

# **The Florida Communication Journal**

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The FCA represents the interests and coordinates the efforts of college and university faculty teaching in the communications disciplines. It also serves graduate and undergraduate students majoring in any of the communication disciplines.

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## **Call for Papers**

***The Florida Communication Journal (FCJ)* is a professional refereed publication and will be soon accepting manuscripts for the upcoming editions to be published bi-annually. Please check the FCA Website, CRTNET (from NCA), and the FCA newsletter for an announcement about a new and streamlined submission process.** We encourage the submission of previously unpublished articles and research reports related to all aspects of the human communication process. We also encourage the submission of faculty and student collaborative work, rigorous student submissions and important pilot studies. *FCJ* is interested in publishing material, both quantitative and qualitative, that makes noteworthy contributions to the advancement of human communication scholarship. Manuscripts should be largely based on primary research.

Please submit only electronic submissions in Microsoft Word documents. This will expedite the review process. Preferred manuscript length is 10-25 pages. Include a separate cover page with the title, author(s) name, address(es), e-mail address(es), affiliation(s) and an abstract of no more than 100 words.

Prepare all manuscripts double-spaced and in accordance with the latest edition of APA guidelines. Begin the manuscript with the title and an abstract, then start the body of the paper on the second page. Be sure to remove all references to the author(s) within the manuscript itself to facilitate blind review. If you have any questions please contact Dr. Chris Gurrie, Florida Communication Journal Editor at [cgurrie@ut.edu](mailto:cgurrie@ut.edu).

Please join us for our annual convention held each October at a location in Florida. Visit our website for more information on the convention and the **Florida Communication Association**  
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## **Friends, Faculty And Facebook: Using Social Networking Sites In Out Of Classroom Communication**

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### **Abstract**

*With the rise of social networking sites (SNS) being used by a wide range of people, it is no surprise that students and instructors are using the same platforms and encountering one another in ways beyond the traditional classroom or office spaces. This descriptive study researched whether or not students were friending their instructors on Facebook and the reasons for that decision. The results indicate that most students chose not to friend their instructors, preferring to maintain a sense of formality and social distance. However, those students who did friend faculty often did so because it was required for a course or because instructors had explicitly stated in class that students could friend them if they chose to do so.*

## **Friends, Faculty And Facebook: Using Social Networking Sites In Out Of Classroom Communication**

The communicative relationship between college students and faculty has been extensively studied. However, a large portion of the literature focuses on face-to-face (FtF) relationships (i.e. Nussbaum, Comadena & Holladay, 1987; McBride & Wahl, 2005), or comparing email to FtF behaviors (i.e. Waldeck, Kearney & Plax, 2001). Facebook has become a ubiquitous social networking site (SNS) in the college landscape and has inspired many scholarly studies. When particularly looking at Facebook, however, these studies have focused on how students use Facebook (Selwyn, 2009), comparing how students and faculty use Facebook (Hew, 2011; Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman & Witty, 2010), student perceptions of faculty using Facebook (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2009), or using Facebook as a course management tool (Gurrie & Lee, 2015). Unfortunately, there have been few studies that explore the use of Facebook *between* students and faculty. The current project aims to understand if college students are friending their instructors on Facebook and why they choose to friend or not friend faculty.

### **Review of Literature**

Educational research has decades of research on FtF communication between students and faculty. In particular, out-of-classroom (OOC) communication plays a role in student retention (Tinto, 1987), perceptions of

teacher immediacy (McBride & Wahl, 2005), and higher grade point averages (Anaya & Cole, 2001). Furthermore, Thompson and Mazer (2009) found that students with academic support networks are more likely to remain in college, and students use a variety of methods to create a support structure, including computer-mediated communication (CMC). Although SNSs were not specifically mentioned in Thompson and Mazer's study, it is possible that the proposed project will elicit additional information regarding SNSs as a way of creating academic support networks.

The nature of OOC communication, however, is more voluntary than in-class communication, so the demeanor of the instructor may lead a student to decide if he or she wishes to pursue OOC communication. Mottet, Martin, and Myers (2004) found that students are more likely to communicate with instructors outside of class if the students perceive that the instructor demonstrates positive approach messages. Students interact with their instructors for a variety of reasons. Martin, Myers, and Mottet (1999) identified five underlying reasons why students communicate with their instructors: relational, functional, participatory, excuse-making, and sycophancy. Further research found that students who communicated for relational or functional reasons felt they had a higher level of learning in the classroom and were more willing to participate in the classroom (Martin, Mottet & Myers, 2000) and produced the most desirable classroom outcomes (Mottet et al., 2004).

Decades of research indicate that there is generally little OOC communication between students and faculty. Some research suggests that the topic of any OOC interaction may be more important than the frequency of such contact (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The position of the instructor at the university also impacts the level of OOC communication. Part time employees (also known as contingent or adjunct faculty) are least likely to interact outside of the classroom with students followed by tenured and tenure-track faculty with full time non-tenure track instructors interacting most frequently (Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, & Lutovsky Quayle, 2010).

Most of the research has thus far focused on FtF interactions between students and faculty although as the internet becomes even more pervasive, researchers are focusing on OOC communication via the internet. Smith and Caruso (2010) found that 90% of college students use SNS, and of those users, 97% are everyday users of Facebook. As technology changes, students tend to embrace the new and discard the old. For example, Hanson, Drumheller, Mallard, McKee, and Schelgel (2011) found that students in their study spent an average of 5.43 hours per week on social networking sites such as Facebook while only spending 1.58 hours per week using email indicating a need for research to focus on the student-teacher relationship on SNS.

As SNSs become more common, they are being used for teaching and learning as an alternate communication tool. Several researchers have



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identified possible educational benefits of using Facebook as a learning tool (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang, & Lew, 2012) or the course management system (Currie & Lee, 2015). When used as an alternate communication tool, research has looked at as how instructors manage their interaction with students on SNSs (Godwin, 2007; Mazer et al., 2007) and how SNSs may promote OOC (Ha and Shin 2014). However, there is limited information from the students' perspective on using SNSs for educational purposes. For example, Ha & Shin (2014) found that students are skeptical of SNSs as learning tools with freshmen being more receptive to using SNSs as an interaction tool than upper level students. A notable limitation to their study is that it did not assess opinions about communication between students and instructors while examining SNSs collectively and only using Facebook as an example of a SNS.

When examining the OOC student-teacher relationship online, students see a different side of their instructors. For example, Harper (2005) found that there is a positive correlation between self-disclosures by faculty online and students' perceptions of an interpersonal bond with that instructor. Likewise, students also equate seeing the instructor's online information as a way to "humanize" them (DiVerniero & Hosek, 2011). Mazer, Murphy and Simonds (2007) examined the effects of faculty self-disclosure on Facebook on learning and classroom climate, and found that high self-disclosure on Facebook seemed to increase a faculty member's classroom credibility. However, this experimental design study may not accurately reflect how students react to instructors they actually know. A study in which students were given a list of possible Facebook behaviors and asked to rank the appropriateness of the actions, students rated any active behaviors, such a poking or commenting on photos or sending a friend request to students, by instructors was considered inappropriate (Teclehaيمانot & Hickman 2011). Because this study was hypothetical, it is unclear if students would feel the same way if they had actual faculty friends. A notable study examining the student-teacher relationship on Facebook found that it is the professors who are more unwilling to friend their students than vice versa (Sheldon, 2016). Further, while this study did examine why students friend their professors, it measured attitudes toward friending an instructor, so it was possible these participants had never actually friended an instructor and also used an *a priori* list of possible reasons and did not examine why students choose *not* to friend their instructors (Sheldon).

### Research Questions

As studies have shown, students are aware of their instructors' online presence (Mazer et al, 2007; Diverneiro & Hosek, 2011). Although it appears that students are aware of their instructors' Facebook presence, it re-

mains unclear what criteria students use to determine whether or not to friend their instructors. Further, it is unclear if the participants of previous research have in fact friended instructors (e.g. Sheldon, 2016). As online presence of both students and faculty grow, the more imperative this research is. Thus, the following research questions are posed:

RQ 1: Do undergraduate students Facebook friend faculty?

RQ2a: What are the reasons why students Facebook friend faculty?

RQ2b: What are the reasons why students do not Facebook friend faculty?

## **Method**

The design of this study is in the qualitative/interpretive tradition (Silverman, 2001). This research strives to identify recurring communication themes by use of open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, participants answered a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit information on if and when they choose to friend their instructors or not and the reasons for doing so.

## **Participants**

A total of 37 in depth interviews were conducted with college students from introductory communication classes from a mid-sized Midwestern university. The sample included 21 women and 16 men ranging in age from 18 to 56 with an average age of 24.86. Participants' education levels included freshmen (n= 8), sophomores (n= 12), juniors (n= 8) and seniors (n=9) in college with a variety of academic disciplines. Participants received extra credit at the discretion of their individual instructors for participating in the interview.

In accordance with qualitative research, the number of interviews was not set, but rather the data collection continued until reaching theoretical saturation, meaning that interviews continued with comparable themes and patterns until no new categories emerging from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

## **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts were read once for comprehension and then analyzed on a line-by-line basis for information pertaining to two large domains: information about if students friended faculty members and when they friended them. All information was inductively identified and provided with a code label. When analyzing the transcripts for information about friending, an inductive qualitative approach was used where all information

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are coded in to open—or general—codes and then organized by connections and relationships into axial—or organized—codes. Open coding involves naming and categorizing through close examination of the data whereas axial coding entails a series of procedures that allow for new combinations of the data by identifying connections between the categories developed in open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Constant-comparison techniques (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994) were also used in examining each line of the transcript to identify other comments that fit emerging themes. If a data unit (word, sentence, or phrase) fit the conceptual definition for a code, it was designated as such (e.g., “classroom invitation to friend”). If the data unit was determined to fit a unique criterion for friending faculty, a new code and conceptual definition was created. Additionally, the researcher made efforts to label the units with “*in vivo*” codes, using the same language as the participants, which allowed for the most accurate reflection of the participants’ voices.

### Findings

RQ1 asked if students Facebook friend their instructors. To answer this question, students were asked about their own Facebook friend status with instructors. The analysis revealed two basic themes as students either had or had not friended instructors. However, the rationale for such choices revealed a number of themes and are discussed below in RQ2. A surprisingly small number ( $n=12$ ) had Facebook friended instructors while the remaining ( $n=25$ ) had not.

RQ 2a asked participants to identify why they had friended faculty. The analysis revealed three themes which illustrate the ways in which students communicatively manage their Facebook relationship with instructors. Three themes emerged for friending instructors: (a) classroom invitation, (b) random searches, and (c) class page created. What follows is a description of each of these themes supported by representative quotations from the interviews.

**Classroom invitation.** A primary theme for why students Facebook friended instructors is through a classroom invitation. The participants revealed that if a faculty member mentions that he or she has a Facebook page and students are welcome to friend, the students feel more comfortable in doing so. According to one participant, “they had mentioned that there were on Facebook, and they generally did not object to being friends with students . . . and it was another handy resource to get information, to ask questions, and that they were actually on Facebook more than on email.” In addition to the instructor making an overt announcement regarding Facebook friendings, some students heard from other students in the class regarding the instructors’ willingness to accept student Facebook friends. As noted by

one participant, “I heard someone in class talking about how he adds a lot of students.” This illustrates how students feel a need to be granted permission from instructors prior to friending them, even if the permission comes from a secondary source.

**Random searches.** A second theme that emerged from students who had friended instructors was the idea of idly searching for people to friend. Students indicated that they had found instructors’ profiles in the “find friends” feature on Facebook and decided to extend a friend invitation, all of which were accepted by the instructor. According to one student, “I added him because his name came up in the search thing.” (Note: Typically names only come up in the add friends feature if the two already have some contacts in common which might make the decision to friend easier).

**Class page created.** A final reason why students tended to friend faculty members is because the instructor created a class page on Facebook. Anyone with a Facebook account can create a page and control who has access to it. In these cases, the instructors created pages for their current classes. As one participant noted, “I actually friended people there [on Facebook] because it was required in one of my classes.” Another participant indicated that such a requirement was “really awkward” because although the instructor contacted the students for “mainly school stuff” she would also “comment on our pictures.” This example may serve as a cautionary tale for instructors who mandate a friend request then try to make the relationship more personal than perhaps the student wants it to be.

Interestingly, most students did not unfriend their instructor after the class was over. When asked about remaining friends, the participants tended to view their instructor as just one of “hundreds of friends” that they have. As one participant said “I have probably, like, 800 friends on Facebook and I don’t even think about most of them so I guess [my former instructor] is just one of those now.”

RQ2b asked participants to identify why they had not friended instructors. Although the number of participants had not friended instructors (n=25) was considerably larger than those who had, the reasons for not doing so were concise. Themes for not friending instructors online were (d) boundary issues and (e) instructor invitation. Following is a description of these themes.

**Boundary issues.** A predominant theme emerging from the data regarding why students had not Facebook friended their instructors was because they felt that there should be a separation of personal and professional between students and instructors. Participants were adamant about keeping a distance between themselves and instructors in regards to their Facebook page. As one participant said, “I just feel like it would cross a line, like I would lose a little respect from my professors.” Another participant saw the blurring of social and professional as a potential ethics issue. “I know

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anytime we talk about stuff in class you have to watch what you say because technically they have to turn you in if you say inappropriate stuff, and I think Facebook would turn out to be the same thing.”

In addition to consciously making the decision to not Facebook friend instructors, some students subconsciously make the decision. Several students noted that the idea of friending instructors on Facebook was something they had never even thought about. When asked why, one noted “it’s just not something I would even think to do,” indicating some kind of subconscious distinction between who could be a possible Facebook friend and who could not be.

To further explore this area, students who indicated boundary issues for not Facebook friending their instructors were asked what they would do if they received a Facebook friend request from an instructor. Because students see a boundary between themselves and their instructors, these students overwhelmingly said they would deny the request. (Another option that Facebook users have is to do nothing and let the request sit in limbo without a reply). A few other students indicated they would wait until after the class was over before making a decision.

**Instructor Invitation.** Another reason for not friending an instructor is because students have not been invited to do so. Similar to a boundary issue, students feel that it is up to the instructor to indicate that he or she would welcome student friends. Without such an invitation, students do not feel comfortable making the first overture. Conversely to the boundary issue category, these participants were more comfortable with the idea of having an instructor send the friend request. As one participant indicated, “I wouldn’t mind if I got a friend request from them, but I mean I’m not going to look for them.”

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to learn if and why students choose whether or not to Facebook friend their instructors. The findings obtained in this study shed light on the OOC student-faculty relationship on Facebook.

First, the data revealed that only some students and instructors are Facebook friends. However, this relationship outside the classroom varies widely. Although only a small number of students had friended instructors in this study, these students were not actually contacting their instructor via Facebook. Consistent with findings by Hew (2011), the ones who were required to join classroom groups, and, therefore, friend the instructor, used Facebook for learning purposes and not social purposes in regards to their instructor.

Students who made the choice to Facebook friend their instructors tended to be passive in their interactions. Typically, students did not

comment on an instructor's Facebook page or seek them out but rather added them as they would anyone's friend request. According to Techlehaيمانot and Hickman (2011), this type of passive behavior is considered to be the most acceptable behavior between students and faculty.

Students who friended their instructor because a class page was developed and joining was mandatory were more active in interactions but only as far as the class page went. Similarly, Currie and Lee (2015) found that students liked Facebook as the course management system as most students are familiar with the platform. However, the current study also found that outside of the class page, students tended to remain passive in their communication with their instructors. As noted previously, when an instructor became more active, the student found the behavior to create an "awkward" situation because it violated the traditional student-instructor relationship. However, the mandatory nature of this friending might be a reason why the student felt awkward since the friend request was class related and not personally driven.

Second, a majority of students in this study indicated that Facebook friending an instructor was a violation of boundary rules. Just as research indicates that instructors have privacy boundaries in FtF communication with students in the classroom (McBride & Wahl, 2005), it also seems that these boundaries still exist in CMC via SNSs. Rather than the instructor's point of view, this study found that students are also aware of the relationship dynamic between them and their instructors and many of them had a firm idea of what "rules" should be in place. What is not clear, however, is if students are separating SNSs from other types of communication with their instructors.

Although the boundaries can be more easily managed in FtF communication, SNSs such as Facebook are more "public" in their design, and unless one closely monitors the ever-changing privacy tools, it can be difficult to manage what information can be seen by friends of the Facebook user. It may be easier for a student to consider all instructors off-limits in SNSs to more easily control information. However, it is not unusual for those students on Facebook to have hundreds of friends (Hew, 2011), so it may be that students view their instructors as just another person they have friended. Because of the power dynamic of the student-instructor relationship, students have little choice but to accept Facebook requests that mandatory for classroom pages. It may be that students still perceive boundary violations yet they may feel compelled to friend an instructor who deems it mandatory for student success in a particular course.

Third, this study provides much needed information regarding SNSs as a conduit for OOC communication between faculty and students. Although SNSs provide an additional outlet that may link students and faculty together outside of the classroom, students seem reluctant to allow instructors access to that facet of their personal lives. As Ha and Shin (2014) found, students are skeptical of SNSs as a learning tool, and as an extension, they seem to be

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skeptical of using SNSs as a place to interact with instructors.

Research by Park and Lee (2014) found that students are motivated to use Facebook as a place for entertainment with motivation for professional use not significantly associated. This research indicates that while instructors and universities may see potential in using Facebook as a way to enhance learning, students do not view Facebook as an educational extension. Consistent with Park and Lee, this study found that most students are not friending their instructors on Facebook because they see it as inappropriate. While online formats may be a relatively easy way to connect students and instructors outside the classroom, Facebook may not be a viable option.

Finally, this study provides practical implications for instructors who may wish to use Facebook with their students. While not all students are opposed to connecting with their instructors via Facebook, there appears to be boundary issues that instructors should be familiar with. If instructors would like to use Facebook as a way to enhance and expand OOC communication, it may be best to indicate to students that they are on Facebook and students may friend them if they wish which allows each student to decide if friending an instructor is appropriate and within their desired boundary levels.

Mandatory joining of created class pages on Facebook should be avoided. There is already a power discrepancy between students and instructors, and forcing a student to become Facebook friends on what students view primarily as a social tool may be viewed as a negative use of power. Instead, it may be best to indicate to students that such a page exists and allow students the choice of whether or not they would like to join that class page. Such a move would still give instructors another way to connect with students who are interested in establishing an OOC communication via SNSs while not mandating students who may feel uncomfortable with connecting with instructors on SNS.

### **Limitations**

As with all studies, this one was not without limitations. First, with only a sample of 37 students, any generalizations are limited. Although the study design allowed for participant voices to be heard, and saturation was reached, a small sample size does not allow for generalizations.

Second, there was no differentiation among the types of instructors that students may have. Prior research has indicated that adjunct faculty are less likely to engage with students OOC than full time faculty (Umbach, 2007). Although students at this university rarely, if ever, have graduate level teaching assistants (TAs), the university does rely on a significant number of adjunct instructors. Since it is probable that most participants in this study have had both full time faculty as well as part time instructors, it is possible that there is a difference with students of having an instructor only once

versus one that the student may have several times.

### **Future Directions**

It is imperative that future research focus on the students' perspectives of how and why they engage in OOC communication on SNSs as Sheldon (2016) found that more faculty are friending their students than they did a few years earlier (e.g. Metzger, Finley, Ulbich, & McAuley, 2010). Most studies focusing on the faculty student relationship do so from the faculty perspective, yet, we know that communication is interactional and requires both parties to engage. As noted by Cox et al. (2011), "it may be that the student side of the faculty-student interaction equation is actually the driving force" (p. 786), and this research seems to support that the students are often the gatekeepers of friending their instructors online unless they are mandated to do so for class pages or assignments.

