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Editor's Introduction

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Topics in the April 2017 issue of *JCI* range from self-representations of female athletes, to the role of class in U.S. advertising, to a review of a retrospective of the role digital media played in grassroots uprisings in the Middle East.

Barbara Barnett begins the issue by asking whether new media mean new self-representations by female athletes. An examination of personal websites maintained by 45 of the world's most successful professional and Olympic female athletes in the 21st century showed that while the athletes described the rigors of training, their physical prowess, and the sacrifices they made to excel, they also depicted themselves as mothers, caretakers, and sex objects. Barnett concludes that this *apologetic behavior* emphasizing traditional roles for women is a carry-over from old media coverage of sports to new in which the success women achieve in sports is viewed through the lens of gender stereotypes.

Next, Patrick Ferrucci and Chad Painter analyze the depictions of journalists for digital and legacy news outlets on the Netflix series *House of Cards*, which traces the ascension of an American politician from the U.S. House of Representatives to the presidency. Using a combination of orientalism and cultivation theory, they conclude that the show depicts digital journalists as more wedded to technology than news values, as less ethical, and as driven more by self-gain than public service when compared with depictions of journalists from legacy media. This, in effect, *others* digital journalists. Ferrucci and Painter surmised that this has the potential to influence how the public views news reporters as digital journalism comes to the fore.

Matthew McAllister and Anna Aupperle argue that select U.S. advertising campaigns following the 2008 economic recession tried to woo consumers by creating associations between their products and high socioeconomic class. An analysis of ads by Buick, Nationwide, Cadillac, Allstate, Air Emirates, and DirecTV showed that the ads made class differentiation explicit in ways that resulted in what the authors called *class shaming*. In particular, the ads ridiculed working class service workers and contained explicit hierarchical comparisons between classes.

Finally, Dunja Majstorovic traces the construction of myth surrounding the Doors' Jim Morrison. His essay argues that the combination of Morrison's physical appearance, treatment in fan magazines, verbal ingenuity in interviews,

and performance techniques (including rebelling against authority) provided the raw material from which his legacy was constructed.

In book review Rauf Arif reviewed Mohamed Zayani's *Networked Publics and Digital Contention*, noting that the book offers a refreshing perspective on the intersection of the digital revolution and the Arab Spring in Tunisia.

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Class Shaming in Post-Recession U.S. Advertising

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Abstract

Class is an issue rarely foregrounded in advertising criticism, although the emphasis on consumption and commodity-defined images of the good life frequently makes advertising a class-oriented discourse. The degree and manner that advertising contains overt symbols and discussions of class may be influenced by the particular era in which a campaign appears. This article argues that several “postrecession” U.S. campaigns including for Buick, Allstate, and DirecTV make class comparisons explicit, as seen in “class shaming” strategies such as a ridicule of service workers, presenting the wealthy as victimized by the working class, and “lower-classface” performances that contrast class-based lifestyles. In such ads, representations of the working class are equated with losers, incompetents, and non-brand users in the ads, while affluent users and opulent lifestyles are celebrated. Final reflections focus on the ideological implications of more obvious depictions of class in current and future advertising.

Keywords

advertising, class, consumption, representation, advertising criticism

A 2015 U.S. television commercial for Buick, titled “Nosy Neighbors,” was the much-aired centerpiece of a pervasive rebranding campaign designed to raise the class status of the automobile brand (Gardner, 2015). In this particular spot, a young White straight couple prepare a meal in their nice, but not opulent, kitchen and notice their neighbors arriving in their new car, outside a house protected by a large iron gate. “Looks like the Garcias got a new car,” says the woman.

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“What they’d get?” asks the husband, a tall thin man with glasses. “I don’t know, but it looks pretty nice.” The husband uses binoculars—apparently kept next to the kitchen window to routinely surveil the Garcias—to get a closer look. “Maybe he got a raise,” she says. “Good for him,” he replies. As she looks at the handsome Garcia, the woman, clearly impressed with his status and attractiveness, breathlessly concludes, “Good for her,” as she bites her lip. Her husband glances at her with his mouth open, and perhaps with an air of concern and inadequacy. The commercial ends with Garcia waving at them while they half-heartedly wave back, clearly in envy, as a narrator informs us that this is “one of five expectations-shattering models from Buick.” The class status of Garcia—as connoted by the newly elite Buick—not only creates anxiety about the couple’s inferior class status, but even symbolically “cuckolds” the husband: He is not as rich, nor as handsome, nor as Buick-owning, as Garcia. And class trumps ethnicity in the ad, as the Latino and upper-class “Garcia” is framed as clearly superior to the middle-class couple embedded in whiteness, perhaps one of the “expectations shatter[ed].”

This ad’s portrayal of normative differences of class status, class envy, and even class “shaming”—symbolized in this case by the middle-class husband’s lack of comparative sexual desirability—is characteristic of several advertisements in the so-called *postrecession* era of U.S. society and, more specifically, commercial culture. Like the Buick example, other advertising campaigns in 2014–2015 explicitly compared and hierarchized class differences and linked the brand to a preferable upper-class status. This article argues that several “post-recession” U.S. campaigns including for Buick, Allstate, and DirecTV make class comparisons explicit, engaging in “class shaming” strategies such as a ridicule of service workers, presenting the wealthy as victimized by the working class, and “lower-classface” performances that contrast class-based lifestyles. In such ads, representations of the working class are equated with losers, incompetents, and non-brand users in the ads, while affluent users and opulent lifestyles are celebrated. Final reflections focus on the ideological implications of more obvious depictions of class in current and future advertising.

The Role of Class in Advertising

Scholars such as Callier (2014), Foster (2005), and Milner (1999) have argued that social class has been understudied in recent discourse and media studies scholarship, despite the concept’s importance for not just Marxian/political economic perspectives but also as a marker of identity and representation. Foster (2005) posits that the pervasiveness of the middle class (or upper-middle class) in media portrayals is now normalized as a default social position for characters in such a way that, like whiteness, it is also paradoxically invisible.

Social class can be defined as “a mode of social stratification by which people are grouped into a set of hierarchical social categories” (Thomas & Gruys, 2015, p. 86). From a Marxian perspective, class is rooted in the social

relations of modes of capitalist production, resulting in group differentiations between the proletariat (workers, masses) and the bourgeoisie (owners, elite) (for a discussion, see Milner, 1999). Rooted in the inequitable distribution of economic resources, class also is a large socioeconomic category involving selective and systematically unequal access to education, geographic areas, and employment sectors, which intersects with other categories of variant privilege such as gender, race, and ethnicity. Differences in the lower and upper classes greatly influence the degree to which a society may be seen as egalitarian, with significant concerns about an ever-widening gap in Western societies, especially the United States, between the rich and the poor (Thomas & Gruys, 2015). The post-millennial label “the 1%,” for the growing economic concentration in a small elite, signifies this gap (Stiglitz, 2011).

Although class has an inherent materialist component involving economic disparities, it also is cultural. Class-oriented symbols may mark people and contexts as impoverished, working class, middle class, and upper class, and can link such markers to evaluative assumptions about the merits of class status. Media play a key role in circulating and enacting such symbolic constructions, as well as the “typical” class orientation in society—the assumption of middle-class status discussed earlier. The media’s portrayal of different class positions is complicated, but evaluative tropes or frames persist (Kendall, 2005). In popular culture, lower classes may be represented with certain consistent signs of inferiority, such as by portrayals of incompetent/goofy blue-collar husbands and fathers in television sitcoms (Butsch, 2005). Media frames of the rich include how they exemplify the American dream and their generosity (Kendall, 2005). Media may also create and circulate narratives about the degree to which class mobility is possible and the reasons for such mobility (or lack thereof). While some “rags-to-riches” media stories promise mobility, images of the “happy poor” or the “miserable rich” reinforce hegemonic assumptions of class predestination (Spangler, 2014). Television programs such as *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Duck Dynasty* present characters/people who are unchanged when placed in different class positions. Similarly, portrayals of how particular class status can be stylistically performed by those materially outside of those class—what Foster (2005) calls “class-passing”—is seen in such movies as *My Fair Lady* and *Pretty Woman*. With the complexity of media and class, it is not surprising that representations of class are often contradictory, offered as “both mutable and rigid” in media portrayals (Foster, 2005, p. 8).

Given the economic component of advertising and its motivations to reach desirable demographic groups with disposable income—as well as its sophisticated use of representational symbolism—class as a concept seems especially apt for critical advertising studies. Class representation, in fact, is arguably at the heart of both modern consumer culture and its strongest mediated form, advertising. In some ways, consumer culture may mitigate class differences—a claim made by many scholars about the early days of modern consumerism. Strasser

(2003) posits that the values of the rich, such as fashion and convenience, spread throughout U.S. culture when brands were sold with those promises. Cross (2000) asserts that “[a] vision of the world of goods available to American citizens in large part replaced the old ideal of a republic of producers and challenged class, religion, and ethnicity as principles of political solidarity” (p. 2). Depression-era advertising often promised such egalitarianism, offering a “parable of the democracy of goods” whereby consumers could “class pass” by making the correct purchases ((Marchand, 1985)

Conversely, advertising and consumer culture could also be used to reinforce differences between classes. Thorstein Veblen’s (1994) much-cited concept of conspicuous consumption highlighted how consumer goods accentuate one’s class status and how, as an upper-class commodity becomes appropriated by lower classes, the upper class will discard it for the latest symbol of elevated class status. As part of the repertoire for marketers, advertising becomes a key way that a brand’s class image is established. Given the value of class as a branding technique and the brevity of advertising forms, advertising depends on the visual display of brands and universally established class-oriented symbols (Schor, 2007). Advertising thus enacts and reinforces the meaning of such symbols through well-circulated advertising.

One technique of establishing class-identity in brands is through portraying their users as specifically class-positioned in ads. Such class portrayals may not always be obvious, since the typicality of middle-class status in advertising may characterize such representation as “unmarked”; similarly, an emphasis on niche “lifestyle marketing” can hide class in more specific demographically oriented sign systems (Callier, 2014). Other classes, including working and upper classes, may be more obviously signaled and constructed. Clothing, accessories, surroundings, body types, grooming, activities, occupations, and speech patterns can position advertising characters in points along the class hierarchy. As discussed later, advertising also has a long history of comparing one class with another in the same ads, such as earlier in the 1900s when ads showed those in lower-status service work gladly assisting the upper-crust brand consumer (Burt, 2013; Marchand, 1985).

Class portrayals in advertising also work intersectionally, sometimes complicating traditional hierarchies. If a woman in an ad is of a higher class than a man, then typical gender-based subordination techniques—a man shown physically above a woman, for instance—may be reversed (Callier, 2014). Working-class males in ads are made masculine in specific ways: with facial hair, wearing jeans and plaid shirts, doing manual labor, and less vocal than middle-class males (Callier, 2014). In brands targeting, and thus celebrating, working-class demographics, rich males may be connoted as effeminate or vaguely European, unlike real American men as symbolized by blue-collar males who work on their cars, watch sports, and of course consume and admire the brand (McAllister & Kumanyika, 2013).

How class is foregrounded in advertising, and the degree of this foregrounding, may vary by different historical eras. Marchand (1985), for example, argues that depression-era advertising compared with the 1980s by engaging “far more explicitly than their present-day counterparts about class position and frequently depicted characters who wore unmistakable badges of their exact class status” (p. 199). These portrayals of the upper class were non-ironic and celebratory, and when the lower classes were portrayed in the same ads as the rich, it was in a supportive service capacity, with no hint of class resentment, and with the servants (especially White maids) often portrayed to be similar in physical appearance and body type to their employers. In such ways, the cultural status of the product was elevated, and at least some possibility of social mobility through consumption was offered.

Another economically distressed era that enacted class distinctly in U.S. media was the 2008–2012 recession. Within popular culture, television shows such as *The Middle* and *Two Broke Girls* portrayed economic hardship and the working class sympathetically, although not always stereotype-free (DeCarvalho, 2013; Spangler, 2014). Programs like *Revenge* and *Downwardly Mobile* ridiculed the rich during these years (Harris, 2012). Advertising often would highlight economic hardship as well, emphasizing savings and special deals for those who lost their jobs (McAllister, 2010). The framing of the economic downturn as especially affecting males—dubbed by some a “he-cession” (Rodino-Colocino, 2014)—meant that some advertisers more strongly linked masculinity with working-class status (Green & Van Oort, 2013).

However, just a few years later, some high-profile brands used different class-based representations. As public discourse highlighted an improving U.S. economy, class hierarchy was still evident in these campaigns, but lower-middle and working-class representatives were ridiculed, often very explicitly. The particular themes and representations of the shaming of lower-class people in these campaigns are critiqued in the sections later.

Context and Method

Certainly the degree to which the United States truly achieved an economic recovery from the 2008 recession (and whether such a recovery improved all economic strata equally) is debatable, even becoming a campaign issue in the 2016 presidential election. Nevertheless, economic news often announced that certain economic indicators such as unemployment improved during the latter years of the Obama administration, and advertising spending followed suit. After a decline in 2009, advertising budgets increased with most media (except for print) recovering. Jumps in advertising spending were especially seen in sectors like media exhibition (such as cable television, Internet service providers, and satellite television) and the recovering automobile industry (Advertising Age, 2014). The promise of an economic recovery was reflected in television

entertainment as well, with programs that portrayed the rich sympathetically, including the television programs *Chrisley Knows Best* and, perhaps more contradictorily, the remake of *Dallas*. (Another example may include the much more successful presidential run of Donald Trump compared with earlier efforts.) Were such trends in programming accompanied by similar trends in advertising, where the upper class was celebrated at the expense of lower-class representation?

Noticing the common themes of ads for Buick and DirecTV, searches were conducted for ads that extended these class dynamics. The authors collected ads from 2014 to 2015 that illustrated the trend of explicit discourse about class. Using YouTube, the website iSpot.tv, DVR recordings, and the webpages of brands that archived their advertising, commercials for Buick, DirecTV, Cadillac, Allstate, Nationwide, and Air Emirates were collected. Ads analyzed were largely from television, but print ads especially tied to previously notable campaigns were also collected. Information sources, especially trade journals, news media, and commentary websites, were also searched for relevant industry information about or general reactions to the campaigns. Using a qualitative textual analysis approach, the ads were repeatedly watched for the “sensitized concept” (Christians & Carey, 1989) of class indicators and any evaluative/ideological frame that accompanied them. More specifically, the symbolic qualities of advertising that are used to convey meaning were engaged. Following work on advertising semiotics (MacRury, 2009; Williamson, 1978), textual elements especially examined include character appearance, narrative, accessories/surroundings, dialogue, brand slogans, and narration. This analysis mirrors the method used by previous studies to critique class representation in advertising, including Marchand (1985), Green and van Oort (2013), and Callier (2014).

It is safe to assume that most post-recession advertising still portrays people as from an assumed middle class. However, several high-profile campaigns explicitly represented people from both the lower-working and upper class where a main point of the campaign was judging the former as inferior to the latter. From this analysis, two class-based themes were delineated in the advertising discourse that involved what the authors call “class shaming”: representations of incompetent working-class service workers and explicit hierarchical comparisons between classes.

“The World’s Worst Cleaning Lady”: Incompetent, Uncaring “Help”

As noted earlier, when service workers in the past appeared in advertising, they typically were happy to help the rich, and, when the workers were Caucasian, they were depicted as similar in appearance to the rich. In such cases, this depiction both mitigated any negative connotation of their servitude and subtly

indicated that class mobility was not impossible (Marchand, 1985). In the post-recession ads engaged here, the portrayals are different: The economic elite not only still need and use service workers, but such workers are incompetent and enact the class-privileged complaint, “you can’t find good help anymore.” In these ads, the maids, waiters, and flight attendants are very much “othered” as unpleasant and uncaring; the economic elite, in turn, were victimized by these servant-class others.

In a Nationwide commercial, for example, customers are portrayed as literal children, all wearing business or professional attire, who are placed in frustrating situations by service workers: At the DMV, a little girl slaps her forehead when she notices she is #83 in line and a clerk uncaringly points out that they are only at #14; another boy destroys his cell phone in frustration when told of a similarly long waiting time on hold; a child at a restaurant calls “Waiter! Waiter!” to the adult waiter who walks by, ignoring her. The portrayal of customers as children who behave badly conceivably could be interpreted as criticizing the behavior if not for the narrator of the commercial—representing Nationwide—who makes clear that the problem is that service workers *treat* the privileged as children, not that the privileged *act* as children: “In the Nation, we know how it feels when you are not treated as a priority. We do things differently. We put members first.” In this light, the childish behavior the privileged exhibit (head slapping, phone tossing, waiter yelling) is understandable, in fact even a natural reaction. Bad service workers—contrasted to the business class-attired children—make them that way.

Another 2015 commercial for Air Emirates featuring the actress Jennifer Aniston, as herself, has a similar moral about the injustice of elites being underserved. Aniston, wearing a bathrobe, wanders the aisles of an airliner. The plane is dark, and eerie music sets a surreal mood. She hears voices in the back of the plane, where the crew is lounging—eating, laughing and, most saliently, not being helpful.

Aniston: I’m looking for the shower.

Attendant: There’s no showers here, ma’am.

Aniston: Well I’m going to look pretty silly, dressed like this, going to the bar.

Attendant: There’s no bar here, but we do have hot towels and a bag of peanuts.

Aniston: Emirates Planes have showers, and they have bars. [At this point a disclaimer in small print informs consumers that these services are only available in first and business class.]

Attendant [mouth full of food]: This isn’t an Emirates plane, ma’am.

Aniston: [in shock as the attendants laugh at her]: There’s no showers? And there’s no bar? Why are you laughing like that?

Aniston passes out, and wakes up from her nightmare: She is now in her first-class bed-seat, in golden sunshine, aboard an Emirates airliner. At the end of the

ad, she explains her nightmare to the sympathetic Emirates bartender—much better looking than the nightmare’s versions—who responds sympathetically, “I’m sorry to hear that,” as he makes her a martini.

These examples offer a timeless advertising message: We give you good service, unlike our competitors. But they also position this service in a class-based way. Those service workers not employed by the brand are bureaucratic, non-empathic, unattractive, and ridiculing. The expectations of the elite (immediate service, travel luxuries) and their reactions when denied (displays of temper, triggered nightmares) are offered as normal and reasonable when faced with such unreasonable class-based callousness.

