

PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNICATION ANNUAL

Pennsylvania Communication Association Special Online Issue on Graduate Research

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Pennsylvania Communication Annual Guide for Authors

The Pennsylvania Communication Annual is dedicated to advancing our undertaking of human communication. Manuscripts should be original and should discuss instructional, theoretical, philosophical, and/or practical aspects of any area of communication. Reviews of recent books and/or video tapes in any area of communication are also considered at the editor's discretion. While articles authored by Pennsylvanians and articles covering Pennsylvania topics are especially welcome, manuscripts on all topics and from all regions, including international submissions, are invited and will receive full consideration for publication.

The Pennsylvania Communication Annual is a refereed journal of the **Pennsylvania Communication Association**. Manuscripts for the 2015 issue are now being received. The acceptance rate for the 2014 journal was slightly over 22%. Submission should follow the latest APA style sheet. Please format your papers for blind review and remove anything that may give away your identity. *Manuscripts should not exceed 8000 words including references, notes, tables and other citations. Also book reviews should not exceed 2000 words.* Please submit your articles to *The Pennsylvania Communication Annual* at my.ejmanager.com/pca website. The submission deadline is 3/30/2015. PCA Annual is indexed by the EBSCOHost service.

Some important details to follow when submitting your manuscripts: Endnotes only and without formatting, no footnotes; no superscript font to indicate an endnote, just regular numbers and we will superscript upon editing; insert tables and illustrations as images only or send separate PDF files of these portions of the documents; and either formatted hanging indents only on references or no formatting at all (no "return" and "tab" to create the look of a hanging indent).

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The Association believes in:

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- Advancing and developing communication curricula
- Responding to student and societal needs
- Attending to and caring for the student inside and outside of the communication classroom

Scholarship

- Promoting communication scholarship within the Keystone State
- Providing a disciplinary commitment to Pennsylvania scholars, reaching out to the larger discipline
- Being a dwelling place of Pennsylvania communication scholarship history

Service

- Connecting the larger community to the communication discipline
- Supporting efforts to professionalize students in communication fields
- Serving our students inside and outside of formal institutional structures

Commitment to the Discipline

- Nurturing the grassroots application of communication in the wider community
- Caring for the discipline on the local academic campus
- Supporting the larger discipline at the regional, national, and international levels

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From the Guest Editor

David DeJuliis
Duquesne University

Questions of human communication are problems for the human condition. In antiquity, the spoken word preserved cultural values, until the written word outsourced memory to written records. Plato responded that the written word would commodify the spoken word and make memory obsolete. In the Middle Ages, the printing press made possible the mass production of books. The few literate scribes and priests warned that mass producing the Bible would trivialize its timeless message. In the nineteenth century, novels provided a new form of self-expression, but European social critics worried that novels weakened traditional roles of husband and wife. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, scholars argued that television inverts the roles of parent and child, and that social media erodes face-to-face conversational skills. In each case, those in control of the means of communication serve as gatekeepers of civilization. Alongside changes in communication, the gatekeepers evolved from elders and sages in antiquity, to monks in the Middle Ages, to the literate in the modern world, to anyone with an Internet connection in the Information Age. Today's intellectuals are both gatekeepers and critics, conversant in the literature of their disciplines and engaged with the social problems of their era.

The problems of human communication are complex. As a process and practice, human communication resists reification. The origins and outcomes of messages are situated in historical frameworks informed by tradition. Communication is always a lived experience performed in and through the human body and grounded in human culture and consciousness. Communication scholars describe and interpret communication as lived experience by attending to subtle shifts and patterns in human behavior, both verbal and non-verbal. They engage and learn from tensions within and outside the boundaries of the discipline. Communication scholars ask the "why" behind the "how" of communication. Questions about the theory and practice of communication emerge within a horizon of interpretive possibilities extending from particular to general and individual to community. As de-

veloping scholars in communication, graduate students answer questions about the theory of communication. As growing gatekeepers of civilization, their communicative practices reconstitute the human condition.

In an ancient Greek parable, a helpless hedgehog outwits a con-niving fox with a single strategy, curling up into a ball. In the mid-twentieth century, Isaiah Berlin divided intellectuals into two categories: hedgehogs and foxes. For the fox, the world is too complex to understand through one lens, and deserves multi-faceted treatment. Foxes, like Aristotle and Hegel, draw on many experiences and pursue many leads. For the hedgehog, the world is too complex *not* to engage with a single idea. Hedgehogs, like Darwin and Marx, reduce the complexity of the world to one defining idea. The complex problems of communication require both hedgehogs and foxes. Some scholars see communication as rooted in history and shaped by dialogue. Others see communication as empirical and investigable through observation of relations among structural properties. From both perspectives, the graduate students in this special issue have reduced the complexity of communities to a few questions, and engaged the questions with flexibility and a sense responsibility to the discipline. As hedgehogs, they reduce an interdisciplinary field to the few guiding questions needed for theory building. As foxes, they engage the questions from different angles, on all fronts and flanks.

This special issue of the *Pennsylvania Communication Annual* on graduate student research compiles a set of five articles by graduate students in communication from varying methodological and theoretical frameworks. Binnie's framework is phenomenology, the study of human conscious experience. She directs her attention inward, to the individual consciousness experience of communication. In her article, "Meeting the Other: The Phenomenological Implications of Changing Communicative Spaces," Binnie asks, can technology replicate the experience of face-to-face human communication? Technologically-mediated communication allows people to communicate instantaneously without being physically present. However, it remains unclear how the experience of face-to-face communication differs from technologically-mediated communication. Drawing on the work of Levinas, Idhe, and Ong, Binnie argues that face-to-face communication and technologically-mediated communication are not distinct forms

or consciousness, but subsets of the same reality as “alternate” experiences of communication.

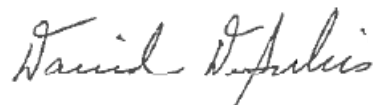
Ecenbarger also examines the effects of technology on the human condition in the context of video games. In his article, “The Impact of Video Games on Identity Construction,” Ecenbarger focuses on identity construction in the physical world and virtual worlds. Ecenbarger reviews the extant literature on video games and identity construction, and theorizes about how identity construction within the virtual worlds of video games translates to the physical world. Drawing on the work of Haraway and others, Ecenbarger first reviews the role of technology in the construction of personal identity, then narrows his focus to the potential for gamers to construct their personal identity within the virtual worlds of video games. Next, he addresses the identification of gamers with characters in their games, as well as other communities of gamers both online and offline. The various forms of identity construction represent not only the convergence of online and offline worlds, but also the blurring of real and fictional identities.

Applequist’s framework is critical theory. In her article, “Pinterest, Gender Reveal Parties, and the Binary: Reducing an Impending Arrival to ‘Pink’ or ‘Blue,’” Applequist focuses on how images on the social network Pinterest define and perpetuate gender norms. Pinterest allows its mostly-female users to “pin” and “re-pin” images reflecting their interests to self-created boards. Unlike Facebook and Twitter, Pinterest is completely visual. Its preference for products over experience perpetuates stereotypes of femininity by commodifying major events in a woman’s life, such as her first home, her wedding and revealing the gender of her unborn child, a popular topic on Pinterest. Applequist examines the images associated with these gender reveal parties within the binary of blue (boy) and pink (girl).

Trevelyan’s framework is also critical theory. Ideographs are words or phrases that carry the ideological values of a given culture. People inject their ideologies into ideographs, and use the ideographs to justify behaviors consistent with the culture. Activists for same-sex marriage use ideographs such as “marriage equality” to overcome the cultural resonance of other ideographs,

such as “family values,” that assume marriage between a man and a woman. In his article, “All <Marriages> are Created <Equal>: Redefining Marriage or Family Values?,” Trevellyan argues that the legal progress made by gay rights activists outpaces the ideographs used in cultural discourse about same-sex marriage. Ideographs such as “family values” carry residual cultural weight despite judicial rulings in favor of same-sex marriage. For opponents of same-sex marriage, the ideographs “family values” and “marriage equality” are mutually exclusive but, for advocates of same-sex marriage, they are complimentary. Trevellyan surveys the strategies of same-sex marriage advocates to reframe the ideograph of marriage equality to include same-sex couples by emphasizing the “equality” in “marriage equality.”

While Trevellyan engages ideographs as cultural signposts, Zhang examines everyday communication as a vehicle for Western values. In his article, “The Global-Local Dialectic in Postcolonial Approaches to Communication Studies,” Zhang argues that communication is the ground of culture and (Western) culture is the ground of communication. The terms of international relations are Western, and Western ideology and cultural values determine political and economic hierarchies, with nations where values are consistent with Western ideology at the top, and nations whose values are other than Western at the bottom. The ideology of imperialism persists in communication about and among nations, where non-Western nations must either speak the language of Western hegemony or not speak at all. Zhang argues that communication constitutes the imperial past, and recreates the postcolonial future. As a whole, the articles in this inaugural special issue of the *Pennsylvania Communication Annual* on graduate student research show that, together, scrutiny of the familiar and engagement of difference generate questions about human communication and problems for the human condition.



David DeLuliis
Duquesne University

Meeting the Other: The Phenomenological Implications of Changing Communicative Spaces

Chelsea Binnie
Duquesne University

Communication between the self and the other in cyberspace is filtered so that it does not occur in direct contact with the other, but rather is mediated through various technological gadgetry or social media forums. One is in effect able to mask or hide the self when communicating with the other and is no longer required to meet the other face to face in order for communication to occur. This paper seeks to answer the question: does technological gadgetry dehumanize the communicative act? The paper will examine the phenomenological implications of communicating in cyberspace via technological gadgetry in juxtaposition with communicating in the lived world by meeting the other face to face. The paper will look primarily at the relationship human beings engage in, with, and through technology, and will examine the phenomenological and technological implications of changing communicative spaces in both the lived world and in cyberspace.

The paper begins with an examination of the phenomenology of technology, or of the ways in which the human engagement of technology offers an alternate experience of being in the world. Technological embodiment (Lash, 2001; Ihde, 2004; Willson, 2006; Petric et al., 2001; and, Josgrilberg, 2011) allows human beings to technically extend the body so as to escape the bounds of space and time when engaging the other. D. Ihde (2004) explores the relationship between human beings and technology through “alterity relations” or through “relations *to* or *with* a technology” (p. 151). Ihde, drawing from E. Levinas’ 1961/1969 text *Totality and Infinity*, understands the notion of alterity as the “radical difference posed to any human by another human, an *other*” (2004, p. 152). The paper moves from Ihde’s (2004) understanding of technology, embodiment, and alterity in the first section to address the ways in which human beings can communicate with one another through technology or technologically mediated conversation in the second section. W. J. Ong (1996) offers caution that communication must retain an element of the human condition, whether the other is engaged face to face or via technology. The third section of the paper will address the impli-

cations present in changing communicative spaces. This section will address the notion of technological embodiment in terms of its potential to permanently alter the way in which human beings think and are consequently able to exist in the world. The paper is organized as such so as to allow the reader to contemplate the relationship human beings engage in, with, and through technology, and to provide a textured understanding of the ways in which technology may lend itself to the process of communicative dehumanization. The term communicative dehumanization is used throughout the essay to reference the state that occurs when technology supersedes the human element of the communicative act. Communicative dehumanization refers to a process through which technology becomes primary and human connection and relation become secondary foci of attention when communicating with the other in either the lived world or in cyberspace.

This essay contributes to the study of communication and the philosophy of cyberspace through its efforts to uncover the way in which human beings phenomenologically experience technology when engaging one another in the communicative act. The notion of technological embodiment (Lash, 2001; Ihde, 2004; Willson, 2006; Petric et al., 2001; and, Josgrilberg, 2011) offers human beings a way to technically extend their natural states into the virtual realm and in so doing allows the self to transcend the constraints of space and time when engaging the other. Technological embodiment opens a new world for human beings and consequently has the capacity to permanently alter their interactions with the natural, lived world in favor of a technologically mediated, virtual existence. Technological embodiment offers human beings an alternative to reality—an alternative that may become more appealing than reality in and of itself as technology continues to evolve.

The Phenomenology of Technology

This section will explore the work of S. Turkle (1995; 2011), S. Lash (2001), D. Ihde (2004), M. A. Willson (2006), G. Petric, A. Petrovic, and V. Vehovar (2011), F. B. Josgrilberg (2011), and W. J. Ong (1995; 1996, 1998). Themes driving the discussion in this section include the relationship between technology and everyday human life, the idea of technological embodiment, attending to the call for a human element to remain present when tech-

nologically engaging the other, and, human beings in the role of technological creators. Turkle's (1995; 2011) work primarily explores the relationship between technology and everyday human life. Lash's (2001), Ihde's (2004), Willson's (2006), Petric et al.'s (2011), and Josgrilberg's (2011) work examines the idea of technological embodiment when communicatively engaging the other. Ong's (1996) work calls for a human element to remain present when engaging the other either face to face or through technologically mediated communicative channels. Ong's (1995; 1998) work also looks at human beings as technological creators. Discussion is structured as such to explore multiple themes present in the literature concerning the phenomenology of technology and to offer the reader a textured understanding of the phenomenological implications of technologically communicating with the other in both the lived world and in cyberspace. Turkle (1995) opens discussion in this section with a critical examination of the role that technology plays in the everyday lives of human beings.

In the 1995 text, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Turkle begins with a series of questions that frame some concerns regarding the rise in the human use of technology in everyday interactions. Turkle (1995) asks,

What will computer-mediated communication do to our commitment to other people? Will it satisfy our needs for connection and social participation, or will it further undermine fragile relationships? What kind of responsibility and accountability will we assume for our virtual actions? (p.178)

Turkle opens with this line of questioning to encourage the reader to critically consider the role technology plays in humankind's everyday lives and to highlight the changes that human being in the world is undergoing as a result of the development and increased use of new technologies. Turkle (1995) indicates that "we are learning to see ourselves as plugged-in technobodies, we are redescribing our politics and economic life in a language that is resonant with a particular form of machine intelligence" (p.178). Here, Turkle points to a reconstitution of the human body from a technological perspective. Turkle's examination of human beings as technobodies indicates that the need to critically question the use of technology is becoming ever more relevant and necessary

as society moves in the direction of an increase in the use and pervasion of technology in human being's everyday lives.

Turkle (2011) continues discussion of the relationship between human beings and technology by examining the computer as a tool. In the book, *Alone Together: Why we Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, Turkle continues critically questioning the role that technology plays in relation to human being in the world. In this text, Turkle (2011) asks colleagues to consider how "computers [were] changing us as people" (p. x). The results of this inquiry indicate that Turkle's "colleagues often objected" to this question and insisted "that computers were 'just tools'" (2011, p. x). Turkle, who finds human beings to be shaped by their tools, found this particular response to be especially problematic. New technology and new forms of technology concern Turkle because of the inability to know how human beings will be impacted through their relation with and use of new technological developments. For this reason, Turkle asks readers to critically question the role that technology, particularly new technology, plays when entering into the realm of human being in the life world. In line with Turkle, S. Lash discusses the relationship between human beings and technology in a 2001 essay that examines technology as a replica of or as a form of human life.

Lash (2001) addresses the issue of human being in the life world in light of humankind's relationship with technology in the essay, "Technological Forms of Life." In this essay, the human body is examined as a technological form of life. Lash (2001) indicates that "I operate as a man-machine interface—i.e. as a technological form of natural life—because I must necessarily navigate through technological forms of social life" (p. 107). The technological nature of life or the inseparability of human being from the machine is pivotal to Lash's discussion of technological forms of life. According to Lash (2001), humankind operates as a technological form of life which causes other forms of life to become forms of "life-at-a-distance" as well as forms of "nature-at-a-distance" (p. 108). Forms of life-at-a-distance are technologically generated replicas of internal material once unique to particular subjectivities, and through the fusion of human being and technology, have exited and distanced themselves from the human body to be stored in an electronic database. Similarly, forms of nature-at-a-distance have manifested in efforts such as the Hu-

man Genome Project wherein genetic material from an organism or a being that was at one time unique and explicit to a particular organism or being is distanced from its origin and stored in an external database in the form of raw genetic material (Lash, 2001, p. 108). Using the human as machine metaphor, Lash points to the notion of space and time in discussion of the technological engagement of the other. Lash (2001) indicates that the nature of sociality is grounded in disconnections in time and space, which renders it difficult to “achieve sociality apart from my machine interface” (p. 108). In other words, when following the human as machine metaphor, Lash finds it difficult for human beings to achieve sociality without technology present to break down the constraints of time and space in the communicative act. For Lash, human being as machine cannot achieve sociality without the presence and the use of technological systems as communicative tools. Ihde examines this interrelationship between human beings and technology in a 2004 book chapter when discussing the connection between embodiment and the human use of technology.

Ihde (2004) looks to the condition of embodiment in discussion of technology and its relation to human being in the life world. In the article, “A Phenomenology of Technics,” Ihde points to the human desire to embody, or through extension to become technology when discussing the condition of embodiment. Ihde (2004) indicates that human beings have a

doubled desire that, on one side, is a wish for *total transparency*, total embodiment, for technology to truly “become me”. Were this possible, it would be equivalent to there being no technology, for transparency would *be* my body and sense; I desire the face-to-face that I would experience without the technology. (p.139)

Ihde (2004) indicates that the other side of the desire is to hold the “power, the transformation that the technology makes available” (p.139). For Ihde, technological embodiment would afford human beings the capacity to break the bounds of time and space—to literally traverse the globe in a moment’s time. Human beings would only be able to achieve this condition through technology. Ihde points to this desire as a source of a human fascination with technology. Through the condition of technological embodiment human beings gain the capacity to break the bounds of

space and time and to consequently experience a different state of being in the world.

M. A. Willson (2006) echoes Ihde's (2004) sentiments on technology and embodiment in the book, *Technically Together: Rethinking Community Within Techno-Society*. Here, Willson (2006) indicates that human beings can embody technology "through the material processes of abstraction, extension, and rationalization" (p. 86). Willson (2006) continues to state that the use of technology allows a sense of community to expand across the bounds of time and space. For Willson, technology "changes the experience of embodiment and alters our understandings of being-in-the-world, including our understandings of being-together" (2006, p.86). Willson highlights the notion of community through discussion of technological embodiment. Social media websites such as Skype afford human beings the possibility to communicate with one another instantaneously and absent the restraints of physical proximity to the other. In this sense, though human beings cannot feel themselves bypassing the constraints of time and space, they are able to address the other at any point in time and at any physical location where technologies such as the Internet, a personal computer, tablet, or smart phone, and social media websites including Skype are accessible.

G. Petric, A. Petrovcic, and V. Vehovar (2011) build on Willson's (2006) discussion of the role of technology and its ability to allow both human beings and a sense of community to transcend the bounds of space and time when communicatively engaging the other. Petric et al. (2011) focus their discussion of human beings' relationship with and use of technology on the intersubjective. In their article, "Social Uses of Interpersonal Communication Technologies in a Complex Media Environment," Petric et al. (2011) indicate that human beings tend to "engage in activities on the basis of their own interests, yet they are linked via a diversity of interactions with each other" (p. 120). Petric et al. apply this notion to technological use through discussion of the intersubjective. The authors indicate that when human beings decide to use a particular form of media, they do so in recognition of their own needs and intents in engaging the other and also in recognition of the communicative needs and intents of the other. Petric et al. (2011) state that the use of media "is always intersubjectively constituted by the interlocutors participating in the inter-

action” (p.120). For Petric et al., the notion of intersubjectivity is central to the human decision to utilize a particular form of technology or media to engage the other. Josgrilberg’s (2011) discussion of technology, novelty, and the world builds off of Petric et al.’s understanding of the relationship between technology and intersubjectivity.

Josgrilberg (2011) explores the quality of novelty when discussing human beings and their relation to and uses of technology. Josgrilberg states that the novelty of technological embodiment is an appealing quality that drives human beings to engage the world in different ways. Josgrilberg (2011) indicates that “the novelty brought on by digital media” through “relation to technical objects resonates with the universal and ambiguous human experience of perceiving the world and expressing it through the body” (p. 309). For Josgrilberg, the novelty associated with technological embodiment or of being embodied in the world is appealing and encourages individuals to engage the world in different ways through the use of technological extension. Josgrilberg finds novelty to be an important quality when examining the relationship human beings share with technology. Ong (1996) demonstrates concern for the impact of new technologies upon intersubjective human relationships and pleads for an element of the human to remain present as a manner of battling communicative dehumanization when technologically engaging the other.

Ong (1996) highlights the need for an element of humanity to remain present when dealing with human affairs, particularly when the channel to engage such affairs is technologically mediated. Ong (1996) feels that “[h]uman life must be ultimately managed humanly by more than information-plus-hermeneutic, which is to say by what it has always been managed by when it has been humanly managed” (p. 15). Here, Ong highlights the importance of attending to one’s humanness when engaging the other—either face to face, or through a mediated channel. Ong (1996) continues to highlight the importance of a human element by pointing to interpersonal and group interaction as the sources of “the love of human beings” and “for one another” that “has held human society together from the start of mankind” (p. 15). In consideration of the communicative act and of human being in the world (whether engaged naturally or through technological embodi-

ment), Ong is careful to highlight the importance of maintaining a human element when engaging and attending to the other.

