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A New Generation
Finds the Beats

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The Rhetorical Enactment of Roles

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Voices Other than our Own

Book Review:
Sturgis Stories by Thomas G. Endres

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*To publish high quality scholarship in the disciplines of
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To meet the journal-related needs of CTAM and its members.

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The Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal is seeking manuscripts for Volume 30, scheduled for publication in summer 2003. The journal welcomes theoretical and applied articles and teaching suggestions from theater, communication and forensics professionals from secondary and collegiate levels. All general articles will undergo a blind review process by a minimum of two reviewers. Manuscripts may be submitted for one of two sections: General Interest research and essays, and a Teacher's Workbook. Contact the editor concerning book review proposals.

Authors should submit three copies of their manuscript. A separate title page should accompany the copies. Authors should include an abstract of the article, and brief biographical information about themselves. Care should be taken that author identification has been removed from the paper itself. **All manuscripts should be prepared according to current APA or MLA guidelines.**

Authors are reminded to keep the Journal audience in mind: students and teachers at the high school, community college, private college and university levels. All manuscripts must be postmarked by March 29, 2002. Please send manuscripts and any questions to Mark Braun, Editor, Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal, Office of Associate Dean of the College, Gustavus Adolphus College, 800 West College Avenue, Saint Peter, MN 56082; 507-933-7368; < mbraun@gustavus.edu > .

***WannaBeats?
Fried Shoes!: A New Generation Finds the Beats***

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The late 1940s and the 1950s were a time of unprecedented prosperity and wealth. As America settled into life after war, most people had no problem conforming to the expected status quo. The economy boomed, and the new families of American soldiers rushed to the shopping centers. A demographic shift occurred due in part to the growth of the middle class, and in part to the "baby boom" as young soldiers came home from war into the waiting arms of young women. Confidence in America was refreshed by the winning of another war, and the temporary defeat of that evil enemy, fascism. As soldiers returned, glowing with victory, they settled down to the American way of life. They married, had children, worked in offices from nine to five, and tried hard to be just like everyone else.

This society of conformity was due in part to a penetrating fear of communism that resulted from World War II. When the enemy is not a person but an ideology, it becomes difficult to determine exactly where or whom the enemy is. Government began to search within US borders for evidence of a communist menace. Political demagogues rose, making radical claims of communist infiltration of the highest government offices. Everyone was a potential suspect. Citizens were encouraged to be wary of those who may be communist sympathizers, and anyone who was "different" was an immediate suspect. As Anderson (1995, p. 16) states, "The message was clear: fit in, be part of the team. Most citizens embraced the eventual result- a culture of consensus and conformity, one which aimed to uphold the status quo". These fears, while present, were always in the background. Part of the required conformity was to pretend that this fear did not exist. Go to work, make a family, live your life, and do not question authority.

In the midst of this mainstream complacency, there arose the proverbial "voice in the wilderness." As families settled down in one of several booming Levittowns into a little white house that was identical to the one next door, Jack Kerouac went *On the Road*, Allen Ginsberg *Howled* and William Burroughs sat down to his *Naked Lunch*. Coined the "beat movement", these authors preached, in many ways, the opposite of mainstream culture. This paper will discuss the rhetorical situation of the Beats as an American social movement, focusing on the reception of the Beats through time and the resurgence of the Beats in the nineties and beyond.

The various explanations of the term "Beat" provide an excellent way to introduce many aspects of Beat culture. Swartz (1999, p. 11) provides

brief explanation of the three main meanings of the word "Beat", as coined by Jack Kerouac and Herbert Huncke. The first meaning of the word has its roots in the jazz culture of the fifties. It is "beat" as in the beat of the music, the rhythm that moves jazz along. Kerouac and other Beats were avid jazz followers and frequently read their works to jazz accompaniment. The next sense of the word means "being broken, beaten down, pushed to the margins of existence by a cruel and hostile world." This meaning of beat had specific meaning for those members of the beat generation who lived on the streets for large portions of their lives, such as Neal Cassady chronicles in his novel *The First Third*. The final meaning of the word "beat" is the shortened form of "beatitude," which is the Catholic condition of blessedness (Sorrell 1982, as quoted in Swartz, 1999, p. 12). Taken together, these three meanings of the word "beat" provide an excellent picture of the Beat generation. They were the base rhythm of a generation, moving along underneath, but crucial to the overall "song." They were beaten down and tired, but were blessed in their own lives.

The Beat genre can be described as spontaneous prose and spontaneous poetry. This was a term used by Kerouac to refer to works written in stream of consciousness form, with little regard to the literary conventions of the time (see, i.e. "The essentials of spontaneous prose" and "Belief and technique for modern prose"). *On the Road* was supposedly written by Kerouac in three weeks and *The Subterraneans* is rumored to have been produced in a mere seventy-two hours. Other authors' works were not written this quickly, but tend to read as though they were written in a rush of adrenaline, causing these writings to appear spontaneous as well. Even more central to the essence of beat works is the value or moral that they attempt to teach. The principles of the Beats, loosely defined, are freedom, individualism, intensity, emotion, adventure, excitement and recklessness. Fast car trips, hitchhiking and voluntary "hobo-ism" were the norm for these authors. Their values seem to be in direct contrast to the mainstream values mentioned earlier. In a fifties society that valued normalcy, the Beats glorified uniqueness. While the mainstream was moving into Levittown, the Beats were cruising across the country in any ride they could catch.

An American Movement

Because of this contradiction of values, many Americans of the fifties were critical of the Beats as un-American and against American values. Critics decried *On the Road* as "hedonistic, nihilistic, and onanistic" (Tytell, 1999a, p. 8). Tytell also acknowledges what he calls the "awful initial reception of Beat writing" (1999b, p. 55). He quotes reviews of *Howl* as claiming that it lacked "decorum of any kind" and was full of "meaningless utterance" (p.55). While the Beats did create a rhetoric aimed at changing the mentality of

mainstream America of the fifties, they were not anti-America. When asked directly in an interview if the Beats were anti-American or antigovernment, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a Beat himself plus responsible for publishing many Beat works including *Howl*, replied first jokingly "No, sir, Senator McCarthy" and then more seriously, viciously denied that Kerouac, as well as Ginsberg and Burroughs were anti-American (Plimpton, 1999, p. 345). In fact, it can be argued that the Beats were viciously American, and that their rhetoric was formed with the intention of helping America return to that which the Beats believed to be truly American. While the Beats were critical of the current state of American society, they believed in the values on which America had been founded, such as freedom and adventure. They were critical of the current America only because they believed that America had strayed from its true form.

There is evidence of the Beats' "American-ness" in various writings of the genre. For example, Ginsberg writes a direct confrontation with America in a rather violent tirade entitled "America", asking when it will shed its facade and return to what it once embodied. Instead of condemning America and giving up, he questions when America "will be angelic." He asks when America will "look at [itself] through the grave." These are not the words of a man that hates America, but a man who longs for a better one and who fervently wants to see a true America rise. Kerouac's novels take place mostly in America, usually racing back and forth from New York to San Francisco by way of Denver. He glorifies jazz and American nature, frequently retreating to the woods in novels such as *Big Sur* and *The Dharma Bums*. In *The First Third*, Neal Cassady describes the streets of Denver in a way only a man who truly loves an area could. Instead of viciously lambasting America and moving to Switzerland, most of the Beats, with the noted exception of William Burroughs, chose to live in and write about a country for which they truly cared. Even their frequent visits to cities such as Paris usually lasted only a few months, and they almost always returned to the States.

A fascinating passage from Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* (1958, p. 14) sets up this dichotomy between the America of the fifties that the Beats disdained and the America of the past for which the Beats longed. "And his anarchist ideas about how Americans don't know how to live, with lines about commuters being trapped in living rooms that came from poor trees felled by chainsaws..." Juxtapose this picture of America with that found only one line later. "His voice was deep and resonate and somehow brave, like the voice of old-time American heroes and orators. Something earnest and strong and humanly hopeful..." (p. 14). There is something fundamentally different about these Americas; the first the Beats were viciously against, but the America of the past represents something much more precious. It is this America that the Beats desired to resurrect.

In saying that the Beats were actually patriotic is not to say that they did not despise the state of fifties society. Instead, they saw the America of the fifties as a threat against the America they loved. These are two very different Americas depicted in the course of the single paragraph quoted above. The first America is that of the "Levittown" suburban America of the cold war culture. Men and women trapped in homes sitting behind their televisions sets. The second passage, however, shows an America for which Kerouac feels nostalgia. This was the rough, unpolished America of the pioneers. It was the pre-suburban America where people depended on their individual strength to survive.

To use *On the Road* as an example, there actually seems to be three Americas that take shape. There is the America of the past, described in the excerpt from *The Dharma Bums* above, the America of the present seen from the view of the living room window, and an America of the future, that will be made up of the "angel headed hipsters" of the beat generation (Swartz 1999, p. 83).

As one beat scholar states,

Critical of this country on one hand, the Beats were at the same time its strongest advocates, wanting us to recognize our strengths and failings so that we could function as humanly (and humanely) as possible in a society that had become increasingly desensitized, one in which the areas of consciousness had become increasingly narrowed down (Knight & Knight, 1987, p. xi).

In an interview with Gregory Corso, Robert King asked Corso if he felt "some kind of stress to express America." Corso answered, "Oh yeah, I love America, I love America. And I know why" (Knight & Knight, 1987, p. 159).

If the Beats had truly hated America, then they could have (and would have) left. In several cases, the Beats did leave the country. Kerouac, Cassady and Ginsberg were frequent visitors of Mexico, and Burroughs spent a great deal of time in Tangiers. But, for the most part, the Beats stayed in America because they did love what America once embodied. In fact, the very themes that the Beats preached were those on which America was founded, freedom, life, happiness. Ginsberg's poem "America", while angry in tone, cries out for an America that has strayed from it's basic foundations. What is *On the Road* but a tale of true American exploits? An underlying theme of Beat literature as a whole is a search for America, a search for what America truly is underneath the ideological mask of cold war conformity.

Critical Reviews

The way in which literary and popular circles receive a particular author or text can say a great deal about the state of the society at large. There

are times that a culture may be too conservative to receive a particularly liberal text. Likewise, there are moments in history where a culture is in too much of a state of change to accept a text that proclaims the status quo. Such is the case with the reception of Jack Kerouac and other Beat authors writing within the context of America during the cold war. If there was ever a time in history in which America was particularly critical of beliefs that contradicted her own, it was during the Cold War. And if there was ever a group of individuals that wrote novels contradicting those beliefs, it was the Beats. In the interest of staying as close to the mainstream as possible, this portion of this paper will focus exclusively on the reviews of novels written by Jack Kerouac. He is commonly considered to be the “least controversial” of the Beats. Kerouac tended to play the role of the observer rather than the leader, both in his novels and in his real life. It is somewhat easier to accept the observations of someone who at least claims to have been a follower, rather than the leader. The leader’s vision can be tainted by the goal, whereas the followers can many times maintain at least some level of impartiality. In the interest of staying as close to the mainstream as possible while remaining marginally outside, Kerouac provides for an interesting case study.

The rest of this section will focus on the reception of Kerouac’s novels, beginning with the reviews accompanying their initial publication (1950-1973), noting the lack of retroactive reviews seen in the 80s, and concluding with a discussion of the reviews that began resurfacing in the early to mid 1990s. The primary reviews studied were those appearing in the *New York Times Book Review*, with supplemental data from other sources. The critique sections that are discussed are mostly about Kerouac’s style and prose, rather than the specific texts. This insures that it was not actually the book itself that was being reviewed, but instead the essence of Beat itself. It was their style and their prose that created Beat texts as a literature outside the mainstream, so the significance of these aspects cannot be underestimated.

As the old saying goes, first impressions are everything. The world’s first exposure to the solo writings of Jack Kerouac occurred in March of 1950 with the publication of *The Town and the City*¹. The *New York Times* review takes a somewhat detached approach to reviewing this rather unusual novel. When referring to the portion of this novel that takes place in New York City, the reviewer John Brooks states that “a good many of his characters take dope and practically all talk a good deal about madness. Some actually go mad; those who don’t succeed in illuminating convincingly some of the more sinister corners of middle-class metropolitan life” (*New York Times* March 5, 1950). Comparing Kerouac to Wolfe, Brooks mentions that Kerouac has a tendency to “overwrite”, a criticism that will resurface frequently throughout Kerouac’s literary career. The review ends with the interesting conclusion that “more often than not, the depth and breadth of his vision

triumph decisively over his technical weaknesses" (*New York Times* March 5, 1950). It seems that even then, certain ears were hearing the message that Kerouac was trying to speak.

The tone of detached respect that runs through this critique is typical of the early reviews of Kerouac. Other reviewers of this novel called *The Town and the City* "an incoherent novel, adolescent in its philosophy, that could stand a stern editing" and "a flood of rhetoric which dissipates the unquestioned power of the novel in useless incident and endless conversation which contributes nothing to the building of character thru action" (qtd. in *Book Review Digest* 1950, p. 505). Another review claims "Mr. Kerouac tells his abundantly varied story with compelling gusto but, in general, without much artistry". One commentator remarks, "though Kerouac sometimes overwrites and becomes sentimental, he has produced a warm and sympathetic novel" (*Book Review Digest* 1950, p. 505).

It seems that critics did not particularly know how to approach the style and content of these novels. Many of the critiques focused on Kerouac's relatively undeveloped style. The author in the *New York Times* review above mentions that the early scenes of the novel are "overly idyllic in content and wordy, even ungrammatical in presentation" (Brooks, March 5, 1950, p. 6). The style was revolutionary for the time, and Kerouac's prose must have proven somewhat difficult to read. The word "overwrite" occurs frequently in these reviews and almost all reviewers comment on the excessive use of words. A reviewer for the *New Yorker* claims that Kerouac uses "ten words where one would do" (qtd. in *Book Review Digest* 1950, p. 505). Most other reviewers would probably agree. It is also interesting that the *Times* author focuses on the drug habits and mental illness of the novel's characters. The fascination with psychology and with drug behaviors was not unique to the cold war culture of the fifties, but it was certainly popular in that time frame. After these respectfully mixed reviews, sales of *The Town and the City* trailed off and pretty much ended about a month after publication (Watson, 1995, p. 132).

Upset with the lack of sales of *The Town and the City*, Kerouac blamed the publishers for having edited out the "guts of the manuscript" (Watson, 1995, p. 134). It would be seven years before his next novel *On the Road* would hit the bookshelves. It is this novel that would vault Kerouac into literary notoriety. One particular review had a significant effect on the way that the public and literary communities perceived the second Kerouac novel. "Just as, more than any other novel of the Twenties, 'the Sun Also Rises' came to be regarded as the testament of the 'Lost Generation,' so it seems certain that 'On the Road' will come to be known as that of the 'Beat Generation'". This review by Gilbert Millstein (1957) was either prophetic or just incredibly insightful. True to Millstein's words, *On the Road* would come to

be known as the bible of the Beat Generation. Millstein went on to praise sections of the novel "in which the writing is of a beauty almost breathtaking, awesome, tender, and funny".

It is rather important to note, however, that Millstein was a substitute reviewer, filling in for the regular reviewer who was out on vacation (Tytell, 1999b, p. 55). While it is this review that has been remembered with respect to *On the Road*, the regular reviewer was not nearly so kind. David Dempsey (1957), the reviewer for whom Millstein was filling in, refers to Kerouac and his Beat friends saying "the freaks are fascinating although they are hardly part of our lives". According to Watson (1955), the negative reviews of *On the Road* were not critiquing the style as the previous reviews did; instead they hailed the novel as an attack against morality. A senior editor at Viking, reviewing the novel pre-publication, claimed that the content was the "quintessence of everything that is bad and horrible about this otherwise wonderful age we live in" (Campbell, 1999, p.164).

Despite the negative reviews, *On the Road* soared to fame, remaining on the bestseller list for five weeks, reaching its height at number seven. Watson claims that *On the Road* was only able to become a bestseller because it was published late in the fifties. Had it been published six years earlier, it probably would have suffered the same fate as *The Town and the City* (Watson, 1955, p. 256).

The next novel presents a particularly interesting point from which to examine these reviews with respect to social reaction in the late fifties. The novel *The Dharma Bums* brought Kerouac out of the genre of societal comment and into the realm of religious belief. Most critics seemed to realize the beauty of Kerouac's prose, and recognized the rhetoric embedded there, intended to ruffle the feathers of the American mainstream. "Its pose is pure American of the sort William Carlos Williams has been asking for all these years; its philosophy, its anti-organization-man-ism is a precious and also radically American stand" (qtd. in *Book Review Digest* 1958, p. 609). Another critique mentions that "*The Dharma Bums* is full of sparkling descriptions of landscape and weather, light falling through trees, the smell of snow, the motions of animals" (p. 609). Earlier in this same critique, the author mentions that *The Dharma Bums* offers an "alternative to the gray flannel suit" (p. 609).

Several critics also mentioned the perceived increase in maturity in the writing of Kerouac. One particular review seems to point this out directly comparing *The Dharma Bums* with Kerouac's earlier writing *On the Road*. Nancy Wilson Ross (1958, pp. 5, 14) wrote in the *New York Times*,

The novel by Jack Kerouac, '*On the Road*,' was a chronicle of the hitch-hikers, hipsters, jazz fans, jalopy owners, drug addicts, poets and perverts of the Beat Generation. In the

present book, however, now only are his 'bums' considerably more respectable and articulate, but they are no longer merely moving for movement's sake...In general, the new activities of Ray Smith-Kerouac and his fellow bums are rather more on the positive side than heretofore. Digging 'cool' Zen in clearly more adult than digging hot jazz, drinking tea is certainly healthier than smoking it".