Although research indicates the importance of and lack of OOC communication between faculty and students, this research is often from a faculty member or institutional viewpoint with little perspective from the students. Students may have a conflicting definition of what constitutes OOC communication. Perhaps those quick conversations before and after class are considered outside of class time to students, and therefore, OOC communication while an instructor may consider it in class communication. Further, as electronic formats continue to permeate higher education, students' needs of OOC communication may also be changing, and emails and online course organizational tools suffice as OOC communication for students.

It would be interesting to focus specifically on students who are required to friend instructors for classroom pages and see how they manage the boundaries. This study indicated that most students manage their classroom and personal boundaries by simply not friending an instructor. However, when students are mandated to join classroom pages, and by extension, friend their instructor, they may engage in specific strategies to protect their personal selves on SNSs with their instructors.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to add to the academic conversation about the appropriateness of using Facebook as a way for faculty and students to connect outside of the classroom, and to do so from the students' perspectives. Much of what is known about this relationship uses hypothetical scenarios to garner responses (e.g. Sheldon, 2016) without knowing if those participants have, in fact, friended their instructors. This study provides a much needed glimpse of the criteria students use to determine if they will use a social tool like Facebook to connect with their instructors outside of the



classroom.

Using open ended questions to allow participants to use their own voice and phrasing and then using those terms to code and analyze the data allowed for the participants to label their rationale for friending faculty. This article provides important information about how students feel about using Facebook as an OOC tool, and showed that generally students did not like the mandated friendings needed for classroom pages and that most wanted to maintain boundaries between their social and educational worlds.

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**The Legacy of Struggle:**

**Transnational Themes of Black Feminism in *La Noire De...*, *Burning an Illusion*, and *Precious***

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**Abstract**

*This study analyzes three films with strong Black female narratives to explore transnational commonalities amongst the lead women. *La Noire de...* / *Black Girl*, *Burning an Illusion*, and *Precious: Based on the Novel Push* by Sapphire respectively portray women from Senegal, Britain, and the United States. Five themes emerge in their stories: a desire for a better life, volatile relationships with men, conflict with White authority, a new identity through literacy/education, and overcoming abuse. Through a Black feminist theoretical lens, the lead characters suffer from a “legacy of struggle” inherent in the lives of these women, but they ultimately show a resistance to their oppressors.*

*Keywords: *La Noire de*, *Black Girl*, *Burning an Illusion*, *Precious*, black feminism, film*

The lived experiences of Blacks around the world contain many cultural differences. However, when viewed as a collective within the African Diaspora, the possibility exists to find commonality. This concept comes to light via a rhetorical analysis of three films: *La Noire de... / Black Girl*, a landmark in African cinema; the Black British film *Burning an Illusion*; and the American, Oscar award-winning *Precious: Based on the Novel Push* by Sapphire. Within Black Feminist theory, these fictional Black women from distinctly different backgrounds share similar experience, and their on-screen lives speak to an overarching, transnational narrative concerning race and gender.

The 1966 film *La Noire de... / Black Girl* features Diouana, a hopeful young Senegalese woman summoned to work in France by her White employers. Their formerly pleasant working relationship turns abusive, and Diouana becomes isolated and depressed (Zwoboda & Sembène, 1966). The 1980s film, *Burning an Illusion*, centers on a professional single Black Briton named Pat Williams, whose initial desires focus on love and settling down in London, England. She enters a troubled relationship that suffers from the disparity between their socio-economic classes. Yet, after they both become victims of police brutality and racially charged violence, they bond and Pat shifts her efforts toward the plight of minorities in Britain (Bandaranayake

& Shabazz, 1981). Lastly, *Precious: Based on the Novel Push* by Sapphire is similarly set in the 1980s, but across the pond in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. The film's namesake and main character is an illiterate 16-year-old mother and junior high school student. *Precious* is the victim of incest by her father and sexual, physical, and emotional abuse by her mother, Mary. Upon suspension from her school, *Precious* is encouraged to enroll in the Each One, Teach One program—a move that sets the troubled girl on a new path (Daniels, Siegel-Magness, & Magness, 2009).

Scholars recognize all three films for the socio-cultural commentaries that they provide on their respective environments. *La Noire de... / Black Girl* dramatically illustrates the detrimental repercussions of neo-colonialism on Africans, including the challenges of depending on foreign aid and the agency that literacy provides for those suffering in the imbalance of power (Langford, 2001; Petty, 2000; Spass, 1982; Virtue, 2014). Although not as well recognized, *Burning an Illusion* is noted for its portrayal of Black Britons whose stories of police brutality and unemployment are noticeably absent (Karamath, 2007). *Precious* provided a similar vantage point into the lives of urban, disenfranchised Black youth. Scholars analyzed the intersection of race, gender, and power, which included elevated views of light skin and the correlation between poor self-esteem and ongoing abuse (Griffin, 2013; Baum, 2010; Mask, 2012). In a broader scope, research on these films falls in line with media studies on Black female portrayals in films and television that show certain archetypal characters that have stereotyped mediated images of Black women, such as the "Mammy," the hypersexualized, relationship-obsessed object, or the "Angry Black Woman" (Sewell, 2012; Tyree, 2011; Hodges Persley, 2012).

This transnational film analysis adds to the abundance of literature on Blacks and Black representation in film and television by using three movies which come from diverse countries yet come together to show shared experiences, expectations, and interactions amongst Black women's lives. Black Feminism provides the theoretical lens that properly and specifically focuses on elements of social power. Scholars conflict over whether or not the U.S. waves of feminism included the experiences of African Americans (Hill Collins, 2000; Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 1998; Clawson, 2008; Marbley, 2005; Springer, 2002). Scholars recognize the influence and tainting of international feminism by Western (namely the United States) philosophies and ideologies on gender politics and social identity (Blay, 2008; Guy-Sheftall, 1998). The ideologies of U.S. feminists did not consistently translate in other cultures. However, feminist issues of Black women are transnational and that, while not universally identical, commonalities can exist (Hill Collins, 2000).

In this analysis, I narrow the scope of Black feminist theory to its elements of social power. Expert author and Black Feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) referred to it as the "legacy of struggle"—a multi-

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layered and multifaceted intersection of oppression regarding race, class, gender, sexuality, and national belonging (p. 26). The underlying and overt subordination of Black women historically developed varied responses of resistance (Hill Collins, 2000). This perspective allows the current analysis of film portrayals of Black women within the Eurocentric and androcentric hegemony, in addition to the social power struggles within families. The intention is to reveal how these mediated images of Black women resist oppression in their respective cultural positions.

This analysis is possible using a historical critical methodology that allows for the films to be examined as rhetorical artifacts. I viewed the films for character-driven social interactions specifically focused on the Black female lead. I made journal notations of every scene where the lead characters engaged in discourse and experienced situations that reflected their sex, gender, race, ethnicity, and/or nationality and how those reflected a shift in power. How did these women fictionally endure their own “legacy of struggle” and what messages from the overarching narrative support Black feminist theory? This study seeks to answer this question and illustrate the ways in which Black women, even from different countries, can share the same experience.

### **The Struggle**

The results of the analysis yielded six themes related to the respective struggles of Diouana, Pat, and Precious. Although these three women represent three different countries and three different time periods, they faced similar hardships in their intrapersonal and interpersonal spheres. Their stories included the desire for a better life; complicated relationships with men; conflict with White authority; overcoming abuse; and a new identity through literacy and education.

### **Desire for a Better Life**

Each woman expresses a longing for their lives to be different than they are. All three talk about this desire in their voice-over narrations throughout the film. In *La Noire de... / Black Girl*, Diouana, a native of rural Senegal, wants to experience the luxurious beaches and urban paradise of France. She daydreams while with her boyfriend and considers his irritation with her disengaged disposition as mere jealousy over her prospective travels. Once she arrives and realizes that she will not get to see any of those cities—let alone leave the apartment—her desire turns into despair (Zwoboda & Sembène, 1966).

In *Burning an Illusion*, Pat has financial independence and a sturdy support system through friends and family. However, Pat wants a significant

romantic partner. She envies her married pregnant friend Cynthia and describes her life without a boyfriend as empty. Once she meets Del, she still wants more from their relationship, including marriage. In the second half of the film, Pat's desire shifts toward Blacks and wanting minorities in her community to understand their rights. Her pursuit of a loving relationship turned into a pursuit for racial equality (Bandaranayake & Shabazz, 1981).

Lastly, in *Precious*, the troubled teen routinely breaks from reality to imagine a better life. In her most outlandish daydreams, she is an attractive celebrity with fame, money, and social status. She also imagines herself in more pragmatic circumstances such as singing in a church choir or sitting in the front of her classroom like a "normal" student (Daniels, Siegel-Magness, & Magness, 2009).

### **Relationships with Men**

The men featured in these three films play specific roles in the lives for Diouana, Pat, and Precious. The least imposing are the two men featured in *La Noire de... / Black Girl* — Diouana's employer named only Monsieur and her boyfriend, who is not named in the film. Diouana's boyfriend is seen minimally and mostly shown as someone seeking to keep Diouana grounded. He has never been to France and is bothered by her preoccupation with living there. In contrast, Monsieur does not want to get involved with either of the women in his house. He stays out of the conflict between his wife and Diouana, despite Madam's persistent complaining and Diouana's visible discontentment and resentment. During many of their disputes, he either walks away or tries to find an ineffective compromise. In one scene, he opts to drink and pass out in the bedroom rather than intervene in their quarreling (Zwoboda & Sembène, 1966).

The first half of *Burning an Illusion* dedicates itself to Pat and Del's troublesome relationship. Del pursues Pat after meeting her at a club, and they begin to date. He moves in, but is hesitant to make any further commitment. Later Del loses his job after his continual tardiness. He laments about the house, grumbles about not finding any work, and grows increasingly demanding of Pat, viewing her only as the preparer of his meals and the one who pays the bills (Bandaranayake & Shabazz, 1981).

In addition to the appalling abuse by her mother, Precious is also the victim of incest by her father. According to Mary, Carl began sexually abusing Precious when she was three years old. Carl is only seen in one flashback scene where he engages in sex with his daughter while telling her "Daddy loves you." When Precious learns that she is HIV positive from the abuse, her emotions overwhelm her one day in class, and she tells her teacher, Ms. Rain, that her father used to say that he would marry her. She further confesses that "love" beat and raped her, made her feel worthless, and



eventually made her sick (Daniels, Siegel-Magness, & Magness, 2009).

### **Conflict with White Authority**

At certain points in all their narratives, Diouana, Pat, and Precious run into conflict with White authority figures. The ongoing conflict between Diouana and Madam is central to *La Noire de... / Black Girl* and what ultimately leads to Diouana's suicide. After weeks of cooking and cleaning, Diouana refuses to get out of bed. At one point, she closes the bathroom door while Madam yells at her from the other side. She resists her employer's insistence that she be happy with and grateful for her job as a maid. Removing the mask that she gave them from their apartment wall was the pinnacle form of resistance. When Madam attempts to take it back, Diouana finally shows her anger for all that she has been through. Both women hold on to the mask and spin in circles trying to wrestle it away from the other (Zwoboda & Sembène, 1966).

In second half of *Burning an Illusion*, conflict with White authority comes in the form of police brutality. During a night out, Del intervenes in a domestic dispute between one of his friends and his girlfriend and the situation escalates. When Del is initially arrested after the instigator of the fight flees, the police come upon an agitated, but peaceful group of Blacks outside of the club. Without asking what happened, the police begin to clash with Del and his friends. Del feels that he is being mistreated and, typical to his brash personality, he quickly defends himself causing a melee. Pat believes that her boyfriend was unjustly attacked, arrested, and imprisoned by White police. She subsequently seeks justice for Blacks who are wrongly incarcerated. Later in the film, Pat is also injured in a drive-by shooting by a White male. The incident only deepens her passion to defend her boyfriend's rights and seek further connection to her African roots to fight against White oppression (Bandaranayake & Shabazz, 1981).

For Precious's graphic depictions of sexual and physical abuse, Precious's actual encounters with Whites are less hostile. She is initially indifferent to her White principal who calls her into the office upon hearing that she is pregnant again. Trying to reach Precious with information on the alternative school, the principal comes to her door, but Precious does not let her into the building. At first she tells the principal she'll beat her up if she doesn't go away, but Precious eventually listens to her as she explains *Each One, Teach One*. Precious seems open; however, Mary is listening to their conversation getting increasingly angry. Mary is always concerned that an authority figure (of any race) will come and find her unfit for welfare. She shouts a long, brutal tirade toward Precious then ends with beating her daughter for bringing "that White bitch" to her door (Daniels, Siegel-Magness, & Magness, 2009).

### **Overcoming Abuse**

As previously discussed, all three women are emotionally and physically abused in their portrayals with one woman being sexually abused as well. In *La Noire de... / Black Girl*, Madam is consistently stern and demeaning to Diouana. During a dinner party, Madam rings a bell in front of the other guests to call Diouana. Madam never allows Diouana to leave the apartment. Once when Diouana stays in bed rather than serve, Madam comes into her room and slaps her on her waist to get her out of bed (Zwoboda & Sembène, 1966).

Pat's boyfriend hits her whenever he is displeased with her actions. Their violent break-up is not the first time Del abused his girlfriend. Earlier, Del is angry at her for throwing his dinner away when he leaves without telling her where he's going. He comes back late at night, and when he discovered his food is gone, he comes into the bedroom where she is and slaps her on the backside while yelling at her (Bandaranayake & Shabazz, 1981).

The abuse of Precious begins in the first scene where her mother hurls a pan at Precious's head, knocking her unconscious. In addition to physical altercations, Mary berates Precious by calling her "dummy," "stupid," "fat," and "bitch." Outside of her family, Precious's classmates ridicule her because of her weight. One day while walking on the street, a group of boys yell obscenities at her and one boy shoves her to the ground (Daniels, Siegel-Magness, & Magness, 2009).

### **A New Identity through Literacy/Education**

The final theme applies to two women in a positive light and to one negatively. Literacy and knowledge are tools to escape the oppression that these women face. At the start of their films, Diouana and Precious are both illiterate. Pat is literate but does not consider herself an avid reader. The turning point for both Pat and Precious comes when they begin to read and receive education (one instructional within a classroom setting and the other informally in books).

While Del is in prison, he asks Pat to send him books. She writes to him that she's reading a book that has enlightened her to the plight of Blacks. She then joins an organization that helps Blacks who are wrongfully imprisoned and learns more from the fellow members. She becomes very invested in her African heritage, even changing her clothing to . Near the end of the film, she wears t-shirts and jeans, less makeup and less jewelry. She occasionally dons traditional Caribbean head ties and dresses. Pat appears to have found her purpose and her identity in her African roots (Bandaranayake & Shabazz, 1981).

In Precious, education and literacy transform and liberate Precious.

She begins her story sitting in the back of her math class and says she never opens her book. She is a sixteen-year-old in junior high school and later admits she spent years in school not learning anything. When she walks into the Each One, Teach One classroom, a flash of light is used to transition from scenes, foreshadowing Precious's change. As she learns to read, write, and appreciate art and history, Precious's physical appearance changes as well. Her outfits are brighter and more feminine. Her hair, which was usually unkempt, is pressed and curled. Later, after the last fight with her mother where Mary drops a television on Precious and her newborn baby, Precious goes to the only safe place she knows, her Each One Teach One classroom. When Ms. Rain finds her, she makes several phone calls to get Precious moved into a half-way house. In the final scene where Mary makes an impassioned plea to be back in Precious's life, Precious tells the social worker that she's reading on a seventh and eighth grade level and she's looking forward to furthering her education until she gets to college. Precious then tells her mother that she's finally learned who her mother really is and says, "You ain't gon' see me no more." Precious takes her daughter and walks away, leaving her mother in tears (Daniels, Siegel-Magness, & Magness, 2009).

Although learning and literacy change Pat and Precious, the lack of literacy is part of Diouana's demise. She is unable to read her mother's letter for herself nor can she respond and tell her about the conditions in France with Madam. Without any education, Diouana is trapped in her circumstances. It is implied that the isolation, captivity, and despair are all reasons that lead Diouana to end her life. Had she the ability to read and write, she could have escaped her circumstances and either made a life for herself in France or found a way back home to Senegal (Zwoboda & Sembène, 1966).

### **Discussion**

The commonalities reflected in these film portrayals are issues within Black feminism. They are the consequential collisions in the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality inherent in the Black experience. Diouana, Pat, and Precious embody the legacy of struggle and the subsequent resistance to oppression. While they share in the fight, their circumstances and responses differ.

Eurocentric hegemony is an already well established adversary in the Black feminist narrative. Racism, discrimination, and marginalization of Blacks by Whites are the collective catalyst for Black empowerment and civil rights movements. For instance, Black feminists would likely find the story of Diouana tragic, but not surprising. Hill Collins (2000) referenced the often quoted passage from Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that likens Black women as "mules" to White employers. "As dehumanized objects, mules are living machines and can be treated as part of the scenery,"

Hill Collins (2000) wrote (p. 46). Diouana was, in many respects, a mule for Madam and Monsieur. Madam consistently reminded Diouana of her place as a housemaid, even discouraging Diouana from wearing her nice clothes in favor of more appropriate maid attire. Madam also allowed her White friends to marginalize Diouana to her African ethnicity. During a meal, one of the male guests insists on kissing Diouana on the cheek because he had never kissed an African woman before (Zwoboda & Sembène, 1966). Even the indifference of Monsieur speaks to the objectification of Diouana. She was not a person to her employers; she was a fixture of the house that provided service and color.

Likewise, the bigger fight against social injustices toward Blacks by White authority figures—such as Pat’s outrage toward the police brutality and wrongful arrest of her boyfriend—is a tenant of Black Feminism. The Black activist should be interested in institutional changes that would fight against discrimination in government entities (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 204). When Pat joined the activist group, she engaged with the group’s agency to free Black prisoners who were victims of racial profiling. Although the court punished Del to the furthest extent of the law in order to make an example out of him, Pat remained committed to the cause.

The role of reading and education are key to the development of these Black women, particularly for Precious. Pat is enlightened by her reading of Black authors; however, Precious is transformed by learning to read. Precious’s initial illiteracy is representative of the impoverished Black youth that don’t attain full reading comprehension and writing skills, thus cementing their oppressed state in society (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 4). For Precious to learn to read and write, she exposed herself to a world that was bigger than her abusive home. She was able to visualize herself beyond the back of the classroom. Most importantly, she refuted her mother’s claims that she was not intelligent enough to live a life beyond teenage motherhood and welfare.

Hill Collins (2000) posited that rocky relationships between Black men and Black women is a repercussion of a slave mentality of protection that turns into control. She wrote that during slavery, it was the responsibility of Black men to protect Black women as part of their masculinity. That need to protect became a need to dominate. Then the subjugation of Black women correlated to maintaining one’s manhood. Hill Collins (2000) explained

Within this version of masculinity, a slippery slope emerges between protecting Black women and controlling them. This control is often masked, all in defense of widespread beliefs that Black men must be in charge in order to regain their lost manhood... This general climate fosters a situation where some Black women feel that they must subordinate their needs to those of Black men in order to help Black men regain and retain their manhood (p. 157).

Such is evident in Pat and Del's relationship in *Burning an Illusion*. Del's violent reactions to Pat asserting herself are the image of a man fighting to protect his patriarchal position in the home. When she confronts him about his lack of a job and contribution to the household, he most commonly tells her to "shut up" and is dismissive of her claims. When she throws his male friends out of the apartment in the middle of a game, one of his friends tells him to get her under control (Bandaranayake & Shabazz, 1981). Hill Collins (2000) also noted, "Black men who feel that they cannot be men unless they are in charge can be highly threatened by assertive Black women, especially those in their own households" (p. 157). When Pat stands up for herself, she becomes a threat to Del and his only response is to lash out physically.

