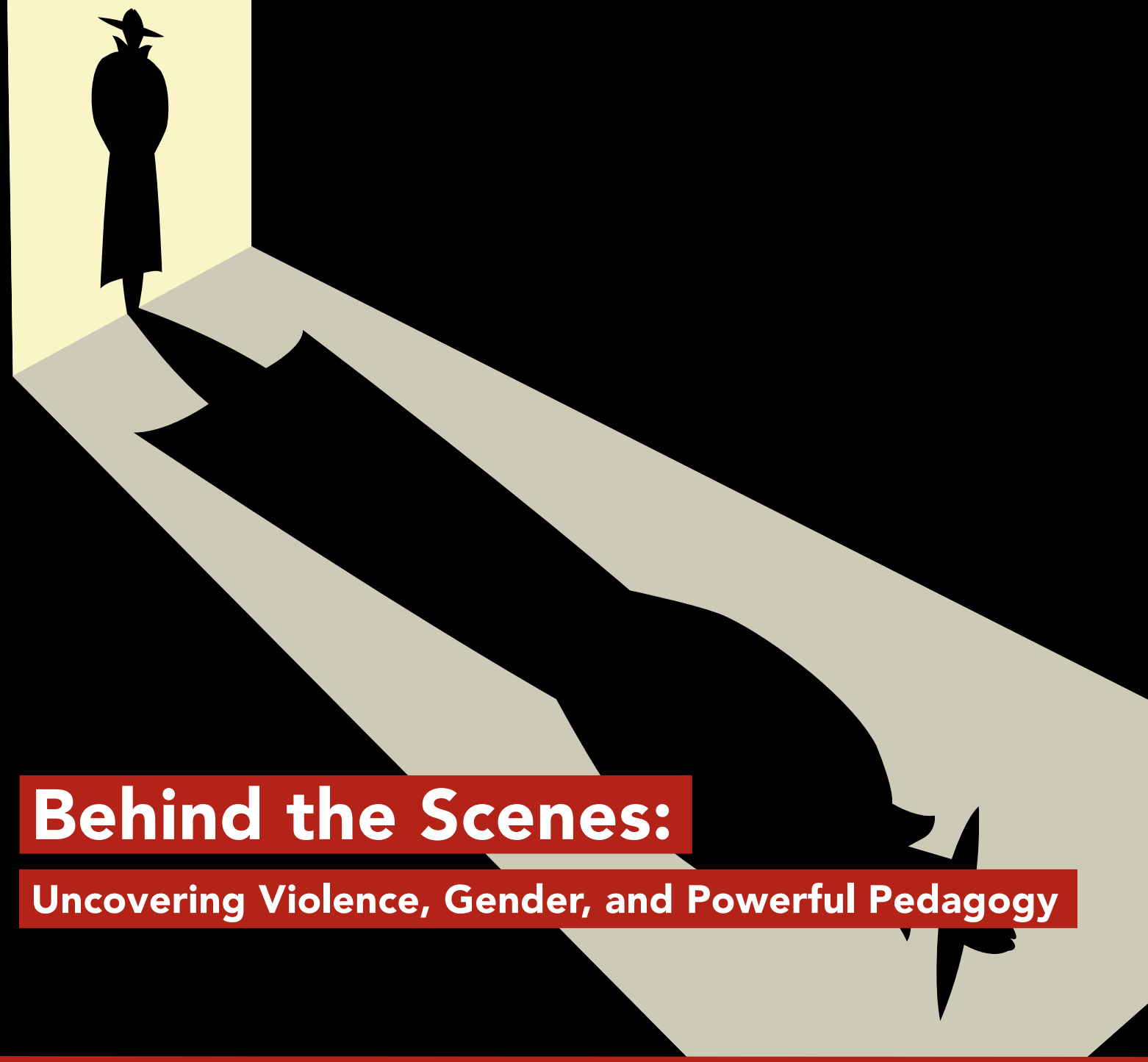
DIALOGUE
The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy



Behind the Scenes:

Uncovering Violence, Gender, and Powerful Pedagogy

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INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy is an open-access, peer-reviewed journal focused on the intersection of popular culture and pedagogy. While some open-access journals charge a publication fee for authors to submit, *Dialogue* is committed to creating and maintaining a scholarly journal that is accessible to all—meaning that there is no charge for either the author or the reader.

The Journal is interested in contributions that offer theoretical, practical, pedagogical, and historical examinations of popular culture, including interdisciplinary discussions and those which examine the connections between American and international cultures. In addition to analyses provided by contributed articles, the Journal also encourages submissions for guest editions, interviews, and reviews of books, films, conferences, music, and technology.

For more information and to submit manuscripts, please visit www.journaldialogue.org or email the editors, A. S. CohenMiller, Editor-in-Chief, or Kurt Depner, Managing Editor at editors@journaldialogue.org.

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The Persistent Need to Look behind the Curtain

Frank Baum created the *Wizard of Oz*, and the grandiose man who lived behind a curtain. Perceived as holding immense power, the façade proved different than the reality. But what exactly *is* the reality? Daily, what are we as viewers, as students, as teachers, learning from popular culture sources around us? Trying to reach for a reality can be problematic in of itself, yet denying their existence is also a trap. The four articles in this issue bring together varied popular media outlets to uncover violence, gender, and powerful pedagogy in and out of the classroom.

First, Becca Cragin explains in her article, "Grounded Aesthetics: Pedagogy for a Post-Truth Era," how students are often challenged in untangling the variety and substance of information streaming into their lives. Many students feel overwhelmed with the information, the discussion of fake news, and tend to believe there is no way to determine veracity. To address these concerns, Cragin provides pertinent sources and applications of literary and critical media literacy which have led her students to see beyond the concept of life in a "post-truth era."

Thus, what we see is the impact of popular TV shows, whether in desensitizing people to violence, to presenting varied cultural values, or to suggesting appropriate gendered presentations and behaviors. Just as Cragin evidences steps to expand student thought, Elizabeth Gartley provides insight into guiding middle and high school students to see different perspectives through considering *The Walking Dead* and the proposing the question "who would be on your zombie apocalypse team?" To ground this discussion, the article, "We All Have Jobs Here: Multiple Intelligences in *The Walking Dead*,"creates a connection between the characters on the show and Howard Garner's multiple intelligences. What becomes evident in this article is the practicality of drawing popular culture into pedagogical practice to support learning. Through Gartley's article, as readers, we are shown glimpses of the ways violence and gender intersect in media representations.

These media representations present a key outlet for informal learning—learning that can take place in ones living room instead of in a traditional classroom. The ways then we understand what we watch can be viewed in many ways, such as seen in, Allen Culpepper's, "A Gendered Perspective on Policing Violence in *Happy Valley* and *Fargo.*" Culpepper unpacks the crimes and argues for a deep parallel between the on-screen portrayal of women in the TV series, *Happy Valley* and the film, *Fargo.* He also suggests a reflection to contemporary thought and political views, hinting at important gendered perspectives affecting (in)formal learning.

Lastly, Adam Nicks moves us to considering the media consumption of live action events, in particular that of professional wrestling in "The Many Faces of Foley: A Journey of Discovery and Influence on Professional Wrestling." He examines the ways in which Mick Foley, a key professional wrestler from the 1990s, developed intricate personas which merged a real and "fake" world. Drawing from Foley's autobiography, Nicks emphasizes the uniqueness of the wrestler's "blurring of the lines between reality and fiction" while addressing concepts of gender and violence that affected audiences and professional wrestling in general.

These articles as a whole highlight the need to continue to explore and examine what is opinion and

what is truth. Collectively, these articles address the persistent need to look behind the curtain and understand further. In some contexts, this plays out in representations and behaviors and others as fiction and reality. The authors here have pressed us to think differently about the influence and potential of media texts and portrayals, from TV, film, to literature and dramatic endeavors.

As is always the case, the vision and work to develop an issue depends upon the work of a strong team. In particular for this issue, I would like to thank our peer reviewers, Douglas CohenMiller (Creative Director), Rob Galin (Copy Editor), Kurt Depner (Managing Editor), and Kelli Bippert (Educational Resources Editor) who provided extra assistance in finalizing this issue. Moving forward, we are excited to see your contributions, encouraging you to submit for both journal articles and also critically perspectives and practices on pedagogical practices and/or popular culture. We hope you enjoy this issue and are encouraged to consider how popular culture presents both opportunities for formal pedagogy while also demonstrating inevitable dynamic effects for informal learning.

Anna CohenMiller
Editor-in-Chief

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Grounded Aesthetics: Pedagogy for a Post-Truth Era

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of cultural studies, positivism and formalism fell out of favor. But in recent years, altered versions of these methodologies have been suggested as solutions to the deficiencies of the ideological approach dominating the field. Where the ideological approach looks at the content of texts to determine their meaning, the aesthetic approach adopted by media scholars in recent years returns to the close textual readings of formalism (while abandoning its assertion that meaning resides in the text alone). Similarly, where the ideological approach tends to use textual analysis devoid of sociological empiricism, the use of "big data" in the humanities enhances interpretation by using empirical data alongside it (while rejecting positivism's assumption that measurable data alone is probative). This article draws both methodological strands together to propose an approach to media interpretation called "grounded aesthetics." Grounded aesthetics involves correlating sociological data with close textual reading to argue for the likely social meaning of the text, given the techniques it uses and the social reality around it. Examples of classroom activities are used to show how the approach can address the "post-truth" perspective many students share: that analyses of representation are interchangeable opinions. Grounded aesthetics greatly improves students' ability to create well-supported textual analyses and to evaluate the persuasiveness of others' arguments. It also models critical thinking skills that are useful for dismantling attacks on reality in the "fake news" era, especially those that dismiss analyses of inequality as ideology.

Keywords*:* aesthetics, big data, class, cultural studies, empiricism, formalism, gender, inequality, media studies, pedagogy, post-truth, race

INTRODUCTION

Cultural studies scholars in the U.S. receive substantial training in the cultural function of ideology, but may be less well equipped to use other methodological approaches in their teaching. With the cultural turn, positivism and formalism fell out of favor, but in recent years they've been reconsidered in their newest iterations: aesthetics and big data. Many students bring a "post-truth" perspective into the media studies classroom – one in which analyses of representation are dismissed as mere opinion. Aesthetic and empirical analysis can be combined to address this perspective head-on, to improve students' ability to create detailed, persuasive analyses of media texts. The same habits of critical thought can also equip students to respond to the "post-truth" era[1] that surrounds them, in which analyses of inequality are dismissed as ideology. Drawing on my experience teaching media studies courses, this article argues that "grounded aesthetics," a pedagogical approach that combines aesthetics with empirical studies, can create more persuasive and accurate analyses of how ideology works than the ideological approach alone.

The examples that follow demonstrate how students can be taught to make persuasive arguments about the connections between inequality in everyday life and media representation by preparing them with foundational empirical knowledge and then training them how to closely analyze texts for social meaning. I designed this approach to address the most common challenges to critical thinking I see in my television studies classes: an inability to distinguish facts from opinions, excessive relativism, discomfort with discussing inequality, a cognitive orientation toward concrete information and susceptibility to cultural influences that exaggerate individual autonomy while minimizing social influence and collective experience. In addition to developing students' media analysis skills, my approach models techniques for understanding ideology in the news, in social media, and in everyday life as well. It argues for a humanistic mode of interpretation that is grounded in textual and empirical evidence, which provides students with tools for principled engagement with the ideological and factual distortions of our current "post-truth" era.

The "aesthetics" in grounded aesthetics refers to the study of form. Cardwell describes this as "thoughtful, reflective and respectful consideration of texts' stylistic qualities" (23). While literary scholars have long employed close readings of texts, in my own field of television studies much, if not most, older scholarship largely focused on the ideology implicit in the narrative (23), failing to attend to the visual, performative, and sonic qualities of the text. This may be due to the fact that when television studies was established as a field, many scholars using its humanities-oriented approach were trained in literary studies rather than visual media (Allen 11; Brunsdon 107-8). The return to aesthetics might therefore be explained by the field's maturation, as a new generation of scholars has rejected television's abject status relative to film (Hilmes 112), giving it the same close attention as any other art form. While aesthetics can be approached in limitless ways, some common concepts used to analyze aesthetics are: gaze (the way the camera moves to convey information or encourage identification with characters), narrative structure (the way the storyline is organized), implied author (the places in the text where we see its perspective), *mise en scene* (the elements that make up the look and mood of a text), genre (a group of thematically and stylistically similar texts that share conventions), performance (the manner in which the content of the text is executed by performers), and quality (which is evaluated in aesthetic or sociological terms).[2]

The "grounded" in grounded aesthetics refers to a variety of forms of empiricism used to generate broad generalizations about patterns in texts, or to establish baseline knowledge about everyday life that can be used to evaluate how textual choices generate a particular representation of reality. The most recent version of this in the humanities is big data, the study of trends across large data sets. In terms of the analytical opportunities digitization has provided for humanistic fields, this can involve coding, standardizing, and tracking macro-

1 In late 2016, Oxford Dictionaries identified "post-truth" as The Word of the Year, after the disregard for factual reality displayed in the U.K. Brexit and U.S. presidential campaigns (Wang 2016).

2 See Cragin 2015 for a detailed explanation of these concepts and how they can be applied in the classroom.

level patterns in qualitative information, such as the Cinemetrics website,[3] which uses computer-generated analysis to quantify the length of edited segments of visual media. It can also include the use of large data sets of information, many of which are digitally accessible, via online publications from think tanks and government agencies. For the purposes of this article, I am using the term generally, to denote any empirical studies of large social structures that can be used to enhance textual interpretation.

PEDAGOGY IN A "POST-TRUTH" ERA

These two methodological trends of aesthetics and big data are increasingly present in cultural studies scholarship, and there are a variety of reasons why they can be helpful in our teaching as well. In the U.S., the majority of cultural studies scholars come from the humanities, a field that is frequently scrutinized for bias by politicians who see little value in humanistic inquiry. Some of the most common criticisms of cultural studies are that it is ideological rather than objective, and that it involves indoctrination rather than education (Bérubé 2007). While there is a small grain of truth in these concerns, in that the humanities model does emphasize qualitative concerns and interpretive methods rather than discovering facts, the criticisms reflect a widespread conflation of ideological analysis with ideology *itself*. As Schiappa notes, because students are often resistant to ideological analysis and tend to perceive it as reading into things, or robbing the viewing experience of its fun, "To overcome such resistance we not only have to make criticism pleasurable, we have to make our own critical interventions persuasive" (169).

Therefore, precise demonstration of *how* ideology operates in texts or across social strata serves as a persuasive defense against the assumption that we are "reading into things" too deeply, or presenting mere opinions, rather than informed interpretations grounded in textual and factual evidence. This may simply be more pedagogically effective, as well, since most students begin college with an orientation toward concrete thinking and need substantial help understanding abstract concepts (McConnell et al 462). After abandoning the belief there is one correct interpretation of the events and experiences around them, students often progress to the belief everything's relative – that there's no way to adjudicate between alternate accounts. This developmental phase is also culturally reinforced in our current moment, when our ability to judge facticity is challenged, at the same time that the legitimacy of traditional arbiters of fact such as news institutions have come under question (from President Donald Trump's frequent misuse of the term "fake news," to actual fake news created by the circulation of doctored images, to potential Russian disinformation campaigns, to recent scandals involving journalists' falsification of news stories). In an environment where the inability to distinguish interpretation from fact allows for the wholesale dismissal of reality when it is ideologically inconvenient, it is important that we continually reinforce the distinction between the two, and improve students' ability to form factually-supported arguments and disarm unsupported ones.

In other words, there is a dual benefit to the cross-over methodologies of grounded aesthetics, in that this approach benefits students both as students and as citizens. For critical cultural studies scholars and teachers, the purpose of media studies is not merely appreciation of the popular arts per se, but rather understanding their connection to everyday life, and most especially its inequalities. Open discussion about our textual and sociological methods, the usefulness and limits of each, and how we arrive at our conclusions about the ideological meaning of popular texts all have the potential to make our students better scholars, and can also equip them with tools they need to navigate other areas of life where they constantly encounter debates about ideology and facts. In terms of media studies, there are many connections between the "post" discourses of our culture – the belief that we are living in a post-racial or post-feminist society – and recent changes in the complexity of television programming and technology, as in the attitude that, "Because we can choose from so many different options, because our experiences of television are now so varied and so

3 http://www.cinemetrics.lv

self-directed, it is old-fashioned and irrelevant to ask questions about television's place in the workings of power" (Levine 180). By establishing a baseline of facts about the reality of inequality, and then exploring how these facts are represented in media through an immersion in the formal elements of texts, we can train students to form their own conclusions about what is most important – not any possible meaning a text might have, but its likely social meaning. To do this, students first need an understanding of the empirical and ideological realities surrounding the text, in order to understand the interpretive context different audiences bring to its interpretation. The approach demonstrated in the examples that follow illustrates how beginning at the concrete and guiding students toward discussions of hegemonic beliefs encourages recognition of, and a richer understanding of, the ideology at play in cultural texts.

I first began to rethink my primarily ideological approach when teaching a course on television comedy. I had designed the course around themes of cultural inequality, as I had been trained to do, and as we studied each program, we looked at it from a generalized perspective, in terms of its cultural messages about each social group represented. The students seemed unenthused with this approach, and were resistant to my conclusions, often pushing back against the idea that comedy could be read with any seriousness at all. They came alive, however, when we began talking about the texts as example of artistic performance. When studying *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957), instead of moving directly to a conversation about the gender norms of the period, I realized I should first begin with an appreciation of Ball's tremendous physical skills as a performer. In "Lucy Thinks Ricky is Trying to Murder Her" (1951), Lucy stuffs a garbage can lid and a cast-iron skillet underneath her bathrobe for protection, and bobs and weaves around the kitchen like a prize-fighter every time her husband approaches her. We observed not only the remarkable precision and energy of her movements, but also the humor generated by her violation of gender norms. From here, the class took off, and it was easy to then segue into a consideration of the gender politics of the time, to contrast the relative non-conformity of Lucy's physical performance with the conservative message in the show's narrative, as argued in a seminal analysis of the show (Mellencamp 1986).

I realized my training as a scholar not only led to me to do a disservice to the texts I was analyzing (in that my analyses of their cultural meaning looked at content and narrative structure alone, rather than providing detailed evidence for how these interacted with performance and visual and auditory styles), but to do a disservice to my students as well, by telling them my conclusions without showing them how I arrived at them. From that point forward, I designed all my classes with one goal in mind: for students to be able to create their own well-supported interpretations of the likely social meaning of media texts, by considering both their formal elements and the cultural influences surrounding them. Just as I realized I needed to demonstrate the intermediate steps involved in textual analysis, I thought through the intermediate steps one would need to understand how ideology in everyday life shapes the interpretation of media. So in addition to incorporating more aesthetics into class activities, when designing The Female Detective, a course on race, gender, and crime, I decided to also experiment with incorporating much more sociological data about inequality in everyday life, to see if this lowered students' resistance to the idea that ideology was operating in these entertainment texts. The examples that follow are based on techniques I have refined over the last ten years teaching the course.