This portrayal of service workers as uncaring is reinforced in one ad featuring the personification of “Mayhem” for Allstate insurance, a campaign that debuted in mid-2010 (Schultz, 2013) and continued through 2016. Played in a comedic deadpan style by actor Dean Winters, in each ad Mayhem enacts a different thing or person that can cause destruction/devastation and from which you need insurance. In this 2015 installment, Mayhem is a housekeeper (“Janet”), manifested as Winters wearing an apron over his characteristically tattered business suit. Mayhem/Janet eats her employee’s food, carelessly breaks an expensive-looking urn, unknowingly empties a fish tank with a vacuum cleaner, and rips down a window curtain. Despite this destruction, the housekeeper’s incompetence is not why you need insurance, as his voiceover explains:

I’m the world’s worst cleaning lady. Cleanliness was supposed to be my middle name. But then my parents settled on Janet. Now, I’m here in your home having a pretty spectacular Tuesday. But I don’t notice the loose rug at the top of your stairs, and that’s about to become an issue for me. [Mayhem/Janet falls down the stairs.] If you’ve got the wrong home insurance company, my medical bills could get expensive. Where agents help keep you protected, from Mayhem, like me.

The ad positions the consumer’s sympathy not with the injured worker, but with the innocent homeowner. Janet is bad at her job, an idea both shown visually (urn breaking) and verbally (“world’s worst”). Janet ultimately is blamed for her own injury: “I don’t notice the loose rug” rather than “You [the home owner/employer] didn’t fix the loose rug.” Further adding to the degradation of home-service workers is that, in most other versions of this campaign, Mayhem doesn’t represent people, but objects: a ringing phone stuck in the seat cushion of a car, a smoldering tailgate grill, a cheap bungee cord, jumper cables, dryer lint. Janet, functionally, equals flammable dryer lint in this manifestation of the campaign. Although she is referred to as “world’s worst cleaning lady” (a gendered colloquialism that contrasts with more dignified labels like house cleaner or housekeeper), she also represents the legitimate danger of unexpected and crippling litigation from working-class woman unsupervised in the home. In fact, in this case, Mayhem is arguably a class of people who are bad

at their jobs and could threaten property and livelihood, at least for those in a class position to afford housekeeping.

Additional implications of an advertising spokesperson (in this case, the suited Mayhem) winkingly pretending to be a working-class person will be returned to in the following section. For now, Janet joins Nationwide and Emirates as representations of service workers who unreasonably do not do their job, and are uncaring. Viewers/consumers are clearly not encouraged to identify with those portrayals, as strongly implied by the problem-solution plot structure of the ads, and by explicit narration (Nationwide) or direct address (Allstate). Conversely, those in a class status above them, those who deserved to be serviced, are victimized in the ads, suffering due to working-class incompetence.

“Don’t Be Like This Me”: Judgments, Comparisons and Lower-Classface.

Other ads in the post-recession age compare classes even when no service relationship is presented. Such ads overtly foreground class hierarchy with a judgmental edge that positions the elite as superior to classes below them—sometimes even biologically superior. One version of this was the Buick commercial described in the introduction, in which a young couple watches their well-to-do neighbor in his new Buick. In this ad, class superiority overcomes the disadvantages of ethnic prejudice (the young White couple feels a need to “keep up with the Garcias”) and infuses those in this class with more sexual charisma than the lower classes (“Good for her,” says the woman about Garcia’s spouse).

A commercial for another car brand, Cadillac, made this point so explicit that many advertising observers were shocked by it (“Caddy Spot”, 2014). In the high-profile TV commercial titled “Poolside” that aired in the United States during the 2014 Winter Olympics and Academy Awards broadcasts, an upper-class character played by actor Neal McDonough walks viewers through his opulent house—including an Olympic-sized in-ground pool, wall-to-wall windows, and a double-island kitchen—as he explains his life philosophy that not only celebrates American gumption but also attributes economic success with individual initiative and hard work. The character talks directly to the camera as he tours his house:

Why do we work so hard? For what? For this? [gestures at pool] For stuff? Other countries, they work, they stroll home, they stop by the café, they take August off. Off. Why aren’t you like that? Why aren’t we like that? Because we’re crazy driven, hard-working believers, that’s why. [High fives his kids as he walks by.] Those other countries think we’re nuts. Whatever. Were the Wright Brothers insane? Bill Gates? Les Paul? Ali? Were we nuts when we pointed to the moon? That’s right. We went up there and you know what we got? Bored. So we left. Got a car up there with

the keys in it. You know why? Cause we're the only ones going back up there, that's why. [Walks briefly off-camera, reappears in a tailored business suit.] But I digress. It's pretty simple. You work hard. You create your own luck. And you've gotta believe anything is possible. [Unplugs his hybrid Cadillac, gets in the car.] As for all the stuff [camera shows the elaborate displays on the dashboard of the car], that's the upside for only taking two weeks off in August. N'est-ce pas? [Slow wink. Cut to Cadillac logo and branding.]

The ad mixes conspicuous consumption, nationalism, and Ayn-Randian individualism to establish a neo-liberal explanation of economic success. The individual who works hard and “creat[es] your own luck” is able to afford cutting-edge luxury technology (such as the Cadillac ELR). In this particular case, the direct-address comparison is not of the rich to the lower-classes, but rather American exceptionalism compared with lazy, unproductive other countries. However, given the hardships then faced by European countries such as Greece and Spain at this time, with massive unemployment and national debts—and public protests over austerity policies (Rüdig & Karyotis, 2014)—as well as the audacious display of wealth in the ad, applying these judgments to the poor seems a reasonable reading. The whiteness of the main character (blond haired, even Aryan in appearance) reinforces multiple layers of privilege: class, race, and nationalism, all attributed to the can-do spirit of American individuals. Ultimately, the advertisement answers its opening question (“Why do we work so hard?...For stuff?”) with the continued display of expensive possessions climaxed by the luxury hybrid Cadillac and the spokescharacter's wink.

The ad triggered significant discussion in 2014 advertising trade journals, online forums, and even on Rush Limbaugh's radio program (who, tellingly, praised the ad's politics; Limbaugh, 2014) about the appropriateness of the message, forcing the company to defend the ad that they themselves admitted was a form of “brand provocation.” Ford released a parody ad featuring an African American female environmental entrepreneur discussing social responsibility rather than individual success, although this generated more publicity for “Poolside” (Bond, 2014). In response to this criticism, one “misconception” the company corrected was that the ad was not targeting millionaires, but rather those who earn “around \$200,000 a year” (McCarthy, 2014); this figure contrasts with the average salary in the United States in 2014, a little under \$45,000 (Pramuk, 2015). The backlash about the ad was not necessarily about its ideology but rather its explicit style, including a direct-address lecture from a person of privilege.

This strategy of using overt comparisons of class difference to establish brand image in post-recession advertising was more enduring in a 2014–2015 campaign for DirecTV, the satellite provider. In the original version of the humorous campaign, Rob Lowe played two versions of himself, one who had DirecTV and the other who had cable, with the latter also characterized by an undesirable

physical or personality trait: “Overly Paranoid Rob Lowe,” “Peaked in High School” Lowe, “Crazy Hairy” Lowe, “Scrawny Arms” Lowe, and “Painfully Shy” Lowe, among others. Both versions talk directly to the camera, with each ad beginning, “Hi, I’m Rob Lowe, and I have DirecTV,” and the alternate walking on camera, “And I’m [inferior version] Rob Lowe, and I have cable.” The commercial then cuts back and forth to the real and alternative Lowes in front of their home television system of choice as they explain their system’s advantages and disadvantages, respectively. The commercials all end with the two Lowes on screen together, and the DirecTV Lowe saying, “Don’t be like this me. Get rid of cable and upgrade to DirecTV.” An additional variation of the campaign appeared in the 2015 Swimsuit edition of *Sports Illustrated*, featuring the same supermodels who are in the photo spreads.

Like “Poolside,” this campaign received significant media coverage, sometimes praising (Nudd, 2014), but also as a point of criticism in at least two instances. The International Paruresis Association accused the “painfully shy” Lowe—who also had a shy bladder—of stigmatizing a physical condition (“Shy Bladder Sufferers,” 2014). Complaints from DirecTV’s competitors about factual claims eventually led to the campaign being revised (Crain, 2015). Later versions in Fall 2015 touted the service’s football packages and used famous current and former players in similar comparative versions of themselves who had DirecTV or cable.

The campaign offers competing views of masculinity that are influenced by Lowe’s own public history as an actor and celebrity, as Vayo (2015) argues. However, class is also a key marker in the campaign. The class contrast between the different Lowes was likely designed to raise the status of satellite television, given the image of external home satellite dishes as a sign of tackiness and lower socioeconomic status (Emmison & Smith, 2000, p. 118). The DirecTV Rob Lowe is styled as upper class: well groomed and dressed, and surrounded by pristine opulence not unlike that of the character in Cadillac’s “Poolside.” His house contains large recreation rooms (large enough for a pool table), wall-to-wall windows, an in-ground pool, a mountain view for his tai-chi exercises in front of his giant flat-screen HD television, and even a second home (“I have the same incredible TV experience no matter where I live”).

This contrasts with the surroundings, physical appearance, and clothing of the cable Lowes. Creepy Rob Lowe, for instance, enacts creepiness largely by his class performance: big mustache, white t-shirt with a gold chain, jeans with a chain wallet, and slick-backed hair. Overly Paranoid Lowe has long hair and wears a ball cap. Bowling trophies, old-style CRT analog televisions, tabletop fans (rather than air conditioning), run-down, drab décor like green-striped cloth sofas and, of course, intrusive cable wires characterize the dwellings of the cable versions. Crazy Hairy Lowe hangs out in dive bars—which we know because the women portrayed as drinking there have tattoos, wear leopard-skin

prints, and show significant cleavage. Peaked in High School Lowe works in a hot and smoky Asian fast-food restaurant. Total Deadbeat Lowe wears a Hawaiian shirt and has “soul patch” facial hair. The cable Lowes must endure the DirecTV Lowe overtly judging them: the former looks in self-shame at the latter when he points and states the main lesson of the campaign’s morality tale: “Don’t be like this me.” The conflation of some behavioral characteristics (“creepy” “paranoid”) with body characteristics (“crazy hairy,” “scrawny arms,” and in a later ad featuring retired football player Randy Moss, “petite”) seems to imply a contradiction that the accompanying working-class status is both a result of personal choices and biologically predetermined. A moral of the commercial is that the only way to prevent such fates—or at least display to the world that you do not belong with the cable versions—is to “upgrade” to DirecTV.

The campaign inserted an additional intersectional element with the *Sports Illustrated* print ad version featuring supermodels in the two roles (“Swimsuit 2015”, 2015). At three points in the issue are two double-page spreads with the DirecTV model (such as Hannah Davis) and the cable version of that model. The DirecTV versions of the model are presented in glamor shots that match the sexualized theme of the special issue: in their swimsuits and on the beach. The cable versions, in which the models mirror in humorous and non-sexy ways the poses from the beach DirecTV models on the previous page, are combinations of class and gender that speak to particular stereotypes: “Cat Lady Hannah Davis,” “Mom Jeans Chrissy Teigen,” and “Lunch Lady Nina Agdal.” The first two are marked as kitschy lower-middle class, but in ways that segue with the sexist tropes. In the cable Cat Lady photo, Davis is on a throw-covered and worn couch, surrounded by 15 cats, wearing a cat sweater, and with cat tchotchkes on an end table. One cat is using a litter box in front of the couch. Her cat sweater, large glasses, and bad makeup (the latter characteristic of all three cable women) signal at best a lower-middle class approach to taste and décor. Teigen’s Mom Jeans has large hair and a large-flowered blouse and is loading an avocado-green dishwasher in a similarly decorated small kitchen, in addition to her ill-fitting pants. Perhaps most obviously classed is Lunch Lady Agdal, who is portrayed as working in a large and dirty kitchen cafeteria, serving hot dogs and chili (apparently), wearing a uniform and—in the ultimate marker of the working class that is very rarely seen in post-millennial advertising, even for tobacco products—drawing on a cigarette. The demeaning portrayals of class did not go unnoticed, in particular an ABC story that examined a relatively short-lived Twitter backlash targeting the campaign (“DirecTV”, 2015).

The ads intersectional portrayals are starkly ideological. As Barak (2014) argues, images such as lonely women with multiple cats are used in media to “contain” the dangers of independent single women to conventional gendered life paths by portraying them as tales of failed femininity. Similarly, the lunch

lady is a stark portrayal of working women, both uncaring and unclean (smoking while cooking/serving food), a portrayal that flows with the Allstate “cleaning lady” commercial discussed earlier.

The Allstate commercial shares another characteristic with DirecTV: its unusual representational style. In the past, White performers engaged in racialized performances such as “blackface” or “yellowface” to exaggerate for comedic effect the look and behaviors of people of color, an exaggeration that served as a form of delegitimation and ridiculing hegemony (see, for example, Arceneaux, 2005). In this case, Allstate’s cleaning lady commercial and the DirecTV ads engage the involved celebrities (actors, models, and football players) in what may be understood as “lower-classface,” where the joke is that the audience knows the main spokesperson/celebrity (Dean Cain’s “Mayhem”; Rob Lowe; Hannah Davis) is not from the working class. This semiotic strategy of a character role-playing as another character is not an attempt to deceive through “class passing,” a concept discussed earlier. We do not believe that Mayhem is really trying to come off as Janet. Rather, it is more like a transparently obvious Halloween costume. Instead of masquerading as a monster, though, the celebrity-character is dressed as a lower-class person. The humor is based on the “horror” of being in that class position. Lower class people are thus shamed with this class-based performative makeup; look at me pretending to have gaudy surroundings, behaving badly and making stupid decisions, as the working class does. It is a performer of a privileged class making a ridiculing statement about a lower class through imitation, with the assumption that a privileged-class audience gets the joke. This performative strategy may ultimately be seen as less mean-spirited than if a separate actor were cast as the “not me”: it is presented as a funny performance exercise or even as the performers somehow making fun of themselves (even if, upon examination, it is a classed version of themselves). And all are trumped by the successful, richer, more tasteful and attractive DirecTV representative, or the Mayhem character who becomes himself again once the lesson is taught. In such cases, the “true” upper-classed self of the spokesperson—Mayhem, Lowe, Davis—is the superior one.

Conclusion

This article has argued that in some highly visible campaigns class, as a representative category in post-recession advertising, has been more foregrounded than in previous years, and in ways that are strikingly hegemonic by presenting them in ways that both benefit the powerful and imply they are representative of entire classes. The rich are framed or explicitly described as attractive, successful, and responsible for their success. Conversely, the ads engage in a kind of “class shaming,” portraying lower-class people as less happy, less sexy/sexually fulfilled, incompetent, uncaring (or even taking pleasure in their

customer/employees' discomfort), and finally, blameworthy; these ads do so by directly comparing them to those in a higher class. The most stark comparisons are done through the representational style of "working-classface" that allows well-known actors to engage in exaggerated class shaming while offering a satirical frame to seemingly buffer, through humor, the harshness of the message.

Such campaigns reinforce not just classist stereotypes—the working class as uncouth and slovenly, the rich as hard working and put-upon—but also the broader ideology of neoliberalism, a worldview that benefits large capital, has driven political movements toward free-market policy and consumerism, and is perpetuated in much of popular and commercial culture (Wayne, 2003). Like neoliberalism, in the world of these ads class is sometimes a lifestyle choice (DirecTV or not), or the lack of initiative (not "crazy driven, hard-working believers" as Cadillac would argue). Those deserving an opulent lifestyle are prevented by the laziness of those lower on the class rung (such as the unfortunate Jennifer Aniston), and, of course, one can self-brand their class status with the correct choice of car (a Buick is "Good for him").

Although many of these campaigns are high profile (and still in circulation as of this writing), perhaps in the larger commercial culture they are atypical and easily ignored in a sea of commercial messages. Certainly many commercials during this era still celebrated the working class (such as jeans or beer commercials). Perhaps these explicitly comparative ads may decrease as economic contexts change and their messages forgotten. But, alternatively, they may be indicative of a change in advertising's portrayal of class, where it is normalized to compare class more obviously and with a message that the rich are better than the poor and each, in turn, have earned their station.

Such portrayals, especially if continuing in advertising and other forms of popular discourse, have implications for how people in different classes may view people in other classes, as well how those people view themselves. They also have implications for how people understand the importance of structural inequalities versus individual explanations for impoverishment and privilege. If class is inherent in a person—if cleanliness was supposed to be your "middle name"—then the lesson seems to be to accept one's station in life and serve the rich well. If it is easy to purchase your way to avoid "being like this me," then why don't the poor simply make better consumer decisions?

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Print Versus Digital: How Medium Matters on *House of Cards*

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Abstract

This study utilizes textual analysis to analyze how journalists are depicted on the Netflix drama *House of Cards*. Through the lens of orientalism and cultivation, researchers examine how depictions of print and digital journalism would lead viewers to see digital journalists as less ethical and driven by self-gain, while also viewing technology as an impediment to quality journalism. These findings are then discussed as a means for understanding how these depictions could affect society.

Keywords

television studies, digital journalism, journalism, critical studies, orientalism, cultivation, *House of Cards*

Introduction

Beginning in the late 1990s, newsroom convergence became the most popular buzzword in the journalism industry (Bosch, 2010). But the transition to convergence, or as the industry now refers to it, multimedia journalism, decidedly did not go smoothly (Klinenberg, 2005). Today, while legacy media remain converged and yet still struggle with the transition, many news organizations started as digitally native (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Researchers, however, have

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shown news consumers do not find digital sources of news as credible as their legacy counterparts (Bradley, 2014). In fact, a Pew Research Center study showed news consumers found content in print or on television as more credible than Web content (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley, & Matsa, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to examine, through textual analysis, how the distinction between print and digital journalism is portrayed on the fictional television show *House of Cards*. According to cultivation theory, portrayals on television directly influence how viewers see the world around them (Gerbner, 1998). Depictions of journalists in film and on television impact an audience's perceptions of real-world journalists (Ehrlich, 1997). In fact, Ehrlich and Saltzman (2015) argued that the public's perception of the journalism industry is shaped more by popular depictions of the profession than the work done by journalists. Orientalism argues that the media depict certain dominant groups as normal, thereby subtly letting, in this case, viewers know that this group is part of the American mainstream and thus more credible; at the same time, the media depict any minority group as something different, subtly letting the audience know this group is weird or odd (Said, 1994). Perhaps the lack of trust news consumers have concerning digital journalism is partly due to mainstream depictions of digital journalism. Understanding how popular culture depicts digital journalism, and journalism in the 21st century in general, can help us understand how and why the public views the industry (Conway, 2014). This study aims to do just this by examining, through the lens of orientalism, how the hit Netflix drama *House of Cards* depicts both legacy and digital journalism, as it is one of the first mainstream serials to depict journalists working for both media forms (Gould, 2013).