In the 1995 essay, “Hermeneutic Forever: Voice, Text, Digitization, and the ‘I,’” Ong attends to the interplay between human beings and technology. Ong further highlights the importance of the human element when looking to the construction of computers. Ong (1995) states that a “computer program begins with a decision to start this way rather than that way, with this question rather than that question—a decision made and formulated in the human lifeworld, not within a computer” (p. 23). Ong is careful to highlight the notion that humankind created the computer and therefore gave it the capacity to think, not the other way around. Ong, similar to Turkle (1995; 2011), examines computers as “tools” or as “extensions of human beings (not vice versa)” (Ong, 1995, p. 23). In a later essay Ong highlights writing as an early form of technology that functioned similarly to today’s computer. Ong (1998) states that “writing is a technological product storing knowledge outside the human individual and thus encouraging a sense of the known as separate from the knower” (p. 19). The recognition of writing as an early form of today’s computer further highlights the human component that Ong calls for in communicative encounters with the other. The writing-computer association also indicates that human beings have been phenomenologically engaging this form of technology as a communicative tool long before humankind brought the computer into being.

Technological Engagement with the Other

This section will explore the works of V. Miller (2008), M. A. Willson (2012), M. L. Houser, C. Fleuriet, and D. Estrada (2012), E. A. Konjin, S. Utz, M. Tanis, and S. B. Barnes (2008), Ong (1960), P-P. Verbeek (2005), R. Kumar (2005), A. Cerra and C. James (2012), and J. Waldo, H. S. Lin, and L. I. Millett (2007). Themes that move the discussion forward in this section include, human relationships in the lived world and cyberspace via technologically mediated channels, human needs that develop as a result of technologically mediated communication, the moral and ethical implications that arise due to the use of technological communicative channels, and, the relationship between technologically generated communication and issues of identity masking, privacy, and, anonymity. Miller’s (2008), Willson’s (2012),

Houser et al.'s (2012), Konjin et al.'s (2008), and Ong's (1960) work examines human relationships with one another in the lived world and in cyberspace through technologically mediated channels. Verbeek's (2005) work touches upon the idea of human needs that emerge as a result of technologically engaging the other. Kumar's (2005) work discusses the moral and ethical implications that emerge as a result of communicating with the other through technologically mediated channels. Cerra and James' (2012) and Waldo et al.'s (2007) work explores the complexities that emerge as a result of the relationship between technologically mediated communication and identity masking, privacy, and anonymity. Discussion is arranged in this order so as to offer the reader an overview of the literature surrounding the communicative act of technologically engaging the other and to outline some of the complexities and implications that emerge when communicating with the other through technologically mediated channels in either the lived world or in cyberspace. Miller (2008) begins discussion in this section with an examination of the significance of connecting to the other when communicatively engaged through technologically mediated channels.

Miller (2008) attends to Ong's call for a human element in the communicative act in discussion of technology and engaging the other. Miller (2008) indicates that "in phatic media culture, content is not king, but 'keeping in touch' is" (p. 395). Miller (2008) highlights that the most important element of the communicative act is not found in what is said between one individual and another, but in "the *connection* to the other" (p. 395). In light of engaging technological embodiment to address the other, Miller (2008) points to the "text message, the short call, the brief email, the short blog update or comment" as crucial tools that can be utilized to develop, maintain, or strengthen one's connection to the other (p.395). In line with Ong (1995; 1998), Miller (2008) is careful to highlight a few technological tools that allow human beings to communicate effectively with one another through mediated technological channels.

Willson (2012) also follows Ong's (1996) thought on maintaining an element of the human when engaging others technologically. Willson points to the nature of relationships in today's society as being determined by technology. Willson (2012) asserts that proximally close and socially embedded relationships "are

affected by increasingly mobile labor and social practices and the necessity of utilizing technologies to manage and supplement them” (p. 282). Willson (2006) echoes Miller’s (2008) call for the “text message, the short call, the brief email, the short blog update or comment” and views them as byproducts of a societal movement toward technological mobility (p. 395). Willson calls for attention to the human element in communicative exchanges both in the lived world where one can engage the other face to face and in technologically mediated communicative environments wherein the act of engaging the other is technologically-driven as a manner through which human beings might be able to ward off the dehumanizing effects that technology may have upon human communication.

Houser, Fleuriet, and Estrada (2012) attend to Ong’s (1996) call for a human element to communication in their article, “The Cyber Factor: An Analysis of Relational Maintenance Through the Use of Computer-Mediated Communication.” In discussion of human relationships and cyberspace, Houser et al. emphasize the need for relational maintenance. Houser et al. (2012) define relational maintenance as “an ongoing process where partners must respond and adapt to the needs and goals of both individuals. It involves repairing and maintaining the relationship” (p. 35). The authors indicate that relational maintenance is particularly important in mediated or technologically driven communicative engagements because it attends to the human need for a sense of belonging, or community. Houser et al. underscore relational maintenance as an important element of mediated or technologically driven communication because of the rise in frequency and pervasiveness of technology in today’s world. The author’s focus of attention on relational maintenance combats communicative dehumanization as it heeds Ong’s (1996) call for an element of the human to remain present when engaged in the communicative act with the other.

Konjin, Utz, Tanis, and Barnes (2008) also heed Ong’s (1996) call for a human element to communication. Konjin et al. examine interpersonal communication mediated by technology in the essay, “How Technology Affects Human Interaction.” Konjin et al. (2008) indicate that a “great deal of interpersonal communication is now mediated by technology” and that computer-mediated technologies “can sometimes facilitate or impede communication

and can alter interpersonal interactions” (p. 3). The authors pay particular attention to how new technologies can “challenge the more traditional definitions of interpersonal communication” (Konjin et al., 2008, p. 3). The authors indicate that the introduction and continued use of new technologies is changing the face of communicatively engaging the other. For Konjin et al. (2008) these new technologies function as “relationship enablers” that not only provide new forms of communication but also fundamentally change the face of interaction between the self and the other (p. 3). The author’s work supports Ong’s (1996) call for an element of the human to remain present when communicatively engaging the other but also makes room for the potential opportunities and challenges, such as communicative dehumanization, that can emerge from the human use of technology.

In the 1960 essay, “Wired for Sound: Teaching, Communications, and Technological Culture,” Ong looks at the treatment of the self and other in light of the continual emergence of new technology. Ong (1960) indicates that “no civilization has given such attention to problems of personnel and personality” and that the “‘I’ and ‘thou’ have never been the objects of more explicit treatment than now” (p. 249). Ong attends to the human element of communication here and highlights the importance placed on the self and other in light of communicating through mediated technology. Verbeek (2005) heeds Ong’s call here through discussion of technology and the human needs that are generated as a result of communicating through technology. Verbeek (2005) understands technology as “that which creates the means for supplying human needs” and finds that as “these needs progressively increase” the effort to “supply these needs” moves to become “tightly organized” which results in the “entire society” becoming revamped “in terms of this required functionality” (p. 37). Verbeek looks to technology as a tool, which attends to human needs and as a result, has the capacity to generate a sense of community in response to those needs. Ong (1996) and Verbeek (2005) both highlight the importance of retaining attention on the human component of the communicative act when addressing or engaging the other through the use of technology. It is this focus of attention on retaining an element of the human that allows individual beings to push against the force of communicative dehumanization when engaging one another either in the lived world or through technologically mediated channels.

Kumar (2005) furthers Ong's (1996) and Verbeek's (2005) emphasis on retaining an element of the human when technologically engaging the other and addresses the issue of human needs as a result of technologically mediated communication through discussion of the notion of Value Sensitive Design. Kumar (2005) defines Value Sensitive Design as the "values that center on human well-being, human dignity, justice, welfare, and human rights" (p. 82). Kumar (2005) indicates that Value Sensitive Design helps to ensure that values retain a "moral epistemic standing independent of whether a particular person or group upholds such values" (p. 82). For Kumar, Value Sensitive Design helps determine how values will play out in society and ensures that a moral component is attached to them. Kumar's work on Value Sensitive Design contributes to the study of cyberspace and of technologically mediated communication because it infuses the communicative act with moral and ethical components, which, in turn, work to combat communicative dehumanization when technologically engaged with the other.

Cerra and James (2012) attend to Ong's (1996) call for an element of the human to remain present when engaged with the other in their discussion of the relationship between human identity and technologically mediated communicative engagements. Cerra and James (2012) examine technologically mediated communication in light of its capacity to mask one's identity in cyberspace. Cerra and James (2012) find that "technology has allowed for the creation of a world where others can mask their identities—either for harmless or malicious intent—it can also serve to remedy the blind spots that naturally occur as a result" (p. 16). Cerra and James highlight technology's capacity to create a world where identity masking can occur with relative ease. This is in juxtaposition to the lived world, where it is not impossible to mask one's identity, but certainly is not as easily achieved as can be in cyberspace. Ong (1975) highlights this notion in the essay, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction." Ong (1975) indicates that masks "are inevitable in all human communication, even oral" (p. 20). Ong (1975) reinforces Cerra and James' (2012) notion that technology creates a world and opens up a technological space where it is not exceedingly difficult to function as someone other than the self.

Waldo, Lin, and Millett (2007) extend Cerra and James' (2012) discussion of the relationship between human identity and technologically mediated communication through exploration of the interplay between privacy, anonymity, and technological communicative channels. Waldo et al. (2007) find that privacy "corresponds to being able to send an encrypted e-mail to another recipient" while anonymity "corresponds to being able to send the contents of the e-mail in plain, easily readable form but without any information that enables a reader of the message to identify the person who wrote it" (p. 46). Waldo et al. indicate that privacy is particularly important when the content of a message is afforded primacy whereas anonymity is preferred when the identity of the author is at issue. The author's (2007) discussion of privacy and anonymity reinforces Cerra and James' (2012) and Ong's (1975) discussion of masking behaviors as they present themselves in the technological realm. Waldo et al.'s (2007) discussion of the relationship between privacy, anonymity, and technology highlights the significance of Ong's (1996) call for an element of the human to remain present when engaging the other through technological communicative channels.

Phenomenological Implications of Changing Spaces

This section will explore the works of G. A. Gladney (1991), T. W. Cooper (1998), L. Haddon (2011), J-L. Nancy (1996/2000), I. James (2006), D. Beer (2008), S. Turkle (2005), P. S. N. Lee, L. Leung, V. Lo, C. Xiong, and, T. Wu (2011), I. Richardson (2007), and W. J. Ong (1980). Themes that advance discussion in this section include technological exclusion and communicative dehumanization, technological embodiment as a form of world construction, privacy concerns resulting from a change between public and private cyberspaces, and the relationship between technology, human consciousness, and the perceived quality of human life. Gladney's (1991), Cooper's (1998), and Haddon's (2011) work looks at notions of technological exclusion and communicative dehumanization. Nancy's (1996/2000), and James's (2006) work explores technological embodiment as a form of world construction. Beer's (2008) work examines privacy concerns that emerge as a result of changing public and private cyberspaces. Turkle's (2005), Lee et al.'s (2011), Richardson's (2007), and Ong's (1980) work discusses the relationship amongst technology, human consciousness, and perceived quality

of human life. Discussion is organized as such in an effort to offer the reader a series of perspectives on the phenomenological implications of changing communicative spaces and to demonstrate the implications, such as communicative dehumanization, that might emerge as a result of technologically communicating with the other in either the lived world or in cyberspace. Gladney's (1991) work begins this discussion with an examination of the ethical implications that can emerge as a result of changing communicative spaces.

Gladney (1991) takes an ethical approach in examination of the implications of changing communicative spaces. Gladney (1991) notes that by and large, mass media has been understood "from an ethical viewpoint", however, "only in rudimentary form to date have technologies themselves been brought under ethical analysis" (p. 101). Gladney indicates that in discussion of technologically mediated communication, the media of communication have received a lot of ethical attention, but technology has largely been overlooked. This oversight of an ethics of technology might assist in fostering environments in and through which the process of communicative dehumanization can take place. Cooper (1998) attends to Gladney's (1991) observation in the essay, "New Technology Effects Inventory: Forty Leading Ethical Issues." In this essay Cooper examines the introduction of new technology into society as a ripple effect. According to Cooper (1998), the addition of a "new technology will act differently and raise unforeseen social and ethical issues" (p. 71). These issues are exacerbated when spread across different countries and different cultures as each receives the introduction of new technology differently—herein lays the ripple effect. Cooper feels that technology's capacity to raise unforeseen social and ethical issues can greatly alter the impact that technology has upon its' introduction to a particular society. Both Gladney's (1991) and Cooper's (1998) emphasis on an ethics of technology underscores Ong's (1996) plea for an element of the human to remain present when engaging the other through technologically mediated channels. Gladney's (1991) and Cooper's (1998) focus of attention on ethical technological communicative engagement also resonates with Ihde's (2004) conception of alterity relations; all of which actively work to combat the process of communicative dehumanization.

Haddon (2011) extends Cooper's (1998) focus of attention on the ethics of introducing new technology into society by focusing on the implications of the exclusionary capacity technology can have when changing communicative spaces. Haddon feels that the introduction of new technology can be dually purposed. On one hand, Haddon (2011) finds that online communication can open up new communicative possibilities, but cautions that, "at the same time, this can mean degrees of exclusion from participating in communities for those who are not online (but whose peers are, for instance)" (p. 320). Haddon locates the condition of exclusion as an implication of changing communicative spaces, particularly in light of individuals who do not have the same access to technology as their peers. As Haddon notes, this lack of access can leave some individuals marginalized because they are unable to acquire the tools necessary to participate in communities that are technologically generated. In consideration of communicative dehumanization, the byproduct of this type of technological exclusion might foster an environment of communicative exile, leading those who do not have similar technological access as their peers to find themselves excluded from technologically mediated communicative opportunities.

Nancy (1996/2000) moves away from Haddon's (2011) discussion of technological exclusion and instead focuses on the relationship between the human body and a technological thing as constitutive of a new reality or world-view in his book *Being Singular Plural*. Nancy (1996/2000) looks to technological embodiment as a manner of "[c]o-appearing" (p. 59). For Nancy, (1996/2000) "social co-appearance is only ever thought of as a transitory epiphenomenon" and society "is thought of as a step in a process that always leads either to a hypostasis of togetherness or the common (community, communion), or to the hypostasis of the individual" (p.59). Nancy indicates that technological embodiment causes the individual to either turn toward community, an exteriorization of the self, or to turn toward the individual, an interiorization of the self. James (2006) interprets Nancy's understanding of technological embodiment as constitutive of a new worldview. James (2006) indicates that by using a technical apparatus, one is "plugged into" it in a way that "more fundamentally reveals a certain manner of being or existence and a certain experience or constitution of world-hood" (p. 145). This technical extension of the self allows the individual to break through

the constraints of space and time and in so doing, allows one to engage the world in a different, technologically driven way. Nancy's (1996/2000) and James' (2006) understanding of the relationship between technological embodiment and world constitution takes a neutral approach to communicative dehumanization as Nancy identifies interiorization and exteriorization as byproducts of technological embodiment and James' discussion focuses on the technological constitution of world-hood, neither of which directly addresses or implies the presence or absence of communicative dehumanization when technologically engaging the other.

Beer (2008) extends Nancy's (1996/2000) and James' (1996) discussion of technological embodiment and world constitution through examination of the relationship technology shares with individual and societal concerns regarding public and private domains and spaces. Beer looks to the creation and use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) when examining the interplay between public and private space in cyberspace. Beer (2008) feels that SNS "can be understood as archives of the everyday that represent a vast and rich source of transactional data about a vast population of users" (p. 526). According to Beer (2008), SNS operate to serve "capitalist interests" and to provide information to "third parties using the data" (p. 526). For Beer (2008), SNS also publicizes "issues of privacy" and the "agendas of those that construct these technologies" (p. 526). Beer finds concern in changing between public and private spaces in cyberspace because users can have private information transmitted to a plethora of individuals and/or organizations without knowing that this activity is taking place. Beer's (2008) discussion of SNS and privacy concerns in public and private cyberspaces does not directly address the notion of communicative dehumanization but does highlight an implication of changing communicative or technological spaces. Beer's work exposes conceptions of safety and privacy as byproducts of changing communicative spaces out of the lived and into the technical realm.

Turkle (2005) moves away from direct discussion of privacy concerns in changing communicative spaces (Beer 2008) and underscores Ong's (1996) call for an element of the human to remain present when addressing the relationship human beings share with technology. More specifically, Turkle demonstrates concern

over the impact that technological embodiment might have upon a human subject. Turkle (2005) indicates that the “question is not what will the computer be like in the future, but instead, what will *we* be like? What kind of people are we becoming?” (p. 19). Turkle fears that the computer as an extension of the human body will serve to alter the human mind and the manner in which it thinks and subsequently engages the life world. Turkle (2005) defines this action as a “subjective computer” (p. 19). For Turkle, the computer becomes subjective when it permeates social and psychological life. This subjectivism causes Turkle to critically consider the ways in which the computer may permanently transform engagement between the self and the other. The notion of a subjective computer may be understood to lend itself to the process of communicative dehumanization as human beings change communicative spaces because the very notion of a computer as subject removes the necessity of the human element from the communicative equation.

In a 2011 article, Lee et al. extend Turkle’s (2005) concern about the ever-evolving relationship between human beings and machines by focusing discussion on the relationship between technology and enhancing the quality of human life. Lee et al. (2011) performed a study indicating “that the use of the Internet for interpersonal communication is not the same as offline face-to-face communication in enhancing quality of life” (p. 386). As a result of their study the authors found that “[o]nline communication has an adverse effect on people’s perceived quality of life.” (Lee et al., 2011, p. 386). Lee et al.’s study contributes to the philosophy of technology and cyberspace through its examination of the implications of changing communicative spaces. The authors indicate that technological embodiment might not enhance an individual’s quality of life—an idea that may be in juxtaposition to the beliefs of many technophiles—in the same way that face to face communication enhances the quality of an individual’s life. The authors’ work offers evidence that communicative dehumanization may appear as a byproduct of technologically engaging the other through its discussion of the effects of face to face communication versus technologically mediated communication and through its claim that technologically mediated communication adversely affects an individual’s perceived quality of life.

Richardson (2007) and Ong (1980) move away from examining the impact technology might have upon the perceived quality of human life (Lee et al. 2011) and instead look to technological embodiment in examination of the implications of changing communicative spaces. Richardson (2007) approaches technological embodiment by examining “every human-technology relation” as “a body-tool relation” (p. 205). Richardson (2007) cites this technical extension of the human body as a source for constituting “certain kinds of being-in-the-world, and particular ways of knowing and making that world” (pp. 205-206). Ong (1980) highlights technological embodiment as “affect[ing] the externals of man’s lifeworld immeasurably” (p. 140). For Ong (1980), humankind’s experience with technological embodiment is so pervasive, that “technology has fused with human consciousness itself” (p. 140). Both Richardson (2007) and Ong (1980) offer neither hope nor concern for humankind’s capacity to engage technological embodiment. Rather, both call the reader to critically analyze and question the impact and long-lasting effects that the technical extension of the body as well as technological embodiment might have upon the human mind, and also to consider how this technical fusion with the human body might create a space within which the process of communicative dehumanization may take place.

Conclusions

The first section of the essay sets out to examine the relationship between human beings and the phenomenology of technology. Discussion in this section is driven by four themes including the interrelationship between the everyday life of human beings and technology (Turkle, 1995; 2011) and the idea of technological embodiment (Lash, 2001; Ihde, 2004; Willson, 2006; Petric et al., 2001; and, Josgrilberg, 2011). The third and fourth themes explored in this section include attending to a call for an element of the human to remain present when technologically engaging the other (Ong, 1996) and human beings as technological creators (Ong, 1995; 1998). The first section teases out the phenomenological implications of technologically communicating with the other in both the lived world and in cyberspace so as to determine if technological gadgetry dehumanizes the act of communicating with the other. The literature reviewed in the first section suggests that the phenomenology of technology does not necessarily

dehumanize the communicative act inasmuch as it opens up space for new complexities, challenges, and opportunities to emerge when communicatively engaged with the other in either the lived world or in cyberspace.