The combination of aesthetics and empirical data can be used in a variety of ways to explore the connection between everyday life and its representation. My first few examples below, on gender inequality in Nancy Drew mysteries and *Cagney & Lacey*, demonstrate one angle of approach: using a close grounding in the aesthetics of the text to better understand ideology in everyday life. The subsequent example, of racial inequality in *The Wire*, approaches the issue from the opposite direction, grounding our understanding of the ideology of race in broad patterns of empirical data, in order to understand the representation of race in the text. Each approach emphasizes one side of the representation-reality connection more than the other,

but both use the same pedagogical strategy to study it: moving from the concrete to analytical, in order to gradually build students' ability to distinguish between ideology, representation, and fact.

NANCY DREW: THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

This section demonstrates how starting from concrete examples of representation helps students tease out their inherent ideological implications. One of the central premises of the course is that the figure of the female detective is at odds with traditional gender norms, due to her physical or mental strength, bravery, and independence. We trace the development of this figure through a variety of genres and media, from late 19th/ early 20th-century literature up through contemporary TV and film. In each era, we look at the gender anxiety the female detective creates (through contemporaneous responses to the text), and how the author alters the traditional detective model to accommodate a feminine hero. In this manner, we work back and forth between micro-level analyses of specific examples and a broader scope illustrating larger patterns, to gradually build an argument for the cultural implications of these representations.

Across the decades, a clear pattern emerges. Until recently, the female detective's power has usually been diminished through a combination of the following strategies: emphasizing her appearance over her abilities; emphasizing her humility and acceptance of a secondary status to men; framing her abilities as irrational, accidental, or attributable to male mentors; or emphasizing her physical or emotional incompetence. Students often have difficulty seeing how highlighting the detective's femininity could be a means of disempowering her, given that post-feminist media tropes encourage viewers to see traditional femininity as an innate form of personal expression that generates power (Gill). I've found, perhaps counterintuitively, that closely describing the aesthetics of a text can be an effective way to begin discussion of more abstract concepts such as their ideology – for example, by looking at a book's cover. Concrete description get the class warmed up and ready for more abstract thinking, but also allows *the students* to generate the evidence for the ideological analysis that follows, rather than imposing a conclusion developed by the teacher.

In preparation for our discussion of Nancy Drew, students read *The Secret of the Old Clock,* and secondary sources on gender norms in the first half of the 20th century (both in everyday life and in popular culture). I begin with a display of the covers of Nancy Drew mysteries from different eras, which provides the opportunity to think about the gender norms reflected in each period. The Nancy Drew series has been reissued every few decades from the 1920s to the present, which provides a helpful point of comparison, particularly when multiple versions of the same volume in the series are compared. While the clothing and hairstyles vary with each reissue, there are commonalities that can be traced across the series in how femininity is depicted, especially in the reissues published prior to the last few decades.

Image 1: The cover of the 1950 edition of *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* frames Nancy Drew as a decorative rather than an active figure.

As the cover of the 1950 edition of *The Mystery at Lilac Inn* illustrates (see Image 1), Nancy Drew is often represented in a variety of adventurous scenarios that would have been perceived as daring in the early 20th century, yet visually, the covers often emphasize the decorative role and physical and emotional restraint traditional femininity requires, rather than Nancy's competence and physical and emotional strength. The students identify many specific details about the cover that reflect this trend, and then on their own, or with some assistance, are able to draw conclusions about the meaning these appear to convey. For example, they notice the polish of Nancy's makeup and hair, the stylized ruffles of her blouse, and her positioning toward the viewer (*conclusion: the image emphasizes her decorative function over her active role*). They notice her off-balance posture and the crook of her fingers, how this is unlike the posture one would expect of someone sneakily detecting – balanced, elbows and knees bent, hands open, facing toward danger (*conclusion: the image implies she's not prepared to react quickly or with strength*). They notice how high Nancy's eyebrows are raised, her widened eyes, and her open mouth, all conveying a sense of surprise (*conclusion: the image implies that she stumbled onto the solution accidentally, rather than through logic*). We consider the racial implications of this vision of femininity, not only in how often Nancy's whiteness and blondeness are visually emphasized against dark backgrounds, but also in how often they are emphasized narratively, in Nancy's interactions with people of color. Using a secondary source, we discuss the way the racism of earlier versions of the books was addressed in later reissues by removing all references to people of color, and how film adaptations emphasized Nancy's youth and femininity even more strongly than the books (Nash 77). We end discussion of the series with a clip from *Nancy Drew: Detective* (1938), where the protagonist is transformed into an incompetent sidekick to her boyfriend, who now replaces her as the star of the narrative.

CAGNEY & LACEY: THE BIG PICTURE

For the section of the course looking at the influential series *Cagney & Lacey* (1982-1988), one of the learning outcomes is for students to understand how reception is influenced by historical context and contemporaneous "representational ecology" (Schiappa 23), and it is therefore important to consider how an image operates *relative to others*, rather than debating whether it is, in the abstract, a positive or negative representation. Our assigned reading addresses the 1970s and 1980s response to second wave feminism in everyday life – when gender roles were being debated and women joined the police force in greater numbers – and on television, where the female detective also became more common (Mizejewski 59). The activity below serves as another example of how attention to aesthetic detail illuminates how texts operate ideologically, but this time an additional layer of interpretation is added, as students learn to evaluate representation as a potential cultural response to a particular historical moment. The aesthetic approach used with Nancy Drew books also works well for television, because opening sequences and pilot episodes act as a kind of book cover, often reflecting the essence of a series, providing a snapshot of both the overall premise and the mood producers hope to effect. Through head-to-head comparisons of short parallel clips from shows with female vs. male leads, and of female leads from one era vs. those of another, we again explore the ways the "neutral" (i.e., male) model of a detective is altered when a woman takes his place.

Image 2: *Get Christine Love!* emphasizes the main character's competence and confidence.

Image 3: In *Police Woman,* femininity is linked with incompetence and victimization.

We compare the opening sequences and several clips from two series that premiered in 1974: *Get Christie Love!* (1974-1975), a blaxploitation series with an African-American woman as its protagonist (see Image 2), and *Police Woman* (1974-1978), a police procedural with a white female lead (see Image 3). After watching these, the students free-write about concrete details they observe or adjectives that come to mind as they watch. Inevitably, "strong" is the main adjective used for Christie, and "weak" for Pepper. While both are conventionally attractive, Christie has many traits culturally coded as masculine, such as physical and verbal aggression that she directs at men and women alike. The opening sequence conveys her confidence, intelligence, and competence: she is shown running, jumping over railings, and driving aggressively; the camera focuses on her face or on her whole person; she is shown acting alone, with the exception of brief images of her male co-workers in the last 10 seconds of the sequence. By contrast, Pepper's appearance is the primary trait emphasized in the opening: the camera focuses closely on her legs or breasts (when she is dressed skimpily for undercover operations), or it slowly pans down her body, voyeuristically; when she is shown, she is largely shown as a victim, standing helpless in horror as she is attacked by various men; and she is only shown in the first third of the sequence, in these decorative or victimized ways, whereas the last two thirds of the sequence are shots of her male colleagues actively and competently pursuing police work without her. The students always note how fun Christie is to watch, and how dull Pepper is, yet *Get Christie Love!* only lasted one season, while *Police Woman* went on for four. Our reading suggests a possible explanation for this discrepancy, in that the Blaxploitation style was addressed to an African-American audience, "but the formula didn't work for the white-dominated Nielson audiences" (Mizejewski 63-64).

Image 4: *Charlie's Angels* combines decorative glamour and competent teamwork to deliver an ambivalent message about women's strength.

Compared to Pepper's glaring incompetence (in the episode we watch, she keeps dropping her gun and sobbing uncontrollably), *Charlie's Angels* (1976-1981) represents an improvement, as the Angels are all skilled, brave, and effective (see Image 4). We learn the show was extremely popular with women viewers possibly because of their glamour, but also because of their independence from male authority and their teamwork as well, in that the series represented the first application of the "buddy" formula to women (Mizejewski 69). Yet a comparison of the show's opening sequence to *The Rookies* (1972-1976) from the same period reveals its use of color, music, setting, and camera work all highlight the decorative and sexualized function of the protagonists' femininity. The men in *The Rookies* are framed in realistic poses and actions that emphasize their courage and competence, with intense, threatening music enhancing the sense of their abilities as crime-fighters, as they charge aggressively across the screen. Images of the former police officers of *Charlie's Angels*, in contrast, are initially realistic, yet grow increasingly glamorized and unrelated to police duties as the sequence progresses: in tandem with music that conveys a sense of ease or entertainment, the women are shown tossing their hair, eyes wide and mouths open, as if to convey they are devoid of thought.

We consider our primary text, *Cagney & Lacey* (1982-1988), against this backdrop of prior images. In addition to watching a season 2 episode on date rape, which fits thematically with our exploration of gender and violence, we take a side-by-side look at the opening sequences of seasons 1 and 2 to see how the series struggled to find its place culturally in representing strong female detectives, in an era in which women's physical strength and bravery may have seemed threatening to many in the audience (see Images 5 and 6). After reading how the show's producers were concerned that Cagney and Lacey were too aggressive and might be read as lesbian (D'Acci 30-37), we compare the changes in each season's opening sequence, finding ample evidence of this anxiety. The students are able to easily identify aesthetic changes that replace masculine-coded music, costumes, facial expressions, and actions with feminine-coded ones. For example, the first season's opening sequence is reminiscent of *The Rookies*, with its serious music and many shots of uniformed (female) officers bravely charging into danger. It seems the producers originally wanted to signify that this was no *Charlie's Angels*. The second opening sequence is profoundly different, however: the brass-buttoned navy blue uniforms of season one have been replaced by colorful scarves and soft office casual, as the women laugh together, shop together, and repeatedly smile at their male partners and co-workers, while peppy, upbeat theme song plays. The students conclude that the sequence is meant to convey that these women will not threaten the patriarchal order.

Image 5: *Cagney & Lacey,* Season 1: the opening sequence conveys the detectives' bravery in the face of danger

Image 6: *Cagney & Lacey,* Season 2: the opening sequence emphasizes the detectives' friendship

These exercises provide demonstrable evidence of the key premise of the course, that strength and competence are on some level culturally understood to be incompatible with femininity. We may not have

reached this level of understanding had I started with a simple assertion about gender ideology, but the point is more easily granted when we try to imagine Sherlock Holmes positioned as Nancy Drew was on the book cover, or a male police officer constantly smiling while shopping, arm and arm with his pal. These aesthetic analyses powerfully illustrate discomfort with images of strong women, and they also help students understand something I have had difficulty convincing them of in the past, that the sexualization of women can potentially be damaging to gender equality. While I would argue that sexualization per se is not inherently harmful, it is the primary way women are represented in media, and the students usually conclude that because it conveys incompetence and predominates over alternative ways of viewing women, it is troubling to them. At the same time, while *Cagney & Lacey* makes some accommodation to gender anxiety, our analysis of the foregrounded feminist perspective in the full episode leaves students with an appreciation of *how much better* these characters are than those in prior shows: they have fully developed interiors, are flawed yet likeable, intelligent, brave, and thoroughly competent at their jobs. The students' exposure to a variety of older series helps them assess representations sympathetically, as compromises with the cultural limitations of their eras, and lays a foundation for later sections of the course that look at the wave of female detectives that followed in the wake of the critical and popular success of *Cagney & Lacey*.

THE SYSTEM: EMOTIONS AND FACTS IN LESSONS ON RACISM AND POVERTY

The following section approaches the representation-reality (or aesthetic-empirical) divide from the reverse direction, studying the intersection of racial and economic inequality to form a foundation of prior knowledge allowing students to assess the representation of inequality and crime in *The Wire*. The preparatory work described below is completed both outside of and during several class periods, so we are subsequently able to develop an aesthetic analysis sensitive to the series' use of formal techniques to build a macro-level, structural analysis of crime, race, and poverty. Given that my students' comments during discussions of inequality often reflect strong belief in individualism and even "post-racialism," exposing them to the clear patterns of inequality emerging in large data sets and other forms of empirical research helps them see that structural explanations of inequality are not mere liberal platitudes but rather fact-based conclusions with substantial explanatory power.

The student population at my university is primarily white and from rural environments, where they seem to have had little prior experience interacting with people of color. My courses always focus intensively on race and gender in popular media, which means they tend to draw a challenging demographic: usually a third of the students are ethnic studies and women's studies majors who care deeply about race- and gender-based inequality, and the remainder are students who do not seem to share this interest, but would like to take a fun course on TV. Given this dynamic, what often happened in the past was that white students would not feel comfortable talking about race in front of students of color, and the tension in the room meant issues were discussed in a perfunctory, polite way that did not seem to connect meaningfully with students' feelings and beliefs. While there are many important aspects of pedagogy to consider when discussing racism in the classroom, such as how to effectively and supportively engage students of color, the activities that follow address the primary challenge I see in my classes (given their demographics): white students' reluctance to fully engage with discussions of race. If the goal is to reduce racism, then finding a way to reach shut-down white students is critically important. While people of color are the ones primarily harmed by racism, consideration of white students' perspectives on racism also needs to be included, in order for them to set aside their defensiveness and genuinely invest in the conversation (Ellwanger 38-39; Giroux 383-384).

Recognizing this challenge, one many instructors share, I made several important changes to my teaching methods that have greatly improved the quality of discussions about racism. The first is that I

realized I needed to consider more deeply the emotional experience of discussing the subject. We now talk directly about the awkwardness of these kinds of conversations, that many people fear being judged, and that those who have been personally and painfully affected by inequality may feel their anger is not accepted or understood. I also branched out from my training in film studies to look at social science resources that could help students understand the structural, institutional, and historical causes of inequality, rather than reducing racism to the scope of individual prejudice. This helps redirect students away from preoccupation with whether they are individually responsible for racism toward understanding where racism came from, why it is still here, and how it harms people of color. Here are two sets of examples: 1) how I use psychological research and psychology-related exercises in the classroom to help shift students toward a structuralist perspective that reduces their defensiveness; and 2) how I use big data to demonstrate to students why a structuralist perspective on inequality is valid. For both types of activities, I have students access links to the shorter or more fact-based resources before class and then discuss their implications during class, and for the longer or more experiential activities, we do these wholly in class.

The Psychology of Racism

Doll tests are a series of long-running experiments that demonstrate how most children in the U.S. develop a belief in white superiority from a very young age. Originally conducted in the 1940s by psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark, the test asks children to choose between dolls with lighter and darker skin tones, pointing to the one that is pretty, smart, or the one they would choose as a friend. These experiments have been replicated for decades, and while the exclusive association of whiteness with positive traits and blackness with negative ones has been slowly declining over the years, especially among children of color, the pattern is still predominant among white children. Videos of the results are widely available on YouTube,[4] and it's heartbreaking to see most of the children repeatedly choose the white doll. It seems to reduce many students' sense of personal guilt for collective racism, to see that children who are very young have already absorbed this message about race and value. Students are less likely to feel the need to defend themselves from the accusation of being racist when we acknowledge that many of us are carrying around subconscious racist beliefs transmitted to us in early childhood. The videos illustrate the implicit, ambient nature of this type of racism, which is much more common than the overt acts of hate that students are more readily able to accept as racist.

A Class Divided: A similar example I link to is a Frontline documentary (available on the PBS website[5]) about the blue eyes/brown eyes experiment teacher Jane Elliott conducted after MLK's assassination, where she marked elementary students with a collar denoting their eye color, then easily led one half of the class to mistreating the other, on the belief that they were superior to those with a different eye color. While these were young children, Elliott has repeated the experiment over the years with adults with similar results, which suggests that racial bias has a significant affective or psychological component that maturity and education do not necessarily address.

Project Implicit: Showing students examples of implicit bias is more effective than simply asserting that racism exists, given that the culture surrounding my classroom often claims it does not. In addition to several anecdotes that illustrate the concept of implicit bias, I include a link to the Project Implicit website[6] for students to view outside of class. It explains what implicit bias is and provides a wide variety of examples of different forms of it. The project includes online experiments available to the public that track how quickly participants click on a keyboard to associate marginalized and dominant groups with positive or negative traits, which may be an indicator of bias. While the project's principal investigators acknowledge that the results do not

4 For example, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZryE2bqwdk.

5 https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-class-divided

6 https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit

predict which individuals will commit biased acts, they do claim that the results generate broad patterns that are predictive of how groups will behave, and that the results of the tests over the years reflect established trends of pro-white and anti-black bias in all racial groups, even among blacks themselves, suggesting just how widespread and unconscious implicit bias truly is (Tierney 2008).

Self-fulfilling Stereotypes: Mark Snyder's classic work on stereotypes as self-fulfilling prophecies make the link between unconscious bias and behavior, helping students see how prejudice persists. In a summary of the consistent results of decades' worth of psychology experiments, he analyzes how people enact and replicate prejudice: by acting in ways that make it more likely for us to have the kind of experience we anticipate in an exchange with someone from a different social group, or by remembering evidence that confirms stereotypes but forgetting evidence that does not.

Balance Your Budget: While there are many good tools available for thinking through issues of privilege and inequality at the individual level, such the widely reprinted "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (McIntosh), I also find it helpful to supplement these kinds of resources with data and activities supporting broader claims that: 1) explain how representative individual instances of inequality may be; and that 2) explain how structural forces can affect individual experience. For example, I find that my students, despite their predominantly lower-income backgrounds, still often make comments reflecting the belief that poverty is caused by a character flaws: the lack of willingness to work. So I created a budget activity, where students try to balance a month's worth of income and expenses using one of two spreadsheets I provide: a median-income budget for a U.S. family of four or a poverty-level budget. The students are allowed to choose which budget to balance, and invariably the majority of them choose a median income. I provide a list of estimates for costs they might not be aware of, such as diapers, formula, health insurance, groceries, etc., as well as summaries of current Census Bureau data (median and poverty-level incomes, statistics on the substantial percentage of the poor who work, etc.), which I link to.

