," 142.
- ⁶¹ Wendy Sharer, "Traces of Familiar: Family Archives as Primary Source Material," in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, eds. Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 54.
- ⁶² Sharer, "Traces of Familiar," 54.
- ⁶³ Jerome Bruner, "Narrative, Culture, and Mind," in *Telling Stories: Language, Narrative, and Social Life*, eds. Deborah Schiffrin, Anna De Fina, and Anastasia Nylund (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010, 45, emphasis added.

Moving Interviews into the Digital Age

Carl M. Cates and Kelly J. Ryan Naranja

In meeting course outcomes to improve the skills of students for conducting and participating in interviews, an assignment to enable a different vision for digital interview competency was introduced. Students learned how to properly conduct themselves in a Skype interview using appropriate preparation techniques for future job seeking.

Keywords: *interviewing, employment interviews, on-line interviewing, digital communication*

It is easy to recognize the rapid changes in education and the workplace, especially the pervasiveness of electronic elements. Online communities and use of alternate meeting tools like Second Life, Gotomeeting.com, Skype, and company conference call systems are routine. Online interactions are a routine element of life. What is not common is the well-crafted interview. Any simple search or cursory review of videos on YouTube or other sites demonstrates the wide gulf of skills demonstrated in interviewing, speaking and production for this new small screen. In meeting course outcomes to improve the skills of students for conducting and participating in interviews, an assignment to enable a different vision for digital interview competency was introduced at a campus in the southeastern United States. In a section of Interviewing – a complete, freestanding course on the subject, not a component of other courses – students learned how to conduct themselves in a Skype interview using appropriate preparation techniques for future job seeking. The objective was to engage and prepare communication students in thinking through the differences in employment interviews for the web rather than face-to-face.

Generative Moments for the Assignment

One of the first indicators of the change in function of web communication was in January of 2012 when Gabrielle Giffords announced her resignation from Congress via YouTube. While public appearances would follow, the initial announcement gained the nation's attention and news outlets replayed the video. It indicated in a very public way the move into a mediated environment where the individual can make announcements or relay messages for those having an interest. While technology is not taking the place of the face-to-face meeting, it is certainly becoming a mainstay in corporate life, especially when it comes to interviewing. According to a survey by Right Management in 2013, nearly one out of every five job seekers participated in a video interview (Bortz 92). That number continues to increase. In his 2015 book, *Don't Wear Flip-Flops to Your*

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Interview, career coach and management psychologist Paul Powers noted that “the number of job candidates having video interviews is doubling every two years” (159). It is an obvious step in reasoning that we must start addressing this medium of presentation for our students. Screening interviews are routinely web driven rather than telephone or cattle calls. Kirkwood, Gutgold and Manley (2011) argue that cultural forces drive the use of emerging technologies and those digital communication skills are imperative in today’s competitive job market.

Literary Rationale

In Morreale, Hugenburg, and Worley’s (2006) assessment of the basic communication course, only “Ten respondents described new methods of assessment including digital and paper portfolios, competency-based goals and grading, and the strategic use of peer groups for exams and mutual feedback” (429). A short time later, Barney (2008) notes that the power of the hammer is now available to anyone with a webcam and a video account. Prensky (2010), in a discussion of the move to video expression, opines that while for some reading and writing as a standard practice will be important, the question for educators is whether we should embrace the “communication of ideas through media that are easier to use” (124). Indeed, instructors face the task of educating students to interact in a world where communication techniques are rapidly changing, and technology is increasingly being integrated into corporate communication (Pecot-Herbert 2012). Procopio (2011) found that digital assignments provide the opportunity to improve communication skills in a new medium. Kirkwood et al. continue, “Digital speech of self in a communication course enables students to see the importance of a professional digital presence and to start practicing early. To be competitive, students must hone their digital communication skills, as well as their media skills” (150).

The Activity

The Class and the Assignments. During the fall terms of 2013 and 2014, the first author taught a freestanding section of an Interviewing course. Most of the student’s major program was in Speech Communication, though some students use the course to fulfill the requirements for a Speech Communication minor. Experience with social media varied though most students demonstrated a propensity of use with cell phones.

Assignments for such courses routinely include in-class activities and projects utilizing experiences interviewing campus and community members. To improve on the staged, in-class face-to-face employment interview, a Skype-style screening interview was included to provide experience in electronic interviewing from both candidate and employer perspectives.

