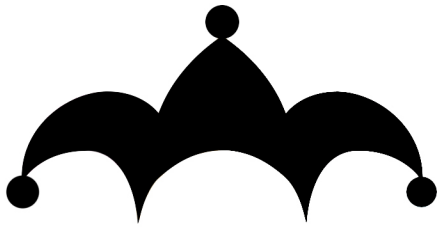
VOL

5

The Foolscap



REPRESENTATIONS

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

The Foolscap

VOL

5

REPRESENTATIONS

The Foolscap
Volume 5
2018

St. Michael's College

Coach House Printing
Toronto

Printed with the support of
the Arts and Science Students' Union

Table of Contents

Masthead 2

Letter from the Editor 4

'Unpresidented': Twitter, Information Disorder, and @realdonaldtrump 5
Victoria Yang

Explore the Uncharted: How Multiculturalism Shapes Canadian Identity from a Perspective of Multicultural Media 12
Yidi guan

Understanding Polysemy in *Amos 'n' Andy*: Art of Comedy or Racist Stereotypes? 18
Huisi Cai

Identity Crisis: Asians in the Media 23
Angelika Olegario

LOOK WITH YOUR A THOUSAND EYES 27
Jemima Hamilton

Representations of Psychology in *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* 35
Shubhi Sahni

#LetsTalk without Bell 40
Leora Bromberg

Contributors 46

Masthead

Editor-in-Chief
Celeste Yim

Associate Editors
Lauren Park
Ondiek Oduor
Elena Senechal-Becker
Kate Stoehr

Design Editor
Winnie Wang

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

In 1987, Gugliemo Marconi succeeded in the world's first overseas radio transmission by requesting a response from six kilometres away over the Bristol Channel. In Morse code he asked, "ARE YOU READY," and waited for a response. Today, my friend sent a message to a group chat made up of our closest friends asking, "Do u guys think I might be a character in a video game and whoever is playing me is very bad at it?" We each responded quickly and reassuringly that no, whoever is playing her is a great, intelligent gamer with good taste in avatars.

The theme for The Foolscap's 5th Anniversary publication is Representations in response to the many ways in which we, students of media, wrestle with the representations we see of ourselves, others, and whatever else exists on the spectrum of identity. Through scathing critiques, fine-toothed analyses, essays both creative and critical, cut and pasted fine art, this edition of the Book & Media Studies journal attempts to distinguish between what is real and what is represented and whether the two, in 2018, are really very different.

The messages being sent to and from the contributors of this journal beg, as Marconi's inaugural one did, for a response. After having the pleasure of editing so many eager submissions, I confirm that these students of media–within and beyond a six kilometre vicinity of one another–are indeed READY to offer theirs. Let this journal be a vibrant, frustrated, and thoughtful effort to answer the many calls for action that today's study of media and group chat conversations demand–knowing well that it is only one student association's representation.

Love,

Celeste Yim
Editor-in-Chief of The Foolscap 2017/18

‘Unpresidented’: Twitter, Information Disorder, and @realdonaldtrump

by Victoria Yang

“[*Twitter*’s] definition was ‘a short burst of inconsequential information,’ and ‘chirps from birds.’ And that’s exactly what the product was,” stated *Twitter* co-founder Jack Dorsey in a 2009 interview. Since its 2006 founding, however, *Twitter*’s role in the media landscape has been far from inconsequential. With a global user base of 328 million, it has helped shape a population of the world’s social and political reality. *Twitter*’s ability to connect and empower has contributed to the argument that social media could be “a global force for plurality, democracy and progress.” Recently, however, this claim has been challenged. Society faces the threat of “information disorder”, a term coined by Wardle and Derakhshan to describe mis-, dis-, and mal-information, often referred to as “fake news.” Although information disorder is not a novel issue, its role in the 2016 United States election has shown the ways in which it can negatively impact democracy. Some argue that “Donald Trump would not have been elected president were it not for the influence of fake news.” In Wardle and Derakhshan’s recent report, the impact of false and misleading information online on democracy is identified as a key area in need of study. In this essay, I seek to examine this particular aspect of information disorder by exploring the impact that Donald Trump’s *Twitter* account (@realdonaldtrump) has had on the media. In this paper, “the media” shall refer to organizations involved in professional journalism, including print, digital, and television. This paper shall argue that Donald Trump uses his *Twitter* account to undermine the media, which exacerbates information disorder by framing the media as “fake news” and amplifying and endorsing false news sites and content.