The students work on their budgets outside of class, then discuss them during class. It is a very dynamic activity, as the students become intensely engaged in debating what they are and are not willing to sacrifice to make their budgets balance. Once they have got their budget balanced (which they almost always do by dropping their health insurance), I throw a wrench in their plans, and announce they have just had an unexpected baby, or the car needs expensive repairs, so now they cannot get to work, and then I ask what else they will sacrifice in response to this unexpected event. The biggest expenditures in their budgets align with national averages (where housing, health care, and child care are the biggest economic hurdles most families face), and they also begin to see how a single unexpected event can wreak havoc on their plans. The students find it extremely difficult to balance a median-income budget with all their needs (let alone their wants), but then they are shocked when I suggest they now cut their income in half and try balancing a poverty-level budget. Because the activity is focused around concrete details, they are eventually able to see how the minimum wage keeps people in poverty, even when working full-time.

Imagine You're a Slave: White students also frequently express the belief that racism no longer exists, because slavery ended long ago, or that unequal outcomes today are unrelated to historical inequality. I sometimes assign a free-writing activity on slavery, where students are asked to imagine that they were recently freed from life-long enslavement, in which they were removed from their family and country and taken to a foreign land where they were banned from owning money or learning to read and write. I ask them to imagine how they and their children would be emotionally, physically, and economically affected immediately after emancipation, and then given these effects, how the family would be impacted again a generation later, and then again later. Paired with data on disparities in wealth accumulation, the activity illustrates how these long-ago events could impact subsequent generations.

These resources have been invaluable because they document common patterns of responses to

inequality and then help students begin to understand how those might impact people on an individual level. The patterns they reveal are so widespread and persistent that students are eventually persuaded that, despite individual variation, large-scale racism does still exist. The activities also help remove a sense of personal responsibility for the current state of affairs, which allows white students to set aside their fear of being judged, so they can be more open to learning about racism. Once this emotional barrier to learning is reduced, we prepare for our discussion of *The Wire* by drawing on macro-level data to help explain how these patterns of prejudiced belief have translated into detrimental experiences shared by many people of color.

The Facts of Racism

I supplement these speculative activities focused on individual experience with information on racial discrimination trends in housing, lending, and hiring in various historical periods. Fortunately, large data sets of this kind of information are now regularly published by government agencies and other sources, and I have found myself spending more class time in recent years explicitly talking to my students about how to find reliable information online. In a "post-truth" era, these kinds of media literacy skills are even more critical. While the Trump administration has stripped the White House website[7] of much of its prior content, the National Archives has retained this information,[8] and many government entities still maintain independent websites, such as the Census Bureau[9] and the Bureau of Justice.[10] These sites often include downloadable spreadsheets and summary reports, which allow you to easily tailor assignments – you can provide students with summaries, or ask them to dive into the details and determine the pattern on their own. I also encourage students to read the work of reputable think tanks, those that may have a bias in terms of research focus, but use reliable research methods and neutral language, such as The Urban Institute[11] and The Williams Institute,[12] and I often provide links to coverage of a single issue by a variety of news outlets, so students can compare how they identify and describe social problems. For example, for our discussion of the War on Drugs (a key theme of the first season of *The Wire*), I include the following links to demonstrate that there's a broad consensus across the political spectrum that this strategy has been a failure:

- *The Atlantic (leans left)13*
- *The Cato Institute (leans right)14*
- *MSNBC (leans left)15*
- *National Review (leans right)16*
- *Time (relatively neutral)17*
- *The Washington Post (relatively neutral)18*

Using big data provides clear evidence that prejudicial discrepancies in outcomes still exist. It also helps isolate independent factors, as part of students' resistance to the idea of white privilege may be that race is intersectional with other aspects of their identities and experiences that are not hegemonic, such as the

7 https://www.whitehouse.gov
8 https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov
9 https://www.census.gov
10 https://www.bjs.gov
11 https://www.urban.org
12 https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu
13 https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/05/sessions-sentencing-memo/526029
14 https://www.cato.org/blog/sessions-re-escalates-drug-war
15 https://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/jeff-sessions-moves-forward-his-regressive-drug-war
16 https://www.nationalreview.com/2017/05/jeff-sessions-war-drugs-congress-should-change-law
17 https://time.com/4825099/don-winslow-trump-drug-policy
18 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-new-war-on-drugs-wont-be-any-more-effective-than-the-old-one/2017/06/22/669260ee-56c3-11e7-a204-ad706461fa4f_story.html

economic disadvantage many of them experience. As Zingsheim and Goltz note,

> In order to place whiteness both in relationship to discourses of power and still remain grounded in lived experienxce, these students invoke topics other than race, such as class, in order to make sense of the theories. It is dangerous to allow these connections to displace race as the object of critical interrogation. It is equally dangerous to simply dismiss these intersections as refusals to engage in a critical discussion of race. (233)

Relying on large data sets can help address this difficulty in teasing out what is due to race, by ruling out other variables. The majority of poor people in the U.S. are white, so poverty is not only due to race. On the other hand, a quick look at Census data reveals that the rate of poverty for people of color in the U.S. is double the rate for whites (Pew Research Center 23). Over the span of hundreds of millions of people, this large, clear pattern would not have emerged from all the outcomes random probability could generate, if racism were not still at play.

The intersections of racial and economic inequality have a significant impact on crime as well. The disparities in rates of poverty described above suggest that, even though the majority of the poor are white, as a group their experience of poverty is fundamentally different than it is for African-Americans (the poor population represented in *The Wire*). By carefully disentangling the data on poverty and crime, Samson and Bean were able to define an "ecological dissimilarity" among poor whites and blacks: while 9 out of 10 poor whites live in stable, mixed-class neighborhoods where the disadvantages of poverty are mitigated, half of all poor blacks live in dysfunctional, extreme poverty neighborhoods that are highly violent, isolated from access to jobs and transportation, and where most residents are unemployed (11). Residing in an extreme poverty neighborhood is strongly predictive of violence (both in terms of criminality and victimization), and so African-Americans are overrepresented among criminals because they are overrepresented in these neighborhoods, due to racial segregation (12).

This increased rate of criminality might initially look like a moral failing of African-Americans, and this group has in fact been represented throughout American history as dangerously, inherently criminal, from the days of emancipation,[19] to the Moynihan report,[20] to the overrepresentation of African-Americans as criminals in the news (Phillips and Frost 133), to the high levels of "racial resentment" among white Americans, who attribute poor outcomes among African-Americans to individual character flaws, not structural inequality (Tuch and Hughes 149), to the election of Trump, which is best explained not by economic anxiety but by racial resentment (Smith and Hanley 207). Yet the connection between poverty and racism that Samson and Bean isolated in their research indicates that this racial disparity the culture focuses on as a collective character flaw of a minority is in fact a geographic disparity – a collective character flaw of the majority: its tolerance of racial segregation.

The news has begun in recent years to report on unequal treatment of minorities in our criminal justice system – such as the use of excessive force, over-policing, and sentencing disparities – and anecdotal videographic evidence of these problems circulates regularly through social media as well. Yet many of my students still seem reluctant to accept that structural inequality could explain the high rate of incarceration of African-American men in the U.S., as that is largely an interpretive argument (in that it looks at symptoms and asserts a cause). In this situation the use of empirical data may be more effective than abstract ideological argument alone. We spend a great deal of time teasing out the distinction between class and race, because it is critical to a structural-sociological understanding of crime that I hope will displace the individual-moral understanding most of my students bring to class. Not that individuals do not make the choice to engage in crime, but that the environments they are immersed in strongly affect the range of options available to them,

19 As the Jim Crow Museum at Ferris State University has documented (https://ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow).

20 https://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/moynchapter4.htm

and that poverty and racism make leaving those environments difficult for most. The intractability of an extreme poverty neighborhood and its restriction of the choices available to its residents are the very focus of *The Wire*.

THE WIRE: THE BIG SYSTEM ON THE SMALL SCREEN

The Wire (2002-2008) serves as a perfect example of the recent television trend of narrative complexity, and one of its main characters is a remarkable female detective, but its most significant feature is the argument it builds about the relationship between structural inequality and crime, which is unique among all other representations in the course. The activities and evidence described above provide a solid foundation of knowledge students bring to the show, so they can recognize and identify how the text builds its argument. As the lyrics of the opening theme suggest (*you gotta keep the devil/way down in the hole*), the series is not only about the crime in an extreme poverty neighborhood, but the way this neighborhood is isolated and penalized for much broader social problems inherent to American life.

I explain to my students that we see around us the reality that people of color are disproportionately poor, and disproportionately living in dysfunctional, impoverished ghettos; we see these large patterns, but rarely talk openly as a society about the reasons for them. Therefore, we are each left to draw our own conclusions, and the conclusion many draw (as indicated by the high levels of racial resentment Tuch and Hughes find among whites) is that there is something inherently wrong with people of color, especially African-Americans. This leads to a circular kind of logic, where we see evidence of inequality and mistake these symptoms for a cause. What is lacking is not the *what*; we already have the raw evidence of differential outcomes for various socioeconomic groups. What is missing is the *why*. Prejudice is therefore not a lack of information that's remedied simply by providing more information, but a filter through which we process information. It's the "why" we each supply as we interpret the evidence around us. More than anything else, then, disrupting prejudice requires an argument about "why."

The Wire, more than any other fictional series in television history, I would argue, provides this why. Its sole purpose, in fact, is the examination of why there is so much poverty and crime in one of the wealthiest nations on earth, why extreme poverty neighborhoods like the one it depicts lead to such poor life outcomes for their residents, and why the politicians, police, school system, unions, and citizens allow the problems to continue. The show implicitly asks, "Why is this happening?" and "Who benefits?" The answers its proposes are that individuals and social groups benefit economically, psychologically and professionally from monitoring and policing extreme poverty neighborhoods, even though the business of illegal drugs is spread across all of society. The series explores the intersections of inequality and crime by connecting them to key institutions of U.S. society, rather than focusing solely on the morality of criminals. Morality in *The Wire* is very gray, not black and white, and there are good guys and bad guys in *both* armies of the War on Drugs – the dealers of The Towers *and* the Baltimore police.

The strategy of the series is perfectly encapsulated in the opening scene, when Detective McNulty begins his investigation of the murder of a kid nicknamed Snot Boogie. Before our screening, I warn students that *The Wire* is a challenging show to watch, especially in the beginning, because of its narrative complexity.[21] One of the newest trends in recent television, narrative complexity is when the storyline is organized in a sophisticated, complex way that makes the viewer work hard to understand its meaning, rather than the spoon-fed, obvious didacticism of traditional TV. A show with narrative complexity often: has many intertwining stories, with many points of view you have to evaluate; is initially confusing, plunging you into the action midstream, or revealing its meaning gradually over time, or by jumping forward or backward in time; rewards your patience and close attention; and subtly shows rather than tells.

21 See Mittell for a detailed analysis of narrative complexity.

Image 7: *The Wire:* McNulty struggles to understand a senseless death

Image 8: *The Wire:* a young man's death is linked to larger patterns of inequality ("this is America")

The opening sequence (see Images 7 and 8) gives us no cues as to the significance of what we are watching and why, provides no background context as to who any of the characters are. It is a quiet, sad scene, shot with a realist aesthetic, and devoid of the usual affective controls of television: no music cues our emotions, no cameras zoom to direct our attention. We just listen in as two somber people sit in the dark, watching over the corpse of a child, trying to make sense of it. We see compassion and then confusion in McNulty's reaction shots, as we learn that every week Snot Boogie would try to rob the neighborhood kids' crap game, and every week they would catch him and beat him up. When McNulty asks why they let him keep playing, his informant replies, "Got to. This America, man." So from the first moment of the series, symbolic and structural parallels are drawn between the rigged systems of the larger society and the microcosm of The Towers.

We explore these parallels by carefully examining the first episode, which establishes the series' twin narrative structure, which considers similarities between two dysfunctional systems, The Towers, and the criminal justice system. Just as drug dealer D'Angelo gets in trouble with his boss (kingpin Avery Barksdale), Detective McNulty gets in trouble with his boss for pursuing an unauthorized investigation into Barksdale's gang. These episodes set up a clear pattern where both criminals and cops are trapped in corrupt systems, where their only options are to acquiesce to the system and be personally compromised (but survive and benefit), or fight the system and be destroyed, while the system lives on (with their immediate replacement.) Widely considered to be one of the best television shows ever created, *The Wire* uses some conventions of the police procedural, but broadens its scope to include an enormous ensemble cast, representing entire interconnected communities of different racial and economic classes. It is often described as Dickensian, both for its sprawling scope and its heart-breaking depiction of the cruelties extreme poverty neighborhoods inflict on children. It is remarkable not only for the quality of the writing and performances, but also for the compassion with which it treats its characters, in the parallels it draws between them as they navigate the symbiotic worlds of crime and law-enforcement.

The series indicts its viewers for our participation in and tolerance of a system that blames the moral failings of the larger culture on its scapegoats, the African-American poor of the inner city. Because the series pivots continually between the structural and individual, between the disadvantaged and socially dominant, it makes for a perfect case study of the intersections of race, class, and gender in American society. Because I prepare the students for the individual stories in *The Wire* by first examining the large cultural patterns they represent, I find students are now much more willing to discuss racism, poverty, and crime. This approach can be very helpful for working with groups whose individual levels of understanding of inequality vary widely, too. For some, critical analysis of American culture is very new and deeply threatening to the beliefs they

have been taught by their families and communities. For them, grounded aesthetics is a way to ease them into these discussions by showing rather than telling that profound inequality exists. Other students may be painfully, personally aware of inequality, yet they can also benefit from developing these analytical tools, so they are better prepared to demonstrate how their personal experiences are reflective of larger trends, and how popular culture texts address the cultural myths around them. For both groups, demonstrating that the compassionate perspective of *The Wire* is grounded in factual accuracy can serve as a powerful response to the dehumanization of people of color that has been reignited and mainstreamed in recent years.[22]

CONCLUSION

By the end of the semester, my students can argue much more persuasively about the ideology of a text and its likely social meaning, because they have developed the tools for conducting detailed textual analyses and learned how to connect these to broad social experiences. The grounded aesthetics approach meets students where they are at, which is often developmentally oriented toward concrete information and culturally oriented toward individualism. Rather than simply telling students inequality exists, using large data sets shows them the concrete evidence they need to see in order to be persuaded that large disparities in outcomes exist for members of lower-status groups. Similarly, rather than telling students the ideological meaning of a text, showing them how the text constructs meaning provides them with concrete details they need to see in order to be persuaded that the particular choices made were purposeful representational techniques. The twin halves of my grounded aesthetics approach, big data and aesthetics, operate in tandem to help students develop the skills needed to connect the concrete and individual with the abstract and social.

Grounded aesthetics is therefore a very effective way of teaching students how to analyze the ideology in the details of entertainment media, but it has a side benefit as well: it also offers many parallel techniques for dismantling the power of ideology to shape news coverage, social media, and debates in everyday life. By modeling a style of argumentation that is attentive to details and context, interpretive yet grounded in evidence, it provides a powerful response to the belief that the humanities' concern with inequality is a subjective agenda rather than a disciplined engagement with reality. Moving forward, our challenge as teachers of popular culture will be to continually confront and demythologize the ever-changing iterations of "fake news" justifying inequality, whether in fictional entertainment, social media, or the news. Nothing could be more important in the bewildering "post-truth" era we are teaching in and living through.

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We All Have Jobs Here: Teaching and Learning with Multiple Intelligences in *The Walking Dead*

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ABSTRACT

A model can be useful when engaging secondary students in team-building by appreciating differing skills and identifying their own strengths. In this example, a model was provided that students to indulge in the transgression of popular culture and zombie media. Middle and high school students participated in a critical thinking and team-building unit which capitalized on student interest in zombie popular culture, particularly the AMC series *The Walking Dead*. Students engaged in cooperative activities with a "zombie apocalypse" theme. Activities included identifying roles for team members based on individual skill sets in order to strengthen to group as a whole. This approach allowed students to approach this unit as assembling a "zombie apocalypse team," an idea borrowed from popular culture. The popular culture "zombie apocalypse team" shows that survival depends on building a cooperative team of individuals with disparate but complementary skills and approaches to problem solving. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences can provide theoretical framework to examine how the group of survivors in *The Walking Dead* combine multiple intelligences, as represented by individual characters, to survive. This model can provide a more detailed context to allow students to their own strengths within a team.

Keywords: educational psychology, Howard Gardner, intelligence, Multiple Intelligences, psychology, The Walking Dead, pedagogy, team building, secondary education

INTRODUCTION

"Who would be on your zombie apocalypse team?" has become a popular thought experiment entertained by horror fans, online memes, and quizzes. In fact, typing "Who would be on your" often autocompletes in a Google search with "zombie apocalypse team." The question itself seems to suggest a popular understanding that no one skillset or strength is adequate to survive extraordinary conditions. Rather, success relies on assembling a cooperative team of individuals with disparate but complementary skills. This premise is played out in the popular ongoing series, *The Walking Dead*. The AMC series, developed by Frank Darabont based on the comic series by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore, and Charlie Adlard, follows a close-knit group of survivors as they navigate a post-apocalyptic world after a zombie outbreak led to the collapse of society. Most members of the group came together as strangers, each bringing a unique background and different approaches to problem solving. The notion that communities benefit from diverse representation of individual strengths is not limited to the popular imagination. Developmental psychologist Howard Gardner observed that across cultures and community contexts, the breadth and complexity of human problem solving could not be adequately assessed using traditional measures of intelligence. In 1983, Gardner published his seminal work, *Frames of Mind*, in which he described his theory of multiple intelligences (MI theory), which sought to develop a better understanding of human intelligence than accounted for in traditional IQ tests and similar measures. This article will explore a practical application of the question, "Who would be on your zombie apocalypse team?" and the use of zombie popular culture as a conduit to teaching team building in middle and high school. Then, this premise will be further applied to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as a theoretical framework to examine how the group of survivors in *The Walking Dead* combine multiple intelligences, as represented by individual characters, to survive.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Howard Gardner became critical of traditional views on intelligence prevalent in psychology, which led to his research and development of his theory of multiple intelligences, introduced in the 1983 book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. ("Reflections"). Gardner described an intelligence in terms of the ability to solve problems or fashion products of significance to a particular cultural context or community (*New Horizons* 15). In addition, Gardner identified several criteria an intelligence must fulfill: the potential for isolation by brain damage, a place in evolutionary history, the presence of core operations, the potential to symbolic expression, a developmental progression, the existence of prodigies or exceptional individuals, and support from experimental psychology and psychometric findings (*Frames of Mind* 66-71). To identify intelligences, Gardner reviewed volumes of existing research and identified seven intelligences: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. In 1995, Gardner wrote that if he were to rewrite *Frames of Mind*, he would include an eighth intelligence, that of the naturalist ("Reflections" 206).