It would seem that Ross believes not only that Jack's characters matured, but their recorder has as well. Even though Ross asserts a more mature narrative voice in this novel, she approaches it with the detached, humoring tone that one addresses a child that continues to make mistakes, but who exhibits a small bit of improvement. Her tone suggests that between *On the Road* and *Dharma Bums*, *Dharma Bums* is the lesser of two evils. Though most of the critiques of *The Dharma Bums* were derisive, sales of the book were strong (Watson, 1995, p. 257).

So what is it about *The Dharma Bums* that helped it become the "bible for the 'rucksack revolution'" of the sixties? (Watson, 1995, p. 257). Perhaps part of the appeal of this novel is the very passages that the *New York Times* reviewer criticized as having an "awkward, even ludicrous, force on the ear" (*New York Times* October 5, 1958). Nancy Wilson Ross (1958) gives an example of this unpolished prose, quoting "Let there be blowing out and bliss forevermore' I prayed in the woods at night" from *The Dharma Bums*. However, this passage that Ross quotes as a criticism is the perfect example of how this particular Kerouac novel may have had a hand in the wandering youth of the sixties and seventies. It also serves as an example of how these Beat works are able to speak to a generation.

The passage above takes place during one of Kerouac's meditation sessions in the backyard woods of his mother's home. He goes on to say that he "kept making newer and better prayers" (1958, p. 136). On afternoons when "neither Buddhism nor poetry nor wine nor solitude nor basketball would avail [his] lazy but earnest flesh," Kerouac wrote poetry like "Nothin to do, Oh poo! Practically blue" (p. 136). Isn't it the restlessness and boredom that Kerouac expresses here that motivates the later youths to defy expectations and attempt to find themselves in travel and wanderings? Kerouac explains that one night the stifling got the best of him, and he felt that he would die "because there was nothing else to do in the cold loneliness of this harsh inhospitable earth" (p. 137). However, like those youths who traveled after Kerouac's example, he found that the "tender bliss of enlightenment was like milk in [his] eyelids and [he] was warm" (p. 137). It was for this example of enlightenment buried beneath "awkward" prose that the new "rucksack revolution" of the sixties would come to strive.

While *The Dharma Bums* may have been underestimated in the late fifties, it seems as though the critics of the early sixties approached Kerouac with the sort of tone one expects from an exhausted parent regarding the child who just can not seem to get it right. While several praise the fact that Kerouac's awkward prose seems to be taming itself down, the new critique is that the description seems trite, sometimes not even believable. It appears that as Kerouac's writing become closer to the norm, it lost the rough believability that it had in the beginning. Critics "derided him as a Beat has-been," but these negative reviews "were preferable to being ignored" (Watson, 1955, p. 294). Kerouac's *Book of Dreams*, published in 1960, was given no reviews at all (p. 294).

By the late sixties and seventies, Kerouac seems to have been old news. Society witnessed his drunken demise in 1969, but had pretty much written him off before then. A 1967 review of *Satori in Paris*, Andrew Sarris (1967) claims that while "Kerouac can still write a blued streak, but his skyrocketing prose no longer illuminates a landscape. He now travels alone, out of his time and place". The 1963 *New York Times* review of *Visions of Gerald* reveals the same sort of tone, except even more negative. Saul Maloff accuses that "Kerouac believes that if only one were to write really bad prose, the result...would be literature, and disturbingly beautiful. Yet the curious effect of his wild rush of words in inarticulateness, a stammer" (Mauloff, 1963, pp. 4-5). In 1968, Kerouac's last major work to be published before his death was released and largely ignored (Cook, 1994, p. 247). According to Cook, Kerouac's obituary considered him a "has been" and it appeared to all that "the Beat Generation had died along with him" (p. 247). Curiously, Kerouac's novel *Visions of Cody*, published in the early seventies after his death, yielded a positive review in *The New York Times* without any mention of the criticisms he earlier faced. It would seem that after his death, his "bad prose" was not quite as bothersome.

Virtually no reviews of Kerouac appear in the *Book Review Index* from the late seventies until 1989. It would seem that there was little interest, at least in the area of critical analysis, in Jack Kerouac throughout much of the eighties. Since the vast majority of Kerouac's novels were published in the fifties and sixties, this would not appear to be particularly significant. When one takes into consideration, however, that in 1990 four reviews appeared and by 1995 there were 38 reviews of Kerouac novels, the lack of reviews in the eighties become a little more interesting (*Book Review Index*, various editions).

Not only has there been an increase in the number of reviews being performed, the reviews that were once rather mixed are now remarkably positive. *The Library Journal*, which once stated that Kerouac's first novel was simply "recommended, but not for the fainthearted" (qtd. in *Book Review Digest* 1950) now states that in 1990, Kerouac's works still have "great

appeal and should be in all collections” (“Classic Returns”, 1990, p. 119). It claims that *On the Road* “change[ed] the course of literature” (p. 119). It seems that the author who was once only “recommended” is now regaled as having “heard a new call, saw a new horizon, and started a literary movement” (p. 119).

The Beats Meet the Nineties

It seems strange that now, at the century’s turn, sales of beat writings have soared and Kerouac and Ginsberg, once feared by the elders of a generation, are now embraced by virtually everyone. A *New York Times* article contained the following statistic: “[*On the Road*] has sold nearly 3.5 million copies in the United States and continues to sell at a rate of 110,000 to 130,000 copies a year, a pace that has increased slightly since 1991, when steady annual sales of 25,000 *quadrupled* in one year” (Emphasis mine, *New York Times* 3/30/01). It appears that there is something in the Beat’s rhetoric that appears enticing to Generation X and those close to them. For some reason, the generations before the current college graduates did not feel the same nostalgia for the Beats as do the present 20-somethings. However, the increase of interest in *On the Road* is obvious, as are other jumps in Beat related materials.

It is not only the beat writings that have increased popularity, it is the Beats themselves as well. The sale of the scroll on which Kerouac’s *On the Road* was written was recently auctioned off for a price of \$2.4 million at Christie’s (*New York Times* May 23, 2001, p. B4). Abercrombie’s use of *On the Road* as a prop in an advertising campaign and the Gap Ads featuring Ginsberg are representations of the shift occurring in the reading habits of today’s youth. July 3rd is official Allen Ginsberg Day in Boulder Colorado, and poetry readings modeled after that infamous night at 6 Gallery are once again increasing in popularity. As John Tytell (1999b, p. 57) states,

Now the Beats are taught in universities all over America. The 1995 Whitnew Museum Beat Culture retrospective show, the 1996 exhibition of Burroughs’s paintings at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the 1996 Venice Film Festival, which featured thirty Beat-related films, and the 1997 Beat conference at the Roosevelt Center in Holland are recent signs of the international vitality of this interest.

The most surprising aspect of all of this is the demographic reading these works. It is not only those who are on the fringes of society, as the youth who read them in the sixties. It is the mainstream that has grasped on to the Beats. College classes about the Beats have increased, and conferences dedicated to the Beat legacies are held across the country. Bruce Cook states that Kerouac novels, even when not assigned reading, are “touted by seniors

to freshman at colleges and universities all over the country. *On the Road* is one of the favorite books of the so-called X-Generation" (1994, p. 248).

The interest in academia is understandable because of the Beats literary and rhetorical influence. The observation that middle class high schoolers, part of the post-Generation X cohort, are reading Beat authors is a bit more surprising. A high school drama teacher recently complained that a student who refused to participate in any of his classes and had completed virtually none of his academic work, sat in his class reading "On the Road", stating that it was not for a class, it was "just for fun."

At first glance, it seems that the Beats' rhetoric has become assimilated into the mainstream. This would account for this rather surprisingly large audience for these works. However, the Beats' anti-bourgeois attitudes are not part of the ideology of the American people of the nineties. We are too consumer-orientated, too concerned with advancement and production. The soaring (and now crashing) dot com industry and the Microsoft empire are examples of the mainstream. In fact, rather than representing an assimilation of the counter culture of the fifties, our society of today closely resembles that of the fifties mainstream. The fifties were known as a decade of intense fear, fear of nuclear war and the fear of anything different. The nineties have been coined by a computer expert as a "decade of fear and cowardice" (Dvorak, 2000, p. 103). What more appropriate person to name this decade than one familiar with the center of today's society, the computer. But instead of fearing the Bomb, society of the nineties fears failing financially, they fear going to school without a gun, they fear oil prices. We feared Y2K, and continuing into the 21st century we fear tall buildings and boarding airplanes. Sound familiar?

There have been many other phrases used to describe the nineties decade; "Decency decade", "Decade of value", "Sober 1990s", "Snoring 1990s". These all sound strikingly familiar to the happy-go-lucky and complacent picture of the fifties. How about the "Make-it-or-break-it decade?" Or "Decade of the brand", "Practical decade", or the "Nose-to-the-grindstone nineties" (*The Nameless Nineties*). The "Silent Generation" has been replaced by the "Practical decade." The man who sat in his office wearing "the grey flannel suit" in the fifties could easily be exchanged for a "nose-to-the-grindstone" man of the nineties.

Like the youth of the fifties, the generation of the nineties goes straight from high school to college without the aforementioned road trip, and the magical MBA is sought much more fervently than the "kicks" of the beat generation. While our wardrobes may have expanded to Abercrombie rather than the "gray flannel suit," our "rat race" is just as prominent as it was in the fifties. This similarity between the fifties and the turn of this century was pointed to by Hettie Jones (one of the little studied woman Beats) when

she asserted that we are “again in fear of art that points fingers.” She looks to the “new little wannaBeats, who have been handed a world of real trouble with their cyberspace” to keep the Beats alive (1999, p. 54). It is these “wannaBeats” with whom the rest of this paper is concerned.

Rather than being assimilated, it can be argued that the recent heroization of the Beats and the increased sale of Beat writings is due to the fact that these writings express values that the nineties mainstream feel forced to repress. Upon graduating from high school, students expect to go on to the university that each teen dreams of in high school. With Berkeley in mind, they dream of the college where students protest when they believe in something. Where it does not matter what you wear or where you come from, it is what you can think that matters. Time to sit around discussing philosophy in small crowded rooms. Professors challenge students to think and to formulate their own ideas, to challenge a professor if they feel compelled to do so.

Instead, students find a collegiate atmosphere that is no less complacent than the one encountered by, and in fact forced upon, students of the fifties. While they do feel more able to express themselves and their dissents should they discover something that they feel strongly about, they feel strongly about very little. They accept what their professors say as truth, without daring to think that they may have something to contribute. They are so focused on their grades that they do only the reading absolutely necessary, they are too busy to do that which is not. They spend so much time trying to plan out their days in the ever-present planner, that they do not actually have enough time to do the things they planned.

Recently a “protest” occurred at Northwestern University. While for an extremely worthy cause, the students’ idea of protest was four tents camped for a couple of days in the library plaza. While the “protest” eventually succeeded in meeting their goals, it was hardly something that would live up the ideal of university protests set by the universities of the sixties. One of the students helping to organize the event had to actually plan time into his day (and his day planner!) to stop by and sit with fellow protesters. Students protest when the ducks in the campus lagoon are threatened, but not when grade inflation plagues the university. Grade inflation, while harmful in the long run, offers an easy way of getting ahead and actually increasing fairness could produce a lower GPA. Saving the ducks has little repercussion.

Recently, an article appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* supporting and adding to these observations. Written by David Brooks (2001), the catchy introduction to this article titled “The Organization Kid” was “The young men and women of America’s future elite work their laptops to the bone, rarely question authority, and happily accept their positions at the top of the heap as part of the natural order of life” (p. 40). A bleak but true caption for this millennial generation. It is also important to note the significance of the

title, an obvious reference to William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man*, which was written as a critique of the businessman of the fifties.

Robert Wunthnow, a sociologist at Princeton, classifies students as "eager to please, eager to jump through whatever hoops the faculty puts in front of them, eager to conform" (quoted in Brooks, 2001, p. 44). He goes on to explain that it is very unusual to have a student challenge a position that a professor takes (p. 41). Ironically, this same observation was made of the college student of the fifties. A professor of that time described his students as "gloriously contented." They too were a "generation without responses" (Anderson, 1995, p. 19).

Brooks goes on to note also that the "new elite [do] not protest" (2001, p. 49). One of the journalism students he interviewed told him that "people are too busy to get involved in larger issues" (p. 40). This observation supports the claims that were made earlier with respect to Northwestern. Specifically, the non-politics of this generation has been noticeable in our turnout at the voting booths. *The Atlantic Monthly* contained the following statement:

In the 1994 midterm elections, for instance, fewer than one in five eligible Xers showed up at the polls. As recently as 1972 half of those aged eighteen to twenty-four voted; in 1996, a presidential-election year, only 32 percent did. Such anemic participation can be seen in all forms of traditional political activity: Xers are considerably less likely than previous generations of young Americans to call or write elected officials, attend candidates' rallies, or work on political campaigns. What is more, a number of studies reveal that their general knowledge about public affairs is uniquely low (Halstead, 1999).

Like those students of the fifties, it seems as though the students of the nineties will happily fall into this complacent way of life. Brooks notes that "nowhere did [he] find any real unhappiness with this state of affairs" (2001, p. 40). Instead, students are driven to achieve by the opportunities that they see. They are extremely goal-orientated and strive to achieve. As Brooks puts it, "It's not the stick that drives them on, it's the carrot" (p. 41).

The conformist nature of today's youth provides an interesting twist for this discussion of the Beats. It is unlikely that the Beats are present here only because we are like the generation of the fifties because, judging from sales figures, the youth of the fifties did not read the Beats. However, it is not inappropriate that the Beats re-occur in this same sort of context. The fact that students are reading and re-reading these novels could be taken as an indication of a sort of escape from the conformist nature of their lives. Students go through their days of classes without complaint. They attend meetings lasting until all hours of the night, only to return home to study.

Reading novels that glorify the open road and random jobs taken only for the purpose of living may seem a breath of fresh air to students feeling a bit trapped.

In fact, some avid readers of the Beats criticize these authors for not being “free [enough] from conformity.” In a recent class on Cold War Literature at Northwestern, a discussion occurred on Jack Kerouac’s novel *The Dharma Bums*. While students accepted and understood that the Beats were radical for their time, many students expressed frustration that the Beats did not go far enough. There was a great deal of criticism that the Beats were not far enough outside of the consumer culture of the fifties. A specific passage seemed to trouble students the most. Ray (Kerouac) provides a harsh critique of consumerism throughout the novel, but still expresses a great deal of excitement after buying new camping equipment. This disappointment with the Beats for not being radical enough indicates, at least to a certain extent, that students expect the Beats to do better. They expect that the Beats should be able to be radical to the full degree. Instead of purchasing his new camping equipment, the students of today think that he should have just headed into the mountains without it. They expect their rebellious figures not only to criticize society, but to live complete outside of it. However, what students fail to recognize is that in the time that the Beats were writing, criticizing society was radical in itself. This millennial view of the radical as one who can criticize and live outside the wall is only possible because the Beats dared to take the first step. This failure to contextualize is yet another support for the theory that the young of today expect the Beats to function as our own personal radicals.

This leads to the idea that students recognize that they themselves are not able to rebel against the society in which they live, be it because our societal or personal restrictions. So instead, they look to the counter culture to do this for them. They find their method of temporary escape by living it through other sources, such as music, film, and books. However, failing to find suitable examples for this idea of rebellion in this day and age, they are looking to the past to find their heroes. When one of the major restrictions of a section of society is the expectation of conformity and perfection, what more appropriate source to grasp than the Beats.

This type of expression is not unique to college students. It can be argued that the same type of “rebellion by proxy” is occurring in middle schools and high schools as well. In the regimented schedules of today’s teens, they have no more time to challenge the status quo than do college students. Brooks notes this when comparing the heavily supervised children of today with the freedom granted youths of the past. He states

...new books and a shelf’s worth of foundation reports now assert that kids today do not seem to want as much freedom and space as they have been granted. So the task for parents

is to define boundaries for their adolescents, to offer continual guidance and discipline. Who decades ago parents were advised to withdraw from their teens' lives as those teens flew off to adulthood. Now they are advised to serve as chaperones at all-night graduation parties" (2001, p. 46).

High school kids go straight from bed to school at the crack of dawn, to rehearsal, to fast food, and to homework. It is simply expected. Teachers and other students stigmatize students who are not heavily involved in extracurricular activities.

This structurization of today's youths does not show any signs of fading in the near future. Play dates and preschool begin even before the children start school. Kids are in little league as soon as they can walk, and schools have even begun cutting recess out of grade schools to make more time for studies. In this area of conformity, it is entirely possible that this sort of "living vicariously" through the Beats is occurring as a means of expression or rebellion against the norm and against the parents who are making their play-dates.

Another symptom of this sort of achievement-based youth culture is the fascination with risk that has been noticed by several psychologists. Lynn Ponton (1997) explains that risk taking behaviors are a normal part of adolescence, but problem behaviors such as sex, drugs, and fast cars stem from the inability to express this desire for risk in a healthy manner. At first this may seem to contradict the complacency that has just been noticed. However, if one looks at this with respect to the Brooks article, it begins to make a bit more sense.