First, Trump’s framing of the media as “fake news” in his tweets erodes trust in the media. This exacerbates information disorder by reinforcing his ability to perpetuate a singular narrative through his *Twitter* account to his supporters. In the past, the phrase “fake news” has been used to describe a multitude of concepts, from satire to manipulation to propaganda. During the 2016 presidential election in the United States, its definition as “news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers,” primarily in the context of social media, was popularized. However, a *Twitter* search of all instances where Trump tweeted the phrase “fake news” reveals that he has used it 154 times since December 10, 2016. It is most often used as a blanket descriptor for the ‘unfair’ coverage of his administration by mainstream media outlets, with *CNN*, *NBC*, and *The New York Times* often being named. By appropriating the term, Trump links its former meaning, which created “a sense of danger about nefarious types intentionally sowing lies to influence the election,” to the mainstream media. Subject to journalistic codes of ethics, most news organizations have as their core mission high standards of accurate reporting in service of the public good. By calling the media “fake news”, however, Trump suggests that it is intentionally betraying this primary mission. As summarised by linguist George Lakoff:

> [Trump’s use of ‘fake news’] is done to serve interests at odds with the public good. It also undermines the credibility of real news sources, that is, the

> press. Therefore it makes it harder for the press to serve the public good by revealing truths. And it threatens democracy, which requires that the press function to reveal real truths.

One of Trump's tweets from February 17 2017 provides an example of this, stating, "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @ CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!" By outright claiming that the media is acting contrary to citizens' interests, Trump effectively conveys his intent to erode the public's trust in it.

Trump's attacks on the media using the phrase "fake news" are evident through tweets that, among other things, deem negative polls fabrications, call for the firing of journalists, and seek to remove news organisations' licenses. This has had a demonstrable impact on those who read the tweet, particularly Trump supporters. A recent experiment by the Poynter Institute finds that exposure to a combination of three articles: first, a retracted CNN story pertaining to Trump (media error condition); second, an article where Trump attacks media coverage as "fake news' (media attack condition); and third, an article about the Russia investigation (neutral condition), "increased respondents' negative attitudes toward the media relative to a control condition." That "these effects were concentrated among Trump approvers" shows that Trump's "fake news" tweets may contribute to an information environment that promotes a mistrust of the media. Furthermore, the study finds that Trump's attacks on the media have contributed to a stark partisan divide: "Republicans have vastly more negative views of the press than do Democrats, including almost half who support restrictions on press freedom." When a significant part of the population views the media negatively and wishes to restrict the freedom of the press, democracy is unquestionably challenged: the media plays a critical role in democracy by holding the government accountable. Therefore, Trump's "fake news" tweets have a tangible impact on press freedom in the United States.

Second, his promotion of highly partisan and misinformation and disinformation sites and content through *Twitter* strengthens the insular right-wing media landscape, which has been shown to be more susceptible to "sustained network propaganda and disinformation." By doing this, he suggests to his supporters that only certain sources are to be trusted, further undermining the media by isolating his supporters from alternative viewpoints. This can be seen in a November 2017 tweet, which states, "We should have a contest as to which of the Networks, plus CNN and not including Fox, is the most dishonest, corrupt and/or distorted in its political coverage of your favorite President (me). They are all bad. Winner to receive the FAKE NEWS TROPHY!"

By promoting Fox News, Trump undermines the free press by suggesting to his supporters that they should only believe partisan news sources that cover his administration favourably. Leading up to the 2016 election, Trump also frequently retweeted *Gateway Pundit,* a site known for propagating conspiracy theories and "regularly publish[ing] outright false stories". Thus, not only does Trump attack

the media, but he endorses highly partisan and untrustworthy news organizations, driving traffic to sites which produce information disorder.

