



DIALOGUE

*The Interdisciplinary Journal of
Popular Culture and Pedagogy*



ON MEDIA LITERACY, POWER, AND REPRESENTATION

Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy

Volume 11, Issue 1 | March 2024 | www.journaldialogue.org



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. *Dialogue* is committed to creating and maintaining a scholarly journal accessible to all—meaning that there is no charge for either the author or the reader.

The Journal is interested in contributions offering theoretical, practical, pedagogical, and historical examinations of popular culture and pedagogy, 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, please visit www.journaldialogue.org or email Dr. Anna CohenMiller, Editor in Chief, at editors@journaldialogue.org.



Editorial Team

Anna CohenMiller, PhD

Editor in Chief, Founding Editor

Anna CohenMiller, PhD, is an award-winning educational leader, TEDx and keynote speaker who addresses systemic issues of equity and inclusion in teaching and learning. She specializes in arts-based decolonial research and innovative pedagogy, including addressing critical media literacy (in)formal learning through popular culture. For eight years, CohenMiller worked in Kazakhstan (Central Asia) leading education and research at an emerging flagship university. During that time she co-founded the Consortium of Gender Scholars and led the development of The Motherscholar Project, an online platform promoting and advocating for inclusion of mothers in higher education across the academic pipeline. Today, Professor CohenMiller is a Full Professor at Nord University (Norway) where she brings together her international experiences to empower and promote justice-centered research and education. Professor CohenMiller's contributions can regularly be seen in popular outlets such as *InsideHigherEd*, *Medium.com*, as well as in over 100 research and educational journals and books, including the award winning *Leading Change in Gender and Diversity in Higher Education from Margins to Mainstream* and *Questions in Qualitative Social Justice Research in Multicultural Contexts*. Her recent book integrating research and adult learning, *Transformative Moments in Qualitative Research: Method, Theory, and Reflection*, has been termed a "must read." Since 2011, Professor CohenMiller has been involved with SWPACA in developing *Dialogue* and then as an Executive Team member.

Karina Vado, PhD

Associate Editor and Musings Editor

Karina A. Vado (she/her/ella) is an Assistant Professor of Latinx Studies in the Department of English at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, FL, and affiliate faculty in the university's Center for Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies. She earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of Florida as well as an M.A. in Women's Studies from UF's Center for Gender, Sexualities, and Women's Studies Research and a Graduate Certificate from UF's Center for Latin American Studies. Karina's research interests span the fields of Hemispheric American Studies (especially Afro-Latinx, Chicana, Latin/x American, and African-American literary and cultural studies), Science and Technology Studies (especially Critical Race & Feminist Science Studies), and Science Fiction and Utopian Studies. Her scholarship has been supported by several competitively awarded fellowships including the Florida Education Fund's McKnight Doctoral Fellowship, the University of Texas at Austin's Gloria E. Anzaldúa Summer Research Fellowship, and Penn State University's Diversity Pre-Doctoral Fellowship. You can find samples of Karina's scholarly writing in edited collections such as *Race and Utopian Desire in American Literature and Society* and in *Human Contradictions in Octavia Butler's Work*. For more information on current research projects and opportunities for collaboration, visit vadokarina.com.

Barbara Perez, MA

Managing Editor

Barbara Perez (she/her) is a third year doctoral student in the Culture, Society, and Politics track of the Comparative Studies Program at FAU. Her research areas of focus are Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (esp. ecofeminism & environmental feminisms, and feminist epistemology and STS), as well as Latinx Environmentalisms. She is also interested in political ecology, critical animal studies, and feminist pedagogy. Prior to coming to FAU, Barbara completed an MA program in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, and an advanced certificate in LGBTQ+ Studies at San Diego State University. Her MA thesis was a feminist epistemological critique of comparative cognition research. Before that, Barbara worked for three years as the research coordinator of a comparative cognition lab in San Diego. Prior to that, Barbara earned her BA and BS degrees at the University of Florida in English and Psychology, respectively. During her undergraduate career, Barbara conducted behavioral research with cetaceans and canids.

Tyler Robert Sheldon, M.F.A.

Assistant Managing Editor

Tyler Robert Sheldon's seven poetry collections include *Everything is Ghosts* (Finishing Line Press, 2024) and *When to Ask for Rain* (Spartan Press, 2021), a Birdy Poetry Prize Finalist. In addition to his work with *Dialogue*, he is Editor-in-Chief of *MockingHeart Review*, and his writing has can be found in *Dialogue*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Ninth Letter*, *Pleiades*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, and other places. A Pushcart Prize nominee and winner of the Charles E. Walton Essay Award, Sheldon earned his MFA at McNeese State University. He lives in Baton Rouge, where he teaches and writes.

Miriam Sciala, MA

Book Review Editor and Copy Editor

Miriam Sciala has been teaching Academic English internationally for over 25 years. She holds an MA in Geography from York University in Toronto and an MPhil in Second Language Studies from Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Born in Switzerland and raised in Zambia, she now carries a Canadian passport. She considers writing and editing her second career, having written and published numerous articles and short stories and has a first novel in progress.

Roxanne Henkin**Children's Critical Media Literacy Editor**

Dr. Roxanne Henkin is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Interdisciplinary Learning & Teaching at The University of Texas at San Antonio. Dr. Henkin's research interests include multiliteracies and multimodal digital literacies, children's literature, confronting bullying through literacy, critical literacy for social justice, writing process and instruction, and global in-service staff development in literacy. She has published many articles and two books, *Who's Invited to Share: Using Literacy to Teach for Equity and Social Justice* and *Confronting Bullying: Literacy as a Tool for Character Education*, both published by Heinemann. Dr. Henkin is a Past-President of Literacies and Languages for All. She was also the lead co-editor of the journal *Voices from the Middle* (2006-2011). She has received many awards including the 2020 Literacies and Languages for All Lifetime Membership Award, the 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award from Niles North High School in Skokie, Illinois, the 2020 NCTE LGBTQ+ Advocacy and Leadership Award, and the 2022 Literacies and Languages for All Service Award. Dr. Henkin created and is Director Emeritus of the San Antonio Writing Project. She has helped to create and teach writing projects in the US, South Africa, India, the Philippines, and Kazakhstan.

Douglas CohenMiller**Production Editor and Creative Director**

Douglas CohenMiller is a graphic designer and founder of Umbrella Works design studio (www.umbrella-works.com), where he is the principal graphic designer and creative director. His practice focuses on long-term branding and identity for clients in the US and internationally. Since 2011, Doug has been involved with the SWPACA; first spearheading a rebranding effort and helping to launch *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*. Alongside this work, he has been developing unique conference identities and material each year and producing and creative directing each issue of *Dialogue*. His other clients range from fields of academic institutions, non-profits organizations, as well as small businesses. Beyond graphic design, Douglas is an active photographer. His photography and essays can be found at <http://fotografica.umbrella-works.com>. Currently, Douglas is living in the mountains of southern Spain with his family.

Robert Gordyn, MPhil, MA**Copy Editor**

Robert Gordyn has been an English Language Instructor since 1995, mostly teaching internationally in a variety of countries and regions of the world. Originally from and now based in Canada, he is a freelance editor and part-time English instructor. His academic background includes graduate degrees in Geography and Second Language Studies. Along with being an avid reader of philosophy and history, Robert has ongoing interests in communication, both in terms of the written word and in public speaking.

Arlyce Menzies, MFA**Copy Editor**

Arlyce Menzies was raised in the Rust Belt, educated in the Bluegrass and New England, and now teaches writing in the windy steppe of Kazakhstan. She got her MFA in Creative Writing, Poetry at Boston University, where she enjoyed studying and practicing translation from Russian to English, copyediting for Agni, and honing her writing craft. In addition to teaching at Nazarbayev University, Arlyce facilitates translation workshops through OLS@NU and is an Art Editor for *Angime*, Kazakhstan's first trilingual arts and literary magazine.

April Manabat, MLIS**Reference Editor**

April Manabat is an Expert Librarian at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan. She is currently the Subject Librarian for School of Sciences and Humanities and the coordinator for the Ask-A-Librarian Service of the NU Library. A Filipino licensed librarian, she finished her Masters of Library and Information Science at the University of the Philippines Diliman. She has more than a decade of experience in academic librarianship. Her research interests include academic librarianship, digital humanities, and information literacy.

Joseph Yap, MLIS**Reference Editor**

Joseph Yap is a registered librarian from the Philippines and is earning his Ph.D. at Eotvos Lorand University in Budapest, Hungary. He serves as a Project Team Member of the Nazarbayev University Integrity Initiative and is an Organizing Team Member of the Consortium of Gender Scholars. He is a faculty member teaching Library and Information Science courses at the University of Perpetual Help System Laguna. As part of his extension services, he acts as the Adviser of the Association of Special Libraries of the Philippines and Social Media Manager of the Special Libraries Association - Asian Chapter. His research works can be found here: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7852-1047>.

Yelizaveta Kamilova, MLIS**Reference Editor**

Yelizaveta Kamilova is a Masters of Library and Information Science and an Expert manager at Nazarbayev University Library in Kazakhstan. She is currently the Subject Librarian for Graduate School of Education and the coordinator for the Interlibrary Loan Document Delivery Service, also responsible for the Department Documentations as well. She has more than a decade of experience in academic librarianship. Her research interests include academic librarianship, library virtual services and information literacy.

Advisory and Editorial Board

ADVISORY BOARD

Lynnea Chapman King

Adams State University, USA

Ken Dvorak

Northern New Mexico College,
USA

Marc Ouellette

Old Dominion University, USA

Alison Macor

Texas State University, USA

Laurence Raw

Baskent University, Turkey

Jerry Bradley

Lamar University, USA

Stephanie Brownell

Bentley University, USA

Tamy Burnett

University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
USA

Melissa Vossen Callens

North Dakota State University,
USA

Geoffrey Carter

Saginaw Valley State University,
USA

Natasha Chuk

Independent Scholar, USA

Elizabeth Morrow Clark

West Texas A&M University,
USA

A. S. CohenMiller

Nazarbayev University,
Kazakhstan

Tobi Collins

New Mexico State University,
USA

Brian Cowlshaw

Northeastern State University,
USA

Becca Cragin

Bowling Green State University

Byron Crape

Nazarbayev University,
Kazakhstan

Janet Brennan Croft

Rutgers University, USA

Adam Crowley

Husson University, USA

Julie DeLong

Independent Scholar, USA

Kurt Depner

New Mexico State University,
USA

Diana Dominguez

University of Texas at
Brownsville, USA

Laura Dumin

University of Central Oklahoma,
USA

Brad Duren

Oklahoma Panhandle State
University, USA

Lance Eaton

Brandeis University/North Shore
Community College, USA

David Emerson

Independent Scholar, USA

Justin Everett

Independent Scholar, USA

Susan Fanetti

California State University -
Sacramento, USA

Carly Finseth

Boise State University, USA

Draga Gajić

University of Novi Sad, Bosnia
and Herzegovina

Robert Galin

University of New Mexico,
Gallup, USA

Clayton Garthwait

West Chester University, USA

Bridget Goodman

Nazarbayev University,
Kazakhstan

Robert Gordyn

Nazarbayev University,
Kazakhstan

Kelly Grace

Nazarbayev University,
Kazakhstan

Jimmy Guignard

Mansfield University

EDITORIAL BOARD

Aaron Adair

Massachusetts Institute of
Technology, USA

Maria Alberto

University of Utah, USA

Donna Alden

New Mexico State University,
USA

Mark Allen

South Texas College, USA

Jenn Avery

Southern New Hampshire
University, USA

Lexey Bartlett

Fort Hays State University, USA

Michelle Bedeker

Nazarbayev University,
Kazakhstan

Chris Bell

University of Colorado,
Colorado Springs, USA

Justin Bendell

University of New Mexico -
Valencia, USA

Kelli Bippert

Texas A&M University-Corpus
Christi, USA

Valerie Guyant
Montana State University-
Northern, USA

Chuck Hamilton
North Texas Community
College, USA

Darrell Hamlin
Fort Hays State University, USA

Roxanne Henkin
University of Texas at San
Antonio, USA

Brent House
PennWest California, USA

Michael Howarth
Missouri Southern State, USA

Jenna Hunnef
University of Saskatchewan,
Canada

Lutfi Hussein
Mesa Community College, USA

Roxie James
Northwestern Oklahoma State
University, USA

Jennifer Jenkins
University of Arizona, USA

Jamie M. Jones
Grays Harbor College, USA

Nancy Kay
Merrimack College, USA

Warren Kay
Merrimack College, USA

Hyein Amber Kim
State University of New York at
Buffalo, USA

Brad Klypchak
Texas A&M Commerce, USA

Jane Kubiesa
University of Worcester, UK

Kim Lacey
Saginaw Valley State University,
USA

Carmela Lanza
University of New Mexico -
Gallup, USA

Samantha Lay
University of West Alabama, USA

John Lepley
Independent Scholar, USA

Dalyn Luedtke
Norwich University, USA

Jessica Maerz
University of Arizona, USA

Julienne McGeough
Liverpool Hope University, UK

Liz Medendorp
Pueblo Community College, USA

Richard Mehrenberg
Millersville University, USA

Michael Miller
University of Texas at San
Antonio, USA

Iulian Mitran
University of Bucharest, Romania

Mona Monfared
University of California - Davis,
USA

Erika Tiburcio Moreno
Complutense University, Spain

Rikk Mulligan
Longwood University, USA

Angelique Margarita Nairn
Auckland University of
Technology, New Zealand

Barbara Perez
Florida Atlantic University, USA

Deirdre A. Pettipiece
Lehman College, USA

Timothy Ray
Independent Scholar, USA

Shelley Rees
University of Science and Arts,
Oklahoma, USA

Pamela Rollins
Southwestern Oklahoma State
University, USA

Tim Rupert
Slippery Rock University, USA

Tiffany Scarola
Bowling Green State University,
USA

Miriam Sciala
Nazarbayev University,
Kazakhstan

Kelli Shapiro
Texas State University, USA

Gregory Stephens
University of Puerto Rico-
Mayagüez, USA

Joy Sterrantino
Southern Utah University, USA

Karen Tatum
University of Texas at Arlington,
USA

Robert Tinajero
University of Texas at El Paso,
USA

Deanna Tomasetti
Independent Scholar, USA

Shane Trayers
Macon State College, USA

Pat Tyrer
West Texas A&M University, USA

Karina Vado
University of Florida, USA

Margaret Vaughn
Metropolitan State University,
USA

Erik Walker
Plymouth (Mass.) South High
School, USA

Rob Weiner
Texas Tech University Library,
USA

Ryan Windeknecht
University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, USA

On Media Literacy, Power, and Representation

Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy
Volume 11, Issue 1 | March 2024 | www.journaldialogue.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial

Media Literacy, Power, and Representation

Barbara Perez and Karina VadoArticles

Articles

Three Years of Misinformation: A Case Study of Information Literacy Methods

Elizabeth Zak

“This is music!”: What Stranger Things’ Eddie Munson Reveals About the Power of Metal

Ashley Butterworth Brumbelow

Gender, Age, Class, and Racial Stereotypes and Power Relations in Television Ads: 2011-13 vs 2021-22

Thomas Clark and Julie Stewart

Art of Inclusion

Catherine R. P. King

On Media Literacy, Power, and Representation

As popular culture scholars and enthusiasts who recognize the usefulness of media in all its forms, we know the stories we tell and those we consume are always complicated by questions of power and representation: How we choose to narrate such stories (including who gets to tell these) matters. How can we be responsible consumers and creators of media? And how can we, as educators, simultaneously draw on media sources as teaching tools to help students relate to abstracted topics while complicating and problematizing media? As Stuart Hall (1981) notes,

Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured... That is why 'popular culture' matters.

This profound statement underscores the responsibility we hold as consumers and creators of media. Media is not only a reflection of society; it is a powerful tool for shaping perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs, and often functions to naturalize hegemony.

Thus, media literacy must extend beyond mere the use of popular culture or other media sources to ground theory. Though this, in itself, is important as media can and does help us reflect on how theory connects to our lives and communities. In the classroom, the inclusion of media can help make topics more relatable and tangible for students. We also have the opportunity, and indeed the obligation, to critically analyze media content, understand its underlying messages, and recognize its impact in maintaining or resisting norms and hegemonic ideologies. By doing so, we can become more informed consumers of media, as well as responsible creators and advocates for a more inclusive and representative media landscape that can shape culture towards more just futures. As teachers, this also elevates our task from simply using media as a teaching aid to engaging with it as an important instrument for social change. Classrooms can be sites of imagination and resistance. As such, our classrooms become critical laboratories for exploring and challenging the dynamics of power and representation in media, fostering a generation of learners who are equipped to navigate and shape the ever-evolving media-saturated world they inhabit.

The articles featured in this issue explore the very possibilities and tensions of engaging the intersections of media literacy, power, representation, and pedagogy. In our first featured article, "‘This is music!’: What *Stranger Things*’ Eddie Munson Reveals About the Power of Metal," Ashley Butterworth Brumbelow argues that though "The wide reach of digital technology has further diversified student perspectives in the contemporary classroom... this diversity is often not reflected in school curricula." Butterworth Brumbelow thus makes the case for integrating more media, and more diverse forms of media, into classrooms as potential windows to subjugated perspectives that invite disruptions to the status quo. In particular, this article explores the potential for challenging conventional social norms, engaging marginalized students, and teaching themes of nonconformity and social justice through a case study where metal music from *Stranger Things* is integrated into secondary English curricula.

In our second featured article, “Gender, Age, Class, and Racial Stereotypes and Power Relations in Television Ads: 2011-13 vs 2021-22,” Thomas Clark and Julie Stewart provide a helpful framework and resources that faculty and diversity, equity, and inclusion experts can use to dissect and teach about how advertisements create and reinforce social stereotypes. By analyzing stereotypical depictions of gender, class, age, and race across eight television ads from 2011-2013 and 2021-2022, Clark and Stewart draw on the concepts of intersectionality and intercategory complexity “to help gain a deeper understanding of how various stereotypes operate and intersect in specific ads over time.” In so doing, Clark and Stewart reveal the enduring power and ubiquity of stereotypes in media and importantly call for their disruption and undoing vis-a-vis the power of critical interrogation.

In our third featured article, “Three Years of Misinformation: A Case Study of Information Literacy Methods,” Elizabeth Zak emphasizes the importance of adapting media literacy to keep up with constantly evolving media. Zak delineates how misinformation evolves alongside the internet, challenging the effectiveness of information literacy methods like the CRAAP test, RADAR framework, and SIFT method. Zak’s study emphasizes the need for ongoing research to understand trends in misinformation, counteract increasingly sophisticated forms of misinformation including visual deceptions like deepfakes, and predict potential future threats.

Finally, in our fourth featured article, “The Art of Inclusion: Theatre’s Contribution to Popular Culture Literacy for Students with Intellectual Disabilities,” Catherine R.P. King provides an example of how to integrate popular culture in the classroom through their study on integrating theatre into special education curricula. King uses case studies to examine the versatility and effectiveness of using theatre in special education to empower students with [dis]abilities. Integrating theatre into special education curricula can not only provide students with opportunities to learn social and life navigation skills but also enable students to engage with popular culture in critical and meaningful ways. As such, King argues that integrating theatre into special education can have a transformative effect on students.

The diverse perspectives and methodologies presented in these studies collectively emphasize the vital role of media literacy in resisting and transforming systems of power. Media literacy can equip us with the critical and adaptable tools necessary to navigate our complex and ever-changing media landscape. Each study, in its unique way, contributes to a broader understanding of how media shapes and is shaped by societal norms and power dynamics. The studies also show that by incorporating varied forms of media into our curricula, we can not only enrich students’ educational experience but cultivate a generation of critical thinkers and change-makers who are capable of using media to challenge norms and contribute to the creation of a more equitable and just society.