Literature Review

Depictions of Journalists in Popular Culture

Since the early days of film, Hollywood focused attention on journalists (Ehrlich, 1997). Even the film considered the greatest American cinematic feat, *Citizen Kane*, revolves around a character deeply entrenched in the newspaper industry (Schudson, 1992). Films as disparate as the 1931 screwball comedy *The Front Page* to the 2014 dark thriller *Nightcrawler* revolve around journalism, while television programs such as *Lou Grant* and *The Newsroom* all examine the inner workings of journalism.

Perhaps the most famous depiction of journalism comes from the 1976 Oscar-winning film *All the President's Men*, which tells the story of real-life *Washington Post* journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein as they investigate and ultimately break the Watergate scandal. This powerful and positive depiction of the media as an incorruptible watchdog of power significantly and favorably affected the public's opinion of journalism (Schudson, 1992), which, again,

illustrates how understanding popular depictions of the industry are important. Other films and programs such as *The Insider*, *State of Play*, *The Newsroom*, and *Lou Grant* provided the public with a generally positive glimpse into the world journalism.

While many images of the journalist in popular culture remain positive, even more provide viewers with a negative visualization (Ehrlich, 1997). Many journalists consider producer David Simon's *The Wire* as the most realistic depiction of the industry ever (Lowry, 2007), yet scholars have found that its fifth season, which focuses on the state of journalism, showed a morally decaying industry (Ferrucci & Painter, 2014). *Shattered Glass* retold the real-life story of Stephen Glass, the reporter eventually caught plagiarizing stories in *The New Republic* and other magazines. Even producer Aaron Sorkin, who purposely attempted to depict journalists positively in *The Newsroom*, gave viewers an illustration of a newsroom more intent on spending time on personal and petty issues than uncovering and disseminating sports news in the sitcom *Sports Night* (Painter & Ferrucci, 2012). However, regardless of how popular culture depicts journalists, these depictions can affect the public's opinions (Ehrlich, 1997), which is why it remains important to study how popular culture presents journalists.

Digital Divide

Journalism finds itself in a time of change (Lowrey & Gade, 2011). The newspaper industry took its first significant step toward embracing the digital world in 1980 (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Bosch (2010) defined digital journalism as news produced by news workers using digital tools. Singer (2011) then defined technology associated with digital journalism as anything computer-based that has affected journalistic practices and routines. For example, technological developments include everything from e-mail, laptops, and cell phones to blogs and inexpensive digital video recorders. Each of these advents and other similar tools allow journalists to perform their functions "simultaneously easier and harder" (Singer, 2011, p. 218).

Habermas (1984) argued that technology is, at its core, neutral. However, he wrote that when outside its proper sphere, technology can then be utilized in manners that could become a major societal problem. Essentially, the argument put forth by Habermas (1984) is that technology itself does not cause anything negative, but simply how it is used can effectively transform something else negatively. In journalism, technology allows nonlegacy media organizations an opportunity to cheaply and easily disseminate news (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Because most of these new, digitally native news organizations focus their coverage on niche topics, it allows for a subtle shift of journalistic norms (Tandoc, 2014). For Habermas (1984), technology is not changing journalism, but rather new innovations are allowing new journalistic organizations to transform some

essential norms of legacy media, such as a substantial number of layers in the gatekeeping process. Marcuse (1941), unlike Habermas, does not believe technology is simply a neutral apparatus. He argued that technology is constantly shaped by humans and social context and that the two cannot be separated. So therefore, he would say the journalists have consistently shaped technology as it relates to the field and that this has been guided by self-interest.

Orientalism

The crux of orientalism is that the media tend to portray dominant groups as normal. Because of this, language and norms of the dominant group are accepted as unbiased. However, the media tend to represent minority groups as appearing outside of the American mainstream (Said, 1994). Thus, the media plays a large role in shaping what the public views as standard American mainstream versus what could be considered odd and abnormal (Buchowski, 2006). Originally, scholars applied the theory primarily to studies of cultural geography. Through the work of Wolff (1994) and Todorova (1997), though, orientalism is now a valuable concept for exploring the concept of the *Other* (Buchowski, 2006). Essentially, orientalism, therefore, is a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between” the mainstream and the odd and non-mainstream (Said, 1994, p. 2).

The process of constructing the other occurs through media representations, and changes to this identity typically happen through “a restructuring of the perception of social inequalities by the hegemonic liberal ideology” (Buchowski, 2006, p. 464). Considering the media constructs meaning, studies examining how various things are depicted become essential to understanding how the public views something. If certain segments of the journalism industry continuously are depicted as the *other* by the media, then these representations might affect the public. Gurevitch and Levy (1985) argue that media representations are sites “which various social groups, institutions and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality” (p. 19). Ehrlich and Saltzman (2015) noted that the public understands journalism more through popular depictions of the industry than through actual journalism; therefore, examining how television programs present the industry in its totality is important to understanding how the public sees it.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory essentially posits that what people see on television affects them. First introduced by George Gerbner (1998), the theory’s foundation lies upon the idea that the bulk of what people believe about the world is never experienced firsthand. Opinions about what they do not experience come from what they see around them, particularly on television (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan,

& Signorielli, 2002). Researchers suggest that the more people watch television, the more they believe the images depicted (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Through a series of studies, Gerbner and his colleagues found that watching television does not directly affect people, and that the images they see do not immediately, for example, make someone act out in a similar manner. However, they found that, through time, watching television *cultivates* an experience, and people believe what they see on television is consistent with the real world. Gitlin (1983) argued that people believe what they see on television because of a cyclical process: What they see on television reinforces previously held attitudes that also were formed by watching television. Most studies applying cultivation theory utilize quantitative methods, specifically content analysis, but a growing number of studies apply the theory qualitatively (i.e., Ferrucci & Painter, 2014; Miller, 2010).

The majority of the public would not have intimate experience concerning the journalism industry. Instead, they would base their opinions on what they see in the world around them, which mostly would come from television. Additionally, if the viewing public has rarely seen depictions of digital journalism outside of *House of Cards*, it stands to reason that with already lower levels of trust of the medium, these viewers would use the show's depictions as a manner of reinforcing attitudes.

House of Cards

The on-demand Internet-streaming media company Netflix released the first season of *House of Cards* all at once on February 1, 2013. The show revolves the character of Francis "Frank" Underwood, a Democrat representing the state of South Carolina in the House of Representatives who later becomes vice president and, ultimately, president. The political drama follows the machinations of the political world, paying close attention to the way Underwood attempts to gain and harness more and more power. Netflix released Season 2 of the show February 14, 2014, and Season 3 became available for viewers February 27, 2015. *House of Cards* depicts journalism in a pretty similar manner to other television programs that came before it; McNair (2014) argued that the drama, like all that came before, falls into a heroes and villains dichotomy and could very well "be impactful in relation to public perceptions of the journalist's role" (p. 244). These black and white depictions lead viewers to believe journalists are either ethically beyond reproach or completely impaired ethically (McNair, 2010).

What makes *House of Cards* worthy of an empirical examination, though, is that the show is one of very few attempts by the entertainment industry to depict digital journalists, and the show gives viewers a glimpse of "the battle between traditional journalism and the blogosphere, a recurring theme in *House of Cards*" (Gould, 2013). The drama features traditional journalism at the

Washington Herald, a clear fictionalized version of the *Washington Post*, a place where characters Zoe Barnes, Lucas Goodwin, and Janine Skorsky all work. However, at the onset of the series, Barnes only works for the digital side of the newspaper, and she later leaves the paper for the digitally native operation *Slugline*, a “Politico-style website run by twenty-somethings. They are out to undo old-school journalism” (Gould, 2013). Skorsky soon joins Barnes at *Slugline*, and soon, as an article by the journalistic foundation the Poynter Institute pointed out, her move lets *House of Cards* explore the differences between print and digital journalism in a manner never done before on television program (Moos, 2013). Therefore, this study asks, how does *House of Cards* depict journalists from both print and online media?

Method

To investigate the question of how *House of Cards* depicts print and online journalists, researchers conducted a textual analysis of the first three seasons of the show. Both text and video of the 39 episodes that Netflix released between February 2013 and February 2015 provided the unit of analysis for this study. For this textual analysis, the researchers focused on narrative aspects of *House of Cards*, primarily conducting an analysis as defined by Toby Miller (2010) in his book examining television studies. Narratives encourage people to make decisions about aspects of the television program, and an analysis of narrative also makes researchers make decisions about the artifact they are consuming (Foss, 2009).

Textual analysis allows researchers to understand what people produce on television (Berger, 1998). A textual analysis of television allows researchers to “unearth the meaning of individual programs and links them to broader social formations and problems” (Miller, 2010, p. 23) and “identify the ideological tenor of the content” (Miller, 2010, p. 32). This allows the researcher to understand how the receivers of the text could interpret meaning; therefore, a textual analysis of a television program cannot truly get at the producers’ goals, but can extrapolate all possible meanings and interpretations of the viewer (Miller, 2010). Textual analyses of television shows can utilize two different tactics: one using a grounded theory approach and another that surveys the program through the lens of a specific theory (Berger, 1998). For this study, researchers used the latter approach by analyzing the data through the lens of both orientalism and cultivation theory.

For this study, two researchers independently viewed the entirety of the three released seasons of *House of Cards* during a 20-day period. Both researchers took notes on how the show depicted journalists and the industry of journalism. After comparing notes, both researchers then independently viewed the entirety of the show once again. These notes were then combined and analyzed. During the analysis, researchers identified themes and subsequently categorized the data

into these themes, as often done in qualitative analyses (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Finally, one researcher wrote the findings section for this study. Miller (2010) surmised that “television has become an alembic for understanding society” (p. 145), and the researchers look to *House of Cards* to, at least in a minor way, understand how society views the differences between print and digital journalism.

Findings

During the second stage of examining the data, researchers identified three consistent themes that continuously emerged during readings. As argued by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), when conducting a textual analysis, researchers should place data within the themes before writing up the findings section. For this specific study, the three themes that surfaced concerning how *House of Cards* depicted digital and print journalists were their relationship with technology, their application of ethics, and the overall goal of their journalism.

Relationship With Technology

Almost immediately, the show sets up a clear juxtaposition between print and digital journalism, a distinctly different paradigm for working within each medium. In the first scene concerning journalism, viewers meet Zoe Barnes (Kate Mara), a young and ambitious journalist at the *Washington Herald*, who comes from a digital background. She wants to write a digital-only blog about politics. Her immediate editor is Lucas Goodwin (Sebastian Arcelus), an older, but not old, print journalist. In this initial scene, this distinction between their backgrounds and loyalties are made clear, as Zoe argues with Lucas for a TMZ-like politics blog written in the first person, while Lucas dismisses the idea. Zoe informs him that this dismissal is the reason print journalism is dying, and Lucas tells her “then it will die with dignity,” implying that digital journalism does not have dignity. Here, it is not simply technology that makes Zoe’s brand of journalism odd or worse, but rather how her generation views technology and has adapted it into their culture.

In a scene during Episode 1, Lucas and *Herald* editor-in-chief Tom Hammerschmidt (Boris McGiver) are shown looking at the Web analytics concerning a story Zoe recently published online. The scene makes it very clear that both Lucas and Tom view the analytics only because they have to, as their faces clearly belie their annoyance and skepticism about the place of Web analytics in journalism. In Episode 2, another clear message is sent regarding how print journalists feel about digital journalists when Zoe barges into a *Herald* budget meeting to tell political writer Janine Skorsky (Constance Zimmer) some news. Skorsky displays a disregard for Zoe and digital journalism when she calls Zoe a “Twitter twat,” fundamentally communicating that Zoe’s fascination and

adoption of a specific technology altered her appreciation of normal, mainstream journalism norms, which are less concerned with breaking news and more with truth and accuracy.

After Zoe gains nationwide recognition for the stories she is writing from material provided by Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey), she is asked to appear on a cable news program. Zoe tells the show's host that it is hard to work at the *Herald* because editors insist on "double and triple checking everything." This comment begins a dialogue about the future of journalism:

Host: Is that a workable model in the Internet age?

Zoe: Our readers think it is.

Host: Readership is going down.

Zoe: It's not that the *Herald* refuses to adapt. We have an online presence. But, yes, we could do more.

The "more" that Zoe refers to and the lack of rapid adaptation is a euphemism, in this conversation, for too many layers of gatekeeping. Zoe wants to publish things straight to the Web without waiting on editors. The ironic part of this conversation is that the story Zoe is getting this attention for is completely bogus. Underwood leaked her the story only for his benefit because he would gain political capital if the *Herald* wrote about an early, incorrect version of a specific education bill.

Later in the first season, Zoe's consistent ability to break political news—all news provided to her by Underwood, most of which is wrong—leads Tom to offer her the White House beat, considered the most prominent assignment at the newspaper. He is being forced to do it by the paper's publisher and clearly thinks little of Zoe as a reporter, again, primarily because of her adherence to technology. At the meeting when Tom offers the job to Zoe, she turns it down but records the conversation, during which he calls her a "cunt." He fires her, but before she leaves, she says, "These days, when you're talking to one person, you're talking to 1,000." When he explains the conversation to the publisher, who is in the process of firing him, Tom says, "Know this, Zoe Barnes, Twitter, enriched media, they're fads. They're not what this paper is built on. I won't be distracted by what's fashionable." There is a clear othering of technology during these early episodes. It is made clear that mainstream journalists think very little of technology, and that it is a fad that should not be part of any real journalistic toolbox.

Shortly after Tom is fired, Frank shows up at Zoe's apartment and tells her to Tweet something. The news he gives her is false, but she asks no questions and simply Tweets it as news. The show is implying that the need for editors is vital. Without these layers, powerful people can mislead journalists and coerce them to print falsities.

Zoe leaves the *Herald* to work for *Slugline*, a digitally native *Politico*-like news organization, as does Janine. Producers, however, already have established

Janine a print-style reporter, one who does not use technology. She tells Zoe that Underwood is using her, and she needs to rely on others, such as editors and reporters, to vet the information she is disseminating to readers. During the late portion of Season 2 and throughout Season 3, most of the journalism happens at the *Wall Street Telegraph*, a newspaper. Two different journalists cover politics for the paper at different times, Ayla Sayyad (Mozhan Marnò) and Kate Baldwin (Kim Dickens). While journalism is not as prominently featured in the show during the later half of Season 2 and throughout Season 3, both Ayla and Kate display a dislike of technology-based reporting.

House of Cards essentially depicts digital journalists as *other* by clearly setting up a distinction between Zoe the digital journalist and a host of print journalists. This is done through scenes of Zoe consistently publishing false information and receiving a wholeheartedly negative depiction. Throughout the three seasons, digital journalism is shown as weird, odd, and a “fad.”

Application of Ethics

One way *House of Cards* *others* digital journalism is through a juxtaposition of how digital journalists such as Zoe and print journalists such as Lucas and Ayla apply ethics during news production. This juxtaposition is set up early when Zoe is depicted as a journalist who will do anything for a story, including sleeping with Underwood so he will provide her with information. During Episode 2 of the first season, Frank gives Zoe false information. The show implies that she knows it is false, but still wants to print it. She even tells Frank she does not think it will be printed because her editors will not find it credible. This doubt implies that she knows they, the print journalists, are more ethical than she is. This incident is not the only time Zoe knowingly writes a fake story. Before writing about a potential nominee for secretary of state, Zoe asks, “Is that true?” Frank replies, “It will be after you write it.”

Shortly after Frank uses Zoe to print a series of inaccurate stories, they meet up at a bar, leading to the beginning of an affair. She uses her looks to sleep with sources, and the show depicts her consistently dressing provocatively to get ahead, something Janine and Ayla, print reporters, never do. In one scene, Frank arrives at Zoe’s apartment and begins to initiate sexual foreplay. Zoe stops him, and he replies, “We’ll talk after.” She immediately replies, “No, we’ll talk first.” The implication of this scene is obvious: Frank and Zoe’s relationship is very similar to one between a prostitute and a john. Zoe will not have sex with Frank until she receives her payment, a piece of information.

Digital journalists are depicted as having poor ethics throughout the show. In one scene, Zoe meets Janine for a drink and asks Janine if she would like to join *Slugline*. Janine is surprised and asks if *Slugline*’s editor, Carly Heath (Tawny Cypress), would even want her. Zoe does not know, she says, because Heath is “pretty fucking anti-establishment” and does not really care for print

journalism. This implies that *Slugline* does not value the norms and ethics of print journalism, and that she wants to “break all the rules” and “do whatever it takes to get stories.”

Later in the show, Zoe, Janine, and Lucas all begin working together unofficially, trying to understand the story of Peter Russo (Corey Stoll), a representative from Pennsylvania whose career is taking awkward turns. The trio does not yet know that Underwood is controlling Russo’s actions. Janine is attempting to put all the pieces together—she is shown doing quality reporting—but Zoe unethically looks at Janine’s notes and asks Lucas what she should do with this info. Zoe believes Janine could report incorrect information—the audience knows Janine is right and Zoe wrong, though—and asks Lucas how to proceed. Lucas, the print journalist, tells Zoe she needs to trust Janine, a veteran, quality reporter. The audience knows everything Lucas says is correct, but Zoe does not agree and immediately brings the information back to Frank, her source. During the first episode of Season 2, Zoe again disregards Lucas’ advice and meets Frank. She proceeds to tell him everything the three have dug up concerning him and Russo. Frank denies it all—again, the audience knows it is true—and tells Zoe not to print it.

Late in Season 2, Ayla is shown working on a story and attending a press conference concerning something she deemed potentially untrue, trivial, and, at best, not the public’s business. At the press conference, she sees a digital journalist who is excited about the story. Ayla tells him the story is “bullshit,” and she leaves, implying that a print journalist does not print salacious material.