It appears as though there is a tendency toward extremes in today's youth. There is a plethora of teens that seem to exhibit the problem behaviors listed above. For them, risk is an everyday experience, often to dire consequences. Because of this, there is an impression in society and among youths that all risks are bad. This could explain part of why students who want to pursue a "risky" profession like acting or music usually have a major in some unrelated field. This cuts down the risk of an inconsistent job, but often ends up with the forfeiting of the dream. So there is, on one hand, teens who constantly take unhealthy risks and, on the other hand, teens who do not take risks at all.

It is these students who refuse to take risks that are reading the Beats with almost an insatiable fascination. How else can one account for the pre-law, pre-business, pre-politicians that can quote the opening line of *Howl*? Recall that one of the principle values that the Beats championed was the importance of risk, the thrill of danger. They drove as fast as they could, racing back and forth across the country in a matter of days. They tried different drugs, different sex partners, different religions, and different types

of living. Anything that would produce that rush of adrenaline was fair game for the Beats (see, i.e. Cassady, 1991). So again, it seems that students are taking their risks vicariously through the Beats.

The nineties can be categorized as a sort of retro decade. Many aspects of today's culture are actually throwbacks to previous decades. The Beatles have made a substantial comeback since their climb to popularity decades ago. Bruce Cook, author of one of the first beat commentaries *The Beat Generation*, points out a beat "fashion" trend among high school and college age students. He places the baggy style jeans of young men as originating with those worn in the fifties. He attributes the stylish five o'clock shadow sported by today's young men to the photographs that documented the Beats throughout their lives (1994, p. 251). College classes are teaching the Beats, conventions are dedicated completely to the Beats, and students are reading these novels in between classes and during the summer. This truly is a resurgence of interest in Beat culture, and the rhetoric that they preached.

Conclusion

From retrospective reviews to literary conventions, from the classroom to the dorm room, from the coffeehouse to the fraternity house, this generation is reading the Beats. Walk into any bookstore and one will see not only shelves of books written by the Beats, but also scores of books about the Beats. However, no one seems to be able to offer a complete explanation. Everyone has noticed it happening, but no one can offer a reason. Based on the conclusions of this paper, this makes sense.

It has not been noticed that this renewed interest should seem strange because the state of our society, specifically the youth culture, lends itself perfectly to the rhetoric that these Beats represented. Today's youth can grasp the Beats' joblessness while they pursue their MBAs. They read about road trips while they fly from internship to interview. The Beats allow this generation to express their hidden desires, but their rebellion occurs only by proxy. Vicarious adventure allows them to rush through high school to the university to graduate school to their jobs, while still "living it up" through their reading.

The next question that needs an answer, however, is why the Beats? Why not look to some more current, easily accessible current author? The answer: there are none that provides the necessary excitement. Lacking a suitable example in current literature, this generation has latched on to the Beats, and is living through them. And there is substantial evidence that they realize this as they do it. During a presentation involving *On the Road* one undergraduate remarked, "I told my roommate that I didn't want a job after college, I wanted to drive across the country. She told me that I had been spending too much time on my *On the Road* project."

So what would the Beats have to say about all this? They probably never imagined that their literature would be found applicable by a generation several decades away. One author speculates,

Does this mean that the Beat Generation has parented a mass movement? Jack Kerouac would shudder. Allen Ginsberg would rub his hands in glee and say something apocalyptic. William S. Burroughs would blame it all on CIA mind-control operations. And Gregory Corso would say, "Fried Shoes" (Cook, 1994, p. 252).

However the Beats may have reacted, their rhetoric does indeed live on, and it will continue to do so as long as there is complacency to be persuaded against. Though written primarily in the cold war fifties, a new technological generation has found the literature of the Beats, and is rebelling vicariously through it.

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Notes

- ¹Previous works of Kerouac had appeared as joint efforts between Kerouac, Burroughs and Ginsberg.

***The First Ladies Speak:
The Rhetorical Enactment of Roles***

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As American First Ladies became more active in their husbands' presidencies, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argued that they exerted "a subtle intrusion of the private into the public."¹ When these intrusions become apparent to the public, concerns arise. Since a wife is often privileged to sensitive information, questions regarding secrecy and influence are common. During the presidential campaign, the spouse of the candidate is neither a running mate nor a political team member. She is neither elected nor appointed to an office by the voting public. She is simply tied to the campaign as the candidate's spouse. However, because the First Lady holds the position of spouse of the president of the United States, great concern arises regarding the power and role of the First Lady. What is the role of the First Lady? How is that role carried out through the discourse created by the First Lady? I contend that the role of the First Lady is enacted through her rhetoric. First, I identify the spheres in which the First Lady functions. Second, I track the evolution of the roles of the First Lady over the last twenty years and identify the demands of the varying roles. Third, I evaluate how Nancy Reagan's "The Battle Against Drugs: What You Can Do," Barbara Bush's "Choices and Changes," and Hillary Clinton's "Women's Rights are Human Rights" rhetorically enact the characteristics of the three roles commonly conformed to by the First Lady. Specifically, I argue that Reagan embodied the traits of the "First Mother," Bush embodied the demands of the "First Wife," and Clinton embodied and contributed to the characteristics of the "New First Lady."²

Understandings of Political Women

Although the First Lady may be accepted into the public/political realm, traditionally she is limited to specific roles within it. Kelly and Boutilier (1978) argued that there are three categories of women within the political realm, and that these categories are based primarily on the personal autonomy of the woman.³ The categories were identified as the "private" woman, the "public" woman, and the "achieving" woman.⁴ According to Kelly and Boutilier, the "private" woman is one who does not seek out power or positions of authority and remains dependent on her husband. She is considered to be a person who internalizes traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity although she does not publicly display the traits. Although inherently private, out of a sense of civic obligation the woman may act publicly by speaking on behalf of her husband, voting, or doing charity work. The sec-

ond woman, the “public” woman, may also be motivated by a civic obligation. Despite being limited by the demands of her husband’s career, attitudes, and connections, she may choose to participate actively within the public sphere. Unlike the private woman, the public woman chooses to play an active role within the political environment recognizing the relevance of her situation. The third woman, the “achieving” woman, is the most independent in comparison to her counterparts. She plays an activist political role as she attempts to affect social and political change. Kelly and Boutilier argue that First Ladies are “public” women whereas elected women and independent activists comprise the category of “achieving” women.⁵

Twelve years after the article by Kelly and Boutilier was published, a different view regarding the First Ladies’ position has emerged. Edwards and Chen argue that the original categorical separations have changed due to the changing roles of women in society.⁶ They believe that the “public” and “private” categories as defined in the Kelly and Boutilier study have merged together to form the current private/domestic sphere.

In order to understand the role of the First Lady, it is important to distinguish the two spheres in which she functions: the public/political sphere and the private/domestic sphere. The public sphere is open and accessible to the general public. It is the open forum which our country has designated for democratic conversation and debate. The public sphere is traditionally male dominated, and, according to Edwards and Chen, is viewed to be superior to its counterpart because of this distinction.⁷ Within the public sphere is the political sphere. The political sphere handles the concerns brought up within the public sphere. It represents the concerns of the public, yet maintains a gender-based hierarchical structure in which men are valued more than women.⁸

In contrast to the public/political sphere is the private/domestic sphere. The private sphere is not as accessible as the public sphere. Although women are consigned to the private sphere, they are forced to remain under male dominance within this realm. The private sphere encompasses personal and family matters. Matters that are too private to be addressed within the public/political sphere are contained within the private/domestic sphere.

Kelly and Boutilier’s definition of the “achieving” woman coincides within the current public/political sphere in which the woman is recognized as being separate from her husband’s political identity. Gardetto further expands upon this concept, noting that traditional Western political theory viewed a symbolic separation between the public (political) realm and the private (household and family) realm of social life.⁹ Edwards and Chen argue that S.L. Bem’s “Lenses of Gender” further constituted this division. Edwards and Chen claim that America’s lenses of gender reinforce a hierarchical structure that supports the privilege of males.¹⁰ Within this hierarchy, men are traditionally associated with

the elevated public realm and women are confined to the private realm. It is not impossible, nor uncommon, for a woman to enter the public/political sphere if she has a political position. Society has shown to have little significantly less objection when her husband crosses into the private/domestic sphere.¹¹ Gardetto argues that these views also contribute to the devaluing of women and the domestic sphere.

The Roles of the First Lady

The traditional view of the First Lady is entrenched in stereotypical gender roles. The First Lady is expected to serve as a role model for American women.¹² As such, she is expected to embody the traits of a caring mother and loving wife. She should be a supportive mother to her children and serve as the emotional core of her family. Gardetto argues that political culture considers the traditional nuclear family as the assumed unchangeable norm. Stating that failure to challenge the stereotypical beliefs of Mom as the "emotional support for her husband and as emotional core of the family" reinforces this view, Gardetto argues that the First Lady is the symbolic "Mom" of American culture.¹³ As the symbolic "First Mother," she is responsible for reinforcing ideal family values by producing an ideal family and providing it as a model for others.

The First Lady should also serve as the ideal wife for her husband and, thus, the ideal or "First Wife" for the society. She is expected to provide emotional support to the President and serve as his best friend by helping him to think clearly.¹⁴ She also should devote herself to the care of the president including "his health, his recreation, his well-being, and his intellectual and spiritual well-being."¹⁵ Finally, she should be willing to produce an heir to the President to prove his masculinity and heterosexuality.¹⁶

The First Lady is also expected to serve as the ideal political wife. Within her roles as the White House hostess and charitable advocate, she exerts great influence within the American public and even internationally. Not only does she influence fashion and domestic style, she also encourages public interest and awareness for social concerns. Politicians agree that the First Lady should take actions on issues of public concern, however as Nancy Reagan's former Chief-of-Staff James S. Rosebush said, "Address yourself to issues on which you feel deeply, but only after all other responsibilities" are fulfilled.¹⁷

Betty Winfield argues that positive media coverage does not allow for the idea of a politically active First Lady. She notes that journalists were content with depicting First Ladies within the "customary female supportive nurturing areas: as an escort, a leader of the fashionable, social and cultural events, and as a doer of charitable works."¹⁸ However, as topics of political power or influence and policymaking arose, journalists became more

critical of the women.¹⁹ Winfield argues that the criticism increased significantly when Hillary Clinton became First Lady. Contrary to past First Ladies, Clinton emerged as, and even defined, a “new kind of First Lady.”²⁰ The media did not know how to handle her openness about her “egalitarian marriage, her position as head of the health reform task force, and her career as a financially independent lawyer.”²¹

Gardetto argues that the traditional role of the First Lady is dualistic in that she must meet the demands of both the public and the private sphere. The “New First Lady” represented a new breed of women who insisted on sexual equality and self-development.²² Although the New First Lady was and is still being developed, Winfield argues that Clinton represented the changes that the New First Lady would motivate. An analysis of speeches given by three former First Ladies will demonstrate how each First Lady can rhetorically enact a specific role.

Nancy Reagan, “The First Mother”

On June 24, 1986 Nancy Reagan addressed an audience of 2000 at the World Affairs Council.²³ The title of her speech was *The Battle Against Drugs: What Can You Do?* During the speech, Reagan discussed the characteristics of drug abuse and the effect that it has on children, society, and individual lives. After presenting a need for action, Reagan encouraged the audience to join her in taking a stand against drugs.

Reagan based the motivation for her speech on her concern for the nation and “our children.”²⁴ Stating that her intent was to protect the future of the nation, she accepted the role of the “First Mother” to the nation’s youth. Reagan described the events that influenced her decision to take on that role claiming that her journey reflected that of the nation as a whole. By comparing her journey to that of the nation’s, Reagan depicted herself as a suitable candidate to lead the shared journey. By merging the two, Reagan could serve as the voice for the nation’s parents and present her motherly concerns as the feelings of the nation as a whole.

Reagan recalled that her interest in drug abuse awareness began in the 1960s when her husband was serving as the Governor of California. Due to the popularity and greater acceptance of drug use at the time, Reagan said that she had difficulties determining which actions were teen rebellion and which were signs of drug abuse. Although she began to notice a “tragic” side to the issue she, like everyone else at the time, was “so naïve then” almost like a loving mother with an initial sense of denial that her child could be in danger.²⁵ Acting as a concerned friend, Reagan listened to other parents’ tales of how drugs affected their lives and their children’s lives. Over time, Reagan recalled reading more about drug abuse in the newspapers. However, being a perceptive mother, she realized that “we had the making of a tremendous problem.”²⁶

Still wanting to address the issue in the 1980s, Reagan realized that her position as First Lady provided her with that opportunity. Declaring drug abuse awareness as her platform, she was able to address her concerns on a nationwide scale. Noting that her decision to declare a battle on drugs was not a popular view, she portrayed herself as a fearless advocate, a fighting mother. While in the White House, Reagan began her formal creation of the drug abuse awareness campaign. She said that she educated herself through meetings with doctors, teachers, and experts in the field. However, rather than approaching her speech from a clinical level, she used the personal testimony of children as support for her claims.

She cited two letters during her speech, one from a teenager who used drugs, the other from a teenager affected by a loved one's use of drugs. Reagan claimed that the first letter opened her eyes to the nation's denial that a problem existed. Citing the turmoil and grief expressed in the letter, Reagan portrayed herself as hearing the voice of the nation's children. By listening to "our children's pleas" that "weren't getting through to us," Reagan took on the challenge of protecting America's youth and establishing herself as the ideal mother; willing and able to truly hear the child's needs.²⁷ She claimed that although it was unfashionable for her "to take on drugs," she took a stand against those who opposed her.²⁸ She would later use this argument as a template for other adults to emulate.

Reagan commented on the progress that she had viewed since her efforts first began. Citing "Just Say No" clubs in the schools and interest from other political spouses, Reagan argued that awareness was being achieved and that people have "an obligation to take a personal stand against drugs."²⁹ She read an excerpt from a letter by a child who had been affected by a loved one's use of drugs. Revealing that written at the bottom of the letter was the word "help," Reagan instructed the audience that they had the "moral obligation to provide that help."³⁰ Reagan offered ways in which the audience could begin to meet their moral obligation.

Reagan tried to relate the story specifically to an adult audience. She told the stories of two professionals who were unable to take their stand against drugs. Both of the individuals had been in social settings in which their peers had been using drugs. Although they did not condone drug use and felt uncomfortable being in the situation, Reagan pointed out that neither had the courage to tell their peers about their concerns. Believing that the two examples would be identifiable to her audience, Reagan attempted to provide a backdrop of ways the audience could fulfill their own personal responsibilities if ever in a similar position. In a motherly tone she encouraged them to find their own strength and to speak up as their peers had not. She claimed that those who did not condemn drugs were thereby condoning their sale and usage. In this section, Reagan does not only model First Moth-

erhood for the adults, but actually “mothered” the adults in her audience as if they were mere children in need of behavioral guidance.

After addressing those who agreed with her platform, Reagan directed her message toward the declared enemies of it. She gave a confident statement about the effect that the war on drugs would have against drug dealers. She warned them that their future of dealing would be altered by the parents of the world. Using an authoritative tone, she noted that the united parents of the world would soon push out the drug pushers. Here again, Reagan displayed her advocacy and determination to save the nation’s children.

Having addressed the individual’s and parent’s responsibilities in the battle against drugs, she next moved the battle into the school and workplace. Citing the rights of students and employees, she urged that schools and corporations should not tolerate drug usage at all. Using phrases such as “schools need” and “corporations have to,” she demanded that the battle she had declared be brought into other realms of society.³¹

Reagan made one final appeal to her audience. She attempted to describe the emptiness felt by youth who are affected by drugs. Using rhetorical questions, Reagan attempted to make the scene more lifelike for the audience. She closed by urging the audience to continue the fight against drugs.

The overall tone of Nancy Reagan’s speech is that of a concerned mother. Throughout the speech she addressed the audience as if they were unaware of the effects of drug abuse. While educating her audience, she frequently used the phrase “it concerns you.”³² She then finished the sentence by describing the different scenarios in which the audience members may be affected. Reagan also presented her speech as a parental lecture. Although she was addressing adults, Reagan structured her arguments as if she was talking to a child. According to Reagan, people “have the responsibility to be intolerant of drug use.”³³ She told the audience that they had to force the issue in order to make others uncomfortable even if it made them unpopular. In a motherly fashion, Reagan acknowledged that condemning drugs might result in some member’s of the audience losing friends. Even though the audience consisted of grown adults, Reagan spoke as if to a child deep in a playground dispute, rationalizing that the loss of the friendships was justified. She explained that any friendships lost were not worth keeping “because a friendship that is based on condoning drugs is not much of a friendship anyway.”³⁴

Although Reagan’s speech carried a motherly tone and depicted her as the “First Mother,” she also touched upon the wife and political elements of her role. Referencing “the Great Communicator” in the second line, Reagan sent regards from the President.³⁵ As aforementioned, speaking on behalf of her husband is one of the traditional responsibilities of the First Lady. She later referenced her husband once more during the story of her journey. The

mention, however, only identified the time period as that when her husband was Governor of California.

At the time the speech was given, President Reagan had already declared “the war on drugs” and had begun the anti-drug crusade.³⁶ Working as a partner, Nancy Reagan headed the “Just Say No” public campaign.³⁷ By not further mentioning her husband during the speech, Reagan presented the story as if she was independently heading the battle. She frequently used the pronoun “I” rather than “we” to describe her feelings, thoughts, and concerns about the issue. In this instance, Reagan embodied “The New First Lady” traits by displaying her political concerns as being independent of those of her husband’s. Although Nancy Reagan displayed characteristics of all of the First Lady roles, “The Battle Against Drugs” speech exemplified that of the “First Mother.”