Barbara Perez
Managing Editor

Karina Vado, PhD
Associate Editor

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF:

With this issue, I am delighted to share with you the expansion of our Editorial Team. We are honored to have Karina Vado take on the new leadership position of Associate Editor. Her expertise in popular culture and pedagogy has added significantly to Dialogue's commitment to research and conversations around popular culture and pedagogy. Additionally, we have brought on two excellent colleagues to the team. Barbara Perez joins us as Managing Editor and brings specialization in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, as well as Latinx Environmentalisms in comparative studies. And Tyler Sheldon joins us as Assistant Managing Editor bringing specialization in poetry and popular culture, taking on the

If you would like to join us, feel free to reach out with ideas regarding innovative and emerging directions for popular culture and pedagogy (e.g., Video Game Editor, Film Review Editor, Podcast Review Editor). Looking forward to hearing from you!

Anna CohenMiller, PhD

Editor in Chief

Co-Founding Editor



All papers in *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy* are published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share-Alike License. For details please go to: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>.

Three Years of Misinformation: A Case Study of Information Literacy Methods

Elizabeth Zak
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa, USA

ABSTRACT

Misinformation is an ever-evolving digital issue. As the internet evolves, so too does misinformation and the ways in which it is propagated. Information literacy methods, such as the CRAAP test, the RADAR framework and the SIFT method, can help information users discern between real and fake information, and prevent the spread of misinformation. Unfortunately, the speed with which misinformation evolves often makes information literacy methods obsolete when they are designed and implemented. Furthermore, when people trust misinformation, they struggle with identifying correct information. Visual misinformation presents another concern: people trust what they see, and new misinformative developments such as deepfakes are especially convincing. I chose to explore three examples in 2004, 2013 and 2020, as these years were each dubbed “the year of fake news” by various media outlets. I evaluated the examples using methods popular in each year, and further evaluated how effective the method is at identifying misinformation. Each method is relatively effective when evaluating news and information in its time; however, each possesses its own drawbacks. A better understanding of the methodology used to identify each year’s misinformation will allow us to understand the misinformation of the past and look forward to potential future threats. More research into information literacy methods and their implementation is necessary.

Keywords: information literacy, information literacy methods, misinformation, news outlets

INTRODUCTION

When was the definitive year of fake news? In 2004, 2013, and 2020, news reporters argued that each respective year was the year that Americans were duped by fake news stories. These stories ranged from a 100% restaurant tip to a miracle cure for COVID-19. Unfortunately, none of these years were the final “year of fake news.” While misinformation in all media is concerning, online misinformation presents a particular threat. Online misinformation spreads up to six times faster than true information (Vosoughi, 2018). In most cases, information seekers choose to trust information based on its source instead of its quality (Pennycook, 2020). Once someone believes misinformation in either textual or visual form, it is difficult to convince them of the truth (Cook, 2015). Therefore, one major way of preventing the spread of misinformation is information literacy. Information literacy is the ability to discern between real and fake information (Campbell, 2008). Unfortunately, while researchers define and teach information literacy methods, new methods of misinformation evolve quicker. Re-examining information literacy methods allows information seekers to identify which elements of information literacy endure. I chose to explore a news example from each previously stated year, and evaluate its credibility based on a corresponding information literacy method from the same year. This article does not aim to determine sources of misinformation: rather, it seeks to test methods of information literacy. Although information literacy is one effective method in combating misinformation, its evolution cannot simply mirror the evolution of misinformation. Rather, we must develop information literacy methods with the evolution of misinformation in mind.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Misinformation is a growing concern. Specifically, online misinformation is a current problem (Cooke, 2015; Shao, 2018). Cook et al (2015) explored online misinformation, arguing that a multidisciplinary approach is necessary to stop its spread and impact. They also explained that retracting misinformation is insufficient: once a message spreads, it is hard to convince people that the message is wrong. Shao et al (2018) corroborated this in a network study, finding that misinformation, even if originally propagated by bots, is retweeted and believed by humans. Because some social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, do not vet their users’ qualifications and content, misinformation may be posted and potentially spread quickly even if it is untrue. Waszak et al (2018) found that social media is a source of medical misinformation, and that information seekers may incorrectly label it as correct information. They then share this misinformation over social media. Allcott et al (2019) further explained that Facebook and Twitter are both major sources of misinformation. Specifically, they found that fake news stories rose on social media in 2016. Other researchers disagree with the severity of misinformation online. Khan and Idris (2018) found that users often relied on their experience level with the internet when determining whether or not to share potential misinformation, although more educated individuals were more hesitant to share information. People who unintentionally spread misinformation often misidentify it as correct information. Researchers have identified misinformation and its ability to spread as a major problem; unfortunately, there is no current history of the evolution of severity of misinformation, or analysis of the effectiveness of current solutions for misinformation.

Information literacy presents a solution to the problem of mis- and disinformation. Keshavarz (2014) explained that methods of evaluating traditional information are insufficient when applied in a web-based setting, as “in new information environments, the users are responsible for credibility judgements about the information that they receive” (Keshavarz, 3). Cooke (2018) discussed information literacy as a solution for misinformation, arguing that “Information literacy considers the context in which information is found and consumed, and it seeks information that is relevant and that has long-term potential to be useful” (Cooke, 45). Many people overestimate their information literacy abilities. Mahmood (2016) found that people

overestimated their information literacy skills. Plencner (2014) found that people incorrectly believe they are skilled at discerning between real and fake information on the internet, using emotional cues instead of logical reasoning when presented with incorrect information. When conducting a user study regarding fake news, Paskin (2018) found that “Even though respondents could have checked whether the stories were real or fake by simply opening a new tab on their browser and comparing the information with that of other sites, they chose not to do so” (Paskin, 17). This shows that even if the duplicitous nature of fake news is obvious, users will ignore fact-checking in favor of the information presented immediately in front of them. Once information users trust a source, they may trust its information without verification. Pennycook et al (2020) found that information seekers share information before reading it. In many cases, “instead of attending to central elements (i.e., the quality of information), consumers seem to attend to peripheral cues, such as the source of the information” (p. 863). While many people may use their own information literacy skills to identify misinformation, many still fail.

Based on the current literature, I chose to explore the impact of information literacy methods, and their effectiveness when combatting news examples presented in three different years of fake news.

SELECTION OF METHODS

When determining which stories to examine for the case study, I chose to analyze three examples. I selected examples based on their potential to misinform. Specifically, I sought case studies that had a wide reach. When examining the different news articles declaring 2004, 2013 and 2020 the year of fake news, I identified potential examples to use. I chose to use three different news outlets to obtain articles to demonstrate misinformation as a widespread problem. This paper does not evaluate the reliability of certain news outlets. Instead, the selected news articles are the case studies on which I tested the information literacy methods. I specifically omitted articles from sources that advertise themselves as satirical, such as The Onion or Clickhole. Future work could potentially explore their satire and its gravity.

Once I obtained my case studies, I determined which information literacy method to use. I chose to use the CRAAP test, the RADAR method and the SIFT method to analyze the articles. Each of these methods was designed in the same year their corresponding article was created. Each method is widely known by the information science community as a useful information literacy method. Not only are CRAAP and RADAR important methods, but they are still recommended by librarians when analyzing misinformation (McLean, 2015; Neely-Sardon, 2018). Although new, the SIFT method has become popular among both information literacy professionals and students alike (Baer, 2020; Ziv, 2020). Each of these methods is still used today when evaluating information. Due to this longevity, I selected these three methods. For historical accuracy, I chose to use time-specific evidence: for example, as the Ad Fontes Media Bias Chart was developed in 2018, after 2004 and 2013, I did not use it to evaluate potential bias in either the 2004 or 2013 example.

In each example, I further explain both the article selected and the method used.

2004 FAKE IMAGE->CRAAP

According to the New York Times, 2004 was the year of fake news. Satirical news outlets such as the Onion, were popular, as were satirical news shows (Williams, 2018). These news outlets used fake news to spoof current events. Specifically, the New York Times article explained that although the fake news was used to entertain, most viewers were able to determine which news was real and which was fake.

The article I reviewed from 2004 originated from the New York Times, on February 13, 2004. The article was titled “Conservatives Shine Spotlight on Kerry’s AntiWar Record” and cited a photograph of John Kerry and Jane Fonda at an antiwar protest (Stolberg, 2004). Released by a retired Green Beret, the photograph

circulated throughout the internet (Hafner, 2004; Stolberg, 2004; Todd, 2004). Many reputable news outlets used and cited it, discussing John Kerry's anti-war protests (Novak, 2004). The photograph discussed was a composite of two other photographs: one of John Kerry at a Mineola, New York anti-war rally and one of Jane Fonda speaking at a Miami Beach, Florida anti-war rally (Light, 2004). Although each of them had spoken at an anti-war rally, they did not speak together. Within the week of the original article's publication, the copyright owner of the original Kerry image provided the negatives and explained that someone else photo-doctored the photo, arguing that encryption or other digital protection for images was necessary (Light, 2004). The New York Times later published an article discussing the use of photoshop in creating the image (Hafner, 2004). It is still unknown who doctored the image (Light, 2004). Unfortunately, people continue to cite and circulate the image as proof that John Kerry is anti-American and unfit for his 2021 appointment as Secretary of State to the United States (Horwitz, 2016; Fact Check-Old altered photo of Jane Fonda and John Kerry at an anti-war rally resurfaces, 2021).

One such method that the reader could utilize to determine the factualness of this article is the CRAAP test. The CRAAP test allows users to determine which sources are trustworthy. CRAAP stands for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose. Sarah Blakesee developed the CRAAP test at California State University in 2004. The CRAAP test can help readers determine whether or not a source can be trusted. Focusing on credibility and reliability, the CRAAP test is an excellent way to determine which information to use. However, some researchers criticize the CRAAP test for using jargon that students may not understand and requiring students to evaluate using what some consider an outdated methodology (Kantor, 2018; Caulfield, 2019). Similarly, Fielding stated that the expansion of misinformation and disinformation may result in the test's obsolescence. Certainly, some trusted information may be old. Users may struggle with identifying the difference between scholarly and media literature, as well as checking anyone who is cited in the piece of information. This test is effective as a rule of thumb and a quick check of a resource's information. During 2004, the CRAAP test was a prominent method for evaluating an article's integrity. The following is an analysis using the CRAAP method of the 2004 New York Times article. **CURRENCY:** The article was indeed current, as it was published in February 2004, during the Presidential election campaign of John Kerry. The image was not current, as it was created during the 1970s. This article passes the Currency check. However, the image does not pass the Currency check.

RELEVANCE: Because the article was reporting on a current event, it is relevant. This article was written during a United States Presidential Election year, and John Kerry was the presumptive Democrat nominee. At the time of the article's publication, the New York Times had also published an article about the current president, Republican George W. Bush's war record and opinions (Bumiller, 2004). Because the New York Times reported on other political news related to war, this article was pertinent to the New York Times. The article passes the Relevancy check.

AUTHORITY: The article was found on Conservatives Shine Spotlight on Kerry's Antiwar Record - The New York Times (nytimes.com). The URL provides some authority. The Pew Research Center reported that online information seekers often trusted websites of major news organizations, such as the New York Times. Therefore, the story may seem more credible (Pew Research Center, 2005). This provides authority to the claim made about John Kerry. When the photo's original author explained that the photo was doctored, their authority overrode the New York Times' authority. As the original photographer, they were the authority on the photo. Therefore, although initially the photo and article initially pass the Authority check, they ultimately fail this check.

ACCURACY: An information seeker could search other news outlets to determine if they corroborate this story. Other news outlets initially corroborated this image and agreed with its accuracy (Novak, 2004; Cable News Network, 2004). The article passes the Accuracy check.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the article is to report on John Kerry and discuss his antiwar stance. Overall, the article's purpose is not to sway someone's opinion about the 2004 election. However, the disseminator of the photograph stated outright in the article that he was searching for photographs that presented John Kerry unfavorably. Therefore, the person who provided the photograph had an ulterior purpose: to argue that John Kerry was not a good presidential candidate. Although the photo and article initially pass the Purpose check, they ultimately fail the Purpose check.

ACCEPT or REJECT?

Overall, using the CRAAP test to evaluate the article regarding John Kerry's anti-war stance shows us the importance of authority and purpose. The article's legitimacy is verified by the different parts of the acronym (accuracy, credibility, relevance, and partially both authority and purpose). However, the article and image are inaccurate.

Had the author of the image not spoken out, this misinformative image would have been disseminated; even when the photographer explained that the photo was doctored, some people stated that it was not (Reuters Fact Check, 2021).

2013 FAKE ARTICLE->RADAR

In 2013, the Wall Street Journal published an article, "A Year of Fake Hoaxes," in which the author discussed a number of fake news stories, such as a fake news story about a waitress, and a fake "twerking fail" video. Dewey claims that "if 2013 was the year of the Internet hoax, it was also the year that Internet narratives eclipsed their medium" (Dewey, 2013). She argues that these hoaxes have become news, covered by news media outlets as well as the larger internet community.

I chose to examine an article titled "New study says threat of man-made global warming greatly exaggerated." The article was released by Fox News and details a study that stated that global warming was not an issue. At the time that this article was written, the United Nations Panel on Climate Change, also known as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, had released a report stating that global warming was a result of human activity (Stocker, 2014). Citing this report, many news outlets such as NPR and CNN had argued that climate change is caused by reliance on fossil fuels and other man-made activity (Harris, 2013; Hennen, 2013). Conversely, this article argues that climate change fears are exaggerated and unrealistic. Citing a paper written by the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change, the author explains that manmade global warming is not a current concern. Specifically, the author claims that humans have little to no effect on the natural climate system. The article criticizes then-President Obama's decision to create policy against fossil fuels. It also cites the Heartland Institute's explanation that there will be no increase in natural disasters due to man-made climate change. Overall, this article claims that man-made climate change due to reliance on fossil fuels is not an issue (McKelway, 2013).

Jane Mandalios developed the RADAR method in 2013. The RADAR method is specifically designed for online resources. RADAR stands for Relevance, Authority, Date, Appearance, and Reason. It is a set of questions and understandings that can allow information users to analyze the information presented. RADAR is uniquely helpful, as it was meant for an online forum. Indeed, it can be used for all online platforms. Although RADAR is useful, it focuses on honesty on a scale rather than a binary. Since the RADAR test requires many questions, it can be time-consuming, sacrificing speed for accuracy. This can be concerning for those who seek the most unbiased information and will not settle for less. Similarly, this can be overwhelming for those who are new to reading and evaluating articles. The following is an analysis of the Fox News article using the RADAR method.

RELEVANCE: This article is certainly relevant to the climate change discourse. By 2013, global warming was a

significant concern. Because global warming is both an existential and partisan issue, a news article discussing the level of the threat would be relevant to potential readers. A reader interested in understanding humanity's role in perpetuating global warming might choose to read this article to further their understanding. The article would pass the relevancy check.

AUTHORITY: To better understand the authors behind this article, an information seeker must explore both the author and those that they cite as forms of authority. The author of this article works for Fox News and has written a number of articles about climate change; therefore, the reader may assume that they are a source of authority. Fox News is a conservative news outlet (Jones, 2012; Jurkowitz, 2012). A potential reader may understand that Fox News's political slant could potentially skew its coverage of an event. Viewers who utilized Fox News were also more likely to distrust scientists' arguments regarding global warming (Krosnick, 2010).

Although examining the author of the article is important, an information seeker must also focus on the authorities cited. Specifically, the article only cites conservative, climate skeptic organizations as reliable climate change sources (Cann, 2015). Both the Heartland Institute and its housed panel, the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change, state that there is currently no consensus proving climate change (About the NIPCC, 2019; Bast, 2013; Cann, 2015). Both organizations downplay the threat of climate change (Judson, 2013; Theel, 2014; Inzerillo; Dunlap, 2013; Taylor, 2013). The article does not display balanced authority.

The article would not pass the authority check.

DATE: The article was originally published on September 19, 2013. Therefore, at the time, it was a timely article and appropriate to use as a current source. The article would pass the date check.

APPEARANCE: The source's appearance further lends to its credibility. It looks polished and professional. The article is written for an adult audience and does not advertise anything. The article contains citations and quotes from sources. However, since the article is on a commercial website, there are pop-up ads displayed alongside the article. As a result, the different advertisements on the website may confuse readers or even prevent them from reading the whole article. The article would not pass the appearance check.

REASON: When understanding the reason that the article was written, an information seeker must focus on the content because the article is meant to inform a reader about an issue: climate change. This piece is meant to persuade readers into ignoring climate change. The website is not a spoof site. There is a definite lack of balance in the article's argument: rather than explaining the perspectives of scientists who both believe that humans have influenced global warming as well as those who believe that humans have not influenced global warming, Fox News has simply explained the perspectives of the Heartland Institute and the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change. (Although the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report was mentioned, the article is briefly referenced, rather than discussed in depth.) Because both organizations state that humans have not contributed to global warming, and no opposing opinion is fully presented, it is evident that this article is meant to convince people that climate change is not a threat. The reasons for the article demonstrate that it may not be a credible source. The article would not pass the reason check.

ACCEPT or REJECT?

Based on the RADAR method, we would reject the article.

2020 FAKE IMAGE->SIFT

At the end of 2020, Vox published a news article titled "America's Growing Fake News Problem on Social Media, in One Chart." This article detailed fake news stories such as a hoax that the 2020 election was "stolen" by fraudulent voters (Stewart, 2020). The "stolen election" theory, also known as the "big lie," is a

conspiracy theory that states that there was massive voting fraud during the 2020 United States presidential election. Although this alleged voter fraud took many forms, such as false ballots and fraudulent voting machines, all elements of this theory have been disproven (Eggers, 2021; Rowley, 2021).

I evaluated a Newsmax article that detailed the events of the United States presidential election of 2020. The article's title is "Election Investigation Needed Now to Preserve Our Democracy." The article details the events of the 2020 election, in which Democrat Joe Biden beat then-president Republican Donald Trump. Due to the large number of absentee ballots and each state's rules regarding their count (some states' laws meant that the ballots were counted before Election Day and other states' laws meant that the ballot count began on Election Day), the winner was not determined until days after the election. News outlets had discussed the ramifications of these laws; however, many were still confused. This Newsmax article was written and published on November 9, 2020, days after the election had been called for Joe Biden. However, the author argues that the election is far from over. The author argues that the number of absentee ballots were overwhelmingly in Joe Biden's favor, the software used for the election was glitchy, Pennsylvania's election law was illegal, and Trump poll watchers were denied entry into voting polls. Therefore, the author explains, the election was illegitimate. The author concludes by explaining that all claims must be examined and litigated (Hirsens, 2020).

I chose to use the SIFT method to evaluate the Newsmax article. Emerging in the aftermath of the 2016 US election, lateral reading, also known as investigating and verifying information while reading it, chooses to explore a different aspect of information consumption (Heick, 2022). Also known as SIFTing, lateral reading can allow readers to focus on fact-checking an article as they read it. SIFT stands for Stop, Investigate, Find and Trace. SIFT forces the information seeker to find corroborating, trusted resources to support any information they may find. This allows the reader to process the information slower, while evaluating it. Mike Caulfield developed SIFT in 2019. SIFT has gained more recognition in recent years. Specifically, SIFT is meant to help students avoid being deceived by clickbait and fake news. The method assumes that an information seeker is analyzing an online source and can fact-check this source against other online sources. Because of SIFT's relative novelty, it bears more examination in the context of information literacy. The following is an analysis of the above Newsmax article using the SIFT method.

STOP: Most internet users know that Newsmax is a conservative news organization. Specifically, Newsmax is a largely online resource. Its reputation is that of a right-wing news outlet (Mitchell, 2021). Newsmax has shared disproven conspiracy theories, such as the idea that COVID-19 is a bioweapon, and voter fraud is rampant (Bell, 2020a; Bell, 2020b; Imhoff, 2020; Pennycook, 2020). This knowledge about Newsmax that a casual information user may possess can result in discounting the source. The article would fail the Stop check.