Throughout the entirety of *House of Cards*, whenever a digital journalist is faced with an ethical decision, he or she makes the choice the audience knows is wrong. However, the opposite is true of print journalists, who not only make the ethical choice but also consistently advise Zoe correctly. These depictions portray digital journalists as different from their print counterparts, as less able; they are shown to be beneath print reporters, as different.

Goal of Journalism

The final theme and last manner in which *House of Cards* consistently others digital journalism is through the goals of the journalists for different media. For example, through the course of three seasons, print journalists are consistently shown aiming to inform the public, the historically normative role of journalism. However, digital journalists are more concerned with, primarily, personal gain and fame, and, secondarily, making money.

The goal of putting profit before truth-seeking and journalistic norms appears early in Season 1. Zoe is called into Tom’s office after appearing on television, and Tom very clearly tells her the role of a journalist, in his mind. He says, “Your job is to report the news, not be the news.” She responds that she was “promoting the paper.” He tells her, again, that is not her job, and that she

should not worry about making the paper money and only should worry about reporting accurate news. Later, when Zoe joins *Slugline*, she has a long conversation with Carly. Zoe asks her what the point of *Slugline* is, and Carly intimates that she is having some fun for a bit of time, but the goal is to sell the organization. The conversation implies that Carly started *Slugline* with an end goal of selling for a large profit and the way she aims to achieve her goal is to publish as much news, real or fake, as possible. The key to *Slugline* is producing news people will talk about. Carly tells Zoe not to make her bored, implying that journalism is about sizzle, less about news. Later, when Ayla is at the aforementioned press conference she is deemed to be not newsworthy, the digital journalist covering the event implies that it does not matter because lots of people will read the story, thus generating clicks and, secondarily, income.

While digital journalists are depicted as having money as a primary goal, far more often they are shown desiring personal gain. Before Zoe starts at *Slugline*, she tells Frank that the place would allow her to do “whatever she wants.” At one point, Frank provides Zoe with actual news, yet something that is not as impactful. She says “it’s a puff piece” and she does not want to write it. He tells her to give it to someone else then. Her response: “I don’t benefit from giving other people stories.” This conversation provides the audience with the mission statement for digital journalism: It is all about me. Zoe does not care if the story could inform or if people needed or wanted to know the information. All she cared about was whether the story would benefit her.

This theme reoccurs numerous times. When Zoe and Janine believe they are on to a big story, Zoe wants to stop reporting because it may mess up her relationship with Frank. She tells Janine that the story scares her. Janine says, not knowing Zoe is lying, “Look, if you weren’t afraid, you wouldn’t be doing your job. The only articles that I’ve ever written that truly mattered scared the shit out of me.” The implication is that Janine will risk her personal safety to get a truthful and impactful story to the audience, but Zoe will not even risk her personal pipeline of information. When Zoe needs police sources, she does not try to get them herself. She says she does not know anyone and tells Janine she will ask Lucas, who used to cover crime. Janine is skeptical that Lucas will get her this information because he works for the competition. Lucas, however, does acquire the information and gives it to Zoe, showing his allegiance to the news, not simply to his personal gain or the *Herald’s*.

Once the three reporters have a good grasp of information concerning how Frank is controlling Peter Russo, Lucas and Janine both tell Zoe not to speak with Frank. Zoe, though, still agrees to meet Frank at a subway station. Frank tells Zoe to delete all their communications from her phone; this communication is evidence that the trio has used to uncover some of the conspiracy. Zoe, then, faced with a choice of either continuing to report on Frank and Russo, thus getting incredibly important information to the public, or to help cover up the story and keep her pipeline of information open, chooses the side that best suits

her instead of her readers. After she clears her phone, Frank pushes her off the subway platform into a moving train, killing her.

After Zoe's death, Janine and, especially, Lucas, continue reporting on the conspiracy and Zoe's death despite the clear threat this poses to their safety. Lucas eventually goes to jail trying to uncover the story. Ayla does the same throughout Season 2 and Season 3, continually digging into the story, though she does not get as far as Lucas and Janine, without regard to her safety.

Viewers with any knowledge of journalism see how print journalists are depicted as mainstream, as putting truth and readers first, while digital journalists are othered by always putting themselves and money before readers and truth.

Discussion

House of Cards depicts digital journalists differently than their print counterparts. First, in the drama, digital journalists have a positive relationship with technology, while print journalists approach new tools such as Twitter with trepidation. The show does not necessarily depict technology as a negative, but rather embraces the view of Habermas (1984), arguing that the way digital journalists embrace technology turns it negative. The show, in turn, depicts technology as the cause of many journalistic failings. Second, digital journalists do not practice an ethical form of journalism, consistently breaking major ethical norms of the industry, while print journalists do not engage in this behavior and are often shown lecturing digital journalists—and the audience—on proper ethical behavior. Finally, digital journalists are shown to have differing professional goals. Print journalists on *House of Cards* approach their job as people who represent regular citizens, as workers aiming to bring truth to the people. However, for digital journalists, truth is a secondary, tertiary, or non-goal altogether. Instead, the primary motivation for doing journalistic work is to attain personal attention. Once again, the way the digital journalists embrace and utilize technology illustrates that while technology could be used for positive, in this case the digital journalists such as Zoe have chosen to primarily employ it to build a personal brand and not inform a citizenry.

Ehrlich (1997) argued that depictions in popular culture affect how audiences view the depicted in real life. He specifically wrote about journalism, reasoning that most people do not truly understand what journalists do and exactly how they go about doing their jobs, but people fill in the blanks through what they see in entertainment. McNair (2010) added to this argument, finding that because journalists typically receive either a heroic or villainous depiction, viewers are prone to attaching certain types of journalistic behavior as bad and other types as good, with little in between. And, more specifically, Ehrlich and Saltzman (2015) posited that further academic study of how journalists are depicted in popular culture allows us to better understand why the public

views the industry the way it does. Cultivation theory, furthermore, empirically illustrates that depictions on television affect viewers' reality, and that viewers make decisions about the real world around them by applying what they see on television (Gerbner, 1998).

These depictions especially matter for viewers of *House of Cards* because, as found by McNair (2014), very few films or television programs depict digital journalists. Therefore, many viewers of *House of Cards* could form opinions of digital journalism from the Netflix series' juxtaposition of digital and print journalism. Clearly, as noted by Gould (2013) and other mainstream journalists, *House of Cards'* producers and writers show a disdain for digital journalism as a trade because of the way the journalists employ various innovative tools.

Said (1994) and other scholars of orientalism maintain that one manner in which the media assist people in forming negative views on a subject is through the action of othering. In *House of Cards*, digital journalists are othered. They consistently are depicted opposite print journalists whose behavior is normalized by being shown in an affirmative light. Whenever politicians or print journalists discuss digital journalism, it is often during a negative discourse. During Season 2, one politician, discussing a story first published on a digital site, says, "Nobody will believe it. People understand things coming from there are not accurate or vetted." While this comment is explicitly stated, there are numerous times these sentiments are implied.

For viewers not intimately familiar with digital journalism, *House of Cards* provides them with the character of Zoe Barnes as an archetype. As noted by Gould (2013), there may not be a worse fictional journalistic representative than her in recent years. Zoe is depicted as someone far more concerned with her own self-gain than truth. She will sleep with sources, knowingly print false information, entrap her boss into saying something controversial and, in general, do anything for attention. None of these negative traits have anything to do with technology, but the show still ostensibly juxtaposes legacy and digital journalism as different through the degree in which each embrace and utilize technology. While one could argue that Zoe is simply a villain, not a representation of digital journalism as a whole, *House of Cards* producers and writers make sure viewers understand she is not an anomaly. Zoe eventually goes to work for *Slugline*, an organization represented as successful considering the amount of mainstream press it attracts and the number of reporters it employees. Through *Slugline*, viewers meet Carly Heath, the organization's owner and editor, who explicitly encourages Zoe to conduct herself in this manner; of course, Heath also only practices journalism for personal gain, viewers are told. Once again, the show not so subtly juxtaposes these professional behaviors, which it implicitly treats as abhorrent, against the behaviors of print journalists, which conform to traditional journalistic norms. The main argument then is not that technology is bad, but the way a younger culture employs it is negative. And while the show does depict both males and females on each side of the digital divide, the main vessels

for each side—Zoe as the digital journalist and Lucas as the legacy or print journalist—do, indeed, potentially illustrate a patriarchal social structure. In the world of *House of Cards*, young female reporters embrace technology not to better follow journalistic norms, but to build a personal brand and become famous, while slightly older male reporters utilize technology only when appropriate and are ambitious in appropriate manners.

For viewers of the hit show, these depictions may be their introduction to the differences between print and digital journalism. To them, then, digital journalism is simply a domain for reporters looking to make news about themselves, and not relay truth to readers. Furthermore, studies show that new entrants into the journalistic field are often influenced by popular culture depictions (Ehrlich, 1997). Therefore, if current and future journalism students believe that *House of Cards* depicts solid archetypes of the industry, not only could that affect why people enter the field, but also what people believe is the goal of a journalist. For example, *House of Cards* depicts the digital journalist as an unethical person simply looking for personal gain. This depiction could have negative effects on future journalists and journalism students. Considering that news consumers already believe digital journalism to be less credible (e.g., Bradley, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2014), this type of depiction could further a negative opinion of digital journalism.

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Girls Gone Web: Self-Depictions of Female Athletes on Personal Websites

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Barbara Barnett¹

Abstract

The Internet was heralded as a medium that might expand coverage of women's sports, yet some question whether the Internet has provided even more opportunities to perpetuate gender stereotypes. This research study examines the personal websites of professional and amateur female athletes to determine how women present themselves to the public. This qualitative analysis considers whether women practice "apologetic behavior," in which they assure the public they are women first and athletes second, and whether women follow traditional gender scripts that characterize them as maternal, sexy, or childlike. The analysis shows that women promote their brawn, beauty, and brands. Women provide details about the rigors of training to be elite athletes but also provide details about their personal lives that reinforce gender stereotypes. The analysis concludes that women use websites to construct an apologetic identity, in which they emphasize that they have sacrificed time and energy for their sport, but have not abandoned traditional feminine roles of sex object, mother, or caretaker.

Keywords

sports and media, feminist theory, web, Internet and new media, feminism

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Sport has long been and continues to be a masculine purview. Women may be welcomed as sexy cheerleaders, supportive mothers and wives, and well-behaved fans, but they are less welcome as fierce competitors and capable athletes. When women do achieve any measure of success in sport, they subsequently demonstrate “apologetic behavior” in which they assure journalists and fans they are “ladies first, then athletes” (Festle, 1996, p. 46). Schell and Rodriguez (2000) have observed that women who adopt this apologetic stance may focus on physical beauty and heterosexual acceptance or downplay their athletic skills.

In sport, gender is a sharp—and often acceptable—dividing line, one that is reinforced by mass media. Although media coverage of sporting events has increased in the past 20 years, this has not necessarily translated into more or better coverage for female athletes. Women’s sporting events remain underreported, and when they are covered, women’s accomplishments are trivialized through reports that question their accomplishments, highlight their sexuality, and describe them in terms of familial roles—wife, mother, sister, and girlfriend (Hall, 2002; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). Men dominate in terms of both coverage and sources (“Boxscores and Bylines,” 2005), with women receiving less than 10% of the sports coverage in newspapers and on television, although this percent does increase during major sporting events (Markula, 2009).

New Media, New Stories?

While traditional mass media coverage of sports has been criticized as limiting for women, new media have changed the nature and scope of sports. Creedon (2014) has observed that sports is now “a 24/7 international social media conversation” (p. 712), as professional teams and individual athletes use social media to interact with fans, build positive images, and gauge fans’ reactions and expectations (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010; Pegoraro, 2010; Smith & Sanderson, 2015; Stragier, Evens, & Merchant, 2015). Among athletes, there is “increasing use of online digital media and social networking services . . . for self-promotion, self-representation and personal expression” (Hutchins, 2011, p. 238).

While mainstream media have tended to marginalize women’s voices and interests, new media have been heralded as platforms that could democratize communications and empower women to challenge masculinist narratives. Research on new media and gendered communication shows mixed results. While the Internet offers women the opportunity to connect and to advocate for social change and entrepreneurship (Gajjala, 2014), it also offers a venue for exploitation and reinforcement of traditional sex roles (Harcourt, 2011), and these conflicting gender representations are evident in sport social media as well.

Studies have shown that sports websites are male-dominated, highlighting men’s athletic accomplishments, depicting women as fans or family members, and presenting women’s sports as a minor branch of men’s (Barnett, 2013;

Cantelon, 2010; Markula, 2009; Nelson, 2010). One study found dominance of male voices on Twitter, where men's sports outpaced women's sports in several ways—number of tweets and secondary materials posted, as well as articles, videos, photos, and re-tweets (Smith, 2011). A separate content analysis of pro tennis players' tweets found both men and women discussed their personal lives, but male athletes attracted more followers and appeared to have more influence (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012). An analysis of articles posted on ESPN and CBS Sports Line sites during college basketball tournaments found that nearly three fourths of the articles focused on the men's games, not women's (Kian, Modello, & Vincent, 2009). When Clavio and Eagleman (2011) studied sports blogs, they found men received more photographic exposure than women; when women did appear, they were more likely to be sexualized.

Yet, scholars also have found that athletes use new media to challenge gender stereotypes, and “new media spaces such as those afforded by social networks and Web 2.0 interactivity offer new ways of thinking representations of sports-women” (Bruce, 2015, p. 384). MacKay and Dallaire (2013) interviewed female skateboarders writing for skirtboarders.com and found that athletes, who began the blog to talk about their sport, came to see themselves as leaders, supportive of women in the larger skateboarding community. The Internet offered a way to create alternative identities, challenging male hegemonic sports, researchers determined.

Indeed, unlike any medium before it, the Internet and its sport counterpart or computer-mediated sport or cybersport offer a new source for interpreting sporting identities . . . partly because traditional forms of sport media, such as radio, television, newspaper sports sections and magazines, are created by organizations and with technologies that do not foster dialogue between users and creators at the production stage. (MacKay & Dallaire, p. 174)

In examining gender differences on Instagram, researchers found that women typically depicted themselves in active poses, challenging mainstream media photos of women as passive and posed; however, women who did pose did so in more sexually suggestive ways than men (Smith & Sanderson, 2015), prompting researchers to question “whether it is inherent, instinctive, and expected for a woman to pose in a suggestive manner when dressed up” (p. 345).

New Media and Self-Presentation

As they use new media, athletes construct unique online personalities. Information and computer technologies (ICTs), including various forms of social media, offer “sports organizations and athletes the ability to become directly involved in presenting and releasing information, while the press becomes less involved in filtering that information” (Sanderson, 2008, p. 912).

Athletes can post Snapchat photos of their children, tweet about camaraderie with teammates, challenge disgruntled fans on Facebook, or blog about their daily exercise routines. Through social media, athletes can “share more aspects of their identity than is typically portrayed in mainstream media coverage . . .” (Smith & Sanderson, 2015, p. 343), and they can “take a more active part in their public presentation” (Smith & Sanderson, 2015, p. 343) and “assist in managing their identity” (Sanderson, 2008, p. 930). Athletes can “strategically self-present” (Sanderson, 2008, p. 914), mirroring a practice Goffman (1959) described decades earlier in dramaturgical terms as an individual’s attempt to show the best side of his or her personality to an audience. ICTs give athletes a virtual stage on which to construct a favorable identity that can endear them to fans, as well as corporate sponsors.

Marwick (2013) has posited that web technologies have turned media producers into self-promoters, presenting their “edited” selves as personal brands, and this is true for athletes, who employ new media to build public images that establish them as credible spokespersons for businesses or effective sales agents for corporate products. Aria, Ko, and Ross (2014) coined the term “athlete brand,” noting it centers on the public persona of individual athletes and is built on athletic performance, attractive appearance, and marketable lifestyle. “There is a strong need for today’s athlete to build their brands strategically . . . and social media is one tool that can be used to accomplish this” (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016, p. 136.) The construction of an online personal brand can generate good will among fans and corporate sponsors and, ultimately, translate into increased income for athletes. “Athletes rely a great deal on their public image. Indeed, how the public perceives an athlete can play a significant role in his/her ability to obtain endorsements and in leveraging sports teams when seeking to re-negotiate contracts” (Smith & Sanderson, 2015, p. 345). While advertisers have long used celebrities to boost sales, and sports figures have been endorsing consumer products since the 19th century (Carrillat, d’Astous, & Christianis, 2014; “History of athlete endorsements”, n.d.), online communications offer a kind of matchmaking service for athletes seeking corporate sponsors and corporations seeking spokespeople whose image mirrors the qualities of their products. “In a context where sponsorship and endorsements represent financial opportunities for athletes . . . and significant marketing expenditures for their corporate sponsors, the main issue is the centrality of the star and the cult of celebrity” (Colapinto & Benecchi, 2014, p. 221).

Websites and Identity Construction

One form of online communication is personal websites, a mainstay of ICTs and an early form of social media (Morrison, 2015), which offer a platform for information sharing and interactivity between media producers and consumers.

“A successful and well-organized website provides information that people want to know and a sphere within which they can talk about any issue” (Woo, An, & Cho, 2008, p. 170). Personal websites allow authors to communicate with “known and unknown others” and to “construct digital collages using symbols and signs to express self-concepts” (Schau & Gilly, 2003, pp. 386, 387).

As with other forms of new media, websites allow for identity construction. Individuals use personal websites for self-presentation, manipulating aspects of their personality as they share stories in one-to-many communication, rather than face-to-face (Kim & Papacharissi, 2003). “Hosting a personal home page is convenient, affordable, and allows people to present a multi-mediated self, using audiovisual components and text to communicate to potential mass audiences” (Papacharissi, 2002a, p. 346). Personal websites reflect “a form of conspicuous self-presentation where every element is chosen for its semiotic potential” (Schau & Gilly, 2003, pp. 394, 402).

It is this ability to self-present that is an appealing aspect for personal website authors, particularly women, who say that websites allows female authors a freedom that is elusive in traditional media or in personal communications. Stern (1999) found that women used anonymous personal websites to present personal stories that may have seemed improper or risqué, allowing a safe zone for identity expression. A separate study found that a Korean female political candidate’s website included discussion of a greater variety of issues, not just stereotypically “women’s issues” presented in newspapers (Kim, 2012).