The second section of the essay explores the communicative implications of technologically engaging the other in either the lived world or in cyberspace. Discussion in the second section is driven by four themes starting with the relationship between human beings and technologically mediated communication in both the lived world and cyberspace (Miller, 2008; Willson, 2012; Houser et al., 2012; Konjin et al., 2008; and, Ong, 1960), and, human needs that develop as a result of technologically mediated communication (Verbeek, 2005). The third and fourth themes attend to the moral and ethical complexities and implications that arise due to the use of technology to communicate with the other (Kumar, 2005), and, the relationship between technologically generated communication and identity masking, privacy, and anonymity (Cerra and James, 2012; Waldo et. al, 2007), respectively. The second section looks at the complexities and implications that emerge as a result of technologically engaging the other so as to determine whether or not technological gadgetry dehumanizes the communicative act. The literature reviewed in the second section suggests that technologically engaging the other either in the lived world or in cyberspace does not necessarily or directly lead to the dehumanization of the communicative act. Rather, the literature suggests that while the human use of technology may open up a space for communicative dehumanization to occur, one of the strongest forces that can be employed against such an occurrence is to retain an element of the human (Ong, 1960; 1996) when technologically engaging the other in either the lived world or in cyberspace.

The third section of the paper works to examine the phenomenological implications of changing communicative spaces. Discussion in this section is driven by four themes that include technological exclusion and communicative dehumanization (Gladney, 1991; Cooper, 1998; Haddon, 2011) and technological embodiment as a form of world construction (Nancy, 1996/2000; James, 2006). The third and fourth themes involve privacy concerns that emerge as a result of changing public and private cyberspaces (Beer, 2008) and the relationship between technology, human

consciousness, and the perceived quality of human life (Turkle, 2005; Lee et al., 2011; Richards, 2007; Ong, 1980). The third section of the paper examines the phenomenological implications of changing communicative spaces so as to determine if technological gadgetry dehumanizes the communicative act. The literature reviewed in the third section suggests that while the phenomenological implications of changing communicative spaces can create space for new challenges such as communicative dehumanization and technological exclusion to emerge, it does not necessarily lead to dehumanization of the communicative act. Instead, the literature in this section suggests retaining an element of the human (Ong, 1996) and attending to moral and ethical concerns (Gladney, 1991; Cooper, 1998; Haddon, 2011) when engaging the other through technologically mediated channels either in the lived world or in cyberspace.

This paper originated as an attempt to respond to the question: does technological gadgetry dehumanize the communicative act? The paper concludes that technological gadgetry does not dehumanize the communicative act, but rather complicates the implications of communicating with the other when the spaces of communication are changed. Technological embodiment (Lash, 2001; Ihde, 2004; Willson, 2006; Petric et al., 2001; and, Josgrilberg, 2011) allows individuals to technically extend the body so as to transcend the constraints of space and time. Technological embodiment does not dehumanize the communicative act. Instead, it offers new spaces for communication to occur and in so doing raises new ethical and moral questions (Gladney, 1991; Cooper, 1998; Haddon, 2011) and objections. Ong (1996) felt it central to retain an element of the human condition when engaging the other either in the natural, lived world or through the technical extension of the human body. In conclusion, technological gadgetry does not dehumanize the communicative act but instead can offer humankind a different space within which communication can take place that is absent the constraints of space and time.

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The Impact of Video Games on Identity Construction

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As a planet we spend three billion hours a week playing video games (McGonigal, 2010). Individuals from all walks of life are participating in some sort of gaming activity on a daily basis, whether it is for five minutes or five hours. Studies suggest that a player spends, on average, 13 hours a week playing video games (Makuch, 2010). That is 13 hours a week that a player can take the role of a superhero, a soldier, a spy, or even create their own virtual identity.

The idea of immersing yourself in a virtual environment, connecting with people, and exploring your identity is a topic that has been discussed for a number of years, and the rapid advancement of technology keeps the discussion flowing. With the advancement of technology comes more realistic virtual environments for people to participate within and learn about themselves and others. These virtual environments, whether they are persistent online worlds or narrative driven experiences, allow players to explore parts of their identity by providing a safe place to explore different aspects of themselves.

The following literature review will explore the research involving identity and video games, and will unfold in three parts. The first section will explore the relationship between technology and identity construction starting with Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" and how it alluded to the role of technology in identity construction. We will then shift to how video games allow for players to construct their own identities through play in virtual environments. The second section will address identification with in-game characters. Whether players are playing a massive multi-player online game, first person shooter, or a fighting game they are identifying with those characters and may be exploring their own identities by living vicariously through the virtual avatars. Then identification with real-life gaming communities will be addressed. There are many different types of gaming communities and identification with any of them can be influenced by many different factors, such as race, gender or sexuality. Community identification will also be explored in terms of the con-

vergence of online and real world communities, and how games may influence an individual's connection with those groups. Lastly, I will address oversights and shortcomings in the literature and explore new avenues of research.

Literature Review

Identity Construction

Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (1991) begins to blur the lines between humans and machines. She uses the metaphor of the cyborg to relate to the feminist movement, but her insight on identity is useful when looking toward the future in regard to technology and identity construction. Haraway suggests that identity, from a postmodernist perspective, reflects "otherness, difference, and specificity" (1991, p. 155). This metaphor for the feminist movement began a way of thinking about the human/machine connection, which is further explored by Sherry Turkle in her book *Life on the Screen* (1995). Turkle takes a more literal approach to the idea of cyborg culture in her approach to "being digital" (p. 231). The advancement of technology has allowed for the rise of online communities that individuals can enter which "changes us as people, changes our relationships and sense of ourselves" (Turkle, 1995, p. 232). In the chapter "Identity Crisis," Turkle paraphrases social psychologist Kenneth Gergen when he describes identity as a "pastiche of personalities" in which "the test of competence is not so much the integrity of the whole but the ... correct representation appearing at the right time in the right context" (1995, p. 256). Virtual environments allow individuals to explore identities that they may not have had the opportunity to otherwise. A virtual environment also provides a space to interact with people from around the world. Players have the opportunity to explore and "try on" identities of the other, which then can be incorporated into the self and employed at the appropriate moments. One of the more common examples of this is the male player taking the role of a female character. If a male player takes on a female role and has an experience that is largely only experienced by female players, it engenders the opportunity to internalize not only virtual, but real life situations from a different perspective. Turkle (1995) asserts that identity is not a "stable entity" and that it flows through a

cycle of constant communication with others, which creates “inner diversity that allows for us to learn our limitations” (p. 261). In the closing paragraphs of the chapter *Identity Crisis*, Turkle (1995) suggests that virtual environments are a new way of thinking about identity in the age of the Internet, and calls for more exploration into the topic (p. 268-269).

Services, specifically more interactive services, will “change how we understand or know, what we know, and the function of knowledge” (Flook, 2006, p. 57). Flook (2006) argues that the advancement of the internet, specifically broadband, will allow for content providers to create more complex services. Flook does not make any assumption as to how this will happen, but he theorizes that the internet will develop into “something more than just reading text and watching images” (Flook, 2006, p. 57), the rise of massively multiplayer online games such as *World of Warcraft* (2005) or *Second Life* (2003) help support this theory. Users are no longer just reading or watching, but they are interacting with scripted non-player characters in online games and other users via the internet. Flook (2006) states that they are doing so to meet an emotional need: interpersonal communication. He goes on to quote Norman when he states that “people need to communicate continually, for comfort, for reassurance” (2006, p. 58), citing that internet technology has made possible constant communication through text messaging, instant messaging, email, and voice mail. In addition to the constant communication that the internet allows, virtual social reality spaces invite players to take part in identity construction, or to try on different identities. Banshick & Banshick state that users can create characters, “which allows children to experiment with different sides of their personalities ... They can adopt new traits and new personalities and try them out” (2003, p. 191). Flook furthers this assertion by stating that the freedom of the internet allows for users to create themselves in any way they wish in virtual environments. Thus, as technology advances, users will encounter different, perhaps more visceral ways, of exploring their identities. For instance, the reemergence of head-mounted virtual reality devices, such as the Oculus Rift, could potentially offer an experience that is more impactful on a person’s identity. Blascovich and Bailenson (2011) offer multiple studies in their book “Infinite Reality: the hidden blueprint of our lives” that suggest being inside a virtual world facilitated by a head-mounted device

is internalized much like being in the real world. Perhaps this could lead to a deeper, more ingrained experience with different identities that could be deployed in the real world.

If virtual environments can influence a person's sense of self, it is important to identify who is participating and who is not. Sanford and Madill (2006) illuminate a disparity between boys and girls and the way they interact with technology. The researchers state that the computer is reinforced as a male object from an early age, which invites males to interact with it as a toy while females interact with it more for educational purposes (Sanford & Madill, 2006). In terms of identity construction, this implies that males explore their identity online more so than females. The researchers observed and interviewed six adolescent males and five young adult males in their study and found that video games offer a space for players to experiment with identity: "to safely resist ... and challenge societal expectations of appropriateness regarding attitude, appearance and behavior," thus allowing them to "expand a sense of self and understand their world from a new perspective" (Sanford & Madill, 2006, p. 297). The engagement the researchers are interested in focuses on resistance to societal norms; one of the subjects interviewed said, "You really enjoy it, like killing someone, blasting them in the head ... maybe it's cause you can't do it, it's such a forbidden thing, but like they make it so real and powerful" (Sanford & Madill, 2006, p. 296). These sort of games are allowing players to engage in activities that are against societal norms, and then experience the consequences of these actions in safe space (Sanford & Madill, 2006). This suggests that if a player is engaging in these activities in a game world, they are less likely to play out these scenarios in real life – they are aware of the consequences and not making it a part of their identities. On the other hand, the researchers suggest that video game play allows for players to gain confidence from game play, rather than the actual game environment (Sanford & Madill, 2006). The operational skills that are gained from playing video games, such as computer literacy, manual dexterity, and the ability to read multiple screens, transcends into real world scenarios where players can reinforce that part of their identity.

While Sanford and Madill focus on video games outside the classroom, Chee (2007) approaches identity construction through virtual environments as an educational goal. By exploring the

three areas of immersive learning: embodiment, embeddedness and experience. Chee defines embodiment as the internalizing of key concepts through action, interaction and thought within the context of a predesigned, situated activity (p. 14). Embeddedness is defined as being a person “in the world [with] a clear sense of being ... in a sociomaterial world in space [and] time” (p. 14). In other words, understanding that you are a part of a culture or society that has a specific meaning. Lastly, Chee suggest that experience comes when the prior two areas coalesce; “active experimentation in the world ... leads to reflective observation and, over multiple cycles, the formation of more abstract concepts” (p. 15). She highlights that these are natural forms of learning and play a role in the construction of identity (Chee, 2007).

Chee separates her argument from Turkle’s by interpreting *Life on the Screen* as a way of enacting a virtual self “not on the screen but rather through the screen” (Chee, 2007, p.16). In other words, with the advancement of technology and immersive game environments, players can become fully embodied persons in a virtual environment. This is opposed to the text-based system Turkle was referring to in her work. According to Chee (2007), immersive 3D spaces allow for players to interact with others, perform tasks, and create a virtual sense of self. Chee (2007) suggests that these virtual identities blend themselves with real world identities and vice versa (p. 17), allowing players to explore different identities and enacting them in different situations.

Bessiere, Seay, and Kiesler (2007) extend Chee’s argument when they look at identity construction through avatar creation in *World of Warcraft*. Their research proposed that those who were dissatisfied with aspects of themselves are more likely to participate in virtual self-enhancement than those who were content. They suggest that despite rules and constraints embedded in the virtual environment, “the anonymity and fantasy frees players from the yoke of their real-life history and social situation, allowing them to be more like the person they wish they were” (Bessiere, Seay, & Kiesler, 2007, p. 534). The researchers suggest self-discrepancy theory - the idea that psychological well-being is closely related to a person’s actual self (me as I am) - may come into play - if players are enacting an ideal-self online, it may reduce some actual-ideal self-discrepancy and increase feelings of self-worth (Bessiere, Seay, & Kiesler, 2007). Thus,

trying on different identities online can add more layers to a person's actual identity if it harbors positive emotions. Thinking about this assessment from the perspective of Sanford and Maddill, a virtual environment that elicits negative feelings could deter players from including it into their identity.

The use of virtual environments by pre-teens is of specific interest and importance since the stage of development they are in is critical to identity formation (Meyers, 2009). Meyers (2009) identifies virtual environments as spaces where pre-teens can socialize and interact with others, create their own "digital story," and gain new information age skills. Meyers (2009) suggests that the low-risk in a virtual environment allows younger children to experiment with different personas that they may incorporate into their actual identity (p.231). Meyers does not address the implications of virtual environments on pre-teens. Given the importance of the particular stage of development, more research must be done in order to truly understand the implications and consequences of being a pre-teen digital native who constructs their identity online. Research conducted by Sandra Abrams (2011) suggests that players react to prompts in the virtual world, which is one reason we should consider a focus on digital identity development in preteens. Abrams (2011) states that the real world reaction to in game prompts "allows for the discussion about gamers' responses to virtual stimuli and the embodiment of game inspired behavior" (p. 221). She uses a framework of understanding gamer identity in three parts: virtual, real, and projective. Real identity is the actual identity of the person playing, virtual is the identity of the avatar on the screen, and projective is the embodiment of the virtual identity into the real identity (Abrams, 2011). Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest that projective identity creates "new personalities and new relationships, [in a] world that only exists on the net" (as cited in Abrams, 2011, p. 227), to which Abrams raises the questions: what happens when gamers assume these identities or when the game is turned off? Abrams (2011) argues that when players internalize their association with a character, they may also embody the characteristics of that character and deliberately behave in a way that conveys a particular image, personality or status. If preteens are doing this in virtual environments, it calls into questions whether they are constructing their own identity or performing identities that have been constructed and constrained by the game designers.

Identification within Game Characters

Virtual environments not only provide a space for identity exploration and construction, but a place where players can immerse themselves into a different world. They can temporarily alter their identities, connect with on-screen characters, and feel like they are a part of the virtual experience. Sheila Murphy (2004) suggests that “in the case of video games, identity is most substantially modified by the ways that gamers can control their digital characters, and also in the ways that gamers surrender control over themselves and their characters in order to play” (p. 233). Murphy (2004) asserts that identification with characters in a game is very complex due to the near cinematic-like state of video games. Murphy (2004) explains how the perspective changes in video games, such as having control of your character versus loss of control during cut-scenes or pre-planned events, complicates identification due to the control and surrender that players have over their characters. Murphy (2004) goes on to state that identification takes place off the screen as well due to the invention of vibration in controllers, players can now feel the repercussions of their actions. During points of gameplay where the player has surrendered control, through the controller’s feedback you may still be able to physically *feel* what is happening on screen. A player may not have control, but they are still connected.

Fighting games, such as *Mortal Kombat* (1992) or *Soul Calibur II* (2002), are good examples of how complex character identification can be. Hutchinson (2007) argues that due to the limited amount of narrative and structure of fighting games, players participate in the most basic form of identity construction: self and the other. Although the article is focused on fighting games, such as *Soul Calibur II* or *Mortal Kombat*, the argument can be made for character identification as a whole. Most video games have some sort of conflict, and in many cases players are forced to choose a character or have one chosen for them, before placed in opposition to another character on the screen. Once players have a character they are identifying with, the character they are fighting against is identified as the other (Hutchinson, 2007). This sort of identification becomes more complex when players have the ability to switch characters at any given time. The act of changing characters causes a player to redefine their self and the other during game play (Hutchinson, 2007). If the game’s direc-

tion also includes cut scenes, surrender and control (Murphy, 2004) – the identification process can become very complicated.

Identification with characters also changes based on the way players engage with a game. Tronstad (2008) sheds light on the difference in identification between roleplayers and non-roleplayers in *World of Warcraft*. Although anyone playing a game can be considered to be playing a role, the terms have a specific meaning in the realm of online gaming. A roleplayer, in *World of Warcraft*, is a player who interacts with other players as their character – not as themselves. The contrast to this is a non-roleplayer who interacts with other players as themselves. The article suggests that a player who is actively taking the role of their character has a separation from the character that a non-roleplayer may not. Roleplayers are creating a separate identity with a “history, drives, and motivations of its own” (Tronstad, 2008, p. 257). For those who do not roleplay, it is an embodied experience that is an extension of the player (Tronstad, 2008).

No matter which style of play a person engages in within a massive virtual world such as *World of Warcraft*, Charlotte Hagstrom (2008) finds that the naming of a character is an important part of the identification process. Hagstrom (2008) found that players spend much time coming up with just the right name, while only a few use random name generators. For those who have been entrenched in roleplaying games for many years, they generally have a pattern for naming their characters or keep the same name throughout all the games they have played (Hagstrom, 2008). The clothes and physical features of the character may change, but the name, history and identity stay the same suggesting that the name is linked to how a player identifies with the character (Hagstrom, 2008). This is contrary to games where players are constantly shifting identities through new characters. Players become attached to the idea of the character they have created, and that character manifests itself throughout the player’s gaming history.

Obviously, players are not always assuming the roles of the characters that they play when gaming. Klimmt et al. (2009) recognize identification as a “temporary shift in players’ self-perception (p. 325). This is in line with Hutchinson (2007), Tronstad (2008), and Hagstrom (2008) who also suggest that players

perceive their characters in different ways. A player may go through constant shifts, such as in fighting games, or shifts that are more continuous and span many games over a long period of time, such as online roleplayers. The work of Crawford and Gosling (2009) expands on how identity shifts can influence the player's actual self, rather than just the virtual self. There are many resources online for players to engage with outside of the game worlds, such as websites that are dedicated to specific games. These websites allow players to create fan-fiction, works of art, poetry, and discuss other areas of interest with other players. All of this reinforces a person's actual-self by allowing participation as themselves and not their characters, these websites are used as a space for social performances and to extend the user's personal narrative (Crawford & Gosling, 2009).

Klimmt et al. (2010) revisits identity shifts while playing video games, finding that "a player who perceives himself as less courageous than he actually wants to be can reduce his self-discrepancy by identifying with a courageous game character" (p. 364). This reinforces Crawford and Gosling's (2009) argument that a player can enhance their actual-self outside of video game play. If players are inspired or motivated by a game, it can lead them to partake in outside activities which reinforces who they are and how they identify.

The way a narrative is presented can also influence the way a player identifies with a character. Dubbelman (2011) distinguishes two ways a video game's narrative is portrayed – representation or presentation. Representational narrative is when the player is living the story through past events - a ghost playing a specific character. While presentation is when the player takes the role of the character. According to Dubbelman (2009), presentational stories "portray the protagonist as an empty vessel for somebody to project one's own identity on ... extending our physical presence [into the game world]" (p. 168). Dubbelman (2009) also contends that the representational narrative format is more like movies or television where we "identify with characters and their struggles, empathize with them and thus go through all sorts of emotions" (p. 163). The two different ways of telling a story illustrates the type of identification that players may have with a character. Arguably, the presentational mode of narrative allows players to explore different identities within a virtual

world by the unfolding of events seemingly caused by the player. Meanwhile, the representational mode creates feelings of empathy by communicating events for players to identify with. Kallio, Mayra, and Kaipainen (2011) identify the types of players who participate in these forms of narrative as “immersionists,” stating that immersionists use games as “a place to meet friends ... [or] a personal hideaway from the everyday routine and environments” (p. 344). The players usually participate in long gaming sessions on a regular basis, and they sometimes find it difficult to “draw the line between game space and nongame space” (Kallio, Mayra, and Kaipainen, 2011, p. 345). With players seeking out relationships in online gaming spaces, it can be inferred that game space is just as real to a player as nongame space. If this is the case, the relationships that are being built online may be just as fulfilling as relationships forged offline. Indeed, many of the relationships that begin online end up turning into relationships that extend beyond the game and into the real world. Whendkf

Empirical research conducted by Przybylski et al. (2012) shows that “virtual environments, like close relationships, may be motivating to the degree that they allow individuals to experience ideal aspects of themselves” (p. 75). In relation to immersionists not being able to “draw the line between game space and nongame space,” (Mallio, Kaipainen, Mayra, 2011, p. 354) this could prove to be evidence that players are bringing their virtual identities to their actual identities. The findings of Przybylski et al. (2012) were inconclusive as to whether the identity enactment was “compensatory or constructive,” but “did make clear that humans are drawn to video and computer games at least in part because such games provide players with access to ideal aspects of themselves” (p. 75).

Identification with Gaming Communities

In the early days of video games, the hobby was criticized for many different reasons, but one of the dominant issues was social isolation (Jansz & Marten, 2005). However, research suggests that gaming has positive social effects including strengthening family bonds and promoting inclusion into peer groups (Jansz & Marten, 2005). Jansz and Marten (2005) focus on video gaming at LAN events. LAN is an acronym for local area network. At these events players, usually for a weekend, bring their comput-

ers or gaming systems and play locally with other players. They are usually hosted by an organizing body for competitions or by large gaming communities to promote inclusiveness and socializing outside of the game. Jansz and Marten show that the competition sparked by playing games with people in real life is more gratifying than online gaming at home. Their research also found that gamers enjoyed the social aspect of being able to talk, face-to-face, with fellow gamers about new technology, new games or strategies for the games they play the most (Jansz & Marten, 2005). An earlier ethnographic study by Moore, Mazvancheryl, and Rego (1996) focused on a specific community for a game called *BOLO* (1982). The research found that players connected with a “community of gamers for the specific purpose of being recognized as a member of that community” (Moore, Mazvancheryl, & Rego, 1996, p. 170). The handle, or gamer name, that a player uses was found to be a crucial part in identifying members of the community, and that the player’s skill was linked to social status within the community (Moore, Mazvancheryl, & Rego, 1996). The game space provides a place to bring together players who have a shared interest in the game. The game provides a space where individuals who may never interact otherwise can come together. Although one community is online and the other is face-to-face, the reasons for participating are largely the same – to gain a sense of togetherness, to socialize, and to be recognized.