Educators enthusiastically embraced MI theory. Volumes have been written about the application of MI theory in classrooms, and entire schools have even designed their curricula to support multiple intelligences ("Reflections" 202). However, rather than placing a greater value on a more diverse range of intelligence, some educators have confused multiple intelligences with "learning styles" ("Reflections" 202-203). Gardner wrote that he was "jarred" by attempts to teach all content areas using all the intelligences or using multiple intelligences simply as mnemonic devices ("Reflections" 206). Musical intelligence in particular has been subject to being used as merely a vessel for teaching the more traditionally valued linguistic and mathematical intelligences (Kassell 32). While Gardner's theory has been embraced by many in the field of education, others have harshly criticized MI theory, even arguing that the theory is pseudoscience (Gleak 126-127). This paper takes no position on the scientific basis of the theory of multiple intelligences, but rather aims to use the

theory as a framework for analysis.

Gardner sought to develop a theory of intelligence which better explained the diverse skills and approaches to problem-solving that individuals possess. The intelligences Gardner identified do not function in isolation, but within a cultural setting, community or social context, which suggests communities benefit from a diverse representation of intelligences. Although few outside the fields of education or psychology might be familiar with Gardner's theory, the idea that individuals of differing strengths working cooperatively are greater than the sum of their parts, is not a radical one and is represented in popular culture. *The Walking Dead* and the notion of the zombie apocalypse team presents a model in the popular imagination of how different intelligences or strengths function in context. Maudlin and Sandlin invite educators engaging in teaching popular culture to reflect upon the impact and cumulative imagery in popular culture (376-377). Although these common images often reinforce negative stereotypes, zombie apocalypse narratives, including *The Walking Dead*, have contributed to the common image of the "zombie apocalypse team."

The Walking Dead, in particular, offers an interesting model of the zombie apocalypse team, in which multiple intelligences can be represented by an individual member of the recurring cast of survivors. In practice, popular culture can serve as a conduit for students to learn and apply new ideas (Creadick 17). Teaching through popular culture, such as *The Walking Dead* and other zombie media, provides a model of teamwork and differing strengths which allows students to confidently envision themselves as part of their own team. Below is an application of the zombie apocalypse scenario for team building with middle and high school students, followed by an analysis of multiple intelligences as represented by individual characters in *The Walking Dead*.

As a certified school librarian, my position within my school allows me to collaborate closely with my educator colleagues and to engage with students in informal conversation, often about popular culture. During the course of the project described below, I had frequent discussions with students as they worked on their "zombie project" in the library and around the school. My role as librarian also led me to conversations with this group of students about their shared interest in *The Walking Dead* television series and comic book and the young adult book series *Rot and Ruin* by Jonathan Maberry. With this article, I hope to open educational possibilities for secondary students, especially who may struggle with traditional academics, by engaging students with the transgression of popular culture in the classroom and empowering students to recognize their strengths with a framework such as multiple intelligences.

IN PRACTICE

In spring 2016, I was invited to observe and participate in a team-building unit which would post students with the question: "Who would be on your zombie apocalypse team?" My colleague, who works with me at a suburban middle school in the northeastern United States, is an instructor with an educational nonprofit that partners with public schools. He and another instructor in the same program at a nearby rural high school created a zombie-themed critical thinking and team building activity for students enrolled in the program. The intent was to create a dropout prevention program, and has evolved to work with students to develop skills such as leadership, critical thinking, communication, self-awareness, character development, and team-building. Many students enrolled in the program at the two schools were avid fans of *The Walking Dead* and other zombie media such as *Z-Nation*, *Shaun of the Dead*, and Jonathan Maberry's young adult book series *Rot and Ruin*.

Many students enrolled in this program, which fits into students' schedule like an elective course, may struggle with traditional classroom assignments and academic success. Instructors design learning activities to capitalize upon and develop students' strengths. Many projects are founded in career readiness or community service with authentic, real-life goals. Activities also often have students collaborating with peers to work

toward a common goal. Teaching through popular culture in this context provides students with a learning activity which is unique and resembles play. For middle and high school students -- especially those who may not easily fit the ideal of traditional school success -- subverting typical school expectations by creating a zombie apocalypse plan, talking about favorite *Walking Dead* characters, even playing a shooting video game in class, creates a sense of *jouissance*, a blissful pleasure that comes from disrupting the social order (Duncum 234). Further, teaching through popular culture can decenter and redistribute authority within the classroom (Creadick 16). Not only does the instructor give up being the expert, but students may also be forced to reassess and redefine their roles within the classroom.

The unit harnessed students' interest in zombie popular culture to help them work toward team building and leadership learning targets. Competencies students were working toward included: demonstrating team membership and leadership, the ability to analyze strengths and weaknesses in self and others, understand and apply knowledge of social roles, and identifying and understanding personal aptitudes and abilities. The activity drew from the "Zombie Preparedness" lesson published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and a zombie-themed critical thinking lesson by Breanne Harris. Since students were also working toward competencies in teamwork, communication, and social skills, students were given team-building tasks, such as identifying a team leader and individual roles for team members.

Interestingly, although this unit was not designed with MI theory in mind, the learning activities integrate a number of intelligences throughout the project. Students capitalized on the personal intelligences through self-reflection of strengths and weaknesses and then working together as a group. Group leaders, in particular, had to show strong interpersonal intelligence. One middle school activity had students engaged in "shooting practice" using a Nintendo Wii video game and gun controller. Each team could then choose their best shooter to compete against other teams to earn a preferential starting point within the larger activity. In an opportunity to demonstrate linguistic intelligence, students gave presentations or oral arguments about their plans. Teams also created maps as part of their plan, which would require spatial intelligence.

The unit took place during class time over the course of two weeks. The high school unit was more theory-based, with students mainly working in the classroom, while the middle school unit was more practical, with students creating a zombie survival strategy within the school building. High school students began the unit with class discussions about infectivity and emergency preparedness. Students also worked on individual tasks such as identifying individual needs and choices for zombie preparedness. Students then each created ideal or imagined zombie apocalypse teams, which could include real or fictional people, and presented their plans to their classmates. In the second week of the unit, students were broken into teams. First, each team was tasked with identifying a leader, including determining how that leader would be chosen -- through a quick election? Drawing straws? Students were cautioned to be aware that for "the rest of the game you will take orders from that person until there is a revolt or they get eaten by zombies." Teams were then instructed to establish group norms, including division of labor and wealth, responsibility toward other groups, laws within the group, and how to handle infected members. Students were instructed to negotiate and debate points until the team could reach consensus.

Middle school students were engaged in more practical, hands-on activities. In one introductory activity, students had to find their way to the sitting area of the classroom while blindfolded and navigating a rope maze. The first two students to the sitting area could take their blindfolds off and provide vocal commands to the remaining students. Those first two students also became the team leaders and had the privilege of choosing the other members of their team.

Once teams were formed, each team worked as a group to identify individual strengths and assign each team member a specific role. In addition to the team leader, group roles included the medic, weapons specialist, strategist, and most resilient. Each role had defining characteristics. For example, the medic should

demonstrate empathy, kindness, and character; the weapons specialist should be the most resourceful and show originality and creativity; the strategist should be smart, sensible, and judicious. During these discussions, students readily made connections to the roles of favorite fictional characters -- identifying themselves as the Rick or Daryl of the group, for example. As a group, students discussed the roles and how they functioned within the team. Students identified their individual skills and strengths and which role they felt they were best suited for. For instance, an athletic student might see himself as well-suited to be weapons specialist, while a shy student known for being caring could serve the role of medic. However, these self-assessments also had to align with their peers' assessments, as well as the skills students had identified on resumes created earlier in the school year.

A custodian gave students an all-access tour of the school building, and each team was tasked with identifying their top three choices for best rooms to use as a base, along with inventories and strategies for surviving for two days. The role of each team member informed their priorities when identifying potential hideouts. The medic had to ensure they had access to first aid supplies. The weapons specialist had to find potential weapons and other supplies such as gear and food. The strategist was in charge of identifying the group's final location and strategy for survival. The group leader would listen to all perspectives and make the final decision. Portions of the unit were stylized like a game, with students rolling dice to determine if the way was clear or if zombies roamed the school hallways. Once their survival plans were complete, each group presented their strategy to the other teams.

When students had debriefing sessions on the unit, they had the opportunity to reflect on working with their team and their individual roles within the team. Students identified their own strengths within their team, and some students said that they wished they had spoken up more during the activities. One group even said that if they were to do the activity again, they would overthrow their leader and choose another member of the group to lead the team. One of the learning targets students were working towards, "Working Toward Team Goals" was described as "A synergetic team is a complementary team: capitalizing on the strengths of team members making weakness irrelevant." Even the group that wished to overthrow their leader recognized the strengths of individual members and of the group as a whole and the leadership qualities of the individual they wanted as the team leader. Both teams reflected positively that their team was stronger for having individual members with different strengths and roles within the group.

The learning goals of this unit were unique in that although each student was working toward the same competencies in teamwork and collaboration, they demonstrated these competencies through their differences. The unit included both conscientious teaching of collaboration through capitalizing on the strengths of individual members and a fanciful, yet practical, application of working with team members with complementary skill sets. The use of the zombie apocalypse scenario and references to popular culture allowed students an engaging and imaginative way to apply their individual skills and practice working with a team. Even when middle school students earned a free day and the option for a trip to a local doughnut shop, students unanimously opted to stay at school and continue working on their zombie apocalypse plans.

I had the opportunity to listen in on middle school students' conversations as they discussed the different roles within their team. Students considered not just their own personalities and strengths, but those of their teammates as well. This process, and a future iteration of this unit as a whole, could further develop students' insight into the role of differing skills to strengthen the group as a whole by explicitly teaching multiple intelligences through familiar popular culture, in this case, *The Walking Dead*. Below is an overview of how individual characters could be used as models for Gardner's multiple intelligences.

INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE: RICK GRIMES

Rick Grimes, a former sheriff's deputy, is the leader of the band of survivors in *The Walking Dead*. Rick demonstrates exceptional skill in reading people and their motivations, as well as the ability to bring people together to work cooperatively. Gardner explained that in an advanced form, interpersonal intelligence can allow a skilled individual to read the intentions and desires of others and potentially to use this knowledge to influence a group of disparate individuals to work cooperatively (*Frames of Mind* 253).

Early in the series, Rick says to an antagonist character, "We survive this by pulling together, not apart." Rick shows his commitment to this sentiment in his efforts to help the group escape Atlanta. He leads the group out of the city by using the knowledge and expertise of the other members of the group, including background knowledge about city planning, observations about walkers, and the spatial intelligence of Glenn Rhee ("Guts").

By the end of the fifth season, the other characters who have followed Rick have come to recognize his insight and abilities. When the group arrives at Alexandria, Rick has a violent outburst, frightening the residents of Alexandria ("Try"). As a result, the leader of Alexandria, Deanna Monroe, schedules a community meeting to discuss the events and potential consequences ("Conquer"). Michonne, Carol, Abraham, and Maggie all speak in Rick's defense. One of the common themes in all of their comments is that Rick's strength is his understanding of the world. Rick met each of these characters at different points and in different contexts, but each of them expresses loyalty for him. Either explicitly or implicitly, each character also expresses an understanding that they are stronger as a group, as a family. Gardner's definition of an intelligence is the ability to solve problems within a particular context or community (*New Horizons*). The problem Rick is tasked with solving is to survive in a dangerous world. To achieve this end, he has employed advanced interpersonal intelligence to bring people from disparate backgrounds and experiences together to work cooperatively.

INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE: CAROL PELETIER

Gardner described intrapersonal intelligence as a depth of understanding of one's internal feelings or range of affects and emotions and the ability to "draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one's behavior" (*Frames of Mind*, 253). In her first introduction, Carol is meek, polite, and under the thumb of an abusive husband. Carol has grown and changed over the course of the series, and reflects on her changes. By the third season, Carol has transformed into a confident and contributing member of the group. When another character remarks to Carol that she does not seem scared of anything anymore, Carol responds simply, "I'm not" ("This Sorrowful Life").

By the fourth season, Carol is more contemplative about her change. In talking to Rick about her previous life with her abusive husband, she says, "I didn't think I could be strong. I didn't know I could, that I already was." When Rick asks about her daughter Sophia, Carol says she's dead. "Somebody's else's slideshow," suggesting that Carol views herself as so changed as to be a new person entirely ("Indifference"). In season five, she goes into greater detail to Daryl:

> I went home, I got beat up, life went on, and I just kept praying for something to happen. But I didn't do anything. Not a damn thing. Who I was with him she got burned away. And I was happy about that. I mean, not happy, but at the prison I got to be who I always thought I should be, thought I should've been. And then she got burned away. Everything now just consumes you. ("Consumed")

Carol's self-knowledge functions as much more than idle reflection, but rather helps guide her behavior and actions. As the series continues, Carol is driven to do whatever is necessary to protect the lives of the community members and is viewed by those around her as an integral and valued member of the group.

SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE: GLENN RHEE

Gardner described spatial intelligence as the ability to perceive the visual world in three dimensions, to adapt or adjust initial perceptions as necessary, and to be able to re-create aspects of one's visual experience (*Frames of Mind*, 182). In the second episode of the first season, Glenn, as yet unseen, helps Rick escape from a military tank in Atlanta, describing an exit strategy and route via the radio. Glenn then meets Rick in the alley, and leads him up a fire escape. As Rick follows, Glenn shows familiarity with the area, and has, at any given moment, several exit strategies in mind. Glenn can strategize and plan on his feet as circumstances change and areas are blocked ("Guts").

Gardner related spatial intelligence to the strategy and visual memory of chess players and the "ability to anticipate moves and their consequences" (*Frames of Mind* 202). But Gardner argued that strong spatial intelligence was more than just exceptional visual memory, using the example of the battlefield: A commander who enters into battle with a detailed image of his battle plan, but is unable to quickly change course or adapt his plans as circumstance change would make a poor commander (*Frames of Mind* 204).

When Rick, Glenn, and others return to Atlanta to rescue a group member and retrieve Rick's dropped bag of weapons, the group discusses which task to tackle first. Rick says to Glenn, "You know the geography, it's your call" ("Vatos"). In creating a strategy to retrieve the bag of guns and ammunition, Glenn creates a model of the surrounding area drawn on the floor, using different objects as models for the bag and people: "That's the tank, five blocks from where we are now, that's the bag of guns. Here's the alley I dragged you into when we first met. That's where Daryl and I will go." Glenn's plan accounts for the fact that he may not be able to come back the same way, so he positions group members two blocks in the other direction. Not only does Glenn demonstrate a strong visual memory of the area, obstacles, streets and alleyways, but he is able to effectively strategize and anticipate potential changes and adapt accordingly.

BODILY-KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE: MORGAN JONES

Gardner describes bodily-kinesthetic intelligence as the ability to solve problems or fashion products using one's body (*New Horizons* 10). While many of the characters in *The Walking Dead* demonstrate some level of advanced bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to survive, Morgan Jones is noteworthy not only because of his advanced skills in martial arts, but also due to his apparent fast learning speed and fashioning of tools and products. In the first episode, Morgan declines to travel with Rick to Atlanta, saying he needs to practice shooting. Yet, when he takes target practice from the upper floor of a house, he is able to accurately make headshots with ease ("Days Gone Bye"). Later in the series, Morgan shows exceptional bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. When Rick encounters Morgan again in the third season, Morgan has not only survived solely on his own, but has fashioned a complex series of traps with bait, arrays of spikes, walls, snares, and guards against walkers, as well as booby-traps against intruders ("Clear"). Although Morgan is mentally unstable, he has used bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to create and use tools in order to protect himself from walkers and intruders.

Morgan appears again in the fifth season, eating alone next to a campfire when he is attacked by two men, one of whom is armed with a gun ("Conquer"). Morgan has no trouble dodging their attacks armed only with a bo staff. Neither of the two successfully land a single blow to Morgan. At this point in the series, Morgan's dedication to non-killing requires a much higher level of physical skill than accuracy with a firearm. Morgan's unique ability is later recognized by King Ezekiel, leader of the community The Kingdom, who asks Morgan to train his people ("The Well").

LOGICAL-MATHEMATICAL INTELLIGENCE: MICHONNE

Gardner characterized individuals exhibiting strong logical-mathematical intelligence as questioning and showing a persistence in carrying through, appreciation of connections, and flouting conventional wisdom (*Frames of Mind* 158). The stoic, katana-wielding Michonne is introduced after Rick's group flees the Greene family farm. Michonne becomes a companion of Andrea when she is accidentally left behind. Early in season three, Andrea and Michonne are taken to the community of Woodbury led by the Governor. Michonne shows skepticism towards both the Governor and Woodbury ("Walk With Me"). Early on, Michonne tells Andrea she does not trust the Governor and alludes to something sinister being hidden in the community of Woodbury ("Walk With Me"). Later, Michonne examines the military vehicles and equipment the Governor brought back to Woodbury, she finds bullet holes and blood. The Governor told the community that the servicemen had been overrun by the dead before the Governor and his people arrived ("Killer Within"). When the Governor finds her, Michonne takes the opportunity to question him directly, with the confident, probing manner of an attorney or detective:

> **Michonne:** "You'd think one soldier would drive away, especially against something so slow."
>
> **The Governor:** "Those men were heroes. Not the kind to leave anyone behind. If only we got there sooner. And you were with us."
>
> **Michonne:** "Lots of bullet holes. You think biters figured out how to use weapons?"
>
> **The Governor:** "They must have encountered bandits weeks ago." ("Killer Within")

The Governor's responses do not provide satisfactory answers for Michonne, as his statements do not fit in with the connections she has already made. Gardner noted that those who possess exceptional logical-mathematical intelligence value their intuition, and yet cannot accept any fact until it has been rigorously proved. Michonne continues to persist in finding answers by breaking into the Governor's home ("Say The Word").

Michonne becomes a valued member of the main group of survivors, often playing the role of the level-headed voice of reason. After the group is at the mercy of the Saviors, Michonne is once again compelled to seek her own answers. When Carl asks why Michonne did not go scavenging with his father, she explains, "I have to figure some things out." She explains to Carl that while she may think Rick is wrong in his approach in dealing with the Saviors, "Even if I think he is, I don't know" ("Go Getters"). Although her intuition may guide her, Michonne cannot accept any fact as given until she has rigorously sought her own answers.

LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE: HERSHEL GREENE AND MAGGIE GREENE RHEE

According to Gardner, linguistic intelligence includes a sensitivity to the pragmatic functions of language, or the uses to which language can be put (*Frames of Mind* 80-83). Hershel Greene is introduced early in season two as the head of the Greene family farm where he lives with his daughters, Maggie and Beth, and several family friends. Gardner described linguistic intelligence as a sensitivity to the different functions of language, including the potential to excite, convince, convey information, or to please (*Frames of Mind* 82). This sensitivity to the functions of language can be seen in Hershel's interactions with and lasting impact on the other characters. Hershel uses language to defuse tense situations and to counsel other characters. After Hershel's death, Maggie similarly uses language to inspire and influence others.