This can also be seen in *Precious*, but in a different manner. In *Precious's* life, the aggressive, power-hungry male figure is her mother. Mary outright tells the social worker that she owns *Precious* (Daniels, Siegel-Magness, & Magness, 2009). By that ownership, Mary feels entitled to treat *Precious* cruelly for her own reasons. When Mary confesses that she sexually molested *Precious* because she had no one to love her, she reflects the need to oppress another person in order to regain and retain her own sexuality similarly to the way a Black man would to a Black woman in Hill Collins's theory. Also, the worst beatings that *Precious* receives in the film were a result of her asserting a level of independence from her mother. Just as Pat was hit when she stood up to Del, *Precious* was often abused when Mary felt threatened by her.

Most importantly, all three characters display attitudes and behaviors of resistance to oppressive forces. They do the unexpected and reject the roles assigned to them by society (Hill Collins, 2000). *Diouana* refuses to be a confined African housemaid. Pat refuses to be a victim of racial discrimination, nor will she allow it to happen to others. *Precious* refuses to be abused by her parents and held down by the trappings of being an uneducated teenage mother living off welfare. Each woman takes strong action against the limitations placed on them by authority figures—both White and Black, both parental and societal. Such agency appears as *Precious* getting an education, Pat deciding that she is not a doormat for a lazy man, or something as simple as *Diouana* taking back a gift that symbolizes her homeland. These displays of resistance transcend nationality lines and blend into the African Diasporic experience for women. Hill Collins (2000) called it "a distinctive, collective Black women's consciousness" (p. 98).

### Conclusion

Despite their cultural differences, commonalities amongst the hardships faced by Black women are visible in the films *La Noire de... / Black Girl*, *Burning an Illusion*, and *Precious*. All three main characters wanted

better lives than their own, which were wrought with abuse and conflicts within their relationships with men and oppressive authority figures. Viewed within the Black Feminist theoretical framework, Diouana, Pat, and Precious suffered via a legacy of struggle inherited by the historical plight of Africans and those of African descent around the world. Yet, each showed a form of resistance to oppression. While not every movie had a happy ending, one can see the collective courage and strength within Black women that transcends national borders to find themselves and their voice.

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## **Critical Closure Tracing**

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### **Abstract**

*Spain has been experiencing financial turmoil since 2008, following the economic crash of the United States in 2007. Discourse tracing and an analysis of power centered on this economic turning point provides crucial information into how a national may re-construct identity and establish power structures. Thus, this paper uses Spain as a case study in applying discourse tracing and critical discourse analysis to evaluate shifts in dialogue among texts. In doing so, it becomes apparent dialogue can be used to silence voices and promote power structures within a nation struggling to reconfigure its own identity and sense of purpose.*

### **Introduction**

The dual processes of discourse analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have interjected themselves into critical-cultural paradigmatic research, acting as the vehicles needed to challenge the convention of power relations and ideology in a system as it changes and transforms over time (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009, p. 1517). Such qualitative approaches (Anaïs, 2013; Deetz & McLellan, 2009) are best used for focusing on processes, practices, and perspectives which are not necessarily generalizable, but are nonetheless key in clarifying how processes shape practices and perspectives and vice versa in a more detailed fashion (Altheide, 2000, p. 291). Thus, this research utilizes these processes to expand the literature and clarify specific contextual instances wherein discourse analysis and CDA, when used together, may be most beneficial.

### **Rationale**

This article centers on the academic conversation surrounding discursive tracing and CDA, demonstrating the compatible nature between the two and their ability to work together in a research project. To do so, national identity and identity construction are evaluated through the lens of discourse, language, and power. The paper also shows why such a process occurs within a nation aspiring to create a collective identity among its people. In fact, discourse tracing and CDA help to highlight and explain this process of national identity construction. Using Spain as a case study, this research inspects the ways in

which the economic crash of 2008 impacted discourse surrounding the notion of siesta time in Spain's quest to produce a new collective identity on a global scale. Such analysis can be cross-applied to other contexts and proves the two processes of discursive tracing and CDA can be used in tandem. First, however, it is important to define the terms used throughout the research.

### **Definitions**

Alvesson (2000) articulates the fluid nature and lack of uniformity for the terminology used for discourse analysis and CDA. For this paper, each term will be defined using Fairclough's (1989) book on language study, *Language and Power*. Fairclough proposes that language is not an external to society but is a part of it (p. 22) such that society determines language. More specifically, language is both a collective (langue) and individual (parole) system or code characterized by linguistic variation (pp. 20-21). Discourse is "language as a social practice determined by social structures," (p. 17) which is constituted by sets of conventions labeled as orders of discourse. Fairclough emphasizes the social process aspect of both language and discourse. Conversely, a text is not a process; it is a product of the larger discursive social practice and can be either spoken or written.

Thus, a textual analysis critically examines the products (texts) of socially determined (discourse) systems of symbols and codes (language). However, discourse tracing and CDA are more concerned with the how and why behind a text, moving further away from the what which is more typical in content analysis. As a result, discursive tracing and CDA allow for more detailed, in-depth thick descriptions (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009, p. 1522).

### **Literature Review**

Like individual identity which is constantly reinventing itself based on different contexts, situations, and experiences, national identity is rooted in shared paradigms but is continuously modifying itself based on outside stimuli. These stimuli, or turning points, usually occur as specific points in time. Discursive tracing enables researchers to conduct a more in-depth analysis or identity construction along a timeline where discourse transforms over time. Jointly, Critical Discourse Analysis enables scholars to push such analysis of discourse transformation one step further by overlaying it with discussions about power relations and the prevalence of certain discourses over others. Dominating discourse transformation will dictate how a nation makes claims to collective identity, thus producing a dominating national identity which may deviate from more marginalized perspectives. A more detailed discussion of national identity, discourse tracing, and CDA is required before any examination of Spain as a case study may take place.

### **National Identity Construction**

Social media and international communication networks seem to be on the rise and the world is now more globalized than ever before (Pennisi, 2012). While globalization has grown, so too have questions regarding how such interconnectivity plays a part in nation building and national identity construction. Identity is socially constructed through interactions between the agent and the surrounding environment. Nations construct identities through culture, tradition, attitude, and many other physiological and psychological factors (Hall, 1999). This type of national identity should not be confused with an individual's national identity (i.e. an individual's identification with a geographic location; Martin & Nakayama, 2018). National identity in this context is the collective identity of a nation based on characteristics such as socio-economics, but which is primarily is comprised of two elements: political community and a community of laws and institutions with a single political will (Smith, 1991). Conflicts of national identity center on these factors of socio-economics and politics.

Yet, identity is not stable. It is an ever-fluid entity, constantly being made and re-made (Sweet & McCue-Enser, 2010, 619-620). Indeed, identity construction occurs via language and symbol use which are dependent on the ever-changing cultures in which they are constituted and the audience who participates in the constitution. Edwin Black's (1998) notion of collective identity postulates cooperation between rhetorician and audience in the establishment of a shared identity based on shared beliefs or values. The audience becomes an active agent in formulating such collective identity at the moment they receive the language to do so (Charland, 1987) even though they may employ opposing narratives (Zagacki, 2007). Thus, collective identity formation (national identity formation) relies on language and discourse to mediate a common set of beliefs, attitudes, and values centered among opposing narratives. It is an ongoing negotiation between all parties involved to reach consensus about what it means to be a part of a collective (i.e. a nation).

Within this negotiation, national identity and the discourse surrounding it can be impacted by factors which challenge national paradigms. For instance, 9/11 challenged the United States' feelings of invincibility and nationalism when the nation suddenly found itself under attack on her own soil (Li and Brewer, 2004). In the face of such challenges and the relatively new impacts globalization poses, nations must re-create specific aspects of their identity if not their identity as a whole. Navigating these waters can mean dismantling long-held traditions or ways of living which may not bode well to the citizens of that nation. Thus, the ways in which the individual citizens and the nation as a whole communicates their identity can give insight into the values and beliefs the nation holds dear.

To understand such identity re-construction and the values underlying

the process, it is important to analyze the discourse surrounding pivotal turning points within the nation. 9/11 was one such turning point for the United States. Analyzing the discourse both before and after the terrorist attack reveals the United States' desire to cling to a sense of strength and community while upholding ideals such as freedom and justice (Hutcheson, Domke, Billeadeaux, & Garland, 2010). Despite collective identity's assertion on creating an identity grounded in shared ideology, identity construction can actually be one-sided, with those in power dictating the discourse and the outcomes the discourse produces. Such power can marginalize citizen voices and reinforce notions of colonialism or imperialism.

### **Theoretical Framework and Processes**

Subsequently, two approaches arise of seeming importance to this study: globalization and competitiveness rhetoric (Muntigl, Weiss, & Wodak, 2000) and the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Wodak, 2001). Globalization and competitiveness rhetoric are a part of the Knowledge-Based Economy (KBM) and are used on a micro-level to examine recontextualizing global policy strategies. According to Wodak (2001), DHA has recently been used to study nation and national identity as elements in case studies about Austria, Hungary, and the European Union (Kovács & Wodak, 2003; Muntigl et al., 2000; Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart, 2009; Wodak & Van Dijk, 2000). The DHA integrates a historical dimension into the context and analysis. Both approaches can be instituted as the primary lenses through which each text is finally and fully contextualized and examined within the larger processes of discourse analysis. Therefore, the need arises to describe the two discourse analysis approaches this research employs: (a) tracing discourse along a timeline and (b) CDA to critically analyze the discourse in opposition to the power imbuing it.

First is the process of discourse tracing. Tracing discourse draws on qualitative methodology and the critical-interpretive theory and is well-suited for projects including any artifact which changes over time. This type of analysis considers practices of discourse spanning micro, meso, and macro levels (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009). It has been strongly impacted by Foucault (1972) and Fairclough (1989). Foucault and Fairclough conceptualized characteristics of both discourse itself and the process of discursive tracing. Both authors stress the importance of power in and through discourse and the ways in which discourse creates and perpetuates power. LeGreco and Tracy (2009) argue for a four-stage methodological process for discursive tracing: Research Design (Stage 1), Data Management (Stage 2), Data Analysis (Stage 3), and Evaluation (Stage 4).

The other noteworthy process is critical discourse analysis (CAD) which is a problem-oriented approach "characterized by a number of

principles...[and] characterized by the common interests in demystifying ideologies and power through retroductable investigation of semiotic data” (Wodak, 2013, xxi). CDA finds itself integrated into many social theories (Van Leeuwen, 2006). This approach labels discourse as more of a social practice in which discourse is constructed by the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) framing it while also shaping those frameworks in return (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Power also plays a large role in CDA as it tries to make evident the hidden relationships between discourse, power, and ideology (Wodak, 1996). CDA aspires to challenge taken for granted relationships and status quo patterns of power. Wodak (2012) argues the difference between discourse studies and CDA can be found in the problem-oriented, multi-theory approach of CDA.

Although different, similarities are identifiable between these two processes. Both discursive tracing and CDA are adequate lenses through which to analyze texts and discourse. In fact, these processes together are the best way to fully evaluate and challenge the use or abuse of power in discourse. Thus, this paper argues that discourse tracing and CDA are two different processes that can work harmoniously in one examination of a text, discourse tracing blending into a deeper CDA. It is not an either-or situation, but a both-and situation wherein a researcher can trace discourse along a timeline and then can critical analyze that discourse for demonstrations and ill uses of power.

### **Criticisms of CDA**

By employing both discourse analysis and CDA at the same time, it is more feasible to avoid the major criticisms levied against Critical Discourse Analysis. Widdowson (1995) argues CDA is not an analysis at all, but more of a slanted interpretation. CDA enters into an “analysis” with preconceived notions, beliefs, or arguments about what is happening in a situation and, therefore, tries to find texts to support those pre-constructed perceptions (Widdowson, 1995). In other words, CDA is not concerned with allowing the texts to dictate the argument and discursive themes, but rather reverses the relationship so the arguments or themes dictate the texts. CDA makes no attempt to mask these intentions (Meyers, 2001, pp. 16-17).

Legitimate as these critiques may be, this research argues using discourse analysis and CDA in conjunction with each other mitigates this potential downfall. By engaging in discourse analysis first, which makes no preemptive assumptions about the text, it is possible to allow the text to dictate discursive patterns and themes at work. CDA, then follows, functioning as a filter through which the discursive patterns or themes pass through to be examined for instances of power use or abuse. Consequently, this paper attempts to answer Meyers’ (2001) question regarding Critical Discourse

Analysis: “Is it possible to gain insight from purely empirical data without using any preframed categories of experience (p. 17)?” This paper suggests the answer is yes, but only by going through a discourse analysis prior to the CDA.

### **Historical Context**

To further these arguments, this paper uses Spain as a context for a case study and looks at the discourse surrounding a tradition of Spaniards: Siesta time. This time-honored tradition is the time set aside each day for residents and visitors of Spain to “rest” or take a siesta. Spaniards will close down almost all shops and businesses during this time, so people may take a few hours of the day to unwind and relax. Such a tradition was a cornerstone to Spain’s identity as a laid-back country and was used to attract tourists coming from faster-paced countries. This discourse began to change, however, as globalization increased, and one country’s economy began to have greater influence on another’s. The United States’ economic crisis in 2007-2008 was felt around the world, including Spain. So much so that Spain experienced a major economic crash of her own in 2008. Reeling from devastation, the Spanish government began looking for ways to gain global economic footing again. Governmental officials surmised the best way to take back the Spanish economy was to make Spain look like the rest of the world (Deschenaux, 2008; Gibbs, 2015).

### **Research Questions**

Such a case study interjects itself into the conversation about discursive tracing and critical discourse analysis. Studies have examined the relationship between discourse and trust (O’Grady, Dahm, Roger, & Yates, 2014), discourse and textual formation (Mitra, 2006), discourse and individual identity (Tracy & Scott, 2006), discourse and policy (Cherlin, 2004; Kirby & Krone, 2002), and discourse and race, national, and ethnic issues (Wodak, 2001). Little research has expanded discourse tracing to collective identity and analyzing the relationship between discourse, power, and national identity especially relating to socioeconomic or geographical demographics. There does exist a body of literature utilizing case studies of national identity and discourse (Hansen, 2006; Mackey, 1998; Stokowski, 2017; Wodak, Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart, 2009). This study adds to the current body of literature by provided further case study specific to Spain itself and analyzing a different turning point (socio-economic) in the nation’s timeline as well as proposing a nuanced way of analyzing text. Therefore, in addition to the argument about the symbiotic relationship between discursive tracing and critical discourse analysis, this paper desires to answer case study specific research questions to

illustrate the full nature of examining power in and through discourse. Thus, the case study proposes the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the identity challenges faced by Spain due to the nation's economic crash of 2008?

RQ2: How has the meaning of siesta time transformed over time?

RQ3: In what ways do government officials and Spanish citizens talk about siesta time and its meaning on Spain's national identity?

Answering these research questions illustrates the relationship between discourse and power on a national scale and in the context of national identity construction. Because building a national identity is rooted in collective identity, this case study reveals the relationship discourse and power have between citizens of a nation and their government. Findings from this study will uphold the argument that discursive tracing and critical discourse analysis can both be used to evaluate the same text or discourse. The results provide implications for the constitution of national identity in lieu of turning points such as socio-economic or political events. The study itself is necessary to expand the conversation on discourse tracing, power, and national identity.

However, this study is limited in scope due to the nature of it being a case study. Future research, therefore, will want to analyze further case studies using both discursive tracing and critical discourse analysis processes to test for its accuracy, validity, and cross-application on other contexts. It is also necessary to examine national identity construction taking into consideration other turning points in nation's timeline. It is possible different types of turning points (i.e. economic, political, crisis, etc.) will produce various discourse patterns with alternative effects. Thus, to truly understand national identity construction and the discourse surrounding it in terms of power, further studies must be conducted considering various causes.

## **Methods**

Spain's identity re-construction must be analyzed through discursive tracing, evaluating texts before and after the economic crash of 2008, and through critical discourse analysis, critiquing the use – or abuse – of power used by the Spanish government to marginalize minority voices. Thus, the two processes will be used together to analyze the same texts and discourse using LeGreco and Tracy's (2009) four phase model for discursive tracing. Phase 1 outlines the specific Research Design in which the case is defined, the turning point is identified, and the literature is properly reviewed. Phase 2 works on Data Management in which researchers gather texts to be organized chronologically around the previously identified turning point. During this phase, researchers will contemplate each text for common or shared themes. Phase 3 deals with Data Analysis where questions are postulated based on the findings of the previous two phases. The case study is then written, dictated

by the answers surmised from the posed questions. Phase 4 implements Evaluation in which theoretical frameworks are applied and implications, limitations, and future research are revealed.

Following this structure, literature has been offered as an explanation of the methodology, framework, and turning point of the case study (Phase 1). Next, texts of native Spanish authorship which mention siesta time will be accumulated and organized by date – those written before 2008 and those written after 2008, excluding text written during 2008 (Phase 2). Once a large quantity of texts has been amassed and organized, they will be analyzed for discursive themes and traits (discursive tracing, Phase 3). Next, the texts will be re-read and scrutinized for discourses of power and ways in which language and power interact through the texts (CAD; Phase 3). The paper will finally reveal a summary of findings along with a discussion about them, limitations to the case study, and where discursive study may head in the future (Phase 4).

## **Findings**

Still reeling from the 2008 financial crisis, Spain has continuously been navigating national identity construction. The slower pace and more relaxed attitude of Spain's culture, which was the pinnacle of advertisements used to attract tourists, has now been challenged in favor of a faster pace and more progressive-minded attitude, which more readily matches the mindset of other surrounding countries. Thus, traditional Spanish practices like siesta time are being targeted as obstructions to identity reconstruction efforts.

Following the discourse of siesta time across this timeline reveals such convictions and efforts to emphasize efficiency while downplaying contradictory sentiments. Evaluating this discourse reveals hidden power structures and pressures at work as well as voices being pushed to the side. It is within this process of contention and power Spain must try to construct a national identity based on the shared beliefs of her citizens. The next sections are structured around LeGreco and Tracy's (2000) four phase model to illustrate the discursive transformation followed by a critical analysis of that exposed discourse.

### **Phase 1: Research Design**

Phase 1 of LeGreco and Tracy's (2000) model has already been discussed above. Now that the case and its turning point has been defined and potential research directions have been explored through a review of literature, it is possible to progress on to the next three phases of this four-phase model.

### **Phase 2: Data Management**

Phase 2 is concentrated on gathering text/data from a variety of sources. Google and the "News" tab were used to find online news articles by typing in "la siesta de españa." Each article was examined to make sure each one chosen was appropriate for my research study. Once all the texts had been



amassed, they were separated chronologically using the year of 2008 as the reference point. Two groups of texts emerged: Those written before 2008 and those written after 2008.

#### Phase 3: Data Analysis

Each group of texts – those before 2008 and those after 2008 – were evaluated together across micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. The following structured questions (LeGreco & Tracy, 2000, p. 1532) were posed to each article for analysis (the results can be seen in Figure 1):

Who is the speaker/author?

Who is the audience?

Is siesta time talked about positively or negatively?

Is progress/productivity talked about positively or negatively?

Is the language inclusive or exclusive?

Are there any voices or perspectives missing?

Comparisons between the two groups of texts follow to demonstrate how the discourse surrounding siesta time in Spain has changed over time and the implications of such a transformation. Finally, the paper ends with a discussion to more explicitly uncover the discursive transformation and the role power has engaged in throughout.

Texts before 2008. The texts accumulated before 2008 all came from online Spanish newspapers including, *El País*, *El Confidencial*, *20 Minutos*, and *BBC World* (Spanish). The authors themselves did not play as large of a role. However, the audience demographics, perspectives, and discourse about siesta time were all important. Each of these questions as posed above (minus the question pertaining to author) are explored below.