INVESTIGATE: When googling Newsmax, an information seeker may see results that indicate its untrustworthiness. For example, Newsmax had retracted an article spreading misinformation about Dominion voting machines (Birkeland, 2021). Other reporters and researchers have discussed Newsmax's partisan leaning and links to misinformation (Hasen, 2021). Both the Ad Fontes Media Chart classifies Newsmax as a "Strong Right" news outlet while the AllSides Media Bias Chart classifies Newsmax as "Leans Right" (Ad Fontes, 2022; AllSides Media Bias Chart, 2022). Investigating the source clearly demonstrates that the source's partisan leaning may result in the spread of deceptive or false information. The article would fail the Investigate check.

FIND: The Newsmax article states that in Michigan, President Biden received a block of votes, all of which were in his favor. However, both the New York Times and USA Today disprove this claim, explaining that there had been a typo in reporting local data, which was quickly corrected (Nicas, 2020; Stanglin, 2020).

The Newsmax article explains that the rate of rejected mail-in ballots is 30 times lower in 2020 than it was in 2016. Once again, Ballotpedia has disproved this statement, showing that it was only a 42% decrease. (Ballotpedia, 2021).

The Newsmax article states that votes were swapped from Trump to Biden; this has been contradicted by Politifact (Politifact - inaccurate early vote count in one Michigan County was a human error, not a failure of the software, 2021). The author claims that this may have happened in 47 other counties; there are no other sources that corroborate or dispute this statement. The author also claims that the Supreme Court rejected a fraudulent Pennsylvania law stating that ballots could be counted after November 3; this was once again untrue (Fessler, 2021). Finally, the author explains that poll watchers were denied entry. This may have been for a number of reasons. CBS has explained that poll watchers were not removed. Furthermore, there are a number of reasons that poll watchers may have been denied entry: wearing partisan clothing is one such reason (Link, 2020; Quinn, 2020). The article would fail the Find check.

TRACE: Due to the fact that the majority of these claims can be traced back to Twitter or verbal sources, tracing these claims at the time of writing was largely obfuscated.

One example is the idea that vote tabulators swapped votes from Trump to Biden. This claim has only been supported on Twitter. However, both the Washington Post and CBS News have shown that these videos were doctored (Kelly, 2020; Lewis, 2020). Therefore, while there are many claims made, most of them were difficult to trace and often they were rebutted.

Another example of unsubstantiated claims is the claim that poll watchers were denied entry into the polls. I found a video of someone being denied entry on Twitter: Will Chamberlain on Twitter: "A poll watcher in Philly was just wrongfully prevented from entering the polling place #StopTheSteal <https://t.co/iJTfRk0Id>" / Twitter. In the video, an unmasked man in a brown shirt is being told to leave a poll site. Initially this was due to confusion regarding his poll watching certificate (Chamberlain, 2020). However, once again, further evidence demonstrates that this mistake was rectified, and the man allowed to serve as a poll watcher (Reuters, 2020).

Although some of these claims are traceable, a number of them are difficult to identify and confirm. Overall, the claims are incredibly difficult to trace, and therefore lack credibility. This article would fail the Trace check.

ACCEPT or REJECT?

Based on the SIFT method, we would reject the article.

DISCUSSION:

I found three interesting evolutions to discuss: the evolution of misinformation's severity, the evolution of information literacy methods and finally the evolution of the information user and their purpose for finding information.

THE EVOLUTION OF SEVERITY OF MISINFORMATION

Misinformation has evolved over time. Although internet-based misinformation was initially viewed as satire and comedy, online misinformation has quickly become prominent and serious. In the case of the John Kerry and Jane Fonda image, the stakes were relatively low: supporters of John Kerry would no doubt support Jane Fonda's presence in the campaign. John Kerry already had a reputation as an anti-war protester, as did Jane Fonda. The article was disproven quickly, as the original photographer issued a statement days after its publication. Meanwhile, there is severity in arguing that man-made global warming is a nonissue. The article discussing global warming also exists to refute claims rather than making any unique statements. Furthermore, it acknowledges an alternative perspective, citing the idea that global warming does exist, albeit as a natural part of the climate. Although global warming is a scientific consensus, and resources disproving this article are available, there are still many people who believe global warming is a nonissue or afforded disproportionate attention (Cook, 2019; Hong, 2020). Finally, arguing that the results of the 2020 United States election directly

and negatively affect voters' faith in the democratic system. By only focusing on one party, the author of the article ignores other issues caused by the other party. Similarly, the article does not provide substantiated evidence to support their claims. There is no evidence that ballot boxes were stuffed, or that the 2020 election was fraudulent; however, people believe and spread this claim (Beber, 2012; Chiu, 2022). Although the articles evaluated by CRAAP and RADAR provided flawed evidence, it was still evidence. The article evaluated by SIFT does not provide evidence to support its claims. This demonstrates that misinformation has evolved from entertaining to serious and cited to unsubstantiated. Misinformation has escalated significantly through accessibility, evolving from simple manipulation of facts to clear and blatant falsehoods.

THE EVOLUTION OF METHODS

While misinformation continues to evolve, so too do information literacy theories. Each of these theories has their own benefits and drawbacks.

CRAAP chooses to focus on a binary in determining whether or not a resource is credible. Because CRAAP is so rigid, researchers may struggle with identifying which part of the method is most important. Most information users regard CRAAP as one of the first information literacy methods, and therefore is treated with reverence. CRAAP is still useful as an information literacy method: many information science professionals still teach it in schools.

RADAR focuses on a specific set of details. RADAR builds on CRAAP through its explanation of information as a non-binary method. Because RADAR allows some resources to be deemed more credible than others, rather than a simple binary, this can encourage the information seeker to determine which information is best. Due to its range, RADAR is considered better than CRAAP. RADAR is a very useful framework as well and could be used in tandem with the CRAAP test for maximum effectiveness.

SIFT explores both the source of the information and the content. As an internet-specific information literacy method, it not only assumes that the information seeker will also be able to quickly correlate and search for information pertaining to the source it also presents an information user with a built-in group of articles to use or cite for an assignment. Unfortunately, it is time consuming. Someone may choose to use either RADAR or CRAAP instead of SIFT due to time constraints. Overall, however, SIFT responds best to the information as a part of the information ecosystem.

These information literacy methods also share major elements. CRAAP and RADAR both use Relevance and Authority. They both utilize a specific set of details. Information seekers should use CRAAP and RADAR due to the range of misinformation spread by authority figures in a timely manner. SIFT shares no words with these methods; however, SIFT builds on CRAAP and RADAR in that it evaluates both the authority of the source, and the content. Specifically, SIFT expands on CRAAP and RADAR while simultaneously serving as a potential complement to both. This is particularly helpful, as it ensures that the most effective parts of an information literacy method are passed from method to method.

EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNET AND INFORMATION SEEKER

Misinformation has evolved alongside the internet. Specifically, the ability of information users to both read and spread misinformation has grown explosively. Because of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, information users may find misinformation reposted by either malicious users or duped individuals. With regards to the John Kerry article analyzed by the CRAAP test, the user would only be able to read the article and potentially email it to their friends and family. An information user may have been able to share or tweet the Fox News article evaluated by RADAR to a number of subscribers. In fact, when examining the reach of this article, I found 38 tweets spreading this article. Fox News tweeted the article and

received 228 retweets and 78 likes. Although this is hardly viral, it is still an interesting change in spread. The Newsmax article was also tweeted, though it only received 1 retweet and 6 likes. However, this may be due to a migration: by November 2020, people had begun to migrate to alt-right social media, leaving Twitter for Parler and MeWe. This clearly demonstrates the insidious nature of misinformation and its spread due to the evolution of the internet. It is also interesting to note that although Facebook and Twitter remove accounts that spread misinformation, it was still relatively easy to find tweets about these articles. Migration to echo chambers and false information literacy are two major results of believing misinformation (Törnberg 2018; Zak, 2023). Therefore, although removal of misinformation has been touted as a solution, misinformation is still on these platforms after some removal of handles.

While information literacy and misinformation have evolved and changed, so too has our perception and use of the internet. We must also note that the internet is no longer viewed as a source of dubious information. The internet is a source of reliable information. Many information seekers often turn to the internet when trying to find sources for papers, research, and general information. RADAR and CRAAP are meant for not only the internet, but sources such as books, and periodicals. Meanwhile, SIFT is a method that focuses specifically on internet tools. CRAAP explains that if a news source ends in .com or .org, it may be untrustworthy. However, as the internet has continued to evolve, website endings are less important when identifying a source's legitimacy. Since SIFT is a method designed for internet materials, this demonstrates a general perception that the internet can and should be used when obtaining information for schoolwork and beyond. While misinformation still exists, there are even more online resources that may help identify, correct, and disprove misinformation. Further research evaluating media such as TikTok and Youtube videos, as well as graphs and their creators is necessary. Information professionals and researchers must design information literacy methods with the internet in mind.

CONCLUSION

Understanding information literacy is essential when determining which information is real and which is fake. In an online world, information literacy methods can allow users to quickly check a source before believing it. Although information literacy methods were initially meant to determine which resource could be used for academic work, their use case has evolved to include everyday information analysis. Misinformation appears in all types of sources, whether news outlets or social media. Future work could potentially focus on the evolution of misinformation on specific social media platforms, or information literacy methodology designed for specific types of misinformation. This work is both theoretical and practical: as misinformation evolves, so too must new information literacy methods in the classroom and beyond. While new information literacy methods are helpful in combatting misinformation, we must also recognize the importance and relationship to old information literacy techniques.

REFERENCES

- Ad Fontes Media. (2022). *Interactive media bias chart*. <https://adfontesmedia.com/interactive-media-bias-chart/>
- Allcott, H., Gentzkow, M., & Yu, C. (2019). Trends in the diffusion of misinformation on social media. *Research & Politics*, 6(2), 1-8 <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168019848554>
- Allsides*. (2023, September 22). *All Sides media bias chart* <https://www.allsides.com/media-bias/media-bias-chart>
- Baer, A., & Kipnis, D. G. (2020). Teaching online source evaluation: Going beyond CRAAP using lateral reading. https://rdw.rowan.edu/lib_scholarship/21
- Bast, J. (2013, November 28). *AMS survey shows no consensus on global warming*. *The heartland institute* <https://heartland.org/opinion/ams-survey-shows-no-consensus-on-global-warming/>

- Beber, B., & Scacco, A. (2012). What the numbers say: A digit-based test for election fraud. *Political analysis*, 20(2), 211-234. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mps003>
- Bell, L. (2020, June 12). Covid-19 spreads pandemic voter mail-in ballot fraud concerns. *Newsmax*. <https://www.newsmax.com/larrybell/mailballot-votefraud-covid19/2020/06/12/id/971866/>
- Bell, L. (2020, September 4). Viral bioweapons have become a pandemic reality. *Newsmax*. <https://www.newsmax.com/larrybell/bioweapons-viral/2020/09/04/id/985514/>
- Birkeland, B. (2021, April 30). *Newsmax issues retraction and apology to Dominion employee over election stories*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/30/992534968/newsmax-issues-retraction-and-apology-to-dominion-employee-over-election-stories>
- Bumiller, E. (2004, February 9). Bush states his case. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/09/us/bush-states-his-case.html>
- Cable news network. (2004, February 12). *Kerry takes new fire over Vietnam*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/02/11/elec04.prez.kerry.fonda/>
- Campbell, S. (2008). Chapter I- defining information literacy in the 21st century. *IFLA publications*, 131, 17. <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla70/prog04.htm>
- Cann, H. W. (2015, April). Climate change, still challenged: Conservative think tanks and skeptic frames. Western Political Science Association. <https://www.wpsanet.org/meeting/pastprograms.php>
- Caulfield, M. (2021, February 15). SIFT (the four moves). Hapgood. <https://hapgood.us/2019/06/19/sift-the-four-moves/>
- Chamberlain, W. [@willchamberlain](2020, November 3). A poll watcher in Philly was just wrongfully prevented from entering the polling place#stopthesteal [Tweet; video]. Twitter. <https://mobile.twitter.com/willchamberlain/status/1323615834455994373>
- Chiu, M. M., Park, C. H., Lee, H., Oh, Y. W., & Kim, J. N. (2022). Election fraud and misinformation on Twitter: Author, cluster, and message antecedents. *Media and Communication*, 10(2), 66-80.
- Cook, J., Ecker, U., & Lewandowsky, S. (2015). Emerging trends in the social and behavioral sciences: An interdisciplinary, searchable, and linkable resource. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0222> Misinformation and how to correct it. , 1-17.
- Cook, J. (2019). Understanding and countering misinformation about climate change. In I. E. Chilwa & S. A. Samoilenko (Eds.), *Handbook of research on deception, fake news, and misinformation online* (pp. 281-306). Information Science Reference/IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-8535-0.ch016>
- Cooke, N. A. (2018). Critical literacy as an approach to combating cultural misinformation/disinformation on the Internet. *Information literacy and libraries in the age of fake news*, 36-51.
- Dewey, C. (2013, December 30). *A year of internet hoaxes: Fake events but very real coverage*. The Washington post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2013/12/30/a-year-of-internet-hoaxes-fake-events-but-very-real-coverage/>
- Dunlap, R. E., & Jacques, P. J. (2013). Climate change denial books and conservative think tanks: Exploring the connection. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(6), 699-731. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213477096>
- Eggers, A. C., Garro, H., & Grimmer, J. (2021). No evidence for systematic voter fraud: A guide to statistical claims about the 2020 election. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(45), e2103619118.
- Election results, 2020: Analysis of rejected ballots. Ballotpedia. (2021). Retrieved April 19, 2022, from https://ballotpedia.org/Election_results,_2020:_Analysis_of_rejected_ballots
- Fessler, P. (2020, October 19). *Supreme court rules pennsylvania can count ballots received after election day*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/19/922411176/supreme-court-rules-pennsylvania-can-count-ballots-received-after-election-day>

- Getting beyond the CRAAP test: A Conversation with Mike Caulfield: Inside Higher Ed.* Just Visiting. www.insidehighered.com/blogs/just-visiting/getting-beyond-craap-test-conversation-mike-caulfield.
- Hafner, K. (2004, March 11). The camera never lies, but the software can. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/11/technology/the-camera-never-lies-but-the-software-can.html>
- Harris, R. (2013, September 27). UN climate change report: Sea level, air temperature to rise. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=226902314>
- Hasen, R. L. (2022). Identifying and minimizing the risk of election subversion and stolen elections in the contemporary United States. *Harvard Law Review*, , 265-301.
- Heick, T. (2022, January 20). *The difference between lateral reading and vertical reading*. TeachThought. <https://www.teachthought.com/literacy/how-res-ding-different-future-literacy/>
- Hennen, D., & McLaughlin, E. C. (2013, September 27). *U.N. climate change report points blame at humans*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/27/world/climate-change-5-things/index.html>
- Hirsen, J. (2020, November 9). Election investigation needed now to preserve our democracy. *Newsmax*. <https://www.newsmax.com/jameshirsen/alito-ballots-late-legislature/2020/11/09/id/996200/>
- Hong, S. C. (2020). Presumed effects of “fake news” on the global warming discussion in a cross-cultural context. *Sustainability*, 12(5), 2123.
- Horwitz, J. (2016, August 22). Racism and talk of religious war: Trump’s staff’s online posts. *AP NEWS*. <https://apnews.com/article/d98c99e8626549d984d3695ac6ef589f>
- Imhoff, R., & Lamberty, P. (2020). A bioweapon or a hoax? The link between distinct conspiracy beliefs about the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak and pandemic behavior. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 11(8), 1110-1118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620934692>
- I Jones, J. P. (2012). Fox news and the performance of ideology. *Cinema Journal*, 51(4), 178-185. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23253592>
- Jurkowitz, M. (2013, October 11). *How Americans get TV news at home*. Pew Research Center’s Journalism Project. <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2013/10/11/how-americans-get-tv-news-at-home/>
- Kantor, S. (2018, June 8). Flushing the CRAAP Test.pdf. Selected Works of Sarah Kantor. <http://works.bepress.com/sarah-kantor/2/>
- Kelly, M., & Cahlan, S. (2020, November 12). Analysis | four viral videos falsely suggest ‘voter fraud’ led to Biden’s victory. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/11/12/four-viral-videos-falsely-suggest-voter-fraud-led-bidens-victory/>
- Keshavarz, H. (2014). How credible is information on the web: Reflections on misinformation and disinformation. *Infopreneurship Journal*, 1(2), 1-17.
- Khan, M. L., & Idris, I. K. (2019). Recognise misinformation and verify before sharing: A reasoned action and information literacy perspective. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 38(12), 1194-1212.
- Krosnick, J. A., & MacInnis, B. (2010). Frequent viewers of Fox News are less likely to accept scientists’ views of global warming. *Report for The Woods Institute for the Environment*. <http://woods.stanford.edu/docs/surveys/Global-Warming-Fox-News.pdf>
- Lewis, S. (2020, November 7). No, these viral videos do not actually show election fraud. *CBS News*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/viral-videos-do-not-show-election-fraud-evidence-donald-trump-joe-biden/>
- Light, K. (2004, February 28). Fonda, Kerry and photo fakery. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2004/02/28/fonda-kerry-and-photo-fakery/15bdc6ed-c568-49fc-bddd-ac534c426865/>
- Link, D., & Nerbovig, A. (2020, November 10). Fact check: Videos showing crowd locked out of Detroit TCF Center with windows obstructed are missing context. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/11/10/fact-check-videos-crowd-locked-out-detroit-center-lack->

- [context/6195038002/](#)
- McKelway, D. (2013, September 19). New Study says threat of man-made global warming greatly exaggerated. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/new-study-says-threat-of-man-made-global-warming-greatly-exaggerated>
- McLean, K. (2015). *LibGuides*. Home: Library News.
- Mitchell, A. (2021). Large majorities of Newsmax and OAN news consumers also go to Fox News.
- Neely-Sardon, A., & Tignor, M. (2018). Focus on the facts: A news and information literacy instructional program. *The Reference Librarian*, 59(3), 108-121.
- Nicas, J. (2020, November 4). No, Joe Biden wasn't suddenly awarded 138,000 votes in Michigan. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/04/technology/biden-michigan-votes.html>
- Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC). (2019, March 8). *About the NIPCC*. Climate change reconsidered. <http://climatechangereconsidered.org/about-the-nipcc/>
- Novak, R. D. (2004, February 19). Kerry and Hanoi Jane. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2004/02/19/kerry-and-hanoi-jane/b4ef1c0d-e7b2-49a0-b66b-8f8cb2544edd/>
- Paskin, D. (2018). Real or fake news: who knows?. *The Journal of Social Media in Society*, 7(2), 252-273.
- Pennycook, G., Epstein, Z., Mosleh, M., Arechar, A., Eckles, D., & Rand, D. (2019, November 13). Understanding and reducing the spread of misinformation online. *ACR North American Advances*. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/3n9u8>
- Pew Research Center. (2005, March 6). *Part 2. the role of the internet in 2004*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2005/03/06/part-2-the-role-of-the-internet-in-2004/>
- Plencner, A. (2014). Critical thinking and the challenges of Internet. *Communication Today*, 5(2), 4-19.
- Putterman, S. (2020, November 18). *Inaccurate early vote count in one Michigan County was a human error, not a failure of the software*. Politifact. <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/nov/18/ted-nugent/inaccurate-early-vote-count-onmichigan-county-was-/>
- Quinn, M. (2020, November 5). Fact-checking Trump's claims on poll watchers. *CBS News*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fact-check-trumps-claims-poll-watchers/>
- Reuters Fact Check. (2021, March 23). Fact check-old altered photo of Jane Fonda and John Kerry at an anti-war rally resurfaces. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-fonda-kerry/fact-check-old-altered-photo-of-jane-fonda-and-john-kerry-at-an-anti-war-rally-resurfaces-idUSL1N2LL28P>
- Rowley, M. (2021). Prophetic Populism and the Violent Rejection of Joe Biden's Election: Mapping the Theology of the Capitol Insurrection. *International Journal of Religion*, 2(2), 145-164.
- Shao, C., Hui, P. M., Wang, L., Jiang, X., Flammini, A., Menczer, F., & Ciampaglia, G. L. (2018). Anatomy of an online misinformation network. *PLoS one*, 13(4), e0196087.
- Stanglin, D. (2020, November 10). Fact check: Typo led to false post about Michigan votes showing up 'magically' for Biden. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/11/04/fact-check-typo-led-false-post-michigan-votes-biden/6164385002/>
- Stewart, E. (2020, December 22). America's growing fake news problem, in one chart. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/12/22/22195488/fakenews-social-media-2020>
- Stocker, T. (Ed.). (2014). *Climate change 2013: the physical science basis: Working Group I contribution to the Fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge university press.
- Stolberg, S. G. (2004, February 13). Conservatives shine spotlight on Kerry's antiwar record. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/13/us/conservatives-shine-spotlight-on-kerry-s-antiwar-record.html>
- Taylor, J., & Idso, C. (2013, November 22). *Global Warming Alarmism Denies Sound Science*. The Heartland Institute Global Warming Alarmism Denies Sound Science Comments. <https://heartland.org/opinion/>