Barbara Bush, “The First Wife”

Unlike Nancy Reagan who displayed her “First Motherhood” in *The Battle Against Drugs*, Barbara Bush attempted to defend her position as “First Wife” in her Wellesley commencement address titled *Choices and Changes*. Although she was referred to as “The American Queen Mother” and “Grandma America” Bush is most notably recognized as being “the ideal political wife.”³⁸ Following the traditional role of standing by her man and abandoning personal and scholastic ambition, Bush was recognized as the silent, compliant partner to her husband. In fact, Bush’s epitomizing of the “First Wife” caused controversy over her scheduled commencement address at Wellesley College. Some students of the college claimed that Bush did not represent the feminist ideals celebrated by Wellesley. Protesters also expressed their belief that Bush had achieved fame only through her husband’s achievements and was therefore not a suitable speaker.³⁹ In her speech, Bush tried to overcome the biases against her by proving that she was more than just a silent wife. In addition, while justifying her experiences, she also set out to show her audience that marriage was a choice that every woman should have the opportunity to make. Although Bush argued that she was more than just a wife, the underlying message of her speech contradicted her intended message.

Bush began her speech by welcoming the audience and recalling her past visit to the college, perhaps as a way to refute the protesters’ claim.⁴⁰ Bush told the audience that during her past visit to Wellesley she spoke of her experiences when her husband served as Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China. In his review of the speech, Professor Kevin Dean claimed that Bush showed that her status as the wife to the ambassador had not been challenged then, and thus, her status shouldn’t be challenged now.⁴¹ Bush then told a story about diversity. The diversity story served as a defense for

Bush, because the theme supported her claim that women could choose the direction of their lives, including the path of marriage and motherhood. In addition, the story served as an analogy for women striving for individualism who are pressured by society to conform to proscriptive roles.⁴² Bush argued that each woman should cherish her own identity and accept the same in others.

Although in support of this view, Bush's speech seemed to lack her personal identity. Bush referred to herself about ten times within the speech and all of her references were benign, either reporting her feelings, stating the choices she made in the past, or encouraging the audience to accept her message. None of her examples really defined her as a person. The three major references Bush made to herself were about her past visit to the college, her work with the literacy campaign, and her marriage to George Bush. Although critics claimed that she created identification with her audience through self-depreciation and reiteration of Wellesley lore and tradition, with the removal of Bush's three personal references, I contend that the speech is so generic that another speaker could have given it.

After Bush completed her story about diversity, she addressed the topic of her selection as speaker. She first acknowledged that she was not the first choice for a speaker in a light-hearted manner to show her audience that she was comfortable with the controversy surrounding her invitation. After establishing a speaker/audience relationship, Bush explained some of the choices that she made for herself and her future. She used her examples as support for her claim that she had created her own success. She encouraged her audience members to consider making similar choices in their futures. Although Bush, "hope[d] that many of you will consider making three very special choices," her dispassionate verb choices did not provide the support needed to make the claims appear as firm and independent as she had hoped they would be.⁴³ Instead, her use of verbs such as I "hope" and I "offer" make Bush's suggestions seem weak and optional.

The first choice that Bush encouraged the women to make was to get involved in big ideas of the time. Referencing her literacy campaign, Bush acknowledged her fulfillment of the civic obligation of the First Lady. In this instance, Bush had somewhat separated herself from the traditional position as wife by showing that she had taken the lead on a nationwide campaign. However, as the protesters claimed, this opportunity was opened to her because of her husband's position as President thus reinforcing her role as the "First Wife" and not the "New First Lady."

Second, Bush encouraged the audience to enjoy life and to have fun, citing George Bush's ability to make her laugh as one of the reasons that she "made the most important decision in her life," to marry him. Rather than describe her personal experiences creating her own fun, Bush again failed to

support her claim that she was independent of her husband, by describing how her husband made her enjoy life. Although Bush had intended to show that she had celebrated her own identity, this specific section refuted her claim. Bush's explanation as to why she married George Bush was the most developed description that she provided about herself. Incidentally, she chose to describe herself not as an individual, but as a partner in marriage. After declaring her choice to marry George Bush, she used the pronoun "we" to describe her happiness in marriage. Her most detailed description about herself involved her choice to become a wife, contradictory to her claim that she was more than just a spouse.

Bush further contradicted her claim of independence from her husband in this section through her reference to him. Rather than say, "I married my husband" or "I married George," which may have suggested an equal partnership in marriage, Bush referred to her husband by his full name. Her audience was most likely aware that her husband was the President. Therefore, it was unnecessary to use his full name. It is also significant that Bush chose to identify George Bush during this section instead of during her first reference to him at the beginning of her speech. Rather than call him by name, Bush used the pronoun "our" when recounting the trip that she had discussed during her first visit to the college. By referring to her husband in this manner so late in the speech and while describing her choice to marry, she appeared to show a submissive deference to him.

Bush's final stated choice was to value her human relationships. It is at this point in the speech that Bush addressed a woman's fulfillment as a mother, wife, and friend. She explained that above all of her other demands in life, she focused first on those relating to her human relationships. Incidentally, Bush's statements coincide fully with Rosebush's claim that a First Lady should address other issues after having met all her other responsibilities.⁴⁴

Although Bush argued that her choices made her an independent woman, all of her choices centered on helping others. She did not mention how making such choices would better the individual self or promote personal identity. In fact, during the remainder of the speech, Bush exemplified the traditional female role as mother and wife. She argued that relationships with "spouses, children, and friends" set precedent over any career and life choices that are made.⁴⁵ She further argued that the "success of society" depended on the success of the women in their homes.⁴⁶ Rather than acknowledge potential career contributions to society, Bush said that women's success as parents dictated the success of society. These arguments were clearly evidence for Bush's reverence for traditional female roles.

Bush, however, tried one final time to confirm her claims by suggesting that one of the women in the audience may serve as the President of the

United States. Bush commented that at that time a man would assume her position as the president's spouse. Although this idea was most likely favorable to the members of the audience, the underlying message that Bush expressed up until that moment was not in support of a woman leading the country as President. As such, Bush's rhetorical enactment of the "First Wife" undercut her concluding quip about a future "First Husband."

Hillary Clinton, "The New First Lady"

Unlike the previous two First Ladies, Hillary Rodham Clinton has had many articles published about her. Her image, her actions, and her pictures all have crossed the pages of academic journals and are believed by most observers to signal a change in the nature of the role of the American First Lady. Although the "New First Lady" is still being developed today, Clinton's rhetoric embodied and contributed to the changing role.

On September 5, 1995, in front of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women plenary session, Hillary Rodham Clinton presented *Women's Rights are Human Rights*.⁴⁷ The overall purpose of Clinton's speech was to speak against the violation of women's rights. She directed her arguments to three different audiences. Using various types of appeals, Clinton structured her speech to address those in agreement that women's rights needed to be protected, the women whose rights were being violated, and those who continued to violate women's rights. The fact that Clinton attended this conference in a capacity independent of her husband, but related to her position within the government, provided the backdrop for the "New First Lady" to take action.

Recognizing that the audience present at the conference was in agreement that women's issues needed to be addressed, Clinton rallied for support of her plan to bring about change. Giving voice to the women of the world was the "great challenge," she declared.⁴⁸ Her speech was an attempt to provide that voice for the audience. She described negative tales of woe and sorrow along with positive descriptions of women's accomplishments. Clinton spoke for the women in her own country who were fighting for changes and improvements. She related the experiences of the small group of American women to the large group of all women in the world in order to create a unified feeling.

In perhaps the most intensive portion of the speech, Clinton described multiple ways in which women's rights were being violated. She began each of the statements with the phrase "it is a violation of human rights."⁴⁹ She then finished the sentences with a different description of a violation. By structuring her statements in this fashion, Clinton again created unification within the cause. Each of the statements began with the same words and each one ended with a description that carried the message that women were

suffering. Although the sufferings were different, each issue built upon the others and carried the plea of all women, thus intensifying the need for change.

Clinton's selection of changes reflected the characteristics of the "New First Lady." As mentioned, the First Ladies of the previous twelve years had dedicated themselves to nationwide social problems. Clinton took her fulfillment of her civic obligation to a higher level by addressing the social problems of all women. She also stated that her pursuit for change would continue into other conferences and meetings. Clinton insisted that the members of the audience shared the responsibility to speak for the women of the world who were not being heard.

In an attempt to reach the oppressed women of the world, Clinton stressed the importance of self-development and the unification of all women. She announced that the goals of the conference were to "empower women" and "to bring new dignity to women and girls around the world."⁵⁰ In doing so, she argued, women, their children, their communities, and their nations would flourish. Clinton offered hope for women by declaring that the strength of the group and its supporters would help to improve all women's situations. She described her encounters with women from all over the world and the challenges that the different groups had faced. Although each of her examples was different from the others, she pointed out that beneath the different situations was a collective group of women all fighting for better lives. By joining together, Clinton argued, significant changes could occur. She displayed her identification with the group and confirmed that she was working toward the same goal by shifting her tone during this speech. She frequently used the word "women" to identify the category, however, she frequently used the pronoun "we" to show that she was also a part of that group.⁵¹

Clinton's arguments reflected the "New First Lady's" demand for sexual equality. While describing some of the positions that women hold within society, she progressed from the traditional roles as "mothers, wives, sisters, daughters" into the non-gender specified "learners, workers, citizens, and leaders."⁵² Clinton's various examples also supported her claim that women were capable of contributing to society outside the domestic realm.

Clinton used her personal achievements as support for her claim. During her speech, she did not mention or refer to her husband for support or ethos. Instead she drew off of her past experiences with issues related to families, children, and women as support for her own credibility. Noting that she had spent twenty-five years dealing with similar issues, she reinforced the argument that she was a "New First Lady." Rather than leave her career upon moving into the White House, Clinton opted to continue in an area that was familiar to her. Although she noted that her time in the White House allowed her to examine a variety of issues on a national and worldwide level, she did not suggest that her position was the sole basis of her achievements.

Finally, Clinton addressed those in disagreement with the theme of the conference, and those who violated women's rights. Within her opening comments, Clinton discussed the positive effects of the conference. Immediately afterwards, she acknowledged that there are "those who question the reason for this conference." "Let them listen to the voices of the women in their homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces" she challenged. By arguing that the women of the doubters' own countries were making the demands, Clinton appealed to identification as motivation for change. Clinton tried to show that the demands were not being made by an outside group, but rather were pleas from each country's female population. Using this technique, Clinton avoided presenting herself as a bully demanding change in someone else's country and instead cast herself as a discussion mediator.

Clinton also attempted to challenge the view that women did not contribute to economic and political progress. Pointing out the accomplishments and value of the women present at the conference, Clinton offered the audience examples of women's contributions. She then described the impacts that occurred when women were given equal rights. Clinton described the new findings that the families of educated and healthy women who had been given "a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society" were able to flourish.⁵³ The result of this growth led to communities and nations flourishing as well. "That is why," she said, "every woman, every man, every child, every family, and every nation on our planet has a stake in the discussion that takes place here."⁵⁴

The overall tone of Clinton's speech was not anti-male, but rather pro-female, stressing the importance of sexual equality. In fact, Clinton mentioned that the arguments she presented should be cross-applied to men as well. Her idea of a shared community was reflected in her use of the pronoun "we." As mentioned above, it was clear that "we" was a constant reference to all women. However there are certain references within the speech that appeared to include both men and women as the collective "we." As Clinton was referring to the crowd, "as we sit here" and as "we have been reminded" it appeared to address all members of the audience.⁵⁵ It had been during these references that it appeared as if Clinton expanded the general "we as women" category into the "we as people" category which showed that Clinton had not set out to propel women to a higher standing than men, but rather to put them on equal ground and felt that both men and women were able to help accomplish this goal.

Not only did Clinton reflect the traits of the "New First Lady," she contributed to the characteristics of the role as well. During her speech, Clinton showed how she embodied the traits of the "New First Lady," the "First Mother," and the "First Wife," thus suggesting that the "New First Lady" was a synthesis of all three roles.

Although Clinton argued that women were more than just mothers and wives, she did not belittle any positions in the process. Whereas the “New First Lady” argued for sexual equality and self-development, Clinton displayed how the “New First Lady” would meet those demands while also fulfilling the more traditional roles as evidenced in Clinton’s frequent references to women’s various roles in society. While recalling the different opportunities, she displayed her equal respect for all of the choices. As she described the many positions in society that a woman may hold, Clinton did not make careers or independence more valuable or honorable than traditional mother/wife roles. In fact, Clinton recognized that “time and again, our talk turns to our children and our families.”⁵⁶ Clinton’s statement reflected her views of women and of herself. She recognized and acknowledged that families are important to women and stressed that women should not be required to choose between a career and a family. Clinton enacted this argument as she described both her joy and success in her career as well as her personal reverence for her role as a mother and wife. In doing so, Clinton defined the “New First Lady” as an emerging role which subsumed its predecessors instead of merely replacing them.

Conclusion

By tracing the roles of the First Lady over the last twenty years, I was able to identify the ways in which Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and Hillary Clinton rhetorically enacted the roles Americans expect and, usually, accept for First Ladies. For generations, these expectations were typical of and reinforced traditional gender roles. However, once Hillary Clinton assumed her position as First Lady in 1992, the roles began to change. Historical concern over the First Lady’s influence on the President became an even greater issue once Clinton began to fulfill and redefine her role as “the New First Lady.” Although this new role for president’s wives still embraces the traditional role of wife and mother, its public, independent elements appear to have unsettled American audiences.

Additional studies of the rhetoric of the First Ladies will not only offer a look into the personal rhetorical style of each woman, further explanations of society’s concerns and expectations may unfold as well. Why are American audiences unsettled? When did these concerns begin? Have the First Ladies traditionally chosen their roles or are we as a society denying them other options?

Notes

- 1 Edwards, Janis L., and Chen, Huey-Rong. "The First Lady/First Wife in Editorial Cartoons: Rhetorical Visions through Gendered Lenses." *Women's Studies in Communication* 23 no. 3 (2000): 371.
- 2 In order to test if the rhetoric of the First Ladies' reflected the "First Mother, First Wife, or New First Lady" roles, I obtained speeches from the last three first ladies, and searched for examples of the First Lady embodying her duty as a mother and wife. I then searched for examples of the First Lady operating in a position independent of her husband. I considered the tone of the speech, the types of arguments that were made, and the general statements given by the First Lady that would relate to these roles.
- 3 Edwards and Chen, "First Lady/First Wife," 371.
- 4 Ibid., 371.
- 5 Ibid., 371.
- 6 Ibid., 372.
- 7 Ibid., 371.
- 8 Ibid., 371.
- 9 Gardetto, Darlaine C. "Hillary Rodham Clinton, Symbolic Gender Politics, and the *New York Times*: January-November 1992." *Political Communication*. No. 14 (1997): 226.
- 10 Edwards and Chen, "First Lady/First Wife," 368.
- 11 Ibid., 371.
- 12 Ibid., 368.
- 13 Gardetto, "Hillary Rodham Clinton, Symbolic Gender Politics," 226.
- 14 Winfield, Betty Houchin. "'Madame President': Understanding a New Kind of First Lady." *Media Studies Journal*. 8 no. 2 (1994): 62.
- 15 Ibid., 62.
- 16 Edwards and Chen, "First Lady/First Wife," 379.
- 17 Winfield, "Madame President," 62.
- 18 Winfield, Betty Houchin. "Hillary Rodham Clinton's Image Content, Control, and Cultural Politics: Introductory Note." *Political Communication*. No. 14 (1997): 222.
- 19 Ibid., 222.
- 20 Winfield, "Madame President," 70.
- 21 Ibid., 61.
- 22 Gardetto 227.
- 23 Seiler, Michael. "First Lady tells L.A. Group to Say No to Drugs." *The Los Angeles Times*, 5 June 1986, part 1, p. 12.
- 24 Reagan, Nancy. "The Battle Against Drugs: What Can You Do?" *Vital Speeches*. Vol. 52, 1986: 645-47.

- 25 Ibid., 646.
- 26 Ibid., 646.
- 27 Ibid., 646.
- 28 Ibid., 646.
- 29 Ibid., 646.
- 30 Ibid., 647.
- 31 Ibid., 647.
- 32 Ibid., 645.
- 33 Ibid., 646.
- 34 Ibid., 647.
- 35 Ibid., 645.
- 36 Schaller, Michael. "The War on Drugs." *The 1980's*, 200: 145–149.
- 37 Schaller, "War on Drugs," 148.
- 38 Edwards and Chen, "First Lady/First Wife," 373.
- 39 Rosenfield, M. "The Wellesley Protest, Beyond Barbara Bush; From Campus Petition to Public Debate, Students Touch A National Nerve." *The Washington Post*. P. B1.
- 40 Dean, Kevin W. "Putting Public Back into Speaking: A Challenge for Forensics." *Argumentation and Advocacy*. No. 28 (1992): 192-99.
- 41 Dean, "Putting Public Back," 194.
- 42 Ibid., 194.
- 43 Bush, Barbara. "Choices and Changes." In *Contemporary American Public Discourse*, edited by Halford Ross Ryan, 382. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1992.
- 44 Winfield, "Madame President," 62.
- 45 Bush, "Choices and Changes," 382.
- 46 Ibid., 381.
- 47 Clinton, Hillary Rodham. "Women's Rights are Human Rights." P. 1–4. < <http://douglas.speech.nwu.edu/bycontro.ntm> > 2 November 2001.
- 48 Ibid., 1–3.
- 49 Ibid., 3.
- 50 Ibid., 1, 3.
- 51 Ibid., 1–4.
- 52 Ibid., 1.
- 53 Ibid., 3.
- 54 Ibid., 2.
- 55 Ibid., 2, 3.
- 56 Ibid., 1.