Who is the audience? Among these texts, readership seems balanced between genders, but is slanted towards people who are younger, more educated, and working class. *El País* has a readership demographic of mostly males (59%), 25-44-year-olds (40%), those with higher levels of education (72%), and those possessing a socio-economic status of mid- to upper-class (87). *El Confidencial* is geared towards more affluent and influential people, more so than other native newspapers. *20 Minutos* has a readership demographic of mostly females (51%) and those who are working (51%). *BBC World* has an international readership.

Is siesta time talked about positively or negatively? These texts demonstrate a more neutral perspective of siesta time. Among these four texts, two of them spoke positively about siesta time (*El País* and *20 Minutos*) and, conversely, two of them spoke negatively about the practice (*El Confidencial* and *BBC World*).

On the one hand, looking at the positive discourse of siesta time in the *El País* and *20 Minutos* articles, there is an emphasis on the benefits of siesta time. Both stress the importance of being anti-stress and being able to relax during the work day. *El País* argues napping is actually healthy for people and

emphasizes the positive nature of the tradition, going as far as saying “selling naps is a great idea” (Escola, 1999). Both articles suggest the work day needs to include a break for people to be able to step away from the harried lifestyle of work, so they can return rejuvenated.

On the other hand, *El Confidencial* and *BBC World* discuss the negatives associated with the habit of siesta time. Both articles stress siesta time has negative impacts on day-to-day living such as work-life balance and family lifestyles. *El Confidencial* emphasizes the stress taking a nap in the middle of a work day can cause, directly countering the arguments being made in the articles written by *El País* and *20 Minutos*. Not only does the *BBC World* article mention the harm to productivity as a negative consequence of siestas, but the article discusses at length the negative stigma associated with siesta time and the relaxed attitude of Spaniards. The article berates the country for its lack of punctuality, suggesting a bad reputation has been garnered because Spain cannot be punctual like other industrialized countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. The article even mentioned how lacking punctuality is interpreted as sinful in some cultures dominated by the Protestant religion (Westcott, 2007). Thus, these two articles assert the negative outcomes siesta time produces which cannot be outweighed by any seemingly positive benefits it may pose.

Is progress/productivity talked about positively or negatively? Similar to the previous question, the articles written before 2008 seem to be divided on perceptions of progress and productivity. It should be no surprise the two articles articulating the negative aspects of productivity the most are *El País* and *20 Minutos* and the two articles articulating the positive aspects of productivity are *El Confidencial* and *BBC World*.

First, both *El País* and *20 Minutos* recognize the faster pace of the work day in the status quo. For instance, *El País* mentions “in the modern pace of life...only 20% of Spaniards take a siesta regularly” (Escola, 1999). This quotation asserts it is the fault of the “modern pace of life” which keeps citizens from fully embracing siesta time and its many benefits. Similarly, *20 Minutos* uses more negative connotations through linguistics to demonstrate its dislike of notions toward productivity. An example of such connotation is its description of the status quo as an “abrupt financial world” (Castrillo, 2006). Abrupt has a negative connotation of being harsh and cold. Thus, when added to “financial world,” it gives the impression of a harsh and cold financial world displaced from humanity and the concerns of the every-day working person. The underlying argument being proposed by both articles is the disdain for turning away from such a time-honored and beneficial cultural tradition, such as siesta time.

Second, both *El Confidencial* (2005) and *BBC World* (Westcott, 2007) place emphasis on restructuring the work-day schedule to decrease break time but increase productivity. These articles argue doing so will produce

extraneous benefits like being better able to balance work and family life. In the BBC World (Westcott, 2007) article, which primarily discussed punctuality, the idea of being punctual and more productive is associated with having pride and decency. The article implies through linguistic construction how improving punctuality is good since other industrialized nations are punctual. The logic flows such that if industrialized nations are punctual, punctuality is a good thing; if punctuality is a good thing; then improving punctuality is good; improving punctuality is good to become more industrialized. Thus, both articles claim the inherent and long-lasting implications of turning to a more productive and industrialized lifestyle.

Is the language inclusive or exclusive? Unfortunately, three out of four of these texts use exclusive rather than inclusive language. Exclusive language being language which marginalizes, totalizes, or others groups of people or individuals. Exclusive language uses words such as “they” or “them” when talking about a group. Conversely, inclusive language tries to avoid marginalizing or totalizing language by using “we” and “us” statements instead of “I” statements. The only article to use inclusive language is *El Confidencial* (2005) which specifically used “we” statements to unify the audience and the collective nation of Spaniards.

*El País*, *20 Minutos*, and BBC World all use some type of exclusive language whether implicitly or explicitly. For BBC World (Westcott, 2007), it is more explicit. This article uses “I” statements to suggest a separation between speaker and audience. Such separation denotes a perspective of superiority. *20 Minutos* (2006) has more implicit forms of exclusive language. The text uses sexist language by using terms such as housewife. All three texts exclude certain audiences by gearing their language and perspective towards business people, government personnel, or wealthy or affluent individuals. Consequently, these forms of exclusionary language lead to certain voices and perspectives being left out.

Are there any voices or perspectives missing? In all four texts, lower-class and non-wealthy people’s perspectives are missing. The texts use perspectives from business leaders, government officials, and heads of national organizations or movements rather than lay person perspectives. In fact, there is no mention or comment made by an average Spanish citizen. Essentially, the rural voice goes unheard in all of these texts.

Texts after 2008. The texts accumulated after 2008 all came from popular online Spanish newspapers including, *El Mundo*, *RT*, and BBC World (Spanish). Again, the authors themselves did not play as large of a role, being mostly absent from these articles. However, just like for the texts accumulated from before 2008, the audience demographics, perspectives, and discourse about siesta time were all important. Each of these questions (minus the question pertaining to author) are explored below.

Who is the audience? The BBC World audiences are the same as

before: International. Since it is the Spanish version, however, there is a more concentrated audience of Spanish speakers. El Mundo has a readership demographic of mostly males (51%), 25-to-54-year-olds (72%), and mid-to upper-class individuals (84%). RT has a readership of individuals in the business and financial marketplace.

Is siesta time talked about positively or negatively? There seems to be more positive talk found within all but one of these texts regarding siesta time. In addition to these texts re-emphasizing the importance of siesta time's health and stability benefits, they stress the cultural aspect of siesta time more. The texts use linguistic choices such as "favorite pastime" (RT, 2012), "sacred" (Jones, 2017), "consecrated right" (Jones, 2017), "iconic practice" (Jones, 2017), and "habit" (El Mundo, 2011). Additionally, the texts describe opposition to siesta time as a serious affront to a time-honored tradition, making statements such as "under threat (RT, 2012)" and "defending this habit (El Mundo, 2011)." Within these texts, siesta time has an almost ethereal connotation and a holy sacredness, which does not translate to all of the texts.

One BBC World article (of the two examined) speaks highly against siesta time. Using phrases such as "Time to wake up!" and "doesn't make sense," this text puts emphasis on the (seeming) illogical nature of siesta time. The text mentions siesta time's inability to reach all people in today's status quo society which is increasingly becoming more urban. Again, it stresses the importance of family and work-life balance and articulates the negative effects of siesta time to these institutions and to a person's overall health (BBC World, 2016).

Is progress/productivity talked about positively or negatively? Interestingly, there seems to be a rift between the positive and negative aspects of productivity in these texts. El Mundo makes no mention one way or the other about it and RT remains relatively neutral. Ironically, the two BBC World articles are in opposition to each other, with one arguing for the positive nature of productivity and one arguing for the its more negative nature.

RT's (2012) text, although neutral, contains interesting implications through the dialogue it includes. The text contains comments from different people which include phrases such as "regular work hours" and "rational work hours." Such phrases indicate there exists a right or normal form of work schedule. The work hours these phrases refer to is the 9am-5pm work week as mentioned earlier in the text. Therefore, the people's dialogue would indicate the status quo work schedule is somehow abnormal or wrong, similar to the perspectives articulated one of the BBC World texts.

"¿Qué tan cierto es que los españoles todavía hacen la siesta (BBC World, 2016)" has a more positive outlook on productivity than the other texts. Like the RT article, this text includes comments about Spain's work schedule and the desire to move away from the status quo to more "rational schedules." It also contains similar arguments as texts written before 2008.

For instance, multiple comments made throughout the text refer to reconciling work and family life, indicating a direct relationship between productivity and family. These comments also imply a direct relationship between productivity, quality, and time spent at work. Thus, the RT text emphasizes discourses which express a perceived need to improve society through productivity.

Conversely, “Los mitos sobre la siesta en España (Jones, 2017)” portrays a negative perspective on productivity. Rather than speaking out against productivity explicitly, the discourse contained in this article offers counterarguments against productivity. One such argument is the notion of presenteeism which is defined as being at work for longer periods of time without completing more assignments (Jones, 2017). Presenteeism negates the notion of long working days causing more productivity and has become an increasing problem in Spain throughout the last decade.

Is the language inclusive or exclusive? These texts, holistically, use more inclusive language than they do exclusive language. All of them use “we,” “us,” and “our” statements to bring a more unified tone to their discourse and to demonstrate collective ideas.

For example, sleeping pods were tested in Madrid during 2017 which working people could reserve to take a nap during their lunch break. The reservation page was published on the Internet under the name “Save Our Siesta” (Jones, 2017). By using the term “our,” this site is trying to imbue a sense of togetherness and unity. “Our” indicates an appeal to the collective identity of Spanish people and the traditions they hold. Additionally, using the word “save” indicates the tradition of siesta time is under threat by outside forces. It calls to all Spanish people to rise up and fight against the forces trying to undermine a cultural ritual. Thus, the name “Save Our Siesta” is an appeal to every Spanish person’s feelings of being a part of the collective and preserving a time-honored tradition central to everyone.

However, BBC World (2016) uses inclusive language like “we” and “us” in a simultaneously exclusive way. For instance, the article contains dialogue by the President of the Spanish government at the time, Mariano Rajoy, such as: ““We are going to grant a certificate of quality to companies with rational hours...””(BBC, 2016). The sentence uses the word “we” but is less inclusive of all Spanish people and rather includes only those a part of the Spanish government. Thus, exclusion is hidden by what, in other context, would be considered inclusive language.

Are there any voices or perspectives missing? Unfortunately, these texts are still missing the lay person perspective. None of them employ lower-class, uneducated, rural voices in their discourse. Rather, they utilize perspectives from affluent, mid- to upper-class citizens holding jobs in the private sector or government. The BBC World (2016) article even includes international perspectives, but no native citizen perspective. Whether intentional or not, these texts do not include vital the voices of average, every

day people in Spain.

However, the RT (2012) text does use the voice of small business owners rather than big business owners or government officials. These perspectives speak more to the economic crisis in Spain rather than the institution of siesta time itself. Therefore, even though the text uses a voice otherwise left out of the discourse, it does so in an insignificant way. The choice to include these perspectives in such an unimportant way only reiterates the exclusion of lower-class, uneducated, or unemployed voices.

#### Phase 4: Evaluating Discourse Tracing Research

LeGreco and Tracy (2009) end their four-phase model with evaluation of the discourse tracing. They break this evaluation into two separate sections of implications: Theoretical implications and practical implications. Following their model, Phase 4: Evaluating Discourse Tracing Research will act as the “Discussion” section found in most other academic works. An evaluation of the discursive transformation will occur first, answering the three proposed research questions and then both the theoretical and practical implications will be discussed.

Evaluation of Discursive Transformation. The eight texts included in this analysis span a timeline ranging from 1999 to 2017. The only year in which texts were completely excluded was 2008 – the rupture point of our discourse tracing. Through an interpretation of the discourse along such a timeline, each research question can be explored.

Throughout the timeline, a few things remain consistent which highlight answers to RQ3. The audiences of these texts are younger, more educated persons who are of middle- or upper-class socio-economic status. Additionally, the lay persons voice is completely left out of the discourse. These consistencies reveal a power imbalance between Spain’s elite and the rural townspeople. Such a scenario indicates a power over discourse which reveals who has a seat at the table or, in other words, who has access (Wodak, 2013). The rural townspeople is excluded from having access to the discourse and thus, their perspective is marginalized and overlooked. As in other texts analysis CDA and politics, this research finds rising dominance in right-wing populist parties who downplay opposing viewpoints.

At the same time, a few aspects underwent a slight transformation across the timeline. For instance, the discourse specifically about siesta time changed from a more divided perspective in texts written before 2008 (wherein there are equal amounts of negative and positive views) to much more positive responses in texts written after 2008. The discourse specifically about productivity, however, retained divided perspectives in texts written both before and after 2008 (wherein there are equal amounts of negative and positive views). Evidently, the perspective on siesta time has only grown more positive over the course of the past two decades which opposes the question posed in RQ2. In fact, siesta time has remained a time-honored

tradition for the most part and only becomes negative in a few texts in which the authors describe it as slow, unproductive, and inconvenient. There are also more mixed emotions about productivity and becoming a nation with a more industrialized work schedule. Such a transformation in one discourse as opposed to the lack of transformation in another underscores the desire in Spain to retain a value which comprises the current, collective identity in Spain. It, meanwhile, also demonstrates a simultaneous desire to become more productive in hopes of arising from the economic crises in which the nation finds itself.

Similarly, the discursive language changed from being more exclusive in texts written before 2008 to being more inclusive in texts written after 2008. This change in language illustrates a change in persuasive tactics wherein those with a voice in this discursive situation endeavor to bring everyone into the same thinking process rather than separating the community in an “us” versus “them” scenario. Such separation would impede the ability of Spain to re-construct a collective, national identity. Therefore, using more inclusive language is Spain’s effort to make reconstruction smoother and more collective.

Thus, referring to RQ1, there seems to be a struggle among the Spanish elite between maintaining tradition and progressing into a more efficient society which are rooted in the historical struggles of Spain to establish identity since the Franconian rulership in which Spain’s time zone was altered to match France and Germany (her World War II allies). It appears the Spanish elite aspire to reconcile values of tradition with values of progress, using more inclusive language, in hopes of creating a collective identity predicated on both sets of values. Successfully reconciling these values would be a step toward a new national identity for Spain.

**Theoretical Implications.** The two theoretical frameworks used in this study were the globalization and competitiveness rhetoric as well as the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). This case study expands on and reinforces literature covering both approaches. It also challenges common notions and critiques about discourse analysis and CDA, freeing both from some criticisms which plague them.

**Globalization and Competitiveness Rhetoric and DHA.** First, the case study demonstrates those who have the agency, access, and voice to knowledge exchange are the primary actors in shaping and ranking social institutions and individuals (globalization and competitiveness rhetoric). The Spanish elite in this case – that is the younger, more educated, employed citizens or government persons – dominate the conversation about how the nation should view such an institution as siesta time and thus labels individuals accordingly. The average, rural, lay person is excluded from such a knowledge exchange and therefore are denied access and agency to influence policies concerning the institution of siesta time.

Second, the case study illustrates the importance and influence historical context has on discourse and discursive transformation (DHA). It is hard to separate the historical context in which the discursive situation occurs from the discourse itself. The ways in which the voices of the texts discuss siesta time and productivity are imbued with reflections of Spain's history and her consistent struggle to construct a unique national identity in face of events such as World War II and the economic crash of 2008.

Discourse Tracing and CDA. The case study explored in this paper concerning siesta time and national identity construction in Spain exemplify the ability to use discourse tracing and critical discourse analysis in conjunction with one another. Discourse tracing afforded the framework from which the process of analyzing the texts took place while CDA allowed for a critical examination of specific language affecting power. A common critique of CDA is its biased nature toward approaching texts with pre-determined biases and evaluating texts supporting such bias. However, by employing discourse tracing first, the ability to approach texts with bias is mitigated due to the fundamental nature and requirements of discourse analysis. For this case study, CDA played a larger role once the texts had been accumulated and evaluated for common themes. Critiques on the use of language did not dictate the texts explored, but rather stemmed from the texts which were chosen more randomly based on date instead of content.

Practical Implications. The practical implications deriving from this case study apply more to the ideals surrounding the construction of national identity. In line with literature on national identity creation, the Spanish actors responsible for most of the discourse in the texts tried to establish common, shared values on which the new identity of Spain could be established. The agents here desired a move away from stereotypes of lagging behind and having more dissipate attitudes towards working to an identity of productivity, efficiency, and industrialization. However, they were (and are) being compelled to reconcile both sets of values together such that Spain's collective identity could be constructed on both values of tradition and values of productivity. The two values need not be mutually exclusive in this case.

Yet, there are deeper implications to draw from this case study because of the marginalized voices being left out of the dialogue. Such scenarios imply a world in which the dominating elite tend to speak for everyone, instead of allowing minority groups to speak for themselves in a form of "Othering." Speaking for others can be problematic and diminishes the rich diversification of perspectives which could be garnered. Rather, the implications of elitism in influencing and shaping values, social institutions, and individuals undermine the commonality of shared values in national identity construction. Therefore, the identity created may not actually be a reflection of the collective, consequently weakening the identity itself.



## Conclusion

This case study example, though beneficial, still contains limitations. First, the generalizability of the study is relatively low due to the small pool of texts analyzed. However, the case study and its theoretical and practical implications do have some transferability which may resonate with some readers and may become applicable to other case studies or areas of research. The findings discovered in this case study can be transferred to similar phenomena in various contexts. A second limitation is researcher biases. Although the use of discourse analysis and CDA mitigate most of the researcher bias criticized in sole CDA studies, it is inevitable not all bias is able to be abolished. The expectation of strong discursive transformation about siesta time and productivity influenced which texts were included and excluded from final evaluation. It is possible, then, the findings could be different if other texts were brought in and examined.

[illegible]

Future research should include as many texts as possible given research time constraints and resources. Researchers should also apply the dual processes of discourse analysis and CDA to other case studies to strengthen the validity of using both simultaneously, especially if the researchers desire to avoid some of the common criticism associated with CDA. Similarly, this case study, too, can be expanded to analyze the discourse about siesta time and productivity along different rupture points. Doing so may also reveal various

power dynamics at work and various progressions of these values over time.

The rationale behind this study was to apply discourse analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis to a case study about Spain's siesta time to evaluate power and language in correlation to national identity construction. Using the theoretical frameworks of globalization and competitiveness rhetoric along with Discourse-Historical Analysis shows the importance of historical context on discourse and how knowledge exchange among only dominate agents can influence perceptions of values. Discourse surrounding siesta time has become more positive in recent years, as it has continued to fall under attack, while notions of productivity have remained divided and uncertain. Unfortunately, CDA of the discourse reveals power distancing and the marginalization of rural, lay person voices. If Spain truly desires to change the discourse of siesta time and productivity and create a new national identity reflective of collective values, it must not exclude perspectives from both Spanish elite and lower-class, uneducated, rural persons. Ultimately, this case study demonstrates how discourse tracing and critical discourse analysis work together simultaneously to analyze discourse, imploring future researchers to utilize the same method to extend their own analyses.

Figure 1. Textual analysis of all eight texts both before 2008 and after 2008 including the structured questions used.