[global-warming-alarmism-denies-sound-science-1/](#)

- Theel, W. by S. (2014, April 8). *Heartland Institute's smoke and mirrors attempt to debunk consensus science*. Media Matters for America. <https://www.mediamatters.org/fox-news/heartland-institutes-smoke-and-mirrors-attempt-debunk-consensus-science>
- Thomson Reuters. (2021, March 23). Fact check-old altered photo of Jane Fonda and John Kerry at an anti-war rally resurfaces. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-fonda-kerry/fact-check-old-altered-photo-of-jane-fonda-and-john-kerry-at-an-anti-war-rally-resurfaces-idUSL1N2LL28P>
- Thomson Reuters. (2020, November 4). Fact check: Clarifying video of poll watcher being turned away in Philadelphia. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-poll-watcher-philadelphia-t/fact-check-clarifying-video-of-poll-watcherbeingturned-awayin-philadelphia-idUSKBN27K009>
- Todd, B. (2004, February 11). Kerry confronts image from anti-Vietnam War era. *CNN*. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/02/11/wbr.kerry.image/index.html>
- Törnberg, P. (2018). Echo chambers and viral misinformation: Modeling fake news as complex contagion. *PLoS one*, 13(9), e0203958.
- Waszak, P. M., Kasprzycka-Waszak, W., & Kubanek, A. (2018). The spread of medical fake news in social media—the pilot quantitative study. *Health policy and technology*, 7(2), 115-118.
- Williams, A. (2018, February 9). 2004: When fake news was cool. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/09/style/2004-when-fake-news-was-cool.html>
- Zak, E. (2023, March 25). False Information Literacy During the Covid-19 Pandemic. *OSF Preprints*. Ziv, N., & Bene, E. (2022). Preparing college students for a digital age: A survey of instructional approaches to spotting misinformation. *College & Research Libraries*, 83(6), 905-925. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.83.6.905>

AUTHOR BIO

Elizabeth Zak is a PhD candidate at the University of Iowa. Her current research focuses on misinformation, information visualization, and information literacy.

SUGGESTED REFERENCE CITATION

APA

Zak, E. (2024). Three years of misinformation: A case study of information literacy methods. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, 11(1). <http://journaldialogue.org/v11-issue-1/three-years-of-misinformation-a-case-study-of-information-literacy-methods/>

MLA

Zak, Elizabeth. "Three Years of Misinformation: A Case Study of Information Literacy Methods". *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*. 2024, vol. 11, no. 1. <http://journaldialogue.org/v11-issue-1/three-years-of-misinformation-a-case-study-of-information-literacy-methods/>



All papers in *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy* are published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share-Alike License. For details please go to: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>.

“This is music!”: What *Stranger Things*’ Eddie Munson reveals about the power of metal

Ashley Butterworth Brumbelow

University of Georgia

Athens, Georgia, USA

ashley.brumbelow@uga.edu

ABSTRACT

The wide reach of digital technology has further diversified student perspectives in the contemporary classroom and what was once considered mainstream has become less pronounced due to the vast assortment of television programming, music, and other forms of media available. Still, this diversity is often not reflected in school curricula. Though examining music as text is a common practice in the secondary English classroom, the songs selected for study are usually representative of mainstream trends and rarely include selections from alternative genres like punk rock, rap, or heavy metal. These genres are avoided due to misconceptions surrounding how their messages affect young people, despite the potential for many positive outcomes. Educational applications for metal music, though seemingly dissonant, can disrupt exclusive and limiting social norms in school settings, provide a sense of community for socially “othered” youths, and have long-term emotional benefits. This paper explores the social/emotional and literary potential of integrating metal music as text in the secondary English classroom, using *Stranger Things* character Eddie Munson as a frame of reference. Implications for practice include employing the metal genre to engage socially “othered” students and pairing these texts with canonical pieces to examine themes of nonconformity, social justice, and resisting oppression.

Keywords: metal, music, literacy, secondary English, *Stranger Things*

Last summer, after a prolonged delay due to the challenges of navigating COVID-19, *Stranger Things* finally premiered its long-awaited fourth season. In it, viewers meet the monster who has been covertly pulling the strings since the show's first episode back in 2016: Vecna. Season Four, Episode One holds nothing back, with Vecna violently killing a shocking total of 17 kids over the course of the 76-minute episode. We learn later that the villain chooses his victims based on their personal experiences with trauma and that their only defense against his power lies in listening to their favorite music. By coincidence, the show's newest season was released during a period of my own life fraught with trauma. The death of two close family members compounded by the stress of my teaching career, a PhD program, and a few rocky personal relationships had left me struggling to stay afloat despite the reprieve of summer break. Like the characters in *Stranger Things*, I had turned to music as my saving grace. In watching the characters connect with their favorite songs, I was transported to the days I spent driving around, blasting Machine Gun Kelly and All-American Rejects, beating the steering wheel to the tune of my own heartache. I thought about how I had similarly used music to cope with the challenges of adolescence, and how I'd often seen my high school students do the same. The pandemic has thrown them into their version of the "Upside Down" which, for many, is just as dark and disorienting as the realm depicted in *Stranger Things*. How many of them would be targeted by Vecna if they existed in his universe? How many are using music as a way to release negative emotions and temporarily escape their circumstances?

In this article, I explore the social/emotional, and literary benefits of integrating music as text in the secondary English classroom, with a special focus on the heavy metal genre. Using *Stranger Things* character Eddie Munson as a lens through which to frame my analysis, I discuss the potential for employing this alternative music style to connect with and engage students often perceived as "other" in the high school setting. Additionally, I offer ideas for classroom application of these strategies, specifically as they relate to themes of nonconformity, social justice, and resisting oppression.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As digital technology and social media have become more prominent in young people's lives, the world has gotten "smaller" in the sense that it is now easier than ever to connect with people and cultures outside of one's bubble. At the same time, however, this surge in new and diverse media has also created division where there formerly was none. Gladwell (2022) points out that the limited television programming available in the 1960s and 70s resulted in majority viewership of popular shows, with as many as 40% of Americans tuning in for episodes of *Guns, Smokey, and the Bandits*. This widespread exposure to the same shows, and subsequent ideologies, was powerful enough to influence political stances. The more television they watched, the more likely conservatives and liberals were to position themselves as "Moderate" on the political spectrum due to a concept called "mainstreaming" (Gladwell, 2022). Now, with the availability of thousands of shows hosted by numerous streaming platforms like Netflix and Hulu, TV viewership and personal perspectives have become much more diversified.

This variety only accounts for TV media, not to mention how the music industry, video games, the internet, and social media have further contributed to the miscellany of viewpoints. The declining effect of mainstreaming does raise the question of why, with so little ideological heterogeneity, schools still rely so heavily on mainstream resources for instruction. As an English teacher, I can attest to the pressures of utilizing canonical literature like *The Odyssey* and *The Great Gatsby* despite the availability of countless texts that better reflect the diversity of the students in my classes. Ladson and Billings (2000) assert that "dominant perspectives distort the realities of the other in an effort to maintain power relations that continue to disadvantage those who are locked out of the mainstream" (p. 263). By refusing to adapt instruction to serve students' diverse

perspectives and cultures, educators may be complicit in upholding oppressive power structures instead of empowering students' unique identities.

One proposed approach to combat the continued presence of mainstreaming in education is punk pedagogy, which is promoted as teaching students "to work within and against institutional constraints, to be critical of the texts and systems that surround them" (Kahn-Eagan, 1998, p. 100). Modeled after the beliefs ingrained in Punk Rock culture, this framework encourages a do-it-yourself mindset, an impassioned anger that empowers one to speak their mind, and a desire to change perceived oppressive structures. This reflects the stance of critical theory which requires that individuals critique the power dynamics present throughout social arrangements and address forms of oppression or exploitation that are discovered (Prasad, 2018). Buchanan (2016) connects punk pedagogy to critical theory by asking educators to join in critiquing the power dynamics that exist in our field, citing punk pedagogy as one in which "we reflect on the experiences of our students and actively work to make changes to those experiences as a way to create more authentic sites of learning by engaging students in their classrooms, particularly through creating authentic learning spaces and projects" (p. 132). Authentic learning spaces and assessments are those that students can connect to their own experiences and prior knowledge, not necessarily the mainstream culture.

Pop culture has been referred to as a "terrain of exchange" where struggle takes place "between the subordinate and the dominant groups in society" (Morrell, 2002). Music becomes one such rendezvous point for representatives from across the social spectrum. Unlike literary canon which is sometimes thought to be reserved for those with superior intellect or culture, music is an easily accessible format that transcends educational background, age, socioeconomic status, and more (Rubin, 2011). Even so, the music that is included in school curricula typically reflects the mainstream, rarely acknowledging the presence of alternative genres, and further bolsters the already dominant perspectives. Ardizzone (2005) notes that music, especially alternative genres like punk or hard rock, can be a convenient and accessible outlet for marginalized youths to share their ideas and express their voices, as they are typically dismissed within the realm of politics and sociocultural decision-making. As educators, choosing to lend credence to alternative and undervalued genres illustrates a commitment, not only to dismantling oppressive structures that exist in our field but also to empowering our students to do the same.

EDDIE MUNSON, "FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS"

The unlikely hero of the *Stranger Things*' fourth season was metalhead Eddie Munson, played by actor Joseph Quinn. Viewers are first introduced to Eddie as he rants about Newsweek magazine's critique of *Dungeons and Dragons* as promoting violent behavior and satanic worship (Duffer et al., 2022a), similar to critiques of metal music around the same time. Metal was condemned in the 1985 U.S. Senate hearing for its connection to "violence, perversion, rape, substance misuse, and poor mental health" despite these claims being unsubstantiated (Rowe & Guerin, 2017, p. 430). Rumors like these fueled the "Satanic Panic" epidemic of the 1980s and 90s, which perpetuated the conspiracy theory that metal fans were devil worshippers because of the genre's references to the occult and its generally dark aesthetic (Perticone, 2018). According to Haynes (2022), *Stranger Things* creators, the Duffer Brothers, have confirmed that Eddie's character was inspired by Damien Echols of the infamous 1993 West Memphis Three case in which three teenage boys—and metalheads—were accused and convicted of murdering three elementary school children as part of a supposed satanic ritual. DNA evidence later showed no connection between the three men and the child murders. They were released from prison in 2011 after many people—including celebrities like Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder and the members of Metallica—advocated on their behalf, prompting a movement in support of their release (Haynes, 2022).

It's immediately obvious that Eddie is an outcast at Hawkins High School; his long shaggy hair, outlandish behavior, and status as president of the Hellfire Club in his first appearance alone are enough to

make people keep their distance. But the same scene also hints at a softer side to Eddie when it's revealed that he took main characters Mike and Dustin under his wing, welcoming them into Hellfire Club when they too were outcast by their classmates at the start of the school year. In a study conducted by Rowe and Guerin (2017) exploring the mental health of metal youth, findings showed that all 28 participants had experienced some form of social exclusion or bullying in school and that, for many, this was the impetus for their interest in the metal genre. Many also reported the desire to be perceived as scary or intimidating so that ostracism became a choice instead of the result of their peers' rejection. This is reminiscent of the scene in which cheerleader Chrissy Cunningham tells Eddie he's not as "mean and scary" as she thought he'd be, to which he responds, "Yeah, well, I thought you'd be kind of mean and scary too" (Duffer et al., 2022a).

Naturally, because of his appearance, interests, and reputation, Eddie becomes the prime suspect in a murder investigation after teens start dying (at the hands of Vecna) in the small, quiet town of Hawkins. There's even a scene in a later episode when a literal mob of townsfolk is incited to hunt down Eddie and bring him to justice. Contrary to his societal perception, Eddie is far from the murderer he's believed to be and actually establishes himself as quite the hero in the show's last episode. His superpower, it turns out, is shredding the guitar to Metallica's "Master of Puppets". Like Eddie, many disenfranchised youth gravitate toward metal because of its angsty themes of rebellion and anti-establishment, which also happen to be common threads woven through the teenage experience. It's likely, then, that integrating metal music as text in the secondary ELA classroom is a promising strategy for engaging high school students, especially those perceived as "other".

"WELCOME HOME" - THE METAL COMMUNITY

After its appearance in one of the most exhilarating scenes of *Stranger Things*, Season Four, Metallica's "Master of Puppets" surged in popularity. First released in 1986, the song topped the charts over thirty years later when it became the #1 Song on the iTunes Rock Charts as well as the 29th most popular song overall (Lash, 2022). Its transition into the mainstream music scene and subsequent uptake by a diverse and much younger audience prompted many long-time fans to speak out against what they saw as a bandwagon effect. According to Kaufman (2022), one such fan took to Twitter, now known as X, to address Metallica directly, writing, "I'm sorry Metallica for all the fake stranger things fans love ya." The band, who have embraced the *Stranger Things* fame as well as the new fans of their music responded on Twitter, saying, "Don't be sorry. Everyone is welcome in the Metallica Family. If they like 'Puppets,' chances are they'll find plenty of other songs to get into" (Kaufman, 2022). The band later took to TikTok to further address these claims, stating, "FYI - EVERYONE is welcome in the Metallica Family. Whether you've been a fan for 40 hours or 40 years, we all share a bond through music. All of you started at ground zero at one point in time" (Reyes, 2022). This reaction from one of metal's biggest acts evinces a significant allure of the genre: the sense of community that exists amongst its fans.

Rowe (2016) explores the curious collective identity shared by metalheads, even those who have never directly encountered a fellow metal fan. Many metal youth identify with the persona as a result of their interaction with relevant online content such as songs, music videos, recordings of metal concerts, and artist interviews. Others pointed to the significance of band t-shirts in connecting the metal community, as it is through this choice in apparel that they can easily identify other fans of the genre. One person explained, "[If] you're on the bus and you see a dude with a Cannibal Corpse shirt on, you kind of know them without even knowing them, you just understand where they're coming from" (Rowe, 2016, p. 86), possibly referencing the feelings of social exclusion shared by many metal youth. Another commonly repeated sentiment was a reverence for the mosh pit and its role in creating this sense of community. Despite the outside perception of mosh pits as settings for violence and aggressive behavior, fans assert that these are spaces in which they "look

out for one another" and feel "cared for" by others (p. 85).

These images of family and a supportive community have starkly contrasted the portrayal of metal in society and pop culture since its inception. In addition to claims that metal induces feelings of depression, suicidal ideation, violence, and risk-taking behaviors, other contributing factors to fans' ostracism have been allegations that they are cognitively inferior to the general population (Baker & Brown, 2016). These assertions were the result of questionable research conducted with metal populations in the 1980s and 90s, which were backed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (p. 4). A prime illustration of this offensive and inaccurate stereotype is *Stranger Things*' Eddie Munson, who is characterized as a 20-year-old high school student still struggling to earn his diploma after two failed attempts, furthering his status as an outcast. Despite its reputation and the historical treatment of its fans, metal music has long provided a sense of belonging and comfort to "othered" youth, the implications of which should be considered in terms of school culture and the classroom environment.

RECHARGING ONE'S "BATTERY" WITH MUSIC

It's no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic was mentally and emotionally taxing for most people. Stay-at-home orders, inconsistent and ever-changing public health communication, and the threat of contracting the virus all took a toll on our state of mind and emotional regulation. During this chaotic chapter, many turned to music for escapism, emotional release, and as a coping mechanism for stress. A study investigating listening to music for stress relief during the pandemic found it to be one of the most effective strategies for stress management among first-year university students, comparable to exercise and sleep (Vidas et al., 2021). Researchers speculate that, unlike these other coping strategies, music listening during COVID lockdown was unique in that it fostered a sense of connection between individuals who may have felt isolated by social distancing and stay-at-home mandates. Another inquiry by Aggarwal (2021) found that 61.3% of teenage participants cited music listening as an effective way to overcome anxiety and manage their stress (p. 241). Other research suggests two approaches to using music for emotional regulation: (1) listening to positive music to counteract a negative mood and (2) listening to music that matches a negative mood to process negative emotions (Stewart et al., 2019, p. 4). Results showed that frequent listening to negative music as a means of coping with negative emotions could be harmful to a person's well-being, while individuals were more likely to experience positive outcomes when listening to more optimistic or uplifting songs (p. 5). However, an earlier study by McFerran et al. (2012) reported that many "highly distressed adolescents used heavy metal music to successfully manage their moods" (p. 11). It is important to note, as well, that metal cannot always be classified as "negative", and to assume such would mean accepting commonly held misconceptions about the genre.

Interviews conducted with metal music listeners support the idea that the genre has positive effects on one's mental health. Several metalheads described experiencing physical and emotional release when listening to metal songs. One such fan recalled letting go of his anger as he "beat [his fists and feet] down on the bed' in time with the intensity of the music" (Rowe & Guerin, 2017, p. 434). Others described connecting with themes of pain and brokenness common to metal lyrics as well as those of dominance over other groups. These reports are further backed by a relatively new approach to mental health, Heavy Metal Therapy (HMT). Quinn (2019) describes undertaking HMT following an experience with a client who was not responding to a traditional therapeutic treatment, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Being a self-proclaimed metalhead and recognizing her client's similar musical interests, Quinn took a chance on an unconventional therapeutic approach, asking the client to create metal playlists to serve as narrative retellings of his experiences. This strategy, Quinn (2019) explains, was born from theories of Voice Dialogue which assert that "we all have different aspects

of ourselves, some which are dominant and some that are ‘disowned’ or pushed away” because they are too “challenging, undesirable or unsafe” (p. 420). Metal, she says, addresses and even embraces the discussion of such “disowned” qualities. The HMT approach has since grown into a widely successful movement which is chronicled on a website that stores playlists, blogs, poetry, and more submitted by HMT users.

As previously discussed, dubious research from the early days of metal correlated the genre with predispositions for mental health conditions like depression and suicidal ideation. However, recent research surveying former metal youth who are now adults suggests that the opposite may actually be true. According to Fradera (2015), results from a Facebook survey by Humboldt State University showed that when compared to a control group of non-metal fans around the same age, the adult metalheads were psychologically and socially comparable to those in the control group. Additionally, participants who listened to metal as adolescents were less likely than those in the control group to be in treatment for emotional issues as adults, providing support for the theory that listening to metal is an effective form of emotional regulation (Fradera, 2015). While there is yet to be an established consensus on the emotional effects of metal music listening, more and more research points to its therapeutic significance and positive implications for stress management and emotional regulation.

There are many potential advantages to integrating music-based learning in the ELA classroom, including songs from the metal genre, typically avoided because of the stigma and general public perception, but which may be the key to engaging many socially othered students. According to Towel (2000), music “can be especially beneficial for hard-to-reach children, who have difficulty learning through traditional methods” (p. 287). Given the precarious state of the pandemic and the ongoing mental health crisis, these findings about the psychological benefits of music should be closely examined in relation to educational approaches.