Furthermore, on November 28 2017, Trump retweeted three videos from Jayda Fransen, deputy leader of far-right group *Britain First*, amplifying and endorsing disinformation. One of these videos was titled "Muslim migrant beats up Dutch Boy on crutches!", and the other two were similarly-themed. Beyond the titles, these videos contain neither sources nor context; this, in combination with the fact that they were originally tweeted by a right-wing extremist group with a political interest in spreading Islamophobia makes their veracity highly dubious. Trump's retweeting of these videos exacerbates the problem of information disorder in two ways. First, by retweeting, he amplifies the impact of the videos. Trump's tweets have the capacity to reach a massive audience on the site. As of December 2017, he has 44.3 million followers. Evidently, many more people have been exposed to the incendiary videos as a result of Trump's endorsement of its content since Fransen's videos typically garner a few dozen to a few thousand retweets. With Trump's online support, they each were shared over 18 thousand times.

Second, they are likely persuasive because of their medium and content, which is consistent with Trump's anti-immigration agenda and presents a challenge to the fact-checking capacity of the media. Wardle and Derakhshan note,

> "The focus on fabricated news 'sites' means the implications of misleading, manipulated or fabricated visual content… are rarely considered. […] visuals can be far more persuasive than other forms of communication, which can make them much more powerful vehicles for mis- and disinformation."

Thus, the medium of video more easily facilitates the spread of misinformation and disinformation, as people are more likely to believe what they see. Furthermore, the Islamophobic content of the videos (ie. the suggestion that Muslim migrants will commit violent acts against non-Muslims) is consistent with Trump's anti-immigration framing seen throughout his speeches and policy. In their discussion of framing, Wardle and Derakhshan state that "conservative media and Republican messaging work unconsciously to activate and reinforce the conservative moral system, making it harder for fact-checks to penetrate." By retweeting posts consistent with the moral system of his supporters, Trump reinforces his position while amplifying what is clearly disinformation: the Netherlands Embassy in the United States' official account refuted claims that the perpetrator in one of the videos was a Muslim migrant. Although in this instance, the media did not provide the fact check, the reinforcement of the conservative moral system, which undermines the effectiveness of the media's fact-checking function, is evident by White House Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders's response to the fact-check. She says, "Whether it's a real video, the threat is real and that is what the president is talking about." As shown through his endorsement and amplification of highly partisan news sites and mis-and-disinformation through *Twitter*, Trump demonstrates his desire to undermine the free press. Texas Tech University chair Brian L. Ott states,

> "Democracy depends on both the ability and the will of voters to base their political judgments on facts, or at least on strong intermediary institutions that can act as guardrails to channel decision making within the broad range of democratic alternatives."

Trump's use of his *Twitter* account exacerbates information disorder by undermining the media, which are imperative for democracy. In this paper, I discussed how Trump repeatedly frames the media as 'fake news' and the effects of this on media trust, then I delved into how Trump actively promotes highly partisan and questionable news sites and content, affecting the fact-checking capacity of the media. The issue of information disorder is complex, and this complexity is compounded by the rapidly evolving social media and political landscapes. The United States is experiencing polarization and divide, and the President's Twitter account only widens such a societal rift. Although this paper only addresses a small part of this broader issue, it hopefully serves as a starting point for understanding the connections between information disorder, the media, and democracy.

Works Cited

[1] David Sarno, "Twitter Creator Jack Dorsey Illuminates the Site's Founding Document. Part I," LA Times Blogs - Technology (blog), February 18, 2009, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2009/02/twitter-creator.html.

[2] Seth Fiegerman, "Twitter Is Now Losing Users in the U.S.," CNN Tech, July 27, 2017, http://money.cnn.com/2017/07/27/technology/business/twitter-earnings/index.html.

[3] "Less Euromaidan, More Gamergate," The Economist, November 4, 2017.

[4] Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, "Information Disorder" (Council of Europe, September 27, 2017), 10.

[5] Hunt Alcott and Matthew Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," Journal of Economic Perspectives 31, no. 2 (2017): 212.

6 Wardle and Derakhshan, "Information Disorder," 212.

7 Alcott and Gentzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," 213.

8 Donald J. Trump, "Twitter Advanced Search: Fake News From:realdonaldtrump," Twitter, accessed December 9, 2017, https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=fake%20news%20from%3Arealdonaldtrump&src=typd.

[9] Trump.