Prepping for Interviews. Students are required to find a job listing appropriate to a graduating student that hopefully matches the career track desired by the individual student. These ads are reviewed for correctness related to entry-level jobs and to the student’s credentials. Next, the students prepare a cover letter and résumé for the job opening. Interviews are organized by comparing the alphabetical roster of the class to a random sequence of numbers generated from random.org. Students are then formed into

groups by date as interviewees. Students participating as candidates on the first day of live interviews then become the interviewer team of day two. All materials turned in by the students as jobseekers are turned over to the interview team so that team members can prepare interview questions based on both the company and the candidate.

Coaching the Students. Over the course of the semester, students prepare for this assignment by having the opportunity to interact with and to observe guest speakers that Skype in on course topics for 10 to 15 minutes of the class meeting. These speakers are selected based on their experience on the course topic but also on their skills communicating electronically. The speakers bring a blend of public speaking talent and media announcing style interaction to these events. Students need to understand that eye contact with the interview team is actually eye contact with the camera in addition that the camera is unforgiving. Students were also coached about backdrop, sound environment, connectivity, and personal appearance by the instructor in response to the guest speakers. Class discussions about experiences were a great asset to this area of preparation. For example, students noted the interviewee needed to be sure of the lighting and whether anyone else could be seen or heard during the interview. Further, the need to practice was highlighted for testing connectivity of the interviewee location and for testing the equipment. The last area generated in class discussions was that of the need for a professional appearance. This went beyond clothing to include whether accessories interfered by making noise and whether the clothes detracted or distracted the participants.

The Interview. Skype is used for this assignment because it works with all common platforms. Each candidate has a designated time to call the classroom to interview with the team. Students not participating that day observe from a more distant part of the classroom, and evaluate all participants. When the call is received, the interview team conducts the screening style interview. Questions are expected to reflect a grasp of the job and company in addition to the credentials of the interviewing student candidate. That candidate is expected to provide answers reflecting credentials and skills. Each interview is scheduled for no longer than seven minutes. While this time limit is in response to classroom time constraints, the length also pressures students to anticipate relevant questions and to prepare clear answers.

Debriefing

This activity enables students to prepare for this style of interview with the additional stress and demands that video interviewing entails. Students clearly learned that the camera and microphone are unforgiving and that it is essential to review one's appearance, setting, connectivity, and equipment. Students also learned that a backup plan of an alternate time or phone-style interview needs to be made in advance. While many of the competencies commonly acknowledged as critical for face-to-face encounters may be similar in this mediated environment, others are different. Beyond the understanding mentioned earlier regarding eye contact, students must understand this type of interview more closely resembles television announcing in style and practice. The list of tips generated for future students included: know who is around you, the camera

sees all and never looks away, eye contact is with camera not the computer screen, jewelry is noisy, and microphones are always hot. Anecdotal evidence suggests this assignment has provided an advantage in hiring for internships and jobs for the students enrolled in the course.

Appraisal

In response to the Skype interview exercise, the professor received anonymous comments from students' SOIs (Student Opinion of Instruction). The data was collected from the 2013 and 2014 student response. The professor was unable to view comments until after final grades were posted to avoid bias. In particular, the Skype interview exercise received five specific comments (17.24 percent) of the twenty-nine collected from 2013 and 2014. (1) "The Skype interview was the best feature. It gave us the opportunity to see what an actual interview will be like in the real world." (2) "Doing Skype interviews with résumé and cover letters really helped me for when I graduate college. Gained more confidence after doing so many interviews over the semester." (3) "The Skype interviews really helped me. It was different and something I never had done before." (4) "Employment interview was fun." (5) "Fun ways to implement the content learned (Skype interview, etc.)."

In addition to the specific Skype comments, many students felt positive about the valuable job experience they were gaining. The SOIs revealed nine comments (31.03 percent) that mentioned the practical application/experience of the assignment. (1) "The interviewing projects were very effective." (2) "I truly feel like I learned about things that will benefit me in the long run. I learned things about interviews in this class that will help me receive a job after college. It makes me less nervous for interviews in the future because I know what to do and expect now." (3) "It taught us how to do a proper interview." (4) "I learned so much from this course, not only by lecture but experience as well!" (5) "The variety of interviews we were able to do inside and outside of the classroom." (6) "Great life applications." (7) "He prepared us for the real world by actually making us do assignments that we would utilize after graduation." (8) "Making sure the lessons learned can be applied in 'real-world' situations." The real world application and implication of the assignment was to equip students with the ability to conduct a successful interview and be confident in their abilities.