“TURN THE PAGE” - CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS FOR METAL

As Goering and Strayhorn (2016) note, English educators have been integrating music-based lessons in their curriculum for many years, from the songs of The Beatles in the 1960s to the more recent study of Katy Perry’s “Firework”. It is rare, however, to encounter metal music in the ELA classroom even though its themes pair nicely with many canonical texts. One reason for this is that the content of metal songs is often deemed inappropriate for study in an academic context. The repeated references to self-harm and suicide, for instance, may be seen as unsuitable for adolescent brains. However, as Baker and Brown (2016) point out, these are topics often addressed in secondary English classes when reading Shakespeare’s *Romeo & Juliet*, the works of Edgar Allan Poe, and Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (p. 10-11).

Unlike these pieces, metal songs often reference such taboo topics to deter listeners from self-destructive behaviors. For instance, the video for “Coming Down” by Five Finger Death Punch depicts two suicidal youths who are saved from this fate by their loved ones, concluding with the contact information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (p. 11). Another prime example is Metallica’s “Master of Puppets”, which cautions listeners against drug use by likening addiction to a puppet master controlling users’ lives (*Metallica – Master of Puppets*, n.d.). Lyrics such as “Master of puppets, I’m pulling your strings / Twisting your mind and smashing your dreams / Blinded by me, you can’t see a thing” demonstrate the negative impacts of drug addiction, warning listeners about the dangerous repercussions of using (Burton et al., 1986)

It is clear that the exclusion of metal music from academia is not rooted in concern for young minds but is due, instead, to the stigmatization of the genre. A popular scene from Season 4, Episode 8 of *Stranger Things* perfectly captures this perception, as the adolescent characters work to rescue Nancy Wheeler from Vecna’s grasp in the Upside Down. Frantically searching through Eddie’s cassette tapes for a song that will save Nancy, characters Robin and Max criticize Eddie’s collection saying, “...we can’t find anything!...What is all this

shit?!...We need music!" prompting Eddie to shriek in response, "This is music!"; thrusting forth a copy of Iron Maiden's *Piece of Mind* album (Duffer et al., 2022b). This sentiment coincides with Walser's (1993) study which

refutes the assumptive claim that heavy metal is not really music but violent, senseless noise through a detailed, informed and informative discussion of development of the musical genre, the history of the music, the influence of classical music, issues of gender, and a look at some of the controversies that have contributed to the reputation of heavy metal as violent, malevolent or dangerous (as cited in Baker & Brown, 2016, p. 13)

Though consistently underestimated in the field of education, the metal genre presents many complex ideas worthy of academic study as well as opportunities to analyze and discuss these topics in relation to students' experiences.

"Master of Puppets" became the unofficial theme song of *Stranger Things* Season 4 because of its strong connections to the show's villain, a puppet master controlling the fate of his victims who also serves as a powerful symbol for the effects of trauma. A classroom analysis of this interpretation alongside the song's original message about drug addiction could segue into a discussion of what "puppet masters" exist in students' own lives (e.g. schoolwork, technology, social media, gender norms, etc.). Lyiscott et al. (2021) posit that "student engagement with popular culture and media in the ELA classroom is richest when it encompasses both analysis of existing texts and composition of new ones" (p. 4). This lesson could culminate with students creating a piece representing their personally-recognized "puppet masters", such as a poem, short story, or visual text. Introducing learners to this alternative genre can bridge further analysis and creation of unconventional texts, and metal songs are easily integrated into existing curricula because of their complementary themes. The following lessons pair metal selections with more traditional literary texts.

TABLE 1
Classroom Applications for Metal

Dystopian Literature	Rubin (2011) details a unit he created that pairs Orwell's <i>1984</i> with the concept album from metal band Queensrÿche, <i>Operation: Mindcrime</i> . Both texts deal with characters fighting against oppressive regimes and the collective anger felt by the affected citizens. The corresponding project asks students to consider the texts' parallel themes as part of their larger study of injustice and political consciousness (p. 76).
Transcendentalist Literature	Wagner (2021) writes about using music to explore themes of nonconformity, civil disobedience, and self-reliance when paired with works by Thoreau and Emerson. While her lesson descriptions do not utilize metal music, one can see how analysis of songs like Metallica's "Wherever I May Roam" would supplement these readings.

<p>Civil Rights and Protest Literature</p>	<p>Cortés Santiago (2016) discusses using “Without a Face” by Rage Against the Machine to teach about injustices directed at marginalized groups, specifically immigrant populations. She writes, “Such dissident voices serve an important goal: reminding us of our civil duty to question, rebel, uncover, problematize, and challenge the status quo” (p. 32).</p>
<p>Romantic Literature</p>	<p>Because of its exploration of the complexities of human emotion, Dark Romantic literature makes an apt pairing for metal music. I recommend pairing Edgar Allan Poe’s “Alone” with Korn’s “Tearjerker”. Both texts address feelings of being an outcast and the psychological and emotional effects of such treatment.</p>

For the upcoming school year, I am planning a unit for my A.P. English Language classes about the dangers of censorship and homogeneous thinking in a pluralistic society. Our major texts for the unit will be Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* and a recent podcast called *The Witch Trials of J. K. Rowling*, both of which center around individuals who are targeted for their actions and beliefs that butt against the status quo. Within the unit, we will also explore the idea of “accepted disruptors”, such as rock artists, who similarly challenge societal norms without experiencing the same backlash or falling victim to socially pervasive cancel culture. Students will listen to and analyze examples of metal songs that function as social commentaries such as Black Sabbath’s “War Pigs”, exploring the music and lyrics for rhetorical choices that convey the band’s message within the greater rhetorical situation. We will also be using the 3Ps– perspective, positioning, and power (Jones 2006)–to examine how artists like these are able to discuss controversial topics without losing their fan base and credibility. The main goal of the unit will be to empower and equip students to express themselves as accepted disruptors in combating issues of social justice. The unit will conclude with students creating a social justice narrative in which they apply some of the strategies they have garnered from our study of metal music to address their chosen social issues in a way that is both outspoken and credible.

Conclusion

If we choose to recognize metal music and other peripheral genres as valid ELA classroom resources, we can further broaden the horizons of our mainstream students while also welcoming “othered” students into the fold. Utilizing metal songs as texts may also help students manage stress and provide a release for frequently repressed negative emotions. Additionally, the themes and topics explored in the metal genre complement a variety of traditional literary texts, so the only resource needed to integrate these songs into established curriculum is an open and creative mind.

Though Eddie Munson’s experience in the Upside Down differs from that of other characters—he is not directly targeted by Vecna and is instead attacked by vicious “demobats” which inhabit the realm—the role that music plays in his story invites pause. Why is it that, while other characters’ favorite songs protect them from danger in the Upside Down, Eddie’s rendition of “Master of Puppets” is ultimately what leads to his death? This serves as a poignant analogy for our “othered” students who are so often typecast, ostracized, or persecuted for their interests while mainstream content is praised for its societal and even educational value.

However, it may be that Eddie wasn't a victim after all. Perhaps he was instead able to harness his "othered" status to create positive change in the world where he existed. Because he was unwilling to succumb to the mainstream influences of his time, he had the skills, tools, and subsequent power to fight against Vecna's evil influence and save his friends in a way that no one else could. Perhaps by exposing our students to alternative genres like metal, they can feel empowered to stand up and fight too.

REFERENCES

- Aggarwal, S. (2021). The effect of art and music on stress and anxiety levels in adolescents. *IAHRW International Journal of Social Sciences Review*, 9(3), 240–242. <https://iahrw.org/product/the-effect-of-art-and-music-on-stress-and-anxiety-levels-in-adolescents/>
- Ardizzone, L. (2005, September 22). Yelling and listening: Youth culture, punk rock, and power. *Taboo*, 9(2), 49-58.
- Baker, C., & Brown, B. (2016). Suicide, self-harm and survival strategies in contemporary heavy metal music: A cultural and literary analysis. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 37(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10912-014-9274-8>
- Buchanan, R. J. (2016). A punk pedagogical approach to genre. *Recontextualized*, 129–140. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-606-4_10
- Burton, C., Hammett, K., Hetfield, J., & Ulrich, L. (1986). Master of puppets [Recorded by Metallica]. On *Master of puppets* [Album]. Elektra Records.
- Cortés Santiago, I. (2016). "Mix it up". In *Recontextualized*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789463006064_005
- Duffer, M., Duffer, D., & Schneiderhan, C. (Writers), & Duffer, M. & Duffer, D. (Directors). (2022). Chapter one: The hellfire club (Season 4, Episode 1) [Tv series episode]. In Duffer, M. & Duffer, D. (Executive Producers), *Stranger Things*. Netflix.
- Duffer, M., Duffer, D., & Schneiderhan, C. (Writers), & Duffer, M. & Duffer, D. (Directors). (2022, May 27). Chapter Eight: Papa (Season 4, Episode 8) [Tv series episode]. In Duffer, M. & Duffer, D. (Executive Producers), *Stranger Things*. Netflix.
- Gladwell, M. (Host). (2022, July 21). When Will met Grace (No. 75) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Revisionist History*. Pushkin Industries. <https://www.pushkin.fm/podcasts/revisionist-history/when-will-met-grace>
- Goering, C. Z., & Strayhorn, N. (2016). Beyond enhancement: Teaching English through musical arts integration. *The English Journal*, 105(5), 29–34.
- Haynes, D. (2022, June 10). 'Stranger Things': How the satanic panic of the '80s, '90s created Eddie. UPI. https://www.upi.com/Entertainment_News/2022/06/10/Stranger-Things-West-Memphis-3/2181654721152/
- Jones, S. (2006). *Girls, social class, and literacy: What teachers can do to make a difference*. Pearson Education Canada
- Kahn-Egan, S. (1998). Pedagogy of the pissed: Punk pedagogy in the first-year writing classroom. *College Composition and Communication*, 49(1), 99–104. <https://doi.org/10.2307/358563>
- Kaufman, G. (2022, July 7). *Metallica melt hater over 'Stranger things' fan diss: 'Everyone is welcome in the Metallica family'*. Billboard. <https://www.billboard.com/music/rock/metallica-response-stranger-things-master-of-puppets-diss-1235111490/>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 257–277). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lash, J. (2022, July 5). *Metallica's 1986 hit 'Master of Puppets' hits No. 1 on iTunes Rock chart thanks to 'Stranger Things' season 4*. TheWrap. <https://www.thewrap.com/metallica-master-of-puppets-stranger-things-season-4/>
- Lyiscott, J., Mirra, N., Garcia, A., & National Council of Teachers of English, N. J. R. S. O. of P. R. (2021).

- Critical media literacy and popular culture in ELA classrooms. A Policy Research Brief. In *National Council of Teachers of English*. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Metallica – Master of Puppets*. (n.d.). Genius. <https://genius.com/Metallica-master-of-puppets-lyrics>
- McFerran, K., O’Grady, L., Grocke, D., & Sawyer, S. M. (2012). *How teenagers use music to manage their mood: An initial investigation*. University of Melbourne. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.639174>
- Morrell, E. (2002). Toward a critical pedagogy of popular culture: Literacy development among urban youth. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(1), 72-77.
- Perticone, T. (2018, March 7). *Heavy Metal and the Satanic Panic*. UWIRE Text, 1.
- Prasad, P. (2018). *Crafting qualitative research: Beyond positivist traditions* (2nd ed.) Routledge.
- Quinn, K. (2019). Heavy metal music and managing mental health: Heavy Metal Therapy. *Metal Music Studies*, 5(3), 419. https://doi.org/10.1386/mms.5.3.419_1
- Reyes, M. (2022, July 11). *Twitter adults are roasting young stranger things fans just finding out about Metallica, and the band responded*. CINEMABLEND. <https://www.cinemablend.com/streaming-news/twitter-adults-are-roasting-young-stranger-things-fans-just-finding-out-about-metallica-and-the-band-responded>
- Rowe, P. (2016). “We’re in this together and we take care of our own”: Narrative constructions of metal community told by metal youth. In *Heavy metal music and the communal experience* (pp. 79–98). Lexington Books.
- Rowe, P., & Guerin, B. (2017). Contextualizing the mental health of metal youth: A community for social protection, identity, and musical empowerment. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(4), 429–441. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21949>
- Rubin, D. I. (2011). Mindcrime and doublethink: Using music to teach dystopian literature. *The English Journal*, 101(2), 74–79.
- Stewart, J., Garrido, S., Hense, C., & McFerran, K. (2019). Music use for mood regulation: Self-awareness and conscious listening choices in young people with tendencies to depression. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01199>
- Towell, J. H. (2000). Motivating students through music and literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 53(4), 284–287.
- Vidas, D., Larwood, J. L., Nelson, N. L., & Dingle, G. A. (2021). Music listening as a strategy for managing COVID-19 stress in first-year university students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.647065>
- Wagner, M. (2021). Seizing the moment: Recognizing transcendental beliefs in contemporary songs. *English Journal*, 110(4), 53–61. <https://doi.org/10.58680/ej202131128>

AUTHOR BIO

Ashley Butterworth Brumbelow teaches honors ninth-grade literature and Advanced Placement English Language and Composition in North Georgia. After obtaining her bachelor's degree in English education and master's in curriculum and instruction through the University of North Georgia, she is pursuing a Ph.D. in language and literacy education at the University of Georgia.

SUGGESTED REFERENCE CITATION

APA

Brumbelow, A. B. (2024). "This is music!": What stranger things' Eddie Munson reveals about the power of metal. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, 11(1). <http://journaldialogue.org/v11-issue-1/this-is-music-what-stranger-things-eddie-munson-reveals-about-the-power-of-metal/>

MLA

Brumbelow, Ashley Butterworth. "This is Music!": What Stranger Things' Eddie Munson Reveals About the Power of Metal. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*. 2024, vol 11, no. 1, <http://journaldialogue.org/v11-issue-1/this-is-music-what-stranger-things-eddie-munson-reveals-about-the-power-of-metal/>



GENDER, AGE, CLASS AND RACIAL STEREOTYPES, AND POWER RELATIONS IN TELEVISION ADS: 2011-13 vs 2021-22

Thomas Clark
Xavier University
Cincinnati, Ohio USA
clarkt@xavier.edu

Julie Stewart
University of Texas, Dallas
Richardson, Texas, USA
julie.stewart@utdallas.edu

ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates how faculty and DEI experts can use resources included in this paper to highlight how a range of stereotypes are created and reinforced in television ads, and it identifies several topics for future analysis. To understand how depictions of gender, class, age, and race intersect in 8 television ads featuring the relationship between the race of individuals depicted in romantic and platonic relationships this article examines 4 pairs of commercials from 2011-13 and 2021-22. Drawing on concepts of intercategory complexity, it describes product, setting, characters and relationships to help gain a deeper understanding of how various stereotypes operate and intersect in specific ads over time. The findings indicate that while interracial relationships were portrayed positively over both time periods, which was not the case with same race ads. In addition, stereotypes of age, class, and gender were perpetuated in the some of the ads from both periods.

Keywords: stereotypes, intercategory complexity, television, advertisements, race, class, gender, age

This article demonstrates how faculty and DEI experts can use resources included in this paper to highlight how a range of stereotypes are created and reinforced in television ads, and it identifies several topics for future analysis. Analyzing the relationship between the race of individuals depicted in romantic and platonic relationships in television advertisements is as positive as recent research suggests and to analyze those relationships as they intersect with depictions of gender, class, and age, it examines 4 pairs of commercials from 2011-13 and 2021-22. Drawing on concepts of intercategory complexity (McCall, 2005), it observes product, setting, characters and relationships to gain a deeper understanding of how various stereotypes operate and intersect in specific ads over time. The findings indicate that while interracial relationships were portrayed positively over both time periods, such may not be the case is same race relationships as other stereotypes of age, class, and gender were perpetuated in many of the ads that were analyzed.

RATIONALE

Advertisements often reflect society's changing sense of social responsibility in defining their brands' messages, including the representation of product, settings, character, gender, age, plot, and the presence of same race and mixed-race friendship and romantic relationships. As Acuff and Kraehe (2020) observe "Mass media are pervasive in the modern world, so much so that when people encounter them in daily life, the content may be consumed unconsciously and the meaning internalized with little criticality (p. 11)." For example, prime time television ads play an important role in shaping popular attitudes toward race, gender, class, and age. As consumers experience ads casually and episodically, attention economics demand that advertisers use visual, aural, and linguistic means to communicate instantly.

Given that television advertising and related media include a wide variety of depictions of characters of different races, ages, class, and gender, and in uneven power relationships, research shows that historically depictions of characters based on these factors have been disparate and that much of what might appear to be progress relies on stereotypes and easy to understand tropes. This is why it is important to study these depictions, as the research is unsettled on where there is progress and where progress can still be made. McCall (2005) points out that the dominant form of quantitative research required of many leading journals focus on single variable studies, such as race, gender, age, and class. By contrast, intercategory complexity "focuses on the complexity of relationships among multiple social groups within and across analytical categories and not on complexities within single social groups, single categories, or both" (p. 1773). This approach "requires that scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions"(1773). "In fact, the size and significance of each element is perhaps why current quantitative social scientific research is divided, regrettably, into separate specialties on gender, race, and class, with little overlap among them" (1787).

In particular, US viewers have seen television ads portraying same race and Black/White interracial friendship and romantic relationships, many of which generated significant public comment. How these friendship and romantic relationships are portrayed in same race/different race relationships in ads matters in themselves and also because they also reflect perceptions of power, gender, age, and class relationships for the audiences that advertisers, who have wealth, power, and privilege, target (Acuff & Kraehe, 2020). As the analysis of the eight ads in this study show, creators of ads that feature same race and interracial friendship and romantic relationships still promote stereotypes within those spaces. It also demonstrates how faculty and DEI experts can use these resources to highlight how a range of stereotypes are created and reinforced in television ads, and it identifies several topics for future analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on intersectionality, some of which is summarized below, reveals the limitation McCall identifies: the often-single focus on race and gender, class, and age without examining their intersection with other variables, such as power relationships, in the characterization of the ads' actors.

Race and gender

Recent research generally reveals significant advances in public acceptance of Black/White friendship and romantic relationships. Hackenmueller (2020) found that interracial couples are not portrayed differently than their intraracial counterparts in the ads studied. She also found that interracial relationships are overrepresented in ads (19% in ads vs. 10% of population), with this caveat: that "interracial couples are found at further distances from each other, and...a relationship between non-White males and White females are underrepresented within interracial relationships. Approximately 30% of the interracial couples portrayed in the television commercials consisted of a non-White male and a White female, a significant underrepresentation from the 37% proportional representation interracial couples in the US population (p. 31)."

Babbitt et al. (2018) hypothesized and confirmed that racial stereotypes differ by gender. Whites and Blacks reported that White men are seen as more prejudiced than White women. Young's (2015) analysis of ads with a matrix of interracial couples revealed that the ads featuring the Black female – Caucasian male couple, the Black male – Caucasian female couple, and the Black couple all generated significantly more *likely to purchase the brand* scores than the ad featuring the Caucasian couple. Further analysis showed that female respondents generated significantly more positive attitudes toward the ad scores for the ads that feature interracial couples than ads that feature same race couples.

Similarly, in a sampling of a high school and college-aged cohort, Young (2015) found "that ads featuring interracial couples generated significantly more positive attitude toward the ad scores than the ads featuring same-race couples, for the sample" (p. 35). Specifically, the ads featuring the Black female – Caucasian male couple, the Black male – Caucasian female couple, and the Black couple generated significantly more positive attitude toward the ad scores than the ad featuring the Caucasian couple. Additionally, Parker (2020) found "no systematic relationship between implicit and explicit biases with regards to race and interracial dating" (p. 59).

On the other hand, Bhat et al. (2018) using a sample of subjects in a wide age range found that ads depicting Black-White couples stimulated more negative emotions though the responses were not related to subjects' own race and gender, suggesting older Americans may be less open to interracial relationships.

Davis' (2019) analysis of an international review of 2000 advertisements reveals that females are portrayed as less powerful and less professional than males on a variety of measures including age, humor, objectification, location, and work. Sharma & Bumb (2021) summarize additional research findings on gender stereotypes in tabular form. (See Appendix A).