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## **Making Sense of Working Role Transitions for Family**

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### **Abstract**

*This study explored sensemaking, emotions, and role transitions in work-family life balance using qualitative thematic analysis techniques. Family members balancing breadwinning, accomplishing emotional attachment, performing a work and family balance of mothering, and emotional attachment based on 34 participant interviews. These findings suggest that through making sense of emotions and role transitions people maintain a work-life balance. This research revealed the importance of both a mother and father making sense of being a family provider and being emotionally attached to that role. The findings provide new insights for researchers and practitioners into the life of balancing work and family.*

*Keywords: Sensemaking theory, Role theory, Emotions, Family, Gender*

### **Making Sense of Working Role Transitions for Family**

Accounting for every family member's work schedule is important for family communication. Working non-traditional shifts is now common. Unconventional schedules beyond the traditional 9-5 pm work day have been popular for a while (Jamal, 2004; Smith, 1986). Moreover, not all industries work 9-5pm, but work on Saturday and Sunday in the evening and night shift (Smith, 1986). In North America, 27 percent of the labor force work on Saturday in such industries as manufacturing, transportation, and health services (Jamal, 2004; Smith, 1986). This may be problematic for families because extended and varied work schedules cut into rest and recovery time for family cohesion, thus juggling work-family life demands becomes complex and challenging (Coltrane, 2000; Hartmann, 1981; Hochschild, & Machung 1989; Martens, Nijhuis, Van Boxtel, & Knottnerus, 1999; Marx-Ferree, 1990; Smith, 1986).

Likewise, household roles become a juggling act of who performs what tasks. Non-traditional shifts impact the complexity of social relation patterns in the performance of roles (Coltrane, 2000). Roles in the household are changing as to whether the woman or the man takes care of the children and household chores. Even though women are occupying more jobs since the 1960s, they are still having more responsibility for the children and household chores and tasks than men do (Coltrane, 2000; Hochschild, & Machung 1989; Jurik & Halemba, 1984). Workplace roles for women have

shifted substantially whereas unpaid family work, such as household chores and taking care of children have not (Coltrane, 2000).

Indeed, women and men are sharing more responsibility but overall women have performed two to three times more household tasks than men (Coltrane, 2000; Hochschild, & Machung, 1989). Specifically, women manage more spheres of the work-family context (Hochschild, & Machung, 1989). For women, it has been a dominant sphere of job, children, and housework, whereas for men, it is job and children (Hochschild, & Machung, 1989). These spheres in a work-family context are symbolically significant to the household and are socially constructed by sex role internalization (learning roles from parents) and individual socialization (learning specific subordinate behaviors) of social and cultural understandings of gender structure (Coltrane, 2000; Hochschild, & Machung 1989; Marx-Ferree, 1990).

Gender in the work-family context divides housework into “women’s work” in which women spend more time on tasks, take responsibility for family operations, and delegate tasks than men (Coltrane, 2000; Hochschild, & Machung 1989). Succinctly, the work-family context for both women and men may strain a work and family role balance, affect each other’s daily emotions, and emotionally drain the personal well-being of the household (Coltrane, 2000; Hochschild, & Machung 1989; Larson & Almeida, 1999; Larson, & Gillman, 1999; Marx-Ferree, 1990). In short, the work-family role changes women and men’s family and emotional dynamic.

The work-family context provides a nexus of daily interactions between family members about work and family-related emotions that affect expressiveness that influences feeling states, behavioral responses, and may be transmitted to other family members in a second-hand fashion (Cassidy, Parke, Butkovsky, & Braungart, 1992; Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991). Emotional transmission (the expression of emotions and behaviors to another family member) is important to explore in a work-family context because positive and negative emotions are meaningful and individual family members differentially conceptualize, express, and react to negative and positive emotions to regulate, control, and negotiate everyday life (Larson & Almeida, 1999; Hansen-Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002). Such work-family research may fruitfully explore the constant emotional experiences of each family member’s emotions and give insights into the causes, consequences, and most important connections to positive and negative emotions and their impact upon the family as a whole (Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991; Hansen-Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002; Larson & Almeida, 1999). Likewise, exploring the work-family context of non-traditional shifts, role shifts in the household, and how women and men interpret, perceive, and respond to emotions differently may construct a better understanding of how family members make sense of these powerful experiences. One goal is to turn appreciation of the daily struggles into an opportunity to inspire exceptional work-family



communication choices that women and men face (Buzzanell, Meisenbach, Remke, Bowers, & Conn, 2005; Hansen-Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002; Kuebli & Fivush, 1992; Scherer, Wanik, Sangsue, Tran, & Scherer, 2004).

From the work-family perspective, women and men may experience changes when working non-traditional shifts in which making sense of shifting household roles and emotions are imperative for effective family functioning. Moreover, there may be a work-life balance negotiation in order to be good in the workplace and also be a good parent. Essentially, parents need to make sense of a new lifestyle and negotiate new roles in their life (Buzzanell et al., 2005). The focus of this study is to look at, from a gender-based approach, how women and men negotiate roles and functions through sensemaking, emotions, and role shifts in non-traditional households. Gropel and Kuhl (2009) contended “the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) (i.e. the perceived sufficiency of the time available for work and social life) and well-being is well-documented; however, previous research failed to sufficiently explain why this relationship exists” (p. 365). By looking through the sensemaking theory lens, this study seeks to explore how women and men make sense of work-life balance, emotions, and role shifts. First, sensemaking theory will be explained followed by previous research on gender roles, parenting, and how these roles are balanced between work and family life. Sensemaking will be discussed next.

### **Sensemaking and Emotion**

Sensemaking is important because women and men make sense of different events in different ways, and this research will explore how these events are communicated (Buzzanell et al., 2005). Furthermore, Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, (2005) conveyed that “sensemaking involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing” (p. 409). Specifically, Kramer and Miller (2014) defined “sensemaking as an intersubjective process of reaching agreement on meaning with others through communication; an individual cannot subjectively assign any meaning to a situation. Sensemaking is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy” (p. 529). These sensemaking perspectives are created by past and present experiences that shape a framework of how events are made sense of (Bryant & Sias, 2011). Moreover, individuals in a family context need to be able to interpret, reflect, and communicate sensemaking in order to effectively make sense of these interactions (Bisel & Arterburn, 2012). Sensemaking, may also foster more understanding and interpretation, especially when mothers and fathers are experiencing working various work shifts (Bisel & Arterburn, 2012). Dougherty and Drumheller (2006) articulated that “sensemaking provides a means to return a sense of stability to the organizational life world” (p. 216). When both parents are

working different work shifts and taking care of the kids at different times, it may impact both the organization and the family context.

While times of instability may not last forever, the main focus of sensemaking is to make sense of those instabilities in both the organizational and family process (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006). The central tenets to sensemaking are enactment, selection, and retention (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003; Weick, 1995). Enactment, first, is based upon preconceptions and the action of those preconceptions within a context (Coffelt, Smith, Sollitto, & Payne, 2010). Selection is choosing and incorporating various interpretations of a communication event in which people act from the interpretation they chose (Seeger, et al., 2003). Retention becomes the proved effectiveness of reducing ambiguity by utilizing interpretations from previous events that made sense (Seeger, et al., 2003).

While utilizing sensemaking in life events such as role shifts in the family and new work or shift changes that may impact the work-family context, emotions are closely tied and may influence sensemaking. Whether it is a mom going into the workforce or the dad taking care of the kids, emotions are both a part of the “commencement” and “outcome” of sensemaking (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006). Moreover, emotions may become more apparent when the flow of life is interrupted and changes (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006). Succinctly, emotions do influence sensemaking, which warrants more exploration in the understanding of the relationship between emotions both in the organization and in the family context of mother and father role shifts (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006). Furthermore, working different shifts where the whole family may not be together may be a difficult time emotionally for the mother and father, so sensemaking is imperative to utilize so that both parents may foster an interpretation of this life event.

For most mothers and fathers, a primary concern is their roles in both the family and the workplace (Buzzanell et al., 2005). Mothers going out into the workforce stress that they are not only working to get themselves a paycheck but to also provide for their family as well (Buzzanell et al.). Likewise, a concern for more child care from the father figure may encompass a different sensemaking perspective for the father role as well. It is imperative to explore how the duality of sensemaking and emotion are communicated for both a mother and a father and how that may influence the mother or father role in work-family life balance.

### **Gender Roles**

Both men and women come from family, and family is a crucial driving force in the acquisition of gender role attitudes and behaviors (Ivey, 1995). Theoretically, Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) noted that “role theory states that experiencing ambiguity and/or conflict within a role (inrole)

will result in an undesirable state” (p. 351). These perpetuations of role attitude dictate who does what tasks and chores. Traditional gender roles are prescribed that differentiate work and family responsibilities, the time and energy perception that is needed to fulfill the objective conditions of the role, and effort and management of gender role performance in a work-family context (Anderson & Leslie, 1991; Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). For instance, a man may say he worked twelve hours in a day, and will not vacuum the inside of the house. Traditionally, this family profile may show that an individual places high importance on work and low importance on family household roles (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). Moreover, these role expectations all communicate past role development from both their parents on who does what chores around the house as these roles are culturally normative (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). In short, role development is all done through communication.

Baumbach, Forward, & Hart (2006) articulated that “communication functions as the fundamental building block of the family unit” (p. 396). Family members develop routines that they themselves were brought up with in which these rules guide them in knowing what to communicate, and whom to communicate to, in order to get a task done in the way that they think is appropriate and effective (Forward, Sansom-Livolsi, & McGovern, 2008). Additionally, sensemaking and emotions influence role communication in a work-family context, as economic, social, and personal resources challenge parent role characteristics along with well-being, value, and commitment of the role (Anderson & Leslie, 1991; Cinamon & Rich, 2002). Sheely (2010) further argued that “role theory asserts that resources and constraints found in family and work environments will shape a parent’s ability to successfully fulfill both roles” (p. 59). Women and men shape their successful or unsuccessful role performance by their energy, personal investment, and sense of harmony that is made sense of from an understanding of roles in the spheres of work, children, and taking care of the house (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Hochschild, & Machung 1989; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). That said, previous fatherhood research will be discussed followed by prior motherhood research.

### **Balancing Fatherhood**

Fatherhood, work, and family life are interwoven. The element of fatherhood consists of shared norms, values, and beliefs that shape what fathers communicate (LaRossa, 1988). These dimensions link a father’s well-being and involvement in the work-family relationship context (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). Daly and Palkovitz (2004) contend “men and women have begun to embrace greater responsibility in realms where

prior generations practiced a greater degree of gender segregation” (p. 211). Nowadays, both the man and the woman are working together more than yesteryear because they may be getting more accustomed to sharing roles. Likewise, fathers of today are expected to be a major parental figure and display paternal behaviors that match motherhood behaviors in compensating time with children that is lost from employment (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006; LaRossa, 1988). In addition, cleaning up after dinner is a household chore, but it is more about the nature of family and fatherhood that changes the composition of masculinity boundaries (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009).

Moreover, the concept of being a breadwinner is being negotiated differently. Past research has documented that at one time, two-thirds of fathers were breadwinners whereas currently there are less than that (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006). The changing economy has limited the potential for strictly being in a breadwinning role (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006). Historically, these patterns of the man being the breadwinner and the woman being the caregiver are changing and warrant exploration into how they are changing (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009).

Likewise, household patterns are transitioned socially around a significant change in fatherhood roles (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006). Succinctly, the sole breadwinning role is less common (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006). Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) found that “the men in our study framed work-family balance as both work and life integration and situated their fatherhood amidst webs of responsibilities” (p. 570). These responsibilities may entail engagement (one-on-one interactions and helping the children with their homework) accessibility (cooking and being available to other child needs), and responsibility (caring for the children’s welfare), that create a paternal identity (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006; LaRossa, 1988; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). In essence, the fatherhood role is changing to consist of more responsibility at home. With mothers working more, it is imperative that fatherhood is not disconnected in the fundamental family life shift because fatherhood features create unique child development contributions (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006; LaRossa, 1988; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). This spectrum of role responsibility encompasses norms, routines, and the relationship between how they are communicated between a man and a woman in the further construction of the work-family context. Thus, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1: How does a father make sense of balancing his work and family role?

RQ2: How do emotions influence balancing a fathering and work role?

### **Balancing Motherhood**

Motherhood and the workplace communicate a balance of role expectations. This work-family context balance is socially constructed from a competing and cooperating viewpoint (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001). Understanding and explaining the work-family context involves the balance of women's occupational and home roles (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001; Marks & Houston, 2002). Moreover, the psychological well-being, accessibility, and closeness of motherhood in the work-family context are defined and contested through the adaptation of social and structural factor influences (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001; Marks & Houston, 2002). These factors are conveyed with traditional and egalitarian attitudes, beliefs, and values in which gender is socially practiced, while also giving meaning and understanding to different aspects of work-family life (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001; Marks & Houston, 2002).

For a mother out in the working world, she is still expected to communicate the nurturing side of family (Buzzanell et al., 2005). Likewise, Sheely (2010) articulated that "when parents work, they occupy multiple roles, including those of parent, employee, and spouse" (p. 60). Even though more women are in the workforce, they still often need to be the main care provider in the family for children and also for daily housekeeping duties (Ingerid, 2006). Indeed, while women work, there is still the expectation of their expression and construction of child care in the work-family balance (Buzzanell, 2005). This balancing of motherhood and a career may create a higher potential for more complex emotions than just one aspect of a woman's role in work-family life (Buzzanell et al.).

In retrospect, Waner, Winter, and Breshears (2005) claimed that "mothers and fathers...have to deal with supervision needs and other scheduling problems such as doctor's appointments" (p. 146). These tasks constitute a change in the work-family context and influence sensemaking, emotions, and role shifts. These role expectations change when fathers and mothers work more hours, or non-traditional shifts. Sheely (2010) contended "working long hours may also lead to parents having less time to devote to their families" (p. 62). Likewise, a work-family context is one in which juggling work and family demands may stress important consequences for the motherhood and fatherhood roles (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). That said, Buzzanell et al., (2005) argued that future research should investigate "the emotional labor and emotion work involved in transitions into working motherhood" (p. 279). Thus, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ3: How does a mother make sense of balancing her work and family role?

RQ4: How do emotions influence balancing a mothering and work role?

## **Method**

### **Data Collection**

Both purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants for this research (Tracy, 2013), as 34 participants were recruited from a medium-sized southeastern university. Participants met research criteria if they have children. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face ( $n = 16$ ), while other ( $n = 18$ ) on-line questionnaires were taken. This sample size is consistent with other qualitative research samples (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007). All procedures were institutional review board (IRB) approved with participants' confidentiality assured. The face-to-face interviews lasted between 10 and 40 minutes while the on-line questionnaires lasted approximately 8 to 20 minutes, using a semi-structured interview guide (Tracy, 2013). The intent of the open-ended questions on the semi-structured interview guide was to gain an understanding of how participants make sense of their work-life balances and emotions, from a gender perspective. Of the 34 participants, 18 were female and 16 were male, ranging in age from 19 to 54 years old ( $M = 27$ ). The ethnicities of participants ranged from Caucasian ( $n = 13$ ), African-American ( $n = 18$ ), and Asian ( $n = 3$ ). The face-to-face interviews were transcribed, and the on-line questionnaires were printed, which resulted in 132 double-spaced pages of analyzable text.

### **Data Analysis**

The social construction of a gendered perspective on making sense of emotions and work-life role balance was thematically analyzed (Dougherty, 2001). Buzzanell, Meisenbach, Remke, Liu, Bowers, and Conn (2005) stated that a thematic analysis is "defined as a theme in a patterned semantic unit in which commonalities and differences among participants' discourses and attendant practices emerged through repeated readings by the authors" (p. 266). The emergent themes emerge from the context in which the phenomenon is experienced from the participant (Dougherty, 2001). The selective approach from Van Manen (1990), reduction method by Lindlof (1995), and a thematic analysis technique by Owen (1984), were used in developing and analyzing themes (Dougherty, 2001).

In the selective approach Dougherty (2001) noted "what statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon being described?" (p. 378). This question is asked as the text is read several times (Dougherty, 2001). These revealing statements are circled (Van Manen, 1990) and effectively analyzed with reduction (Dougherty, 2001; Lindlof, 1995). Potential emerging themes are reduced by sorting the data, identifying possible themes as emergent labels, and rechecking the data for strong and persistent themes (Dougherty, 2001). The emergent labels that captured the

essence of the participants' experiences with constant support were identified (Dougherty, 2001). Likewise, in the multiphase analysis, a theme was noted in relational discourse with *recurrence* (the same meaning thread in at least two parts of a report), *repetition* (the repeated use of key words or phrases), and/or *forcefulness* (the intensity placed on a written message over others that was assumed to make sense of their relations in discourse) (Hosek & Thompson, 2009; Owen, 1984). Sensemaking theory, emotions literature, and role theory were referred back to in order to connect themes, concepts, and categories (Hosek & Thompson, 2009).

Taken together, verifying the research process is common and essential to ensure that the interpretation of the data is both accurate and reflects the participants' views, thus limiting researcher bias (Cowan, 2013; Hosek & Thompson, 2009; Thomas, 2006). Four participants ( $n = 4$ ) responded to the accuracy and reflection of the data interpretation by reading over the exemplars to ensure the researcher chose the appropriate theme that best addressed the participant views (Hosek & Thompson, 2009).

## **Results**

The purpose of the current study was to explore how men and women make sense of role transitions and emotions in a work-life balance. Research question one asked how does balancing a fathering role influence sensemaking.

### **Balancing Breadwinning**

The key theme, *balancing breadwinning* emerged. Performing a balance of a breadwinner and a fatherhood role meant negotiating how time was managed. A respondent stated:

I started my own auto detailing business, so the transition for me is having a full-time job and a small business. I am in a single father role. Having a full-time job and a small business is a means to provide for my kids that will improve my quality of life for my family. When the opportunity came along to start my own business, it was not something that I was looking for to leave the fast-food industry. To balance this time at the detail shop, I had to hire someone to keep the ship running because there was just no way that I can be at the detailing shop and the fast-food restaurant at the same time. It was a blessing in itself where all I had to do was basically follow-up with the person I hired to run the detail shop. In balancing being a general manager in a fast-food restaurant, owning a detail shop, taking my son to baseball practice, and drumming at church, I am able to balance these things by keep pushing because

I know opportunities are not coming from the sky to pay bills, so I balance everything.

Balancing for this participant meant having help to run the auto detailing shop in order to better balance being a breadwinner and a dad. Another participant stated:

being that I was a doctor working out of four offices in two southeastern states, my wife took care of everything; she would have supper for me when I got home. We would sit together, talk, watch TV, and since my kids would stay awake to see me, I would also visit with them, and then we would go to bed around 10 o'clock. The family balance was when I was at home. Before I went to work, I would take my kids to school, spend time with my wife, and go to work. I would get home usually between 10 and 10:30.

On the weekends, we would go to the movies, but when it is time to work, it is time to work. When my older son got sick with cancer, I made sure not to work. If he needed to go somewhere for treatment we went. When I was working, my wife made sure to tell me what was going on; she would take care of the kids, and told me to not worry about it. It was stressful. When my son passed away, I had a stroke, which may have been stress-related. I did spend a lot of time with my son when he was sick driving him back-and-forth to treatment.

Being a breadwinner, especially when a family member gets sick presents a shift in work-family balance. Next we discover the explanation of the second research question.

### **Accomplishing Emotional Management**

Research question two asked how do emotions influence a fathering role. The key theme, *accomplishing emotional management* emerged as meaningful. A respondent conveyed this theme with a rich narrative that stated: a positive emotion came from a level of fear, I guess.

Being a fast-food restaurant manager, owning a auto detail shop, and being a church drummer comes from the ability to provide; trying to meet all obligations, not just financial. So, the fear came from will I have enough clients to make it through the winter time. With me working a lot, my kids are supportive of what was going on because they see me as their first hero. So as long as I stay positive, my kids will be positive. My son is in touch with emotions. When he sees me down, or if I have a certain expression on my face, he will come up and give me a hug; he knows and sees my routines. I guess he can sense when I need a hug every now and then. I, also, rehearse drumming several times a week at my church. I do try to make arrangements for my kids, so they won't be at the church while I am practicing. But the negative emotion actually comes in when I do not



have them with me. I would rather have them with me at drumming. So, the personal emotion towards myself is am I doing too much. So, with emotions, you have to keep the faith, keep calm; you have to realize that you will hit speed bumps, obstacles, but you have to weigh the positives against the negatives. You cannot let one negative moment destroy what you are working for, or what you are trying to accomplish; you have to control your emotions, so that it does not have a negative effect in church, on your family, my fast-food restaurant and auto detailing shop team. So, I have to stay focused, and try to do things in a positive way, so that I stay positive. I work and provide for my kids, and trying to do something positive is not always going to be blue skies. So, do not give up when going through a dark moment. It is all about the kids; it does not matter if you are a mother or a father, at the end of the day that mother or father is their first hero.