***Ideological Messages in "Reality TV":
Capitalistic and Interpersonal Lessons Learned from
Survivor I and Big Brother 2000***

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Abstract

This essay examines *Survivor I* and *Big Brother 2000* and argues that they are examples of how television perpetuates capitalistic and interpersonal ideologies. In other words, these reality television shows are a symptom of our American culture. These shows are masked as "interpersonal games," and they promote ideologies on both social and economic levels.

All entertainment has hidden meanings, revealing the nature of the culture that created it." (Jones, 1992, p. 6). This quotation has no greater relevance than for the most powerful entertainment medium of all: television. In fact, television has arguably become part of the "almost unnoticed working equipment of civilizations" (Cater, 1975, p.1). In other words, TV seriously affects our culture, our society, and our lives. Television actually alters people, particularly their inner selves; the perceiving, mythic, symbolic, judging and critical parts of every human being are affected by television. It affects the way we perceive and approach reality (Cantor & Cantor, 1992; Corcoran, 1984; Freedman, 1990; Novak, 1975).

In addition, television serves as a major source of guidance for behavior (Novak, 1975, p. 12). While human behavior is usually shaped by our parents, churches, and communities, other imaginative materials we use to construct our reality include stories, models, symbols, and images in action. Television is a national medium, and it values instant reflection of trends, and an effort to be "hip," "in," or "with-it" (Novak, 1975, p. 13). It defines for us the boundaries of the permissible (Ellis, 1977, p. 777).

Not only does it influence individuals, it plays a part in society as a whole. It literally functions as an instrument of a national, mobile culture. Television has the ability to electrify and unite the whole nation, creating an instantaneous network in which millions of people are simultaneous recipients of the same powerful images (Cantor & Cantor, 1992; Corcoran, 1984; Freedman, 1990; Novak, 1975).

With this in mind, I present my argument, which is two-fold. First, the "reality TV" programs that ran in the summer of 2000, *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, are examples of how television perpetuates capitalistic ideologies. In other words, these reality television shows are symptoms of American economic culture (specifically, "winning" money), which are masked as "interpersonal games." This leads to the second part of my argument: the social or interpersonal strategies that were "required" to win at each game greatly differed. I argue that *Survivor* is a social microcosm of democracy, where as *Big Brother*, being true to its name, is a microcosm of social repression. Because of this, the strikingly different interpersonal strategies that were used to win at each game can be explained. Thus, I will illustrate how these opposing interpersonal ideals present a paradox to the viewers of both programs.

I am operating under the assumption that television works "ideologically to promote and prefer certain meanings of the world, to circulate some meanings rather than others, and to serve some interests rather than others" (Fiske, 1987, p. 20). I argue that both *Survivor* and *Big Brother* inculcate the ideals of capitalistic ideology on two levels: economic and social. On the economic level, they both endorse the pursuit of money, fame, and successful careers. These values are prevalent in American society and have coalesced into the myth of the "*American Dream*," which stands for opportunity for each individual to get ahead in life; someone can always become wealthy (White, 1988; Cortes, 1982; Grambs, 1982; Rivlin, 1992). These values are an integral part of a capitalistic society, and, as I will illustrate later, both *Survivor* and *Big Brother* are symptoms of these ideological values.

On the second level, each program purports a different preferred social strategy that is needed to "win" at the game of capitalism. *Survivor* advocates "playing dirty" and "everyone for her/himself": forming alliances, lying, and deceiving other people. Conversely, *Big Brother* portrays the opposite: getting along, being nice, and "sticking together." As I mentioned previously, I argue that the drastic differences in social strategies can be explained by the kind of governmental society that each program represents. *Survivor* mirrors democracy, while *Big Brother* mirrors George Orwell's prophetic vision of "Big Brother" and the "Thought Police" in his classic book, 1984.

Finally, the reason I chose to analyze and compare only *Survivor I* and *Big Brother 2000* (excluding *Survivors II-IV* and *Big Brother 2001*) are because these two shows were the "trail blazers" in the reality television "game-show" genre. When the first *Survivor* was filmed, no one had any idea (including the audience) how to win the game. It took the ultimate winner, Richard Hatch, to set the tone and strategy for how subsequent games would be played. The same is true for *Big Brother 2000*. Since the contestants on this show were involved with the filming before most of the *Survivor I* epi-

sodes aired, they had no “strategy” from which to play; they were playing their game as “blindly” as the contestants on *Survivor I*. Therefore, I argue that the first installments of these series were pivotal and, ultimately, the most important.

Ideology

The discussion of ideology is critical if we are to better understand the function of *Survivor* and *Big Brother* in our culture. Ideologies are neither “ideal” nor “spiritual,” but rather material. Ideologies appear in specific social institutions and practices, such as cultural artifacts (Althusser, 1969/70, p. 232). In that way, everyone “lives” in ideologies. Pryor (1992) suggests that ideology in cultural practices can operate as a “rhetoric of control” by structuring the way in which people view the world:

“Ideology ‘refracts’ our social conditions of existence, structuring consciousness by defining for us what exists, what is legitimate and illegitimate, possible and impossible, thinkable and unthinkable. Entering praxis as a form of persuasion, ideology acts as a rhetoric of control by endorsing and legitimizing certain economic, social and political arrangements at the expense of others and by specifying the proper role and position of the individual within those arrangements” (p. 4).

Similarly, Althusser (1971) suggests, “[I]deology is the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group” (p. 149). He continues, “...in ideology ‘men represent their real conditions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form’” (p. 153). Thus, ideology performs a hegemonic function, quiescing the masses, for it inculcates the living person to reinforce his or her own servitude to the existing dominant system instead of rebelling against the ruling ideas (Althusser, 1990, p. 238).

It is through ideology that consciousness is structured. “[A]s Marx says, it is in ideology that men ‘become conscious’ of their class conflict and ‘fight it out’; in its religious, ethical, legal, and political forms, etc., ideology is an objective social reality; the ideological struggle is an organic part of the class struggle” (Althusser, 1969/70, p. 11).

However, we need to elaborate on how these ideological structures determine the consciousness of people. Grossberg (1984) suggests that ideology exists in practices, not merely by producing a system of meanings, which purport to represent the world but rather, by producing its own system of meanings as the real, natural ones (p. 409). In this manner, ideology can act as a “rhetoric of control,” for it does not correspond to “reality;” it is an illusion while alluding to reality.

Althusser argues, in essence, that the question of ideology is how particular significations appear as the natural representations of reality, so that

individuals accede and consent to their explicit organizations of reality and their implicit structures of power and domination (Grossberg, 1984, p. 412). Ideology is the power of a particular system to represent its own representations as a direct reflection of "the real," to produce its own meanings as the natural order. Power is attained within the very structures of the signifying practices themselves and is to be found in the ways in which the text produces meaning through its practices of structuring signifier around the subject (Grossberg, 1984, p. 409).

Ideology, for Althusser, represents the way individuals "live" their relations to society (Eagleton, 1991, p. 18). Grossberg (1984) suggests, "Within such positions, textuality is a productive practice whose (imaginary) product is experience itself. Experience can no longer serve as a mediation between the cultural and the social since it is not merely within the cultural but is the product of cultural practices" (p. 409). The "text" for study, then, becomes the cultural practices and structures, which determine humans. Althusser concludes that ideology reifies our affective, unconscious relations with the world, and determines how people are pre-reflectively bound up in social reality (Eagleton, 1991, p. 18).

Therefore, an ideology is characterized by a blindness to its own presuppositions. Althusser maintains, "The way problems are posed" determines an ideology: "An ideology (in the strict Marxist sense of the term—the sense in which Marxism is not itself an ideology) can be characterized in this particular respect by the fact that *its own problematic is not conscious of itself*." Thus, an ideology is, "Unconscious of its 'theoretical presuppositions,' that is, the active but unavowed problematic which fixes for the meaning and movement of *its problems* and thereby of their solutions" (1969/70, p. 69, emphasis in original).

To better understand the illusion of capitalism, I examine two cultural artifacts: *Survivor* and *Big Brother*. I follow the suggestion of Althusser (1971), who argues, Ideologies "need to be 'interpreted' to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world" (p. 153).

Survivor and *Big Brother* as Texts

In the United States, the "reality TV" genre of programming, such as *The Real World* and *Road Rules*, are currently very popular. Both *Survivor* and *Big Brother* were at the forefront of the newest (and most popular to date) additions to this phenomenon. For the purpose of this essay, I am *only* focusing on the first installments of both programs (*Survivor I* and *Big Brother 2000*). The reason for this is because when they debuted, the "reality game show" was completely new to the contestants; no one had any proven strategies for victory. I argue that the second installments of the programs that ran in 2001 were very different because these people had watched the suc-

cesses and failures of the first casts. It is because of this that I believe the first installments are much more important to examine; they were more "true" to human behavior.

Survivor debuted on CBS in May, 2000, and *Big Brother* followed shortly thereafter in early July, 2000. Both were interpersonal and capitalistic "games" in which the winner received either \$1,000,000 (*Survivor*) or \$500,000 (*Big Brother*). *Survivor*'s theme was: "Outwit, Outplay, Outlast." The premise was the following: Sixteen strangers were "stranded" on a remote island in the South China Sea. They were divided into two "tribes" of eight, the "Pagong" and "Tagi." They have to build shelter, catch food, and establish a "new society." They had to work together as a team to succeed, but ultimately, they were competitors. The tribes competed in games for "rewards" (luxury items such as food), and also for "immunity." Every third day, they attended a "tribal council" in which they voted one member off the island. Whoever won the "immunity challenge" (as a tribe early in the show, later, as an individual) could not be voted off. After several episodes, the two tribes merged into one, "Rattana," as they tried to "outwit, outlast, and outplay" the other contestants. The ultimate prize was \$1,000,000.

Big Brother's premise is playing off of George Orwell's concept of "Big Brother" in his book, *1984*. The figurehead leader in this book, known only by the name "Big Brother," is a person who is *always* watching you. The ever vigilant eyes of "Big Brother" are the "Thought Police," who monitor everyone, everywhere, through the use of telescreens. Essentially, this is the same premise of the television program as well. Ten people gave up their televisions, CDs, computers, telephones, radios, any other contact with the outside world, as well as their freedom to live how they choose, for 89 days. They were confined to a 1600-square foot house and were watched by cameras 24 hours a day. All ten contestants arrived at the house allowed to carry only two suitcases: one packed with clothes and another smaller, "Big Brother"-issued case containing personal items. On Thursdays, the housemates gathered to nominate two fellow cast members for banishment. Viewers had one week to vote as many times as they want via a toll-free number on which resident they wanted out. The contestants could leave voluntarily, but they would be immediately replaced by alternate cast members. If they were able to "tough it out," they could win fame and possibly the grand prize of \$500,000.

The Case of *Survivor*

As Althusser (1969/70) and Pryor (1992) suggest, ideology exists in cultural artifacts and practices. In addition, Pryor (1992) argues that ideology defines for us what is "legitimate and illegitimate," and "thinkable and unthinkable" by "endorsing certain economic and social arrangements" (p. 4). This is certainly true in the case of *Survivor*. The program serves as a cultural artifact that endorses certain practices. In fact, it defines for us the "preferred" economic and social arrangements. The show promotes for us the economic arrangement of "winning" money. It also defines the social arrangements that are legitimate, thinkable, and necessary to win the interpersonal and capitalistic game. First, let us discuss the economic arrangements that *Survivor* purports.

The economic arrangements that *Survivor* perpetuates is in direct alignment with that of the "game" of capitalism: to "win" money, success, and/or fame (which will lead to money). While Richard, the \$1,000,000 prize winner, is the personification of the capitalistic/American Dream come true, the other contestants certainly have had their share of money and fame.

For example, after getting voted off the island, many of the former cast members appeared on the "talk show circuit" and have done many paid interviews. Joel Klug has done approximately 250 interviews (Abele, Alexander & Lasswell, 2000, p 62), and Stacey Stillman is charging \$1200 for a "few quotes," and \$1800 for a full-length interview (www.salon.com). Jenna Lewis has been busy with paid television engagements that require cross country trips (Abele, Alexander & Lasswell, 2000, p. 63). In addition, some have made television commercials. Both B.B. Andersen and Stacey Stillman appeared in Reebok commercials that were aired during the remaining *Survivor* episodes.

Others are making their way even farther into Hollywood. Most have their own talent agents who are getting them acting jobs. For example, Sean Kenniff is going to appear in a role on a soap opera, and Gervase Peterson is currently "sifting through offers" to act in television situation comedies and movies. Dirk Been has been auditioning for movie roles, and Joel Klug has moved to Los Angeles to "become a star." Even Sonja Christopher, the 63-year-old breast cancer survivor and the first contestant voted off, is making her acting debut in the television show, *Diagnosis Murder* (Abele, Alexander & Lasswell, 2000, p. 57). Finally, two of the women contestants from *Survivor*, Colleen Haskell and Jenna Lewis, were asked to pose for *Playboy* magazine. While these women are certainly attractive, they are not the "typical-looking" *Playboy* model. It is obvious that their fame has put them in *Playboy*. No one is revealing the exact amount of the offers, but rumors suggest that they are around \$500,000. Thus, it is clear that even though these contestants did not win the \$1,000,000, they are using their famous faces to "win" the capitalistic game anyway.

Not only does *Survivor* purport the “preferred” economic arrangements, it also defines for us the social arrangements needed to win the capitalistic game: interpersonal **strategy**. The theme of the strategy needed to win the game is, “Nice guys don’t last.” This is demonstrated by the fact that Gretchen, a nice, strong, capable, and nurturing “soccer mother” was voted off the island. There were also many other “nice” contestants who were eventually voted off for one reason or another. However, on the other hand, Richard, the million-dollar winner, used “Machiavellian Smarts” to scheme his way into winning. After the final episode, he said, “I really feel that I earned where I am. The first hour on the island I stepped into my strategy and thought, ‘I’m going to focus on how to establish an alliance with four people early on.’ I spend a lot of time thinking about who people are and why they interact the way they do, and I didn’t want to just hurt people’s feelings or do this and toss that one out. I wanted this to be planned and I wanted it to be based on what I needed to do to win the game. I don’t regret anything I’ve done or said to them and I wouldn’t change a thing.” (www.cbs.com).

One strategy that worked to Richard’s advantage was that upon arriving to the island, he formed an alliance with three other contestants: Susan, Rudy, and Kelly. They decided that they would all vote the same person off the island so that *their* chances of staying were maximized. Richard also “chipped in,” did some “dirty work,” and ingratiated himself by being the only person who could successfully catch fish. He also interacted with others strategically, and decided who to vote off based on who *didn’t like him*, or who was **more likable than him** (or the rest of the alliance).

Thus, it is evident that being part of an alliance is definitely needed to win this capitalistic game, because the four people who were part of the only alliance on the island were the final contestants. In fact, in Rudy’s (who came in third place) final comments were, “My advice for anybody who plays this game is form an alliance and stick with it.” (www.cbs.com). This is similar to corporate America, where many people form cliques, alliances, or particular friendships in order to get ahead. Some people even betray others.

This leads to another essential ingredient to the social arrangements: lying and deception. In fact, in episode nine, Richard (the winner) said to the camera, “Outright lying is essential.” (www.salon.com). He also revealed that part of his strategy was making a big deal of his fishing skills just to distract attention from his schemings. He further stated, “I’m not still on the island because I catch fish, I’m here because I’m smart.” (www.salon.com). For example, he once thought the others did not appreciate his fishing skills. Thus, he decided to stop fishing for a few days so that the group would appreciate him more. It was seemingly a “nasty plan,” especially considering that at the time, the other tribe members were rationing their rice. However, it was this sort of behavior that led him to win the game.

Another example of the necessity for lying is illustrated in the fact that the only alliance of Richard, Rudy, Sue, and Kelly denied to the remaining competitors that they were scheming. Sue even blatantly lied to the *Survivor* host, Jeff Probst, when he asked her if there was an alliance. However, when talking to the cameras, they freely admitted to its existence.

While the alliance strategy worked for most of the game, in the end, it was destined to dissolve when they had to start voting against each other. So, just as in a capitalistic society, it is ultimately, still "everyone for her/himself." The best illustration of this fact is the final quote that Kelly made, "I learned early on in the game [about trust and lying]. I had befriended her [Sue—part of Kelly's alliance]; I trusted her and she betrayed me. She was lying to me, and was plotting against me from very early on. I realized that and I knew that. Therefore I decided not to trust her, not to be friends with her, not to be honest with her, for my own protection." (www.cbs.com). Therefore, even *within* the winning alliance, there was a fair amount of distrust and deception.

The Case of *Big Brother*

As stated earlier, Pryor (1992) argues that ideology defines for us what is "legitimate and illegitimate," and "thinkable and unthinkable" by "endorsing certain economic and social arrangements" (p. 4). While *Big Brother* endorsed similar economic arrangements as *Survivor*, the social arrangements were quite different. In fact, *Big Brother's* "preferred" social practices were the opposite of *Survivor's*. First, however, let us examine the economic arrangements of *Big Brother*.