When a deadly illness infects the group after they have sought shelter in the prison, Hershel puts language to use to move and inspire others. When Glenn becomes ill, Hershel tells him, "We got this far somehow, you can believe somehow. Now we all have jobs here. That one's yours" ("Isolation"). These words

have such a lasting impact, that Glenn, Maggie, and Beth all repeat some variation of the phrase "We all have jobs here" in subsequent episodes. Similarly, Hershel's words stay with Rick even after Hershel's death. In a particularly dark moment, after the fall of the prison and after Rick has killed several members of another threatening group, through a series of flashbacks, Rick thinks back to his conversations with Hershel and the counsel he offered ("A").

After Hershel's death, Maggie eventually takes on a similar role, offering words of support and inspiration. Maggie's skill and sensitivity to the functions of language are recognized by other members of the group. Glenn tells Maggie to continue talking to Deanna at Alexandria, "Keep going over the plans you talked about" ("First Time Again"). Later, Rick tells Maggie she should be the one to talk to Gregory, the leader of the Hilltop community. Rick recognizes both Maggie's skill in language and the application to leadership: "You gotta start doing these things" ("Knots Untie"). In the final episode of the seventh season, Maggie is shown alongside Rick and King Ezekiel, leader of the Kingdom community. Maggie gives an inspiring speech to members of the three communities, Alexandria, the Kingdom, and the Hilltop, using language to bring people together behind a common cause ("The First Day").

MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE: BETH GREENE

Gardner described the components of musical intelligence as melody, rhythm, and timbre, but also explained that music is intimately associated with emotions and feelings. Gardner wrote that music "can serve as a way of capturing feeling, communicating them from the performer or the creator to the attentive listener" (*Frames of Mind* 131). While musical performance may not contribute directly to survival, the characters of *The Walking Dead* have nevertheless shown an interest and connection with music.

Although most of the group's energy is spent on survival, music is shown to be of value within the context of the community of survivors. Beth Greene uses musical intelligence to improve the quality of life of herself and those around her. Early in season three, after the group has struggled to survive over the winter, Hershel asks Beth to sing. At first, she responds that no one wants to hear, but Glenn asks, "Why not?" During their time at the prison, Beth becomes known for singing and uses music to convey emotions. At a moment in the series when the group is scared and vulnerable to attack, Beth sings an uplifting song with the chorus, "You gotta hold on" ("I Ain't A Judas").

After the group has fled the prison, and Beth and Daryl have found shelter in a funeral home, Beth finds a piano and begins playing and singing. When Daryl enters the room she stops, but he asks her to continue.

> **Daryl:** "Why don't you go ahead and play some more? Keep singing."
>
> **Beth:** "I thought my singing annoyed you."
>
> **Daryl:** "There ain't no jukebox, so…" ("Alone")

Here again, after they have been forced from their home and separated from their group, Beth and Daryl find meaning in music. Later, when Beth is held at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, in speaking to Dr. Edwards, she further shows musical intelligence in reflecting on the place of music in the context of the survival:

> **Dr. Edwards:** "[Art] doesn't have a place anymore. Art isn't about survival. It's about transcendence. Being more than animals. Rising above."
>
> **Beth:** "We can't do that anymore?"
>
> **Dr. Edwards:** "I don't know."

Beth: "I sing. I still sing." ("Slabtown")

NATURALIST: DARYL DIXON

In 1995, Gardner wrote about adding an eighth intelligence, the intelligence of the naturalist, to his original list of seven. He explained that naturalist intelligence is demonstrated by the ability to recognize flora and fauna and make other distinctions in the natural world, and to use this ability in a useful way, such as hunting, farming, or biological science ("Reflections" 206). Educator Bruce Campbell further described naturalist intelligence as having "to do with observing, understanding and organizing patterns in the natural environment" ("The Naturalist Intelligence").

The other members of the Atlanta camp express reservations about Daryl's place in the group, but early on his hunting and tracking skills prove to be of value to the camp. In the second season, Daryl's tracking skills are put to further use when Carol's daughter Sophia becomes lost in the woods. Daryl leads the search, and when Rick can no longer make out tracks in the ground, Daryl can. Rick recognizes Daryl's skill by asking him to lead the search: "Daryl knows the woods better than anybody. I've asked him to oversee this" ("What Lies Ahead"). Later, Daryl and Andrea, another member of the group, continue the search. Daryl tells Andrea he was younger than Sophia when he got lost in the woods for nine days, surviving on berries before he finally made his way home no worse for the wear, except for poison oak ("Save The Last One"). Daryl's naturalist abilities have been present from an early age and have adapted to new contexts and needs.

Gardner argued that there is an evolutionary history of survival often depending on avoiding predators and on recognizing and categorizing species (*New Horizons* 19). The naturalist intelligence may also adapt to more modern environments, not only the "natural world" (Gardner, *New Horizons*). Consequently, Daryl's ability to make consequential distinctions in the natural world has adapted to the new demands of survival and avoiding predators, both walkers and people. Daryl can distinguish between live human blood and walker blood, as well as human tracks from walker tracks ("Inmates"). Later, after the group has joined with Alexandria, Daryl comes across Aaron, a resident of Alexandria, in the forest. Aaron comments to Daryl, "You can tell the difference between walkers and humans by sound?" ("Forget"). Aaron recognizes Daryl's exceptional skill and asks him to assist in recruiting new residents to Alexandria.

DISCUSSION

Gardner explained that complexes of intelligences function together (*Frames of Mind* 295). Of course, all these characters show skill in more than just the one intelligence highlighted here. Aaron asks Daryl to assist in recruiting for Alexandria in part because he is impressed with Daryl's naturalist intelligence, but also because Daryl shows interpersonal intelligence in being able to read people and their motives. Morgan shows intrapersonal intelligence in his reflection on his personal journey after losing his son and discovering the philosophy of aikido. Michonne taught herself how to use her katana indicating exceptional bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. However, Gardner also argued that no one individual can possess exceptional strength in all intelligences, which further suggests the necessity of a cohesive team representing diverse intelligences (*New Horizons* 222).

Hershel recognized that every member of the group had a job to do, and Rick saw that the group's strength came from their unity, "As long as it's all of us, we can do anything" ("Last Day"). The group's strength stems from the diverse intelligences of individual group members. Each intelligence, and each group member who represents that intelligence, brings value in their own right. As a result, the group's strength is greater than the sum of its parts. The group would be weaker if certain intelligences had not been developed in

individual members, but had only been used as pathways to traditionally valued academic skills.

While many educators have embraced MI theory, traditional educational settings provide students with limited practical opportunities to identify and use their personal strengths. Interpersonal skills and musical ability, for example, are rarely (if ever) measured by traditional assessments and standardized tests, providing students few opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. Even in group work, students are often working together on similar tasks and using similar skills, rather than collaboratively combining a variety of skill sets toward a common goal. Or, as Gardner and others have noted, different intelligences are used simply as a conduit to developing the more traditionally valued linguistic or logical-mathematical intelligences ("Reflections" 206; Kassell 32).

When young people are under ongoing pressure to conform to adult ideals (such as traditional academic success), youth culture becomes one of resistance and transgression (Duncum 234). Using popular culture to illustrate a concept such as multiple intelligences allows students to not only engage in the play and transgression of pop culture, but also provides students with an opportunity to resist that pressure to conform to academic success, and explore and redefine their own strengths.

In order to effectively and meaningfully use popular culture in the classroom, educators must acknowledge and embrace the role of play that is inherent with students' relationships with popular culture (Duncum 234). Zombie narratives in popular culture are a good example of the play of transgression in popular culture, particularly for younger viewers. Zombie media, such as *The Walking Dead*, is often violent and gory and clearly at odds with school-approved, "family friendly" media.

Embracing the play and transgression of the zombie apocalypse provides a fertile ground for learning, particularly for an emphasis on under taught skills and with students who may not be as easily successful in traditional academic areas. Maudlin and Sandlin discuss the impact of representation and cumulative imagery in popular culture, particularly within the context of teaching and learning (376-377). Although these common images often reinforce negative stereotypes, particularly harmful racial and gender stereotypes, other images may be more benign, such as the "zombie apocalypse team" created by *The Walking Dead* and other popular media. The cumulative imagery of the zombie apocalypse team has allowed many young viewers to imagine themselves on a zombie apocalypse team with their actual (or idealized) strengths. The next portion of this article will explore a unique example of how the popular notion of the zombie apocalypse team informed the development and application of a critical thinking and team building unit with middle school and high school students.

CONCLUSION

As Rick Grimes said, "As long as it's all of us, we can do anything" ("Last Day"). Zombie apocalypse narratives in popular culture, and in particular, *The Walking Dead*, have captured the popular imagination. The notion of the zombie apocalypse team can provide insights into common understandings of teamwork and the benefits of a group or community comprised of individuals with disparate strengths. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences offers a useful framework to analyze the characters of *The Walking Dead* in that each character can be seen as an archetype representing a distinct intelligence. Together, these intelligences combine into a cohesive group, nicknamed "Team Family" by fans, which is together stronger for their differences as individuals. The popular imagery of the zombie apocalypse team creates a model in the minds of young viewers illustrating how different intelligences or strengths function together. By using popular culture as a conduit and embracing the fun of transgression of *The Walking Dead* and other zombie media, instructors can create a meaningful learning opportunity for students to reflect upon and explore their personal strengths and collaborate effectively with a team of peers.

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A Gendered Perspective on Policing Violence in *Happy Valley* and *Fargo*

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ABSTRACT

Portrayal of a police officer determined to fight crime and execute justice in a harsh, isolated environment has become a television and film subgenre, often featuring women facing gender-related challenges. The issues raised in Sally Wainwright's British television series *Happy Valley*, can be made more accessible, particularly to American undergraduate students, via its commonalities with the Coen brothers film *Fargo*. In both, a tough but compassionate policewoman pursues the more sociopathic of a pair of criminals involved in a botched kidnapping attempt instigated by an inept businessman, taking on the case for personal and professional honor, and as a responsibility to family and community. Catherine in *Happy Valley* and Marge in *Fargo* juggle "masculine" and "feminine" roles as they care for family members while policing violence. The women generally succeed in balancing their gender roles, whereas the men around them do not. But they sometimes assume the aggression associated with the male criminals they pursue. *Happy Valley* takes these issues deeper by giving Catherine a more intimate connection with one of the perpetrators and presenting the story more directly through a woman's extra-patriarchal perspective, thus revealing the performative nature of gender roles and the limits of a patriarchal binary view of them. Looking at these issues in relation to *Fargo* paves the way for examination of their more complex and extensive treatment in *Happy Valley.*

Keywords: television, women, gender, police officers, crime, northern England, film, violence, *Happy Valley, detective, Fargo*

The on-screen portrayal of a police officer in an isolated, unappealing location stubbornly determined to fight crime and execute justice has become an established sub-genre of crime-related television and film. A glance at current Netflix crime-TV offerings yields examples such as *Broadchurch*, *Hinterland*, *Shetland*, and *The Break*, to name just a few. Many feature women as criminal investigators. All of them, according to Tammy Oler, descend partly from the hardworking, cigarette-smoking DCI Jane Tennison, the Helen Mirren character in 1991's *Prime Suspect*. Tennison finally gets her chance to lead a murder investigation only when a male DCI suffers a heart attack, and even then faces hostility from her male colleagues. A recent standout within this category, Sally Wainwright's British television series *Happy Valley*, bears striking similarities to Joel and Ethan Coen's 1996 film *Fargo*, in a correspondence useful for pedagogical purposes. Granted, a two-hour film cannot develop characters to the extent that a multi-season television series can, attitudes about gender have evolved to some extent in the couple of decades separating the two works, and the Coens are noted for over-the-top scenes, whereas *Happy Valley* aims for a higher degree of realism. The intent here, however, is not to undertake a detailed comparison of the two works, but rather to make use of the relatively familiar film to help introduce American students to the probably less familiar television series. In a *New Yorker* review of *Happy Valley*, Emily Nussbaum observes that the plot of the series "superficially" resembles that of the Coen brothers' film, adding that both *Happy Valley* and *Fargo* depict crime as "petty" and "pathetic." I would argue, however, that the parallels between the film and the television series, at least in its first season, run deeper—that the two are "connected," to use the *Fargo* protagonist's term—and that the perpetrators, though both petty and pathetic themselves, commit serious crimes.

Both Wainwright's series and the Coens' film show us the challenges facing a sharp-minded and determined woman fighting crime in a harsh, repressive environment. Furthermore, the strong women leads, admirable as they are, relentlessly pursue the most pernicious villains not only to do justice and re-establish or maintain the social order, but also to take vengeance against threats to their personal values and their commitment to protecting their families, and to expunge from their communities the masculine tendency toward violence and aggression that often leads to and characterizes criminal activity. However, the crime-fighting women themselves must sometimes act aggressively, even violently, to perform their duties and succeed within the male-dominated worlds of both violent crime and law enforcement. By shifting the gaze from the traditional masculinist vantage (and advantage) point to a woman's perspective, Wainwright and (to a lesser but still significant degree) the Coens show us how these cops struggle as they work to subdue the threat of chaotic masculine violence and restore a feminine peace. This effort ironically requires them to adopt some aggressive masculine behaviors themselves and thus rattles the foundations of the masculine/feminine binary. Wainwright further heightens the emotional intensity by making the relationship between the cop and the criminal more personal. Although my analysis focuses primarily on *Happy Valley*, a preliminary exploration of its relation to the widely known *Fargo* can be useful in introducing the lesser known British series, particularly to American students, who are more likely to be familiar with the film. It can also serve to facilitate a comparative analysis of the British and American cultural contexts. Economics, social class, and regionalism figure in both the television series and the film. Race, however, is strikingly absent from both, notable only by omission, with the casts of both almost entirely white—though there are a few exceptions, like the negatively portrayed Native American Shep Proudfoot in *Fargo*. On the one hand, the absence of race constitutes a significant omission, but, on the other, it presents a scenario in which students and scholars can interrogate the other issues mentioned above independently from racial biases (and, thus, conversely, return with a fresh perspective to the critical examination of racial bias as it interacts with other cultural forces).

In both *Happy Valley* and *Fargo*, a tough but compassionate policewoman pursues the more sociopathic of a pair of criminals involved in a botched kidnapping instigated by an inept businessman, taking on the case as a badge of personal and professional honor, and as a perceived responsibility to her family and community. Both women, Sergeant Catherine Cawood (played by Sarah Lancashire) in *Happy Valley*

and Chief Marge Gunderson (played by Frances McDormand) in *Fargo*, are portrayed as stronger than their male counterparts, both on the police force and on the domestic front. Male officers often get in Cawood's way, and Gunderson is obviously far more intelligent than her male sidekick, who doesn't recognize a dealer license plate; Cawood's ex-husband, Richard, seems a bit lost in life; and Gunderson's husband, Norm, is a passive and domestic wildlife artist who makes scrambled eggs. It would be difficult to imagine any of these male characters taking down a criminal or running an investigation. Both of the women, however, are quite capable of doing so, and they immerse themselves in police work, a male-dominated field, despite its challenges and frustrations, because they believe they can make their part of the world cleaner, safer, and more just, in addition to—and perhaps partly because of—their need to care for and protect their families and friends. They juggle the performance of masculine and feminine roles as they mother children, husbands, and in Catherine's case, a sibling.

As Marge needs to keep her region safe for the quiet home life she shares with her husband and their unborn child, so Catherine cares for her recovering-addict sister, Clare, and her effectively parentless grandson, Ryan. To put it another way, Catherine and Marge can take care of their families and friends and view the incompetence of others with compassion, yet they can also kick some ass when a law-enforcement situation provoked by chaotic male violence demands it. What makes Catherine's case more personal, though, and pushes her doggedness toward obsession, is the fact that one of the kidnappers in the case she is investigating also raped her daughter, who died by suicide, presumably as a result of the rape. Moreover, in an excruciating twist, the rapist is the father of the grandson whom Catherine is rearing, and thus a potential influence on the child, Ryan. To accomplish their goals, both women take on the stereotypically masculine traits of toughness and aggressiveness that are associated with the criminals they pursue, and they assume the traditionally male roles of surveillance and control. Violence and the protagonists' response to it—particularly in terms of how personally they take their work—distinguishes *Happy Valley's* Catherine from *Fargo's* Marge. Whereas Marge's necessary aggression is directed primarily at the containment of the perpetrators and their eventual punishment for their crimes, and her desire for vengeance is directed at the presence of crime itself, because it has disrupted her sense of social and personal order, Catherine's need for vengeance is directed specifically at Tommy Lee Royce (played by James Norton), who not only personifies the threat of chaos-producing masculine aggression, but also has torn her own family apart. As *Variety* TV critic Maureen Ryan observes, "the central fact of . . . Catherine Cawood's life is that her daughter committed suicide after being raped. The fallout of that tragedy affects Catherine every day in a number of ways, though she tries hard not to let it influence her brisk approach to her job." Steven Carter has argued that Marge maintains a degree of postmodern detachment from the crimes and criminals she investigates, though that point is debatable, given her obvious sympathy for victims. Detachment, however, is definitely not part of Catherine's game plan. Two further observations are in order here: First, whereas the perspective shifts from that of the male characters to that of Marge as *Fargo* progresses, Catherine is the focus from the first scene of *Happy Valley*, when viewers are brought abruptly down from an aerial overview to Catherine's ground-zero perspective. Second, it is only logical to assume that Wainwright, a woman herself, has a kind of innate understanding of Catherine's position as a woman who is less accessible to the male filmmakers, though, conversely Wainwright's series does more than *Fargo* to disrupt the male/female binary that makes the insider perspective distinctive.

Contextualization of this argument requires brief plot summaries. In *Happy Valley's* first season, a frustrated accountant called Kevin asks his boss, Nevison, for a pay raise because he needs money to send one of his daughters to a posh school. When Nevison initially declines, the angry Kevin approaches Ashley, the local drug trafficker and owner of the caravan park where his family spends weekends, to suggest that Ashley and his sidekicks kidnap Nevison's daughter, Ann, for the ransom money, which all could split so that Kevin could get the money he needs and Ashley would make an easy profit. Ashley, of course, wants a bigger share

than Kevin has in mind. When Nevison then tells Kevin that he has decided to pay Kevin's daughter's tuition and that he wants Kevin to run the company while he, Nevison, takes some time off to be with his wife, who is dying of cancer, Kevin wants to call off the kidnapping, but Ashley says it's too late; his lackeys, Lewis and Tommy, already have the operation under way. The kicker is that Tommy is Tommy Lee Royce, Catherine's daughter's rapist, who has just been released from prison and whom Catherine is determined to "deal with effectively." Catherine ultimately catches Tommy, but not before he kills a young officer and rapes the captive Ann.