Age and class

Ng & Indran's (2023) comprehensive literature review on aging in media found "positive stereotypes include being warm, generous and kind, while negative stereotypes include being slow, irrelevant and incompetent" (p. 2). Surprisingly, they found that "individuals with egalitarian beliefs—specifically those who champion gender and racial equality—are actually more likely to endorse ageist beliefs" (p. 9).

Kraus and colleagues (2017) have argued that social class stereotyping is in part a consequence of *social class signaling*—the way social class is communicated through speech, dress, preferences, and other social behaviors. Connor et al. (2020) and Fiske et al. (2002) posit that social class stereotypes abound in social perception and occur for both warmth and competence dimensions. Of the dimensions, the most robust class stereotype is between class and competence. This data suggests an "inverted U"-shaped relationship between social class and warmth, with the middle class considered more warm and the rich and poor stereotyped as less warm.

AD ANALYSIS

Paired 30-second television ads were analyzed. Sponsored by 4 companies-- Philadelphia Cream Cheese, Aflac, Snickers, and KFC—and promoted to American audiences on prime-time television--the ads aired in 2011-13 and 2021-22 respectively featuring same race and interracial platonic and romantic relationships. The criteria for choosing commercials were that they were nationally televised and appeared frequently during the time they were collected. The commercials are representative of the larger body of commercials and the way different types of relationships are depicted to particular target audiences. We recorded field notes on the roles characters play, detailed descriptions of relationships, a summary of the general plot including setting, product, and character actions in each commercial. The ads were also analyzed for target audience; intersections of gender, age, class and race stereotypes; and power relationships.

As theoretical lenses we used several widely employed criteria for assessing how gender, age, class and racial stereotyping are constructed as well as visually and linguistically presented (summarized in Tables A, B, and C in the Appendix) such as Sharma and Bumb's (2021) Negative Issues Concerning Women; Hughey's (2009) "Magic Negro," analysis; Vera and Gordon's (2003) concept of "sincere fictions of the White self;" and Goffman's (1979) analysis of gender role depictions.

PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS

The materials provided in this paper can be used as pedagogical tools for helping students develop nuanced perspectives on how stereotypes are used to promote products and brands. Specifically, faculty can preview the short 30-second ads by providing the tables in the Appendix for criteria by which students can evaluate these ads, then assign groups to view one set of paired ads and to ask them to fill in charts similar to those provided in the body of this paper so they can develop an understanding of the critical dimensions on which the ads can be evaluated. Faculty can also provide the data in the tables and the commentary that follows for additional content analysis, class discussion, and reflective thinking.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Observing eight television advertisements, we explore these questions:

- How are romantic and platonic relationships portrayed relative to the intersection of race, age, class, power, and gender of individuals depicted in television advertisements?
- What other stereotypes related to age, gender, power, and class are promoted in these ads that suggest topics for further exploration?

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF COMMERCIALS

For ease of comparison, the product, settings, characters, relationships, plot, summary of stereotypes, and power relations are shown in tabular form, followed by additional analysis of each paired commercial. The tabular format allows readers to find a single variable quickly and to compare the same variable across all eight ads.

Table 1 Philadelphia Cream Cheese Commercials

Link to ad	https://youtu.be/rKWuzhuOBQs	https://youtube.com/watch?v=PsExXVxSnZ4&feature=share
Product	Philadelphia Cream Cheese 2011 "Stir in a Pheeling"	Philadelphia Cream Cheese 2021-22 "You Don't Just Taste It. You Feel It"

<p>Target audience</p>	<p>Females 20-39 middle to higher economic class of professionals and executives.</p>	
<p>Setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male/Female hugs in an old-fashioned elevator. • Couple close together over a kitchen stove and leaning across from each other at a table in a small hip urban apartment , suggesting a starter dwelling. <p><i>Jingle: Spread a little love with me</i></p>	<p>Living room with near all-White décor in a hip urban apartment with a view of the city Ad accompanied by romantic song lyrics. Take a Look by Irma Thomas. <i>Take a look at this heart</i> <i>It's the one I'm gonna use to love you</i> <i>Take a look at these arms</i> <i>They're the arms I'm gonna use to hug you</i></p>
<p>Characters and Relationships</p>	<p>Light skinned Black female and White male in their late 20's.</p> <p>Male holds female's hand. Each initiates a kiss with the other and the ad ends with a mutual kiss.</p> <p>Both are outgoing, at ease with one another, and communicate their mutual affection wordlessly.</p>	<p>A casually yet expensively dressed light skinned Black female with full make up, earrings, and a ring on the fourth finger of left hand.</p> <p>In her mid-30's, she enjoys being alone with her pure White cat, a signal that she is strong and independent. She is confident, relaxed, and appreciates stylish décor</p> <p>All action is nonverbal.</p>
<p>Plot</p>	<p>The couple return from food shopping and laugh throughout the ad, even as they spill their bag. Ad cuts to couple making pasta in close proximity to each other including stirring Philly into the sauce. Each feeds the other a forkful of pasta. Passionate kiss concludes the ad.</p>	<p>Female smiles indulgently as she spreads cream cheese on an English muffin. She garnishes it with slices of cherry tomatoes and a sprig of rosemary. After one bite she closes her eyes and wraps herself in a White shawl while leaning against her White couch. She smiles dreamily and embraces the shawl while the cat meows in puzzlement. Her fingers touch the contours of her body. While touching, she caresses shawl around face, neck, shoulder.</p>
<p>Presence of IRR and Type of Depiction</p>	<p>Male gives total attention to female reflecting an ideal of hetero-sexual romantic love.</p>	<p>Ambiguous relationship status. Female is portrayed as self-reliant, completely happy in this “alone” moment in her own world, which she is sharing with her cat.</p> <p>Me-time is important to her.</p> <p>The ring and lyrics suggest she has a strong relationship with someone whose absence is required for her to enjoy this experience. Delayed gratification. One bite enjoyed over time.</p>
<p>Gender & Class Depictions</p>	<p>White male and Black female portrayed in a positive way research suggests viewers prefer.</p> <p>Equality, though male initiates most handholding, kissing, cooking and sharing pasta.</p>	<p>Sexually attractive female is shown lying down as camera pulls away. She closes her eyes, removing herself psychologically from her physical surroundings. She hugs the shawl in what some might see as an erotic gesture of beauty, submissiveness &, self-nurturance.</p>

<p>Gender & Class Depictions (Continued)</p>	<p>Warmth and competence. Gourmet cooking, upwardly mobile. Couple shops and cooks together in the kitchen. Married or friends with benefits?</p>	<p>It complements the pleasure she feels as she savors the muffin. White color suggests class, style, childlessness. Upwardly mobile, professional, finer things, gourmet food, warm, competent. Implied romantic relationship. Contrast to Wanda Sykes portrayal of older, angry Black female.</p>
---	---	---

The 2011 Philadelphia Cream Cheese ad reinforces the normality of a White/Black romantic relationship, promoting a theme of mutual, equal, happy love. Suggesting gender and racial equality, the couple, sophisticated urbanites, are unaffected by their racial differences, lovingly touching each other throughout the ad, with the caveat that the male, while paying rapt attention to the female, takes the lead in all activities with female acceptance. At the same time, the nature of the relationship is ambiguous—it is unclear whether this is a fling, a long-term relationship, or a marriage. (This ad supports Branchik’s (2007) suggestion that advertisements eventually reflect reality and that positive changes are on the horizon for the types of couples shown in ads.)

The 2021 Philadelphia Cream Cheese ad demonstrates the intersection of class, gender, and racial stereotypes. While Goffman’s Ritualization of Subordination is present, as women are often shown lying down as a way to show that they are subordinate to males, in this ad the female, sophisticated in her tastes in clothing, décor, and food, is shown as confident in her choices and in her solitude, with a focus on indulgent self-care while the ring and music suggest she is engaged in a romantic relationship outside the frame of the advertisement.

Table 2 Aflac Commercials

<p>Link to ads</p>	<p>https://youtu.be/X8orTQuG29Y</p>	<p>aflachttps://www.thedrum.com/news/2022/03/01/aflac-launches-march-madness-pre-pain-show-with-wanda-sykes-and-lil-rel-howery</p>
<p>Target audience</p>	<p>Consumers in the 35- to 54-year-old age group and to boost sales of accident and disability insurance.</p>	
<p>Product</p>	<p>Aflac Insurance 2012</p>	<p>Aflac Insurance 2022 Pin-Ah-tah</p>
<p>Setting</p>	<p>A Black male and a White male who are friends in a leaking rowboat fishing on a lake.</p>	<p>Wanda Sykes, who is in her late 50’s, & has identified as lesbian and has a White partner, is featured as spokesperson at an outdoor party where a pinata is being struck by a child.</p>
		<p>Sykes is sitting in a broadcast booth looking down on the action at the party as if she were commenting on an athletic event with a male middle-aged Black colleague to whom she is superior in rank.</p>

Characters and Relationships	This ad features two friends. The first is a White male and the second is a Black male who has injured his arm. As they discuss insurance, a duck is constantly stating “Aflac,” to which both men are oblivious. White man is nervous; Black man is responsible in a gentle, reassuring way.	Younger Black male is trying to avoid being hit with a pinata bat He is bent over submissively, looking to the announcers for help. He is nervous with no plan of escape. The announcers speak with confidence and pay little attention to or show pity for the young victim.
Plot	Two males who are friends have gone fishing. The Black male is reminding the White male of all the things his current insurance program does not cover. A duck continuously suggests that “Aflac” would fill those gaps.	Child shown hitting a pinata. Bat is shown swung near the head of a young Black male. Wanda Sykes and a Black male commentator promote Aflac protection plan benefits. Violence is used as humor. Sykes says she is going to call victim’s Mother after sound of bat hitting victim.
Presence of IRR and Type of Depiction	There is a clear interracial friendship in this commercial as it features two guys, one White and one Black, out fishing together on a lake, implying common interest and trust in one another.	Friendship among sports commentators No romantic relationship Sykes knows the victim’s mother. Young Black male shown as afraid Commentators seem indifferent to his situation Sykes speaks most of the words

Both ads have traditionally male settings: a fishing boat on a lake and a booth with sports commentators. The Aflac ad depends upon the stereotype of a Black character who relates “folk wisdom,” (Hughey, 2009) to his uninformed White male friend. He has an abundance of knowledge that his White friend has not considered. The interracial relationship relies on the idea that in this friendship the Black character is able to advise the White character on what choices he should make in his life, and about his insurance. The Black male shares power with the Aflac Duck in helping his friend, with a patient and polite approach, to understand the importance of purchasing supplemental insurance. This implies that the White character, who is agreeable to this advice, needs a wise Black friend to inform him of all of the bills he would have to pay beyond that which his current insurance covers. Both males are sitting in a leaky rowboat, dressed in casual clothes suggesting a lower middle-class identity. They reinforce a stereotype of non-college educated males not noticing what’s going on in their environment, even as the Aflac duck warns of their peril, as gender, class and racial stereotypes intersect.

The more contemporary ad reinforces a one-dimensional image of the angry, Black, middle-aged female, shown in popular culture stereotypes (Motro et al., 2022), dramatically promoted in Madea movies, viewing the pain of a young Black male with condescension and disdain. It reinforces a negative image of some young Black men as having weak character, a theme highlighted in such classic literature as Hansberry’s *Raisin in the Sun* and Baldwin’s *Sonny’s Blues*. This ad, suggesting the announcer has a same race friendship relationship with the victim’s mother, stands in stark contrast to the Philly ad of interracial romantic love, where the couple sees each other in a positive light.

Table 3 Snickers Commercials

Links to ads	https://youtu.be/UQnD0X2cQmo	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD3WqYhopsw
Target audience	All-age group that belongs to middle, upper-middle and an upper-class section of society.	
Product	Snickers Candy Bar 2013 Get Some Nuts Inner Diva	Snickers Candy Bar 2022 Snickers Unfiltered
Setting	A locker room full of football players of various races in their 20s in their underwear and Joan Collins.	A living room with two heterosexual White couples in their 20's participating in a game night.
Characters and Relationships	<p>Role reversal of some gender stereotypes. Joan Collins is com-fortable among half naked athletes.</p> <p>She plays on her celebrity to reinforce her image of diva privilege.</p> <p>Her strong posture, assertive delivery and condescending remarks suggest she sees herself as powerful in a male environment.</p> <p>Only ad of 8 featuring characters in their 60's and 70's. Both are portrayed as cold.</p>	<p>Unmarried couples are at ease with one another at first; uneasy by end of commercial.</p> <p>2nd Female is portrayed as sexually liberated, open to multiple sexual partners--and interpersonally imperceptive.</p>
Plot	<p>Joan Collins berates two White players suggesting one of them stole her deodorant. A White male gives her a Snickers and she transforms into a middle-aged White male.</p> <p>Ms. Beacham at end reinforces the over the hill angry diva stereotype.</p> <p>Tagline: Get Some Nuts</p>	<p>First Female suggests a swap.</p> <p>Second female interprets it as a proposal for a sex swap and asks if she would move in with the first female's boyfriend.</p> <p>Both boyfriends show discomfort non-verbally.</p> <p>Second female's boyfriend shows dismay nonverbally at potential of being less preferred than the other male.</p> <p>The 1st female is irritated and clarifies she meant a swap of the team players.</p> <p>The 2nd female says "Of course" and backtracks in embarrassment.</p> <p>Ad blames her behavior on hunger.</p> <p>Tagline: When You Are Hungry, You're Unfiltered. Snickers Satisfies</p>

<p>Presence of IRR and Type of Depiction</p>	<p>While an interracial friendship among the athletes is portrayed, the two insulted White players are the only athletes who speak. Collins is transformed into a male after a White male who plays the voice of reason gives her candy. The males are secondary to the central female characters, who are both White.</p> <p>The ad reinforces the idea that males are rational, women emotional.</p> <p>The ad implies the older women want to have sex with the males, a role reversal.</p>	<p>2nd female is open to a sex swap and the 3 other participants are uneasy that she would suggest it in the presence of the first female, her boyfriend, and the first female's boyfriend.</p> <p>All the characters are young and White.</p>
<p>Gender and class depictions</p>	<p>Angry privileged divas: much older White women in a testosterone-heavy venue; both reflect Goffman's description of dominance, in this case, of women--superior posture: holding the body erect and head high, a marker of superiority and disdain.</p> <p>Diva sees herself as sexually attractive, healthy, engaged, productive and self-reliant.</p> <p>Male indifference suggests she is not welcome in this setting and her behavior seen as inappropriate</p> <p>Gender swap: male is voice of reason. Women speak more than males, open and close the ad.</p>	<p>Couples sit close together. Males do not speak with only nonverbal indications of discomfort.</p> <p>2nd female is portrayed as unfaithful to the male who accompanied her to game night.</p> <p>She misunderstands how her proposal would be received by the other 3.</p> <p>Two women are the only speakers. Males are voiceless.</p>

The White male in the 2011 commercial swoops in to correct the rudeness of the aging female. The gender stereotypes are manifest: while the White female comes across as agitated and angry, she behaves as if she is the person with power. In reality, the White male, as the voice of reason in the commercial, is the one with the power, as once he gives his friend a candy bar, she turns from being a female, into a rational male. This ad reflects a stereotype with the rational White male giving the aging, passionate White female the advice she needs to succeed in getting the attention she craves. Black characters are voiceless and in the background. (This act of stigmatizing older women is not harmless. It reinforces societal stereotypes of being unaware and unfiltered.)

The contemporary Snickers ad features a similar scenario with a demographically contrasting cast of characters: a young, unmarried, heterosexual White female who speaks openly of switching sexual partners--embarrassing what viewers are to believe to be her three friends. She assumes her friends share her sexual openness and when she realizes they are uncomfortable with her suggestions, (unlike Joan Collins), offers an unconvincing apology. Viewers probably are expected to believe that her initial comment will weaken her trust relationships with the other three. This ad counters some stereotypes with a sexually progressive woman suggesting swapping for a sexual encounter. She defies stereotypical WASP traits: She is neither faithful nor a believer in delayed gratification. She, not the men, is interpersonally unaware of the situation and interpersonal dynamics... and as a result, draws the disapprobation of the other three White characters.

Table 4 Kentucky Fried Chicken Commercials

Links to ads	https://youtu.be/VrN4lAonpN8	https://youtu.be/OmKnMlPmIRk
Target Audience	Children Teens and young adults Families Budget customers	
Product	Kentucky Fried Chicken 2012 Ladies You're Welcome	Kentucky Fried Chicken 2022 Around the Table
Setting	<i>She's a Lady</i> cover. throughout Various settings, such as home, bus, office, and bar with males acting badly.	Entirely in various home kitchens.
Characters and Relationships	Working female, perhaps an administrative assistant, encounters rude boorish males, including husband, bus passengers, & office workers, except for KFC cook. She is portrayed as hardworking, responsible, and perseverant. Men are oblivious/indifferent to what is going on in their environments.	Characters have blue collar vibe Internal dialogs of White male, Black females praising KFC White family & Black family characters are outgoing and at ease enjoying the tastes of KFC products. Seniors not included among characters.
Plot	Female encounters rude White males in a series of situations from morning until after work. She shows nonverbal frustration at each until she is seen shopping with a friendly Black female and spots a smiling male KFC cook. She may be thinking "chivalry is dead."	A variety of characters eat KFC fried chicken sandwich, fries, mashed potatoes, and bucket chicken. <i>Repeated Tagline: That's finger lickin' good</i>
Presence of IRR and Type of Depiction	White male partner is indifferent. Rushes into the bathroom ahead of partner; takes the last of the milk. White female gives bus seat to pregnant female who males ignore. White male co-workers watch female carry heavy bottled water without offering to help. Black female friend relates well to frustrated White female. Children not included ad.	1 Black and 2 White characters are shown enjoying eating alone White family Dad, Mom, 2 preschool kids share a meal. Black Mom, teenage daughter & son eat Together. Black Daughter and others who demonstrate casual table manners are presented in a positive light. White woman speaks the most words.

Gender and class depictions	<p>Working class female who sees herself as put upon by her male partner and a series of other males.</p> <p>Fetishization of female irritants</p> <p>Males portrayed stereotypically as rude, self-centered, oblivious, unhelpful.</p> <p>Annoyance expressed entirely nonverbally.</p> <p>No romance in partner portrayal.</p> <p>Friendship with Black female.</p> <p>Females are warm and competent; males are cold and indifferent.</p>	<p>Black family with older children absent a Dad. Mom glances at son;</p> <p>Black Teenage son and daughter focus on their food.</p> <p>White family of 4 with small children.</p> <p>Family characters absorbed in eating an unsophisticated fast-food meal, Kids do not look at one another. White Dad interacts with kids</p> <p>White Mom psychologically weak</p> <p>Daydreams; <i>sometimes I bribe my kids with fries and mac n cheese.</i> Wife. Mother.</p>
------------------------------------	--	--

The older ad is performative--men and women reacting to societal expectations for masculine and feminine behavior. It plays on several stereotypes with a variety of men being indifferent to a put-upon woman's needs. The female character, while frustrated and feeling powerless, does not confront any of the men. Instead, she seems to be sharing her story with a Black female friend on the way to and at a KFC. This ad reflects how a non-executive woman experiences public patriarchy—free to participate unaccompanied in public transportation, restaurants, and the labor force, yet oppressed and exploited in the service of male interests. The KFC woman--whose dress and demeanor suggest she works as an office administrator--is subject to male indifference to her needs stands in sharp focus to the Philly women whose clear identity as part of a sophisticated consumer class also suggest a self-confidence lacking in the KFC protagonist.