The economic ideals that *Big Brother* purports is also in direct alignment with the "game" of capitalism: winning money, success, and/or fame (which leads to money). The only difference was that the grand prize was only half of that of *Survivor's* (\$500,000 vs. \$1,000,000). However, the outcomes for these ten contestants were quite different than the ones on *Survivor*. It seemed like every time you turned on the television or read a magazine or newspaper, you would see the face of a *Survivor* cast member. However, interestingly so, this was not the case with the *Big Brother* cast.

Unlike the *Survivor* contestants, there was not much publicity for these people after they were voted out of the house. While all of them did do publicity/promotional appearances for CBS, it seems like that is where their fame ended. In fact, a few weeks after banishment from the house, the public almost never heard about them again.

Many of the cast members had high hopes for their entertainment careers following the post-*Survivor* "fame frenzy." For example, one contestant, Jamie, was nick-named "Hollywood" by her fellow house guests because she made it known that she was hoping to turn her fame into a suc-

cessful movie or television career. After banishment, some of the *Big Brother* cast members promptly moved to Los Angeles hoping for their big break. One of them, Brittany, was the contestant we probably heard the most about post-*Big Brother*: A self-proclaimed virgin, she created "love beds" so she could cuddle up with the other house guests. After banishment, she occasionally wrote articles (and still does) for the *Big Brother* web site. Apparently, she said she signed with William Morris, and they had introduced her to producers. She has read for a few movie parts and received call backs on some (www.bigbrother2000.com/NON/article556.html). However, unlike her *Survivor* counterparts, her roles were not just handed to her. She actually had to *audition* for parts, and seemed to be relatively unsuccessful in the process.

Finally, the only other two contestants worthy of mentioning are Eddie, the show's \$500,000 winner, and Jamie, the Miss Washington beauty queen. Although he was the big winner, Eddie did not sign with an agent immediately and said, "...I don't know what options there are. I don't know what markets are out there. I hope to talk to someone and see where I might fit." (www.dailynews/cashing_in—big_brother_winner_eddie_seeking_ways_to_extend_fame_1.htm). All Jamie (a.k.a. "Hollywood") found when she left the house was a dozen marriage proposals.

One economic arrangement that occurred on the show was when the producers offered any house guest \$50,000 to leave the house. Many theorize they did this because the show was so boring that they wanted to "buy out" *any* house guest and replace them with someone more interesting or controversial to "stir the show up." However, no resident would take the \$50,000 buy-out offer. In fact, they all agreed that they would not even take ten times that much (www.salon.com/ent/tv/feature/2000/09/09/bb_analysis/index.html). This interesting turn of events is closely linked to the social situation on the program. Unlike *Survivor*, it seemed like *people* are more important than *money*, which can stand in the way of achieving the ultimate capitalistic dream.

This leads us to the more interesting dimension of *Big Brother*: its social arrangements. Despite the fact that the United States usually leads the world in terms of entertainment, the Dutch were the first to create this television show. There, it was an incredible hit; there was much conflict, controversy, and more importantly, *sex*. Because it was such a ratings hit, both Germany and Spain followed suit with similar outcomes. In fact, in the German version, one female contestant regularly bared her breasts in front of the camera (www.salon.com/ent/tv/feature/2000/09/12/bb_mon11/index2.html). However, this was not the case in the U.S.

The social arrangements in the American *Big Brother* house can be characterized by a quotation from Eddie, the game's winner: "I thought it

was going to be cutthroat, where you have to sleep with one eye open. Actually, the other people were very nice. A bad day at the 'Big Brother' house was running out of toilet paper...I'm not sure what they were looking for... A harsh reality where people fight?...This group was a walk in the park." (www.dailynews.yahoo.com/h/ap/20001002/en/big_brother_winner_1.html).

From the beginning, the contestants all got along very well. The only people who did cause *some* tension in the house were "Mega" and Jordan, who were also the first two to be voted out of the house. This seems ironic, since the person who caused much of the controversy on *Survivor* was the *last* person who "left" (Richard, the winner). Once Mega and Jordan were gone, the rest of the group seemed to bond fairly tightly. In fact, many expressed remorse at having to nominate *anyone* for banishment from the house.

The most drastic display of interpersonal bonding came when contestant George thought he came to a "revelation." He learned from the banished houseguest Brittany that his wife had organized a voting campaign in his favor. Because of this, he vowed that he would not turn the people in the house against each other. His plan: he would walk out of the house with whoever was banished that week.

George attempted to use his powers of persuasion to convince all remaining members of the house to walk out with him. He said, "Do you know the point we could make?" Other house guests seemed to agree with George. Josh stated that the show was about how people "turn on each other...But society does work in here. We can make it work." Curtis added that maybe the "meta game" is "maybe we can win as a *whole*...One thing we've stumbled on is that we as characters—we as people—are bigger than the show." (www.salon.com/ent/tv/feature/2000/09/12/bb_mon11/index1.html).

The philosophical conversation continued. Josh said, "Mankind is bigger than the show. It's the biggest thing [statement] a group of humans could ever make!" George added, "We got a chance to make history!" Finally, Eddie (the eventual winner) said, "If you guys want to walk, I'll walk with you. I want to ruin the show anyway. If we're doing it though...we got to make a pact." Shortly after, *everyone* had agreed to walk.

Then, they all sat around and discussed their personal reasons for wanting to leave the show with George. Josh said he'd be doing it so his niece will know he didn't "stab any backs" for money. Cassandra said it would allow her to feel good when she left the game. Finally, Curtis made clear that his actions were not about making some "huge social statement," but rather about upholding his personal integrity. To this, George, affectionately known as the "Chicken Man" by his fellow house guests, proclaimed that he has never known a *finer group of people* (www.salon.com/ent/tv/feature/2000/09/12/bb_mon11/index2.html). Even though they ultimately decided against

“walking out” on the show, the cast members still remained very close, perhaps even more so as a result of this event.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have demonstrated how *Survivor* and *Big Brother* promote ideals on two levels: economic and social. On the economic level, they endorse the pursuit of money, fame, and successful careers. On the social level, they advocate different preferred interpersonal strategies that are needed to “win” at the game of capitalism. *Survivor* promotes the philosophy that “winning money at all costs is acceptable.” The ideological messages that can be inferred from the show include: We must lie. We must scheme. We must deceive. We must win money and fame. On the other hand, *Big Brother*’s philosophy is “winning money at all costs is *not acceptable*.” It advocates these strategies: We must win money. We must get along. We must stick together. We must be nice and good to one another. We must all be winners by doing this.

For viewers of both shows, these ideological messages are contradictory and present a paradox. Which interpersonal strategy is preferred? Which one will gain them the most money and/or fame? If we look to the popularity of each show, it is obvious that the viewers were more intrigued by *Survivor*. The incredible ratings success it achieved greatly surpassed that of *Big Brother*. Why was this? Is it because Americans are “money hungry” and like to see people “back-stabbing” one another? Is our society really that dismal? I’d like to think not.

I think the answer lies in what the shows implicitly represent. *Survivor* represents our American democracy by allowing people the freedom to “win” any way *they* choose. In essence, it’s an “everyone for her/himself” mindset. We, as Americans, are familiar with this concept; most of us have never known anything else. Conversely, *Big Brother* represents an “us-against-them” mentality. In this show, it is the cast members vs. the producers (a.k.a. “Big Brother”). The producers were the “bad guys” who were trying to *take away* their freedoms and manipulate them in any way possible. They wanted the people to turn against each other. However, that was not to happen.

Finally, Americans are very protective of their freedom, and anything that might threaten that is looked upon with great suspicion. I argue that is what happened in these two reality TV shows during the summer of 2000.

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Using the Feature Film *American History X* to Teach Principles of Self-Concept in the Introduction to Interpersonal Communication Course

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Abstract

Scholars in many academic disciplines have explored the possibilities of using feature films as pedagogical tools. This manuscript adds to that body of knowledge by exploring how one specific feature film, *American History X*, (Kaye, 1998) can be used to illustrate and assist in teaching principles of self-concept in the Introduction to Interpersonal Communication course. This manuscript: 1) summarizes the plot of *American History X*; 2) outlines and defines five specific principles of self-concept that can be discussed in conjunction with the film; and 3) demonstrates how the principles of self-concept cited in this manuscript can be illustrated and taught using the film *American History X*.

Introduction

Scholars in many academic disciplines have explored the possibilities of using feature films as pedagogical tools. Scholars in Anthropology (see: Rohrl, 1981); Communication (see: Lamoureux, 2000; Proctor, 2000; Proctor & Adler, 1991; Siddens, 1990 and 1992; and Welker, 2000); English Language, Writing, Literature and TESOL (see: Chappell, 1986; Moss, 1985; and Parker, 1976); Instructional Media (see: Bailey & Ledford, 1994); Psychology (see: Connor, 1996; Author Unknown, 1995; and Tyler & Reynolds, 1998); Sex Education (see: Maynard, 1972); Sociology (see: Burton, 1988; Groce, 1992; and Tipton & Tiemann, 1993); and World History (see: Cortes & Thompson, 1990) have all explored this topic from many different perspectives.

This manuscript adds to that body of knowledge by exploring how one specific feature film, *American History X*, (Kaye, 1998) can be used to illustrate and assist in teaching principles of self-concept in the Introduction to Interpersonal Communication course. This manuscript: 1) summarizes the plot of *American History X*; 2) outlines and defines some principles of self-concept that can be discussed in conjunction with the film; and 3) demonstrates how the principles of self-concept cited in this manuscript can be illustrated and taught using the film *American History X*.

A Plot Summary of *American History X*

From the direction, plot, characters, and actors, to the editing, lighting, audio, and cinematography, *American History X* is a powerful, disturbing, and extremely well crafted film. It is unusual for the director of a major Hollywood feature film to also serve as the film's principle cinematographer, but that is the case in this film, and fortunately, it serves to strengthen the film even further, rather than weaken it.

First, the plot of the film: The film takes place in the late nineteen-nineties in the Venice Beach area of Los Angeles, California. It centers around the Vinyard family: a mother (played by Beverly D'Angelo), father, eldest son (Derek, played by Edward Norton), eldest daughter, younger son (Daniel, played by Edward Furlong) and younger daughter.

The father is a firefighter for the city of Los Angeles, who is murdered by a black person while fighting a fire in a black neighborhood. Derek is of high school age when this occurs, and he appears to have been a "normal" child up to this point. He is shown to be a basketball player and a good, attentive student. During the process of grieving his father's death, Derek finds himself overcome by feelings of hate and rage. He encounters a white supremacist (Cameron, played by Stacey Keach), who becomes his mentor, and who feeds Derek's anger and hatred. Derek soon becomes a co-leader of the white supremacist group, with Cameron. Derek shaves his head, and adorns his torso and arms with several tattoos signaling his beliefs, such as swastikas, hate mottoes and other images. He also trains his body as well as his mind, becoming very powerful and imposing physically as well.

Cameron convinces Derek to lead, and participate in, several violent acts, while Cameron himself stays in the background. For instance, at Cameron's urging, Derek incites a gang of his compatriots to completely ransack a grocery, formerly run by a Caucasian, now run by a Korean immigrant, and to beat and brutalize the non-white employees of the grocery.

Eventually Derek kills two young black men while they are trying to steal Derek's vehicle. Derek spends three years in the state prison at Chino. During Derek's time in prison, he at first aligns himself with other skinhead inmates, but eventually begins to see that his skinhead allies do not share his

philosophical fervor, and is disappointed to find that some of his "brothers in Aryan supremacy" sell drugs, and interact in other ways, with Chicanos, blacks and other minorities, just to make money illegally while in prison.

Eventually, the other skinheads tire of Derek's fervor and criticisms, he is raped in the prison shower by them, and he has to fend for himself in the prison against the other ethnic groups. He eventually becomes friends with a black inmate, who helps him survive prison, and also to begin to see people for who and what they are, rather than just as a color. By the time his prison term is done, Derek has rejected his white supremacist beliefs, and is ready to pick up the pieces of his and his families lives, and to move forward with their lives after he leaves prison.

However, while Derek is in prison, his brother, Danny, begins to follow in Derek's footsteps, becoming a skinhead himself, and interacting with Cameron, as well as other skinheads. On his return from prison, Derek seeks to show Danny the error of his and Danny's ways.

This brief summary does not begin to describe all the interpersonal and intercultural nuances of this film, all the subplots and characters of the film, nor does it give away how the film ends. It also does not reveal the very careful way in which the narrative line of the film functions. The story is told from two perspectives; a current time line, and a back story of events in the past that lead up to the current time line.

The film begins at 7:00 AM on the morning that Derek is released from prison and it ends almost literally twenty-four hours later, the morning of the next day. As Derek is being released from prison, Danny is called into his principal's office (played by Avery Brooks), and is being reprimanded for writing a history paper that glorifies Adolph Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*. Danny's punishment is to take his history course from his principal and his first assignment is to write a paper in which he explains the impact of his brothers imprisonment on himself. (The principal taught Derek's English literature classes when Derek was in high school, and is aware of Derek's transition from athlete and good student to skinhead.)

Through the device of Danny writing his paper, the audience is shown all the past events that lead up to the current twenty four hour time frame. All the scenes of the film that occur during the "current" twenty four hour period are shot in color. All the past scenes are shot in black and white, and the cinematography and lighting in these scenes is of particular note. It is as though this part of the film was shot by Ansel Adams, the renowned black and white scenic photographer. The framing, the lighting and the use of shadow in these black and white scenes is superb, as is the narrative device of telling the story from these two perspectives. The film provides a wealth of content that relates to film and video production; self-concept; interpersonal relationships; family relationships; and intercultural communication; to name but a few.

Using *American History X* to teach Principles of Self-Concept

There are many more theories and concepts that can be examined in the classroom using this film than are possible to explore through this manuscript. Therefore, this manuscript focuses specifically on theories and ideas related to self-concept that might be explored in an Introduction to Interpersonal Communication class. This manuscript now defines five specific theories of self concept that are commonly addressed in Introduction to Interpersonal Communication classes, and applies them to *American History X*: 1) Self-Esteem/Self-Worth; 2) How we use Roles in our lives; 3) Role Repertoire; 4) Role Rigidity; and 5) Role Conflict.

Self-Esteem/Self-Worth

One important part of what forms our self-concept is our self-esteem. Self-esteem can be defined as how much or how little we like who we perceive ourselves to be. Self-esteem is usually measured on a scale from high to low. People with a high self-esteem like the person they perceive themselves to be, and generally feel good about themselves and have a positive outlook on life. These people tend to be more outgoing and interact with people more readily. People with a low self-esteem do not like the person they perceive themselves to be, and generally feel badly about themselves and have a negative outlook on life. These people tend to be more introverted, and to shy away from contact with other people. In these ways, self-esteem affects your public and private selves significantly (Adler, Rosenfeld, Towne & Proctor, 1998; Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 1999; Wood, 1999).

There are several interesting examples of how self-esteem works in this film. First, many characters seem to suffer from low self-esteem for many different reasons, and they all seem to find senses of higher self-esteem through the feelings of belonging and unity that they discover in the Aryan/Skinhead culture.

For instance, Derek seems to have a relatively average sense of self-esteem for a teenage male until the death of his father. And, it further appears that a large part of his grieving process involves an erosion of that self-esteem. This erosion is amplified as Derek begins to buy into the false premise that his race is being dominated by other races. Then, as Derek begins to assert himself as a leader in the skinhead culture, we begin to see his self-esteem and self-worth rise based on the positive reinforcement he receives from other members of that culture. Finally, by the end of the film Derek rediscovers his sense of self-esteem, based on his own worth as a human being, and not based on the hollow rhetoric of a racist culture. Derek's journey is an interesting one to follow, and is a useful tool to use to teach students about how self-esteem functions, and can be influenced by factors outside and inside the self.

In addition, the characters of Seth and Stacey seem to suffer from low self-esteem, and they both find stronger senses of self-worth through being part of the skinhead culture. It becomes obvious through this film that neither of these people think very highly of themselves outside the skinhead group, but that they have found acceptance in this group, and that they have also found higher senses of self-esteem through this group. In truth, it seems that being a part of this culture is what actually gives them their senses of self-worth. Seth is quite heavysset, and is quite aggressive in his interpersonal interactions, and it can easily be hypothesized that he had little success fitting into more mainstream groups and cultures. Stacey, in an even more powerful manner, seems to find her sense of self worth not just through the skinheads, but also through being Dereks girlfriend, and through his status as a leader of the skinheads.

Finally, Danny, as Stacey does, also seems to find his sense of self-worth, not just through the skinheads, but through his relationship to Derek, and through Dereks status as a leader of the skinheads. As often happens, younger siblings admire older siblings, and they seek their self-esteem through venues traveled by the older siblings, rather than through their own routes.

All in all, this film provides many interesting discussion points concerning self-esteem and self-worth, and it very clearly demonstrates what a powerful part of our self-concept that self-esteem is.

How We Use Roles in our Lives

To further define how the self-concept works in our everyday lives, and how we are able to manage and maintain all the “different selves” that seem to exist in our lives, we often talk to our students about the concept of roles, and some of the other ideas that emerge from that concept: such as role repertoire; role rigidity and role conflict. All of these concepts are clearly demonstrated in *American History X*, and will be examined further in this manuscript.