Being aware of how to positively manage emotions in a work-life balance were important for the participant to be seen as a hero to his children.

Another respondent stated: I did most of my work in a large metro area. A lot of my patients had a huge amount of diabetes problems. So, a diabetic patient may not see very good because they did not take care of themselves. I felt bad when they do not see good. I liked my job and felt good about it when I could help patients. This one lady had a really large tumor and I referred her to an eye surgeon, which had she not had the surgery, she would not have made it more than a week. So, you find these tumors and you say, oh this is great because they are better now, and that is good. Well, from a family standpoint, my son went to work for me; he got to watch what I did as an eye doctor. I like that he worked with me. My son worked with me on Sundays. He would hear about my patients. He would actually assist with some of the patients too. Since, I worked so much, I now feel bad because all of my kids grew up and I did not get to see them a lot, except the son that worked with me.

Accomplishing the management of emotions was experienced from both a work and family perspective because the participant felt that a difference was being made in the patients he helped and also how he liked the opportunity to share that experience with his son while feeling bad that he did not get to share that experience with his other kids.

### **Performing a Work and Family Balance of Mothering**

Research question three asked how does balancing a mothering role influence sensemaking. The key theme, *performing a work and family balance of mothering* emerged as meaningful. Whether it was being a mother or a daughter, these participants performed a complex mothering role. For instance, one respondent stated the complexities of how performing a mothering role was balanced in her family: in my family, as each daughter leaves, the next daughter assumes a mothering role. So, the eldest daughter

was responsible for making sure that all of the kids were taken care of. My mom and dad did not want to do tasks so my brothers, sisters, and I cooked dinner and cleaned. Because I was working 11 hour shifts as a waitress, it took me out of the mothering role, which I should have never been in. This forced my parents to be parents, which sounds terrible, but it gave me more independence. My mom left, so my parents are divorced. So, at Christmas, I took my normal role of head and bracketed out times that we could have dinner together. It was really interesting balancing all of that, and taking work schedules into account. So, it started out with a lot of frustration and anger, but once everyone got used to what was going on, it is comfortable for now, for the most part. When these families go through these transitions, it is really about being comfortable with change, and understanding that everybody is frustrated. It is important to be okay with compromise.

This participant learned how to balance being in a mothering role and brought her family closer together by performing that role.

Another respondent stated: my last child was born two months premature, so I stayed home for the next nine months. After that, my husband left. So, I had to take on the role of father as well as doing all of the disciplining, cooking, helping with homework, and being the chauffeur. So, I had to get a new job, which was teaching. I had to bring grading home every night and although I was home, I did not touch my schoolwork until I put my kids to bed. I did not want grading to interfere with my mothering. So, I would start grading at 9pm and grade until two or three in the morning. So, most nights, I was grading essays constantly. It was tough, but I was not going to let that get in the way of what I felt was an opportunity for bonding with my kids. I was willing to have less sleep and have quality time with my kids. My kids come first. So, it is possible to balance.

The importance of being a mother followed by a teacher was emphasized in the work-life balance context.

### **Emotional Attachment**

Research question four asked how do emotions influence a mothering role. The theme, *emotional attachment* emerged as meaningful. Whether it is a mother or a daughter, the mothering role can still be performed in a concern for others' well-being. As one participant explained: because I was working at my family's restaurant a lot, I got a lot of stress. Even though my dad was the restaurant president, he did not like to execute things, so he would want my mom to execute things, which she was not capable of doing; so my dad relied more on me to take care of things. Taking care of things put a lot of pressure on me. So, the tension between my parents greatly elevated, and I got really depressed. So, since I was managing everything, and taking care of everything, I saw more. So, some of the things I kept to myself. I should

have told my parents about the things I saw, but if I did tell my parents, it would increase their anxieties, so I became more depressed because I had an emotional attachment, so I got unhappy and depressed.

Attaching emotions to others' well-being is imperative for this participant but their own emotion also affected their mothering role performance.

Another participant stated: it was my first year of teaching, so I felt scattered a lot. I also had to get a babysitter because I had to be to work before the kids' daycare opened. Since the kids did not like the babysitter, it made me feel guilty. It was a time in our lives where my kids were first learning that I was person, not just a mom. It was a tough pill for them to swallow. Because I enjoyed teaching, I was better at mothering, and because I was better at mothering, I was better in my family relationships. What I did at home bled back at work. Reframing my views and perspectives helped me to know that when one door closes, and one window opens, you better go through it. Because I was satisfied in my teaching job, it brought my kids and I closer. Focusing on the positive aspects brought lots of laughter. My kids and I had a great time.

Being emotionally attached to being a mother and a teacher were negotiated with an optimistic outlook. Framing a positive outlook meant emotional closeness both at work and at home. In all, these participants revealed how making sense of a work-life balance is communicated in their role and how emotions influence those roles.

### **Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion**

This research explored how men and women made sense of balancing breadwinning, accomplishing emotional management, performing a balance of mothering, and emotional attachment. These findings foster theoretical and practical implications.

As sensemaking theory suggests, balancing breadwinning with home, family, or mothering, creates enactment (the preconceptions of the work-life context), selection (choosing interpretations), and retention (making sense of those interpretations) (Bisel & Arterburn, 2012; Bryant & Sias, 2011; Coffelt, Smith, Sollitto, & Payne, 2010; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003; Weick, 1995). Whether being a single father, being a doctor, assuming a mothering role as a daughter, or a single mother, these participants made sense of a work-life context by acting out their experiences in order to choose the most sensible interpretation that made the most sense to them (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003). Taken together, balancing being a breadwinner and father, or performing a balance of mothering meant that fathers and mothers want the best for their kids while doing what is important to the parent while also teaching their kids the value of balancing life with the priority that family is first followed by work second. Furthermore, it was discovered

that the value of hard work, being a provider, nurturer, and disciplinarian are important for constructing family bonding and a positive connection and outcome in balancing a work-life context. Conversely, if work-life balance is not balanced effectively, the performance of breadwinner and a mothering role is missed out on family cohesion, bonding, and connection.

These findings are important because the challenge of work-family balance entails not only the stress and financial pressure of family obligations, such as unpaid family work and childcare, but also forming and maintaining supportive family relationships in the face of workplace demands so the future workforce (children) can learn, adapt, and relate to the multiple demands of life (Bovenberg, 2005; Craig & Sawrikar, 2009; Valcour, 2007). These findings are encouraging because the social construction of gender in mothering and fathering is embedded in the perceived social expectations of the household structure, family interaction, and role identification of the provider, constructs personal characteristics (resources that buffer against stress) that involve a cognitive (one's degree of success) and an affective (positive feelings and satisfaction) component, to effectively respond to the work-family role balance (Coltrane, 2000; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Maurer & Pleck, 2006; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Valcour, 2007). Likewise, these findings are consistent with work-family research, which point out that the child's developmental outcomes and parents in a mothering or a fathering role reported greater satisfaction, and psychological well-being when roles were balanced (Grandey, & Cropanzano, 1999; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Elvin-Novak, & Thomsson, 2001; Vancour, 2009). Interestingly, the findings in this research suggest that because families are emotional systems, understanding the mothering and fathering role during a transition context fosters the negotiation and expression of emotion in a work-life context (Elvin-Novak, & Thomsson, 2001; Larson & Gillman, 1999; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000).

Role theorists and emotion researchers argued that experiencing ambiguity and constraint in a work-family context will shape role fulfillment, especially while experiencing emotionality (Dougherty, & Drumheller, 2006; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Sheely, 2010). The findings of how people are accomplishing emotional management and emotional attachment in this research mirrors previous research suggesting that managing emotions is complex in the real-life emotional experiences of parent-child interactions that entail the importance of emotional regulation and emotional attachment behavior in parenting practices in the work-life context (Bretherton, 1985; Kuebli, & Fivush, 1992; Laible, 2010; Scherer, Wranik, Sangsue, Tran, & Scherer, 2004; Thompson & Calkins, 1996). Clearly, the current study suggests participants manage the tension of being positive with their job, parents, and children while controlling emotions, accomplishing what must be done in the work-life balance of family, staying focused on the task-at-

hand, and attaching emotions both in the work and family context to make sense of their dual roles.

Specifically, the current research discovered how regulating emotion (the emotional self-control, social competence, cognitive performance, and management of stress) is multifaceted with maintaining a personal well-being in that even when participants were in negative situations, they controlled being negative because maintaining good relations in a work-family context was important to them (Thompson & Calkins, 1996). Moreover, the participants illustrated individual strengths such as being a hero and showing vulnerabilities, such that implicit emotion-coaching was being constructed with a heightened sense of emotional awareness, for instance by a son giving his dad a hug (Gottman, Fainsilber-Katz, & Hooven, 1996; Thompson, & Calkins, 1996). In other words, the socialization of emotion process in emotion-coaching parents teaches their kids about meta-emotion (the feelings and thoughts about emotion), which suggests an opportunity to construct a realization of the importance of emotions in family relationships (Gottman, Fainsilber-Katz, Hooven, 1996; Thompson, & Calkins, 1996; Kuebli, & Fivush, 1992).

Likewise, controlling emotions in this work-life balance context suggested that confiding in someone for social support, and striving to maintain a positive disposition by realizing how positive and negative emotions affect the work-life context for the self-image of the participant and the family, strengthened their self-esteem because positive outcomes were obtained by not only talking about how emotions are self-regulated but also managed by others (Thompson & Calkins, 1996). A cohesive and warm emotional attitude and climate validated high quality emotions, fathering and mothering roles willing to convey empathy, which created self-understanding and effective work-life functioning of their roles, improved psycho-social well-being, and optimal emotion regulation in the emotional attachment to the success and accomplishment of the work and family role (Laible, 2010; Thompson, & Calkins, 1996). Importantly, the participants in this research illustrated the importance of how making sense of balancing work and family constructs an emotional bond and connection which allowed for a greater understanding of just how important balancing the value of work and family can be.

Even though collecting qualitative data yielded fruitful findings, there are some research limitations. First, the on-line questionnaire constrained data collection with participant fatigue, time commitment, answering the questions in-depth, and face-to-face interaction with the researcher. Although this research discovered important findings, especially from the face-to-face interactions between researcher and participant, qualitative research is limited by size and sample composition (Cowan, 2013). That said, future research should examine, from a quantitative standpoint,

how men and women transition in a work-family balance context. Future research should, also, seek to explore the child's perspective of the work-life context. Moreover, extending this research into the organization would be fruitful because participants think about their families when they are working. In other words, future research should address how the work-life balance context affects emotions and making sense of role transitions in the organization. Future research should also examine how listening, emotions, and advice-giving affect the work-life balance context. Lastly, a potential fruitful pathway could further explore how work and family gets negotiated perhaps through compromise, tensions, and or dialectics.

Theoretically and practically, this research provided rich gendered perspectives on the importance of work-life balance. Investigating work-life balance from a gender perspective proved fruitful because whether a man or a woman is in a fathering or a mothering role, building relationships in the work-life context are influenced by emotions, the teaching of emotions, and making sense of the importance of dual roles in a fast-paced world (Hosek & Thompson, 2009). Equally important, reducing role ambiguity in work-life balance provides stability, shaping role success, and is retrospective in making sense of life (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Sheely, 2010; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). On a practical note, this research may be applied to organizations because how an individual handles transitioning roles and emotions in the family context likely transitions into the work context. Moreover, with the pressure to move toward a swift organization socialization process, an applied communication approach to making sense of the contours of everyday work-life phenomena shape women's and men's work-life balance practice in which work-life imbalances are negotiated with energy, optimism, and hope (Kirby & Buzzanell, 2014; Weick & Browning, 1991; Weick, 1995; Weick & Ashford, 2001). Thus, as life becomes even more influenced by technology, balancing work and family relationships and the emotions that are interwoven between these contexts will continue to be important.

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## **An Analysis of the Impact of Preparation Assignments in a Public Speaking Course**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to find out whether pre-class quizzes or pre-class writing prompts had a stronger impact on student learning in a public speaking course by comparing five outcomes: student engagement, completion of preparation assignments, final exam scores, final speech grades, and affective learning. Data from 165 participants showed that there were no differences in student engagement or learning based on which preparation assignment was assigned. Results have ramifications on course design and suggest that students benefit equally from both types of preparation assignments.*

*Keywords: communication, learning, preparation, quizzes, writing*

### **An Analysis of the Impact Preparation Exercises in the Basic Course**

One of the challenges college-level instructors face is getting students to read the textbook before coming to class in order to allow class time to be filled with deeper learning through discussion and engaging activities. In public speaking classes that teach both theory and skills, getting student to do pre-class preparation work is especially important because peer workshops and speech performances often take a substantial amount of class time. Previous research has shown that frequent pre-class quizzes and responses to pre-class writing prompts can have a substantial impact on student preparation and learning in a public speaking course or introductory communication skills course (Broeckelman-Post et al., 2014; Johnson & Mrowka, 2010; Jones, Simonds, & Hunt, 2005; Rattenborg, Simonds, & Hunt, 2005). However, research has not shown whether one of these types of preparation assignments is more beneficial, so the purpose of this study is to compare the effectiveness of these two pre-class preparation assignments in a public speaking curriculum.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Frequent Quizzes**

Frequent low-stakes multiple choice quizzes are one of the most utilized and researched strategies for motivating students to prepare for

class and enhancing long-term learning. When quizzes are given frequently in class, students attend class more frequently and come to class better prepared (Connor-Greene, 2000; McDougall & Granby, 1996), have a foundational understanding of the material before class (Cooper, Tyser, & Sandheinrich, 2007), participate more in class discussion and are more engaged in class (McDougall & Granby, 1996), feel more prepared for the final exam (Johnson, 2007), enjoy the class more (Francis & Schreiber, 2008), and give more favorable ratings for the instructor and the course (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, & Kulik, 1991). Quizzes also impact how instructors teach the course. Instructors who use frequent quizzes can more easily identify student weaknesses or points of confusion (Haigh, 2007), can allow classes to build more progressively and work toward deeper learning (Haigh, 2007), and spend more time doing class activities and less time lecturing (Fernald, 2004). Frequent quizzing increases long-term learning (Brown, Roediger, & McDaniel, 2014) and increases subsequent final exam scores (Banger-Drowns et al., 1991; Broeckelman-Post et al., 2014).

Research also provides suggestions about the formatting and timing of the quizzes. Quizzes have more impact on learning when they are given before the content is covered in class (Narloch, Garbin, & Turnage, 2006) and are most effective when given closer to when the material is covered (Hadsell, 2009). Online quizzes can be as effective as pencil-and-paper quizzes given in class, though students have stronger long-term learning effects when quizzes are taken without access to notes (Broeckelman-Post et al., 2014). This is likely due to effortful retrieval; when someone has to retrieve information from memory when taking quiz or test, they are more likely to remember that information long-term (Brown et al., 2014; Chan, 2009).

Though most research on the impact of frequent quizzing on learning is focused on the impact of multiple choice exams, some research evaluates the effectiveness of more complex retrieval tasks and suggests activities that require more effort might have a stronger effect on learning (Kang, McDermott, & Roediger, 2007), including pre-class writing prompts.

### **Pre-Class Writing Prompts**

Many terms have been used to describe pre-class writing prompts in existing research: short answer questions (Kang et al., 2007), generative processing quizzes (Johnson & Mrowka, 2010), application essays (Jones, et al., 2005), reading objectives, extended comments, and participation sheets (Rattenborg et al., 2005). Though the format and frequency of the specific assignments in each of these studies vary, they have two characteristics in common: (1) students work at the application, analysis, and synthesis levels of Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl's (1956) taxonomy, and (2) students must connect course concepts to their own experiences or other events.

Pre-class writing prompts increase long-term retention (Kang et al., 2007), increase cognitive learning (Johnson & Mrowka, 2010), require developing connections between course concepts and mass media events (Jones et al., 2005), enhance student engagement and participation in discussion and activities (Rattenborg, et al., 2005), and can build critical thinking skills (Huffman, Carson, & Simonds, 2000). Writing prompts push students to engage in elaborative learning processes that help them connect the course content to previous knowledge and personal experience (Brown et al., 2014) through more effortful learning processes (Kang et al., 2007).

In sum, frequent quizzing and pre-class writing prompts have well-established benefits and have been shown to be effective in the basic course (e.g., Broeckelman-Post et al., 2014; Johnson & Mrowka, 2010; Jones et al., 2005; Rattenborg et al., 2005), but we do not know whether one strategy is more effective than the other for improving student engagement, learning, and performance.

#### **Engagement**

Student engagement has been defined as “the quality of the effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to the desired outcomes,” (Hu & Kuh, 2002, p. 555). Student engagement has been positively linked to critical thinking, learning, academic performance, and retention (e.g., Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006). Previous research shows instructor behaviors can either positively or negatively impact student engagement (Broeckelman-Post et al., 2016; Mazer, 2013), and teacher responses to student engagement can in turn create a more supportive and motivating learning environment (Reeve, 2013).

Frequent quizzes and pre-class writing prompts create opportunities for students to engage with course content outside of class and increase time on task, which in turn creates additional opportunities for discussion and activities in class. These activities are associated with higher levels of engagement, but we do not know whether frequent quizzes or pre-class writing prompt are more successful in stimulating self-reported engagement, or whether students are more likely to complete quizzes or respond to pre-class writing prompts (engagement performance), so we pose the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a difference in student engagement for students who complete pre-class quizzes versus those who respond to pre-class writing prompts?

RQ2: Is there a difference in completion rates for students who complete pre-class quizzes versus those who respond to pre-class writing prompts?

#### **Cognitive Learning**

Cognitive learning is the domain in which mental skills or knowledge grow, and includes six sequentially more challenging levels of learning:

knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom et al., 1956). Though cognitive learning is the primary outcome of most educational endeavors, measuring cognitive learning has been the subject of much debate. Because research that relied heavily on self-report measures of learning has raised concerns (Hess, Smythe, & Communication 451, 2001), this study follows the lead of other researchers that have used performance-based measures of learning (e.g., Kuznekoff & Titsworth, 2013) by using final exam scores and final speech performances as measures of cognitive learning to answer the following research questions:

RQ3: Is there a difference in final exam scores for students who complete pre-class quizzes versus those who respond to pre-class writing prompts?

RQ4: Is there a difference in speech performance for students who complete pre-class quizzes versus those who respond to pre-class writing prompts?

### **Affective Learning**

Affective learning is the domain that deals with emotions and attitudes, and is defined as “a feeling, tone, emotion, or degree of acceptance or rejection” (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). In communication research, affective learning has been typically conceptualized as the degree to which students like a particular course (affective learning) and a particular instructor (affect for instructor), consistent with the dimensions proposed in McCroskey’s (1994) Affective Learning Measure. Because course structures, such as requiring participation, can impact students’ affective learning, which then impacts cognitive learning (Frisby, Weber, & Beckner, 2014), pre-class preparation assignments will also likely impact affective learning, so we pose the following question:

RQ5: Is there a difference in affective learning for students who complete pre-class quizzes versus those who respond to pre-class writing prompts?