In the 2022 ad, several stereotypes are promoted. The White family reflects an old-fashioned American ideal: married White couple with one son and one daughter, and a Black mother, no visible partner, with older children, one son and one daughter. The mothers are portrayed in a traditional “homemaker” manner, quietly acknowledging their value in their ability to meet her family's needs through the selection of take-out menu items. This ad also makes an appeal to the importance of Moms and their primary roles as meeting children's needs, while also showing KFC to be a meal to be enjoyed while alone. This sort of “traditional” family reflects Hochschild's (2012) argument that women have a “second shift” where mothers may simultaneously be expected to work, serve their husbands and kids, and take care of the house, so they may not have time to make dinner from scratch but are still in charge of getting dinner on the table, something implied in the 2012 ad as well.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM ANALYSIS

Faculty might explore these additional questions about how stereotypes might be represented in contemporary television ads when viewed through the lens of intersectionality.

White women vs. Black women

Are White and Black women portrayed differently? The 2021 KFC commercial that shows a traditional White family eating together supports previous research that argues that White and Black women are treated differently in advertisements, with White women portrayed as needing the approval of men whereas Black women are often portrayed, as in this ad, as not in relationships with men (or with unidentified relationships as in the Philly ad or as angry as in the Black female character in the Aflac ad). By contrast, the Black and White singles are portrayed as being happy eating their meals alone, prioritizing savoring their food, similar to the 2022 Philly ad, to sharing conversation with others as they eat.

Same race insults

Do insults in television ads happen primarily in same race relationships? In our examples, Collins insults two White men; Sykes disses a young Black man; the White Snickers sexual adventurer promotes herself as a partner to a White male, insulting the other three White friends, perhaps suggesting a sensitivity about interracial insults in ads.

Sex positive roles

Are men and women portrayed equally as sex positive? Both the Philly ads and the Snickers ads highlight sex positive women while only the Philly ad suggests a sex positive man.

Angry mature females

As all 3 older women (Snickers 2; Aflac 1) are portrayed negatively as rude to younger men while they demonstrate strong physical function and confidence in their demeanor and communication, do their depictions counter some age stereotypes and reinforce others? (Rowe and Kahn, 1997).

Unflattering male stereotypes

Are there more negative portrayals of males, given that men in the ads we examined are more likely to be labelled with unflattering stereotypes, such as being patriarchal, condescending, unaware, insensitive, and boorish, than their young female counterparts?

Unflattering images of non-professional workers

Do ads reflect classism toward the middle class, as suggested in the Aflac rowboat and KFC ads?

TOPICS FOR FUTURE EXPLORATION

Alternative analyses might also explore the intersection of age, class, gender, power, and race stereotypes in different types of ads and in different categories, such as those for outdoor equipment and automobiles, which historically have featured men, and anti-depressant, cosmetics, and fashion ads, which historically have featured women, and ads directed to children.

CONCLUSION

While this analysis supports research findings of societal acceptance of interracial friendship and romantic relationships, it also illustrates that other gender, class, race, power, and age stereotypes persist over time. That is, these ads proved to be sensitive to some stereotypes while reinforcing others. As Giroux (2004) observes, media learning is ubiquitous, a *public pedagogy* that influences how consumers view themselves within the world. Our analysis shows that many recent, short prime-time television ads are visual, aural, and textual carriers of gender, racial, age, power, and class narratives and meanings that persuade viewers to see these intersecting categories of difference as self-evident—and that close examination can help faculty and students better understand how some of these stereotypes have persisted over time.

WORKS CITED

- Acuff, Joni Boyd, and Amelia M. Kraehe. "Visuality of Race in Popular Culture: Teaching Racial Histories and Iconography in Media." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2020. <http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v7-issue-3/visuality-of-race-in-popular-culture-teaching-racial-histories-and-iconography-in-media/>
- Babbitt, Laura G, et al. "The Role of Gender in Racial Meta-Stereotypes and Stereotypes." *Social Cognition*, vol. 36, no. 5, 2018, pp. 589-601.

- Bhat, Subodh, et al. "Interracial Couples in Ads: Do Consumers' Gender and Racial Differences Affect Their Reactions?" *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2018, pp. 1-18.
- Branchik, Blaine. "Pansies to Parents: Gay Male Images in American Print Advertising." *Journal of Macromarketing*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2007, pp. 38-50.
- Connor, Paul, et al. "Social Class Competence Stereotypes Are Amplified by Socially Signaled Economic Inequality." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol 47, no. 1, 2020, pp. 89-105.
- Davis, Geena. "What 2.7 Million YouTube Ads Reveal About Gender Bias in Marketing." *Future of Marketing*, Oct. 2019, <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/future-of-marketing/management-and-culture/diversity-and-inclusion/gender-representation-media-bias/>. Accessed 12 January 2023.
- Fiske, Susan T., et al. "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow From Perceived Status and Competition." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 82, 2002, pp. 878-902.
- Giroux, Henry A. "Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy, and the Responsibility of Intellectuals." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2004, pp. 59-79.
- Goffman, Erving. *Gender Advertisements*. Harvard University Press. 1979.
- Hackenmueller, Erin. *The Misrepresentation of Interracial Couples in Television Advertisements*. 2020. U of Alabama. MA thesis.
- Hochschild, Arlie R., and Anne Machung. *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*. Penguin. 2012
- Hughey, Matthew W. "Cinethetic Racism: White Redemption and Black Stereotypes in "Magical Negro" Films." *Social Problems*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2009, pp. 543-577.
- Kraus, Michael W., et al. "Signs of Social Class: The Experience of Economic Inequality in Everyday Life." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2017, pp. 422-435.
- McCall, Leslie. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs*, vol.30, no. 3, 20052, pp.1771-1800.
- Motro, Daphne, et al. "The "Angry Black Woman" Stereotype at Work". *Harvard Business Review*, 31 Jan. 2022, <https://hbr.org/2022/01/the-angry-black-woman-stereotype-at-work>. Accessed by 16 August 2023.
- Ng, R., and Nicole Indran. "Videos about older adults on TikTok." *PLoS ONE*, vol. 18, no. 8, 2023: e0285987. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0285987>
- Parker, Courtney E. *The Association Between Implicit and Explicit Attitudes Toward Interracial Relationships*. 2020. A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of The California School of Professional Psychology.
- Sharma, Sangeeta, and Arpan Bumb. "Role Portrayal of Women in Advertising: An Empirical Study." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 22, no. 9, 2021, pp. 236-255.
- Vera, Hernan, and Andrew M. Gordon. *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness*. Rowman and Littlefield. 2003.
- Young, Nicole. *Race and Attitudes Toward Interracial Dating*. 2015. Oklahoma State U. MSc thesis.

AUTHOR BIOS

Thomas Clark, PhD, is President of CommuniSkills and Professor Emeritus in the Department of Management, at Xavier University. His publication interests include popular culture, environmental communication, and all aspects of business communication.

Julie Stewart, PhD., is Associate Professor of Instruction at the Naveen School of Business, University of Texas, Dallas, Richardson campus. Her publication interests include advertising, media, and public relations.

SUGGESTED REFERENCE CITATION

APA

Clarke, T. & Stewart, J. (2024). Gender, age, class and racial stereotypes, and power relations in television ads: 2011-13 vs 2021-22. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, 11(1). <http://journaldialogue.org/v11-issue-1/gender-age-class-and-racial-stereotypes-and-power-relations/>

MLA

Clarke, Thomas & Stewart, Julie. "Gender, Age, Class and Racial Stereotypes, and Power Relations in Television Ads: 2011-13 vs 2021-22". *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*. 2024, vol. 11, no. 1. <http://journaldialogue.org/v11-issue-1/gender-age-class-and-racial-stereotypes-and-power-relations/>



APPENDICES**Table A. Common Stereotypes of Females in Media (Sharma & Bumb)****Negative Issues Concerning Women**

Parameter	Description
Females are dependent and need men's protection	Advertisements depicting females dependent on male counterparts, often shown as seeking protection from males. Female's decision is dependent on other members at home
Less Intelligent	Advertisements showing females as less intelligent than men
Submissive and face aggressive behavior from men	Advertisements showing females to be silent and facing aggressive behavior from men, through verbal, physical, or mental abuse
Advisory roles/ do not make important decisions	Females, when shown in employment, are in advisory roles or do not take any important decisions
Younger than males	When males are present, females are depicted as younger. This creates an impression that ageing is a taboo.
Weak physical positioning with respect to males	Females are often portrayed as lying down on the ground or on a bed, making females passive, and in some cases is a clear indication of social hierarchy.
Sexy/skimpy clothing, skin showing	Advertisements with females wearing sexy/skimpy clothing reflects emphasis on skin showing
Sexual postures/ expressions/ gestures	Showing females to have expressions, posture, and gestures that induce sexual appeal
Focus on certain parts of body	Focusing on certain parts of a female's body to incite sexual appeal
Object of desire	Females shown primarily as objects of male sexual desire, rather than as whole people--
Successful females are depicted as sexually attractive	Often the females who are successful are shown as sexually attractive
Weak posture	Females are portrayed having a weak posture, with a knee or head bent towards ground.
Unfocused attention	Unfocused attention includes withdrawal symptoms in which females do not focus on anything firmly. This aspect indicates that she is psychologically weak and less stable. She is more dependent on the surroundings for her stability.
Feminine touch	Females are shown with their fingers touching their contours to feel the body. While touching, the caress is usually on face, neck, shoulder, depicting females as delicate and fragile.
Passive behavior	Females remain passive and silent and tend to appear unalert and removed from social settings.
Happy housewife	Focusing on the role that females are happy as housewives and their only duties are limited to home, concerned with the kitchen and bathroom--and not shown in offices or working environments
Relationship roles	Females are shown in relationship roles i.e., as a wife, mother, sister, and not as independent females.
Focus on certain products	Females are shown with products such as cleaning, housekeeping, cooking and not in products such as cars, gaming stations, insurance policies.

Table B. Power Relations in Advertisements

Power Relations As with stereotypes, the short nature of most commercials means that advertisers rely on commonly held social ideology about power as a way of quickly getting across the plot and message of the commercial. Table B summarizes the qualifications for identifying unequal power relationships in advertisements

Power Relations	Relative Size: Goffman (1979) “One way in which social weight—power, authority, rank, office, renown—is echoed expressively in social situations is through relative size, especially height” (p. 28).
	<i>Function Ranking:</i> Characters are depicted as having a ranking order. Instruction or relationships typically involve a subordinate character. In many advertisements, one person “is likely to perform the executive role, providing only that one can be fashioned... This arrangement seems widely represented in advertisements, in part, no doubt, to facilitate interpretability at a glance” (Goffman, 1979: p. 32).
	<i>The Ritualization of Subordination:</i> Specific physical positions demonstrate one character in an advertisement having power over another. Goffman: “A classic stereotype of deference is that of lowering oneself physically in some form or other of prostration. Correspondingly, holding the body erect and the head high is stereotypically a marker of unshamedness, superiority, and disdain” (1979: p. 40).

Table C. Portrayal of Blacks in Advertisements

Stereotypes	Sincere Fictions of the White Self: Vera and Gordon (2003) use the term “sincere fictions of the White self” to describe depictions of Black people or of interracial relationships that are created to appeal to White audiences, appease minority groups, and assuage White guilt and White complicity in accepting the systems of power that have historically oppressed Blacks.	
	Common media stereotypes: This includes the stock Black character who has magical powers of redemption and salvation for White characters, minorities as <i>Minstrels/Entertainers, the Mammy and Tom</i> which is the happy and faithful servant, and the stereotype of the Black male as lazy, unreliable, unintelligent, and oversexualized (Hughey 2009).	
How these stereotypes are depicted in commercials	Black Characters	White Characters
	Sincere fictions of the White self—Black characters need help from White characters and lack socioeconomic mobility on their own.	Affluent, professional, long-term goals Sophisticated upwardly mobile Focus on long-term goals
	Folk Wisdom: Romantic advice for White males. Moral lessons from life and the streets. Spirituality and material detachment	Fact-based and inferential reasoning—lessons from school and business experience. Material values of the upper class Attached to finer things.
Traditional stereotype: Happy, subordinate, part of family. Blacks have a cultural deficiency, poor grammar, and respond to the short term—fast food, cars, women, clothes.	Dominant member of the family. Ambitious, successful, married, faithful, honest, and enjoy delaying gratification to attain finer things like gourmet food or expensive reliable cars.	

The Art of Inclusion: Theatre's Contribution to Popular Culture Literacy for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Catherine R. P. King

palmc753@newschool.edu

ABSTRACT

This essay explores the transformative role of theatre in special education, focusing on its capacity to foster social skills and life navigation abilities in students with disabilities. In light of the fundamental importance of these skills for social inclusion and quality of life, the article highlights the innovative and effective approach to integrating theatre into special education classrooms. It discusses how theatre can empower students with disabilities by enhancing their social interaction, communication, and life navigation skills. In addition, the article delves into the intersection of theatre and popular culture, showcasing how theatre can serve as a valuable tool for helping students with disabilities understand and engage with the ever-evolving world of popular culture. Through live performances, immersive experiences, and creative exercises, theatre offers a unique pathway for students to connect with and appreciate popular culture elements, from fashion and language to societal trends.

Additionally, the essay draws upon case studies and success stories that highlight theatre's versatility and effectiveness as a tool in special education, demonstrating its capacity to empower students with disabilities. These case studies encompass a range of disabilities in students, from Down syndrome and ADHD to deafness and physical impairments, highlighting the transformative impact of theatre on their lives. In conclusion, theatre emerges as a powerful tool for enriching the lives of students with disabilities, equipping them with essential social and life navigation skills, and enabling them to engage with popular culture in meaningful ways. By integrating theatre into special education curricula, educators can contribute to the development of more inclusive and compassionate societies where individuals with disabilities can thrive academically, personally, and socially.

Keywords: special education, theatre education, drama therapy, popular culture, disability culture

INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape has long recognized the importance of fostering social skills and life navigation abilities in students with disabilities. These skills are fundamental for social inclusion and can significantly impact their quality of life. One innovative and effective approach to enhancing such skills is integrating theatre into special education classrooms. As an educational tool, theatre can empower students with disabilities by enhancing their social interaction, communication, and life navigation skills (Corbet et al., 2016; Mpella et al., 2019; Reading et al., 2015).

Popular culture is a dynamic and influential force that shapes the way people build relationships and interact with the world. However, its nuances and complexities can sometimes be challenging to grasp, particularly for students with disabilities. With its power to engage and educate, theatre can serve as a valuable tool in helping these students better understand and appreciate popular culture. Through live performances, immersive experiences, and creative exercises, theatre provides a unique pathway for students with disabilities to connect with the ever-evolving world of popular culture (Corbett et al., 2016).

THE POWER OF THEATRE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Fostering Social Interaction and Cultural Commentary

Theatre provides a safe and supportive environment for students with disabilities to interact socially. Acting in a play or participating in group exercises encourages students to collaborate with peers, express emotions, and engage in reciprocal communication. Through the process of acting and reacting to others' lines and actions, students learn valuable lessons in empathy, cooperation, and teamwork.

Further, theatre fosters social interaction and teamwork, essential skills for navigating the social aspects of popular culture, which include verbal and nonverbal communication, conflict resolution, open-mindedness, creativity, cultural competence, and active listening (Cook, 2020; Corbett et al., 2016; McKelvey, 2019). Drama exercises and collaborative projects require students to communicate, negotiate, and cooperate with peers. For students with social disabilities, such as those on the autism spectrum, theatre provides a structured and supportive environment to practice social skills, helping them feel more confident and capable in social situations centered on popular culture for many reasons (Bella & Evaggelinou, 2018; Wu et al., 2020).

Firstly, the collaborative nature of theatre exercises and group projects necessitates communication, negotiation, and cooperation among participants. Through these activities, students with intellectual disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum, are encouraged and guided in navigating social interactions (Reading et al., 2015). The structured framework of theatre allows for gradual exposure and practice in a controlled setting, enabling students to develop and refine their social skills at their own pace.

Also, the predictability inherent in the rehearsal and performance processes of theatre provides a sense of routine and familiarity, which can be exceptionally comforting for those who struggle socially. This predictability helps alleviate anxiety and allows students to focus on developing and practicing social skills without the added stress of unpredictable social scenarios (Cheung et al., 2022).

Moreover, theatre offers a unique blend of individual expression within a collective context. Each participant contributes to the overall success of a production, fostering a sense of belonging and shared accomplishment. This collaborative spirit is crucial in preparing students for social situations related to popular culture, such as discussions, fan conventions, or group viewings, where teamwork and effective communication are vital (Reading et al., 2015).

Theatre can function as a platform for students to create and perform their interpretations of popular culture. It's a setting where they can critically analyze and comment on various aspects of popular culture, including stereotypes, representation, and societal values, through adaptations, parodies, or original

productions. This deepens their understanding of popular culture and empowers them to actively contribute to cultural conversations (Mpella et al., 2019). Theatre serves as a dynamic reflection of language within the context of popular culture. In live performances and creative exercises, theatre captures the nuances of language, including its evolution and relevance to societal trends (Corbet et al., 2016). By engaging in theatre, students with intellectual disabilities not only enhance their social skills but also gain a profound understanding of language as a powerful tool for expressing and shaping cultural shifts (Reading, 2015). The intersection of theatre and popular culture offers a rich exploration of how language serves as a conduit for capturing and conveying the spirit of a specific time and cultural moment.

In summary, theatre's inherent characteristics, including its collaborative nature, structured environment, and emphasis on individual expression and collective success, make it an ideal platform for students with intellectual disabilities to practice and enhance their social skills (Wu et al., 2020). The art form's ability to strike a balance between creativity and structure creates a supportive space for individuals to build confidence and capabilities in navigating social aspects related to popular culture.

Communication Skills Development and Contextual Learning

In addition to providing a platform for students with intellectual disabilities to explore various forms of expression, theatre also plays a crucial role in honing specific communication skills.

For many students with intellectual disabilities, communication can be a significant challenge. Theatre offers a platform for them to explore various forms of expression, including verbal and nonverbal communication (Wu et al., 2020). Students practice articulation, pronunciation, and tone modulation to portray characters and convey emotions. These skills improve their theatrical performance and carry over into their daily interactions, making them more effective communicators (Mino-Roy et al., 2021).

Portraying characters in a theatrical setting allows these students to go beyond the confines of traditional communication challenges. They can therefore experiment with different modes of expression, fostering creativity and flexibility in conveying ideas and emotions. As they delve into the intricacies of theatrical performance, students inadvertently develop a heightened awareness of their communication styles.

Notably, the communication skills acquired through theatre extend beyond the stage and find practical application in students' daily interactions. The newfound ability to articulate thoughts, express emotions, and modulate tone not only enhances their theatrical performances but also translates into making them more effective and confident communicators in various aspects of their lives (Mino-Roy et al., 2021). This holistic approach not only empowers students with intellectual disabilities in the realm of the performing arts but also contributes significantly to their personal and social development.

As a visual and experiential medium, theatre offers students the opportunity to see popular culture in action. Through live performances or adapted scenes from movies, television, or music videos, students can witness popular cultural elements, such as fashion, language, and social trends, in a tangible and relatable context. This visual representation can be especially beneficial for students with visual or sensory impairments, as it allows them to access the type of cultural information that suits their learning style.

Building Confidence and Self-Esteem through Inclusivity and Representation

Participating in theatre productions can boost the self-esteem and self-confidence of students with disabilities. As they take on roles and perform before an audience, they develop a sense of accomplishment and pride in their abilities (Asimidou et al., 2021; Mino-Roy et al., 2021). This newfound confidence extends beyond the stage, empowering them to engage more actively in social situations and navigate challenges with greater resilience. Additionally, theatre can potentially address issues of inclusivity and representation in popular culture. By casting actors with disabilities and creating performances that showcase diverse perspectives, theatre productions can challenge stereotypes and promote more inclusive narratives (McKelvey,

2019). This sends a powerful message to students with disabilities, affirming their place in popular culture and inspiring them to engage more confidently.