The aforementioned studies show us that game communities exist online and in the real world, giving players groups to identify and socialize with. Stef Aupers (2007) sheds light on how players connect with communities in online virtual environments such as *World of Warcraft*, *Dark Age of Camelot* and other MMOs. Her research suggests that identification begins with creating a character. By simply selecting a faction (good or evil, usually), a player is choosing to identify with and take part in the social norms of that community (Aupers, 2007). Her work then looks at identification with more particular groups of players, such as guilds or clans. Aupers (2007) suggests that guilds can blur the lines between virtual identity and actual identity. This happens when guilds identify themselves with cultures that are outside of the game world, such as “Nameless Love” which is a guild for gay and lesbian players. Social contact has proven to be just as important in the game world as it has in real life: new friendships

(in-game and out) and even marriages have resulted from interacting within a close knit online community (Aupers, 2007). Players are connecting and interacting with others in deep and enriching ways. The communities that a player participates within is a reflection of their virtual, and sometimes actual, identity.

Aupers explains how in game communities may blur the lines between virtual and actual identity, but what happens when the game environment itself influences identity? Hybrid reality games, such as *Can You See Me Now* (2001) or *SpecTrek* (2009), bring gaming to real-life situations, such as walking around a city, chores in the home, or traveling via airplane. They are generally played with a mobile device by players within a certain location. Players can, usually, attempt tasks any way they see fit in order to achieve the goals set by the game, which usually involves interacting with people, businesses or social spaces. Silva and Sutko (2008) suggest that HRGs take these usually mundane experiences and turn them into playful spaces by adding a narrative or purposeful social interaction. Through gamification of real world environments, HRGs are mimicking the feeling of anonymity one may have while playing in a virtual environment, thus allowing players to feel the freedom to explore different identities in real world spaces (Silva & Sutko, 2008). In other words, the community is made up of players who are no longer virtual avatars, but actual people occupying a real life space all while playing a game together. The communal understanding of the game allows for players to feel safe when taking on roles that are not associated with their daily lives (Sutko & Silva, 2008)

Identification within a community, virtual or real, brings us to thinking about identity performance. According to Abrams (2011), “identity performance helps to explain how gamers may situate themselves within a community” (p. 229). When playing an HRG, participants are acting in a way that is acceptable to others playing the game. They’ll be recognized for the actions they are taking to meet the goals of the game, but only others who are participating will realize the actions. Silva and Sutko (2008) suggest that players are more comfortable acting in such a manner knowing that other players are in the same space as them. However, knowing you are in the presence of other players does not make identification with a community easier. Shaw (2011) makes

the case that the under representation of marginalized groups in video games alienates certain types of players from identifying with a community. Shaw (2011) asserts that gaming is largely stereotyped as a hobby for young, white, heterosexual males by non-white, non-heterosexual, non-male players. Players who do not fit this stereotype of gamers suggested that gaming is a “guilty pleasure” or that they did not want to be associated with the negative aspects of gaming (Shaw, 2011, p. 38). Shaw (2011) states that “in a culture in which games are not taken seriously, representation in games is viewed as inconsequential and fewer people are invested demanding diversity in the texts” (p. 39) This suggests that people other than straight, white males are not asking to be represented in games because the other communities they identify with do not view gaming as important. Therefore, non-white, non-heterosexual, non-males are not identifying with the larger gaming community, even though they play games on a regular basis.

Critical Analysis

The body of knowledge surrounding video games and identity is fragmented, much like the sections of this review. Scholars are addressing identity construction through different lenses, whether it is arguing that video games provide a space for identity construction, a space to empathize and identify with in-game characters, or identification with certain groups within the gaming community. I find the lack of comprehensive research that encompasses all three of these aspects to be problematic. All three of the topics discussed play a role in the construction of identity and how a person maneuvers through these identities play an important role in understanding self – virtual or actual. The discussion of each topic is important to create a body of knowledge in order to further discuss the impact of gaming on identity, but by looking at them as fractured and not cohesive, we are missing the mark. Comprehensive study that converges identity construction, character and community identification will lead to further understanding of the impact of video games on one’s identity. The research conducted by Aupers (2008) and Tronstad (2008) come close to achieving this. Persistent online worlds create a different environment than narrative based games, such as first-person shooters or action adventure games. An individual constructs identity right from character creation and then enters a world

with its own rules, norms, and culture and constraints that are not as apparent as other genres. For example, entering the world of *Bioshock* (2007), you are set on a task and empathize and identify with a person that has been constructed for you by the game developers. In an MMO, however, there is the illusion of control over your character and you can construct their identity in your own way. The community for the type of games is also different. An MMO is a world where you are constantly communicating with other players, while *Bioshock* forces you to go outside of the game world to interact with its community. These are two different ways of identifying with a character and community, broad overviews being applied to both as if it were interchangeable is not an accurate assessment.

If identity construction is reflexive and socially constructed, it may be worth studying games and gaming communities as a whole. The influence certain genres of games and the community that surrounds them could shift from genre to genre or even from game to game. In other words, being a part of *World of Warcraft* is a different experience than being a part of *Bioshock*. The interaction is different, the community is different, and the way in which identity is explored is different. Identity construction, as a whole, is not studied by simply looking at one aspect of the person. Thus, understanding how video games can impact a player's identity should not be considered this way either. Coalescing the different, contingent, areas into frameworks for understanding could add more depth and understanding to these games and what they mean to players. Furthermore, we could begin to understand how players internalize the entire culture around games and it is manifested within their identity. Players are no longer just adolescents or teenagers. How have these games influenced this person over the years? How has it influenced the family they may be raising? Career choices? Comprehensive study of the culture surrounding different genres of games, who plays them, and why they play them could lead to better understand the true impact of video games on a person's identity.

Conclusion

The research explored in this paper illustrates how virtual environments provide a space for identity construction and how iden-

tification with video game characters and communities can influence a person's identity.

The advancement of technology has allowed game designers to create immersive, rich, and highly detailed worlds in which players can explore, participate in communities, and sometimes try on aspects of themselves that they may not be comfortable with in the real world. Video games have advanced to the point of realism where players may also identify with characters in a way that explores parts of themselves they may not have known about before. The virtual spaces that individuals participate in is a safe place for identity exploration and construction due to the anonymity and safety that the virtual environments provide. Players can become detectives, soldiers, or even wizards and have real emotional connections with these characters that they are playing. The research has shown that players are leaving these experiences with an improved sense of self that is carrying over into the real world (Klimmt et al., 2010; Przybylski et al., 2012). Players are also connecting their sense of self to communities that surround these games. Whether they are participating in an online guild or seeking out fellow players at LAN events or other online spaces, identification and social interaction with communities is an important aspect of being a gamer; however, other social implications may prohibit players from identifying with these communities (Shaw, 2011).

The research separates in game identification and community identification. I've offered insight into an avenue of research that blends the two, arguing that both aspects work in tandem when influencing a person's identity. This goes for specific game genres as well, the impact of one type of game may be different than another. The broad overview provided in the current research produces a foundation of knowledge that allows us to explore these topics further. Further comprehensive research into specific game genres and the communities surrounding them will lead to a better understanding of how players are trying on new identities, exploring the ideal-self, and the impact video games have on a person's actual-self.

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Pinterest, Gender Reveal Parties, and the Binary: Reducing an Impending Arrival to Pink or Blue

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Pinterest is currently the third most popular website in the world, behind Facebook and Twitter, with 70 million users. The social platform allows users to aggregate images from the Internet, or upload their own, and “pin” them to their self-created “boards.” Users have the ability to represent areas of their choosing in a completely visual way, rather than relying on text or video, by using image-based sharing capabilities, making Pinterest unique. Users may easily “re-pin” the images found by others in order to categorize the pin in a personalized way. Pinterest categorizes the most popular pins into their own category: the pins receiving the highest number of re-pins by other users are deemed most popular. Women overwhelmingly account for its usage, with 83% of users self-identifying as female (Opallo, 2012).

Upon signing into Pinterest, a user is presented with the most popular pins from other members that they follow on the site (see Image A). Users may search for pins relating to their interests, and can pin these images to the boards that they create for their account. Examples of the most popular boards seen on Pinterest include: home décor, design, women’s fashion, DIY & crafts, food & drink, travel, and weddings (“Pinterest stats,” 2012).

Since the majority of Pinterest users are female, many of the boards and pins seen on Pinterest reflect socially-constructed feminine characteristics. One often finds wedding planning ideas, parenting tips, and fitness recommendations across the site. What makes Pinterest unique is its ability to capture such a large audience via the use of imagery. I noticed the ways in which many of the images I saw as a user of Pinterest lent themselves to the commodification of particular life moments of experiences – common are boards devoted to a dream home, dream wedding, or dream fashion wardrobe. Notably, “dream” is often associated with the material objects behind these ideas, as if Pinterest users regress back to their childhoods, wishing for the things they believe they need in order to be happy, yet by applying “dream” to the board, the admission is made that it will always be just that – only a dream, never to be obtained.

Seeing that special “life moments” (i.e. weddings) are popular on Pinterest, I was not surprised to see baby shower themes featured from time to time, but upon seeing images tagged as “gender reveal parties,” I became curious. Each image surrounding the concept always seemed two-sided, with pink or blue blatantly present. Little did I know, the popularity of gender reveal parties had already taken off in the United States. Gender reveal parties allow parents-to-be to throw a celebration announcing the gender of their unborn child to guests. Departing from a typical baby shower, a gender reveal party is held earlier in the pregnancy, and the guest list includes men (Fernandez, 2012). Often, the parents-to-be host the party and the gender reveal is the big “surprise” for the guests and parents as well. It’s the newest form of a surprise party in that it is being thrown by the parents-to-be. As of October 2014, more than 125,000 gender reveal videos featuring the “reveal moment” have been uploaded on YouTube.

This manuscript investigates the most popular images on Pinterest associated with the gender reveal party to understand how gender becomes represented via imagery when using social media as a vehicle. A feminist subject may become positioned as a neoliberal feminist subject by Pinterest, as this research seeks to show. Furthermore, consumer culture theory is applied in this example as a means of explicating the ways in which gender reveal parties and Pinterest emphasize materials objects in an effort to shape identity practices. Current conversations within communication scholarship can benefit from this perspective, as it seems that culture becomes appropriated and re-appropriated on a daily basis, and in the context of feminist scholarship, the consideration of the commodity imperative is one that is important to consider in terms of understanding the ways in which the socially-constructed portrayals of women become permeated. A content analysis and feminist political economy analysis are used to investigate gender reveal parties on Pinterest in order to understand how Gayle Rubin’s analysis of a feminist political economy in 1975 compares to today’s more advanced online technologies. Although Pinterest is one of the most popular websites in the United States and lends itself to a creative discourse, the content within gender reveal parties weakens calls for equality, because the imagery portrays gender in terms that position a feminist subject as neo-liberal. As described by Karl Marx, something becomes a commodity once it can be exchanged with a use-value

attached, meaning that the object (whether physical or conceptual) then possesses both a natural purpose and a value purpose, creating further meaning for those that use it in their lives (Marx, 1976).

Part one of this research will review Rubin's feminist political economy analysis of gender and its applications to Pinterest today and part two describes the ways in which the Internet has influenced perceptions of gender and describes consumer culture theory. The third section of this manuscript addresses methods used, part four reviews the results and discussion, and part five concludes with implications for future research within feminist media studies. The ways in which gender has been commodified is an important consideration when discussing the ways in which the gender binary has become socially acceptable in the United States, as evidenced by Gayle Rubin's earlier work.

A Feminist Political Economy of Gender

In *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex*, Gayle Rubin (1975) attempts to define the sex/gender system, which occurs once a culture turns biological sex into "products of human activity" (Rubin, 1975, pp. 28). Drawing from Marx, she views women's oppression as a function of power. Heteronormative frameworks, which have become commonplace in society, have allowed for the often unrewarded labor of women. However, Marx's interpretations lacked the necessary separation of class, race, and gender. Rubin, therefore, attempted to further extend her feminist view on political economy by drawing from Lévi-Strauss, emphasizing the ideas of kinship, and the ways in which women have been commodified and exchanged throughout history. This kinship system has allowed gender to be socially constructed. Rubin argued that in order for women to be liberated, they must make a conscious effort to separate their human personalities from the gender binary. Culture tells us that a gender binary exists, and the acceptable versions of sexuality are defined as: "male or female"/"girl or boy". If women are the primary users on Pinterest, how are they perpetuating this gender binary? Furthermore, if a child is not born and still in the womb; the mother may choose if she will include the gender binary in her child's future. While this binary may be inescapable culturally, the free will of the mother or father has the potential of interpolating the gender binary among others. Similarly promoting gender reveal parties on Pinterest limits parents' choices of gender to "boy" or "girl," further creating a neo-liberal feminist agenda. The "choice" to pin may not be a choice at all. Therefore, this research will analyze the

results of particular search terms on Pinterest using the category of gender. How does a gender reveal party pin on Pinterest extend Rubin's sex/gender system to explain how society extends sexuality to assign particular gender qualities?

Based on Rubin's analysis, women are circulating as a transaction within an economy that replaces traditional capital with social capital. The more attention and focus parents-to-be place on their unborn child, the more social capital they gain through the processes of gift-receiving, traditional feminine roles of a mother, and traditional masculine traits of a father. Production, as the act of pinning/re-pinning by women, transforms images (i.e. ideas) into social capital. The political economy of gender means that certain images, defined as male or female, boy or girl, are reproduced (re-pinned), enriching the capital to include material value as well as meaning to understand how our culture views sex and gender.

If identity is shaped by the views that are represented to others, then it can be argued that hosting a gender reveal party prematurely allows parents to decide, on behalf of their children, how they will be represented to, and by, the world. Pins on Pinterest allow parents to identify, earlier than ever, the gender that they wish their child to perform. By quite literally compartmentalizing the gender boundary, Pinterest acts as a vehicle for the social construction of reality. While Pinterest is allowing consumers to construct their own identities via the digital realm, this concept is not new. The Internet has played a pivotal role in the influence of gender performance, as described via consumer culture theory in the following section.

The Internet and Consumer Culture Theory

In her 1993 study, Herring found two separate online discourses: a feminine discourse, focused on a "personal" communication style, and an authoritative masculine discourse (Herring, 2001). While this study emphasized discourse, arguably gender performance can be viewed via pictorial discourse seen on Pinterest. Furthermore, the study allowed Herring to conclude that these linguistic practices, performed through a gender binary, diffuse into everyday practices beyond cyberspace (Herring, 2001). Digital spaces cannot be seen as the definitive dominant agency in

the online practices of performing gender, but rather, new technologies are mediators that help to reinforce particular cultural norms (Van Doorn, 2011). Therefore, Pinterest can be defined as a digital space that allows virtual representations to be “materially actualized” (via imagery), allowing performative aspects seen on Pinterest to be represented in daily life (Van Doorn, 2011).

As Butler outlined in her theory of gender performativity, gender is fluid and can exist outside of the body; it is experienced and acted out in daily life (Butler, 1990). New social media technologies provide a digital realm where this gender performativity can be embodied beyond the natural body. Pinterest is the first social media site to reach over 10 million users while simultaneously framing its content as the re-appropriation of womanhood, separated along gendered lines (“Pinterest stats,” 2012). A Foucauldian analysis of this shows that discourse is created via a combination of power and knowledge. Re-pinning particular images of gender allows power to be mediated through a new technology, with increases in popularity resulting in a more casual acceptance of the reality with which individuals are presented (Foucault, 1972). Those with the power to pin and re-pin serve as the labor force that simultaneously perpetuates the discourse surrounding gender norms in Western society. Through this lens, power acts as a mask for the neo-liberal feminist subject, because she is reiterating the very knowledge that society has already forced upon her – having the freedom to pin representations of her life acts as a veil while a binary becomes more solidified (Foucault, 1972). Pinterest continues to flourish because of the labor that women put into its foundation, classifying life into seemingly meaningful and specific categories. Rather than identifying the re-appropriation of womanhood based on Pinterest’s content, what is omitted is just as important: careers, education, sexuality free from the [specifically white] male gaze (as imagery consists of themes that position women as the objects of male pleasure, with objectification, fetishism, and aesthetic attainment at perfection being predominant), and relationships (hooks, 1992; Mulvey, 1975). Content on Pinterest often relates to the presentation of one’s identity to others via material consumption. For gender reveal parties, there is always a cost associated with the event – something must be purchased and presented to others in a way that allows parents to gain social capital.

Consumer culture theory is applicable in this realm because it emphasizes the meaning-making processes of social life in relation to symbol-

ic and material resources (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). This theory relies on the consumption cycle in order to investigate symbolic and contextual aspects of everyday living for individuals. Acquisition, consumption and possession, and disposition processes make up the cycle. I focus on the acquisition and consumption phases for the purposes of this manuscript (Belk, 1987). The use of Pinterest and its processes are the acquisition, while the content itself serves as a form of consumption. Central to consumer culture is the use of symbols and the ways in which symbols denote a meaning in life. This research is using the symbol of gender, signified by particular categories. Since representations of hosting a gender reveal party rely on some sort of capital investment, it can be argued that the gender reveal party has commodified the socially-constructed gender assignment of a baby that perpetuates cultural norms. The results of this study show that this is the case: consumer culture theory can be successfully applied to the online marketplace.

Method

This study originated from a need to explain how representations of gender reveal parties on Pinterest create a solid gender binary. In order to examine this, I collected pins from Pinterest according to specific search terms relating to gender reveal parties and coded for results that used pre-existing social constructions of what it means to be a “boy” or “girl” (e.g. pink, blue, masculine toys, feminine dresses). Social constructions, as described by Berger and Luckmann, are the institutionalized processes of actions, concepts, and representations that individuals and groups in society create and re-create, permitting meanings for what is acceptable, appropriate, and necessary for everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). For the purposes of this study, I defined the gender binary through color, since Pinterest relies on a visual interpretation of meaning, and pins were coded according to color in order to determine how often particular categories of pins reflect the gender binary via this representation. A quantitative content analysis provided the means to discover the content, while a feminist political economy analysis provided the lens to discuss gender representations performed by soon-to-be parents. This approach meant the complexity of meanings generated on the website could be taken into account, including possible meanings that operate at the conscious level of users. In all, four search terms

were used to gather data for one day (search terms: “gender reveal party”, “gender reveal party favor”, “gender reveal”, and “gender reveal party idea”), which generated a total of 230 pin results. Repeated pins were omitted. Pins were categorized according to (1) type (voting game, food, decoration, invitation, or photography) and (2) color (color pink and/or blue defined, color not defined, or neutral colors). All data were analyzed using SPSS software to run chi-square and frequency analyses. The most popular/significant pins were categorized by those re-pinned by users the greatest number of times.

Results

There was a significant difference between whether color (pink and/or blue) was included among pins, $X^2(2, N=39) = 22.769, p < .001$. Category was not a significant indicator of whether color was defined, $X^2(8, N=39) = 6.363, p = .607$. Color (pink and/or blue) was frequently used (66% of the time); however, there were no differences between the types of categories that defined color (pink and/or blue). The attached frequency table further describes these findings (See Tables A and B).

The most frequent (33.3%) category seen in the sample was the voting game, where guests of the gender reveal party typically participated in “casting their vote” for a gender in some specific way. Most often seen in this category were images reflecting a choice to be made, asking guests to wear a bow in their hair or artificial mustache on their face to denote their vote. Sports metaphors and images were also used often, encouraging guests to “pick a team,” “wear their team’s colors,” and “show their team spirit.”

This study found that all five of the most popular pins in relation to gender reveal parties, accounted for based on their number of re-pins, used the defined category of blue and/or pink to visually represent the gender binary. Furthermore, three of the five most popular asked guests of the party to “vote” for which gender they wanted the baby to be. The most popular pin, re-pinned a total of 10,204 times, features a poster reading “Game On – Who’s Team Are You On?”, asking guests to cast their vote by placing a female (pink and wearing a skirt) stick figure sticker or a male (blue) stick figure sticker on the board (See Image B). Each gender is clearly separated via a chart that features “Vs.” in between the female and male sides. Underneath the banner are two bowls – one full of pink buttons, and one full of blue, featuring the corre-

sponding figures on them, asking guests to wear a button in order to “show their spirit.”