The General Concept of Roles

First, we will look at a definition of roles, and how the concept of roles is demonstrated in *American History X*. The different public selves that we present to other people often are framed, or created, within a particular set of obligations or duties that we have, or sometimes they exist because of our social activities and occupations. Trenholm & Jensen (2000) call these different public selves that we use to interact with other people, “roles” that we play. One single person can be a daughter, a sister, a mother, a graduate student, a high school teacher, a friend, and an athlete. Each of these aspects of that persons life constitute a very important role that she plays, and requires a different public self to present to the people with whom she interacts. The

roles that we play in our lives are also subject to change as we grow, evolve, and as we encounter new social and occupational contexts.

In *American History X*, we see many examples of people playing different roles in different social contexts, and many shifts, or attempted shifts, in roles that people play. For instance, Dereks brother Danny, is seen playing one role in school, and with his skinhead compatriots, as a tough guy skinhead. However, with his Mother and his Sisters, he plays a different role as a sensitive and caring son and brother. This is demonstrated very clearly in a scene toward the beginning of the film, when Derek returns home from prison, and when a skinhead friend named Seth comes to the Vinyard families apartment to visit Derek on his release. Seth videotapes Danny playing the role of a devout skinhead, spouting the racist and violent dogma of that group, but prior to Seths arrival, Danny is seen playing the role of a loving, caring, sensitive, teenage boy in his interaction with his Mother and Sisters.

We also see Derek shift between roles in the film. In the flashbacks in the film it is revealed that Derek once played the role of a seemingly sensitive and intelligent high school student, who was an athlete and scholar. With his Fathers murder, and the influence of Cameron, however, he begins to play the role of bigot and hate-monger, leading the group of skinheads with whom he associates. Eventually though, he begins to see the error of his ways, and attempts to revert back to the more sensitive and caring person that he once was.

We also see people play single roles in the film. Seth, Cameron, and Dereks girlfriend, Stacey, play the roles of bigoted skinheads, and never vary from those roles throughout the film. Avery Brooks plays the role of a high school principle who is willing to stand up for what is right, and who appears to be very strong-willed. These people seem to accept the roles that they play and are comfortable in them, seeing no need to alter roles in differing situations.

These are but a few examples of the discussion of the general topic of roles that can be generated from this film, and that discussion can lead to other aspects of role-playing in real life, as well, as we will see in this manuscript. There are also many other interesting aspects and nuances of playing roles in our lives that can be discussed through this film, such as what motivates us to choose roles, change roles, what the impact of the roles we play is on our senses of self concept, and so on.

Role Repertoire

Trenholm & Jensen (2000) also tell us that the number of roles that we can successfully play is called our "Role Repertoire." Sometimes we must make drastic shifts between roles. At 2:00 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, one particular person might be a student in a graduate level class, then

during the next class at 3:00 on those days the same person is a graduate teaching assistant. Many of us make the shift from employee to family member on a daily basis. We often have to play many roles in a day for many different audiences.

In this film, Danny is perhaps the clearest exemplar to use to illustrate this concept. In the example cited above in the section on roles, we see Danny playing different roles with different sets of people in his life. With his family, he is sensitive and caring; with his skinhead friends, and at school, he is a "tough guy wannabe." We clearly see two roles that Danny must balance in his life.

Derek also provides an example of role repertoire from a different perspective, in that his shifts from role to role are more dramatic in nature, and more sustained over time. He starts out playing the role of a sensitive, caring young man, adopts the role of skinhead, then reverts back to his original, authentic role. Danny and Derek's role shifts mirror one another, but Danny makes his shifts on a daily basis, and Derek makes his shifts over a longer course of time. Again, there are many different examples of role repertoire in this film, but these two stand out as primary points of discussion for the classroom.

Role Rigidity

Sometimes people are unable to make a shift from a public self-concept to a private self-concept. This is called Role Rigidity (Trenholm & Jensen, 2000). It happens when a person becomes "locked" into a particular role that the person plays as part of her or his public self-concept, and she or he plays that role no matter what the circumstance. For instance, a teacher that treats her family the same way she treats her students displays role rigidity.

In this film, in particular, the characters Seth, Cameron, Derek, and Stacey demonstrate role rigidity in the roles they adopt as skinheads. These roles permeate their lives and they play these roles exclusively in their lives, no matter who their audience is. Seth and Cameron seem to have locked onto this lifestyle completely, and from observing the film, it is likely that this is because they were never able to find acceptance in any mainstream cultural groups. They seem to have no other roles to play.

Derek and Stacey demonstrate some very interesting points of discussion related to Role Rigidity. At one point, after his release from prison, Derek tries to talk Stacey into leaving the skinhead life with him, and she cannot fathom that thought. Stacey provides a particularly interesting example of the phenomena of role rigidity because it becomes obvious that part of Stacey's deep attachment to the skinhead lifestyle is the status that Derek has achieved as a leader of the skinhead group. She refers to the fact that Derek is perceived by the skinheads as a "god," and that they will be safe, and, in particu-

lar, that they will be able to have anything they want. Stacey does not seem so locked into the skinhead dogma as she is the lifestyle that Dereks status affords her. She is the girlfriend of the "god" and she does not want to give that up no matter what, hence her adherence to this role no matter what.

Derek, on the other hand, provides an example of role rigidity while he is devoted to the skinhead lifestyle, but he eventually gives up that role and returns to a more practical, righteous and diverse life style, likely demonstrating different roles in differing appropriate social situations. Derek does provide an interesting contrast to Stacey as an example of role rigidity though. While Derek is a skinhead, he really truly believes in the principles and ideals of that group. This is demonstrated several times in the film. He is locked into that role due to a complete, total adherence to the philosophical framework of hatred and bigotry that the group endorses. For instance, when Derek is in prison, he is disgusted that members of the skinheads sell contraband materials to Hispanics, Asians, blacks and other ethnic groups, and otherwise interact with them for financial gain. Derek is disgusted that his skinhead compatriots do not adhere to the ideas of the culture as strongly as he does and this eventually leads to his downfall as a skinhead. Derek demonstrates role rigidity as a skinhead in its purest form. He subjugates himself to the philosophy entirely.

As previously noted, there are many examples of role rigidity in this film. These are just a few examples. There are many others and many other points of discussion on this topic offered in the film.

Role Conflict

Trenholm & Jensen (2000) also note that sometimes circumstances make it very difficult for a person to switch from one role to another. For instance, a medical student that is also a spouse and parent sometimes must work long, difficult hours, taking her or him away from the family for extended periods of time, and this creates a strain on the family relationships and work obligations, as well as causing internal stress and tension, as the person tries to successfully meet the requirements of all of these roles. This is called Role Conflict. Again, *American History X* provides many useful examples of this phenomena to share with students in class discussions.

Derek and Danny again provide very clear examples of this phenomena in the film. As previously noted, Danny acts one way around his family, and another around the skinheads and at school. In both some subtle and not so subtle ways, Danny demonstrates discomfort reconciling his admiration for his brother, and his desire to follow in his footsteps as a skinhead, and his desire to be true to himself and his family. There is a clear conflict between what Danny believes in his heart is the right way to act, and how he acts as a skinhead tough-guy bigot. For instance, toward the beginning of the

film some black students are assaulting a white student in the high school bath room and Danny intervenes. On the one hand he has to act tough to survive in this school, and he probably needs the reputation of the skinheads to survive, as Derek does in prison, but on the other hand, he also probably wants to help the white student just because he is a good person too, and not so much because he is playing the role of skinhead and bigot.

Then, there is also the conflict in Danny between being a loving son and brother, and being a skinhead. We see many touching scenes between Danny and his mother (who is also ill) and his sisters. In these scenes, I argue that we see the real Danny, and that he is most conflicted over his different roles in these situations at these times.

Derek also demonstrates the phenomena of role conflict as he tries to reconcile the perceived hypocrisy of his skinhead compatriots, and his own beliefs. His skinhead beliefs are also challenged as he becomes friends with a black prison with whom he works in the prison laundry. He begins to again see people as people and not just as different colors of skin. All his prison experiences lead him to challenge his own beliefs and enable him to find the strength to leave behind the skinhead lifestyle.

This film is rife with examples of roles, role repertoire, role rigidity, and role conflict. These are just a few. There are many more different approaches that can be taken to discussing these topics, and to opening up discussion of these topics.

Conclusion

There are many different principles of interpersonal communication that can be observed in this film, and it is also a very rich resource with which to demonstrate many concepts related to social and cultural issues that are prevalent in the world today, and that our students need to consider to be good world citizens. This manuscript just begins to scratch the surface of how this film can be used in many different classes, and in many different disciplines, to illustrate concepts and ideas of an academic and experiential nature.

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A Taste of the Real Thing: Public Speaking Activities for Deaf Students

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The introductory public speaking course focuses on the principles of selecting and organizing ideas and their effective presentation to a group of people. It offers students the opportunities to prepare and present a variety of speeches while improving their basic skills. "The classroom serves as a protected environment for students to deliver speeches; nevertheless, as the semester progresses, students become ready to encounter new public speaking experiences which include new audiences" (Mohsen, 1993, p. 10) and a different environment. Deaf¹ high school and college students do not have as many public speaking opportunities as their hearing counterparts; it is their educators' responsibility to provide such opportunities that prepare students for the future.

The basic function of public speaking training is to equip the students with skills and styles that are essential and relevant to various work situations. Johnson and Szczupakiewicz (1987) state that the public speaking course reaches students with "diverse academic interests and career goals. It is appropriate to develop basic public speaking courses that prepare students with work related public speaking skills" (p. 131). Thus, the public speaking instructor is challenged to find the most appropriate and effective method for teaching and training the students in order for them to meet the challenges of expected and/or unexpected public speaking situations at the workplace or elsewhere.

Specifically, this article explains four public speaking activities: icebreaking exercises, the speech of introduction, the out-of class speech², and the after-dinner speech. It will talk about the objectives of each speech, the location, the rehearsal, the eye contact, the actual speaking process, and finally speech evaluation.

Ice-Breaking Exercises

Although some students enrolled in the public speaking course have had public speaking experience in high school³, the majority remains new to such experience. Therefore, ice-breaking exercises are essential during the

early stages of the course. The course is designed as follows: after individually introducing themselves, students can be requested and encouraged to simply stand up and mingle for ten minutes with their classmates. When the time is up, students will be instructed to sit in dyads. Every student gets to be an interviewer and an interviewee. Being in a dyad for a maximum of ten minutes with the same person allows each student to learn basic information about the partner. The information earned will be later shared by the interviewer to introduce the interviewee to the rest of the class members. With only minimal instructions, the students deliver their first ungraded two-minute speech. Instructions include explanations on how to categorize and organize information so as to separate family related information from college related or career related information.

The goal of this exercise is for students to have their first taste of public speaking. This approach is used in many other courses. The instructor's comments on the speeches may be limited to seizing the opportunity to introduce different parts of the course. For example, if one or more students maintain poor eye contact with the audience, the instructor, without singling out any particular student, could stress the significance of eye contact during delivery. Also, if students finish their short introduction speech without a concluding sentence, the instructor can briefly mention the importance of the conclusion. It should be noted, however, that one period may not be enough to accommodate all students.

The Speech of Introduction

During this one to two minute speech, class members will introduce real speakers. The instructor selects different programs or events on campus and assigns a class member to do the introduction part after arranging it with the program coordinator or sponsor. This activity does not take place during the scheduled class time. Although class members are not required to attend all events due to possible time conflict, at least two students and the instructor are expected to attend each event.

Speech Topic and Location

The speech topic and location may vary from one student to another simply because each student is introducing a different speaker. It is the responsibility of the instructor to provide the student with information that includes the speaker's name and topic, the location, and the time of the event. Students should be encouraged to meet with the program coordinator to gather audience related information in order to form an idea about the event itself.

One student may introduce a visiting speaker who is presenting on AIDS while another may introduce a local university professor who is sharing her research with other members of the university faculty.

The Actual Speaking Process

For the graduate student presentations, students are provided with the necessary information mentioned above. Each student (1) introduces herself/himself (name only), (2) states the title of presentation, (3) states the presenter's name, (4) explains what the speech would offer, (5) states the name of the interpreter(s), and (6) looks at the presenter and calls the name. Students do not hesitate to show their creativity in the use of sign language.

Eye Contact

Eye contact during the speech of introduction, as with all speeches, should be maintained with all audience members. However, the speaker appears to be more effective and in control if she/he looks directly at the presenter when mentioning the name as well as looking directly at the interpreter(s) when introducing their names (in case the program is interpreted).

Speech Rehearsal

Students are instructed to rehearse their short speech by focusing on the presenter's topic. It is perfectly appropriate to include the names of the speaker and the interpreter(s), along with the presentation title, on a note card. However, explaining the content of the presentation should be done in a natural way that makes the student/speaker look confident and knowledgeable about the up-coming presentation.

Speech Evaluation

The instructor and the two students will evaluate the student/speaker based on her fluency; eye contact with the audience, presenter, and interpreter(s); familiarity with the topic; and overall effectiveness. The instructor decides on how to count the two students' evaluation (i.e. whether to consult their evaluation forms or count their grades as a part of the speaker's speech grade).

However, to maintain uniformity in the evaluation, the instructor may design an evaluation form with specific points that the students must look for when evaluating. The instructor explains the rationale behind such unified evaluation format and how to grade each point.

The Out-of Class Speech

The six to eight minute out-of-class persuasive speech may be a unique experience for both students and instructors. It provides students with a new experience and perspective on public speaking. It gives "eye-contact," "speech rehearsal," and "audience analysis" new meanings. To the instructor, "speech explanation and evaluation" become a challenge.

Audience Analysis

It is impossible to determine the composition of an audience when speaking in an environment where anyone can listen to the speech. It is helpful, though, to keep in mind that it is a university environment and this fact should give the speaker an idea about the audience in general. Handling questions and answers is a major part of the speech for it reveals whether or not the speaker has command over the topic. Thus, the student is expected to conduct an in-depth research with a special focus on interviewing. Since the topics are related to campus life, students are encouraged to interview faculty and staff members to expand their knowledge on the subject.

Speech Topic

Students are required to select a topic related to a problem in any office, program, or department at the university, and offer a solution to the problem; thus a better title to the speech is the **out-of-class persuasive problem-solving speech**.

Speech Location

The speeches are to be delivered in front of the building where the selected office is located, provided there is enough space in the lobby in case of weather changes. Students will be given dates and locations of speeches two weeks in advance.

Potential Audience

The out-of-class persuasive speech is the same as any other speech. The only major difference is the new environment that the speakers experience, which may lead to changes in delivery styles and may require certain skills otherwise not needed during the in-class speech. For instance, speakers are challenged to increase the number of their audience. Speakers should make every verbal and/or nonverbal attempt to get the attention of people who may be walking by or passing through (i.e., potential audience). While instructors should reward such attempts, they should not penalize speakers who may shy away from such encounters. Another new feature is that the speaker may realize the need to repeat a part of the introduction or simply to restate the purpose of the speech if new members joined the audience. These restatements should be accomplished without exceeding the speech time limit and without losing the attention of those who have been listening to the speech since the beginning. It is an uneasy but not a hard task for the students. In fact, many students take pride in their skills to involve those individuals whose interests in the speeches become clear through the questions they

ask following the presentations. Instructors could demonstrate by delivering an impromptu persuasive speech themselves. An appropriate time for such demonstration is during the same explanation period of the assignment or the first following period.

The Heckler

Another required skill for the out-of-class speech is handling hecklers. Class audience members are encouraged to heckle the speaker. Speakers are evaluated on whether or not they hand control of the situation over to the hecklers. Most of the heckling takes place during the question-answer part and must be graded as a section of that part of the speech.

Eye Contact.

Maintaining eye contact with an audience is a major factor in determining speech effectiveness. Eye contact during the out-of-class speech requires an extra effort for several reasons. First, being outside the classroom, students tend to look around and chat among each other. Second, as stated above, the speaker's responsibility to include passers-by in an attempt to have them become a part of the audience requires a great deal of eye contact. Third, since the audience is standing up, most members tend to spread out forming a semi-circle around the speaker.

Speech Rehearsal

Speech rehearsal remains the key to a successful delivery. The nature of the out-of-class speech demands little or no reference to notes, so the speaker can maintain eye contact and gesture effectively. This is not to minimize the necessity of note cards, for they are helpful when dealing with statistics or when simply including key words or ideas. Rehearsal is also stressed to enable the speaker to deal with unexpected situations.

Speech Evaluation

Taking the environment into consideration, this speech is graded first by requiring a typed outline; instructors can find out whether or not the speech has initially been organized.

Similar to the speech of introduction, the instructor must clearly explain the criteria on which she is going to grade the speeches. A typed evaluation form must be distributed to students at the time the speech assignment is being explained. Unlike the speech of introduction, in addition to the written remarks, oral feedback by the instructor and other class members must be shared to provide insights into the speaker's delivery performance and speech organization.

The After-Dinner Speech

Toward the end of the semester, students will deliver a two to three minute speech at a local restaurant. It could certainly be called an after-brunch or after-lunch speech but the concept and the objective remain the same.

Speech Topic and Location

The instructor randomly assigns topics and matches students together. The occasion for the after-dinner speech may vary from one speaker to another. The instructor distributes the topics two weeks in advance to provide sufficient preparation time.

The instructor must work with the students to decide on a convenient and affordable local restaurant. Also, the instructor should make necessary transportation arrangements with the appropriate office on campus.

The Actual Speaking Process

After they finish eating, students will take turn delivering their short speeches. They should be encouraged not to use any note cards during this presentation. The instructor should stress the importance of being natural; accordingly, the instructor should not expect an in-depth speech as those delivered in class. It is important to remember, as is the case with the out-of-class speech, that the restaurant environment is different than the in-class environment.