[10] "With 'Fake News,' Trump Moves From Alternative Facts To Alternative Language," NPR.org, accessed December 10, 2017, https://www.npr.org/2017/02/17/515630467/with-fake-news-trump-moves-from-alternative-facts-to-alternative-language.

[11] "With 'Fake News,' Trump Moves From Alternative Facts To Alternative Language."

[12] Donald J. Trump, "Don't Believe the Main Stream (Fake News) Media...," Tweet, @realDonaldTrump (blog), February 8, 2017, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/832945737625387008.

[13] Donald J. Trump, "Any Negative Polls Are Fake News...," Tweet, @realDonaldTrump (blog), February 7, 2017, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/828574430800539648; Donald J. Trump, ".@daveweigel of the Washington Post...," Tweet, @realDonaldTrump (blog), December 6, 2017, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/939634404267380736; Donald J. Trump, "With All of the Fake News Coming Out...," Tweet, @realDonaldTrump (blog), October 9, 2017, https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/918112884630093825.

[14] Andrew Guess, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler, "'You're Fake News!': Findings from the Poynter Media Trust Survey" (Poynter Institute, November 29, 2017), 12.

[15] Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler, 12.

[16] Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler, 12.

[17] Robert Faris et al., "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election" (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Security, August 2017), 16.
[18] Donald J. Trump, "We Should Have a Contest as to Which of the Networks, plus CNN and Not Including Fox...," Tweet, @search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=fake%20news%20from%3Arealdonaldtrump&src=typd (blog), November 9, 2017, https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=fake%20news%20from%3Arealdonaldtrump&src=typd.
[19] Faris et al., "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election," 18; Abby Ohlheiser, "How the War against Fake News Backfired," The Washington Post, December 7, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/12/07/how-the-war-against-fake-news-backfired/?utm_term=.92181cc461b3.
[20] Jayda Fransen, "VIDEO: Muslim Migrant Beats up Dutch Boy on Crutches!," Tweet, @JaydaBF (blog), November 3, 2017, https://twitter.com/JaydaBF/status/935609305574903812; Jayda Fransen, "VIDEO: Muslim Destroys a Statue of Virgin Mary!," Tweet, @JaydaBF (blog), November 4, 2017, https://twitter.com/JaydaBF/status/935805606447013888; Jayda Fransen, "VIDEO: Islamist Mob Pushes Teenage Boy off Roof and Beats Him to Death!," Tweet, @JaydaBF (blog), November 2, 2017, https://twitter.com/JaydaBF/status/935775552102981633.
[21] Jayda Fransen, "Twitter Advanced Search: Video: from:jaydaBF," Twitter, accessed December 9, 2017, https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=video%3A%20from%3Ajaydabf&src=typd.
[22] Wardle and Derakhshan, "Information Disorder," 18.
[23] Jonathan T. Rothwell and Pablo Diego-Rosell, "Explaining Nationalist Political Views: The Case of Donald Trump," November 2, 2016, https://ssrn.com/abstract=2822059.
[24] Wardle and Derakhshan, "Information Disorder," 42.
[25] Netherlands Embassy, ".@realDonaldTrump Facts Do Matter. The Perpetrator of the Violent Act...," Tweet, @NLintheUSA (blog), November 2, 2017, https://twitter.com/NLintheUSA/status/935953115249086464.
[26] Brian Naylor, "Trump Retweets Incendiary Anti-Muslim Videos From Controversial Group," NPR.org, accessed December 11, 2017, https://www.npr.org/2017/11/29/567159205/trump-retweets-incendiary-anti-muslim-videos-from-controversial-group.
[27] Nathaniel Persily, "The 2016 U.S. Election: Can Democracy Survive the Internet?," Journal O Democracy 28, no. 2 (April 2017): 72.