The second most popular pin, with a total of 790 re-pins, features a professional photograph of a heterosexual couple holding ice cream cones, one with pink ice cream, and the other with blue (See Image C). The photograph is divided into two sections, showing the couple dropping one of the ice cream cones on the ground, implying that the remaining ice cream cone being held in the mother-to-be’s hand reveals the gender of the unborn child.

The third most popular Pinterest image consists of a series of four Hershey’s chocolate bars. Being re-pinned a total of 587 times, the pin features the “he” or “she” of the chocolate bar colored in with a blue or pink paint pen as a favor to give to guests (See Image D). The crossword search party favor for guests received 509 pins, reading: “Is it a girl or a boy?” The puzzle instructs guests to find the word “girl” or “boy” in the crossword to discover the gender of the hosts’ child-to-be (See Image E). The fifth most popular pin with 475 re-pins features a small chalkboard, where guests are asked to vote for the gender they want the baby to be using pink or blue chalk (See Image F). While this research presented a limited scope of how the gender binary is classified in the context of gender reveal parties, further research has the possibility of using consumer culture theory to replicate these methods for the purposes of investigating commodification in the context of social norms and practices.

Discussion and Implications for Future Research

The results of this study can be applied to Rubin’s understandings of the sex/gender system from 1975. If the sex/gender system occurs because culture is turning biological sex into “products of human activity”, then Pinterest is acting as a vehicle to perpetuate cultural ideas surrounding what it means to be a “girl” or “boy.” Having a baby girl correlates with pink imagery, featuring dresses, bows, dolls, and culturally-mediated feminine characteristics; having a baby boy means that parents-to-be emphasize the color blue, trucks, sports, and masculine characteristics. Therefore, social media may act as a way of enhancing ideas of gender, creating a binary where parents view their children in terms of solidified roles. It is important to note that the crea-

tion of one's identity is constructed according to the image presented to others. Further, this binary is being decided for children prior to their existence in the world.

Rubin's ideas regarding the exchange of women via the kinship system can be applied in this study to see *women themselves* as exchanging clear notions of gender self-identification, via sharing and re-pinning images on Pinterest. This study viewed gender as a binary, whereby pink and blue become synonymous with having a baby girl or boy in Western society. Using gender as an analytical tool means that gender serves as an example of power because it signifies particular relationships between an infant and their parents, others, and the world. Gender is in a constitutive relationship with power. A political economy analysis was used in this research to show how particular subjects (users of Pinterest) reproduce particular ideologies within particular social settings, to the extent that ideas of gender become about more than capitalism, also signifying the reproduction of certain images of what it means to be a boy or girl in society.

The results of this study show that color is used as an important cultural indicator of the gender binary. Pinterest commodifies new liberal desires, allowing notions of gender to be played into these views. A neo-liberal feminist subject is created, whereby a woman using Pinterest feels that she has the power to categorize her own life. However, if the boards most often seen on Pinterest are things such as a "dream home," or "dream wedding," the neo-liberal feminist subject ends up focusing on individualized conceptions of what it means to be feminist, while neglecting larger problems impacting her society (e.g. participation in a political system, citizenry within her community, etc.). Pinterest provides a sense of false agency. Additionally, Pinterest serves as a form of free labor, where users generate the content and reproduction of particular ideas – without users pinning and re-pinning these ideas, the site itself could not be sustained.

Gender reveal parties via Pinterest can be seen as a form of gender advertisement. Goffman (1979) argued that there is nothing natural about gender identity, since it is a process whereby individuals learn to take on certain attributes they believe are appropriate for their gender terms (Goffman, 1979). In order to function "normally," individuals then learn what signals to look for, and how to send those signals out to others. Pinterest has targeted women in the form of consumption of images and ideas, showing that women have naturalized the gender identifica-

tion process in a way that perpetuates the very structure itself. Goffman (1979) looked at advertisements as a form of gender “codes,” a language that everyone shares and understands as a means of rules in the world. This study showed that Pinterest can be viewed as a form of gender advertisement, where images are presented to individuals that provide an ability to recognize a girl or boy in a way that becomes fundamental for subsequent interactions with others either on the Internet or in the world (Goffman, 1979). Furthermore, the images (or advertisements) analyzed in this study relate to consumer culture theory, for images have been commodified according to the socially-constructed gender assignment of a baby that perpetuates cultural norms. The results indicate that color is a significant indicator of what it means to be a boy or girl, while specific categories related to gender reveal parties themselves are not meaningful. Color has nothing to do with a party’s category, it visually represents the gender binary; words and explanations are not even necessary. This manuscript did not address the instance of transgendered individuals, but this is a very important consideration that merits its own analysis. Future research should explore how the transgender community is ostracized from the experience of childbirth when looking at these conceptualizations on Pinterest.

While this research cannot generalize to say that all women who use social media platforms help to reinforce the gender binary, it can be argued that the popularity of Pinterest, along with particular pins among users, aid in reinforcing cultural norms. Future research should look more closely at the use of sports rhetoric in gender reveal parties, as this was a common theme seen in the research. In order to break the binary, more research needs to be done to understand how cultural ideas have managed to transfer into the digital realm. Giving infants the chance to create their own identities means that research must look closer at Pinterest and its effects.

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Table A

Frequencies by Category

<u>Category</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Voting Game	13	33.3
Food	8	20.5
Decoration	9	23.1
Invitation	4	10.3
Photography	5	12.8
Total	39	100.0

Table B

Frequencies by Color

<u>Use of Color</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Color Defined (pink/blue)	27	69.2
Color Not	5	12.8
Neutral Colors	7	17.9
Total	39	100.0

Figure A

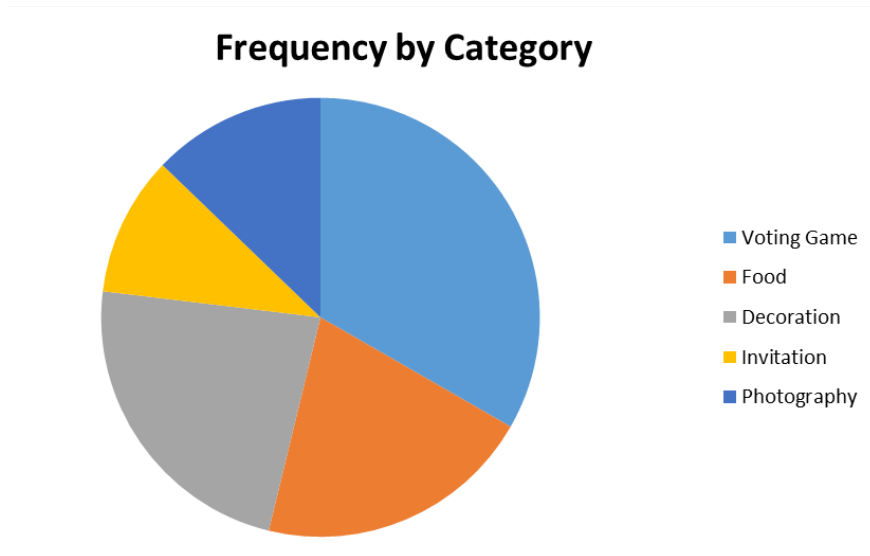


Figure B

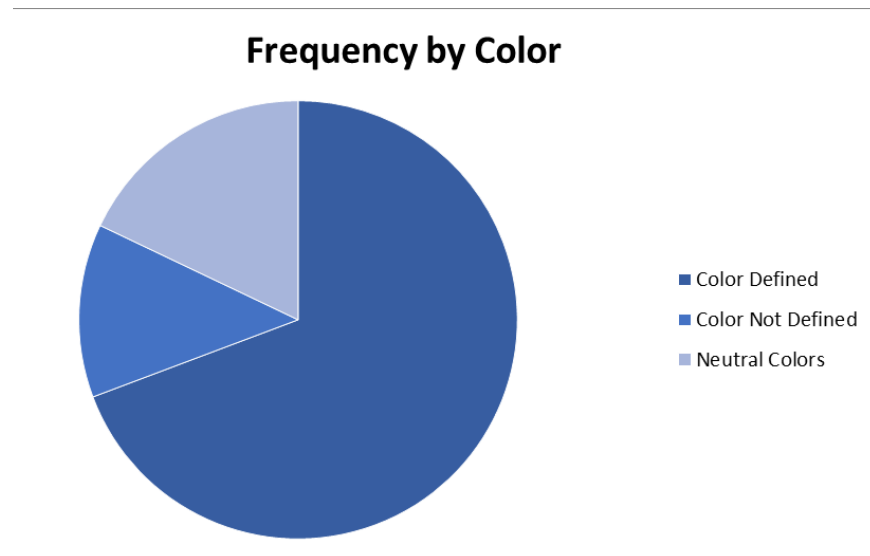


Image C



Image D



All <Marriages> are Created <Equal>: Redefining Marriage or Family Values?

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Historically, one of the longest and proudest traditions in the United States has been the pursuit of positive social change through speech and assembly. This has been especially true of the last century, where Americans have witnessed some of the most monumental *and* contentious social movements toward different notions of equality (Condit & Lucaites, 1993). Recently, marriage equality has been a divisive issue in the sociopolitical sphere. Although the fight for lesbian and gay rights has advanced since the sixties, and perhaps before, exceptional progress has been made in the last few years in both societal and legal realms. However, along with these encouraging strides, this movement has also seen its fair share of setbacks and backlash from public and political opponents.

As evidenced by past movements, social change is enacted through language by changing the way people think about the world they live in *and* about the people they share it with; the movement for marriage equality is no different. According to Cathcart (1972), “Movements are carried forward through language, both verbal and nonverbal, in strategic forms that bring about identification of the individual within the movement” (p. 86). Often, culturally resonant slogans are used to tap into a society’s deeply held beliefs and values as a mode of persuasion. McGee (1980) coined the phrase *ideograph* to characterize these words and phrases that form the building blocks of an ideology.

McGee asserts that people—in this case Americans—are “united by the ideographs that represent the political entity ‘United States’ and separated by a disagreement as to the practical meaning of such ideographs” (p. 8), which is applicable to both advocates and opponents in the national conversation of same-sex marriage. Thus, ideographs are a useful unit of analysis for the study of political rhetoric and social movements because of its persuasive capacity to shift the attitudes of the collective (Delgado, 1994).

As the slogan “marriage equality” has discursively emerged, opponents have employed rhetorical strategies that often tie into the overall theme of “family values,” which has historically been recurrent in American political rhetoric. This study will analyze the ideographic phrase <marriage equality>, as McGee (1980) advised, by both charting how the ideograph has historically developed and how its current usage interacts with related ideographs. More specifically, I will examine how <marriage equality> functioned to change the terms of the national debate over same-sex marriage. This article will proceed first with a brief background of the marriage equality movement with a specific attention paid to recent developments. Next, I will discuss ideology and ideographs, which will serve as the method of analysis. Lastly, I will analyze the competing ideographic function of “family values” and “marriage equality.”

Background

Since the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City, which were consequent of widespread police harassment and discrimination against gays and lesbians, the gay rights movement has made enormous progress. Although a few setbacks have occurred, the last few years have seen some of the greatest advances toward marriage equality for same-sexed couples on both a political and social level. In 2008, the Supreme Court of California overturned *In Re: Marriages*, Proposition 22, which banned the recognition of same-sex marriage in the state. This decision led to the drafting of the controversial 2008 Proposition 8, which passed with a 52.3% vote, this time amending California’s Constitution to ban same-sex marriage. While the State supreme court then ruled to uphold Proposition 8, many believed setbacks such as Proposition 22 and 8 would help propel the issue to the Federal Supreme Court, which would hold the potential for sweeping change through a federal decision—they were correct.

In what may have been a defining moment of the 2012 election, on May 9th, 2012, President Barack Obama became the first president of the United States to “come out” in support of gay marriage in an interview with *CNN* (Gast, 2012). Obama then announced that his administration additionally supports the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), concluding that the growingly contentious act was unconstitutional. This act, popularly known by the acronym DOMA, legally defined marriage as between a woman and a man for the purposes of federal law and marriage benefits. In conjunction, the act also permit-

ted states not to recognize same-sex marriages valid in other states.

In response to the Obama administration's announcement, Republican House Speaker John Boehner and others vowed to defend the constitutionality of DOMA (Shear, 2011). In one of the most monumental strides in the movement for marriage equality, the federal Supreme Court announced in December 2012 that it would hear two marriage cases including *Windsor v. United States*, which challenges DOMA, and *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, which challenges California's Proposition 8 (Liptak, 2012). Expectedly, this debate has been characterized with visceral ideological rhetoric, consisting of moral arguments from both sides of the movement.

Ideographs

By identifying and dissecting the ideologies functioning on both sides of the same-sex marriage debate, this study seeks to help articulate the perspective that have been marginalized or silenced. Hitherto, the use of "family values" rhetoric has, in the past and present, systematically oppressed and pathologized many different groups, scapegoating them for society's ills (Cloud, 1998). In the contemporary setting, "family values" has reemerged in ideologically charged arguments about same-sex marriage, however, most notably by opponents. This analysis will explore the ways in which the phrases <marriage equality> and <family values> function in these arguments. According to Phillip Wander (1983):

An ideological turn in modern criticism reflects the existence of crisis, acknowledges the influence of established interests and the reality of alternative world-views, and commends rhetorical analyses not only of the actions implied but also of the interests represented. More than 'informed talk about matters of importance,' criticism carries us to the point of recognizing good reasons and engaging in right action. (p. 92)

Both opponents and advocates of marriage equality have established interests in this debate, which are stated in more and less explicit ways. By analyzing the fundamental elements that constitute ideologies, this critique will highlight the "good reasons"

Wander addresses, and expose the oppressive in hopes of empowering right action. Michael Calvin McGee (1980) coined the term *ideograph* to characterize the words, phrases, and slogans that, while seemingly commonplace, exert tremendous social and political power. He explains that ideographs provide a theoretical link between rhetoric (concrete) and ideology (abstract), enabling a critic to analyze both the ideology that exists in specific rhetoric and how that rhetoric functions and evolves with its respective audiences. McGee (1980) offers a formal definition of an ideograph as...

an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high order abstraction representing commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable. (p. 15)

According to McGee (1980), ideographs are “the basic structural elements, the building blocks, of ideology” (p. 7). Some common examples of ideographs that resonate with Americans include: <democracy>, <liberty>, <freedom>, <equality>, <rule of law>, as well as many others. Consistent with other ideographic criticisms, for the duration of this article, ideographs will be enclosed with “<>” to distinguish ideographic function from the nonideological meaning of the words and phrases (Cloud, 1998).

The persuasive power of these terms comes from the cultural commitments evoked by usages; as McGee expounds, “when a claim is warranted by such terms as ‘law,’ ‘liberty,’ ‘tyranny,’ or ‘trial by jury’ . . . it is presumed that human beings will react predictably and automatically” (1980, p. 6). This automatic reaction is conditioned over time, building a cultural resonance that often supersedes fundamental logic, as Ewalt (2011) exemplifies, “although a citizen of the United States of America may struggle to concretely define <liberty>, she or he will almost never take a stance against it” (p. 372). Ideological argumentation typically avoids specific and/or logical details about its subject matter, instead it more often seeks to tap into the “‘common’ morality of the community” (McGee, 1987, p. 65). Through their strategic deployment, ideographs often have a partisan and polarizing effect on the public, especially with politically controversial issues such as same-sex marriage. Ideographs in a sense create forcible dichotomy within the public conscience-or in other words, they can lead in-groups and out-groups to perceive the other as against their moral fabric.

Numerous scholars have analyzed society's ideographs to understand the moral, social, and political functionality of the terms, including: <home> (Enoch, 2012); <heritage> (Ewalt, 2011); <life > and <choice> (Hayden, 2009); <human rights> (McGee, 1987); and <patriotic> (Towner, 2012). However, more relevant to the present inquiry, <equality> (Condit & Lucaites, 1990; Lucaites & Condit 1993); <family values> (Cloud, 1998); <marriage> (Stassen & Bates, 2010) have all provided useful insights for understanding <family values> and <marriage equality>.

According to McGee (1980), in order to fully describe and understand a particular ideology, research must include "(1) the isolation of a society's ideographs, (2) the exposure and analysis of the diachronic structure of every ideograph, and (3) characterization of synchronic relationships among all the ideographs in a particular context" (p.16). McGee's process for rhetorical analysis, as Cloud (1998) asserts, needs to start with recognizing and unpacking "the most potent ideographs of society, and then to chart out the uses and inflections of those ideographs both in their immediate contexts (synchronic context) and as they emerge and develop over time (diachronic context)" (p.282).

In light of how powerfully these culturally resonant ideographs can influence social movements, such as the present struggle for marriage equality, it is necessary to identify the ideological units of this debate to better understand their potential function. This study seeks to answer the following questions: How have the concepts of <family values> and <equality> evolved diachronically? How does <marriage equality> function synchronically in its current temporal context? In what ways did the deployment of <marriage equality> work to define political ideologies?

To understand how the phrase functions in its current context, it is necessary to first chart its historical development and interrelation with other ideographs. This is foundational to "ideographic criticism because earlier uses of ideographs serve as precedent and constraint on subsequent rhetors" (Cloud, 1998, p. 392). This study will proceed with first by mapping how <family values> rhetoric has historically developed in discourse and how it has been appropriated to same-sex marriage. Next I will chart at the

historical development of <equality> through its current function

in relation to <marriage equality>.

The Rhetorical Construct of <Family values>

<Family values> rhetoric has proven to be an equivocal, yet influential, resource in the same-sex marriage debate; however, its application has been historically versatile as an argumentative strategy in political discourse for the last half-century (Stacey, 1990). The intentionally abstract nature of this phrase makes “rhetoric of family values . . . an *infinitely malleable symbolic resource* that is understandably irresistible to politicians from both major parties in the age of corporate-sponsored, mass-media politics” (Stacey, 1996, pp. 100-101). The rhetoric of “family values” has been used in a variety of ways in politics, but perhaps most frequently in relation to the decline of the mythic nuclear family, as Stacey (1996) explains:

Backlash sentiment against the dramatic family transformations of the past four decades has played an increasingly pivotal role in national politics in the United States since the late 1970s, when the divorce rate peaked, and a national White House Conference on The Family [*sic*] that was planned during the Carter administration fractured into three deeply polarized, regional conferences on families convened during the first year of the Reagan administration. (p. 3)

Around this time, the Christian right, including the Moral Majority and self-proclaimed “profamily” movements became the grass-roots base for the Reagan-Bush era. This led to the transformation of the Republican Party “into an anti-feminist, anti-gay, anti-abortion, fortress” who ostracized political moderates by acting as the “right-wing family-values police” (Stacey, 1996, p. 3).

Through its deployment over time, the phrase *family values* has developed a powerful association with the nostalgic ideal of the American family, rendering it a rhetorically effective slogan that has been used to change public policy in accord with sociopolitical ideologies and agendas. For this reason, several scholars have suggested treating it as an ideograph. Dana Cloud (1998) analyzed political speeches addressing the Los Angeles Riots to highlight the rhetorical function of <family values>. She found that both Republicans and Democrats used <family values> rhetoric to scapegoat the actual economic problems and racial discrimination existing at the time to poor and “broken families.” According to Cloud (1998):

While <family> itself has been deployed throughout American

history as an ideograph, the <values> side of the equation is also significant. The word “values” indicates a rhetorical emphasis on moral, character-based solutions rather than material redress of economic need or the remediation of structural racism. (p. 391)

She argues that <family> was used as a referent to the idealized and mythical nuclear family, or as she referred to it “utopian.” As Coontz (1992) explains, these visions of “traditional families derive from images that are still delivered to our homes in countless reruns of 1950’s television sit-coms” (p.23); thus for many, <family values> rhetoric evokes mythical familial visions analogous to Ronald Reagan’s political campaign advertisements that emphasized this “American” family model (see Reagan, 1984).

<Family values> in the Context of Same-sex Marriage

According to Cloud (1998), “<family values> rhetoric has vilified feminists alongside gays and lesbians for disrupting “traditional family forms” (p. 392). These alleged disrupters—liberals now linked to this group—are seen as responsible for the decline of the “traditional American family,” and ultimately the decline of society (Platt, 2007). Traditionalism in the context of same-sex marriage both refers to Judeo-Christian morality and heteronormativity, which in this narrative are the requisites for societal health and prosperity. Oppositional rhetoric contends traditional families are the building blocks of civilization, and central to the family structure is marriage and children. Stassen and Bates (2010) argue, “Marriage functions as an ideograph as evidenced by the structure, abstraction, and ability to both unite and divide” (p.5). As this inquiry will show, marriage in the paradigm of <family values> tends to focus on disguised division.