The plot similarities to *Fargo* are obvious and will help engage American audiences who have seen the Coen brothers' production; students familiar with the movie will likely begin to recognize links almost immediately. In the film, Police Chief Marge Gunderson, several months pregnant, also pursues a pair of kidnappers. In this case, car salesman Jerry instigates the kidnapping. He has proposed a business venture to his father-in-law's company and expects to get an equal share in the deal but is offered only a finder's fee. Desperate for cash and angered by this demeaning offer, he arranges for the kidnapping of his own wife, Jean, expecting his father-in-law, Wade, to pay out a heavy ransom. It turns out that kidnapper Carl, the Steve Buscemi character, is a run-of-the-mill petty criminal, but his colleague, Gaear, the Peter Stormare character, is a serious psychopath. Marge too gets her man, Gaear, but only after he kills a state trooper, the kidnapped Jean, and the kidnapper Carl.

Besides the similarity of *Happy Valley's* first-season plot to that of *Fargo*, the protagonist Catherine in the series has many traits in common with Marge in *Fargo*. Both women are highly intelligent and strongly determined, both are compassionate to others, and both are running a police station in a mostly-male environment of law enforcement and crime. Their jobs require them to work outside the home, doing dangerous work in traditionally male territory. They have to be aggressive to handle crime and criminals, and they have to take commanding roles over others in running their police departments. But they must balance these masculine behaviors with feminine ones, Marge being very pregnant, Catherine caring for her sister and grandson.

It is perhaps useful here to comment on the relative success of these women—in contrast to the male characters with whom they interact—in balancing masculine and feminine roles. The men seem less capable of balance. We see the violent, hyper-aggressive Tommy and Gaear, who have no limits on what they will do to other people; the more reluctant Lewis and Carl, willing to commit criminal acts but having their limits; the journalist Richard and the artist Norm, both passive recorders rather than active agents. Then we have Jerry the car salesman and Kevin the accountant, both ineffectual, not to mention Marge's sidekick, who is not the sharpest tool in the shed, and Catherine's male superior, who encourages "losing" evidence for political purposes. Even a male viewer can't help seeing that Marge and Catherine are much more capable than the men around them. The women's ability to balance masculine aggression with feminine domesticity contrasts with the tendency of the male characters to gravitate toward the extreme—either active violence or passive domesticity. In a sense, this balancing capability also reflects the leading women characters' capacity for disrupting the masculine/feminine gender binary. The men in the two productions, especially in *Happy Valley*, seem stuck in boxes built by the binary, whereas women like Catherine can break free of it to some extent. This point might seem paradoxical, but the fact that a woman can approach the binary from an outsider's perspective in relation to traditional patriarchal structures gives her an advantage in perceiving and challenging its limitations. From yet another perspective, compatible with ideas from third-wave feminism and queer theory, we see Catherine performing the role that needs to be performed, regardless of its gender association, whereas the male characters in the series seem to be trapped by their inability to break free from an essentialist understanding of their masculinity. It is perhaps appropriate to add here that, although perceptions of gender and gender roles have become somewhat more fluid in recent years and Wainwright

has the advantage of that more flexible perception in presenting her characters, it could also be argued that gender-role expectations and biases have hardly disappeared.

Regardless of the characters' gender, their behavioral tendencies develop within a specific environment, one that is at best harsh and at worst hostile. Speaking of northern England, the setting of *Happy Valley*, Susan Schmid argues that "the predominant image of the North includes . . . bleakness, coldness, industry, decay, social problems, working class, exploitation, lack of serious culture" (qtd. in Gorton 75). Pretty much the same grim description could be applied to the snowy, grimy atmosphere of the American Midwest in *Fargo* (the one element of the Yorkshire setting not particularly emphasized in *Fargo's* depiction of the Midwest being the social devastation wrought by drug abuse), as could Jake Bugg's "Troubled Times," the *Happy Valley* theme song, which claims that "the only thing that's pretty is the dream of getting out." "Pretty" is a word generally associated with femininity, with beauty and order, something that these settings seem to lack. Furthermore, although both Marge and Catherine, Catherine especially, are depicted as attractive women; they operate in an environment in which prettiness is not really an advantage because it could hinder their being taken seriously as cops.

In her *New Yorker* review of *Happy Valley*, Nussbaum argues that the show, like *Fargo,* "depicts crime as something grubby, not grand: these thugs are small-timers, their evil petty, at times darkly comic, but essentially pathetic," and I agree with her up to a point. The show certainly does *not* glorify the crimes or the criminals or make viewers fantasize about emulating them, and it's true that the criminals are basically small fish in small ponds. And the "pathetic" description is fair enough; there's no question that Kevin and Jerry, Lewis and Carl, and Tommy and Gaear are losers. The criminals aren't all equal, however. The viewer has some empathy for Kevin and Jerry, Lewis and Carl, whereas Tommy and Gaear are clearly dangerous psychopaths. My thinking diverges from Nussbaum's when it comes to the actual crimes. Granted, the kidnappings start off as a bit of a dark-comic lark, but the murders and rapes can hardly be considered petty. This observation leads to a further one, that both *Happy Valley* and *Fargo* include significant violence. That violence is mitigated somewhat, though not wiped out, by humor in *Fargo*. *Happy Valley* is certainly not humorless, but its graphic violence, as in Tommy Lee Royce's murder of the young officer Kirsten and in his later attack on Catherine herself, comes across as both real and disturbing, and the series has been criticized for its violence, which Nussbaum describes as "agonizing."

According to Maggie Brown, writing for *The Guardian*, "These violent scenes . . . have prompted criticism of the programme's creator-writer, Sally Wainwright, from Mediawatch-UK, which campaigns for more regulation," and "[s]ome newspapers have also remarked on what they see as gratuitous violence against women." This fact raises a couple of interesting questions: first, how to define "gratuitous," and second, whether violence against women is different from violence against men. Wainwright herself has responded to the criticism, arguing that (a) the violent scenes are relevant to the story, not merely gratuitous and (b) there are plenty of other TV shows with far more gratuitous violence (Brown). Wainwright argues that she considers it "particularly uplifting . . . that Ann, though suffering a terrible ordeal, had the presence of mind to rescue the woman who went to save her," and that, in reference to a close-up of Catherine's bloody face, "If you get your head smacked against the wall, you bleed. It's life. Drama is about the dark side. How bad things happen to good people" (qtd. in Brown). Wainwright also claims that the graphic portrayal of the murder of the young policewoman was necessary to show "how much of a psychopath [the character Tommy Lee Royce] is" (qtd. in Brown). In relation to the same issue, Nussbaum asks whether the show passes the "worth the pain" test and concludes that it does; in other words, that the violence is difficult to watch, but that it does indeed contribute to the story. On the second point, I would argue that violent crimes against women are revolting, but no more so than violent crimes against men. Claiming that crimes against women are worse because women are more vulnerable or less capable of defending themselves is ultimately a sexist argument. And yet, it seems that the

aggressors are predominantly men and the objects of their aggression primarily women.

Although both Marge and Catherine are revealed as admirable and sympathetic characters with their priorities in order and their hearts in the right place, the characters and their situations differ in a couple of significant ways that reveal Catherine's more intimate connection with her work, as well as the more concrete object of her vengeance. The first has to do with the extent to which viewers get to know the characters. We learn a great deal about Marge's values, about her intelligence, and about her dedication, but we don't really see her weaknesses. With Catherine, though, we see that she can sometimes overreact, that she can lose control to some extent when she is angry, tired, anxious, frustrated, or depressed, that she sometimes makes decisions that she regrets, as when she declines to reassure a young officer who feels incompetent after being reprimanded for letting a local councilor intimidate her; it is the same officer later killed by Tommy Lee Royce, and her husband blames Catherine because he believes the officer was trying to prove her toughness in the situation that led to her death. Although Catherine tells the husband she couldn't have possibly foreseen subsequent events and that "being soft" is not always what a rookie officer needs from a superior, she also concedes that she has had the same thoughts he has. Nor is she always a joy at home; her sister indicates that Catherine can be difficult at times, despite all the good that she does for Clare, Ryan, and various other people.

As Maureen Ryan writes, Catherine is "instinctively giving and often selfless, but she can also be stubborn, abrupt and prickly, and can freeze people in their tracks with a bone-chilling glare of suspicion." She can also be tough on those who cross her. For example, in Episode 3, Catherine and her officers are taking a young man who has been causing domestic trouble while high. As they are taking him out of his flat, another young man, hanging out in the parking lot, is mocking the situation, singing "Another One Bites the Dust." Catherine drags him out of the car he is sitting in, tells him he's under arrest, forces him into the back of a police cruiser, grabs him hard by the balls and tells him that she is now going to de-arrest him and note in her report that he "apologized profusely, in tears." This scene might have roots in 19th-century Yorkshire culture. According to Mary Blewett,

> Texts carefully positioned in Anglo- American contexts provide new perspectives on the sexuality of working women, not as victims or objects, but as active players in gender and class conflicts. Yorkshire lasses and older women used their sexuality to define their female adulthood through sexual experimentation during courtship, *to discipline male aggressiveness and patriarchy, and to advance their status as working women*. (318, my emphasis)

The *Happy Valley* scene bears a striking resemblance to a specific social ritual that Blewett describes known as "sunning," in which a group of young working women sexually humiliates a young man. English novelist and critic J. B. Priestley references the custom, writing that "it was still the custom, in some mills…, for the women to seize a newly-arrived lad and 'sun' him, that is, pull his trousers down and reveal his genitals" (qtd. in Blewett 325), and some fictionalized accounts suggest that some incidents included physical manipulation as well as display. Catherine doesn't need the reinforcement of a group to humiliate the interfering young man; she can handle him all by herself. She doesn't literally expose his genitals, but she does "discipline his male aggressiveness" as she exposes the vulnerable underside of his attempt to enact masculinity. It is also worth noting here that, as satisfying as this scene is for viewers, it is not entirely realistic. Though hardly as outrageous as some of the wilder scenes in *Fargo,* it still contributes more to entertainment value than to verisimilitude.

Catherine is ultimately a noble character, but she does have a darker side. "At the beginning of the show," according to Nussbaum, Catherine is "a heroine, a sharp-tongued pragmatist who is good at her job, but when crimes pile up on her watch her personality begins to break down, in troubling ways—violent trauma,

from the show's perspective, is a bruise that never quite heals." Nevertheless, as Nancy deWolf Smith points out, viewers can empathize with Catherine, though Catherine "never invites pity." Viewers wince when she makes a mistake, but they don't feel sorry for her because she takes responsibility for her own actions, right or wrong. This viewer response shows how the portrayal of Catherine represents an advance over past portrayals of women in television. In a chapter on femininity in his book *Television Culture*, John Fiske writes that the "desire for feminine power is never simple, because it is a desire born in patriarchy and must contain those contradictions within it" (190). Fiske goes on to discuss the "process of implication-extrications," in which viewers identify with the woman protagonist when she is successful, but back off from that identification to some extent when she fails. Nevertheless, "the pleasure of implication with the character when she is asserting power may well be stronger than that of extrication when she is being punished" (191). As a result, "The difference in what Freud calls 'affect,' in the intensity of the experience, maybe will be great enough to prevent the ideological effectivity of the punishment" (191). My assertion here is that viewers react so positively to Catherine's assertion of power in *Happy Valley*, that they do not retract their sense of identification with her when a male superior suggests that she let a case go or when Tommy attacks her, and further, that this is true whether the viewer is a woman, a man, or a person who does not subscribe to the confines of those categories.

The second distinction concerns the idea of vengeance. Neither woman would be considered a vengeful or vindictive person in normal, everyday circumstances, nor yet both of them can and do seek to avenge particularly egregious crimes. The object and nature of their vengeance are a bit different, however. In *Fargo*, Marge's vengeance can be seen as more abstract. She goes after the criminals relentlessly until the solves the case, apprehends Gaear, and scolds him for committing such vile acts, but her concern is not with Gaear himself, however horrible he might be, but rather with the idea of a criminal element contaminating the community that she serves and in which she lives with her husband and soon-to-be-born child. Marge sees Gaear and his criminal actions as a threat to her community, but not really as a threat to her and her family personally; though she abhors the murders, the victims are not her family members or close friends, nor are the kidnappers local. The situation in *Happy Valley* contrasts sharply in this regard. To Catherine, Tommy Lee Royce is not merely a random criminal. He raped her daughter, killed a young officer who worked for her, and raped his kidnap victim, whose family is well known in town; and, significantly, he is a local—not just a threat to the community, but a threat to it that has risen from within it and is to some extent a product of it.

Catherine is not surprised that Tommy comes back to her beat after his release from prison, because, as she puts it, it would never occur to him to go anywhere else. West Yorkshire's denizens might feel trapped by it, but they're unlikely to break free of it. In a sense, at least for Catherine, Tommy is not merely an evil character; he is a personification or incarnation of evil itself. From one perspective, evil threatens to ravage the valley as Tommy the man rapes the young women. And because he is the father of her grandson, she fears that his genetic influence will have a negative effect on Ryan. By means of rape, Tommy has planted his evil seed in good earth, but how will that seed develop? Will Catherine's positive influence *in loco parentis* overcome the potentially negative effects of Tommy's DNA? Furthermore, because of Tommy's intimate connection with the community and with Catherine's family, I would argue that she sees evil, or at least violence, as something that can arise in anyone, herself included, if it is not kept in check through compassion and ethical values, and that, even then, it can still surface in times of anger. The result is that her vengeance is not abstract; it is directed very specifically at Tommy.

As Nussbaum has pointed out, when her sister Clare asks her to deal with her hatred for Tommy in a rational way, Catherine replies that she has no intention of dealing with it rationally. Instead, she says, her "intention is to deal with it effectively." Catherine's statement conflates traditionally masculine and feminine modes of response. On the one hand, rationality is stereotypically associated with masculinity and irrationality with femininity; on the other, Catherine implies that she will take an active, hence masculine approach to

resolve the problem even if that approach is not the rational one. Her response also reveals her obsession with vengeance against Tommy and with eliminating the threat posed by him and the evil he represents. At one point when Catherine is discussing Tommy with her ex-husband, Richard, she mentions "the exquisite satisfaction you'd get from grinding his severed into the mud," an observation that is difficult to imagine coming from Marge Gunderson. Her comment also brings to mind Rene Girard's idea of the scapegoat. In a sense, it seems that Catherine wants to make Tommy a scapegoat for the chaotic male violence mocking the description of her valley as happy, as well as for the demonic influence that could turn Ryan into a replicate of his father, and even for the counter-aggression that has risen within herself.

Maureen Ryan observes that *Happy Valley* "does a fine job of conveying what it's like to be a small-town police officer whose daily rounds allow her to confront the dumb, silly, and awful things people do to each other, and to wrestle with what she herself is capable of." In this show, most of those dumb, silly, and awful things are done by men. The fact that Catherine is wrestling with herself is also significant; as Ryan writes, "It's rare, not to mention refreshing, to come across a female TV character who is not defined by her relationship with a man, and who is so well developed that even when she's abrupt or making questionable decisions, she's always fascinating and believable." I concur, with the one caveat that at some points in the series Catherine verges on being defined by her antagonistic relationship with Tommy Lee Royce.

Just as *Fargo* relies on its northern-Midwest locale for atmosphere, dialect, and, environmental conditions, so does *Happy Valley* depend on its Yorkshire setting. Kristyn Gorton takes up the juxtaposition of "Northernness," women, working-class society, and the conveyance of social realism via melodrama. She sees *Happy Valley* as deriving at least partly from the tradition of kitchen-sink realism in Britain, but with the twist that it is presented from a woman's perspective. Specifically, she argues that Wainwright's work "begins with the anger and injustice resonant with the male protagonists of social realism, but as women, this anger and injustice is worked through in terms of the family and eventually leads to a great sense of commitment to community" (73). Catherine's working-class environment probably contributes to Catherine's sense that the higher-ups are keeping her out of the loop, and she might also be experiencing a typical working-class frustration with "the system," which has allowed Tommy's release from prison, though she is nevertheless determined to work more or less within the system to eliminate him as a threat. She is willing to bend the rules when doing so is likely to improve her chances of getting results—as when she arrests and de-arrests the young man described earlier and when she breaks into the house where she suspects Tommy has been staying—but she's not ready to throw out the whole rulebook.

Gorton goes on to argue that "Wainwright's work shares sympathies and characteristics of social realism, and yet she positions women in the center of this world. But perhaps more importantly, she uses emotion as both a way to engage her audience and as a means to demonstrate the way women, in particular work through the anger resonant with the male protagonists of social realism." She also goes on to argue, following Linda Williams, that "melodrama," though often demeaned, can in fact be rich, complex, [and] socially relevant" (78). For Gorton, Wainwright is "conveying a sense of what it is like to be a woman in the North" (78). What *Happy Valley* reveals, in Gordon's view, "is the way the private and the public are intimately connected," especially in a community where everyone knows everyone else.

Catherine is a caring and compassionate person, but, like most people, she gets angry, and Gorton suggests that "in using anger instead of sadness or melancholy" as the emotion *du jour*, Wainwright "refuses to position [Catherine] as a victim" (80). Instead, "she is seen as almost physically working through the pain and loss she has suffered and finding a way out of her own emotional entrapment. On the other hand, the emotion is performed in a very physical way which becomes reminiscent of the Northern working-class male reaction to a sense of entrapment and a desire for escape in social realism" (80). Gorton goes on to argue,

> The women in *Happy Valley* are far from victims, rather they heroically resolve complex

> feelings and find a deeper connection to the communities they live in. Wainwright's use of a Northern landscape is significant as it simultaneously references the Northern, male anger from social realism and yet develops it, both through her use of female protagonists and in ending the story with hope that is tied to the landscape[,] not outside of it. Her narratives work to root and strengthen her characters' place in the North rather than to suggest that leaving or escaping will offer them a better life. (83)

The question of victimhood is an important one to consider in relation to the show. *Happy Valley* certainly suggests that life in the economically depressed, culturally deprived, drug-infested, post-industrial North of England is hard and that not everyone copes with it successfully. Catherine's daughter is a victim, as was Kirsten, the young officer who Tommy murdered, but Catherine can be better characterized as a survivor, as can Ann, who rises above the trauma of her kidnapping and rape, and Clare as well, who is recovering from her heroin addiction.