Explore the Uncharted: How Multiculturalism Shapes Canadian Identity from a Perspective of Multicultural Media

by Yidi Guan

Multiculturalism is one of the core values in the Canadian national identity. The value has been formally established for a mere few decades since former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau adopted the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, but Canadians have strived to thoroughly implement its principles of openness and fairness. Multicultural Media, an invention accompanying the Multiculturalism Act, played an essential role in implementing the Multiculturalism Act and helping immigrants to adjust into Canadian society. Striving for multiculturalism is justified. Study shows that immigrants who live in a multicultural environment with access to cultural media and activities are able to have a smoother and faster transition into the new society than people who do not have such access (Huston 30-31). However, after many first-generation immigrants establish families and have children who are born into a new cultural society, the value of multiculturalism, which emphasizes the preservation of traditional heritage and adoption of mainstream Canadian values at the same time, could cause confusion of identity among second-generation immigrants. Therefore, I argue that while multicultural media successfully assists first-generation immigrants in adapting their lifestyles into a new society, it can also create confusion with regards to cultural identity for second-generation immigrants. This paper is divided into two sections. First, I will demonstrate how multicultural media assists first-generation immigrants in adapting into society by challenging the mainstream media's many biases and reporting of news concerning specific and overlooked ethnic groups. The second section of the paper will illustrate the role multicultural media plays in the alienation of second-generation immigrants.

The Broadcasting Act, passed in 1991, caused a dramatic surge in the number of ethnic newspaper, radio station, and TV services (Huston 24). The increased number of multicultural media contributes to the transition of first generation immigrants in two ways. First, it effectively challenges the bias of mainstream media (Fleras 6). One problem with Canadian mainstream media is that most of it is controlled by rich corporate elites, resulting in a Eurocentric view of social issues (Ojo 347). Another damage it could cause is that visible minorities, including Canadian-born citizens, are portrayed as second-class citizens in some media, such as films (Ojo 346). A systemic stereotyping of visible minorities could happen as well because news is produced in favour of the corporate elites (Ojo 347). Fortunately, the appearance of multicultural media could improve such a situation since foreign television services are not controlled by Canadian corporations or manipulated by political interest groups. They also tend to provide more objective news (Huston 32). For example, *Chinese Central Television* (CCTV) partners with *Rogers Communications* and provides a number of channels, including English language channels, which are produced in Mainland China (Huston 25). In the case of foreign television services, Canadian news outlets do not have much power over them, allowing a circulation of singular worldview.

Mainstream media not only tends to systematically stereotype minority

groups, but it also disregards ethnic news. Therefore, the second contribution made by multicultural media is that it emphasizes detailed ethnic news, reporting developments that are largely disregarded by the mainstream media. The situation of rendering minorities invisible is no coincidence. According to a survey in 2004, only 3.4% of newsgathering staff consists of non-white people (Ojo 349), leading to a low interest or passion in reporting ethnic news among mainstream media outlets. To make the situation worse, another survey suggests that publishers only ranked "diversity" as the nineteenth concern in their job duties (Ojo 349). Therefore, due to indifferent sentiments regarding the issue of diversity, minorities remain a relatively negligible subject in Canadian journalism. However, multicultural media could effectively fill this gap and build a sense of belonging for first-generation immigrants, which is crucial in adapting to a new society. For example, Tan Geng, a first-generation immigrant coming from Mainland China, was elected as a member of parliament who represents the Don Valley North riding in the 2016 municipal Toronto election. While mainstream media, such as the *CBC*, hardly covered the event, a number of Chinese news outlets, such as *Ming Pao* and *Sing Tao Daily*, two respected and popular Chinese ethnic news outlets, made extensive reports on the outcome of the Don Valley North election. When these news outlets praised the openness of Canadian politics, Tan Geng soon became a symbol of success for Canadian multiculturalism in local Chinese communities.

This impression was strengthened when, on June 1st, 2016, Tan Geng delivered a proposal in Parliament to make Spring Festival an official holiday in Canada. It eventually passed despite the fact that only a few reports about it can be found in archives from the mainstream media. The event was highly received by Chinese news outlets both in Canada and abroad, including Mainland China and Hong Kong. As a result, the pride held by local Chinese people about identifying within a Chinese ethnicity seemed to be strengthened as well as a newfound pride about living in a multicultural country like Canada. This is just one case in which the multicultural media effectively promoted the values of multiculturalism.

While the values of multiculturalism are successfully implemented among the first-generation immigrants, this policy also seemed to aggravate a cultural confusion and difficulty for second-generation immigrants who already struggle to fit into a promised multicultural society. A model of a vicious cycle, consisting of three components, could demonstrate this issue.