“Pro-family” organizations, which also tend to be antigay, have even taken to naming themselves with familial terms, including: *American Family Association*, *Focus on the Family*, *Family Research Council*, etc. This frequently used Orwellian language, even in their organizational names, is aimed at rhetorically linking these groups and their ideological arguments with the idealized vision of the American family. Though both political sides have used this rhetorical strategy versatility and frequently, it has

been particularly effective for conservatives since the Frank Luntz think-tank era of the early 2000s (Lakoff, 2004). Slogans like, “Global War of Terror,” “Clear Skies Act,” or “No Child Left Behind” are rhetorically potent because they evoke certain feelings and commitments that hide their material function.

Society’s keeper: Saving Marriage and Society

In a similar way, opponents of same-sex marriage have taken to the responsibility of “defending marriage” instead of the position of attacking same-sex marriage. According to Lakoff (2004), “marriage is central to our culture. Marriage legally confers many hundreds of benefits, but that is only the material aspect. Marriage is an institution, the public expression of lifelong commitment based on love” (p. 46). However, this understanding of marriage does not provide warrant against same-sex marriage, and is thus circumvented in favor of a strategy that places marriage and society under attack. In doing so, it identifies those defending marriage as heroic and society as victim to those who are seeking to destroy the institution that is the heart of society. They attempt to avoid having their ideology construed with bigotry and homophobia by framing their arguments as advocacy for moral and social health, which is victimized. In their eyes, “they’re just looking out for us.”

Conservatives have predominantly made two general arguments against same-sex marriage based on definition and sanctity (Lakoff, 2004), which are actually interfaced in usage. *Focus on the Family*, a prominent influence of Christian conservatism explains the importance of family and marriage:

Family is the fundamental building block of all human civilizations, and marriage is the foundation of the family. The institution of marriage is unquestionably good for individuals and society, and the health of our culture is intimately linked to the health and well-being of marriage. Unfortunately, the standard of lifelong, traditional marriage as the foundation of family life in our nation is under attack. (Focus on the Family, 2008)

The focus here is not initially on the same-sexed individuals that wish to marry. Instead, it makes the metonymical connection between traditional marriage and a healthy society, which is presently vulnerable to “attack.” This type of war rhetoric is used to paint same-sex marriage advocates as waging war on marriage and American tradition. The last sentence also implies that gay marriage is attacking both “traditional marriage” and the “nation.”

While many political actors and activists from both sides of the debate have argued in favor of letting states legislate marriage and civil unions, former GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum sees it different, “I believe that marriage is not 50 things. You can’t have different marriage laws in different states. Ultimately, marriage is what marriage is,” he continues, “States do not have the right to destroy the American family. It is your business . . . it is not fine with me that New York has destroyed marriage. It is not fine with me that New York is setting a template that will cause great division in this country” (James, 2011). From this view, marriage is objectively between a man and woman, and by leaving it for states to decide, the societal understanding of marriage would be problematized and same-sex marriage could potentially become normalized. Santorum warned of domino-effect, similarly to how Cold War rhetoric depicted communism as a dangerous contagion that needed to be contained to preserve the American way of life.

For this reason, many politicians opposed to same-sex marriage have vowed to uphold DOMA and even add an amendment to the Constitution defining marriage as between a man and a woman. The 2012 GOP presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, ,, promised that, if elected, he would support both of these actions (Johnson, 2012). He also has stated that he does not support civil unions for same-sexed couples because they are essentially the same thing as marriage. Following similar lines to Santorum’s comment, Romney states, “in many cases [civil unions] represent marriage by a different name for gay couples” (Barbaro, 2012).

By allowing proponents to redefine marriage, opponents argue that it will delegitimize the institution for all married couples. This argument is clearly evident in the following statement from the *Family Research Council (FRC)*, “Attempts to join two men or two women in "marriage" constitute a radical redefinition and falsification of the institution, and FRC supports state and federal constitutional amendments to prevent such redefinition by courts or legislatures” (“Homosexuality”, n.d.). Here the *FRC* puts marriage in quotations to imply that same-sex marriages are invalid; however, this seems contradictory to the idea that homosexual couples can then redefine or falsify the institution that is so foundational to the familial social order without being valid to begin with. Additionally, the idea of same-sex marriage is vilified by its

link with radicalism, a term that has been often linked with terrorism for the past decade.

Sanctity, which refers to the holy and sacred aspects of marriage, is also frequently evoked against same-sex marriage. These arguments are biblically grounded in the notion that marriage is a religious ceremony validated by God; thus disobeying the word of God is problematic. However, there is a slight problem with this argument—the 1st Amendment states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” (U. S. Const. amend. I). In response, opponents of same-sex marriage have lamented that this will in fact violate *their* religious freedom by the government forcing religious institutions to marry same-sexed couples. Instead of the 1st Amendment addressing the sanctity argument in favor of same-sex marriage, it has been used to victimize religious opponents. Many of these rhetorical strategies have been deployed to oppose gay marriage long before the 2012 election cycle. George W. Bush consistently vowed to defend the sanctity of marriage, a vow that intensified after the *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* decision to allow LGBTQ couples to marry in Massachusetts (Coontz, 2008). His rhetoric toward marriage emphasized the defense of both the *definition* and *sanctity* of marriage.

The sanctity argument is often connected with the historical and pragmatic social order of marriage, making the argument, “we’ve been doing this for years, it is a natural process, so who are we to go against tradition?” Here Mitt Romney exemplified this theme:

I agree with 3000 years of recorded history. I believe marriage is a sacred institution between a man and a woman and I have been rock solid in my support of traditional marriage. Marriage is first and foremost about nurturing and developing children. It’s unfortunate that those who choose to defend the institution of marriage are often demonized (Turner, 2007).

His remarks represent the general ideology of those who oppose same sex marriage: heterosexual marriage is natural, sacred, and pragmatic in the sense of its purpose for procreation. However, the procreation element of defending marriage is flawed because it excludes those who either cannot or choose not to have children. Nonetheless, they are able to marry as long as it is with a member of the opposite sex.

Because homosexual couples cannot procreate, arguments are made supporting the benefits of having a biological mother and father. Without both of these parents, children are victim to “radical’s” war on mar-

riage. According to of their website, the “Family Research Council believes, and social science has now clearly demonstrated, that children do best when raised by their own biological mother and father who are committed to one another in a lifelong marriage” (“Family Structure”, n.d.). This again returns to a strategy of advocacy as opposed to attack. This also seeks to bolster their argument with “social science”-though not cited-to demonstrate that more than their own religious ideology supports their position.

Advocates of same-sex marriage have also made <family values> appeals toward the best interests for children. In a *Human Rights Campaign* funded study, Bennett and Gates (2004) explain, “since marriage is generally considered a stabilizing factor, the implication appears to be that granting marriage rights to same-sex couples would lead to an even greater degree of stability in these families” (p. 3). By acquiescing the position and strategy of opponents, the *HRC*’s argument is difficult to refute. However, as evidenced by the proliferation of antigay marriage laws and state-level constitutional amendments, this strategy has been met with less success for advocates. By arguing that a married household is best for kids instead of advocating for same-sex marriage single parents and non-married couples are similarly slighted. It is important to emphasize that same-sex couples are equal to opposite sex couples, and thus deserve equal rights (Lakoff, 2004).

The Power of <Equality>

Equality has evolved into one of the most integral terms in American culture, representing many different ideological and social struggles throughout United States’ history. Unlike many of the ideographs that resonate with Americans like <liberty> and <freedom>, <equality> holds both ideological weight, while maintaining a concrete meaning. McGee (1980) explains the extraordinary capacity of equality:

If asked to make a case for “equality” that is, to define the term, we are forced to make reference to its history by detailing the situations for which the word has been an appropriate description . . . The dynamism of “equality” is thus paramorphic, for even when the term changes its signification in particular circumstances, it

retains a formal, categorical meaning, a constant reference to its history as an ideograph. (p. 431)

In other words, while it is difficult to picture <liberty>, <equality> has an observable trait, where one could compare two objects to determine if they are equal. In contrast to the rhetoric of <family values>, which based on its historical uses has proven to be a malleable strategy that can work in favor of either side of an argument, the categorical meaning of <equality> renders it more concrete. The following section will chart the historically developed power of <equality>.

<Equality> stands out as culturally defining because of the historical development of the term. As Condit and Lucaites (1993) assert, “It is at once a normative abstraction that resonates with the highest ideals of America’s collective being, and a rather narrow and pedestrian, empirical characterization of sameness or identity of any two objects” (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. ix). <Equality> was inducted to the American ideographic vocabulary as early as 1776, when Thomas Jefferson stated, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence (US Declaration Ind.). Thereafter, it has found its way into political speeches and American culture in a variety of contexts.

Though the term’s significance originated in the revolutionary period, African Americans have been largely responsible for shaping the ideological understanding of <equality> in America culture. After the Emancipation Proclamation, freed blacks continued their struggle for equality in the form of “equal rights.” This idea of “equal rights” encompassed three crucial elements: equal laws, equal protection, and equal opportunity (Condit & Lucaites, 1993). However, while this conceptualization of <equality> was a step forward, it became apparent that these elements did not amount to social equality.

Egalitarians seeking full equality and white supremacists seeking legitimized separation were both initially appeased by the “separate but equal” doctrine. In the 1896 court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Federal Supreme Court formalized the phrase “separate but equal,” which established that African Americans were to receive the same rights to accommodations, facilities, education, and voting. However, while the quantitative aspect of access improved the qualitative aspect suffered in that blacks were given poorer quality versions of the rights and resources afforded to whites.

The federal mandates of “separate but equal” were thought to move toward legal and social equality; however, it fell short on both accounts. This led African Americans and egalitarians to push for “FULL EQUALITY [*sic*],” which included legal and social equality (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. 11). In 1954 the Supreme Court in the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*, ruled state-mandated segregation was unconstitutional, thus leading to “integrated equality” (Condit & Lucaites, 1993). After this case, the continued struggle for equality in the 1960s was characterized by protests demanding the enforcement of their newly acquired civil rights and by questioning the racist praxis of whites.

The progress realized by the civil rights movement was not a result of white people finally deciding to adopt a more universal understanding of equality, according to Condit and Lucaites (1993), it was the result of two different causes: “First, America’s African descendants have managed to sustain a compelling argument that has virtually required the nation to negotiate the meaning of Equality as a central constitutional term” and “Second, the wide range of contributions made by African Americans in the arts, athletics, politics, and the professions, as well as their presence in the labor market,” led to their recognition as *Americans* (p. 15). In other words, people began to realize that African Americans fill societal roles just like everyone else. Though African Americans’ struggle for equality has progressed, there is still much further to go. American is by no means post-race. However, this long movement in particular helped develop a national resonance for the meaning of <equality>.

According to McGee (1980), “by comparisons over time, we establish an analogue for the proposed present usage of the term. Earlier usages become precedent, touchstones for judging the propriety of the ideograph in the current circumstance” (p. 10). The deployment of <equality> over the course of the civil rights moment has largely shaped its ideographic function, placing both power and constraints upon its current use. It’s meaning has also been shaped by other ongoing movements, such as those for women’s rights and workers’ rights. Currently, gays, lesbians, (and modern day egalitarians) are fighting for equality, in both the legal and social sense. In charting how <equality> has evolved historically in the United States, we can better under-

stand how past deployments of <equality> contribute to its synchronic function in <marriage equality>.

The Emergence of <Marriage equality>

Over the course of this movement, we have seen the reemergence of <family values> as both a means of delegitimizing and legitimizing same-sex marriage. Additionally, in making the claim that a two-parent household is the *best* environment for child rearing, single, divorced, and cohabitating parents are stigmatized (Platt, 2007). Within four years of this strategy being implemented, forty-five states had banned same-sex marriage. Though this strategy has been largely successful for Christian Conservatives, it seemed to be far less effective for advocates of same-sex marriage if these new bans are any indication (Platt, 2007).

According to Lakoff (2004), “polls show[ed] that most Americans are overwhelmingly against antigay discrimination” (p. 47). This is likely because of what “discrimination” means in our culture. It is rhetorically linked to civil rights and the discrimination of African Americans throughout U. S. History; it is linked to the historical and current discrimination of women; and in an extreme sense, it is linked to the genocidal discrimination of the Holocaust. Whether or not people perpetuate discrimination in action aside, when the word “discrimination” is used, it evokes an automatic response. Although Americans are vehemently opposed to antigay discrimination, as Lakoff (2004) conversely notes, “the polls also show[ed] that [Americans] have been against “gay marriage” (p. 47). In fact, according to the Pew Research Center (2013), opposition to same-sex marriage was at a decade high of 60% in 2004. Some polls have even shown opposition as high as 68% (Rasmussen Reports, 2006).

Part of the problem has been with the terminology “gay rights,” “gay marriage,” and even “same-sex marriage” in that it seems like an individual or special set of rights for a small group of people, and thus bifurcates those people from society as being different. In other words, it is something additional as opposed to discrimination. Lakoff (2004) suggested that the terminology is rhetorically flawed; he argued rather than framing the issues as one of gay or same-sex marriage, it should be thought of in terms of *human equality*. Although several years passed after Lakoff (2004) recommended changing the terms of the debate, it was in fact reframed through the use of <equality>.

The phrase “marriage equality” is not by any means new, and it certainly did not arise during the last presidential election cycle. However, in recent years, advocacy groups seeking equality for members of the LGBTQ community, namely *Human Rights Campaign* and *Freedom to Marry*, have popularized the phrase. This has played a significant role in defining the sociopolitical ideologies of both major political parties based upon their support or opposition. The diachronic evolution of <equality> has rendered it one of the most culturally resonant and powerful terms in the American vocabulary; thus by adopting the phrase <marriage equality>, advocates have been able to reframe the debate and redefine opponents.

<Marriage equality> in the 2012 Election Cycle

Over the last decade, both political sides have approached same-sex marriage in vastly different ways. Republican’s have largely vowed to defend “traditional marriage” and “family values,” and Democrats have in the past sidestepped the issue and/or supported civil unions. However, in the few years leading to the 2012 presidential election, the issue proved to be more salient. Barack Obama has over time taken different positions on marriage equality: In 1996 he favored legalizing same-sex marriage; in 2004 he stated he believed marriage is between a man and a woman; in 2010 he felt the same way as 2004, but hinted that his position could “evolve;” in 2011 he claimed, “I’m still working on it” when asked if his support would shift from civil unions to full marriage (Dwyer, 2012). However, in 2012 he affirmed his position.

Obama and Biden side with <marriage equality>

In May of 2012, Vice President Biden made a surprising and landmark announcement on NBC’s *Meet the Press* that he is “comfortable with same-sex individuals marrying” and that same-sex and opposite-sex couples are “entitled to the same exact rights. All the civil rights, all the civil liberties” (Volsky, 2012). A few days later in an ABC News interview, Barack Obama became the first president to come out in favor of marriage equality (Roberts, 2012). In this interview with Robin Roberts he explains how his position evolved:

I've been going through an evolution on this issue. I've always been adamant that-gay and lesbian-Americans should be treated fairly and equally . . . I've stood on the side of broader equality for-the L.G.B.T. community. And I had hesitated on gay marriage-in part, because I thought civil unions would be sufficient . . . And-I was sensitive to the fact that-for a lot of people, you know, the-the word marriage was something that evokes very powerful traditions, religious beliefs, and so forth.

(Roberts, 2012)

In this introduction to his statement, Barack Obama anticipated the potential accusation of flip-flopping on the issue by indicating he has always stood for equality, although he has been hesitant on the issue of marriage. This also speaks to people who have experienced a similar change on the issue, implying that is okay to change positions and this is how you can articulate that change. He also identified that he mistakenly thought that civil unions would suffice for both LGTBQ couples and traditional marriage advocates. The civil unions solution is similar to the separate but equal doctrine that failed to create actual equality by isolating groups as different.

The President further explained that his position has changed because he realized that people he interacts with and respects on a personal level are not able to marry like everyone else. He referenced friends, family, and neighbors, who are in committed, monogamous relationships, and who parent children. He also refers to members of the military who “are out there fighting on [his] behalf-and yet, feel constrained, even now that Don't Ask, Don't Tell is gone, because-they're not able to-commit themselves in a marriage” (Roberts, 2012). Here, he is shifting the focus to those who are victim to marriage inequality, including gay service men and women who he has championed. His emphasis on commonality “with friends, family, and neighbors” reaches out to other people who might be unsettled, unfamiliar, or evolving on the issue.

Obama also expressed familial themes in the interview by extolling same-sexed couples in committed relationships as good parents. There is also a connection made to military support, which suggests that by preventing same-sex marriage, opponents are also unpatriotic in their refusal to support fair treatment of the people who defend the country. Finally, Obama makes his definitive statement in full support of marriage equality, “At a certain point, I've just concluded that-for me personally, it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that-I think same-

sex couples should be able to get married” (Roberts, 2012); though like Biden, Obama was careful in framing this as his own opinion,

Democrats and <marriage equality>:
Evoking Themes of the Past

Since both Biden and Obama have come out in support of same-sex-marriage, and more generally <equality>, they became central themes of the Democratic campaign platform (Stein, 2012). By adopting the rhetorical foundation of <equality>, advocates were able to tap into the deep-seeded cultural resonance associated with its history and appropriate it for the current context.

Civil rights, discrimination, and intolerance are concepts antithetically associated with <equality>. In his address at the DNC, Barack Obama connects the historically developed contempt for discrimination with the present same-sex marriage movement:

Ever since I entered into public life, ever since I have a memory about what my mother taught me, and my grandparents taught me, I believed that discriminating against people was wrong. I had no choice. I was born that way. And I believed that discrimination because of somebody’s sexual orientation or gender identity ran counter to who we are as a people, and it’s a violation of the basic tenets on which this nation was founded. I believe that gay couples deserve the same legal rights as every other couple in this country. (Obama, 2012)

Through this anecdote, Obama is establishing that discrimination has always been antithetical to American ideals, and that this commitment is universally applicable. By explaining that he learned this from his mother and grandparents, he is dating this lesson to the African American civil rights movement. By refusing a group of people the civil and social right of marriage, we as a country are then committing an analogous form of discrimination.

This connection is made more explicit in Barack Obama’s second inaugural address, where he connected three different movements that have contributed to the ideographic function of <equality> in the United States:

We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths that all of us are created equal is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall; just as it guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone; to hear a King proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth. (Klein, 2013)

This passage chronologically lists and links three different movements that symbolically represent Jefferson's declaration that "All men [people] are created equal." The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention was a monumental first step for women in gaining civil and social equality. The peaceful marches from Selma to Montgomery met by violent police reactions marked the peak the civil rights movement for equality. Finally, he references the Stonewall riots of New York, where members of the gay community fought back against discriminatory police raids and harassment, in turn catalyzing the gay rights movement in the United States.

While at least the ideas of racial equality, and on a more murky level equality between males and females-are accepted norms in America, equality for gays and lesbians is a more recent and divided development. By connecting these three moments, this speech calls for a universal understanding of equality, as well as discrimination and intolerance. In concluding with Dr. King's proclamation "that our individual freedom is inextricably bound" to everyone else's, Obama shows that <equality> is all or nothing, that <equality> inherently must include everyone of all sexes, races, genders, and sexual orientations.

Revising <family values> at the DNC: American Dreams and Loving Families

In his speech at the DNC, Obama retells the opportunity story of the American Dream, which has been frequently evoked in <family values> rhetoric; however he makes slight revisions:

My grandparents were given the chance to go to college and buy their home and fulfill the basic bargain at the heart of America's story, the promise that hard work will pay off, that responsibility will be rewarded, that everyone gets a fair shot and everyone does their fair share and everyone plays by the same rules, from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, D.C. (Obama, 2012)

<Family values> themes of personal responsibility and pulling one's self up by their boot straps are still present; however, it is also necessary to make sure that everyone has a fair chance and a level playing field. This responds to the argument commonly made in <family values> arguments that if people are failing, it is their own fault. Later he explains that we as a country must stop blaming "our welfare recipients or corporations or unions or immigrants or gays or any other group we're told to blame for our troubles" (Obama, 2012). This remark directly responds to previous rhetoric used by politicians to scapegoat groups for systemic societal problems, for example blaming the broken families on impoverished African Americans (see Cloud, 1998).

Zach Wahls, author of the viral YouTube speech in support of his same-sex parents also spoke as the DNC, reinstating family in an address aimed toward Mitt Romney:

Governor Romney says he's against same-sex marriage because every child deserves a mother and a father. I think every child deserves a family as loving and committed as mine. Because the sense of family comes from the commitment we make to each other to work through the hard times so we can enjoy the good ones. It comes from the love that binds us; that's what makes a family. Mr. Romney, my family is just as real as yours.
(Wahls, 2012)

Here, rather than making the argument that his moms make a strong family because they are married, he argues that they are strong because they are loving and committed. As a very articulate and powerful as an orator, Wahls demonstrates that he was more than effectively raised and contributes to society in a credible and meaningful way. Lastly, instead of focusing on the institution of marriage, this appropriation of family was centered on love and commitment, which is more inclusive of other parenting or family structures.