A motivation for creating personal websites, researchers have found, is the ability of the author to take charge of the information presented and, consequently, the identity created (Chung & Ahn, 2013). Building on Goffman’s (1959) work, Papacharissi (2002a) observed that personal websites “allow the author control over the information he or she choose to disclose and the manner in which this is done” (pp. 362–363). She further noted:

A Web page provides the ideal setting for this type of information game allowing maximum control over the information disclosed . . . Therefore, the Web page creator executes a carefully controlled performance through which self presentation is achieved under optimal conditions. (Papacharissi, 2002b, p. 644)

While there is no reliable information on the number of personal websites online today, “almost all sports clubs and successful athletes have their own websites” (Beck & Bosshart, 2003 p. 14). For athletes, websites can serve as a way for sports figures and team managers to engage fans, gauge popularity, and increase advertising revenues (McClung, Eveland, Sweeney, & James, 2012; Woo et al., 2008). Additionally, websites give athletes a chance to take control and craft a desirable public image. In 2014, U.S. baseball player Derek Jeter established *ThePlayersTribune.com*, a website with the “mission to give an athlete a

platform to say what is on his or her mind, serious or not, without a reporter playing the journalistic middleman” (Sandomir, 2015).

Previous studies have focused largely on how traditional media represent female athletes, but fewer studies have examined women’s self-representations in new media, and none have examined how female athletes portray themselves on personal websites. While feminist scholars have leveled criticism at traditional and new media for their inadequate representation of women’s sports and their sexualized portrayals of female athletes, women have the opportunity to construct their own media images through personal websites, and it is not yet known whether female athletes seek to defy or conform to traditional gender stereotypes, which situate women as being nurturing, dependent, loving, compassionate, generous, but also weak, easily exploited, submissive, passive, docile, helpless, and childlike (Letherby, 2003; Tong, 1998). The purpose of this study is to explore female athlete’s self-representation on their personal websites. Specifically, this study asks:

RQ1: How do professional and amateur female athletes represent themselves on their personal websites?

RQ2: Do female athletes follow traditional gender scripts in presenting information about themselves and their work?

RQ3: Do female athletes offer “apologetic behavior,” downplaying their athletic achievements?

Method

To understand how women represent themselves on personal websites, I conducted a qualitative content analysis (Altheide, 1996; Altheide & Schneider, 2013) of the websites of professional and amateur athletes.

Websites were chosen because they serve as a comprehensive clearinghouse of information, incorporating texts, images, and videos, as well as personal blog entries, news releases, reprints of news stories, and links to commercial sponsors. Consequently, they provide “unique expressions of contemporary culture, and as such they constitute a huge repository of potential data about contemporary ways of doing and thinking of large groups of people across ethnic and national boundaries” (Pauwels, 2011, p. 247).

This analysis used a purposive sample, one in which cases were selected for study because they were “information-rich and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). The sample included the websites of 45 women, considered top athletes in their sports (Appendix). To conduct the analysis, I drew from *Forbes* magazines’ annual list

of top 10 highest-paid female athletes. If the athlete did not have an official website, that individual was not included in the analysis. I also analyzed the personal websites of top 10 medal winners at the 2010 winter Olympics in Vancouver, the 2012 summer Olympics in London, and the 2014 winter Olympics in Sochi. If a top Olympic medal winner did not have a personal website, I moved to the next name of the list. If there were a tie for number of medals, I selected names in alphabetical order until I had 10 athletes for each Olympic game. To conduct the analysis, I examined visual images and texts on homepages, clicking on links until I was no longer on the athletes' website. Because the purpose of this analysis was to better understand how women represent themselves, fan websites, team websites, or unofficial websites were excluded from this analysis.

The time frame for the study was 2010 through 2015, and dates were chosen purposively because the most recent decade offers an opportunity to examine gender representations in a period that is both contemporary and contradictory. During the time frame of the analysis, women made great strides in athletics, shattering glass ceilings in both amateur and professional arenas: In 2012, for the first time, every country participating in the Olympics sent a female athlete to participate, and nearly 45% of all athletes participating in the 2016 Olympics were women—the largest percentage ever (Fink, 2015; "Women in the Olympic Movement," 2016).¹ In 2014, Becky Hammon became the first female coach in the National Basketball Association, and Jen Welter became the first female coach in the National Football League. In 2013, Danica Patrick the first woman to earn the pole in NASCAR racing at Daytona 500, and in 2015, Serena Williams claimed her 20th Grand Slam title, putting her close to the 24 won by Margaret Court and the 22 won by Steffi Graf, and ahead of the 17 won by Roger Federer.

Yet, inequities for women continue. Female professional athletes were paid far less in 2014 and 2015 than their male counterparts ("Pay Inequity," n.d.). The top 10 highest-paid female athletes collectively earned \$124 million from competitions, endorsements, and appearances from 2014 to 2015, while the top 10 male athletes earned \$950 million during the same time period (Badenhausen, 2015). The highest-paid female athlete in 2015, tennis player Maria Sharapova, earned nearly \$30 million—far less than boxer Floyd Mayweather, the highest-paid male athlete that year, who took home \$300 million, and less than half the \$67 million that the top male tennis player, Roger Federer, earned. In spite of the successes of Hammon and Welter, women hold fewer management and leadership positions than men in sports organizations, including the International Olympic Committee (Senne, 2016); women's sports receives less media coverage than men's ("Boxscores and Bylines," 2005); and women continue to be sexualized and their accomplishments trivialized in traditional media coverage of sports (Hall, 2002; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). "Thus, female athletes are participating in record numbers and delivering record performances;

yet, the media coverage and marketing of female athletes does not reflect this progress” (Fink, 2015, p. 332).

This analysis seeks to extend the existing literature on how female athletes use digital media and offers an opportunity to understand better how women portray themselves when they have the tools to their own stories. It borrows from Pauwels’ (2011) framework of multimodal analysis, which suggests that analysis of websites includes a record of first impressions and reactions; an inventory of salient features and topics, including main content categories; in-depth analysis of content, including text and visuals; and embedded points of view, including the author’s voice or persona. In conducting this qualitative analysis, I developed a matrix, based on previous studies of media representations of female athletes, and examined each website to determine how women were described and characterized in text and how they were presented in still images and videos. I looked specifically at how women described themselves, their athletic skills, and their personal relationships. I also looked for text and images that reflected traditional gender scripts (women as passive, home and family focused, interested in “feminine” pursuits, such as cooking, fashion) or challenged those scripts (women as powerful, aggressive, competitive, women focused on interests beyond home and family). Finally, I noted examples of apologetic behavior in which women downplayed athletic achievements. I took detailed notes on each website, then read and re-read notes to determine themes, ideas that repeated and reoccurred. In analyzing websites, I explored all links, clicking until a link took me away from the athlete’s site.

In websites, both text and graphics construct meaning. Therefore, in this analysis, I examined photos and stories to discern messages to audiences and themes across websites. Because the purpose of the analysis was not to count, but to explore deeper meanings embedded within the text and visuals, qualitative methods were appropriate (Zhou & Sloan, 2011). The analysis of text was informed by critical discourse analysis, which seeks to “show non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 229). The analysis of visual images was informed by symbolic approaches, which help to “identify the ways in which images can condense and crystallize social values . . . and serve in consequence as potent signs in the discharge of meaning” (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998, p. 12).

This article is a feminist research project, aimed at putting women at the center of analysis by “documenting women’s lives, experiences, and concerns, illuminating gender-based stereotypes and bases, and unearthing women’s subjugated knowledge” (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 4). This research began from the standpoint that gender is less about biological differences but is, instead, “a social system, a matter of meanings and values, practices and institutions” (Thompson, 2001, p. 8). This research project starts from the premise that women occupy a secondary status in sports and in larger society and supports the notion that this must change.

A limitation of this study is that it examines a small sample of websites; therefore, results are not generalizable.

Findings

On personal websites, female athletes presented multidimensional cyberportraits of their lives, which involved grueling work and glamorous play. Women simultaneously represented themselves as elite athletes; as women with traditional feminine interests, including men and shopping; and as commodity brokers, who sold products, including skis, watches, candy, beer, milk, and underwear. Female athletes used websites to emphasize their brawn, their beauty, and their brands as they engaged in both backstage (personal) and front-stage (public) presentations (Goffman, 1959).

Brawn: The Sporting Life

While feminist scholars have criticized mainstream media for neglecting women's sports, personal websites allowed athletes to discuss their sport in detail without a journalistic filter. Athletes posted statistics on their performances, competitions, and off-season training; posted photos of themselves in action, as well as photos celebrating victories; and posted videos, podcasts, and blogs about competition, revealing the frustration and exhilaration of elite sport.

Athletes emphasized that hard work and sacrifice, not luck, were the main factors in their success. Olympic medalist Charlotte Dujardin said her sport of dressage required "utter precision," while speed skater Stephanie Beckert described training as imperative to athletic success.

I have been very disciplined with workout for years to make this dream come true... You have to give up other things to realize your dream. I'm not like most people. On hot days in summer, I will not simply go for a swim by the lake. No, I want to sit 4-5 hours on my bike and train.

In articles posted on her website, Serena Williams told *Vogue* that "I don't do the luck thing," and wrote in *Time* magazine, that her successes came at a cost. "I had spent tens of thousands of hours—most of my adolescence—serving, running, practicing, training day in and day out in pursuit of a dream." Agnieszka Radwańska said that her tennis trophies were evidence of successes but also proof of years of sacrifice. "I'm working really hard, and I have been since I was a kid." Swimmer Ranomi Kromowidjojo, who won a gold medal in the 2012 Olympics and planned to compete in the 2016 Rio Olympics, wrote of her training:

In the past few weeks I have tested many things in the swimming pool, such as technique, starting, turning, finishing... I have also done some jumping tests on dry

land, as well as cycle tests, lactate tests, you name it! So no summer holiday for me yet.

Gymnast Gabrielle Douglas and her mother explained in a video the pain of separation once the younger Douglas left home and moved thousands of miles away to train for the 2012 Olympics. When Douglas said she was too homesick to keep training, her mother challenged her to continue, saying: "What do you mean you want to come home? You've sacrificed all this time. You've sacrificed your body. You've sacrificed everything for this dream."

Tennis player Maria Sharapova compared her matches to battles, which required physical prowess and mental acuity, a metaphor repeated by other athletes. In preparing for the Rio Olympics, Gabby Douglas described her workouts as "blood, sweat, tears," while Caroline Wozniacki told the Women's Tennis Association that "my fighting spirit is my greatest asset." Tennis player Victoria Azarenka described her matches as:

difficult on the body. The game has become so physical and takes so much out of you . . . There is no such thing as being really unstoppable . . . but I'm here to try and win every match I go out on court. That's the mentality.

In May 2012, skier Anna Haag discussed preparation for the Olympics, observing, "The fire makes you never, ever want to stop. I just want to keep fighting and constantly evolving." She later compared competition to "a drug. You just want more. You just want to experience it again. And again. And preferably more. And suddenly it becomes actual combat . . ."

Athletes also discussed illnesses and injuries as inherent in their work, describing them as short-term obstacles amid long-term struggles. Ana Ivanovic described an injury during a tennis match. "As I write this I still feel a lot of frustration . . . I know it's part of the sport, and it's probably the most difficult part." Skier Lindsey Vonn chronicled her rehabilitation process for a knee injury, posting a photo of herself in her hospital bed on February 11, 2013, and writing: "Success! Surgery went well yesterday . . . It's going to be a long and hard road back, but I will be back!!" Photos from April 3 showed her doing squats: "Rehab is going well! Double-leg squats already. Love working hard!" Swimmer Dana Vollmer was diagnosed at age 15 with an irregular heartbeat, a condition that could cause fainting, heart attack, or sudden death. Vollmer's mother carried a portable defibrillator to swim meets because her daughter was determined to continue swimming. Runner Sanya Richards-Ross also ran in spite of a diagnosis of Behcet's syndrome, an inflammation of blood vessels throughout the body. Olympic skater Adelina Sotnikova took a year off for an ankle injury and described that time as unsettling: "I missed competing a lot. I miss that feeling when everything inside of you rages and boils, I need that adrenaline."

When athletes discussed losses in their sports, they characterized themselves as fighters, determined to keep going. Darya Domracheva's website linked to an interview *Fashion Collection Magazine* in which the biathlete explained how she coped with defeats:

First of all you have to allow yourself to be upset about it, then get angry, and then use these failures as an advantage, meaning that every mistake I perceive as an opportunity to become stronger and better, make some important conclusions, learn some lessons.

When Lindsey Vonn decided not to compete in 2015–2016 due to injuries, her website praised her decision as one that “takes a lot of courage and greatness, and once again showed Lindsey’s exceptional personality.”

For some athletes, the fighter metaphor extended beyond sports to scandal. When Maria Sharapova was suspended from tennis for 2 years because she tested positive for meldonium at the Australian Open, she used her website to assert that the 2-year suspension was too harsh: “I intend to stand for what I believe is right and that’s why I will fight to be back on the tennis court as soon as possible.” Olympic skater Carolina Kostner wrote that her competitive athletic spirit would help her defend her integrity after an Italian Olympic committee’s anti-doping court said she helped her boyfriend evade regulations. A post from January 17, 2015, with the headline “Carolina Kostner does not give up,” said: “She will continue her defense for as far as possible to clear her name. The world figure skating star has nothing to do with doping and she is sure that the judges who condemned her also realise (sic) that.”

In posting about their front-stage or public lives, athletes presented themselves as determined, as fierce, as warriors, and combatants. They had focus, goals, and determination to excel. They sacrificed, they worked hard, and they saw themselves as unstoppable. Such representations defy traditional feminine stereotypes of passivity.

Beauty: The Nonsporting Life

While personal websites included information on athletic training and performance, the majority of the women in this sample also posted details about their personal or backstage lives, including hobbies and interests, romantic relationships and marriages, vacations and shopping trips. Yuna Kim, whose website called her “queen of the ice,” included a photo gallery with pictures of her “off the ice.” Victoria Azarenka’s website featured a “day in the life” video before a tennis tournament in Melbourne, which included footage of her practicing, playing in an exhibition game, dancing Gangnam style, jet skiing with then-boyfriend/musician Redfoo, and visiting with fans.

Websites also offered athletes a chance to show they were not one-dimensional; their interests extended beyond sports. Claudia Nystand's website listed her cross-country skiing accomplishments, but focused primarily on her art work, and included a main page photo of her holding a pencil, sitting on the floor, bare legs smeared with paint, heavily lined eyes, a cigarette dangling from her mouth, and a liquor bottle nearby. Serena Williams' website noted that in addition to her tennis championships, she had acted in a Lifetime TV series, voiced a *Simpsons* character, and was named a *Vogue* "fashion trendsetter." Ronda Rousey's website described her as "UFC fighter, actress, model." Biathlete Evi Sachenbacher-Stehle told fans she was working on a business administration degree, and skier Tina Maze explained that she was preparing for a career as a primary school teacher. Carolina Kostner worked as a penitentiary police assistant, and Ana Ivanovic studied finance, websites said.

Female athletes used websites to show that their lives were at once ordinary and extraordinary, mundane and glamorous. And websites allowed women to emphasize another duality: They were superior competitors, but they also were sexual and desirable, maternal and nurturing; they were elite athletes, but they embraced traditionally feminine roles.

Sanya Ross-Richard's website noted she was a two-time winner of the Jesse Owens award, but this text was superimposed over five photos, none of which showed her in running clothes, but in cocktail dresses and leather slacks. The website included a tab, "Fast and Fashionable," with a story reporting that she won her Olympic medal wearing Chanel earrings. In Ana Ivanovic's biographical information, she noted that she won the Sony Ericsson WTA Diamond Tour ACES award and also was voted sexiest female player for five straight years by tennisreporters.net. Under Ivanovic's "Career Highlights," there were photos of her holding trophies as well as photos of her lying down in a yellow strapless dress. Olympian Ranomi Kromowidjojo's website included photos of her swimming and wearing gold medals but also a posed photo of her wearing a yellow bathing suit and pink high heels, with a pink inner tube around her neck. Caroline Wozniacki's website included a link, "About Caroline," with a posed photo of her wearing a black knee-length cocktail dress and high heels, with a tennis racket resting on her shoulder.

Serena Williams' website featured the athlete on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* as "sports person of the year." However, Williams was not sweating it out on the court. She was wearing a black leotard and black stilettos, sitting in a chair with bare legs spread apart, and one leg draped over the chair's arm. Ana Ivanovic's website included photos of her in a pink bikini lying on a field of pink tennis balls. When asked how she felt about being a sex symbol, she replied: "Every woman enjoys receiving this kind of compliment, and I am no different." Anna Veith's homepage included a photo of her skiing downhill but also a photo of her posed with her hair swept up, her sweater falling off her shoulder, and the words, "stylish, militant, charming"

superimposed. The website included a link to a story by Trace Sports TV, naming her “hottest female skier in the world.”

Olympic Maria Höff-Riesch’s website photos include action shots of her skiing and training, a photo of her with her medal, and also shots of her posed as Marilyn Monroe—blond wig, white dress blowing up to expose her thighs; posed in front of the ocean with wet skin, eyes closed, faced turned toward the sun, wearing jewelry and make-up; and a posed shot on skis, wearing high heels instead of ski boots. Fencing medalist Elisa de Francisca appeared on a bed with her Olympic medals spread out before her; in another photo, she posed with a sword, wearing a fencing uniform and high heels. Di Francisca’s website included photos of her “on platform” but also photos of her in bathing suits and one exoticized photo of her from a magazine shoot, in which she is crouching and appears to be naked except for plants and foliage covering parts of her head, legs, shoulders, and breasts. Caroline Wozniacki’s website included a blog post in which she discussed her appearance in *Sports Illustrated* in a “bathing suit” that was painted on to her body. “I had a blast, this was so much fun! I love my body paint. This has been such an unbelievable experience.”