## **Method**

### **Procedures**

Participants for this study were students enrolled in one of eight selected sections of the public speaking course at a large public university. In order to reduce variance due to course format, all eight selected sections met in a face-to-face format once per week and were taught by experienced instructors. In four of these sections, students completed a 5-point multiple-choice online quiz in Blackboard for each of the 21 chapters of the textbook before class on the day that the reading was due. In the other four sections, students were required to respond to three short written prompts for each of



the 21 chapters of the textbook and upload those responses to Blackboard before class on the day that the reading was due. The quiz questions were written primarily at the knowledge and comprehension levels of Bloom et al.'s (1956) taxonomy, while the written prompts were written primarily at the application, analysis, and synthesis levels. During the semester, all students completed pre and post-course surveys, and those surveys were merged with course gradebooks at the individual student level before this analysis was conducted.

### Participants

A total of 165 participants were included in this study, 77 enrolled in sections with quizzes, and 88 enrolled in sections with written prompts. Of the participants who responded to the pre-survey, 68.2% ( $N = 75$ ) were male, 39.1% ( $N = 43$ ) were first-year students, 42.7% ( $N = 47$ ) identified themselves as white or Caucasian, and the mean age was 19.74 years. The participants included a variety of majors from across the university, but were predominantly engineers (55.5%,  $N = 61$ ) since the engineering program requires all students to take public speaking instead of allow students to choose between public speaking and a hybrid communication skills course.

### Instrumentation

**Student Engagement.** Student engagement was measured using the Student Engagement Scale developed by Mazer (2012). This scale includes 13 items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Sample items include, "Participated during class discussions by sharing your thoughts/opinions," and "Thought about how you can utilize the course material in your everyday life" (p. 109). The overall measure typically has an overall reliability of  $\alpha = .90$  (Mazer, 2012), and in this study, the measure had a reliability of  $\alpha = .88$ .

**Completion Rates.** The preparation activity completion rates were calculated by summing the scores of all of the pre-class quizzes or pre-class written responses. The 21 assignments in each class had a total possible combined value of 105 points. Because students were allowed to re-take the quizzes until the deadline until they received full credit, and because students who put in a good faith effort to respond to the pre-class writing prompts earned full credit for completion, the total point value reflects the amount of student engagement with the course material outside of class over the course of the semester.

**Cognitive Learning.** Cognitive learning was measured using two types of performance measures: the final exam score and the final speech grade. The final exam was a cumulative assessment consisting of 100 multiple-choice questions that were evenly distributed across the book's content and

included questions that were mostly at the knowledge, comprehension, and application levels of Bloom et al.'s taxonomy (1956). The final speech was a persuasive speech in which students advocated for an organization that is helping to address a significant social issue, and was graded using a 125 point standardized rubric broken into categories that focused on content in the introduction, body, and conclusion, in addition to categories on audience analysis, speech structure, and delivery.

**Affective Learning.** Affective learning was measured using McCroskey's (1994) Affective Learning Measure. This measure includes 16 items, eight of which measure affective learning, and eight of which measure instructor evaluation using a seven-point semantic differential scale. Sample items include, "I feel the class content is bad/good," and "My likelihood of taking future courses in this area is would/would not." This scale typically has a reliability above  $\alpha = .90$  (McCroskey, 1994), and in this study, the reliability was  $\alpha = .90$ .

## **Results**

In order reduce familywise inflation of alpha, a MANOVA with one independent variable (preparation strategy) and five dependent variables (student engagement, completion rates, final exam, final speech grade, and affective learning) was conducted. Box's M test for the equality of covariance matrixes was not significant at the .001 level [ $F(15, 21449.61) = 2.40, p = .002$ ], so Wilk's Lambda values were used. Multivariate tests showed that there were no significant main effects for preparation strategy [ $F(5, 75) = 0.89, p = .49, \eta_p^2 = .06, \text{power} = .30$ ]. Tests of between-subjects effects further confirmed that there were no significant differences between students who completed pre-class quizzes and those to completed pre-class writing prompts. For student engagement,  $F(1, 79) = 0.52, p = .47, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . For completion of preparation assignments,  $F(1, 79) = 0.89, p = .35, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . For final exam scores,  $F(1, 79) = 0.04, p = .85, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . For final speech grade,  $F(1, 79) = 0.58, p = .45, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . For affective learning,  $F(1, 79) = 2.06, p = .16, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . Means and standard deviations are shown in Table 1.

<<INSERT TABLE 1 HERE>>

## **Discussion**

Previous research has shown that using pre-class quizzes or pre-class writing prompts increases student learning preparation and learning (Broeckelman-Post et al., 2014; Johnson & Mrowka, 2010; Jones, Simonds, & Hunt, 2005; Rattenborg, Simonds, & Hunt, 2005), but had not established whether either preparation strategy had a stronger impact. This study found that there is no difference in the effectiveness of pre-class quizzes and pre-class

writing prompts in their impact on student engagement and learning. These results indicate that having students engage with course content and complete preparation assignments prior to coming to class is beneficial, regardless of the format of that assignment. This is consistent with previous research that suggests that the accountability for coming to class prepared might be one of the greatest contributions of quizzing (Connor-Greene, 2000).

However, even though the learning benefits are the same, there might be other reasons that instructors might prefer to use quizzes instead of written prompts, and vice versa. Responses to written prompts can take substantially more instructor grading time than multiple-choice quizzes, particularly when quizzes are administered and graded automatically in a learning management system. Additionally, in large standardized public speaking courses, multiple-choice quizzes can provide large-scale learning analytics opportunities for identifying areas that need curriculum revision. However, responses to written prompts can provide greater insight into students' thought processes and can be a source of student-generated examples that can be incorporated into the in-class discussion and activities. Additionally, written responses require greater student effort and engagement with the material, whereas students can more easily guess the quiz answers or simply retake the quizzes until they get the correct score, even without doing the accompanying reading and preparation.

As the technology available in Learning Management Systems continues to develop, and as universities push to expand fully online course offerings, further research should be done to consider whether it might be possible to utilize those technologies to enhance student engagement and learning even more. For example, it is possible that embedding a quiz into a learning module that also includes a video lecture and media-based examples might have an even strong impact on student engagement and learning. Additionally, further experimentation should be done to find out whether allowing limited versus unlimited quiz-taking impacts student reading and preparation for class. Additional research should be conducted to determine if pre-class quizzes or pre-class writing prompts are equally effective in other communication courses beyond public speaking as colleges and universities expand requirements to include courses like interpersonal and intercultural communication.

One of the limitations to this study is that it did not include a true control group that did not complete pre-class quizzes or pre-class writing prompts. Because previous research has shown that students in the basic communication course benefit from pre-class quizzes and pre-class writing prompts (e.g., Broeckelman-Post et al., 2014; Johnson & Mrowka, 2010; Jones et al., 2005; Rattenborg et al., 2005), it would not have been ethical for us to knowingly provide some groups of students with the benefits of a known educational strategy while denying that benefit to others in a real classroom situation. However, the lack of a true control group means that we do not

know how strong the benefit of each intervention was compared to having no pre-class preparation activity, so future studies should consider comparing both of these preparation strategies to a true control group in a non-classroom setting.

### **Conclusion**

This study evaluated whether pre-class quizzes or pre-class writing prompts had a stronger benefit for student engagement and learning in a public speaking course, and results showed that both strategies are equally effective. Public speaking instructors can be confident that choosing either strategy will have similar benefits, and now have evidence to help support whichever preparation strategy choice best fits the needs and constraints of their instructional context and curriculum.

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Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations by Group*

	Quizzes ( <i>N</i> = 77)		Writing Prompts ( <i>N</i> = 88)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Student Engagement	65.91	14.23	63.70	13.51
Preparation Assignment Completion	82.50	18.65	81.72	26.61
Final Exam Scores	81.22	10.76	81.61	9.11
Affective Learning	38.31	10.77	34.80	10.99
Final Speech Grade	108.25	19.76	105.20	20.78





## **Digital Doppelgängers: Exploring Our Personal Digital Storyworlds**

**Jason Matthew Zalinger, PhD (Assistant Professor and Program Director of Communication Studies - Mercy College)**

### **Abstract**

*New technologies change the recording of our life stories. They challenge us to make a coherent picture from so many digital puzzle pieces. Online, we have been given a rich variety of what I call “personal digital storyworlds” and seemingly unlimited space to collect personal data. However, we have not given users the conceptual and practical tools to help people create cohesive, meaningful life narratives out of all these digital fragments. Bottom line: we are very good at capturing data, but we are not good, yet, at helping people make sense of all these digital narrative elements. In this paper, I ask the audience to reimagine Gmail as a storyworld. The goal is to provide new insights that advance academic conversations about personal digital archives. Using interviews and reflections on my own Gmail archive, this paper makes the case that personal digital archives shape how we understand ourselves.*

*Keywords: storytelling, Gmail, design, archives, interviews*

### **Introduction**

We have all become digital storytellers, historians, editors, curators, co-authors, and autobiographers of our own lives. We are all quick-and-easy photographers and digital memory collectors. We are all now writers—we just don’t realize it. Thus, it is critical to examine and articulate how intimate communication technology archives and shapes one of the oldest, most important human communication practices because the stories we absorb shape our realities. This is a critical time because never before has the historical record been so complete. People that, arguably, would never write daily messages now transmit digital volumes each week. Critically, these messages often find themselves archived. Facebook and Google have become what I call personal digital storyworlds. Within our personal digital storyworlds, we are building and storing the various audio, visual, and textual elements that make up our life stories—and at any time—the blueprints (code) may change. The “software” that makes up the journal in my back pocket (paper) never changes, but, for example, Gmail’s interface changes constantly. Gmail is one of the most powerful current examples of the new ways our technology allows

us to write, record, and examine life stories. Using examples from in-depth interviews, this paper argues that Gmail has a narrative architecture, which supports our personal digital storyworlds. Further, there is a powerful question here about human life and meaning: I argue that all of this digital “stuff” must mean something because the alternative is simply too depressing. Do we want to live in a world in which we create hundreds of thousands of digital artifacts throughout our lifetimes, only to have them discarded when we die? There is self-knowledge in our Gmail storyworlds, and I think that with new tools we can begin to harness that knowledge and learn more about ourselves.

### **Gmail’s “Narrative Architecture”**

Writing about video games, renowned fan studies scholar Henry Jenkins wrote “In this short piece, I hope to offer a middle ground position between the ludologists and the narratologists, one that respects the particularity of this emerging medium—examining games less as stories than as spaces ripe with narrative possibility” (Jenkins 119). Jenkins conceptualization of game space as an environment rich with narrative possibility offers the perfect analogy to understand Gmail as a personal digital storyworld. This is what Gmail is: a giant narrative system “ripe with narrative possibility.” In addition, rather than use the traditional term *setting*, some scholars have begun to use *storyworld* to imply a narrative world “that accumulates, growing larger and more complex as we absorb the narrative” (Abbott 20). Jenkins also argued that game designers were “narrative architects” crafting not games but entire worlds. I believe that the Gmail design team are also narrative architects, even though they might not realize it. Combining Jenkins narrative architects with the concept of a storyworld produces Gmail as a kind of digital storyworld, designed by narrative architects (Gmail designers), constantly changing, ripe with narrative possibility and also ripe with self-reflective potential because we can build tools to help users explore their own archives and see patterns they may have never seen before. Gmail designers cannot and should not *tell* you what your life story is, but they can definitely make tools to help users *see* their storyworld more clearly.

Within this personal digital storyworld, we manage and archive the raw narrative materials of our digital life transcript. It is not the “final” building (i.e., complete life history) I am interested in but the brick and steel and concrete (i.e., narrative elements) as they flow into the construction site (Gmail), and little by little, become stuck together in various ways and at various times, and at any time—the blueprints (code) may change. Gmail is not a storytelling machine. It is not an automatic story generator. It is a dynamic narrative system for creating and archiving narrative elements. Even though Gmail may upset or complicate traditional notions of narrative elements, this, I argue, only makes it a richer more nuanced warehouse for

storing the raw materials of digital life. It is still the job of humans to tell the “final” narrative. But because of the incredible power of Gmail’s interface and rich set of evolving features, Gmail is an unparalleled life-story tool. German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey said that over time we experience a “coming-together-of-a-life,” meaning the kind of organic way our lifetime slowly coheres (qtd. in Kearney 4). I argue that Gmail is the most powerful current example of the new ways our technology allows us to write, record and examine, message-by-message, chat-by-chat, the slow but steady coming-together-of-a-digital-life.

This coming-together-of-a-digital-life is still the work of both time and human effort. Our lives come together only after many years and much thinking and sweat and striving. Gmail’s power as a narrative system does not necessarily rest in the present. Rather, it is after some time has passed, after certain long and stormy adventures that taking the time to look back at what Gmail has collected might be of great service to us. It might help us see more clearly the strange patterns we have developed and the ways that we, as characters in our own story, have changed over time.

Gmail is a dynamic storyworld because Google can change my storyworld’s interface at anytime. For example, Google Voice is a service that gives users a unique and free phone number. It gives users one voicemail inbox with online access and automatic transcription. If a friend calls either my regular number or my Google Voice phone number, it rings on my cell phone. If they left a voice mail, a voice mail alert would be automatically forwarded *to my inbox* where I can simply click and play the message. Now my storyworld has voices, not just text. It is multimedia and new narrative elements are always flowing into it from other people. Over a few years, I have archived roughly 367 voicemails in my Gmail storyworld. I don’t know what to do with them, but I *feel* that I have to save them all. And every time I save a message from my parents, I always have that horrible feeling that they are going to die soon. It’s absurd, but I don’t think I’m alone. Am I a digital hoarder? Am I too sentimental? Maybe. But they make it easy. Google and other services give us so many free tools and so much space that It seems foolish to delete the voices of the characters in my storyworld. Unlike Target or Wal-Mart, these oral narrative elements don’t take up space in my closet or garage. I don’t trip over them in the hallway. And unlike much of the nonsense that people purchase at these trendy tag-sales-in-a-box, my Gmail storyworld is *intimate*. It is filled with suspense, conflict, success, and failure. It is filled with the text messages of friends and voice mails from my grandmother. There are all-night, in-love chat sessions and brutal break-up emails. This is not hoarding. This is my life, my digital life, shadowing my “offline” life. Imagine a child today beginning his or her digital storyworld. It will include Facebook, of course. And maybe twitter and Gmail and text messages and voice mails, status updates and private messages. Now imagine that teenager at the age of

50 or 70 or 90. How will our culture change when everyone has a massive digital storyworld? Will people be able to search through their archives with powerful analysis tools and pinpoint the *exact* moments in their lives when they said something foolish or hurtful? How will we make sense of a lifetimes worth of narrative elements? How will we put together the stories of our lives? As I argued above, I am searching for self-knowledge in my storyworld. I am using the power of story to help me make sense of this strange, time-stamped digital trail I now have. And my personal digital storyworld grows everyday.

In order to understand more deeply and not just rely upon my own archives and storyworld, I interviewed six participants using a semi-structured interview method. The following sections describe some of what I consider the most interesting, illuminating themes that emerged from our discussions. Again, the story I am trying to tell, the argument that I am making, is that personal digital archives—in this case using Gmail as a focus—are more than merely a bunch of messages. They are rich storyworlds that contain vast amounts of personal meanings, and if we design useful systems, we can help people make sense of them. Along the way, I also offer some creative design recommendations that I think may illuminate our storyworlds.

### **A Label Named “Forget”**

Winston is male, Caucasian, thirty-nine, and a PhD student. His Gmail archive contains 16,417 messages. Winston showed me an ironic label in his Gmail called “forget,” which he said is for “the stuff I’m supposed to forget but can’t anyway.” He went on to say it is for “stuff I just didn’t want to think about anymore but decided I needed to archive anyway. Isn’t that a curious distinction?” (Winston). He said that almost everything in “forget” is personal. I told Winston I thought it was interesting that on the one hand, he wanted to forget, but on the other hand, he actually made a label to ensure he would never forget. “I know,” he said, “isn’t that interesting?” It is interesting, and it should be seen as a huge opportunity for Gmail’s narrative architects: How can we design for the paradox of memory, the desire to remember and forget simultaneously? Viktor Mayer-Schönberger argued that there has been a “fundamental shift to the default of remembering” and that too much remembering may have “terrible consequences” (Mayer-Schönberger 11). Winston seems to be struggling with the default of remembering, too. However, Winston indicates that the need to throw away is equally as powerful as the desire to remember. I argue that Winston’s “forget” label is rich with self-reflective potential. Furthermore, Gmail’s narrative architects can design ways to help Winston understand the life narrative sitting in his archives. For example, should the system ask users if a particular label or message is personal, very personal or something-you-want-to-forget-but-can’t? Should the system gently prompt users every year or so to look back at these messages

and see if they feel differently about them? This could be a potential way to help users reflect on how they may have changed in the three years since the message was archived.

Winston told me that the ever-increasing storage provided by Gmail made him “feel free” to create this label. He says, “why not? You want to forget it, but what if someday somebody comes back to me,” and asks him something, and he cannot remember, he says “I want to go back and look.” Winston then allowed me to explore his “forget” label with him. He clicked on it and found 63 messages that he wanted to forget-but-not-forget. Some of those messages included multiple labels besides “forget,” such as “personal,” “health” or the name of his ex-wife. In other labels, Winston found former students, gaming partners and a woman who found him online and knew him when they were in fourth grade in another country. Winston began to go through his various labels. In each label he would find another contact, another message. And each message sparked a narrative of some particular time in his life. I did not ask him to tell me these stories. Often, he did not even need to read the message: Simply looking at the names and dates were enough to prompt a story. Clicking through, exploring his archives, seeing an old message was enough of a prompt to spark a narrative about his life at that particular time. Research suggests the instinctive ways humans tell stories around images or even graphs (Abbott 2008; Viégas, Golder, and Donath 2006; Viégas et al. 2004). It was almost as if each message were a photograph, and Winston and I were looking at an old photo album of text.

### **A Folder Called “Letters”**

Sara is thirty-seven, Caucasian, and has a PhD. She, too, has a folder similar to Winston’s, although, it was buried in her old Yahoo! account, and she had forgotten about it. Her Gmail and Yahoo! accounts contain a total of 40,014 messages. Toward the end of our instant messenger interview, she suddenly stopped and said:

I just glanced through a few of my Yahoo folders and I would also say that the majority of emails that I’ve saved are painful emails. I have a folder called “Letters” that I must have put together at some point and the majority of things in there are from breakups. (Sara)

I asked her why she saved all of these “painful” emails. “What do they mean to you?” I asked:

Honestly I don’t know the logic anymore. They were all related to dating...I think I might have saved some of the painful emails because I wanted to show myself later, ‘Wow was this guy a dick.’ Maybe also I was thinking like, ‘Well maybe this will work out.’ Also it gave me texts to analyze...I just read and re-read until I guess I hit the point that it either stopped hurting, or I stopped looking. (Sara)

Sara uncovered buried digital treasure. An entire folder filled with emails that, like Winston, she saved because they have great personal value. They offer rich narrative insight into her life at that time. These “letters” illustrate the tumult of searching for some connection, for love, for reassurance. For both Sara and Winston these archived messages are more than mere data. They are a digital transcript of their lives. They are digital proof-of-existence. It’s not just a bunch of email. It is, literally, their lives, their storyworlds. And it is *searchable*. They can look back, and rather than having Mayer-Schönberger’s “terrible consequences,” the narrative architecture that supports their storyworlds gives them a chance to reevaluate, to easily go back to the past, reflect, and, hopefully, learn more about themselves and their relationships.

### **Personal and Meaningful Messages**

Monica is 27 and lives abroad now. She began using email in high school with an AOL account. She has 2,237 messages in her Gmail archive. During our instant messenger interview, I asked her if she had any messages that she considered personally meaningful to her. She said yes “My mom recently started using the internet to communicate with me,” and she said “I always save and look over those. [School] is tough, and she’s always very encouraging” (Monica).