As employers adopt technologies, these skills will become foundational. We face a future where video skills will determine the success of not only interviews, but also video résumés. Providing students with practice opportunities, whether course driven or office driven in career development, will be central to their success.

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Evaluating Listening Using *The Daily Show*: Analyzing How Critical Listening Influences Communication Skills

Nancy Bressler

Courses: Introduction to Communication, Public Speaking, Communication Theory, Persuasion, Improving Communication Skills, Introduction to Media

Learning Objectives: *By completing this activity, students should be able to understand how critical listening skills can be developed and how listening influences our communication with others. Through the development of critical listening techniques, students can learn to listen to others and create meaning from their messages. Moreover, students can discover that evaluating the message is equally important to enhance their own communication arguments, media literacy, and critical thinking skills.*

Introduction and Rationale

This activity emphasizes how communication classes can discuss listening and how students can cultivate effective critical listening skills. Students often associate listening with the act of hearing, but listening is a more complex process that involves the creation of meaning; therefore, students often underestimate its value. Developing sound listening skills is vital for college students, since they spend 55.4% of their communication time listening to others (Emanuel et al. 13). Furthermore, becoming a critical listener also requires the development of additional skills. Acquiring critical listening skills is fundamental for improving one's ability to communicate with other people, to develop intimate relationships with others, to increase one's media literacy, and to become an effective public speaker. More than that, previous research has demonstrated that listening is a crucial, practical job skill that students can use in the real world (Landrum & Harrold 131). Despite its importance, however, listening is something that is rarely taught; students rely more on experience than instruction, which can result in poor listening techniques (Rothwell 158).

Through this activity, students improve their critical listening skills in conjunction with the assessment of possibility, plausibility, probability, and certainty. The discussion questions and video clip in this activity provide students with the opportunity to identify, examine, and assess critical listening in media contexts. Through a visual example of how possibility, plausibility, probability, and certainty relate to critical listening, this activity provides students with the opportunity to assess how and when critical listening

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occurs. In this activity, students also evaluate to what extent critical listening determines the quality and credibility of the arguments presented in media discourse, locating the distinctions between what is reported and its likelihood of that report being accurate or reasonable. The connection between listening and media discourse is especially important, since “college students spend as much time listening to media as they do engaged in interpersonal interactions” (Emanuel et al. 13). Through an example from *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* in which Stewart specifically focuses on the underlying messages within media broadcasts, students can start to understand the difference between listening and critically listening. Because Stewart uses humor to illustrate and emphasize the flaws in specific media reports, students can start to assess how critical thinking will improve their own communication skills as listeners.

The Activity

Prior to the class where listening will be discussed, students should read the chapter in their textbook that covers listening and communication. This information is well explained using J. Dan Rothwell’s *In the company of others: An introduction to communication, 4th edition*. Instructors should then obtain an episode of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* in which Stewart finds fault in the logic of a media report. For example, Stewart discusses Fox News and its coverage of the Ferguson protests in this clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0i8-ZNLEeag>.

Once class begins, discuss with the students the difference between hearing, listening, and critical listening. Ask students to explain how they interpret possibility, plausibility, probability, and certainty based on their initial reading of the ideas before class. Request that students provide an example of each term and communicate why their answer is an example of possibility, plausibility, probability, or certainty, paying careful attention to how these terms can seem confusing for students. Once students develop their own conceptualizations for each distinct term, they can relate all of the terms to improving their critical listening skills.

After this initial dialogue, play the sound only of one of the clips of the actual news broadcast that Stewart references; in other words, do not allow students to view the visual aspect yet. Instructors should also not reveal that the clip comes from *The Daily Show*. Students should exercise only their listening skills on the auditory portion of the news broadcast. In the example provided, the news broadcast is included within *The Daily Show* clip, but be careful not to reveal that section to the students yet. Once the clip has been played, divide students into small groups and have them answer the following questions:

- 1) Which aspect of the news story is possible?
- 2) Which aspect of the news story is plausible?
- 3) Which aspect of the news story is probable?
- 4) Which aspect of the news story is likely certain?

Following their conversations, gather the class back together to discuss what themes emerged within the small group discussions. Using the video clip, students can also

debate how their understanding of possibility, plausibility, probability, and certainty may have changed from the initial class discussion.