And while websites allowed women to showcase their sexiness, sites allowed athletes to promote another traditional feminine trait—modesty. Biathlete Darya Domracheva, who appeared in a photo on her website, running with a bare midriff and bare legs and sitting at the edge of a bed in bare feet, told readers that she:

will never take part in the filming of nudity. It is taboo for me. I will certainly not follow the examples of some athletes that appear on the pages of Playboy magazine. I don’t think that’s cool. Self-respect is one of the most important things for me in any cooperation.

Fighter Ronda Rousey, however, said she appeared nude on the cover of ESPN’s body issue but posed strategically, heeding her mother’s advice to remember “whatever pictures you put out there are gonna be out there forever, so just think that one day your 12- or 13-year-old son or daughter is going to see those pictures.” Agnieszka Radwańska, who posed naked for ESPN’s The Body Issue, said she did not see nudity as sexual; rather as evidence of fitness.

I train extremely hard to keep my body in shape and that’s what the article and the magazine is all about. If you read the interview, it only discusses my job as an athlete and what I have to do physically to be able to participate at the highest level of sport.

Athletes frequently used their websites to highlight their traditional feminine roles as wives, mothers, and caretakers. Golfer Annika Sorenstam wrote a

letter, which she published on her website, encouraging her young daughter to pursue her own interests in her own time.

Remember this: I can do anything, but I can't do everything.

And you *can* do anything, Ava. Even play with the boys.

You were the only girl on your basketball team. You're on the same T-ball team as your brother now, but finding your own place in the world as a strong woman is only going to get harder the older you get. That goes for sports, for business, for whatever you choose to do.

A lot of people aren't going to want you there. But don't listen to them. I didn't.

Snowboarder Amelie Kober said she wanted to be a good athlete *and* a good mother. She wrote that a goal was "to prove myself in the World Cup, retract consistently good results and show that there are also known as 'Mama' is possible to operate competitive sports." Swimmer Dana Vollmer's website listed her competitive sports wins, including three gold medals and two world records in the 2012 Olympics, and listed "became a mom" as a career highlight. The site described her as "momma on a mission" and told readers, "When Dana's not in the pool she is watching in amazement as her son grows and tackles one new feat at a time."

Anna Haag, who won two silver medals at the 2010 Winter Olympics, described her husband skier Emil Jönsson a "king." Sanya Ross-Richards' website featured links to news and magazine stories about her marriage to college sweetheart professional football player Aaron Ross and her comments that it is important for wives to be submissive to their husbands.

I think that anything with two heads is a monster, and there has to be one head of the household, and it has to be your husband. I think being submissive is the best trait a woman can have, you have to trust that your husband (or fiancé or your boyfriend, if he is the right guy) won't make any decision that affects you or him in a negative way. I allow my husband to be the man and to lead our household.

When Anna Veith posted news about her marriage in April 2016, she announced she would drop her maiden name, Fenninger: "And when I return to the slopes, I will do that as Anna Veith. It is very important to me to take my husband's name. For me, a sign of deep affection."

Websites reinforced the idea of athletes as celebrities by including trivial information that had little or nothing to do with sports. However, these details gave insights into the women's interests, many of which underscored traditional feminine roles. Tennis player Victoria Azarenka posted on her website, "I love

bears!,” and included video of her hugging stuffed animals. Skier Maria Höfl-Riesch’s website included an “AZ,” link that listed letters of the alphabet, each letter telling something about her interests: “D for Dolce Gabbana—the One—my favorite scent;” E for Escadé, “my favorite evening dress,” and M for Marcus (Höfl), “the man of my dreams, my heart, my life.” Tennis player Agnieszka Radwańska posted that she loved designers Louis Vitton and Christian Louboutin. Danica Patrick’s website promoted her as “one of the most recognizable athletes in the world” and listed her appearances in two *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit pictorials as one of her accomplishments. Under the “Fast Facts” tab, Patrick listed her hobbies as “working out, traveling, nice dinners, and laughing” and explained: “I would love to get into the fashion world and design my own clothing line, shoes, bags. That’s what I would want to do after racing, and it’s something I really love anyways!” Skier Lindsey Vonn’s website reported that she was named a *Time* magazine icon, citing her athletic performances but noting that she had newfound notoriety as the girlfriend of a famous man: “Vonn, a four-time overall World Cup winner, earned a place on the list despite a severe knee injury in February that ended her most recent season. She gained recent mainstream attention when she started dating golfer Tiger Woods.”

Websites offered a way for women to assert that, off-court or off-field, they were pleasant and nonthreatening, and they adhered to traditional gender scripts. Caroline Wozniacki’s biography reported that “along with her natural athletic abilities and passion for the sport of tennis, Caroline has a calm, cheerful disposition, which quickly helped shape her reputation on the pro tour.” Golfer Stacy Lewis’ website described her as upbeat. Author and fitness expert Rich Roll praised swimmer Rebecca Soni’s Olympic accomplishments in 2008 and 2012, then said: “But meet her on the street and you’d never know just how badass she is—her sweetNESS and genuine humility simply won’t allow it.” After Danica Patrick’s car caught fire in Talladega in 2016, her webpage posted an article in *USA Today*, and her reactions to the dangerous situation: “Honestly, I was thinking about my hair. I have a lot of hair, and I don’t want to lose it.”

Two athletes in this analysis observed the tensions between their roles as sports figures and their identities as women, and they offered different perspectives about the impact of sports on femininity. Olympic skier Tina Maze said she felt pressure to repress her emotions, but she could not always do that. “Sport is mostly measured in power, speed, ingenuity, and there are very few sports where feminine qualities (warmth, tenderness, sensitivity) are measured, assessed and rewarded,” she said. “But my feminine side has always resisted and felt neglected. . . . Therefore, if you ever see me cry, do not panic because this is a good sign. There is still a bit of femininity in me!)))” However, Ana Ivanovic did not experience the tensions in the same way: “I don’t have to try to integrate my feminine side into my career. I am a woman and an athlete and the two are not mutually exclusive.”

For female athletes in this analysis, websites served as a reminder that, although they sacrificed to become successful in sports, their femininity remained in tact.

Brand: Commercial Achievements

Female athletes' websites served a commercial purpose, as a site on which women could promote their personal brands as well as corporate sponsors' products.

Yuna Kim's website was typical, with links to varied products that included Hyundai cars, Maeil milk, Samsung air conditioners, Nike sportswear, Hite beer, KB Kookmin Bank, and Dongsuh Maxim coffee. Ana Ivanovic's site included videos of photo shoots for Rolex, as well as tab, "Shop," that directed viewers to Nike's website. Danica Patrick's website promoted her racing career as well as her corporate sponsorships. Patrick gained popularity through her appearances on Super Bowl ads for GoDaddy.com, a business that registers domain names. GoDaddy bragged that its Super Bowl ads featured "smokin' hot girls," and company CEO Bill Parsons told the press that he admired Patrick's racing accomplishments, her competition spirit, and her business acumen. "I have so much respect for Danica, and not just because she looks stunning in her GoDaddy firesuit." When she won the pole position at the Daytona 500, a first for a woman, Patrick thanked GoDaddy, not the female athletes who came before her.

I don't think about *being a woman* when I'm out there on the track, or when I'm managing my business...I'm just really focused on driving and working with the GoDaddy team to leverage all the assets we have in order to be successful.

Skier Lindsey Vonn promoted Red Bull energy drink on her website by wearing clothes with the brand logo, posting a photo of a purse made of Red Bull tabs, and posting photos of her drinking Red Bull at races.

Other athletes highlighted a relationship between athletic performance and fashion sense. Charlotte Dujardin, who won Olympic gold medals in dressage, posted a news report that said she became a member of the Order of the British Empire wearing a "Paul Costelloe wool and angora coat from his new collection." Runner Allyson Felix posted information about her Nike stylist, who showed fans how to braid shoe laces and wear them as a bracelet. Serena Williams posted a YouTube video in which she promoted Nike and concluded by saying it is good to be "strong, powerful, and beautiful." Caroline Wozniacki urged website viewers to "check out my photos from my latest Adidas photo shoot." She combined science, beauty, and commercialism to promote

Compeed blister patches, citing a 2012 study on European women wearing high heels.

I know how much work it can be to look good; I've often worn my heels even if they are painful or uncomfortable. It seems I'm not alone either as nearly 6 out of 10 women in Europe will do the same!

Ana Ivanovic posted a video, entitled "Red Carpet Ready with AI," in which a make-up artist for Shiseido cosmetics helped her get ready, but she assured viewers, "But for me, beauty is something that comes from within."

Even women who did not include personal details about their lives linked to corporate sponsors. Golfer Yani Tseng linked to Adams golf clubs, Lacoste sports wear, Oakley sunglasses and apparel, while skier Marit Bjørgen's site included links to Bliz eyewear, Godfisk! Foods, Bentes hair salon, and Mizuno sports shoes.

Athletes said they paired with corporate sponsors because the companies shared their personal values. Dressage medalist Charlotte Dujardin discussed her partnership with Kingsland equestrian wear saying:

Dressage requires a whole realm of discipline and skills, harmony and hard work. The team at Kingsland have the same ethos with all their creations, with an eye for fine details and quality and so I didn't hesitate when we discussed working together.

Corporate sponsors Moët & Chandon champagne and Naveya & Sloane Jewelry gave Ana Ivanovic a 1.65-carat diamond ring when she played in the 2016 New Zealand Open. She posted on her website: "This is one of the most beautiful rings I have ever seen. It is elegant and sophisticated yet unique and modern, the qualities that I strive for myself." She discussed her corporate sponsor Shiseido in similar terms: "They stand for innovation and sophistication, two qualities that I aspire to." Biathlete Darya Domracheva said she worked with a bakery, an insurance company, and a sports equipment company because "we have many things in common." Danica Patrick, who ended her partnership with GoDaddy, began working with Nature's Bakery, because she said the business shared her interest in good nutrition.

Some athletes used websites to promote their own product lines. Venus Williams' website linked to EleVen, a ready-to-wear clothing collection. "Strong, simple, and iconic are the words I kept in mind when I designed this collection," Williams said. Maria Sharapova's website showcased Sugarpova, a premium candy that "reflects the fun, fashionable, and sweet side of tennis sensation Maria Sharapova." Candy flavors included "sporty, the taste of victory;" "spooky, watch out I bite;" "flirty, lips like sugar;" and "cheeky, cute but fierce." Serena Williams' website linked to the Home Shopping Network, where

viewers could buy her fashions, including dresses, skirts, and purses, and linked to Nike, where she promoted her own line of sportswear. Gabby Douglas' homepage included a trailer for *Douglas Family Gold*, a reality TV series on the Oxygen network about her quest to win in the Rio Olympics. The site also included a link to Douglas' new emoji app, which cost \$1.99 and "will add extra girl power to your texts." After she retired from professional swimming, Rebecca Soni started Rise Elite, a program to train young athletes at a cost of \$350 per month, and promoted the business venture on her website.

Athletes sometimes tied commercial endorsements to good causes, and in these efforts, they reinforced a feminine caretaking role. Skateboarder Amelie Korber supported the Sky Foundation, which helped children learn about the benefits of physical fitness. Swimmer Rebecca Soni worked with the United Nations' Girl Up program, aimed at empowering young women in developing countries. Serena Williams started a foundation that helped build schools in Kenya, and she championed the Equal Justice Initiative that provided legal representation to poor clients. Anna Veith's website linked to commercial sponsors, including Audi, but also linked to the Cheetah Conservation Fund. She said, as a "speed junkie" she felt a connection to the big cats and was concerned about threats from poaching and destruction of their natural habitats. Also, she said: "I would like my children to also be able to observe the fastest animals in the world in natural surroundings." Fighter Ronda Rousey supported a charity that provided mental health services and suicide prevention, although her caretaking message was not couched in traditionally feminine language.

I have this one term for the kind of woman my mother raised me to not be, and I call it a do nothing b*tch. A DNB. The kind of chick that just tries to be pretty and be taken care of by someone else. That's why I think it's hilarious if my body looks masculine . . . Listen, just because my body was developed for a purpose other than f*cking millionaires doesn't mean it's masculine. I think it's femininely badass as f*ck because there's not a single muscle on my body that isn't for a purpose, because I'm not a do nothing b*tch." [asterisk in original]

For at least one female athlete, athletic achievements did not guarantee commercial success. Annika Sorenstam designed golf courses, and in an interview posted on her website, she noted that her outstanding athletic performance (89 worldwide victories) was sometimes not enough.

A lot of times when they throw my name in the ring as a potential designer, in some parts of the world it's not an option—not me personally, it's just that they won't hire a woman. And you hear things like, "Oh, it would be a short course if she designed it."

Websites emphasized nontraditional feminine traits—women's power and aggressiveness—but tempered this with information about traditional feminine

roles, such as sexy model or devoted caretaker. This blending of nonconformity and conformity illustrate that female athletes must negotiate old and new roles to accommodate corporate interests.

Conclusions

Butler (1988) wrote that gender is performed over time through repeated acts, and “gender reality is created through sustained social performances” (p. 528). Websites are one way in which athletes can perform gender and construct identity. The gendered reality on female athletes’ websites is that athletic prowess is accompanied by assurances that women have not abandoned traditional feminine roles. Athletes’ front-stage performances, which highlighted strength, and their backstage performances, which highlighted “good” feminine behaviors, combined to allow women to create a brand identity that sought to make feminine power beautiful. However, websites also sent the collective message that the most powerful athletes are those who adhere to traditional gender scripts.

On their websites, women told stories of training, practice, and competition in their own voices and with their own choice of photos and videos. These stories revealed the sacrifices and rewards of elite competition, as women detailed the physical strain and emotional focus required. Women became subjects in their own stories, and they told stories not just of victory and loss, but of commitment, sacrifice, and dedication. While journalistic stories typically focus on winners and losers, female athletes included not only the results of competition but also the process of training and conditioning. Websites did not position women’s sports as lesser than men’s sports or as complementary to men’s sports. Women’s sports stood on their own, and women stood out as accomplished athletes. This analysis showed that websites offer a means for female athletes to assert their power in a society where they are frequently judged as unwelcome strangers in a male domain.

While websites did expose the rigors of athletic training, presenting women as physically strong and emotionally tough, websites also emphasized that women also were pretty faces, avid shoppers, and devoted partners to men. By posting photos of themselves in bathrobes, bathing suits, tight-fitting dresses, and high heels—or with no clothes at all—women’s self-representations were as objects of desire. Additionally, women posted links to articles in traditional media, which characterized them as the hottest, the sexiest, and the prettiest. For women who chose not to emphasize sexual attractiveness, websites were used to reassure that female athletes were ultra-girlish (loving shopping, shoes, and men) or maternal (loving children, caring, and nurturing).

By presenting themselves as glamorous and sexy, as childlike and exuberant, and as concerned and maternal, female athletes displayed apologetic behavior, and through their websites, female athletes moved beyond a demonstration of apologetic behavior to construct an *apologetic identity*. By placing their athletic accomplishments alongside their fashion photo shoots, women trivialized their

unique successes. By discussing traditional feminine roles—as wives, girlfriends, nurturers, sex symbols, cuties—female athletes demonstrated a reassuring behavior, in which they asserted that they are truly feminine, not masculine, and, therefore, not trespassers in the male domain of sports.

Websites serve as a reminder that for female athletes, skill is not enough; women must look pretty and behave “properly.” On websites, women control the message, and that message is that they are competitive but also conventional.

Additional studies would be needed to determine if this apologetic identity is strategic—whether, in seeking to represent themselves as powerful, women may realize that physical strength sets them apart as elite athletes but that adherence to traditional feminine roles helps them “fit in” and gain credibility in male-dominated sports. Or, since athletes receive corporate sponsorships and appear in advertisements—and advertising tells stories through stereotypes—female athletes may feel a need to conform in order to attract and keep sponsors, who, in turn, support their athletic training and competition. A question for future research is whether female athletes view apologetic identity as necessary for construction of commercial identity and financial success. This initial analysis indicates they do.

This research project examined only one form of digital media—websites. It should be noted that during the time of this analysis, some athletes discontinued their websites, which may reflect a wider trend of abandoning websites in favor of other forms of social media, such as Facebook (Temin & Anderson, 2014). Given this, additional studies of other social media formats are worthwhile to learn about gendered identity constructions.

Because the interest of this research project was on women, an analysis of male athletes’ websites was beyond the scope of this analysis. Future studies may consider differences in gendered portrayals and shed additional insights on contrasting gender roles, exploring how women and men’s storytelling styles differ.