Discussion

As indicated by this exploration of the ideographic slogans surrounding the same-sex marriage debate, the power of ideographs can change over time (diachronic) as a result of their interaction with other ideographs (synchronic). <Family values> has been a

staple for both liberals and conservatives throughout the last few decades; however, it has been predominately used by conservatives over the last decade in opposition to same-sex-marriage to support their thesis that homosexuality and same-sex marriage are in large part responsible for the decline of the “traditional American family.” In some ways, they might be correct in their hypothesis that the “traditional family is in decline,” although not in the way they are propagating. The mythical family that fits their homophobic and patriarchal ideals is in decline. Groups like the *Family Research Council* and *Focus on the Family* have worked hard to insert their narrow ideologies into the public through political voices, but as people are taking them less and less seriously, it appears their charm is waning.

On the other hand, <marriage equality> has demonstrated terminological superiority in the same-sex marriage debate because of its referent power to <equality>. In American culture, there are few words that carry with it the historical magnitude of <equality>. It represents the struggle and hardships experienced during several different factions of civil rights and equality movements; however, they are interconnected by the historical usage and expansion of the term. For people who have lesbian and gay friends, coworkers, family in their lives, and for people who are reading about this movement in the news, reframing same-sex marriage as about <equality> puts the discussion into terms that the majority of Americans understand.

Previously, scholars have focused on the deceptive power of ideographs to achieve “equivocal and ill-defined normative goal[s],” and to guise unscrupulous behavior as acceptable and necessary (McGee, 1980, p. 15). For instance, ideographs such as <democracy> and <liberty> have served as powerful rhetorical strategies for justifying undemocratic behavior, horrific violence and imperialistic foreign policy. However, this study suggests ideographs such as <equality> can also be deployed for positive ends by articulating social movements in relation to previous movements. Whereas democracy has been deployed to equivocally to make motives unclear, <equality> conversely functions to clarify the movement’s message.

Future research should investigate how this movement was also propelled by public means in vernacular discourse. Additionally, a visual aspect was introduced to the equation when the Human Rights Campaign started the memetic Facebook equal sign, with appeared as the profile picture for a huge population of users. Finally, because an in-

creasing number of conservatives are evolving on the issue of same-sex marriage, it will be interesting to chart if and how they distance themselves from those who do in an effort to redefine their political party.

As noted by McGee (1980), <equality> holds both this abstract understanding as well as an observable categorical meaning. This is a good fit with the LGBTQ rights movement because part of it is seeking the more abstract and complicated social equality; however they are also seeking civil equality, which is an observable trait in that progress and setbacks can be measured as it materializes in state and federal courts.

Over the past few years, we have seen monumental strides for marriage equality. According to PEW Research Center (2013), the majority of Americans support marriage equality; and this opinion has grown faster than any social movement before it. In looking back at the struggle for women's or African American civil rights, one might expect such a degree of change in support for marriage equality to take several decades to half of a century. Though it is beyond the scope of this study to attribute a direct cause of social change to specific rhetorical strategies, the correlation of the wide spread adoption of <marriage equality>, rapid changes in public opinion, and increasing number of states legalizing same-sex marriage suggests it has been effective. In fact, according to the *Human Rights Campaign* (2014), 17 states have authorized same-sex marriage.

The Democratic Party made a decision many thought was politically dangerous; however, it ended up providing them with the power to redefine their opponent and shape the terms of the election cycle. Additionally, this movement has produced an unprecedented shift in public opinion, and this momentum seems to be growing. For this reason the movement for marriage equality provides a rich example for studying social movements.

Reframing the debate in terms of <equality> is not merely to re-framing in the sense of media effects. It works to portray this movement for what it is. Since this paper was written, the Supreme Court struck down both DOMA and California's proposition 8; both of which are seen as tremendous strides for marriage equality. However the same-sex marriage debate contentiously

continues at the state level and achieving broader full equality for the LGBTQ community might be even more distant. However, the steps advanced in the past few years indicate that we are headed in the right direction.

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The Global-Local Dialectic in Postcolonial Approaches to Communication Studies

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As cultures come into contact driven by globalization, they meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination (Pratt, 1992). These asymmetrical relations are not only historically constituted by Western colonialism and imperialism, but are also re/constituted by global dominance of Western ideology, culture, and knowledge at the present time (Canagarajah, 1999; Shome & Hegde, 2002a; Singh & Doherty, 2004). Given the multipolar tendency of our contemporary world, critical interrogations of these asymmetrical power relations have become much needed undertakings in the study of culture and communication (Jandt, 2012; Kim, 2008; Nakayama & Halualani, 2011). In this regard, Shome and Hegde's (2002b) postcolonial approaches to communication studies have provided an important theoretical contribution to this endeavor.

Postcolonial approach, by its very critical nature, is "an interruption to established disciplinary content that was, and continues to be, forged through structures of modernity and histories of imperialism" (Shome & Hedge, 2002b, p. 250). Postcolonial approaches to communication studies revisit the epistemic structure of power relations in our daily communication by "inviting reconnections to obliterated pasts and forgotten presents that never made their way into the history of knowledge" (Shome & Hedge, 2002b, p. 251). In this sense, postcolonial approaches offer spaces for marginalized (non-Western) groups to challenge the descriptive and account for the ways in which the dominant (Western) group has spread as global rules. Through exposing and interrogating "Western-centeredness" (Robertson, 1987, p. 28) in day-to-day cultural and communicative interactions, postcolonial approaches empower communication scholars with marginalized (non-Western) identities to bring their own narrative into the conversation of culture and communication. As Shome and Hegde (2002b) note, postcolonial approaches explore the ways in which various cultural phenomena of postcoloniality and communication are intertwined in each other, and recognize the postcolonial politics of communication. On that account, postcolonial approaches "open up new vistas for communication scholarship" (Shome & Hegde, 2002b, p. 249), and bring more non-Western scholarship into the study of culture and communication.

While acknowledging the contribution of Shome and Hegde's (2002b) postcolonial approaches to communication studies, I contend that knowledge of globalization studies has not gained enough attention in their approaches. Globalization studies, in its broadest definition, is an academic field of the global-local integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of cultures (Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006). Much of our understanding about globalization studies actually comes from the politics of postcolonial and communication studies (Jameson, 1999; Krishnaswamy, 2008). For instance, many key concepts of globalization studies are "borrowed from a decidedly postcolonial grammar" (Krishnaswamy, 2008, p. 3). Concurrently, Jameson (1999) states that globalization itself is a communication concept that alternately masks and transmits cultural, political, social, and economic meanings.

Despite the inherent connections of globalization studies with postcolonial and communication studies, few communication scholars have emphasized the importance of globalization in postcolonial approaches to communication studies (Krishnaswamy, 2008, p. 2). In their works, Shome and Hegde (2002b) recognize disjunctive flows of globalization that compels postcolonial approaches to pay greater attention to global-local configurations in the study of culture and communication. However, Shome and Hegde (2002b) do not fully analyze the value of globalization in their postcolonial approaches, and downplay globalization as a mere condition or a temporality, as they only state, "the contradiction and ambiguities written into postcolonial and diasporic lives [are] under the conditions of globalization" (p. 267). As an intercultural communication researcher who specializes in globalization studies, I argue that the role of globalization is much more intrinsic than a "condition" to communication studies in our contemporary times. Shome and Hegde's (2002b) problematic, and I would argue, dismissive discussion of globalization motivates me to further explore the ways that globalization studies informs postcolonial approaches to communication studies.

As Tomlinson (1999) notes, globalization is a complex global connectivity, which lies "at the heart of modern culture" (p. 1). Contemporary globalization presents new global-local configurations that call for a rethinking of the communication of cultural politics in ways that "exceed some of the dominant theoretical

frameworks through which we usually tend to map cultural politics” (Shome & Hegde, 2002a, p. 173). These global-local configurations are essential to enhance the heuristic and critical cultural value of postcolonial approaches to communication studies. In fact, Loomba (2005) asserts that if the discipline of postcolonial studies is to survive in any meaningful ways, it needs to absorb itself far more deeply with the contemporary “globality” within which local colonial institutions and ideas are being remolded into “disparate cultural and socioeconomic practices” (pp. 256-257). Therefore, rather than being complimentary or a condition, globalization studies should be more emphasized within postcolonial approaches in every cultural and communicative interaction.

In this essay, I attempt to explore how globalization studies can further enhance theoretical values of postcolonial approaches to communication studies. In my opinion, the commitment of globalization studies to postcolonial approaches, first and foremost, is to theorize the global-local dialectic (configurations), to answer how the global-local dialectic operates, and how it can be undone and/or redone beyond boundaries of space, place and temporality (Tomlinson, 1999). Thus, at the core of this essay, I will examine the assumption that a clear theoretical recognition of the global-local dialectic in postcolonial approaches can create more spaces for alternative (non-Western) scholarship in communication studies. Specifically, I attempt to address the following questions:

1. In what ways can the global-local dialectic be theorized as a merge of globalization studies and postcolonial approaches to communication studies?
2. In what ways can the global-local dialectic help create more spaces for “non-Western” scholarship in postcolonial approaches to communication studies?
3. How can globalization studies, when merged with postcolonial approaches to communication studies, help in the academic pursuit of producing knowledge that de-centers the West, and is conscious of an increasingly multipolar world?

In order to respond to these questions, I first provide a brief review about globalization studies as an entry point to my analysis. The aim of this review is to introduce and highlight key moments and theories of contemporary globalization studies related to postcolonial and communication studies, and to create a knowledge base for discussions of the global-local dialectic. Second, I introduce the value, scope and im-

portance of the global-local dialectic. Third, I provide an analysis of the global-local dialectic in three theoretical approaches. Lastly, I use the interrogation of critical race theory (CRT) in the global-local dialectic as an example to further illustrate how the global-local dialectic, as an interdisciplinary approach of globalization studies and postcolonial approaches, helps create more spaces for the “non-Western” scholarship in the study of culture and communication.

About Globalization

It is human nature that we depend on each other as a community and keep expanding this dependency to every corner of the global (Martin & Nakayama, 2011). On that account, globalization is never a new phenomenon to the world; instead, it has been moving through various phases over thousands of years. As Turner (2010) points out, globalization as a phenomenon started much earlier than globalization studies as a field of inquiry. In the past two decades, people have wrestled with the vague and all-encompassing task of theorizing the notion of globalization (Radhakrishnan, 2010; Tomlinson, 1999). Because of intensive global exchanges of economies, technologies, politics, and cultures in modern times, contemporary globalization is different than any of its past forms. For instance, during the colonial era, the encounter of the colonizer and the colonized was also a form of globalization. However, that form of globalization mostly happened in specific colonial and regional contexts. Furthermore, the consciousness of nation-state boundaries had been reinforced in these colonial encounters. In present times, the concept of globalization describes the global status of how economy, culture, and politics are transformed into a form of convergence across and beyond nation-state boundaries. For that reason, in many aspects of contemporary globalization, the world becomes “truly globalized” (Hay & Watson, 1999, p. 420).

Beck’s (2000) *What Is Globalization* offers a comprehensive discussion about problems and complexities in defining globalization in the modern sociological and cultural literature. Beck (2000) notes despite the fact that the nature of contemporary globalization is complex, fluid, and dynamic, people still grasp some of its defining moments from modern human histories, such as: The fast growth and expansion in finance, economics, and

computing in the 1970s; the end of the Cold War in the 1980s; the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York; and the London underground and Mumbai bombings, etc. All these historical moments have “intensified the process of globalization” in one-way or another (Turner, 2010, p. 9). In addition to these historical moments in contemporary globalization, Beckford (2003) provides five key tenets of globalization that should be taken into account:

1. The growing frequency, volume and interrelatedness of cultures, commodities, information, and peoples across both time and space;
2. the increasing capacity of information technologies to reduce and compress time and space (giving rise to notions such as the global village);
3. the diffusion of routine practices and protocols for processing global flows of information, money, commodities, and people;
4. the emergence of institutions and social movements to promote, regulate, oversee, or reject globalization;
5. the emergence of new types of global consciousness or ideologies of globalism that give some expression to this social interconnectedness such as cosmopolitanism. (as cited in Turner, 2010, p. 119)

As a phenomenon, contemporary globalization is one where entanglements between the global and the local are being produced faster than ever. At the same time, globalization produces a state of global cultural identities in transnational motion-flows of people, trade, communication, politics, technologies, finance, economy, social movements, and other cross border movements (Shome & Hegde, 2002a). Therefore, given its diverse and comprehensive nature, globalization studies provides knowledge, theories, and concepts for newly emerging fields in the study of culture and communication, such as postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, critical feminist thought, hybrid identity, and diaspora studies (see Bardhan, 2011; Bardhan & Orbe, 2012; Deepak, 2012; Purkayastha, 2010; Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013).

In the study of culture and communication, addressing the distinction between globalization, internationalism and transnationalism is necessary due to their complex interconnections. The key difference between globalization, internationalism, and transnationalism is how they look at the relationship of nation-states. Internationalism focuses on a nation-to-nation relationship. In other words, the nation-state boundary still exists in international communicative contexts. According to Malkki (1994), being international becomes synonymous with being “foreign,” and international relation is a relationship of “one and the other” (p. 37). Transnationalism strives to overlay disparate identities of nation-

states, and emphasizes the convergence of nation-states in transnational communication (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 2006). Despite the fact that globalization is committed to theorizing the problematics and phenomena of internationalism and transnationalism (Hall, 1996), its focus, however, is not them. The core attention of globalization is to theorize the dynamic and complex global-local dialectic across nation-state boundaries, and questions how much of our world has been represented in the global-local dialectic (Tomlinson, 1999). That is to say, the global-local dialectic delineates the contextual process of contemporary globalization. In the following section, I will provide a specific introduction of the global, the local and their dialectical relations.

The Global and the Local

The local and the global are originally developed as a new metaphorical vocabulary to reflect upon the age-old dilemma of relationship between the particular and the universal (Radhakrishnan, 2010). The local comes to stand in for the particular, and the global for the universal. The global-local dialectic quickly becomes a dominant language in globalization studies to describe the spatial dichotomy which emphasizes the contradictory nature of the universal and the particular in contexts of space and place (Harvey, 1989; Radhakrishnan, 2010). However, Abbas (1997) criticizes the use of the global and the local as dichotomies because “there is no longer a space elsewhere” (p. 312). In fact, contemporary globalization leads to “complex forms of deterritorialization and reterritorialization” (Shome & Hegde, 2002b, p. 257) of space in our everyday life, which makes the distribution of capital, technology, and military power become much more intricate than any other time in human history.

In the context of contemporary globalization, Lefebvre (1974) predicts that mass urbanization becomes “the production of space that was binding together the global and the local, the city and the country, the center and the periphery, in new and quite unfamiliar way” (as cited in Harvey, 1991, p. 431). Lefebvre (1974) calls this complex world-space contradiction as a global-local dialectic. Globalization and communication scholars extend Lefebvre’s articulation of the global-local dialectic to describe the processual, relational, and contradictory nature of global-local relations

which encompass many different kinds of relationships beyond spatial boundaries (see Abbas, 1997; Martin & Nakayama, 2012; Radhakrishnan, 2010; Shome & Hegde, 2002b). In the study of culture and communication, Friedman (1994) considers the global-local dialectic to be “intermeshed and co-constitutive, emphasizing the ways in which cultures were being remade anew, not being destroyed, in the context of globalization” (as cited in Radhakrishnan, 2010, p. 26). Specifically, in critical intercultural communication studies, researchers (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Singh & Doherty, 2004; Shome & Hegde, 2002b) interpret the global-local dialectic to be a form of asymmetrical power relationship, and a site of struggle.

As social beings, we are all situated within the processes of globalization where power asserts itself in what Grewal and Kaplan (1994) term “scattered hegemonies” (p. 3); that means power relations of the global and the local have become multipolar in the world. For that reason, it is problematic to rely on any dichotomies or binary terms to homogenize and generalize global-local dialectical relations. For instance, in their critical feminist study, Grewal and Kaplan (2001) ask feminist scholars to look at interrelationships between and among power holders situated in different positions of the global-local dialectic. Grewal and Kaplan note that until feminist scholars give their attentions to multipolar tendency in the global-local dialectical power relations, they will not be possible to build alliances across cultural and physical divides without ignoring differences or falling into extreme cultural relativism. Grewal and Kaplan’s global-local dialectical articulation serves as a critical endeavor to decenter single power-centeredness in feminist studies. In present times, the single dominant power in the world is the West. The center of postcolonial approaches to communication studies is to interrogate and trouble the un/marked Western-centeredness, and create more spaces for non-Western scholarship (Shome & Hegde, 2002b). On that account, the global-local dialectic in globalization studies should be introduced to contribute to postcolonial approaches to communication studies. In order to further illustrate this argument, I will first introduce my usage of “the West” and “the non-West” in the next section.

The West and the non-West

In this essay I use “the West” and “the non-West” in the service of a Spivak’s (1988) “strategic essentialism” (p. 214). Spivak (1988) coins the term “strategic essentialism” to refer to the ways in which marginalized social or cultural groups may temporarily put aside individual dif-

ferences, to forge a sense of collective identity through which they band together to achieve certain goals. With this in mind, I also use this dichotomy of “the West” and “the non-West” as a strategy to simplify the complexity of world reality, in order to illustrate the value and scale of the global-local dialectic in post-colonial approaches.

According to Said (1978), “the West” is a social construction that privileges Western countries’ interests in their colonial, neo-colonial, and postcolonial practices. With the expansion of colonialism in the sixteenth century, Western European countries, such as Britain, France, Italy, and Germany, spread colonial systems into Africa, the Americas, and Asia, which involved a colonization of “the non-West” (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991, p. 23). In the nineteenth century, in order to maintain privileges of colonizers in the “postcolonial” world, Western European countries and some colonized countries which had been settled by Western European colonizers, such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia, re/interpreted “the West” and “the non-West” to their modern definitions: The West includes nations such as the U.S., Australia, and most of West European countries which are Anglo-Saxon-centric in terms of race (White), culture, economic and political systems, etc. The non-West mainly refers to the rest of the world where most of the countries had an experience of being colonized or semi-colonized by the West, and where the majority of their population is non-White (Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1996). According to Tomlinson (1999), the social, political, and cultural systems in the world are still dominated by the West in a form of Westernization that includes:

The spread of European languages (especially English) and the consumer culture of “Western” capitalism.... styles of dress, eating habits, architectural and music form, the adoption of an urban lifestyle based around industrial production, a pattern of cultural experience dominated by the mass media, a set of philosophical ideas, and a range of cultural values and attitudes-about personal liberty, gender and sexuality, human rights, the political process, religion, scientific and technological rationality, and so on. (p. 89)

Based on the colonial history of “the West” and Tomlinson’s (1999) description of Westernization, in this study I use “the West” as a set of privileged identities of the Western countries

(the colonizer) who enjoy the economic, political, and cultural dominance of the global system. Similarly, I use “the non-West” to refer to subaltern or marginalized identities of the non-Western countries (the colonized), which are forged through “alternative” or “other” (Gaonkar, 1999, p. 13) historical, political, cultural, and geographical contexts.

Given the undeniable historical and economic dominance of the West in the world, Westernization has been centered in contemporary globalization (Shome & Hedge, 2002a). However, as Appadurai (1996) states, globalization should not to be considered as a synonym of Westernization. On the contrary, contemporary globalization is “in the unequal ways in which it is experienced by people across different spaces, and finally, in its complex and uneven productions of new forms, planes, and configurations of power” (Shome & Hegde, 2002a, p. 174). The global-local dialectic, as the core of contemporary globalization, catches the flowing, changing and multipolar tendency of power relationship in the world (Krishnaswamy, 2008). On that account, postcolonial approaches can use the global-local dialectic to address the scale and value of global multipolar development, and open more spaces for the non-Western scholarship.

The Global-Local Dialectic

Based on the contextual groundwork about the global, the local and their relationship in the previous section, this section is designed to theorize the global-local dialectic from three approaches, namely, the global’s exposure to the local; the local’s identity in the global; and the “disembedding” of the local to the global.

The Global’s Exposure to the Local

With the rise of global trade in the 1980s, technology and media advances opened borders and brought global products and cultures to previously far-flung locations (Turner, 2010). Under such a condition, local distance is no longer a barrier in the way of global transactions or flows of culture, human labor, and capital. The global, as a unified identity, raises local identities inevitably to the horizon of “a single space” (Robertson, 1992, p. 6). The global “comes from the networking of social relations across large tracts of time-space, causes distant events and powers to penetrate our local experience” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 9). Through scrutinizing local commercial practices, it is not difficult for people to tease out globalized consequences. For instance, the U.S.

based company Apple products such as the iPhone and iPad, which are designed in California, have become popular electronic devices for a newly affluent middle class in China (Podoshen, Li, & Zhang, 2011).