After the students have conversed about their initial observations, play the video clip (both visual and audio) along with Stewart's commentary about the news broadcasts. Through the use of humor, Stewart stresses the flaws and absurdities within the reports. Addressing the role of humor in Stewart's style is central to this activity since, as Jodi Jan Kaufmann observes, "students [begin] developing an awareness that multiple reading positions [are] not arbitrary, but rather [are] socially constructed and ideologically charged in distinct ways" (47). Humor is also a multi-contextual genre in itself that allows for multiple readings within its text. Thus, it is the ideal source for students to start to critically listen to the media example in opposing ways through examining the use of Stewart's humor. As a class, contemplate the following questions:

- 1) In what ways does Stewart's commentary address skepticism? How does that change your initial observations about the media report?
- 2) In what ways does Stewart's commentary address true belief? How does that change your initial observations about the media report?

Rothwell defines skepticism as "a process of listening to claims, evaluating evidence and reasoning supporting those claims, and drawing conclusions based on probabilities" (171). Through the first question, students start to consider what aspects of the media report's claims were well-supported with quality, credible evidence. Students can also question what conclusions they would presume if given these claims and evidence. Rothwell identifies true belief as "an eagerness to approve of claims without credible evidence or solid reasoning, or even when opposing evidence or reasoning contradict the claim" (171). After students have started to analyze their conclusions in contrast to the media's conclusions based on the same claims and evidence, students start to realize to what extent one's confirmation bias affects reasoning. Because of the powerful nature of media, students also start to scrutinize claims made in the media without adequate evidence or reasoning.

Debriefing

Once students explore this video clip, the activity can be applied to a variety of other media examples. For instance, recent political commentators Samantha Bee (host of *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* on TBS) and John Oliver (host of *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* on HBO) also explore claims made by politicians, journalists, and commentators. Their humorous interpretations are, like Jon Stewart's, also based on revealing faulty reasoning, implausible argument, and unreliable evidence. While other mediated examples could be used in class, a fundamental guideline for instructors is to find a humorous example. As previously noted, humor is essential to this activity because the genre allows for multiple interpretations of media content; hence, students can adapt their critical listening skills when they consider multiple positions of arguments. Moreover, students could also be encouraged to find their own examples of media content that demonstrate faulty-reasoning, evidence, and/or claims. By discovering their

own examples, students can take the application of this activity further because they can construct their own arguments about critical listening.

Appraisal

Students repeatedly express that they enjoy incorporating a popular culture reference, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, into their classroom learning. The show airs on Comedy Central weeknights and attracts numerous college-aged viewers. According to CNN in 2012, the Pew Research Center for People and the Press concluded that 39% of the show's viewers are between 18 to 29 years old (Collinson para 8). Therefore, while students may be reluctant to acknowledge critical listening and believe it is an automatic part of their daily routine, they are more receptive to apply a media example that they are already watching to their classroom learning. As a result, this activity demonstrates how critical listening is distinct and vital to students' development of arguments, recognition of critical thinking skills, and cultivation of media literacy skills.

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The Influence of Poverty on Health: Promoting Conversations in the Classroom

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Courses: Upper Level Undergraduate or Graduate Level—Health Communication; Intercultural Communication; Development Communication; Health & Culture; Power, Privilege, & Difference

Objective: The goal of this activity is to promote conversations around health, poverty, and marginalized communities within the communication classroom. Also, students' understandings and critical thinking skills surrounding social justice issues will be improved.

Rationale

Today, across the globe, themes such as diversity, digital divide, human welfare, community-oriented participatory initiatives, social justice, and transparent modes of collective action reflect the new priorities (Melkote and Steeves 1). Specifically, within the fields of development and health communication, Dillon and Magsamen-Conrad infer scholars have called for a more participatory approach within development programs (2). Meaning, in order to communicate and promote change, we, as communication scholars, have to start by encouraging our students to take meaningful and engaged steps outside of the classroom walls, and into the community. A century ago, John Dewey (1916) brought our attention to the fact that there would be a shift in formal instruction. He encouraged educators to bridge the gap and make meaningful connections between subject matter and student's lives (Smith-Sanders 44). This class activity was designed for the communication classroom, and it was created to address Dewey's warning. Specifically, this activity addresses social justice issues focused around the effects poverty has on health.