The first component is that second-generation immigrants are naturally born into an environment with two conflicting cultural values. Grant's study suggests that although second-generation immigrants hold positive attitudes towards multiculturalism, they generally feel their traditional heritage is incompatible with the Canadian values (Grant 100), resulting in an internally conflicted mindset.

The second component comes from the external environment, which includes stereotyping or racist attitudes second-generation immigrants are disposed to when they choose to participate in Canadian mainstream activities. Being raised

in a Canadian society, their native or familial heritage tends to have less influence, resulting in the immigrants identifying themselves as Canadians. Thus, they tend to participate in more Canadian mainstream activities (Grant 100, 103) instead of their own cultural activities. Having spoken to a number of second-generation immigrants, I have gleaned that they do not feel different than other members of Canadian society, especially Caucasian citizens, since they are under the impression that they have been raised with a similar lifestyle and values. However, it is still probably true that they are victims of stereotyping or even subtle racist comments whether they are aware of it or not (Grant 101). From my personal experience, such unfair treatment not only comes from people with different ethnicities than mine, it also comes from first-generation immigrants within my same ethnicity. The reason for this could be that second-generation immigrants have adopted a Canadian lifestyle to a certain extent, while first-generation immigrants are more likely to be faithful to their cultural heritage. This seems to result in the alienation of second-generation immigrants from first-generation communities.

The third component of the cycle, which is also the most vital one, is a result of the multicultural media. As discussed earlier, ethnic media–such as newspapers–have a substantial audience consisting of mostly first-generation immigrants. The two aforementioned news outlets, *Sing Tao Daily* and *Ming Pao*, do not offer services in English or French, because their targeted market is that of first-generation immigrants from Hong Kong or Mainland China, which I think is a problem. When first-generation immigrants rely heavily on ethnic media, they seem to gradually lose a cultural connection with their children, second-generation immigrants, who cannot comprehend cultural information in the multicultural media as easily as their parents do. For example, one study suggests that second-generation immigrants often feel forced to choose between what is taught at home and what is taught at school (Stoink and Lalonde 45). As a result, second-generation immigrants, feel both alienated at home because traditional values are reinforced by multicultural media and that they have already thoroughly adopted mainstream values from external institutions like school. An environment of cultural conflict is created, which leads us back to the first component of the cycle. The cycle causes second-generation immigrants to be "in this world, but not of this world" (Huston 26).

Multicultural media, on one hand, is an effective tool used to implement Canadian multiculturalism by filling in the gaps which exist in mainstream media. Newcomers are connected to a distinctly packaged understanding of society. On the other hand, however, such outlets also seem to create cultural confusion among the second-generation immigrants who are already stereotyped and alienated from certain social groups. Since this is the case, the need to broaden the scope of multiculturalism in order to to consider the development of second-generation immigrants is urgent. There must be a second stage of multiculturalism, which does not exclusively focus on first-generation immigrants, but also on the second-

generation immigrants. Additionally, I also propose a firm stance on anti-racism, which must be reiterated throughout all multicultural policies made by the Canadian government in order to protect second-generation immigrants from alienation. Although the overall goal to implement these profound changes to what we Canadians consider multiculturalism might seem unprecedented, doing so should be thought of as a journey into an uncharted area–one which shall require much learning and exploring along the way.

Works Cited

Fleras, Augie. "Multicultural Media in a Post-Multicultural Canada? Rethinking Integration" *Global Media Journal--Canadian Edition*, vol 8, no. 2, 2015, pp. 25-47.

Grant, Peter R. "Sustaining a Strong Cultural and National Identity: The Acculturation of Immigrants and Second-generation Canadians of Asian and African Descent" *International Migration & Integration*, vol 8, 2007, pp. 89-116, DOI: 10.1007/s12134-007-0003-2.

Huston, Gabriel A. Canada's Ethnic Media: A National Socia-Economic Report on Canada's Community-Based Ethnic/Third Language Media. *National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada*, 2012.

Ojo, Tokunbo. "Ethnic Print Media in the Multicultural nation of Canada: a case study of the black newspaper in Montreal" SAGE Publications, vol 7, no. 3, 2006, pp. 343-361.