A pedagogical digression is perhaps in order here. In their article "Pop Culture Pedagogies: Process and Praxis," Julie Garlen Maudlin and Jennifer A. Sandler write that "Popular culture itself has material consequences, as it helps constitute society and social life; through our engagements with popular culture, we learn what the world is, how to see the world, and how to experience and act within the world" (368). Maudlin and Sandler go on to observe that "popular culture has everything to do with difficult knowledge that operates along the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other circulations of power" (369). As stated earlier, *Happy Valley* and *Fargo* address racial issues only by omission, but both address "class, gender, sexuality, and other circulations of power," with *Happy Valley* pushing the envelope further in relation to these issues." Thus, studying *Happy Valley* in relation to the earlier and more widely known *Fargo* facilitates investigation of important questions: To what extent are small-screen and large-screen popular culture texts products of a "people's culture" and to what extent are they producers of that culture? Do the different time periods and different geographical settings of the two productions have a significant impact on their portrayals of gender, sexuality, social class, etc., or do both productions reveal more similarities than differences between the two situations? To what extent is the behavior of characters in the two screen productions the result of their circumstances and to what extent is it the result of the characters' individual traits and motivations?

To conclude, the first season of *Happy Valley* has significant similarities to the film *Fargo* in terms of plot, setting, and characterization, thus making *Fargo* a useful pedagogical tool for introducing *Happy Valley* to an American audience, with the additional benefit of allowing for productive discussions of cross-genre and cross-cultural comparison. Furthermore, both the Coen brothers and Wainwright bring the audience in line with the woman lead's perspective, though Wainwright does so more immediately and more intensely, in a way that challenges patriarchal assumptions and binary gender categories. Both the film and the television series feature woman cops solving complex cases and apprehending dangerous male criminals that pose a threat to order in her community, and to her own system of moral and ethical values. Whereas Marge in *Fargo* perceives the criminals as outsiders who have brought a relatively abstract threat to her community and family, Catherine in *Happy Valley* takes the threat posed by Tommy Lee Royce much more personally, partly because he raped her daughter and thus fathered her grandson and alienated her ex-husband and adult son, and partly because she sees him as the personification of locally bred evil. She fears not only that Tommy's criminal influence will infect her grandson, but also that Tommy, as a home-grown villain, represents potential evil in everyone, herself included. She might be able to avoid it herself and nurture it out of Ryan, but she must muscle out Tommy as its incarnation. Because he, like many of the other criminals she encounters in her police work, acts out through disruptive violence, perhaps partly in frustration at his dismal socioeconomic circumstances and sense of inescapable entrapment, she must sometimes respond with masculine aggression to contain the male-generated violence that poses a private threat to her family and a public threat to her

community. She realizes, however, that she must focus and contain her own aggression to prevent its escalation to the unbridled violence of a psychopath like Tommy. In her attempt to juggle masculine and feminine roles to create a functional balance, she demonstrates the performative nature of those roles, thus opening up, if not fully escaping, the boundaries of the traditional binary view of gender that traps the Yorkshire men of the series, who are too much encapsulated by a patriarchal society to see its limits. Moreover, by opening up Catherine's perspective to all viewers, regardless of gender, Wainwright not only establishes solidarity with women viewers, but also makes an extra-patriarchal perspective on the limits of essentialist binary views of gender accessible even to men watching the series. Furthermore, by having students analyze a cultural commodity like *Happy Valley*, using another cultural product like *Fargo* as a foil, one can, as Maudlin and Sandlin write, help students "explore the hegemonic aspects of popular culture," as well as its "potential . . for effecting social change" as they "deconstruct messages" about such issues as class, gender, sexuality (379), and, I would add, any issue that involves the exercise of power and the response to that exercise of power.

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The Many Faces of Foley: A Journey of Discovery and Influence on Professional Wrestling

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ABSTRACT

Though the academic community often looks down on professional wrestling, there are examples in which the medium allows for elaborate and complex storytelling rivaling other forms of literature. During the 1990s, due to the constant blurring of the lines between reality and fiction within the world of wrestling and the increasingly intelligent audience that consumed the product, performers were forced to adapt to a more realistic style integrating their actual life events and personality into their on-screen personas. One sports entertainer of note was Mick Foley, who crafted three splintered characters he portrayed amongst numerous promotions. Each had their own trajectory and were representative of separate aspects of his own psyche. Cactus Jack was a brutally violent version of Foley hungry to succeed by any means necessary, Mankind was a Gothic personification of Foley's insecurities, and Dude Love was an out-of-date projection of an adolescent Foley's ideal, confident hero. Throughout Foley's career he pioneered a new style of sports entertainment, set a new precedent for character development, and redefined physical expectations for what a performer could be. Mick Foley has since gone on to become a *New York Times* bestselling author, an advocate for the charity RAINN, a spoken word performer, and a Santa Claus portrayer.

Keywords: Mick Foley, Mankind, Cactus Jack, Dude Love, professional wrestling, World Wrestling Federation, World Wrestling Entertainment, Attitude Era, sports entertainment, personas

> *In wrestling, such characters and their progressing narratives remain closely, if not inextricably, tied to the performer themselves, defined by their personal idiosyncrasies of physicality and capacity to author in-ring narratives that are simultaneously varied and familiar. Wrestlers can never, in a sense 'start afresh' in their story-telling but are always tied up in their own progression of character storyline and personal ability. In this sense, wrestling 'identity' and its close correlation with in-ring 'ability' can be constructed, but it cannot necessarily be 'faked.' (MacFarlane 152)*

Though routinely dismissed and disregarded as lowbrow, lower class, crass entertainment, professional wrestling features unique in-ring storytelling and backstage segments that can be utilized for rich plot development and vivid characters who blur lines between reality and fiction. Screenwriter Max Landis claimed, "If you follow one character all the way through [their career] you can see this format allows the telling of interesting, diverse, compelling stories," ("Wrestling Isn't Wrestling"). The "Attitude Era" of the late 1990s–the industry's most commercially successful period—witnessed the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), World Championship Wrestling (WCW), and Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW) battle for primetime ratings supremacy. This highly competitive atmosphere forced management to differentiate their product and dispense more creative control to performers, who in turn injected their own personalities into their on-screen counterparts.

Mick Foley, a notable sports entertainer of the Attitude Era, was employed within all three of the major companies and permitted to flesh out multiple personas alongside some of the most talented, and well-respected wrestlers in the business. Foley wrestled under three different characters: the unhinged "King of the Death Match" Cactus Jack, the tortured soul Mankind, and the dorky cool 70s hippie Dude Love. His extensions not only reflected his personality but served as a means of survival and longevity within his occupation. Each of the characters' on-screen arcs contributed to an overall narrative of reconciliation of Foley's fractured inner self through the catharsis of audience praise. Years of storylines converged for all three identities to be absorbed into a new, singular, real "Mick Foley" further obfuscating actual life and performance.

As a self-described "socially inept, amusement park-obsessed loser who has been ostracized by all but a few of his fellow wrestlers," Mick Foley did not fit the typical profile of conventional wrestlers who achieved popularity and success within the industry (Foley 343). Foley claimed he was "realistic enough to realize [he] was not somebody that a wrestling company was built around [but had his] own unique style [and was] able to blend it in with other people's styles [to] have a very good match with just about anybody," ("Monday Night War: Have A Nice Day!"). The selfless nature of his performance in the ring would prove to be one of his greatest strengths, as he was willing to sacrifice his body for the enjoyment of fans and integrity of the matches. Foley's high-impact and self-destructive feats were influential and emulated by an entire generation of up-and-coming wrestlers captivated by his verbal diatribes and idiosyncratic tone.

Though each of the "Three Faces of Foley," as they have come to be known, were extremely similar in their hardcore wrestling and even overall narrative progressions, they were unique in their mannerisms, attire, and approach to the spectacle that is sports entertainment. The final condensed Mick Foley form is one that could only be revealed after the cumulative experiences of each. Mick Foley's interactive storytelling spanning the Attitude Era forever changed the professional wrestling industry by piercing the illusion of established reality. Though retired from in-ring competition, Mick Foley pioneered a new style of sports entertainment, set a new precedent for character development, and redefined physical expectations for a professional wrestler.

"BANG, BANG!" CACTUS JACK

At the beginning of Foley's career, "kayfabe," or the illusion sports entertainment was entirely real, was a closely guarded secret amongst performers. In order to keep the reputation of professional wrestling as a legitimate fight, older wrestlers who took to training the new generation would often withhold the knowledge of how to make maneuvers appears brutal while inflicting little damage. This was the case for Foley, who thought he would impress his mentor, Dominic DeNucci, by showing him his practiced forearm smash in stereo with a foot stomp to make it sound like a massive hit. Unimpressed by the lack of real impact, DeNucci told Foley "'Kid, don't think that this is alla bullshit like you see on TV,'" (Foley 85).

Cactus Jack was the first professional name under which Foley wrestled, and the only moniker to journey through all three of the big companies, as well as the independent circuit. The origin of the name came from a one-off pseudonym his own father, Jack, used when playing a fantasy wrestling game with Mick during his childhood. It was seemingly plucked from Foley's subconscious when forced to choose an alias moments before his debut in 1983 (Foley 105).

Carefully curated, Cactus Jack's appearance set him apart from other wrestlers of the time. Though certain promoters encouraged a different, more traditional costume, Foley was adamant Cactus Jack should avoid athletic wear in favor for the same thing Foley normally wore. As he related in his 1999 memoir: "'Didn't he get it?' I thought as I looked at my sweats, suede fringe Indian boots, and red flannel. 'It's not the clothes, it's me'" (Foley 254).

In a later interview, Foley, under the guise of one of his other personas, would go on to say:

> "I never wanted to be Cactus Jack…Cactus Jack was supposed to be around for three months. He stayed for eleven years. What made Cactus Jack different was that he just wanted it a little bit more. He was willing to go the extra length. He was willing to sleep in a filthy car in order to achieve his dreams. He was willing to forgo romantic relationships to be the best. He was somebody in an era of bodybuilder physiques who carved out his own niche, who said 'I'm gonna make it on my own style,' who said, 'No one else is gonna tell me what to do, I'm not going to dye my hair. I'm going to be exactly who I am, and I'm going to do it my way.'" (Foley 582)

The individuality aspect of Cactus Jack was important for Foley to maintain, and would prove to be a crucial component to the methodology of the character. Overcompensation for his unusual looks and abilities manifested in the Cactus Jack identity as a varied skill set of risky maneuvers and captivating, profound diatribes, which established an unpredictable dichotomy. The intricacies of Cactus Jack were honed in smaller promotions where Foley developed his craft. Cactus Jack was designed to be a "kind of rebel with an attitude" (Foley 112). Foley eventually found himself in a Dallas-based promotion, World Class Championship Wrestling, where the Cactus Jack character underwent a radical transformation. He understood the character to be "more mischievous than insane" but went in the latter direction and found immediate support from promoters (Foley 178). Adding to this unhinged element, Cactus Jack was billed as Cactus Jack Manson, in reference to the infamous serial killer Charles Manson, but quickly dropped the surname.

In his autobiography, *Have A Nice Day!: A Tale of Blood and Sweatsocks,* Foley admitted to using method-acting to more deeply understand the mentality of Cactus Jack, testing out his newly deranged persona in popular nightclubs of the Dallas area. There he "met a pretty, divorced mother of two named Valerie…as the nervous, paranoid, simple Cactus Jack and didn't really know how to tell her that I wasn't really like that guy she had met" (Foley 179). Though living life as Cactus Jack outside of the ring would prove to be a difficult task, Foley maintained his act for the entire duration of their several month long romantic relationship while he was within World Class Championship Wrestling, literally living the part both on-screen and off.

In 1991, Foley secured a position within Ted Turner's World Championship Wrestling, where his wild, reckless style created a sharp, chaotic contrast to the otherwise cartoony pre-existing heroes and villains. Cactus Jack turned heads and drew eyes by performing high-risk maneuvers on concrete, such as his trademark finisher of a flying elbow from the ring apron to the outside. Oftentimes, the damage inflicted on himself was far worse than it was his opponents, and his daredevil move-set combined with his disoriented rambling backstage interviews aligned him with some of the company's biggest villains, like Abdullah the Butcher (Foley 269).

In WCW, Foley received national exposure on a syndicated television program, and was able to gain experience in a major company. However, after being neglected and misused as a talent by the booking committee and writers, Foley left his lucrative position and sought out a more artistically rewarding, less financially secure, and physically demanding lifestyle in the independent promotions of America and Japan. It was during this period where he "had improved tremendously, gained valuable confidence, learned to work the mike, and had a much better idea of who I was in the ring and what I was trying to accomplish" (Foley 263). This expansion of the Cactus Jack character, and coming into his own as a performer, would lead him to ECW where he would have his most successful run under this identity.

Extreme Championship Wrestling operated out of Philadelphia and was managed by former WCW personality Paul Heyman (a.k.a. Paul E. Dangerously), who was willing to capitalize on the overlooked potential of Cactus Jack and give him a platform to push the character to new heights. ECW thrived on a niche market of bloodthirsty fans craving hardcore antics who knew and respected Cactus Jack's independent run overseas in Japan's International Wrestling Association. Prior to ECW, Cactus Jack participated in a series of grueling tournament bouts involving gratuitous and gory usage of barbed wire, exploding boards, ladders, chairs, and tables, which led to him being crowned the "King of the Deathmatch." With Cactus Jack's reputation preceding him, he was welcomed into ECW in 1994 with the immediate adoration of the audience.

However, as Cactus Jack became beloved by the fans, "Mick Foley's act was no longer unique" amidst ECW's "violent culture," and "having blended into his surroundings, Foley would need to find another way to stand out from the rest of the ECW roster" ("Monday Night War"). Paul Heyman would later explain, "Mick became a hardcore hero, but deep down Mick wanted something more. Mick wanted to do something that would have everyone talking," ("Monday Night War"). In need of reinvention in order to survive and thrive within the company, Foley would alter the Cactus Jack character from a universally accepted hero to a cowardly heel that denounced the brutal nature of ECW and begging to reclaim his former high-paying position within WCW. Foley described his process as systematically altering everything the audience enjoyed about him, including tying back his hair and putting on a series of self-described "boring" matches filled with rest holds ("Monday Night War"). This tweaking was out of necessity as there was already an abundance of other wrestlers fulfilling the niche, devil-may-care good guy role the Cactus Jack entity occupied. In order to stand out, he needed to change and stay one step ahead of fans.

Foley justified his turn in character in one of his most well-known promos describing a point within a recent match when he saw a spectator's sign: "Cane Dewey. Cane Dewey. Dewey Foley is a three-year-old little boy – you sick sons of bitches!" (Foley 464). ECW fans were known for being "smart" to the business of professional wrestling being an elaborate show and that the performers were not their actual characters in their everyday lives (*WWE Presents: The Rise and Fall of ECW*). However, in this blurring of the lines, Cactus Jack blamed the audience for dragging Dewey Foley, Mick Foley's actual son, into the fictional world. This forced Cactus Jack to turn his back on the rabid crowd lusting for authentic pain and united both Cactus Jack and Mick Foley as one entity. Through the diminishing borders of kayfabe, Foley's storytelling utilized this smart crowd's knowledge against them, fooling them into being unsure of what was actually part of the show. As an anti-hardcore hero, Mick Foley's ECW interpretation of Cactus Jack served as a perfect villain

for the times, and gained him enough recognition to be recruited to the WWF where he hatched his most celebrated face: Mankind.

"HAVE A NICE DAY!" MANKIND

> *Literature…presents a detailed account of mankind's chronic duality and incompleteness, as well as his attempts, which range from the noble to the ludicrous, to achieve integration (Zivkovic 122).*

Once in the World Wrestling Federation in 1996, Mick Foley reluctantly retired Cactus Jack to appease the desired creative direction of real-life owner and on-screen personality, Vince McMahon. A new identity was forged, originally named "Mason the Mutilator," "the idea that Vince had was to match Undertaker up with someone who could get inside his head and could threaten him mentally as well as physically" (Foley 497). The Undertaker was one of McMahon's most impressive creations behind-the-scenes and an established star for the WWF brand. Foley came prepared for his new role by suggesting several alterations to "Mason the Mutilator" before it ever made it on air. The inspired changes would develop into Mick Foley's most successful iteration.

Foley deemed the name to be too outlandish and cartoony, opting for the double entendre of "Mankind." As he explained to McMahon, he "could talk about the 'future of mankind' or 'destruction of mankind' and it would carry different meanings [or he] could also blame mankind as a people for creating Mankind as a person. Then [it would be unclear as to whether he was referring to himself] or making an indictment on the whole human race" (Foley 506). This type of nuance was a departure from less serious, kid-friendly wrestlers of the WWF like The Mountie, Repo Man, and Bastion Booger.

To further distance himself from other wrestlers, Foley requested "'separate entrance and exit music – no one's ever done that before. The entrance will be scary, but the exit will be beautiful'" for a desired effect of appearing completely at peace after destroying an opponent (Foley 504-5). A particular scene fed into the impetus for Mankind, from the 1994 film *The Silence of the Lambs* in which Hannibal Lecter viciously attacks two prison guards while haunting piano music plays (Foley 504). The sharp juxtaposition of action and atmosphere resonated with Foley, and inspired him for the remainder of his career to plan out significant moments in his matches to an unusual, offbeat soundtrack.

For weeks leading up to Mankind's debut, teasers played introducing the unsuspecting audience to a character they had never experienced anything like before. "The vignettes were filmed in front of a makeshift dungeon and featured me playing with rats and telling stories of piano playing, child abuse, neglect, and disfigurement. I had been reading books like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and was full of antisocial images" (Foley 518). The dark character was initially reminiscent of a brooding monster, dressed in tattered brown clothing and a leather mask with bolts, his hulking, hunched posture would rock back and forth whispering delusional gibberish and lashing out unpredictably, often squealing like a pig during attacks and ripping out his own hair.

The Undertaker, played by Mark Calaway, was a supernatural, unstoppable personification of Death-incarnate within the WWF. His already accomplished gimmick lent tremendous credibility with the relatively new Foley and would prove to be one of Mankind's greatest opponents. Mankind's in-ring debut also showed him using a new finishing move known as the Mandible Claw, which was less damaging to Foley's body and more theatrical than Cactus Jack's Flying Elbow. The Mandible Claw was done "'by pressing down with your two middle fingers on the nerves underneath the tongue, and pressing up with your thumb on the nerves running under the chin,'" which contributed a surreal strangeness to the character by the abrupt thrusting of his hand into an opponent's mouth (Foley 502).

The feud with the Undertaker would take place over many months with several specialty matches, including a Buried Alive match and a Boiler Room Brawl. The latter was built around "the psychology… that in 'the [boiler]room,' [Mankind] would have the advantage, because since Mankind's Federation debut, he had been filmed inside the room, as if it were his lair" (Foley 549). The dark, dingy setting was filmed prior to an audience being in an arena, and was aired later without commentary, setting it apart from typical matches and adding a horrifying realism to the battle. Whereas Cactus Jack's psychotic nature was built with excessive violence and legitimate brutality, likely due to the smaller scale productions he was involved with, Mankind's threatening presence within the WWF ring was initially a more supernatural, larger than life, dramatic effort.