As for emails that fall under the realm of “personal,” Winston seemed to indicate that although he saved most Gmail messages by default, this was more due to practical concerns such as finding someone’s email address or phone number. Of course, daily personal correspondence may not be as emotionally charged as digital love letters. However, I would argue that even our daily email will, over time, become important to us. They become not just messages but powerful reflections of a time period in our lives. Taken as a whole, these daily personal messages may add up to give us a powerful reminder of what we were doing at a particular time in our lives. It is up to us, however, to explore our own history and see what self-knowledge may be gained—what may seem trivial now accumulates meaning over time. Personal digital archives, I argue, are *all* significant—even the seemingly quotidian. Each message may hold meaning, but we need more reflective designs to help users make explicit the implicit narrative structure of their archives. Winston even admitted to saving things that he did not “really” want anymore. For example, he very honestly told me he once signed up at a site that helps men find Russian brides. I thought he was kidding, but he still receives messages from the site. It was difficult for him to unsubscribe, so he created a Gmail filter, which automatically sends them “right into the archive or deletes them, but I still kept some because I want to remember” (Winston). Again, how can we judge what is trivial or not in our own archives without either an outsider-looking-in perspective or some form of self-reflective exploration? Can we

design narrative systems so that the system itself acts as a kind of impartial outsider-looking-in at the archives to help the user gain perspective?

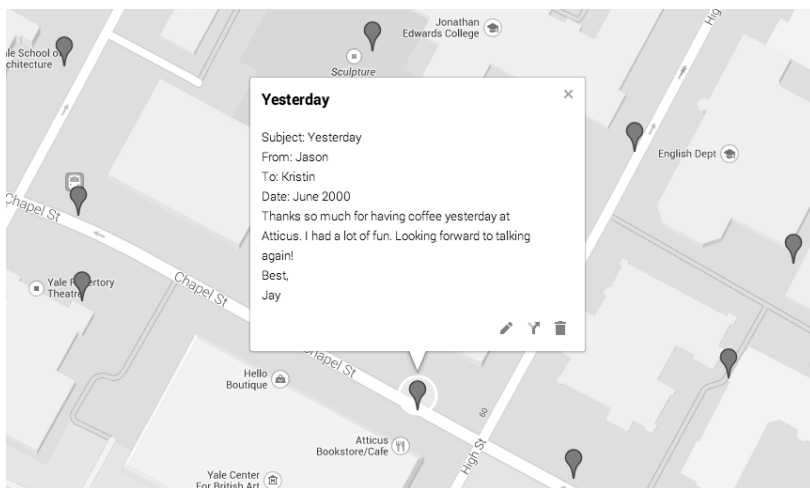
When I asked Sara about any meaningful messages she said:

No. I mean there used to be. I think I saved messages for sentimental reasons more when I was single. Like as ‘proof of concept’ that someone dug me. Now that I’m old and married I’m completely utilitarian in what I save. (Sara)

I asked William if there were any messages in his Gmail that were personally meaningful and how he would find them. Exactly like Sara he said no at first then quickly changed his mind. He said:

No. There are no emails in my Gmail that are so...I shouldn’t say that. There are emails in my Gmail account that are very important and very personal to me, but there are none that I can recall at the moment...somewhere in there I’m sure there is something that is wickedly important to me, but I’m not sure how I’d find it. (William)

Like other participants, William knows there is buried treasure in his digital archives, but he does not have a map. Therefore, as a design recommendation, what if we could create a Gmail and Google Maps mashup that would overlay Gmail messages onto a Google Map, or even Google Earth? Would it help a user to piece together their Gmail storyworld by seeing their Gmail displayed on a map?



**Figure 1: A Google Maps mashup that overlays messages onto a map. Would it help us to see our story using a map?**

### Lost Narrative Elements and Uncertainty

Winston and I were discussing a Gmail interaction, which he considered to be a conflict. I asked him if he would feel sad if the interaction were deleted forever and not recoverable. He said:

I've lost a lot of things in my life. When I was growing up, we moved so often that whole communities would just vanish overnight, and so I'm used to that...part of me would be gone. Would I deal with it? Sure. (Winston)

Winston then said that what he would "miss" from the message was the title of a book that was mentioned. He assumed he would forget about it if it were not saved inside the interaction. But, he says, "the part with the story where my attitude has changed I think is more valuable than the thing I would miss" (Winston). He makes a subtle yet complex distinction between what is *valuable* and what is to be *missed*. What is valuable to him is the title of a book that he might want to look up someday. But the story itself, with its conflict and human frustration is what he would truly miss. Thus, Winston is expressing a simple yet powerful set of archival values where information is valuable, just as stock market information is valuable, but the records of complex human interactions are things to be missed. I asked Winston how he would feel if every message in his "forget" label was deleted and lost forever. He said:

I'd be OK, but I would feel the loss because there was a reason I wanted to forget those things. They used to have some emotional weight, but they don't have as much anymore. It's all slacked over time. All of my Gmail could be gone, and I would persist. I would just do something else. But I would have this uneasy feeling that I had lost more than I knew I'd lost. And it's that uncertainty: what exactly did I lose? I know there was stuff in there that was important, but I don't know what it is. That kind of thing would keep me up at night. And I would have this nagging, haunting feeling something was lost, but I didn't remember what. Where this way [in possession of his archive] I can look at it again, and you get it out, and you realize, you know, that's not such a big deal. Like that business with [a colleague]. She was actually quite polite. I felt stung, but so what? And it helps my healing process more than if it were gone and all I remembered was the sting, and I couldn't refer to it again. (Winston)

How do we design for such a complex constellation of emotions? Maybe it is unfair or simply wrong to expect the designers of digital storyworlds to create some kind of emotional safety net in case all of your digital archives are lost. Still, if we break down what Winston told me into discrete design problems, we can, at least, ask some new questions. For example: How do we design for the catastrophic loss of an archive? How do we design in order



to aid the healing process of reflecting back on conflict? For now, it may be enough simply to be *aware* of the complex feelings people have about their personal digital archives and begin with simple conversation with users in the hope that better solutions will be found. Designers should, at the very least, ask themselves these challenging questions as they build and tweak their storyworlds.

When I asked Ellen via instant messenger about how she would feel if her Gmail vanished and was unrecoverable her first reaction was literally a crying emoticon: :( She then said, “I would be devastated” (Ellen). I asked William how he would feel if he lost all those printed out messages. Similar to Winston, he told me that he would “recover.” He said:

It’s not the same as if I lost [my dog]. If I lost [my dog] it would be devastating. If I lost these emails, I would be like, ‘well, that’s disappointing,’ but they really were just taking up room. I’m not insane about it. I realize they are just pieces of paper, but there would be a part of me that would be sad that they were gone in the same way that...there’s stuff from my childhood that no longer exists like a favorite stuffed animal. (William)

By comparing lost emails to a favorite childhood toy, William raises an interesting question: Imagine today’s youth growing up with email, texts, instant messenger, and digital voice mails. Imagine they reach the age of 30 or 40 or 50. Suddenly, they lose all of their personal digital archives from when they were younger. Would they feel like William, as if the messages are just another lost childhood toy? Or would they feel a much stronger sense of loss—some kind of loss that humans have never really felt before because of the potential *volume* of messages? How might people feel when messages from their mothers and fathers are lost? How might people feel if they lost digital voice mails from their children?

I asked Sara how she would feel if all her Gmail was deleted and unrecoverable. She told me:

I think if my Yahoo! account was deleted I might feel momentary sadness but not full. Actually, I’ve been thinking of deleting my entire contact list on yahoo since I don’t use it to email but Yahoo! gets hacked so easily...but I think if my [Gmail] was deleted I would feel an indefinable sadness. Probably not for one message but more frustration because I wouldn’t have the ability to find any information. I don’t think I’m as emotionally tied to emails as I was when I was younger. (Sara)

Sara’s response is interesting. Despite what accounts she still uses now, there are so many stories in her archives. In fact, the first thing she told me was a story from her Yahoo! archives. But as she said, she’s grown and gotten married. Gmail is, to her, less emotional, yet at the same time, she uses it to re-read old messages when she feels insecure. And even though she said she

was considering deleting her Yahoo! contact list, when she actually looked more closely, she found her folder called “letters,” which was filled with “painful” messages. Finally, Sara sees her Gmail as an information reference book, which all my participants seemed to suggest as well. There seems to be a natural progression from emotionally charged emails when users are single to more informational emails as they get older and settle down. Yet, none of my participants have, for example, children. I can only speculate, but my interview data seems to suggest that emotionally charged moments *captured* in their digital archives lead to powerful life narratives or narrative fragments. It is not until my participants began to explore old emails that they seemed to dig up and see value in their storyworld.

### **Regret and Deleted Messages**

“I don’t want to have any regrets,” Ellen said to me, “So it makes sense to hold on to any one thing in case I shall ever need it.” I asked her if she thought it was possible to live without any regrets.

“No, well. Not for me, at least. I’m extremely indecisive.”

“Do you think you are using Gmail as a way to minimize regret?” I asked.

“Possibly, if you want to take it there. I guess it means a lot more to me than simply email. In some ways *I have* used it to manage certain aspects of my life...mostly personal, even financial, I guess.”

Similar to another participant, Jacob, she then called Gmail a “scrapbook” and said it was like a “personal assistant.” Finally, she said “I’ve sent things to [my ex-boyfriend] by email that I’ve regretted, but at the same time, it might have felt cathartic to do so” (Ellen).

I asked Sara if she’s ever sent a message to someone important in her life and regretted it. She said:

Oh absolutely. Many times I’ve had sort of a bad or angry mood and really been pissed at people for irrational reasons and then you send a fucking email, which is just totally out of proportion, and there is no taking back an email or saying, “No that’s not what I said.” (Sara)

Sara makes a keen observation: With digital messages, we can no longer pretend or even misremember. Gmail is our digital life transcript. Everything is remembered, time-stamped, to the second. Is this good or bad? Will regretful emails cause nothing but embarrassment, or worse, or will they actually force us to confront people, i.e., get it all out there, so to speak?

I asked William if he had ever deleted any messages that he regretted. He said:

Yes. Not from Gmail because I archive everything...Occasionally I get really annoyed at listservs that send me 500 messages, and I will, out of spite, delete them. I don’t really do that anymore because it’s hitting a button versus hitting a button, so I just archive in case. In

my old email addresses, sure, I used to delete things all the time and then immediately regret it. Usually it was work related...Something I didn't think I would need and then eventually did need...I rarely deleted personal emails. Perhaps because I knew it would be something I would regret. (William)

What's fascinating here is that William used to get frustrated at the deluge of some listservs, and delete them out of spite. However, he now archives them because "It's hitting a button versus hitting a button" meaning the Archive button versus the Delete button. What does this mean? It means that the interface, in this case, *encourages* William to archive rather than delete. The design of the interface is changing the shape of the narrative elements in William's archive. Thus, it is ultimately changing the shape of his digital life narrative. William subscribed to these listservs for some reason. They are narrative clues about his life at a certain time. And even if he does not read them and just archives them, they are, as Jacob noted, a kind of time capsule or snapshot of a community that William felt compelled to connect with. Furthermore, are we changing the nature of regret? Have we created something we might call "digital regret?" If users like William now archive almost everything, maybe we will eventually stop regretting deleted messages because none will exist. Everything will be saved. The regret of an angry message will be preserved. Another noteworthy observation is that William, once again, contradicts himself. He noted earlier our discussion that he considered himself someone who is good at discerning what will be important in the future. Yet, he admits regret for deleting work-related information. Thus, again, we see the gap between what a user thinks about their archive and the reality of daily use. And in this gap is an opportunity for designers to help users. How can we design to minimize digital regret? Gmail has already attempted to solve this problem with their Gmail Labs "Undo Send" feature, which gives the user five, ten, twenty or thirty seconds to set their "undo" time. However, is there a way to do more? Instead of a thirty-second maximum time to undo a message, what if users could select certain critical messages or contacts such as their boss or spouse and set the undo time to one minute or one hour? In addition, sending a message and regretting it is still a problem. Gmail had attempted to do something about this problem with their now-discontinued Gmail Labs feature called Mail Goggles whose goal was to save users from sending potentially regretful emails while drinking. Their solution was that on late nights and weekends, you would be forced to solve math problems before you could *compose* your email. It is the math equivalent of a breathalyzer. Of course, if you failed the math problems, you could always disable the feature and send your message.

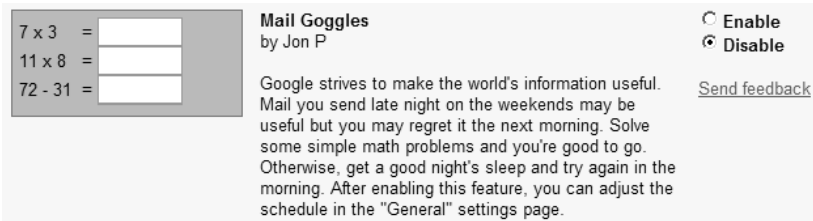


Figure 2: Gmail Labs discontinued Mail Goggles was a tongue-in-cheek program that made users do math between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. in order to prevent users from sending messages while intoxicated.

However, what if Gmail designed a Labs Feature called Sleep on It, which would let users get the satisfaction of actually “sending” their message, but instead of the message being sent, it would be stored in the users draft folder, and the next day—assuming they have sobered up—the user would receive a pop-up message asking: “Are you sure you want to send this message?” This way, users could get a chance to see and reflect upon what they were intending to send rather than stopping them before they got in the car drunk, so to speak.

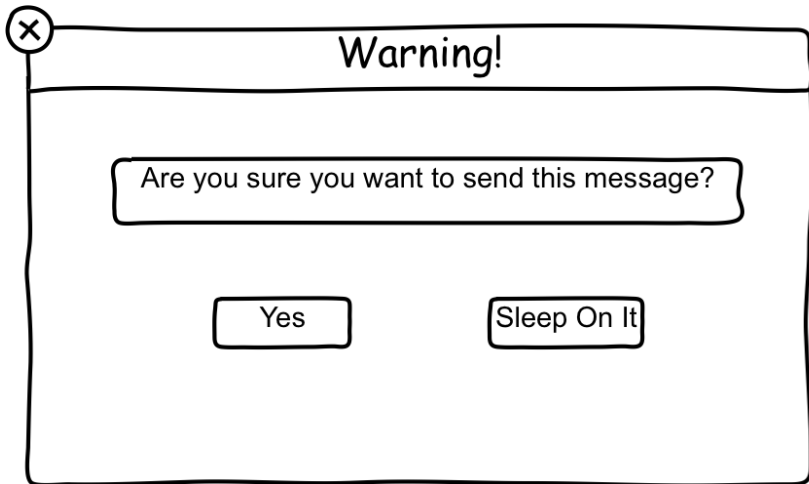


Figure 3: Sleep on It is a design idea what would give users the drunken satisfaction of sending a message without sending it. The next day, they would be given the chance to read their message to see if they still want to send it. Can this kind of self-reflective system help us before we send regretful messages, or is it better to send them and live with the consequences?

Continuing our discussion about email and regret, I asked Winston, “If you could go back and change anything that dramatically changed the meaning of what you said, would you?” He said “Maybe. I would be tempted” (Winston). Winston paused for a moment to consider the consequences of this possibility. I then asked about two scenarios: One in which any change would be permanent and one in which you could freely edit and undo edits. Winston seemed troubled by this possibility. He said:

Something about it is holy like an archive or museum. And I wouldn’t change to make myself look better. I’m already managing my persona. But there are little things that might embarrass me like the time I didn’t use subject-verb-object. Or it seemed like I was thinking in some other language and trying to write in English and it just came out like gobbledygook. I would rewrite those so that what I intended was there. But I don’t think I would have the will to alter everything permanently to reflect on an alternative version of my life unless I really, really came to believe that I was important to the future somehow and people would study these things and care. If I’m William Shakespeare then yeah...do I think other people would? Yes. Would my students? Sure. Some of them say very regrettable things. (Winston)

I then asked Winston if he thought he could learn something about himself by going back and reading through his Gmail archive. He agreed, so I asked him what he thought he could learn:

This business with the personas is something I learned from going back and reading because you realize ‘Yeah, you told the truth, but this is the face of the truth that you showed. One little piece. It’s like a multi-sided object, and you chose to show that part. (Winston)

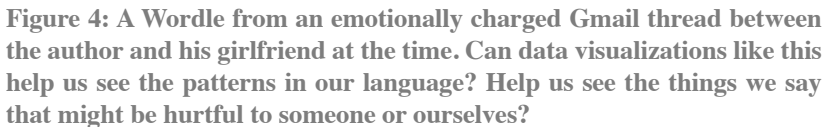
With constant advances in both software and hardware, it is possible to create all kinds of interesting narrative data visualizations. One possibility is that they could make a Gmail Labs feature called YouCube, which would be a “multi-sided object” as Winston described. It could be programmed so that each side of the cube is a different picture of the user in each of the different roles or “personas” as Winston calls them—almost like a Rubik’s Cube of our lives. The cube could simply rotate slowly as a reminder of the various roles we play in life: Student, son, father, teacher, brother, husband, uncle, boyfriend, girlfriend, wife, mother and so on. YouCube could be a visual reminder of the different kinds of roles we play in our Gmail narrative and the narratives of everyone else in our archive. “Are there any specific features of the interface, which you think help Gmail to be a storyworld?” I asked Winston. “This threading of the conversations was a breakthrough because I didn’t have that at Yahoo! And it’s so different. Just this stacking them like that... [stacking one message on top of another in chronological order] just changes everything” (Winston).

I asked Winston if he could invent a Gmail Labs feature that would help make Gmail as a storyworld easier to understand, what kind of feature do you think would help?

I have lots of ideas, but one of them is a word cloud by day. So, if I could go back to some day in 2005 and see my word cloud that would be interesting, wouldn't it? Especially in my Sent mail because the Inbox is full of spam...my sent mail, I wrote all that. (Winston)

Similar to Winston, Ellen told me that she would want to see some kind of graphic representation. Sara said her design would be "very Wordle-like." A Wordle is a word cloud that allows users to visualize text in a variety of fonts and layouts.

Following this idea, I created a Wordle using an email from my own Gmail account. Similar to Winston, I have a Gmail label that contains highly personal or emotional messages. I named that label "meaningful." I searched through my meaningful label and found a particularly emotional email that, like Winston, I wanted to forget but could not. First I anonymized the email addresses using the letter X. Then I uploaded the text to Wordle.net. The result is shown in Figure 4. When the Wordle popped up, it actually startled me because there was one word in there—"scooter"—that I had forgotten about. I was so angry at the time that I could not say the name of my girlfriend's new boyfriend. So, I called him "scooter." The Wordle showed the word very large, meaning I had said it a lot, more than I thought. I then went back to the original email thread and was somewhat...ashamed? Regretful? I remembered using the word in such an unnecessarily mean way. Thinking of that word—scooter—and this exchange put me into a reflective mood. Why do we say the things we say? Did I say other mean things? Is my *memory* of that time in my life all wrong? What else is buried in my Gmail archive? What else can I learn about myself? About my past? What else is in my personal digital storyworld? What is in yours?



What can you learn about yourself from exploring your personal digital storyworld? And how can narrative architects help users like Winston and Sara explore and make narrative sense of their storyworlds? We are collecting and archiving more personal digital data than ever, and now is the time to start asking these questions and using our digital storyworlds to help us learn about ourselves, our relationships, our life stories, and the world we live in. There is self-knowledge in our personal digital storyworlds. With new ways of imagining our personal digital archives and new tools we can begin to harness that knowledge and learn more about ourselves.

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