Appendix

Athletes’ websites included in this analysis

2014 Olympic Medalists

Anna Fenninger	Slalom skiing	http://www.anna-veith.com/en/
Charlotte Kalla	Cross-country skiing	www.charlotte-kalla.se/
Darya Domracheva	Biathlon	http://daryadomracheva.com
Marit Bjørgen-Rennet	Cross-country skiing	www.maritbjorgenrennet.no
Therese Johaug	Skiing	www.theresejohaug.no/
Tina Maze	Skiing	www.tinamaze.com
Maria Höfl-Riesch	Snowboarding	www.maria.com.de/
Martina Sáblíková	Speedskating	www.martina-sablikova.com/

(continued)

Continued

Amelie Kober		http://amelie-kober.de/
Carolina Kostner	Skating	http://www.carolina-kostner.it/E-Home.htm
2012 Olympic Medalists		
Allison Schmidt	Swimming	http://swimallison.com now linked to: https://swims.wam.com/tag/allison-schmitt/
Allyson Felix	Track, field	http://Allysonfelix.com
Dana Vollmer	Swimming	www.danavollmer.com
Ranomi Kromowidjojo	Swimming	www.ranomi.nl
Rebecca Soni	Swimming	www.rebsoni.com
Elisa di Francisca	Fencing	www.elisadifrancisca.it
Gabrielle Douglas	Gymnastics	www.gabrielledouglas.com
Charlotte Dujardin	Dressage	http://charlottedujardin.co.uk
Sanya Ross-Richards	Track	www.sanyarichardsross.com
Serena Williams	Tennis	http://serenawilliams.com
2010 Olympic Medalists		
Marit Bjørgen	Skiing	www.maritbjoergen.no www.maritbjoergenrennet.no
Magdalena Neuner	Biathlon	www.magdalena-neuner.de
Martina Sáblíková	Speed skating	www.martinasablikova.cz
Stephanie Beckert	Speed skating	www.eis-beckerts.de
Justyna Kowalczyk	Skiing	www.justyna-kowalczyk.pl/
Maria Riesch	Skiing	http://maria.com.de
Claudia Nystand	Skiing	www.claudianystad.de
Evi Sachenbacher-Stehle	Biathlon	www.evi-sachenbacher.de
Lindsey Vonn	Skiing	www.lindseyvonn.com
Anna Haag	Skiing	http://annaoemil.se
2015 Top-Earning Athletes		
Maria Sharapova	Tennis	www.mariasharapova.com
Serena Williams	Tennis	www.serenawilliams.com
Caroline Wozniacki	Tennis	http://carolinewozniacki.com/
Danica Patrick	NASCAR racing	http://www.danicapattick.com
Ana Ivanovic	Tennis	www.anaivanovic.com/
Petra Kvitova	Tennis	http://petrakvitova.net/
Simona Halep	Tennis	No official website
Ronda Rousey	Boxing	http://rondarousey.net/
Stacy Lewis	Golf	www.stacysback.com/

(continued)

Continued

Agnieszka Radwańska	Tennis	www.agaradwanska.com/
Maria Sharapova	Tennis	www.mariasharapova.com
Li Na	Tennis	No official website
Serena Williams	Tennis	ww.serenawilliams.com
Yuna Kim	Ice skating	www.yunakim.com
Danica Patrick	Car racing	www.danicapattick.com
Victoria Azarenka	Tennis	www.vikaazarenkatennis.com
Caroline Wozniacki	Tennis	www.carolinewozniacki.com
Agnieszka Radwańska	Tennis	www.agaradwanska.com
Ana Ivanovic	Tennis	www.anaivanovic.com
Paula Creamer	Golf	No official website.
2013 Top Earning Athletes		
Maria Sharapova	Tennis	www.mariasharapova.com
Serena Williams	Tennis	www.serenawilliams.com
Li Na	Tennis	No official website
Victoria Azarenka	Tennis	www.vikaazarenkatennis.com/
Danica Patrick	Car racing	www.danicapattick.com
Yuna Kim	Figure skating	www.yunakim.com
Caroline Wozniacki	Tennis	www.carolinewozniacki.com
Agnieszka Radwańska	Tennis	
Ana Ivanovic	Tennis	www.anaivanovic.com
Paula Creamer	Golf	No official website
2012 Top-earning athletes		
Maria Sharapova	Tennis	www.mariasharpova.com
Li Na	Tennis	No official website.
Serena Williams	Tennis	http://serenawilliams.com
Caroline Wozniacki	Tennis	http://carolinewozniacki.dk
Danica Patrick	Car racing	http://danicaracing.com
Victoria Azarenka	Tennis	www.vikaazarenkatennis.com
Yuna Kim	Figure skating	www.yunakim.com
Ana Ivanovic	Tennis	www.anaivanovic.com
Agnieszka Radwańska	Tennis	www.agaradwanska.com
Yani Tseng	Golf	www.yanigolf.com
2011 Top-earning athletes		
Maria Sharapova	Tennis	www.mariasharpova.com
Caroline Wozniacki	Tennis	www.carolinewozniacki.com
Danica Patrick	Racing	http://danicaracing.com
Venus Williams	Tennis	http://venuswilliams.com

(continued)

Continued

Kim Clijsters	Tennis	No official website
Serena Williams	Tennis	http://serenawilliams.com
Yuna Kim	Figure skating	www.yunakim.com
Li Na	Tennis	No official website
Ana Ivanovic	Tennis	www.anaivanovic.com
Paula Creamer	Golf	No official website
2010 Top-earning athletes		
Maria Sharapova	Tennis	www.mariasharpova.com
Serena Williams	Tennis	http://serenawilliams.com
Venus Williams	Tennis	http://venuswilliams.com/
Danica Patrick	Racing	http://danicaracing.com
Yuna Kim	Figure skating	www.yunakim.com
Annika Sorenstam	Golf	http://annikasorenstam.com/
Ana Ivanovic	Tennis	www.anaivanovic.com
Jelena Jankovic	Tennis	https://www.facebook.com/JelenaJankovicOfficial/ (Facebook page is listed as official website).
Paula Creamer	Golf	No official website
Lorena Ochoa	Golf	http://lorenaslinks.org/ (Foundation website is only site)

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1. This research project was completed before the 2016 Olympics began.

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A Young Lion, the Lizard King, and Erotic Politician: Tracing the Roots of Jim Morrison's Mythical Image

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Abstract

In the past 45 years since his death, Jim Morrison's legacy, in the form of rebellious and antiestablishment reputation, numerous reprints of his photographs and the continued popularity of the Doors' music, has elevated the singer from a 1960s sex symbol image to the status of a pop culture icon. This paper aims to trace the roots of his now mythical image by analyzing the components which have been identified as those that initiated its creation: his attractive physical appearance and the promotional material launched to enhance it, press articles that focused on his physique, his highly sexual and unpredictable live performances, and his verbal ingenuity shown in the interviews he gave with memorable catch phrases.

Keywords

Jim Morrison, the Doors, sex symbol, image, myth

Introduction

According to Danesi (2008), a celebrities' premature or tragic death is one of the notable factors that contributes to someone becoming a pop icon (p. 112). In his lifetime, Jim Morrison was praised as a sex symbol, but it was his death at 27

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that made him a pop culture icon and granted him a mythical status. For Fournier and Jiménez (2000), Morrison can be seen as a modern hero, located in the land of myth, as he met all the qualifications for a tragic character: He was admired and envied, exalted and censored, sought for and rejected, and in the end even prosecuted (pp. 207, 209).

Since Morrison's passing in 1971, both he and the Doors have been *revived* several times. The beginning of what Margry (2008) calls the *mythologizing process* of Morrison was recorded at the end of the 70s (p. 144) first with the release of the LP *An American Prayer*¹ in 1978 and then the following year when Francis Ford Coppola used *The End* as a theme song for his film *Apocalypse Now*.

That this revival would continue in the 1980s, leading to the “the Doors [holding] near-mythical regard” (Buckley, 2003, p. 309) and to “the growing iconization of Morrison as a male sex symbol,” was confirmed with the release of his first biography *No One Here Gets Out Alive* in 1980 and then again “with the September 1981 edition of *Rolling Stone*” (Margry, 2008, p. 144)—the now iconic front page with Morrison's photograph and the headline: “He's hot, He's sexy, He's dead.”

Another 10 years after, the 20th anniversary of Morrison's death was marked by Oliver Stone's movie about the Doors. For Davis (2004), this *Hollywood's treatment* was “the defining event in the development of the Jim Morrison legend” (p. 469). Despite the controversies,² the movie introduced numerous of new fans to the music of the Doors.

Today, the Doors continue to sell in respectable numbers—a million albums a year as stated in the latest documentary about the group (DiCillo, 2009), their Facebook fan page has 16.9 million likes, the number of their followers on Twitter has amounted to 463,000,³ and Morrison's grave in Père-Lachaise cemetery in Paris has been one of the city's major tourist attraction for decades. There are numerous biographies of Morrison and recollections of him are central in two autobiographical books written by his bandmates John Densmore and Ray Manzarek.

In the past 20 years, the Doors and Morrison have also become topics of the academic papers (e.g., Crenshaw, 2014; Fournier & Jiménez, 2000; Kuwahara, 1992; Magistrale, 1992; Wolfe, 1999). To some extent, Morrison's poetry has also been a subject of analysis—most notably Wallace Fowlie's book *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as a Poet*.

This continuous interest in Morrison and the Doors is tackled in many of the mentioned papers. Wolfe (1999) explains how fans, regardless of their age, are continuously drawn to Morrison “because of his expressive gifts, his risk-taking reputation, his sexuality, and his death” (p. 56); Kuwahara (1992) names as the reason for this attraction the “youthful rebellion which he epitomized and which, regardless of time periods, appeals to teenagers who rebel against authorities” (p. 55) while Magistrale (1992) notes the appeal of “his focus on the self”

in a combination with his “naked, apolitical rejection of all authority and institutions” (p. 141).

The universal and lasting appeal of the Doors’ music lies in the exploration of “self-expression, darkness and release, sex and death” (Crenshaw, 2014, p. 3). These are all themes that transcend the 60s and early 70s generation and can in fact relate to any generation. They can also be seen, not just as a part the Doors’ music, but as part of Morrison’s timeless appeal.

Even though he is primarily a musician, Morrison’s appeal is broader than just his lyrics (music) and rock star image—he is a pop culture icon. In terms of his looks, decades after his death, he is still perceived as a sex symbol, his premature and in all sense tragic death has given him the status of an immortal and an untouched symbol of youth. Beyond the symbolism of his physical attributes Morrison’s actions, his wild performances and his problems with the authorities along with the struggle for freedom of speech and expression, has made him a symbol of rebellion and opposition to the establishment. These factors, along with his verbal ingenuity, flattering press commentaries and well-used promotional material constructed a Morrison myth, one that transcends the period in which he lived. Using these identified categories (components), this paper aims to explain the creation of Morrison’s mythical image.

Defining Image Components

Analyzing the reasons for the continuing popularity of the Doors first single *Break on Through*, Wolfe (1999) argues that it is Morrison’s image, among other reasons,⁴ that allows the song to endure. He elaborates this reasoning by using Dyer’s definition of the image as “a manufactured public impression created with the help of visual images” (p. 40).

This paper analyzes the components that led to the creation of Morrison’s image by using the same definition along with media text categories that define image as explained by Frontani (2007): *promotion* (which, among other, includes: press books, fashion pictures, and television appearances as well as the physical appearance of the celebrity), *publicity* (information produced by the media mainly through interviews), *work product* (musicians’ recorded music, live performances, and film material), and *commentaries* (criticism; pp. 3–4).

Using some slightly modified categories listed above, the paper argues how Morrison’s now mythical image has roots in the combination of several factors that helped create his image as a sex symbol but also as a rebellious and unpredictable character. They are, for the purpose of this analysis, divided into four components:

1. His attractive physical appearance and the promotional material used to enhance it—at the beginning of the Doors’ career, Morrison showed an awareness regarding his attractive physique—he formed a unique and

highly sexual style that became his trademark (long hair, tight leather pants worn with no underwear), and much of the Doors promotional material (especially photographs) was used to capture and promote his attractive looks.

2. Press commentaries that largely focused on his physique—Morrison was frequently featured in teenage magazines, and many concert reviews in different magazines, apart from the music analysis, provided his detailed physical description. He was hailed by the press as a sex symbol.
3. His verbal ingenuity—in the preserved recorded interviews, it is noticeable how he spoke slowly, obviously taking its time to think about the questions and thus frequently providing interesting and witty answers that continued to be cited and form a large part of his image. Later, in some of his final interviews, Morrison admitted to have manipulated the media using catch phrases.⁵
4. His live performance reputation and repulsion towards the authority—reactions from the band's audience as they grew accustomed to theatrical performance contributed to the creation of the Doors' specific concert reputation and the public's ever growing anticipation and demand for Morrison's excessive behavior. His concert conduct, from onstage arrest in New Heaven to an incident and consequently the trial in Miami, led to the confirmation of his rebellious and antiestablishment image.

Attractive Physical Appearance and Promotional Material

Perhaps more than his bandmates, Morrison was aware of the importance of image. In his autobiographical book, John Densmore (2005) recalled how Morrison was the one who thought about their image when they started the band—regarding the way they should dress, he even considered wearing suits (p. 56). This was soon discarded—there was no talk of a uniform look as each member formed a unique style and Morrison's was the most conspicuous. In the Doors most formative years (1967 and 1968), Morrison's look consisted of leather jackets and pants. He wore his pants frequently without underwear (Davis, 2004, pp. 234, 320). His hair “all wavy and thick” (Weintraub, 1968, p. 7) as once described by a fan in a *Crawdaddy* review, formed an infallible part of his image and was his trademark. Even though it varied in length through his career, it remained steadily long (for male standards). Once questioned about its length, he replied: “I wear my hair long because I don't look good with short hair” (Cook, 1967). Due to “his soft curls” Manzarek (2012) compared him to Michelangelo's David and Alexander the Great (p. 98) and same did Densmore (2005, p. 36).

Long hair was a trademark of the 1960s counterculture, and its meaning in the hippie movement is explained by Saint-Jean-Paulin (1999): It was a symbol of protest (against the war and the army that imposed a very short haircut) and a

sign of belonging to a certain community. It too represented a new attitude toward women and an attempt to erase the boundaries between the sexes by a metaphorical return to childhood where no such apparent distinctions existed (pp. 42–43).

Even though the Doors were not part of the hippie culture,⁶ all members had long hair, and at the beginning of his career, Morrison too sported a very hippie-like stature as a consequence of his malnutrition and use of lysergic acid diethylamide. This thin stature along with long hair could be a reason why his sexuality was described as “equally fascinating to men and women” (Kimmel & Aronson, 2004, p. 556) and the reason he was often deemed innocent, even compared to a child: “. . . he is the sexuality of child, the sensuousity of child only . . .” (Williams, 1971, p. 55), or described like a little boy, childlike but not childish (Weintraub, 1968, p. 8).

The visual image is an important part of Morrison’s mythical image, the largest portion of which came from photographs. Among both the promotional and newspaper photographs, those that stand out are the photos taken by Gloria Stavers (later used on different, numerous occasions, including the famous 1981 *Rolling Stone* cover but also by Elektra Records as promotional photographs for the band) and Joel Brodsky’s session entitled *young lion*.

Stavers took many photographs of Morrison, but the most famous remains the photo shoot in her apartment—a series of photographs that feature him wearing leather pants, a black leather jacket, and her fur coat. According to Hopkins and Sugerman (2006), Morrison’s appearance in *Vogue* magazine not long afterwards was also due to Stavers who sent the photos to her friend at the magazine almost immediately after she had taken them (p. 148).

Joel Brodsky’s *young lion* session is a series of photographs, widely recognizable due to numerous reprints especially on posters and T-shirts. For Morrison’s biographers, these are the photographs that helped define his image in a way that it became “something he felt he could never live up to” (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006).

The photos, taken the day after the photo shoot in Stavers apartment with shirtless Morrison still wearing one of her necklaces, feature him with the haircut created by celebrity stylist Jay Sebring and modeled, as Morrison had wished, on Alexander the Great (Hopkins & Sugerman, 2006, pp. 144, 148). The photographs became a “visual bonanza for Elektra” as they were frequently reprinted (Cunningham & Voso Lab, 1991, p. 67) but also for the fans that saw them as “images of the human ideal” (Margry, 2008, p. 147). As Margry (2008) pointed out, the impact of those particular photographs became so powerful over the years that it “helped shape the way in which Morrison is perceived”⁷ (pp. 146–147).

Apart from the photographs, the band’s promotion consisted of television appearances. In the late 1960s, 95% of all households in America owned a television set and members of the population under 20 (who amounted to 41% of the population in 1965) were the most constant television viewers (Bindas & Heineman, 1994, pp. 22, 24). In such circumstances, a television

appearance was essential for a rising band with national aspirations. The Doors' earliest performances were on local television but in July 1967, they appeared on the national television show *American Bandstand* (Davis, 2004, p. 188). This performance was quite reserved; all band members appeared restrained, almost timid, even Morrison who had not yet fully defined his most famous visual and performance image. Only a couple of months later *The Ed Sullivan Show* captured a changed Morrison—shown in all his *aesthetic fulfillment* wearing leather, he emanated a violent and incendiary sexuality (Fournier & Jiménez, 2007, p. 19). This show too, was “the site of the first national Doors scandal” (Marcus, 2011, p. 87) as they decided to ignore the attempt to censor their song “Light my fire.”⁸ For Inglis (2006), “The Doors’ dismissive response helped to cement their prestige within the counter-culture” as they were praised for their “decision to distance [themselves] from any sort of negotiation with the establishment” (p. 572).

Another important Doors’ performance on American television was on *The Smothers Brothers Show* in December 1968. It was one of the last filmed shows (apart from the European tour) that featured Morrison in his prime. Davis (2004) compares his looks in leathers and long hair with “grey-eyed Achilles” noting how he “never looked that good again” (p. 299).

Press Contributions to Image

Morrison’s biographers Riordan and Prochnickey (2006) regard Morrison’s image makers as “media moguls who descended” on him “like celluloid vultures determined to milk his full potential as a sex symbol” (p. 164), and the result was a produced image largely based on his looks, the clothes he wore, and his often highlighted onstage sexual appeal.

Some critics saw Morrison’s good looks as the band’s most valuable asset, while others regarded it as a primary reason why the Doors have not been taken seriously enough. In that sense, one critic identified Morrison’s sexuality as “the major reason for some heads rejecting The Doors as being a strictly teenybopper type band” adding a bitter remark how his sexuality “appears to have drawn vastly more comment than their music” (Tobler, 1970, p. 6).

Morrison’s frequent appearances in teenage magazines contributed in large part to the formation of his sex symbol image. In 1967, the year that the Doors released their first album, 75% of all singles and 45% of all LPs were bought by girls age 12 to 17 years (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 165) so it was impossible to ignore such a large part of the potential audience. Morrison and the Doors appeared many times in *16 Magazine*, the biggest teen magazine in the 60s (Davis, 2004, p. 148) with a circulation of 1 million copies and additional 4 million readers (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 165). From 1958 to 1975, the magazine was edited by Gloria Stavers who, according to Marsh (1997), was “the first real pop journalist” who “basically invented rock and pop culture

journalism as we know it today” (p. xii). Several Morrison biographers point out how important it was to receive her attention as she was extremely powerful in constructing images of male rock stars—“she asked and received a great deal of deference from the music industry” since she was “controlling the hearts and minds of nearly every fourteen-year old girl in America” (Jones, 2015). Besides *16 Magazine*, Morrison too appeared in magazines like *Datebook*, even on the cover, and some articles like “My Dream Date with Jim Morrison” were written by Elektra’s publicist Danny Fields (Davis, 2004, p. 148).

Fournier and Jiménez (2007) analyze the special kind of presentation Morrison received in such magazines: The texts were idyllic and romantic with an emphasis on his deep loneliness, typical of someone as talented and little understood as Morrison—he was pictured vulnerable, dangerous, and sensual at the same time (p. 20).