Empathy and Perspective-Taking

Theatre encourages students to step into the shoes of different characters and experience life from various perspectives, a process that cultivates empathy and helps students better understand the feelings and experiences of others (Asimidou et al., 2021). Developing empathy is crucial for building positive relationships and fostering inclusivity in society. Theatre uniquely evokes emotions and empathy, allowing students to connect more deeply with characters and scenarios from popular culture through a deeper understanding of their motives and intentions (Fabian et al., 2022). This emotional engagement can help students with cognitive or emotional disabilities better understand the motivations, conflicts, and social dynamics depicted in popular culture (Bella & Evaggelinou, 2018). Indeed, by identifying with characters and their struggles, students can gain insights into the human experiences that underlie cultural phenomena.

Navigational Skills for Life

Theatre often involves improvisation, where students must think on their feet and adapt to unexpected situations. These experiences enhance their problem-solving skills and teach them to navigate unfamiliar or challenging circumstances (Fabian et al., 2022). Such skills are valuable not only in social situations but also in real-world scenarios. Theatre productions often require students to learn and follow complex scripts, rehearse diligently, and adhere to a schedule, all of which impart valuable life skills in organization, time management, and discipline. Mastering these skills is crucial for students with disabilities as they transition into adulthood and face the demands of independent living and employment (Cook, 2020).

CASE STUDIES AND SUCCESS STORIES

Several studies and success stories demonstrate the positive impact of theatre in special education:

1. **Theatre for People with Intellectual Disabilities:** A study featured in the *Community Mental Health Journal* explored the effects of theatre workshops on children with Down syndrome (Cheung et al., 2022). Over the course of a 12-week program, participants engaged in various acting exercises and collaborative activities through drama therapy. The results revealed significant improvements in their expressive language skills, social engagement, and emotional regulation. Researchers reported that participants exhibited increased confidence in social interactions and a greater sense of belonging within their peer groups.
2. **Drama Therapy for Children with ADHD:** A play therapy study featured in the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Group Therapy* examined how play therapy was introduced as an intervention for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Hansen et al., 2000). The structured nature of drama activities helped children with ADHD focus their energy and develop self-control. Children practiced listening skills, impulse control, and conflict resolution through role-playing and improvisation. The program resulted in improved attention spans, reduced impulsivity, and enhanced self-esteem, as reported by parents and teachers.
3. **Inclusive Theatre Production:** One remarkable success story comes from an inclusive theatre company production created by ArtStream. This nonprofit provides performing arts opportunities to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The theatre company is open to students with various disabilities, including physical and cognitive impairments. Not only did these

productions receive widespread acclaim from the community, but they also promoted inclusivity and understanding among the local community body. The neurotypical student mentors developed deep friendships with their peers with disabilities, and teachers observed improved self-advocacy skills among the students with disabilities as they became more assertive in expressing their needs and preferences (Lenakakis & Kolsida, 2017).

4. **Theatre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students:** Theatre programs have been instrumental in empowering students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Using sign language, expressive body movements, and visual cues, these students have excelled in theatre productions (Sandahl, 2023). These experiences have allowed them to shine on stage, improve their communication skills, and build self-confidence. Moreover, [inclusive theatre productions](#) featuring hearing and deaf actors have educated audiences about the abilities and talents of individuals with hearing impairments, fostering greater acceptance and inclusion (Kilpatrick, 2009).

These case studies illustrate the versatility of theatre as an educational tool in special education. Whether it is enhancing communication for children with autism, promoting self-control in students with ADHD, fostering inclusive environments, or empowering those with physical disabilities, theatre consistently demonstrates its ability to positively impact the lives of students with disabilities, helping them develop essential social and life navigation skills for a brighter future.

CONCLUSION

Theatre is a transformative tool in special education classrooms, offering students with disabilities a unique opportunity to develop their social skills and confidently navigate the world. Through the power of theatre, students can enhance their social interaction, communication, and life navigation skills while building empathy, self-esteem, and problem-solving abilities. Theatre involves real-time interaction among performers on stage. Specifically, actors must respond to cues, engage in dialogues, and coordinate movements, fostering quick thinking and adaptability. While collaborative projects exist in other fine arts, such as visual arts and music, they may not always require the same level of immediate and dynamic interactions as theatre.

Additionally, theatre places a strong emphasis on both verbal and nonverbal communication. Actors use spoken words, facial expressions, and body language to convey messages, helping participants develop a holistic approach to communication. By contrast, in other fine arts, communication may focus more on visual or auditory elements, potentially placing less emphasis on the nuanced combination of verbal and nonverbal communication. Yet, all fine arts do contribute to personal and social development. Still, theatre's emphasis on real-time interaction, communication variety, and role-playing sets it apart in certain aspects of social skill development.

As educators and society continue to strive for inclusivity and empowerment for individuals with disabilities, integrating theatre into special education curricula stands as a promising approach. Harnessing theatre's creative and expressive potential will allow students with disabilities to succeed academically and thrive in their personal and social lives, leading to a more inclusive and compassionate society through a chain of causality that starts with the creative and expressive potential employed through theatre and leads to the development of skills that contribute to personal growth and improved social interactions. Ultimately, the positive impact on people with intellectual disabilities contributes to a broader societal change, creating a more supportive environment within which all individuals can reach their potential. Theatre catalyzes individual development, and the cumulative effect of these individual transformations contributes to a positive shift in social attitudes and inclusivity.

REFERENCES

- Asimidou, A., Lenakakis, A., & Tsiaras, A. (2021). The Contribution of drama pedagogy in developing adolescents' self-confidence: A case study. *Drama Australia Journal*, 45, 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14452294.2021.1978145>
- Bella, M., & Evaggelinou, C. (2018). Theatrical play and social skills development: Theaters' perspectives on education autistic students. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 13(3), 414-427. <https://un-pub.eu/ojs/index.php/cjes/article/view/3201>
- Cheung, A., Agwu, V., Stojcevski, M., Wood, L., & Fan, X. (2022). A pilot remote drama therapy program using the co-active therapeutic theater model in people with serious mental illness. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 58, 1613-1620. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-022-00977-z>
- Cook, A. (2020). Using an inclusive therapeutic theatre production to teach self-advocacy skills in young people with disabilities. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 71, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2020.101715>
- Corbett, B. A., Key, A. P., Qualls, L., Fecteau, S., Newson, C. Coke, C. & Yoder, P. (2016). Improvement in social competence using a randomized trial of a theatre intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 46, 658-672. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-015-2600-9>
- Fabian, R., Tarasova, D., Bergmann, T., & Sappok, T. (2022). An improvisational theatre intervention in people with intellectual disabilities and mental health problems. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*. DOI: [10.1080/20473869.2022.2082826](https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2022.2082826)
- Hansen, S., Meissler, K., & Ovens, R. (2000). Kids together: A group play therapy model for children with ADHD Symptomatology. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Group Therapy*, 10, 191-211. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016631228545>
- Kilpatrick, B. R. (2009). Accessibility to theater for deaf and deaf-blind people: Legal, language and artistic consideration. *International Journal of Interpreter Education*, 1(1), 77-94. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/ijie/vol1/iss1/6>
- Lenakakis, A., & Koltskida, M. (2017). Disabled and non-disabled actors working in partnership for a theatrical performance: A research on theatrical partnerships as enablers of social and behavioural skills for persons with disabilities. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 22(2), 251-269, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2017.1286975>
- McKelvey, P. (2019). A disabled actor prepares: Stanislavky, disability, and work at the National Theatre workshop of the handicapped. *Theatre Journal*, 71, 69-89. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2019.0004>.
- Mino-Roy, J., St. Jean, J., Lemus-Folgar, O., Caron, K., Constant-Nolett, O., Despres, J. P., & Gauthier-Boudreault, C. (2021). Effects of music, dance and drama therapies for people with an intellectual disability: A scoping review. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 50(3), 385-401. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12402>
- Mpella, M., Evaggelinou, C., Koidou, E., & Tsigilis, N. (2019). The effects of a theatrical play programme on social skills development for young children with autism spectrum disorders. *International Journal of Special Education*, 33(4), 828-845. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1219307.pdf>
- Reading, S., Reading, J., Padgett, R. J., Reading, S., & Pryor, P. (2015). The use of theatre to develop social and communication behaviors for students with autism. *Journal of Speech Pathology & Therapy*. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2472-5005.1000102>
- Sandahl, C. (2023). National Theatre of the Deaf. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Theatre-of-the-Deaf>

King

Wu, J., Chen, K., Ma, Y., & Vomocilova, J. (2020). Early intervention for children with intellectual and developmental disability using drama therapy techniques. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2019.104689>

AUTHOR BIO

Catherine R. P. King, Ed.D., is the managing editor of the Metropolitan Universities journal. She received a doctorate in Learning and Organizational Change from Baylor University, where her dissertation explored the role the fine arts plays in university students' development of 21st-century skills. She also received an M.S. in Strategic Design and Management from Parsons School of Design, a B.A. in Theatre Arts from Virginia Tech, and a Women in Leadership certificate from Cornell University. Her research interests include interdisciplinary arts integration, design thinking, and visual culture.

SUGGESTED REFERENCE CITATION

APA

King, C. R. P. (2024). Art of inclusion. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, 11(1). <http://journaldialogue.org/v11-issue-1/the-art-of-inclusion/>

MLA

King, Catherine. "Art of Inclusion." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*. 2024, vol 11, no. 1, <http://journaldialogue.org/v11-issue-1/the-art-of-inclusion/>.



All papers in *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy* are published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share-Alike License. For details please go to: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>.



DIALOGUE

*The Interdisciplinary Journal of
Popular Culture and Pedagogy*

Call for Papers

Rolling Deadline

www.journaldialogue.org

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.

Free to read. Free to submit.

Topics are particularly welcomed that address a critical scholarly examination of popular culture and pedagogy, such as:

- Relationships between literature, culture, music, technology, gender, ethnicity, and media;
- Theoretical, practical, pedagogical, and historical examinations of popular culture, including interdisciplinary discussions and those which examine the intersections between American and international cultures; and
- Interviews, reviews of books, films, conferences, games, music, technology, children's media.

TYPES OF SUBMISSIONS:

1. Articles/essays — theoretical or practical discussion of popular culture and pedagogy. Articles and essays are reviewed through a double-blind peer review process. Submissions should follow these general guidelines:

- MLA or APA format (please note which format you are using)
- 5,000-7,000 (inclusive of abstract, endnotes, and citations).
- Submit two manuscripts, one blinded for review. All manuscripts should be in Microsoft Word format, 12pt Times New Roman with:
 - 10 keywords;
 - abstract (250-300);
 - author bio(s) (up to 100 words);
 - author contact information (email, phone, and social media as applicable).

To submit an article, visit <http://journaldialogue.org/submissions/>

2. Proposal for Special Issues — brief description (up to 500 words) of the topic to be considered, the breadth of appeal of the topic to *Dialogue's* audiences, and the need for such an issue. If a set of articles have already been identified for consideration, include a list of titles of 6-8 articles, suggested referees, and short bios (up to 250 words) of all authors and editors

3. Reviews — essays reviewing books, films, games, conferences, children's media, and other sources as they relate to popular culture and pedagogy. Reviews are assessed through an editorial process guided by the lead editor. Submissions should follow these general guidelines:

- MLA or APA format.
- Length: 1,200-1,800 (inclusive of endnotes and citations).



Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy is the official journal of the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association (SWPACA). Learn more at www.southwestpca.org.

- All manuscripts should be in Microsoft Word format, 12pt Times New Roman with:
 - 10 keywords;
 - abstract (250-300);
 - author bio (up to 100 words);
 - author contact information (email, phone, and social media).
- **Book Reviews** — See Call for Book reviews for specific formatting and a list of suggested books (<http://journaldialogue.org/books-for-review/>). Book Review questions and submissions can be emailed to the Book Review Editor, Miriam Sciala (miriamsciala@gmail.com).
- **Children's Critical Media Reviews** — See Call for Critical Media Reviews for specific formatting and a list of suggested media <http://journaldialogue.org/call-for-childrens-book-reviews/>. Questions and submissions can be emailed to the Children's Critical Media Review Editor, Roxanne Henkin (rhenkin@journaldialogue.org).
- All other review questions and submissions can be emailed to editors@journaldialogue.org .).

4. Musings on Pedagogy & Practice — Highlight applications in the classroom, best practices in teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom, new multimodal approaches, and additional items/ideas not fitting neatly into a scholarly article. See <http://journaldialogue.org/musings-submissions/> for Musings specific style guidelines. Questions and submissions can be emailed to the Musings Editor, Karina Vado, kvado1224@gmail.com.

To submit an article, visit <http://journaldialogue.org/submissions/>

For questions and more information, contact the editors: editors@journaldialogue.org





DIALOGUE

*The Interdisciplinary Journal of
Popular Culture and Pedagogy*

Call for Book Reviews

Editor: Miriam Sciala

www.journaldialogue.org

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.

Free to read. Free to submit.

THE BENEFITS OF BOOK REVIEWS AND A NOTE FROM THE BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

In *Dialogue, The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, book reviews play a crucial part in the introduction to the public of newly-written books that provide analyses of popular culture and the way it reflects current social conditions. These publications can serve to educate not only the general reader, but also researchers and educators. Indeed, by providing insight into a particular book that goes beyond what the title – be it catchy or not – provides, the reviewer lays out the main components of a book to the potential reader and can be instrumental in convincing that reader to choose that particular book for a future read.

Hence, by describing the main gist and viewpoint on a book of popular culture for our journal, which caters to social scientists/researchers and educators, the reviewer is placed in a position whereby they can reach out to our readers and pique their interest in a book that is pertinent to their interests. For instance, an educator reading one of these books may be induced to translate the knowledge gained from the book into practical methodologies that can be applied to their pedagogy. Ultimately, this will help them guide students towards more salubrious perceptions of social issues and a deeper understanding of the various existences among various social groups, thus engendering a kinder and more tolerant society.

Academics involved in the social sciences also appreciate reading our book reviews as they search for sources to support and enhance their own research. A book review could help them save time as they can then more rapidly decide whether the book in question is suitable for their endeavours in explaining the way popular culture reflects our society.

Writing a review of one of the books on our list would be beneficial to our readers. By helping them to ascertain the genre of popular culture under discussion and the angle in which the information is presented, the reviewer places the readers in a position whereby they can better judge whether reading the entire book would be beneficial to them and whether it could lead to potential applications within their respective fields.

The books on this list have a focus on a specific genre of popular culture, be it fiction, film, television, music, video games or technology. They have been written with the aim of helping the reader understand popular culture and its assistance and limitations towards the generation of a deeper comprehension of society. If you are interested in reviewing one of these books, we invite you to contact us letting us know which book you would like to review. We look forward to collaborating with you.

A note from the Book Review Editor - Miriam Sciala

For me as a reader, or more specifically, as a bookworm from a very early age, book reviews open up possibilities as they guide me to the next set of books on my lengthy “to be read” list. Realistically, though, despite the best of intentions, I never will



Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy is the official journal of the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association (SWPACA). Learn more at www.southwestpca.org.

read all the books on that ever-expanding list as life is much too fleeting. Therefore, for all those that will remain unread, book reviews serve a different purpose – that of providing a synopsis - a brief description that offers me a view of the author’s stance, the context within which the book was written and a few choice details that enable me to gain a sense of the subject matter; in truth, it is a condensed account that nonetheless provides some information, opening a window into the narrative. In fact, a perspicacious review on its own can provide me with a few precious moments of reading pleasure. And after turning that page, I will have gained knowledge and the possibility of applying it in my work.

The act of writing a book review, in my experience, is extremely rewarding, too. This type of writing has done more than afford me the opportunity to read a particular book; it has engendered a perusal with intent – a deeper reading than that done merely for pleasure. Book reviews are my mini-research projects where I approach the book from the angle of the chronicler who endeavours to comprehend and explain the content and point of view of that book, connecting these to the context in which it was written. It is an exercise in objectivity to outline the strengths and limitations that form the features of the book. Penning a book review for the reader activates my creative side as I communicate the salient information appearing in the book to an imaginary fellow reader, albeit without giving too much away, in an attempt to prompt that reader to pick that book up and experience it through their own eyes.

CALL FOR BOOK REVIEWS

Dialogue would like to invite experienced academics to review new books for our readers. We are currently seeking reviews of the following books:

1. Allen, Craig. *Univision, Telemundo, and the Rise of Spanish-Language Television in the United States*. University of Florida Press. 2020.
2. Bordwell, David. *Perplexing Plots: Popular Storytelling and the Poetics of Murder*. Columbia University Press. 2023.
3. Dorney, John; Regan, Jessica; and Salinsky, Tom. *Best Pick a Journey through Film History*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 2022.
4. Giannini, Erin. *Supernatural: A History of Television’s Unearthly Road Trip*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 2021.
5. Lent, John. A. *Asian Political Cartoons*. University Press of Mississippi. 2023
6. Mahdi, Waleed F. *Arab Americans in Film: From Hollywood and Egyptian Stereotypes to Self-Representation*. Syracuse University Press. 2020.
7. Manno, Andrew. *Toxic Masculinity, Casino Capitalism, and America’s Favorite Card Game: The Poker Mindset*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2020.
8. Mitchell, James G. *Watching in Tongues: Multilingualism on American Television in the 21st Century*. Vernon Press. 2020.
9. Sinykin, Dan. *Big Fiction: How Conglomeration Changed the Publishing Industry and American Literature*. Columbia University Press. 2023.

Guidelines: short articles reviewing books, films, games, conferences, etc. as they relate to popular culture and pedagogy

- Format: MLA or APA
- Length: 1,200 – 1,800 (inclusive of endnotes and citations)
- Editorial review
- To be considered for online publication on a rolling basis

Contact editors@journaldialogue.org or miriamsciala@gmail.com to coordinate writing a review for the journal.





DIALOGUE

*The Interdisciplinary Journal of
Popular Culture and Pedagogy*

Call for Musings

Editor: Karina A. Vado, PhD

www.journaldialogue.org

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.

Free to read. Free to submit.

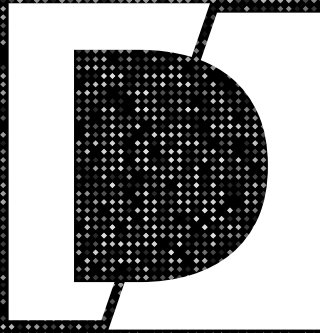
The “Musings” section of *Dialogue* highlights innovative popular culture integration in the classroom, best practices in teaching and learning inside and outside of K-12 and college/university classrooms, emergent multimodal teaching approaches, critical insights into popular culture, and/or additional items/ideas not fitting neatly into a scholarly article. Of particular interest are “Musings” that explore one or more of these topics/areas:

- The politics of popular culture
- The role of popular culture in politics
- Intersections between critical pedagogy and popular culture
- Intersections of social justice and popular culture
- (Mis)Representations of class, (dis)ability, ethnicity, gender, race/racialization, and sexuality in popular culture
- Global popular culture
- Multimodal popular culture
- Student perceptions of popular culture
- Representations of academia/education in popular culture
- Popular culture as pedagogy
- Popular culture and media literacies
- Popular culture and multimodal literacies

See <http://journaldialogue.org/musings-submissions/> for Musings specific style guidelines. Musings can be emailed to editors@journaldialogue.org or to the Musings Editor, Karina A. Vado, kvado@journaldialogue.org.



Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy is the official journal of the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association (SWPACA). Learn more at www.southwestpca.org.



DIALOGUE

*The Interdisciplinary Journal of
Popular Culture and Pedagogy*

*Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture
and Pedagogy* is the official journal of the **Southwest Popular/
American Culture Association (SWPACA)**.

Read Dialogue online at: www.journaldialogue.org

The mission of the **SWPACA** is to promote an innovative and nontraditional academic movement in Humanities and Social Sciences celebrating America's cultural heritages. To provide an outlet for scholars, writers, and others interested in popular/American culture, to share ideas in a professional atmosphere, and to increase awareness and improve public perceptions of America's cultural traditions and diverse populations.

Visit us online at: www.southwestpca.org



Facebook: facebook.com/southwestpca

Twitter: twitter.com/southwestpca

Web: www.southwestpca.org