Attempting to flesh out the Mankind character by grounding him within the real world, an idea formed to air a series of interview segments over several weeks in which announcer Jim Ross sat with Mankind to reveal his origins. Foley rose to the occasion and formulated a way to add authenticity to the character:

> I believed in Mankind and didn't want anyone to see the real Mick Foley just yet. So I came up with a game plan. I would tell the real-life Mick Foley's stories, and I would give Mick Foley's opinions, but I would do it as Mankind. In actuality, the two weren't that different, as in most cases the most successful gimmicks were simply an amplified extension of a certain part of the real-life personality. I guess in that case, Mankind was the insecure side of my personality; the side that had never quite felt accepted. It was that side that surfaced in the Jim Ross interview, and it surfaced in a way that was both funny and touching, and it changed the way people perceived and felt about Mankind. (Foley 577)

Following this, the audience sympathized with the character and by proxy Mick Foley, who had been addressed within the interview by his real name, completely breaking the kayfabe fourth wall. This was a historic moment for the WWF to acknowledge wrestlers were more than just the characters they played on TV and were real life humans existing outside of the ring. As the Attitude Era continued, this would continue to become one of the biggest shifts in storytelling within the industry where the lines between scripted and unscripted would consistently be pushed to their breaking point. Foley himself would go on to exploit this and usher about this change in the audience and performer relationship.

Also featured within these interview clips was a portion of one of Foley's real homemade videos from college, in which he portrayed a smooth, suave hippie named Dude Love, who would later be brought in to the WWF as a way for Foley to live out his childhood ambitions and further align him with the increasingly captivated audience.

"OW! HAVE MERCY!" DUDE LOVE

Capitalizing on Foley's growing popularity, the WWF allowed him a chance to introduce a separate character from Mankind into the WWF continuity - one of the only times in which a performer was allowed to have two simultaneous personas. Growing up, Foley described himself as being a "shy, insecure, poorly dressed, weird guy, who also happened to be polite, kind, funny, and borderline not too-bad looking" (Foley 47). In a series of backyard videos filmed with friends in college, Foley explored his interest in professional wrestling and developed an alter ego named Dude Love, who was there to do and be all the things Foley felt he couldn't (*The Life and Career of Mick Foley*).

In *The Loved One*: "Mick Foley" was his "character in the beginning, a tortured soul…Mick is without ambition" (Foley 67). But after finding purpose in the sport of professional wrestling, the fictional Mick Foley is transformed into the cool Dude Love. He was Foley's "fantasy creation of what a man was

supposed to be…As the Dude [he could] be all of the things that Mick Foley never was – rich, successful," and popular with women (Foley 57). This last aspect was especially important to him as a youth as he later recalled he "actually felt like a different guy when [he] put on the Dude's ensemble of long brown wig, orange headband, mirrored shades, and pajama top" (Foley 57). Echoing a similar form of method-acting he would later employ with Cactus Jack, the young Foley often "would actually go out with my friends while dressed as the Dude" (Foley 57).

Using the Dude Love manifestation brought about feelings of self-confidence and a heightened sense of importance for Foley to communicate more effectively with the opposite sex and gain attention from peers. During a serendipitous occasion in which Foley screened *The Loved One* in front of his former high school's auditorium, he saw "kids, most of whom [he] didn't even know, cheering for a guy with a wig and long underwear" (Foley 82). For the first time, Foley felt as if he were more than "just a college punk with a pipe dream of being a wrestler" (Foley 82). In the footage, when Foley jumped from the roof of a friend's house onto a crash pad of cardboard boxes and old mattresses, his stunt work garnered explosive applause from his first ever audience, reinforcing his desires to pursue professional wrestling as a career and way of life.

Within the later on screen narrative of the World Wrestling Federation, Mankind desperately attempted to align himself with the increasingly popular Stone Cold Steve Austin, an anti-hero who was just becoming one of the most successful wrestlers of all-time. Austin refused every offer of friendship the outsider Mankind presented, and "something just snapped within Mankind" (*The Life and Career of Mick Foley*). Much to the delight of the fans who were savvy to the childhood aspirations of Mick Foley, the character of Dude Love debuted to save Stone Cold from a beat down from the bad guys, winning the WWF Tag Team Championships in the process.

Living out his dreams of youth on screen was rewarding not just for Foley, but for the audience as well, who by this point, identified and connected with Foley as an overachieving underdog. The savagery of Cactus Jack and the darkness of Mankind were alleviated with the levity of Dude Love, showing a wide range of performance for Foley and further displaying his ability to adapt and survive:

> I also took a look at the World Wrestling Federation roster and saw that it was filled with legitimate tough guys. The Dude, I decided, needed to be the antithesis of tough. He had the market cornered on 'goofy' and took full advantage. In everything the Dude took part in – from his 'so bad it was good' entrance video to developing the worst finish in the history of the business, the Dude embodied nerdyness [sic] and nincompoopery. The fans loved it. (Foley 599)

Dude Love had always been Foley's goal for wrestling, and was even considered for his first ever match, but he claimed he "knew [he] didn't have the experience or the talent to be the Dude just yet" and chose Cactus Jack until he "developed the poise to be the Dude" (Foley 105). After many years of wrestling under his belt, and venturing across dozens of different promotions, Foley finally achieved a perceived level of talent necessary for accurately portraying his cherished Dude Love persona. Armed with the brutal worldly exploits of Cactus Jack and breaking forth from the insecure shell of Mankind, Dude Love embodied Foley's mental depiction of his perfect form.

When debuting in WCW, his frightening Cactus Jack shook up the bright, vibrant heroes of the roster, and a similar reception awaited him when he arrived in WWF as Mankind. Now, with the industry shifting to a point where the Attitude Era was in full effect, every character on screen had an edge to capitalize on the lewd and crude, anti-authority counterculture movement of the 1990s, popularized by television shows like *South Park*.

Dude Love served as an aesthetical counter to this overwhelming grittiness within the WWF. Foley's fun-spirited portrayal was a total tonal shift from the psychotic monsters he previously inhabited. In a similar

move as his turn in ECW as Cactus Jack to stay a step ahead of audience expectations, and to portray a different version of the truth in his character, Foley acknowledged his usual outsider and out-of-touch lack of cool and donned a lighter gimmick more suitable of another time (Foley 592). This, of course, turned out to be a different form of popularity where it was a campy wink directly to the fans playing with Foley as an alternative from the dark rebels, like the Undertaker or "Stone Cold" Steve Austin. Dude Love was escorted to the ring by scantily clad flower child dancers, to the tune of a Bee Gees knock-off song, and had cheesy catchphrases printed on his tie-dye shirts.

While a younger Mick Foley once wished he "had possessed the Dude's confidence and charisma," this third mask sprung from the recesses of his past and became an unexpected success (Foley 110). During what Foley calls "The Summer of Love," he "led a dual existence as Mankind and Dude Love – even to the point of appearing on the same show as both guys at different times. In a few matches… [Foley] started the match as the Dude, only to be beaten all the way up the aisle…Mankind would suddenly emerge and continue the battle" (Foley 592). The shifting back and forth between Mankind and Dude Love culminated in a strange scenario during a feud with Hunter Hearst Helmsley in which Cactus Jack would make his long-awaited debut into the WWF and all three of Foley's alter egos would exist simultaneously.

THE THREE FACES OF FOLEY

On the September 22, 1997, episode of Monday Night Raw, a "revolutionary backstage interview... let all of [Foley's] personas decide which incarnation would compete in a Falls Count Anywhere Match" against Triple H/Hunter Hearst Helmsley ("Monday Night War"). Thanks to dated special effects, Dude Love interviewed Mankind in a similar fashion to the Mankind/Jim Ross segments, which had originally catapulted the character to success. Both Dude Love and Mankind agreed they were unfit to participate in such a hardcore style of match, and that there was instead someone better suited for the stipulations: Cactus Jack. Wielding a trash can, Cactus Jack proclaimed he was coming for Hunter, and then emerged from the entrance down the ramp as if he burst from the screen.

While initially resistant to the idea of bringing Cactus Jack into the WWF upon hiring Mick Foley, the "fans' approval of Cactus Jack could not be ignored and Vince McMahon had grown to embrace all of his different personas" ("Monday Night War"). Occasionally, Mick Foley switched between Dude Love, Cactus Jack, and Mankind, sometimes multiple times on the same show and wrestling under all three different identities on the same night or even same match. Foley's popularity waned over the next few months, as overexposure not only nearly ended his career from a health-standpoint, but also a character standpoint. Foley later reflected that "by asking our universe to accept a change from Mankind to Dude Love to Cactus Jack to Dude Love back to Mankind in what was a pretty short order, it kind of soured people" on his gimmicks *(The Life and Career of Mick Foley)*.

To combat the stagnancy, Dude Love began a high profile feud in which he sold out on his hippie morals to become a corporate shill for Vince McMahon, hoping to attain the heavyweight championship. This backfired into an on-screen employment termination for Dude Love. Cactus Jack wrestled several more times and won the WWF Tag Team Championship with his former adversary from Japan and ECW, Terry Funk (who also interestingly and unexplainably chose to go under the masked alias of "Chainsaw Charlie"), before feeling like he was not getting the recognition he had earned and set out on retiring. Once again, Cactus Jack voiced Foley's true feelings of frustration with the demands of fans and the growing popularity of the industry. Using this persona as an outlet, he spoke of his displeasure with the people in attendance for overlooking his sacrifices to the business:

> And it's funny, because when I came here two years ago I was Mankind, and there were people saying, 'Why don't you just be Cactus Jack?' Then I came out in tie-dye and

> some white boots and they said, 'Why don't you just be Cactus Jack?' Well, I gave you Cactus Jack. I gave you every goddamn bit of energy I had, and when I was lying there helpless, you chanted someone else's name…It's gonna be a long time before you see Cactus Jack in the ring again (Foley 631).

Mankind had last been seen six months earlier, as Foley spent all of his time embodying his earlier creations, and in an attempt to win over fans, Mankind was dusted off and brought back on screen (Foley 647). Unfortunately for Foley, the return was met with mediocre results, leaving him creatively floundering and directionless, especially after an unsuccessful attempt to align Mankind with the same corporate entities as Dude Love.

Mankind's revival brought him back to his roots with a somewhat rushed feud with the Undertaker, who had been the main opponent upon Foley's debut in the WWF years earlier. With a special stipulation of a Hell In A Cell at the 1998 King of the Ring pay-per-view, a 16-foot steel wire cage was placed over the ring with a roof, and Foley, feeling the pressure to top the original Cell match featuring the Undertaker and Shawn Michaels a year earlier, decided to put everything on the line. The match would go on to become a career defining performance, featuring Mankind being thrown off the top of the structure twice as well as implementing the use of steel stairs, chairs, and thumbtacks. An interesting detail to note is during the course of the battle, Mankind's mask was removed and remained off the duration of the night – marking the first of such an occasion. Though Foley lost the match, and received several life-altering injuries, he cemented his legacy within the industry and gave his career a much-needed resurrection.

> "If you've only seen the falls and you haven't seen it unfold as a story watch it back again because it's powerful. It's powerful. In its own way it's beautiful when you see the lengths human beings were willing to get to get to that finish line. We may not have gotten there the way designed, but by god we got to the finish line. And I realized I was just a symbol for anyone that ever went the extra mile, who shed their blood, sweat, and tears to get to that finish line" (*20 Years of Hell*).

Facing off with the wrestling world's version of Death proved beyond any doubt Mankind was a survivor and captured the audience's approval more than ever. With years of injuries stacking up on Foley's body, he adapted the character away from the hardcore, high-impact stunt work and chose instead to let more of his own light-hearted personality seep through. Transitioning from Cactus Jack's extreme punishment on his opponents, and using the humorous approach as Dude Love in an otherwise stark roster filled with edgy and cool characters, Mankind morphed from a frightening, Gothic freak into a goofy, lovable comedic act.

Foley believed the character had endured an incredible amount and in the process endeared himself to the people, which made his character's transformation warranted (*The Life and Career of Mick Foley*). Venturing further into the comedy role, Foley would become rejuvenated in a way by the Mankind character:

> I was feeling a lot like a battered and beaten man that time had left behind and was confused because of it. I decided to portray myself as a battered and beaten man that time had left behind and was confused because of it. I knew for a fact that many of our fans were not actually 'cool.' I gambled they would get into a character that likewise was not. I had already begun wearing a torn-up collared shirt and tie to the ring, and now I had my reason. The shirt and tie would represent my last remaining connection to the corporate world that had shunned me. In a sense, the outfit was my connection to Vince McMahon, who was the company's hottest heel, and was the perfect guy to play off of (Foley 669-70).

Serving as a foolish foil allowed Foley advancement within the company to work with some of the bigger names in a non-threatening role. In addition to pairing with Vince McMahon, the tyrannical owner, he also formed a tag team known as "The Rock N' Sock Connection" with a reluctant partner and extremely popular rising star, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

Perhaps the greatest partnership to Mankind in his resurgence was a sock puppet creation called "Mr. Socko." In a match, Foley would signal for his Mandible Claw finishing maneuver by pulling a white athletic gym sock with a crudely drawn face from his tights before stretching it over his hand. He would then grip his opponent with Mr. Socko, and perform the move as usual. Backstage interviews would feature Mankind using a high-pitched voice to give life to the sock sidekick, who captured the fans' hearts; Foley would later explain, Mr. Socko made a bad match good and a good match great (Foley 680).

Though Mr. Socko came about from an improvised moment in a taped segment involving Vince McMahon, it was not the first time in Foley's career that he implemented that particular article of clothing, albeit for different purposes:

> Interestingly, four years before the invention of Mr. Socko, I was wearing a long tube sock on my right arm, as I was planning on doing the Cactus clothesline over the top of the barbed wire. I knew the possibility was strong of catching my arm on the wire as I went over, a possibility that could do massive amounts of injury to my skin, veins, and tendons as well. The sock, as it would later in my life, would protect me. (Foley 407)

Mr. Socko became an inseparable component to the Mankind character and distanced him even further from his original demented, boiler room dwelling outcast.

With Foley near the end of his career at the start of 2000, he had a brief return as Cactus Jack, creating a framed narrative to his professional life story. Ultimately, his last performances billed him not as Cactus Jack, or Dude Love, or even Mankind, but as Mick Foley. Retiring from a full-time schedule, Foley returned for an on screen role as Commissioner, and for one-off matches throughout the years as "Mick Foley." This new on-screen Mick Foley was the closest representation to the real man. He wore clothing similar to Cactus Jack, acknowledged his past career by attaching the title of "Hardcore Legend" to his name (and even had multiple instances where he returned to his deathmatch-style), and embraced the goofiness of Mankind, the offbeat absurdism attitude of Dude Love.

Just as he stopped, the industry underwent a massive shift. ECW went bankrupt and was bought out by the WWF with WCW following shortly after. The WWF's monopolization of the market led to an influx of talent and marked the end of the most popular and commercially successful period of time in professional wrestling history.

Foley earned the respect of the fans through many years of performing, and through several incarnations of beloved characters. Without the changes made to each one, his career might have ended multiple times. Similarly, professional wrestling evolved to fit with the growing understanding with the audience that the wrestlers were putting on a form of scripted entertainment. For Foley, it was only after acquiring the experiences as Cactus Jack, Mankind, and Dude Love that he was able to get past the otherness of Cactus Jack, grow beyond the insecurities of Mankind, and adapt to possess the confidence of Dude Love. In the process of chasing his dreams and earning a living, he managed to impact the business.

"THE HARDCORE LEGEND" MICK FOLEY

> *'It seems that as of late, I have been having trouble with my identity. But now with the gracious help of Vince McMahon, I have found out who I am. I am a speaker of four*

> *languages. I am a student of American history and a reader of Greek tragedy. I am a leader of men and a lover of women, as well as the toughest S.O.B. in [the] World Wrestling Federation.' (Foley, 641)*

Through his long career, Foley not only pioneered a different style of sports-entertainment, but also set a new precedent for character development, and redefined physical expectations of what a performer should look like. It is only after obtaining these experiences and achieving adoration for each of his "Three Faces" that he revealed his true self to the audience, phasing out his colorful extensions and becoming an on screen version of the actual Mick Foley. The "Hardcore Legend" spawning after his regular career ended was an identity he would shamelessly promote his authorial works through with a wink and a smile, engaging in "cheap pops" by pandering to whatever city the local audience was from, and wearing shirts with cartoon characters or Christmas iconography. At the same time, this seemingly aloof jester could tap into something darker at a moment's notice if antagonized, occasionally returning for matches rekindling his wilder days of barbed wire, thumbtacks, and flaming tables. Much like professional wrestling, Foley's career was a variety act performance modified to fit whatever was best for the narrative at that specific point in time.

The real Mick Foley is a far tamer and well-adjusted individual than the overemphasized aspects of his personality that birthed the deranged Cactus Jack, the weird Mankind, and the goofy Dude Love. According to his official website, Foley has, on multiple occasions, produced New York Times Best-Selling literature, is a father of four (Huey, Dewey, Mickey, and Noelle), has clocked several hundred hours of service for the charity RAINN, which offers help to women survivors of rape and incest, and currently tours with a spoken word act when he is not portraying his latest doppelgänger: Santa Claus ("Bio."). As a lifelong fanatic of Christmas, Foley has become an impersonator of Kris Kringle, a polar opposite to his legendary hardcore fame.

As screenwriter and professional wrestling fan Max Landis advocates, sports entertainment is a craft extending beyond the stereotype of oiled up bodybuilders grappling: "we love watching people grow, change, struggle…and when you watch wrestling that's what you get…wrestling is melodrama, wrestling is mythology, wrestling is action, wrestling is comic books, the only thing wrestling isn't is wrestling" ("Wrestling Isn't Wrestling"). Without Foley embracing the changing expectations and understanding of the audience during the Attitude Era, professional wrestling might not have survived and would certainly not have endured in the way it has. Foley's characters were complex and fully fleshed out with a wide range of emotion.

Mick Foley was a creator and author in a medium that is oftentimes dismissed as being shallow, and has on occasion, earned such judgment. However, the storied career and evolution of his three characters eventually condensing into a singular identity is a harrowing journey of violent reconciliation with inner-struggles of self-acceptance. Had he not have come along at the time he did, during the height of wrestling's popularity, he himself admitted: "I don't think I would have been pushed to constantly create, to better myself and push myself to make that connection with that audience. It definitely brought out the best in me," ("Monday Night War"). In many ways, this competitive spirit for survival also brought out the best in wrestling entertainment.

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