But not just teenage magazines projected him as a sex symbol. Music magazines that analyzed the Doors music frequently and in great detail described Morrison physique and clothes as well. Morrison referred to such practice with resentment when interviewed for *DownBeat*, a magazine he praised as the one that really deals with music, explaining: “Most of the so-called music magazines cover everything but music. They are fan magazines and sensation-seekers. I have been written about in all of them . . .” (Cuscuna, 1970, p. 13 as cited in Dawn Goldsmith, 2007, p. 39).

In *The Village Voice* in December 1967, Howard Smith wrote how Morrison, “plastered all over the teenybop fan magazines,” causes an animalistic response he had never seen before from different kinds of women. He identified him as the biggest male sex symbol since James Dean and Marlon Brando, explaining how his “appeal is much more than words or music,” adding, “If my antenna are right he could be the biggest thing to grab the mass libido in a very long time” (p. 14). Michael Lydon wrote in *The New York Times* in December 1968 about Morrison’s self-developed *erotic style* which made him “rock’s biggest sex symbol” (p. 74) and in another *Times*’ article Morrison was described as “a pop star with a vision . . . packed in sex” (Aronowitz, 1967). In a review in the Seattle underground newspaper *Helix*, the Doors were called “carnivores in a land of musical vegetarians” while Morrison was described as “sexual in almost psychopathic way” (Robbins, 1967).

Apart from *Helix*, reviews about the Doors were frequent in their *hometown* underground newspaper *Los Angeles Free Press*. Dawn Goldsmith (2007) who analyzed their writings praised it in an context that they unlike many other publications including *Rolling Stone* “chronicled [the Doors] countercultural contexts, influences, and confrontations with the main stream” (p. 17) but concluded how they too “exhibited interests in perpetuating perspectives of [Morrison’s] images, legends, and myths” sometimes doing it almost like fan magazines where his appearance seemed “to matter more than the songs or performances themselves” (pp. 33–34).

One such example was an *Los Angeles Free Press* article by Liza Williams (1971) in which she called him “a poster or . . . an idol or a picture to kiss at night under the covers, a piece of paper, a doll . . . the ultimate Barbie doll” (p. 56). She compared him to young Medici while providing a worship like description: “that throat of exquisite muscles holding the face which hardly rises in prominence from the column of throat before it is swallowed in the cherubic curls, the young prince . . .” (p. 55) In *Crawdaddy*, Kris Weintraub (1968) described Morrison’s physique as otherworldly: “There isn’t another face like that in the world. It’s so beautiful and not even handsome in the ordinary way. I think it’s because you can tell by looking at him that he IS God . . .” (p. 6).

Those articles, which almost appear as idolatry, helped construct an image of Morrison not just as sex symbol, but as a living embodiment of myth.

Image Projected Through Interviews

According to Walters (2006), Morrison himself contributed to his sex symbol image since he had “an active role in the formation of his self- and world-views” (p. 73). The fact that he was well educated—he graduated from University of California, Los Angeles with a B.S. degree in cinematography (Davis, 2004, p. 67) and extremely well read (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 35) could reasonably be linked to the verbal ingenuity visible in the interviews he gave, many of which also serve as a confirmation of his active contribution in image creation. In an interview given to Michael Lydon in *The New York Times*, while describing the bands power which, in his own words is sexual, Morrison called the Doors *erotic politicians* (2003, p. 75), the phrase that almost immediately became one of his most quotable.

Talking to Jerry Hopkins for the *Rolling Stone* in 1969, Morrison admitted his media manipulation and explained precisely what it was about:

They [the journalists] look for catchy phrases and quotes they can use for captions, something to base an article on to give it an immediate response . . . I knew that a few key phrases is all anyone ever retains from an article. So I wanted a phrase that would stick in the mind. (Hopkins, 1969)

He addressed the same issue in a later interview:

I was very good at manipulating publicity with a few little phrases like ‘erotic politics.’ Having grown up on television and mass magazines, I knew instinctively what people would catch on to. So I dropped those little jewels here and there – seemingly very innocently – of course just calling signal. (Chorush, 1970)

Morrison was well aware of the media power in creating image, the potential his words could have and as he put it “that the interview was an art form that should be prepared like any other art” (Davis, 2004, p. 153).

In fact, his first ingenious phrase was released at the very beginning of the Doors contact with the media—in Elektra Records' official biography of the band members in 1967. Such moves were frequently made by discography houses—they were used to target the profitable teen audience by stirring young girls' imaginations. While the other band members wrote only the basic personal data, then 22-year-old Morrison decided to provide the press and the audience with more material. The released biography fulfilled its purpose as it contained one of his most memorable quotes: "I am interested in anything about revolt, disorder, chaos, especially activity that seems to have no meaning" (Gaar, 2015, p. 33). Despite the later provided explanation that it was just one of the catch phrases, he deliberately placed to manipulate the media, the press held on, and this phrase along with *erotic politicians*, cited numerous times afterwards, contributed significantly to the construction of his image.

Live Performance Image

Writing about the music of the counterculture, Perone (2004) reflects on the "curious sort of religious aura" (p. 153) that surrounded some of the musicians of the era, naming Morrison the most notable among them. This kind of special experience the Doors provided their audience with was once described by Morrison as a "kind of secular religion" (Ferrara, 1970). As the center of the *ceremony*, Morrison was compared to an electric shaman by his bandmate Ray Manzarek (Walters, 2006, p. 73) but also by critic Richard Goldstein (1968, p. 42); very soon after they started performing, the Doors gained the reputation for excess and a lot of people came not to for the music but for theatrical exhibition. In that sense, Hopkins and Sugerma (2006) wrote how the public expected to see Morrison "behave in a way that no one else could, or would" (p. 211) while Fournier and Jiménez marked his conduct and body language at concerts "as strong form of flirtation" that sometimes turned to sexually explicit behavior (2005, p. 3). "The Doors were intimately associated with sexuality in the minds of their audience" (Crenshaw, 2014, p. 7), and the sexual side of the Doors' concerts was too noticed and promoted by the press—they called their performances: a "sinister stage presence" (Heisler, 1968), a "ritual of psychic-sexual exorcism" (Youngblood, 1967, p. 15 as cited in Dawn Goldsmith, 2007, p. 19), "an orgy," and "mass sexual hysteria" (Thomas, 1969).

The press too competed in designing the perfect description for both Morrison and the Doors. Due to the final lyric of the song "Not to touch the Earth," Morrison was frequently dubbed the "self-proclaimed Lizard King"; Joan Didion (1979) called the Doors "missionaries of apocalyptic sex" and "the Norman Mailers of the Top Forty" (p. 21); in *Life* magazine's reportage, the Doors were called "kings of acid rock" while Morrison himself was compared to Cat Girl. The author too focused on his unpredictable nature: "... with Lilly Christine you had a good idea that the performance was going to stop short

of its promised ending-point. You don't know that with Morrison" (Powledge, 1968, p. 88).

Apart from the sexual image, the Doors concerts too served as projection of Morrison's rebellious⁹ and unpredictable nature, especially on two separate occasions that resulted in his arrests. The first was a concert in New Haven, Connecticut in December 1967 where before the show, Morrison got into quarrel with a policeman who caught him backstage kissing with a female fan and did not recognize him. After some vulgar language from his part, Morrison was sprayed with a can of mace (Davis, 2004, p. 214). Still in pain at the beginning of the concert, he decided to tell the audience what had happened calling policeman "a little man in a little blue suit and a little blue cap" (Powledge, 1968, p. 93). He was arrested not long after, along with two journalists and a photographer. According to Davis (2004), the event was national news (the first arrest of rock singer onstage; p. 216), and the press writings mostly sided with Morrison. The arrest also resulted in his further alienation "from the forces of law and order"¹⁰ (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, pp. 206, 207).

The second event was the Doors concert on March 1, 1969 in Miami after which Morrison got arrested, under, among other, accusations of "lewd and lascivious behavior in public by exposing his private parts and by simulating masturbation and oral copulation"¹¹ (Burks, 1969). The concert was held in an unadjusted space where promoters had sold several thousand tickets more than what had been agreed upon (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 293). Morrison arrived late and drunk, and tried to implement some of the ideas and principals of Artaud's theater of cruelty along with Living Theatre,¹² which he had attended the week before.

The Doors' and Morrison's literature cover the *infamous* concert extensively—Davis (2004) called it the worst and one of the most important concerts in rock history (p. 317) and Riordan and Prochnickey (2006) referred to it as "a sixty-five-minute incident" (p. 292). The aftermath of that *incident*, marked by completely contradictory statements by numerous eyewitnesses¹³ on whether or not Morrison did expose himself on stage, left serious consequences since he was arrested, tried, and eventually convicted.¹⁴

The main difference between New Haven and Miami events was no press sided with Morrison in the latter case: *The Miami Herald* labeled the Doors as a dirty band (Densmore, 2005, p. 210) while *Rolling Stone* published a warrant for Morrison on the front page with a mocking subtitle "Uh-oh, I think I exposed myself out there" (Burks, 1969).

For Morrison, the Miami trial presented his fight for constitutional rights. As he explained—he fought for "freedom of speech and the right of anyone with a personal viewpoint to state their ideas in public... without legal pressure..." but in the end concluded how the case itself failed to receive enough national coverage and the opportunity to become "a major case, a kind of a ground-breaking case" (Fong-Torres, 1971).

Deconstruction of the Image

Among the many questions Morrison received regarding his image in the media, his answers varied from expressing satisfaction and gloating to expressing profound regret. In several interviews, he claimed that he liked the way the media addressed him, but with a certain amount of sarcasm detectable in his voice. Questioned by Richard Goldstein (1968) on how he prepared for stardom he replied ironically: “about the only thing I did was . . . I stop getting haircuts” (p. 42) and in an interview with Salli Stevenson (1970) when asked how he felt about magazine articles that called him the “Lizard King” he replied: “Oh, I liked it. I enjoyed it . . . I’ve always liked reptiles. I’ve always had a fondness for them. I mean we did evolve from reptiles . . .”

Though admitting his deliberate construction of catch phrases, Morrison denied any part in constructing his sex symbol image and addressed it to the press. When asked to comment on writings and talk about his “sex appeal to women of different ages” Morrison admitted that his reputation had helped him “out in some tight situations” and allowed him “to meet a lot of groovy ladies that otherwise probably wouldn’t notice him” but denied that it was an intentional behavior by his part but rather *crazy talk* produced by the media: “. . . it’s the reporters, it’s the press, people like that, that create this insanity . . . that make up this stuff and then people start believing it . . .” (Smith, 1970).

Some members of the press acknowledged unfair writings towards Morrison. In *DownBeat*, Michael Cuscuna wrote of him as “a victim of sensational publicity and harassment by silly journalists” as well as of his entrapment “in the routine of success, with a public image to live up to, while his best musical and cinematic ambitions remain stifled . . .” (Davis, 2004, p. 373). The same was identified by Jerry Hopkins (1969) in *Rolling Stone* who blamed not only writers but also the public as well. He accused them of “spinning and spreading outrageous tales as regularly as the Doors have churned out hits” and concluded how those “new stories – each wilder than the last – [that] were told each week and over a period of two years” resulted in “Jim Morrison [coming] to represent the perfect Super Star – someone far larger than his work or his life.”

Morrison’s physical appearance started changing drastically by the end of 1968, there was evidence that he had been stuck with the public image of sex symbol along with theatrical behavior that he himself had created, and all this without the fans really understanding how he genuinely undressed his soul during this process¹⁵ (Fournier & Jiménez, 2007, pp. 22–23). His drastic change of physical appearance—a long beard, change of clothes (he stopped wearing leather), and gained weight that almost led him to being totally unrecognizable is described by Walters (2006) as an act of a snake shedding its skin (p. 75) and the culmination of it was the Miami concert.

Roughly 6 months after that incident, journalist Salli Stevenson (1970) asked Morrison a question about his state of mind during that *infamous* concert. His answer echoed with resentment over his media-generated image:

I was just fed up with the image that had been created around me... which I sometimes consciously, most of the time unconsciously, cooperated with. It just... it got too much for me to really stomach and so I just put an end to it in one glorious evening.

For Fournier and Jiménez (2007) this was an act of nihilism—in a period of just 4 years, Morrison went from proudly displaying his beautiful physical attributes at the beginning of his career to intentionally deconstructing his image during the last 2 years of his life (pp. 15–16).

Conclusion

Analyzing the circumstances that led to the creation of Morrison's mythical image, this paper has argued how it was a product of several embedded factors defined as four categories (components) only to the extent of the analysis since it was a unified combination that ultimately comprised his image. Morrison's attractive looks, captured both in photographs and on television, along with his frequent appearances in teenage magazines and his fans' reviews that bordered on the edge of worship helped create his image as a sex symbol. Besides the good looks and successfully placed promotional photographs, Morrison too contributed to his public image—his creativeness and verbal ingenuity in interviews he gave often resulted in well-selected catch phrases, and his unpredictable (stage) behavior, along with frequent arrests and clashes with authorities, formed a rebellious part of his image and certain expectations of excess from concertgoers.

Morrison showed ambivalence towards his image—it pleased him at first, as he believed it could only enhance his power and increase his influence on the people he was trying to reach (Riordan & Prochnickey, 2006, p. 252) and some of his words from the beginning of the Doors' career suggest he was ready for the fame. He obviously felt he had a lot to give when he wrote what Davis (2004) calls "an artistic manifesto" in his Elektra Records official biography: "You could say that it's an accident that I'm ideally suited for the work that I am doing. It's the feeling of a bowstring being pulled back for 22 years, and suddenly being let go" (p. 154).

But as the people began attending the concerts for the show, to see the Jim Morrison they envisioned, he grew to hate his media-produced image, one that was very different from the person he really was, as explained by his biographers Riordan and Prochnickey (2006): "The press saw the side of Morrison that best suited their needs" (p. 20).

As of the end of 1968 and especially from the spring of 1969, he began to actively disassemble his image, radically changing his physical appearance (Fournier & Jiménez, 2007, p. 16). The Miami incident marked the beginning of a downward trajectory for both Morrison and the Doors.

It is interesting to notice the tremendous impact this event had, as not even Morrison's tragic death at only 27 managed to revive the interest in the Doors. The true revival came almost a decade later and according to many, the 80s were the time when Morrison's legend began to form. Today, most frequently pictured at the peak of his popularity, he holds near mythical status—forever young and rebellious, he has become a true icon to worship.

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Notes

1. The LP featured Morrison reading his poetry with instrumental accompaniment provided by the rest of the Doors members.
2. According to Margry (2008), the film entitled "The Doors" was in fact a disguised Morrison's biography "based on Stone's own understanding of the central character" (p. 145).
3. The numbers are as of January 2016.
4. The other reasons stated by Wolfe (1999) are lyrics that appeal to adolescents of today and of the 1960s as well as musical elements like Morrison's vocal performances (p. 39). The importance of the song, apart from the lyrics analyzed by Wolfe, also lies in the promotional video the band shot for their first single, best described by Davis (2004): "Shot in color on a stark black set lit by club lights, the clip featured mostly Jim's face and features—the blue eyes, pillowy lips, and long hair of a beautiful new rock star" (p. 150). This performance highlighting Morrison's sex appeal could too serve as a confirmation of promotional material for the Doors in goal of promoting Morrison's sex symbol image from the beginning.
5. Analysis of these interviews is also used as an insight into his own views on his popularity.
6. Crenshaw (2014) points how historians have failed to categorize the Doors in the ways their listeners have: "Audiences and critics responded to these messages in diverse ways"; while listeners and writers often did not draw a line between the Doors and hippie culture, the band attempted to separate themselves from the San Francisco scene and psychedelic "catch phrases" (p. 3). Since the Doors idea was to "express a more intellectual appeal," and the "fault between San Francisco and Los Angeles" was indeed "perceived and articulated by the Doors" Crenshaw calls "toward the

- ongoing historical reinterpretation of the counterculture” as a “a multifaceted complex of different, overlapping subcultures” (p. 3).
7. In another article, Margry (2007), who analyzed visitors of Morrison’s grave, points out how many fan-visitors have tattoos of him, most frequently pictured as the young lion (p. 145).
 8. Before the show the Doors were asked to change the lyric that contained the word *higher* as it could be seen as a drug reference (Davis, 2004, p. 203). Censorship of this kind was usual and it had happened earlier that year with the Rolling Stones when their song “Let’s spend the night together” was changed to “Let’s spend some time together” (Jones, 1991, p. 76). According to Bindas and Heineman (1994), many singers and groups said yes to such demands just to appear on the show because they believed in profit rather than principle (p. 27).
 9. Some of the unpredictable image of the Doors came too from a documentary *The Doors are open* made by British Granada television about their Europe tour in September 1968—it showed them as rebellious and revolutionary, a band who “show more clearly what they’re against rather than what they’re for” while Morrison, called an “American super star,” was described as “a poet, prophet and politician” who speaks “for a generation who have spilt their dissent onto the streets of the world” (Sheppard, 1968).
 10. According to Morrison’s biographer Davis (2004), he was arrested a total of 11 times (p. 381).
 11. Apart for that felony charge, there were five misdemeanor charges: two counts of indecent exposure, two counts of open public profanity, and one of public drunkenness; in total six arrest warrants (Burks, 1969).
 12. The Living Theatre founded in 1952 by Julian Beck and Judith Malina was famous for “nudity, obscenity, anarchy, antiauthoritarianism, and violence” (Davis, 2004, p. 314). According to Prochnicky and Riordan (2006), Morrison attended every one of their performances at the USC’s Bovard Auditorium (p. 289).
 13. The concert was covered by several professional photographers and thousands of other cameras and none had “caught him exposed” (Davis, 2004, p. 323). Morrison’s bandmates claimed as well that he had not exposed himself on stage. Manzarek (2012) called it hypnotization or mass hallucination explaining how people saw what they wanted to see and subsequently created a myth (pp. 300–301).
 14. Morrison was convicted of two misdemeanors (indecent exposure and open profanity) and sentenced to 6 months of hard labor. He was in the process of appeal when he died (Marcus, 2011, p. 191).
 15. One of the crucial moments that marked Morrison’s disappointment was the Doors’ Forum concert in December 1968 before an audience that only wanted to hear “Light My Fire.” Frustrated, at one point he stopped singing and began questioning the reasons they came and finally he resignedly concluded: “. . . we can play music all night long, but that’s not what you really want, is it? You want something else, something more, something greater than you’ve ever seen before, right?” (Hopkins & Sugarman, 2006, p. 215).

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