In the spring of 2015, celebrity Gwyneth Paltrow took to *Twitter* with a picture of several healthy foods and the following statement, "This is what \$29 gets you at the grocery store – what families on SNAP (i.e. food stamps) have to live on for a week" (McCoy). Paltrow was trying to raise awareness to demonstrate the hardships faced by

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those living on SNAP, which stands for, *Supplement Nutritional Assistance Program*. Paltrow, like many other celebrities, decided to take on the Welfare Food Challenge (Welfare Food Challenge). The idea of this challenge is to raise awareness of the issue of food insecurity and poverty. Unfortunately, Paltrow's efforts were not well received (McCoy). Critics hounded her for her attempts to raise awareness surrounding the topics of poverty and health, because she was merely focusing around one small aspect of the problem (McCoy). Additionally, Paltrow did not complete the challenge and only made it a few days before she broke.

Healthy eating is indeed an issue for those living in poverty and utilizing the SNAP program, but distance and access to fresh and healthy foods are also problems when examining the effects poverty has on health. Therefore, we have created an activity for communication educators to utilize within their classrooms to raise awareness on the topic of poverty and health. There are three goals with this activity: (1) to promote conversations surrounding poverty, health, and marginalization in and outside of the communication classroom; (2) to improve students' understandings and critical thinking skills surrounding social justice issues; and (3) to encourage students to participate in service-learning activities.

Description

Often times within the communication classroom, difficult conversations arise surrounding the challenges certain individuals face in society. Asking some college students to understand life at the poverty bracket is often difficult to grasp. This activity has the potential to develop a dialogue promoting awareness regarding poverty and health between communication educators and students. At the beginning of this activity, students are told that they will have a \$29.00¹ food allowance for one week. Students must collect all receipts, maintain a daily food log, and attempt to eat as healthy as they can. Students cannot use their meal plans, accept any kind of charity, or eat any food they already had during this time and are placed on the honor system. To aid the students in processing the activity, a few guiding questions were provided:

- 1) What is the role of *agency* in this activity?
- 2) How were your choices enabled and/or constrained during this activity?
- 3) What does it mean to be *marginalized*?
- 4) How does *marginalization* affect the lived experiences of marginalized people in society?
- 5) What can you do to aid marginalized communities in regards to increasing their knowledge about health?
- 6) How can we better communicate the effects poverty has on health to larger audiences?

Although it does not have to be required for the project, we suggest communication educators have their students volunteer at a local food bank or

¹Please note that \$29.00 was the amount Paltrow used, feel free to adjust the allowance amount based on SNAP's recommendations for your state and or region. The \$29.00 is merely an example amount for the purpose of this article.

community kitchen. These forms of civic engagement will allow students to truly experience poverty full circle. Instilling the importance of civic engagement in the minds of students is critical to the future of our society. Giving back the gift and encouraging experiential service-learning outside of the classroom walls will only increase students' educational experiences.

As the instructor, it is important to preface that the communication classroom is a safe space, this way students will feel more comfortable sharing their experiences. At the end of the week, students must submit a paper describing their experiences, deliver a presentation to the class, as well as express how they felt embodying a life style other than one they are normally accustomed to.

Debriefing

During the week, discussions in the classroom should center on marginalization and the subsequent implications of marginalization on health. When individuals are marginalized from mainstream society, survival is higher on the priority list than living a healthy lifestyle (Yehya and Dutta 1223). Depression, humiliation, and inaccessibility to health care and healthy living are all struggles that come along with living in poverty ("A culture-centered" 67; "The critical cultural" 534; Yehya and Dutta 1223). When students share these experiences with their colleagues, those colleagues will tangentially feel the repercussions of poverty and food concerns in lower socioeconomic status households. More importantly, however, hearing individual recollections of difficulties brings a sense of reality and urgency to this activity.

Documenting daily meals with a food log will also help keep students accountable to the project and help other colleagues see commonalities in what the group ate as a collective. Combined, these measures reinforce learning outcomes and create a sense of cohesion among participants of this project by bringing a sense of group reality to the experience. The tools also help students extrapolate what is happening in the communication classroom and apply it to the broader population. These measures, however, are by no means exclusive, and the eager practitioner can alter these strategies/debriefing tools as desired.

Appraisal

There are several variations that can be done with this activity. One is modifying the allocation of funds to match the SNAP benefit allocation for the local area. Providing a local look at poverty may aid in providing deeper connections with the community. Another modification could be to allow groups to participate together and share resources. A discussion of community building and the importance of pooling resources must accompany this variation. As previously mentioned in the description, an adaption that includes volunteering at local food banks or community kitchens could accompany this activity. Adding this service-learning component intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service (Jacoby 3; Robinson and Clemens 35). The original activity and all modifications provide a unique way for students to learn about the challenges of food insecurity, embody the life of another in a practical way, and promote social justice.

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