Eye Contact

Eye contact will also be affected by the restaurant environment. Students need to be reminded that their audience is their classmates and unlike the out-of-class speech, they are not expected to “recruit” outside audience members.

Speech Rehearsal

As with the above two speeches, students need to rehearse since the use of note cards should be highly discouraged. This is a simple speech where the speaker is briefly commending or praising someone’s work.

Speech Evaluation

The instructor will evaluate speakers based on their naturalness, organization, eye contact, and overall effectiveness. Also, special consideration should be made if a speaker is interrupted as a result of being in a “noisy” environment. The instructor’s oral feedback along with the written remarks must be provided to students later on during scheduled class time. It is not suggested to provide students with an immediate feedback at the completion of their after-dinner speech, because students

tend to view this event more as a class gathering than a class assignment. Providing them with immediate feedback may impact the spontaneity of the presentations.

Afterword

Visual communication is an integral part of deaf education. Using visual aids in a public speaking course is essential to the understanding of different parts of the speech. University students are trained and encouraged to use Microsoft PowerPoint during class presentations as a major visual support to the material they present. This article, however, did not address visual communication due to the nature of the activities. PowerPoint or other visual materials such as graphs, charts, photographs, objects, videotapes, overhead projector, and so forth, cannot be utilized in the activities described above.

It is certainly true that the above activities may not be limited to Deaf students. However, educators of Deaf students have the responsibility to expose their students to opportunities that are otherwise not feasible to them outside the academic training environment. Spourle (1997, p. 383) states "special-occasion speeches are uniquely able to connect us powerfully and vividly to real experiences in life." Beebe and Beebe (2000, p.427) explain that "special-occasion speeches are critical thinking activities that require the speaker to synthesize and apply his or her speaking skills to unique statements." Students expressed their positive feedback to such experiences. "The point is, as one student noted on the course evaluation form: 'out-of-class, it is more like the real thing' " (Mohsen, 1993, p. 11).

Footnotes

1. Deaf with a capital "D," refers to a person who is a part of the Deaf Culture (Jankowski, 1991, p. 144).
2. An extended version of the out-of-class speech has been published in *The Speech Communication Teacher* (Mohsen, Summer 1993, Vol. 7 No. 4).
3. Less than a third of students enrolled in the public speaking course at Gallaudet University reported having had a public speaking course in high school.

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***Listening in the 21st Century:
Voices Other Than Our Own***

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Kitty Thuermer, in *The Washington Post* of August 25, 1990, perhaps best describes for us listening across cultures: "A Senegalese proverb tells youth, 'Your ears are older than you are,' referring to the vast oral tradition passed on from generation to generation. In America, our ears are very young. To survive in today's global environment, we need to hear voices other than our own. If you listen closely, you might hear them right across the street." (Coakley & Wolvin, 1992, p. 432-444).

"Gone are the days on most college campuses where classrooms are filled with a homogeneous group of students. Today, instead, the student population is more diverse than ever before" (Baiocco & DeWaters, 1998, p. 188). "We are living in an age of international multiculturalism. All nations, all people, all cultures are becoming part of a vast global village" (Lucas, 1998, p. 23).

Statistician M.E. Ryan found "two thirds of all immigrants on this planet come to the United States" (as cited in Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2002, p. 99). During the 1990's the U.S. Bureau of Census reported that the U.S. foreign-born population increased four times faster than that of the native-born population (Beebe et al., 2002, p. 99). The Census Bureau provided the following figures and estimates:

In 1997, the number of immigrants living in the United States soared to over 25.8 million, the largest number ever recorded. Almost one-half (46 percent) of the recent entrants were from Spanish speaking countries.

In 1996, non-Hispanic whites made up 73.1 percent of our population. But from 1990 to 1999, the white, non-Hispanic population grew by only 7.3 percent, a much lower rate than most minority groups.

In 1996, blacks, the largest racial minority group, made up 13.8 percent of our population. But between 1990 and 1999, the black population grew at the rate of 33.6 percent, almost five times greater than the non-Hispanic white population.

In 1996, Asian Americans represented 3.5 percent of the U.S. population, but that percentage is expected to more than double to 8.5 percent by 2050.

By 2050, Hispanics will account for about 25 percent of the nation's population, making that group the largest of the minorities. (as cited in Beebe et al., 2002, pp. 100–101).

Looking ahead to the middle of this century, non-Hispanic whites will be in a bare majority, 52.8 percent, which will inexorably shrink to a minority percentage in just a few years (Longaberger, 2000). In education specifically, the enrollment of minority students in college surpassed 10 percent in over two-thirds of the states in the United States (Enrollment by Race, 1994).

Listening scholars Nadine and Wolff (1992) asserted “culture influences listening behavior” (p. 245). Wolvin and Coakley (1992) contended, “culture is a primary determinant of all communication behaviors—including listening—because one’s culture essentially serves to define who one is and how one will communicate through one’s perceptual filter” (p. 124).

As early as 1983, educators were informed “in classrooms and workplaces throughout the world, we note a persistent inclusion of diverse cultures that will profoundly affect all forms of communication—particularly listening” (Marsnik, Nichols, Tacey, & Wolff, 1983, p. 248). Kearney and Plax (1996) expanded on this opinion. “Not all listeners look and act alike” (p. 186). Bentley (2000) wrote “it is important to realize that to whom we listen may be very different in the next millennium” (129).

Educators function at the front lines of the multicultural movement. One challenge is to “clarify communication style differences that may be misunderstood” (Sue, 1994, p. 384). Weinstein (1997) stated, “several interrelated processes have gone into the creation of today’s national aggregate populations, many, but certainly not all, of which are highly ethnically diverse compared to past standards” (p. 244). With such changes in the population and composition of society and classrooms in the United States, it is valuable to examine the impact of differing listening styles on the communication process.

Communication scholars concur that listening is at the root of the communication process and “listening is a key component of the teaching/learning process” (Cooper & Simonds, 1999, p. 59). “Just as audience members have different backgrounds and abilities, they also have different ways of listening” (Daly & Engleberg, 2001, p. 37). If students in a classroom are defined as an educator’s “audience,” then educators must be conscious of the different listening styles that exist in every classroom.

Being aware that differences exist in listening behavior and styles is valuable for both learners and teachers. In fact, even at the most basic

phonetic level, listening is affected by culture. Phonemes, or the speech sounds that distinguish one word from another, are a very important part of the process. "Not all languages include the same kinds of sounds. Some are characterized by clicks and whistles...cross-cultural listening requires that you become more familiar with the speech patterns of an unfamiliar language...Listening in cross-cultural contexts takes greater attention and concentration than it does when interacting with members of your own language community" (Brownell, 2002, p. 371).

Three definitions are essential. In 1996, the International Listening Association (ILA), after several years of research and discussion, framed a widely accepted definition of listening. "Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (Emmert, 1996, p. 2).

Culture is the "set of customs, behaviors, beliefs, and language that distinguish a particular group of people and make up the background, experience, and perceptual filters of those individuals within that group" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1992, p. 143). Hofstede described culture as the "mental software" that touches every aspect of how we make sense out of the world and how we share that sense with others" (as cited in Beebe et al., 2002, p. 100). Culture shapes worldviews, attitudes, values, and behaviors. The influence of culture is obviously prominent when one attempts to communicate across cultures.

By merging definitions of culture and listening, Thomlison (1997) defined intercultural listening as "communication in which the processes of receiving, attending, and assigning meaning are influenced by cultural differences" (p. 81). However, "what must be kept in mind is what one perceives as characteristics of a good listener or a good communicator is often determined by subtle, yet powerful influences and rules in one's own ethnic culture" (Dillon & Nelya, 1998, p. 118). Listening schema vary among individuals and among co-cultures.

Communication scholars document that Western cultures place more emphasis on speaking than on listening. In contrast, non-western cultures tend to emphasize listening rather than speaking. "These two orientations—one favoring talk and one preferring silence—can influence the listening process" (Mills & Samovar, 1998, p. 122). Educators must be aware of these fundamental differences among students in classrooms. Expecting total participation in a class discussion may not be appropriate for all students in a classroom. Lustig and Koester (1999) pointed out that, "English is a speaker-responsible language in which the speaker structures the message and relies primarily upon words to provide meaning. Japanese, however, is a listener responsive language in which speakers indirectly indicate what they want listeners to know" (p. 249). Wolff and Marsnik (1992) continued. "The Japanese especially admire the combined qualities of sincerity and politeness;

silence is considered polite and appropriate behavior while excessive talkativeness is considered rude" (p. 252).

Furthermore, in general, Asians stress etiquette more strongly than do Europeans and Americans. "A study of perceptions of listening behavior revealed that international students perceived Americans to be less polite and less patient as listeners than listeners in African, Asian, South American, or European cultures" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 125). "Japanese respect the customs of foreigners and expect visitors to respect the customs of Japan. Group interaction remains a vital part of the decision-making process, during which one should listen intently to words and silence" (Marsnik & Wolff, 1992, p. 252).

Inherent in the ILA definition of listening is the importance of nonverbal messages in the listening process. "Even the size and number of gestures are controlled by culture. Educators should not expect people from cultures that value reserved behavior to engage in the same number of gestures as ones that have very energetic communication styles" (Mills & Samovar, 1998, p. 122). Euro-American and African American listeners tend to concentrate on a speaker with their bodies. They lean forward, focus eye contact on the speaker, often nod in agreement and are generally expressive, attentive and friendly. Other cultures exhibit a more restrained listening style.

Students from Eastern cultures are often less intense in their nonverbal listening behaviors. For example, "people of Asian heritage are likely to avoid eye contact with speakers and to exhibit little overt expression in their facial or bodily movement" (Kearney & Plax, 1996, p. 187).

"In Japan, listeners learn to rely on nonverbal communication. There is a tendency to create an understanding of the relationship between the speaker and the listener to interpret meaning" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 249). Further emphasizing the importance of a relationship in a communication event, Wolvin (1987) found that above all there was a need for the relationship dimension of the communication process to be primary in the process. Good listeners in any culture are those who care about their relationships with others.

Brownell (1996) summarized, "diligence is especially important when dealing with the relationship of nonverbal behaviors and listening, ...effective cross-cultural listeners recognize differences in nonverbal systems and do not make assumptions about what various behaviors mean" (p. 363). There are examples of people using nonverbal behaviors in culturally inappropriate manner. President Nixon for example, while on a goodwill tour of Latin America flashed his well-wishers at the airport the American "A-OK" sign. Little did he know that in several Latin American countries that gesture, loosely translated, means "screw you" (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1996).

While communicators cannot ascertain and respond to all of the cultural differences that exist in each communication event, they can acquire general strategies to cope with diversity. The specific listening schema are not as important as simple awareness of the diversity of schema manifested in the listening process. Of course, what is true for a group may or may not be a part of an individual's repertoire of communication or listening behaviors.

Listening researchers have traditionally come from fields that share common history and gender. "Little thought has been given to listening across or between cultures. Most of the existing research looks for ways to decode a message in exactly the same way it was intended" (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 206). Chen and Starosta offered a method for intercultural listening which takes a more active approach to improvement of intercultural listening competence. They believe listeners should widen their perspectives. Listeners need to step outside of their comfort levels in order to develop new ways to interpret meanings. Listeners need to develop what they referred to as a third culture.

A third culture is created when partners in a communication event, each operating from a different culture, join aspects of their separate cultures to form a new culture. The goal is to reduce the tendency to speak and listen from an "us" versus "them" perspective. Instead of one of the individuals adopting all the features of the other or instead of trying, impossibly, to eliminate all communication and listening barriers, each creates a totally new understanding based on the beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors of the other (Beebe et al., 2002).

Cooper and Simonds (1999) explained that when educators are aware of the cultural differences in their classrooms, they begin to form a third culture. "We can begin to structure our classrooms so that we communicate effectively with multicultural students. We can, for example, respect the ethnic background of our students" (p. 22).

Samovar and Mills (1998) instructed listeners "to adapt to the countless communication events that you have with people from different cultures. It is important to practice tolerance, patience, and empathy" (p. 124). Nishida (1985) further explained how to develop tolerance, empathy and patience. "The most effective intercultural listeners have a high tolerance for ambiguity. In other words, they can see many points of view and they remain open minded when confronted with information that contradicts their pervasively held beliefs" (p. 68).

The effective cross-cultural listener maintains an attitude of acceptance and open-mindedness, listening not only to accomplish a specific task but also to learn and to appreciate other ways of seeing the world. Cross-cultural listening requires patience and kindness. When listening to those who are unfamiliar with your language or point of view, be willing to make mistakes, to maintain an attitude of acceptance and

open-mindedness, and to appreciate other ways of seeing the world. (Brownell, 1996, p. 363).

Samovar and Mills (1998) offered another piece of advice. Learners and educators need to “develop empathy—it will increase concentration and compassion” (p. 123). In this way communicators can become more tolerant and patient as listeners and as speakers.

In summary, Marsnik and Wolff (1992) urged educators to become perceptive listeners who are aware of cultural insights as they interpret and recreate messages. Further,

Being aware of the diversity of cultures will enhance intercultural listening. For example, Arabs express their feelings without inhibition in loud voices when speaking to equals, Latin Americans have little regard for time constraints and deadlines, Asians are unlikely to disagree openly with a teacher, Jamaicans believe that looking at a teacher is disrespectful while looking away is respectful, Germans require more space than others during interpersonal encounters to satisfy the ego, and the French are open and sensitive communicators.

Perceptive listeners should be aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds of students and teachers in the global village classroom. (p. 246).

If educators and learners practice tolerance and empathy, understand the communication process, are aware of cultural differences in listening, adapt to others, and develop a third culture, they will hear voices other than their own.

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BOOK REVIEW**Endres, Thomas G. *Sturgis Stories*****Kirk House: Minneapolis, 2002. 135 pp.***Jan Loft**Southwest State University*

It is with great trepidation that a motorcycle enthusiast approaches a book about the biker lifestyle and the Sturgis experience. Too often the media and academics alike portray motorcyclists with a rudimentary stereotyping, perpetuating the one-dimensional myth of the dirty biker. This is not the case with Thomas G. Endres' *Sturgis Stories, Celebrating the People of the World's Largest Motorcycle Rally*.

As Endres explains in his introduction, this book is not just about the reputations and legends of two-cylinder outlaws, but the real stories of the people who walk the sidewalks of Sturgis and ride the Black Hills during a week in August, who can explain why they are there and will gladly account for how they got there. Endres is very clear that he is not a biographer or a photographer, but a writer and researcher of popular culture, communities and communication. It does not hurt that Endres, born in Deadwood, rides a motorcycle and knows a clutch from a front brake. For people who only read about the motorcycle lifestyle, *Sturgis Stories* can be trusted to give an honest variety of perspectives on the lifestyle and the rally. For those that do ride, the book will ring true for the simple reason that Endres lets the people talk, using their words to describe and explain this phenomena that intrigues so many people, social scientist or not.

How could this book be useful to a communication educator? Endres, a full professor and chair of his department at the University of St. Thomas, uses a format that makes the text of the book applicable to several theoretical and analytical paradigms. Each personal account is a separate vignette that can be researched for what kinds of interactions create and maintain social meanings and what establishes group norms, roles and rules for social groups. For example, each story can be examined from Goffman's frame analysis, as each individual defines and makes sense of the Sturgis experience. Endres' face engagement with each motorcyclist brings forth their definition of the situation, sometimes expressed quite eloquently while other times expressed more plainly by someone who does not realize they are defining social organization and theory. *Sturgis Stories* can be a tool for looking at how a sub-culture holds

itself together through communication of shared meanings and symbols.

Because Endres writes the words of those he talked with, *Sturgis Stories* can be used for a study of how social groups use speech to shape the social group and how the speech used establishes and reflects the codes of the group. An analysis of the language used can show that a sub-culture has its own sub-culture sets that do not always agree with each other on definitions and meanings of elaborated and restricted codes, and yet would stand as a cohesive group if those outside the lifestyle attempted to apply meaning to the words.

Sturgis Stories can be used for studies in ethnography and phenomenology. Endres' sensitive style offers examples of a cultural community of shared meanings, systems and patterns. Several of the bikers interviewed, through their own use of the language of the motorcycle culture, reflect the rules of speaking, the speaking boundaries and appropriate events and acts of speaking. Endres does not force his own categories upon these people who sat down and shared their experiences, but lets the readers apply their own experience with interaction and language.

Endres' book can be used for the entire breadth of communication studies. The individual accounts can be used for interpersonal and cultural studies, interviewing principles, and organizational communication. From the front porch perspective of Babe, or the huge differences, and yet not surprising, commonalities of Beatrice and Boodan, to the British perspective of Karen Louise, to the viewpoints of Stacy and Steve, or any of the other individuals who shared their thoughts and experiences, *Sturgis Stories* is a collection of perspectives that only those in the lifestyle can describe.

I have a final comment on *Sturgis Stories*. Simply, and away from academics, the book is a good read. As someone who did pick up the book with some trepidation about the tales within, I was relieved to find a collection of stories from those who ride and have more than a thin description of the lifestyle. Black and white photos accompany each story, photos that look like the casual snapshots found in any of the thousands of personal Sturgis photo albums scattered around the world. So whether you ride or not, settle back with *Sturgis Stories*, put your mind up on the highway pegs, and enjoy the ride.



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