With the expansion of global trade in cultural products, such as films, magazines, and other popular cultural businesses, the global culture is increasingly exposed to local communities. At the same time, the global exposure frequently brings about changes in local cultures, values, and traditions. Hall (1996) points out that when the local encounters the global exposure, there are generally two ways for the local to react: The first way is that the local refuses to be globalized to any degrees, and retreats its local cultural identity into an exclusive and defensive enclave. In that way, the local expects to preserve its original identity. Tomlinson (1999) refers to this reaction as “cultural protectionism;” that is “a self-conscious defense of traditional beliefs, values, and practices precisely defined by the undermining of tradition threatened by global compression” (p. 12).

For instance, North Korea can be considered as a cultural protectionist country. Its leadership intentionally uses its nation-state boundary to separate its cultural, political, and ideological identities from the influence of the rest of the world. In addition, the United Nations’ comprehensive package of sanctions limits North Korea’s activities in the global community. However, contemporary globalization is a force “beyond human control” (Skonieczny, 2010, p. 6). In present times, no country can survive without participating in the exchange of products, labors and cultures with others. Under the pressure of globalization, North Korea has been engaging global activities with its own “unconventional wisdoms” (Park, 2002, p. 120). For example, North Korea frequently uses nuclear threat as an efficient strategy to keep its presence and connection within the global community. From a perspective of globalization studies, North Korea’s failed practice of self-isolation/protection shows that cultural protectionism is a mere powerless display of the local’s resistance to the aggressiveness of globalization (Roberston, 1992). In other words, cultural protectionism cannot stop the local from being exposed and impacted by the global.

As I mentioned earlier in this study, given its dominance of economy, technology and military in globalization, the West has been centered in the global. For that reason, the non-West has to find access to Western knowledge resources on its own terms in the process of globalization (Canagarajah, 1999). Hall's (1996) second approach asks non-Western cultural powers to look at the process of globalization from a more positive perspective. Hall notes that the global always brings new identities to the local. With assuming the global exposure, the local constantly re/constructs its own identities, to a certain extent, the global's exposure always enhances dynamics of the local. Because the global is "dominated by the modern means of cultural production whose center remains in the West" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 27), there is always a concern from the non-West that its identities will be westernized in the process of globalization. However, Hall (1996) also reminds us that the global brings about new ideas, cultures, and identities to re/shape identities of both the non-West and the West. For that reason, as new rising power holders of the multipolar world, the non-West needs to actively participate in the conversation about what different kinds of globalization should be constructed in the future.

The Local's Identity in the Global

Bhaji on the Beach is a comedy film about a British Indian community directed by Chadha (1993). The main plot of this film is about a diverse British female group of Indian descents who go on a day trip to the beach in Blackpool, England, encounter identity clashes in different generations of Indian immigrants. There is a scene where a woman from Mumbai visits relatives in this community. However, the style of the Mumbai woman's dress, talk, and behavior upsets many community members because she is not as a "traditional Indian" as they expected. As an international Chinese student in the U.S., I can easily connect the Mumbai woman's story with my own experience in a Chinese American immigration community in Southern Illinois. I am often teased by senior Chinese immigrants who comment that they are more "Chinese" than me in many ways, despite the fact that they have not been to China in decades, while I came from China only a year ago. The identity crisis of the Mumbai woman in *Bhaji on the Beach* and myself in a Chinese American immigration community, triggers my interest to look at how people perceive the local identity of oneself and the other in global contexts.

One's local identity means that we all act and behave within certain local constraints that we consider as our essential cultural identity and organize ourselves around it (Radhakrishnan, 2010). In traditional cultural theories, the local represents as "a static, bounded space where personal meanings are produced and reproduced, cohesive cultural values are articulated, and traditional ways of life are lived" (Levison, 2004, p. 1). However, the flexibility of the local is often ignored in this definition (Radhakrishnan, 2010). The British Indian immigrants in *Bhaji on the Beach* are upset because they cannot connect the woman from India with their perception of being Indian any more. That story indicates that the local identity does not completely match with the general identity of a certain space all the time. Likewise, when senior Chinese immigrants tease me about my inability to be Chinese, their discourse also implies that a local identity continues to exist but it does not exist in ways that it has been conventionally conceptualized in geographical contexts. The local constantly absorbs new identities of the global, and is always "a matter of becoming" (Hall, 1990, p. 234). At the same time, the local is not a mere subordinate to the global either. Tomlinson (1999) points out that the local always has its own core identity preserved within itself. Its core identity is always recovered and adjusted by the process of the reconstruction and rediscovery of its culture. For that reason, when the local meets the global, as Tomlinson (1999) describes, it is "a matter of struggle" (p. 34).

The recognition of the local's identity in the global helps post-colonial approaches to explain how the rising of non-Western scholarship blurs Western-centeredness in communication studies. The global "produces, and is a product of, multiple modernities that in our contemporary times, are often entangled in each other whether in collision or in alliance or sometimes both." (Shome & Hegde, 2002a, p. 177). Each local modernity has its own history, condition of politics, and culture. Therefore, it is problematic to look at Western modernity as the only modernity to construct the global.

For instance, Chinese and Indian modernities are influenced by Western modernity to a certain extent, but they are also deeply rooted in their own local cultural identities which are very different from Western forms. Obviously, neither Chinese nor Indian modernities are Western-centric or a simple reaction to Western

modernity. That is to say, the constitution of global modernity in this multipolar world is not from an one-single local modernity, but many kinds (Shome & Hegde, 2002b). The dynamics of different local identities ask communication scholars to pay special attention to non-Western modernities that have been forged through other historical, geocultural, and geographical contexts. For that reason, non-Western scholars have already started to decenter Western academic dominance, addressing the issue of ignorance regarding “the non-West” in the study of culture and communication. The Afrocentric (Asante, 2006) and Asiancentric (Miike, 2007) paradigms are two exemplars where the Western academic dominance is decentralized and relocated.

The “Disembedding” of the Local to the Global

The global-local dialectic is not a one-way process, nor does it come from one single starting point (King, 1996). As the local is continually formed into new identity, its new formation also brings back localized consequences to the global. As Appadurai (1996) notes, a variety of cultural flows, stemming from different social, spatial, and historical locations produce a diversity of globalization. In contemporary globalization, the distance between the local and the global is “shrinking” at an unexpected speed. The “complex connectivity” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 3) between the global and the local provides possibilities for the local to act in a more active way in shaping the global. Giddens (1990) uses “disembedding” to describe the “lifting out” of local identities into the global across “indefinite spans of time-space” (p. 21). The concept of disembedding helps us to understand the inherent global-local dialectic and more broadly grasp the local’s contributions to the global. Giddens (1991) proposes two types of “mechanism” in the disembedding process of the local: Symbolic tokens and expert system.

Symbolic tokens are “media of exchange which have standard value, and thus are interchangeable across a plurality of contexts” (Giddens, 1991, p. 18). In other words, a symbolic token is a media accepted and used by different localities across nation-state boundaries. For example, capital is a media of exchange separating economic relations from time-space determination of physical localities. The comparative simplicity and immediacy of modern capital exchange for both local and global businesses is faster than ever. The flow of capital does not only deterritorialize nation-state boundaries, but also makes the local impact economic tendency in globalization. For instance, the 1997 Asian financial crisis that initially started in Thailand, did not only grip much of Thai-

land and Asian economies, but also raised fears of a worldwide economic meltdown due to global capital contagion (Reinhart & Rogoff, 2009). In this case, capital as a symbolic token, not only lifts up the local capital into the global market, but also makes the global market reliant on the shape of different local capital holders.

When explaining “expert system,” Giddens (1991) refers to it as a systematic mediation of everyday life that is achieved by institutionalized expertise from the lifting out of social, cultural, and economic relations from local contexts (p. 18). Expert system associates with the trust about expertise from our daily mundane experience. For instance, most people have no special knowledge about where our automobile parts are made, or which research institute invents the pills that we take when we are sick. In contemporary times, the fast development of global collaborative manufacturing makes it impossible to track sources of most of the goods we use in our daily life. According to Giddens (1991), every local experience is intertwined with the global in an “expert system” (p. 19), and the expert system is also constructed from the disembeddings of the local. That is to say, no matter whether we like or not, to a certain extent, we have to trust expert system from the local’s disembeddings in contemporary globalization.

Taking a similar stance, Tomlinson (1999) expands Giddens’ (1991) two types of mechanisms into the cultural domain. Tomlinson views mass media as a symbolic token, and communication system as an expert system, arguing that the local culture uses the two mechanisms to lift out to the global, and becomes a part of the global. For example, the concept of Yin-Yang is deeply rooted in ancient Chinese philosophy. In *I Ching*, the Yang stands for the positive, and the Yin for the negative (Cheng, 1988). The Yin-Yang relationship illustrates how seemingly opposite or contradictory forces are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world; and how they give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another. Since intercultural communication scholars increasingly find problematic in using Western binary philosophy to investigate complex cultural and social phenomena, many of them (e.g., Hoopes, 2007; Latener & Leon, 2005; Osgood, 2008) turn to use the concept of Yin-Yang in their research. Consequently, the Yin-Yang, as a Chinese cultural belief,

has also become a part of the global culture and impacted different people outside of Chinese local cultural contexts. This increasingly scholarly attention to Yin-Yang in intercultural communication studies demonstrates that non-Western local cultures not only can contribute to the study of culture and communication, but also could be a force to progressively change its Western-centeredness (Cheng, 2012).

In contemporary times, one can belong to the global as a place, just as one can belong to the local as a space (Grossberg, 1996). Since the late 1990s, a concept “glocalization” has increasingly garnered the attention of scholars interested in globalization studies (Bauman, 1998; Robertson, 1992; Roudometof, 2005; Tomlinson, 1999). Glocalization was originally introduced as a Japanese marketing neologism in the 1980s, and has since been used to capture the process whereby the global is adapted to differentiated local conditions (Robertson, 1992). Robertson (1992) explains the status of glocalization as the global “involves the linking of localities. But also it involves the ‘invention’ of locality, in the same general sense of the idea of the invention of tradition” (p. 35). On the one hand, in glocalization, the local and the global are completely enmeshed into each other, breaking the traditional thinking of the global-local dialectic. On the other hand, glocalization also brings up new questions: How are the local and the global to be identified as analytically separate; and how do we differentiate the power roles of the global and the local? These questions necessitate that we further explore the global-local relationship in new directions.

In summary, there is no possibility that the global-local dialectic can be simply theorized into these three approaches, namely, the global’s exposure to the local; the local’s identity in the global; and the “disembedding” of the local to the global. The nature of the global-local dialectic cannot be defined as a generalization either. However, these three theoretical approaches reveal one fact that the global-local dialectic is complex and intricate in contemporary globalization. The global-local relationship does not simply stand for relations between the particular and the universal any more. The global-local dialectic has become “the various ways people are attached and attach themselves (affective) into the world” (Shome & Hegde, 2002a, p. 186). In the next section, I interrogate U.S. American based critical race theory (CRT) in the global-local dialectic, in order to further contextualize how the global-local dialectic, as a merge of globalization studies and postcolonial approaches, opens more spaces for non-Western approaches in the study of culture and communication.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the Global-Local Dialectic

There is a growing scholarly recognition (see Anderson, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Few, 2007; Griffin, 2010; Shome, 2010) that the concept of race is in crisis, but still essential to our everyday communication and identification. In U.S. American contexts, critical race theory (CRT) started from a reform movement in critical legal studies (CLS), which was in the field of law. Specifically, CRT was informed by the scholarship of Derrick Bell, the first tenured African-American professor of law at Harvard law school (Crenshaw, 2002). In its theoretical foundation, CRT focuses on exposing and challenging how U.S. American legal policies have contributed to “the systemic disempowerment of African Americans more broadly” (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 12). Firmly rooted in the study of Law, CRT has also been used by scholars in other fields such as communication, culture, education, sociology, history, politics, and even ethnic studies (see Allen, 2007; Collier, 2005; Griffin, 2010; Sue, 2010; Warren, 2008).

At its core, CRT scholarship exposes and interrogates race and racism by positioning the interests of people of color at the center of its inquiry (Griffin, 2010). In addition, CRT has developed several key tenets in the past decades. First, CRT understands race as a product of social construction and is “not objective, inherent, fixed, or necessary biological” (Few, 2007, p. 456). Second, race and racism exist as forms of social power relations in our everyday life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Few, 2007; Griffin, 2010). Third, racial colorblindness is problematic to advance racial equality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Griffin, 2010). Lastly, race and racism are contextual (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Griffin, 2010; Harris, 1992). In U.S. American contexts, Whiteness is an identity constructed by the social system that privileges the White race (Harris, 1992). As Delgado and Stefancic (2001) note, Whiteness “lies at the heart of structural determinism, the idea that our system, by reason of its structure and vocabulary, cannot redress certain types of wrong” (p. 26). For that reason, the U.S. American critical race scholars, particularly non-White scholars, use CRT as a way to advocate for social justice, and to expose and interrogate the root and perpetuation of Whiteness (Griffin, 2010). In other words, CRT has become a space for U.S. American non-White scholars to narrate their own stories and

engage in the conversation of re/constructing U.S. American racial system.

Despite the increasing global recognition of CRT scholarship, most works on CRT still speak to U.S. American racial categories and contexts (Shome, 2010; Sekimoto, 2012). As a non-White international researcher, I often feel that my identity and experiences about race and racism across nation-state boundaries are not sufficiently explained in contemporary CRT scholarship. Thus, I turn to Shome's (2010) internationalizing approach to critical race studies. Shome (2010) states that to understand race today, there is a need to situate race outside of U.S. American contexts, and to explore how the politics of race is informed by larger global historical, cultural, and social systems across nation-state boundaries. In agreement with Shome's (2010) articulation, I contend that the global-local dialectic has something to contribute to interrogating and internationalizing CRT.

The global-local dialectic represents a processual, relational, and contradictory relationship between the global and the local (Martin & Nakayama, 2012). International race scholars recognize that Western concepts of race and racism do not only prevail in Western social contexts, but also have consequences worldwide (see Chen, 1996; Cvetkovich, 1992; Sekimoto, 2012). From a perspective of postcolonial approaches, this phenomenon is caused by the continuing economic, cultural, and ideological dominations of the West in the colonial era and at present. However, contemporary globalization is not "a mere continuation of the earlier cultural and economic logics of colonialism" (Shome & Hegde, 2002b, p. 175). Contemporary globalization transforms our world into a multipolar global community where Western modernity is constantly interrupted and resisted by "alternative modernities" (Gaonkar, 1999, p. 21). Under such a condition, the multipolar tendency of the world forces CRT scholars to understand and study race in global contexts, moving beyond U.S. American/Western based racial conceptualization, to a more internationalized racial theorization that takes non-Western CRT scholarship into account.

Postcolonial approaches see non-Western communication scholarship as "a phenomenon that is an effect of colonial occupations but also as site of resistance to colonialism" (Shome & Hegde, 2002b, p. 258). Given its critical nature, CRT needs to inform more scholarship about non-Western racial identifications and narratives, particularly, outside of U.S. American contexts. As deeply rooted in U.S. American law

studies, the development of CRT has been “shoring and maintaining a U.S. centered ethos in our understanding of race” (Shome, 2010, p. 149). At the same time, complex dynamics of contemporary globalization have resulted in “new racial formations” in other local cultural and social contexts (Shome, 2010, p. 152). In this vein, unless CRT offers more spaces for scholarship outside of U.S. American/Western contexts, it will fail to find a balance of the global-local dialectic in critical race studies. Shome (2010) describes four negative consequences of U.S. American-centeredness in critical race studies:

1. We implicitly stabilize the relationship between race and nation; 2. we fail to recognize that the cultural politics of the United States – given United States’ dominance in the global sphere – does not begin or end with the U.S.; 3. we dangerously reproduce an unwitting nationalism in our scholarship; 4. we show little interest in racial politics in other parts of the world and in doing so, reinforce an U.S. centered introversion, insularity, and arrogance that plagues everyday living in the U.S. (p. 152)

In order to avoid these negative consequences and more importantly, to understand how race plays out in this increasingly multipolar world, CRT scholars need to explore the meaning of race outside of U.S. American/Western contexts. Shome (2010) points out that race is centrally tied to the politics of history, culture, and society. How we experience race and how we are made and unmade by race “has to do with the spatial relations of race (that are also material relations) that inform a context (a place) in a particular moment” (Shome, 2010, p. 155). That is to say, the conceptualization of race always has a specific localized identity. For that reason, using U.S. American/Western-centered conceptualization of race to explain race in non-U.S. American/non-Western contexts becomes very problematic in this diverse and multipolar world.

For example, China is a homogenous country with over 91.51% of the population identified themselves as “Han” ethnicity (Chinese National Demographic Data, 2012). “Race” as a term did not exist in Chinese vocabulary, until overseas Chinese scholars introduced this concept at the beginning of the twentieth century and translated it into “Zhong Zhu,” which was a combination of the character “Zhong” for seed, and an old Chinese term

“Zhu” for describing the lineage of patrilineal extended families (Chiu, 2013). This translation indicates how race is conceptualized differently in Chinese cultural contexts. Instead of conceptualizing race based on biological differences, Chinese conceptualization of race emphasizes family root and kinship connections (Dikotter, 2005). In the U.S., one discourse of racism relates to the idea that White is biologically and socially superior to other races (Aptheker, 1992). However, the description of racism in Chinese cultural and social contexts is that “the Chinese race is equal or even more superior to the White” (Chiu, 2013). In this sense, U.S. American based CRT such as Whiteness studies, cannot explain racial phenomena in Chinese racial context and system.

The conceptualization of race in Chinese racial and cultural contexts is not the only exemplar contrasted to U.S. American/Western conceptualization. Race and racism are always “territorialized in particular ways in a particular context” (Shome, 2010, p. 154). Furthermore, Wright and Rogers (2011) notes:

In Germany under the Nazis, Jews were considered a distinct race, not merely a religious group or an ethnic group. In Africa today, Tutsi and Hutu have sometimes been regarded as distinct races. Racial classifications are thus never simply given by biological descent even if they always invoke biology; they are always constructed through complex historical and cultural processes. (p. 2)

At the same time, situating CRT studies in specific local contexts does not mean to consolidate nation-state boundaries or separate racial conceptualization from “the transnational” (Shome, 2012, p. 156). Shome (2012) uses the term of the transnational to describe the status that we live in a time where “insides” and “outsides” cannot be clearly defined in contemporary globalization. The transnational is “one’s placement in a given context of transnationality and the relationalities that inform them” (Shome, 2012, p. 156). In this sense, the core of the transnational is a politics of the global-local dialectic in postcolonial approaches. That is to say, the transnational recognizes the complex and paradoxical relationship between the colonial and the postcolonial, the transnational and the relational, and the local and the global. As Shome (2012) notes, the context of race is “always an outcome of convergences and divergences of transnational relations in a given moment” (p. 156). On that account, the transnational approach helps CRT reach out to different conceptualizations of race and racism outside of U.S. American/Western contexts, and across nation-state boundaries in the global-local dialectic.

Conclusion

Neither postcolonial approaches nor globalization studies are driven by any concrete method, and both are committed to rigorous interdisciplinarity (Radhakrishnan, 2010; Shome & Hegde, 2002a, 2002b). While working within a certain methodological tradition, postcolonial approaches scrutinize history and heritage of such methods, as well as their connections with the researcher and the reader, and the local and the global (Shome & Hegde, 2002b). Therefore, no matter what methods are used in postcolonial approaches, there should always be a theoretical connection with globalization studies. While connecting globalization studies with postcolonial approaches seems simultaneously challenging and promising, I do recognize that one essay cannot cover all the issues resulting from such connection. Nonetheless, my attempts to introduce the global-local dialectical theorization in postcolonial approaches remain salient in advancing the scholarship of culture and communication within the realm of critical intercultural communication studies.

As contemporary globalization progressively unsettles our assumptions about the world, critical intercultural communication scholars need to recall what matters in the study of culture and communication is “how culture and cultural identity are evoked, by whom, for what purposes and with what potential consequences in specific locations” (Singh & Doherty, 2004, p. 2). Clifford (1997) theorizes these specific locations as “global contact zones” (p. 7). In global contact zones, disparate histories, cultures, identities, and politics come into contact and clash with each other in asymmetrical power relations (Clifford, 1997; Singh & Doherty, 2004). These asymmetrical power relations are re/constituted and contested by daily interactions of different cultural power holders of the world (Canagarajah, 1999; Singh & Doherty, 2004). For that reason, global contact zones are contextualized forms of the global-local dialectic.

In the global-local dialectic, the West and the non-West should both be participants in producing, negotiating, and challenging the design of our global future. However, in contemporary globalization, the ideology that emphasizes Western superiority and non-Western inferiority still misleads our thinking and action (Hall, 1996). Therefore, the core task of critical intercultural

communication scholars is to interrogate the Western-centeredness, while bringing in more non-Western scholarship into the study of culture and communication. In this regard, the merging of globalization studies and postcolonial approaches helps critical intercultural communication scholars to achieve this task in and through the global-local dialectic.

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