Stroink, Mirella L., and Lalonde, Richard N. "Bilcultural Identity Conflict in Second-Generation Asian Canadians" *The Journal of Social Psychology*, vol 149, no. 1, 2010, pp. 44-65, DOI: 10.3200/SOCP.149.1.44-65

Understanding Polysemy in *Amos 'n' Andy*: Art of Comedy or Racist Stereotypes?

by Huisi Cai

Amos 'N' Andy has been one of the most influential yet controversial TV shows in American history. Before it was adapted from the radio, Correll and Gosden, two white actors played the Black characters in the radio program, making it a great success in 1930s America (Shankman 237). A saying describing the popularity of the show said, "you could walk down any American street and hear the entire *Amos 'N' Andy* broadcast without missing a line" by listening to the program through the windows (Ihnat et al). However, despite its great success, the television version of *Amos 'N' Andy* was canceled by *CBS* after a national boycott led by the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*, or the *NAACP* (Kagan 71). The organization worried representations of foolish Black characters in the show contributed to stereotypes of the Black community, leaving false images to other members of the society and counteracting Black peoples' endeavor in the Civil Rights Movement. However, other social critics and Black leaders argued *Amos 'N' Andy* was a great comedy show that spoke to Black people for the first time in history, it deserved respect and appreciation. To reveal the richness of messages embedded in the show, which can lead to contradictory interpretations, this paper will focus on two episodes of *Amos 'N' Andy*, "The Gun" and "Kingfish Sells A Lot". By analyzing the characters and their relations in the show, it can be found that although main characters misrepresent the Black community through negative portrayals of Black people, the show was still a pioneer of depicting Black people in American film and television history, paving the way for more dignified Black characters in future American TV shows.

In *Amos 'N' Andy*, most humor came from the main Black characters which lined with typical Black image in that era. Laziness, dishonesty and a lack of intelligence were all parts of Black archetypes which appeared in early minstrel shows (Wright). *Amos 'N' Andy* perpetuated the depiction of African Americans as such. In the show, Kingfish was a greedy schemer who would rip off his friends to keep his money. Each time he tried to cheat his friends, he was fooled. Andy was a gullible victim of Kingfish's schemes. In the episode "Kingfish Sells A Lot", Kingfish schemed to sell a rural lot to Andy by showing a mansion built on the lot, which in fact was the false front of a movie set. It took a long time for Andy to realize he was cheated, which he did by finally examining the fake facade. Then, Kingfish set another trap to convince Andy that there was an oil well on the land by having Calhoun spray oil using a hose.

Although these two Black characters were remarkably entertaining, it is hard for the audience to find any valuable quality in them. They were lazy, foolish, used incorrect English and were never motivated to improve themselves or further their education. Their relationship was also problematic since, despite being friends, Kingfish and Andy were constantly ripping off one another, while the latter was often victim to the former and occasionally fought back in similar deceitful schemes.

Other characters were also not attractive. Algonquin Calhoun was an

unreliable, unscrupulous lawyer who was easily bought off when Kingfish bribed him to cheat Andy with some motor oil. Although he was in a respectful, upper-class profession, he was so careless that he accidentally fired off a gun during a courtroom hearing in the episode, "The Gun". Kingfish's wife, Sapphire was also a stereotypical character: an angry Black woman who "emasculated her husband and killed his ambition" by complaining about her husband often (Wright).

The negative representations of Black people were not only embodied by unfavourable personalities of characters designed in the show, they were also implied in Black characters' reactions to situations in which they were incapable. In the aforementioned episode "The Gun", Kingfish and Calhoun both mistake a gun as a toy. After accidentally firing off the gun, they became scared, dropped the gun and escaped as fast as they could as though they were children who were ashamed of making mistakes. The immature, childlike portrayal of Black people represented a striking contrast with the white judge who wisely found out what was going on and rescued Kingfish from being convicted. This message implicitly suggested that Black people were children of nature who needed white people to both tolerate and take care of them. The white judge, as the only white character in the episode, represented justice but also white authority in the American legal system. The message would appear much different if the judge were Black, but *Amos 'N' Andy* failed to represent Black people as authoritative or competent.

The numerous negative representations of Black people in *Amos 'n' Andy* caused the *NAACP* to protest the ways in which the show stereotypes Black people. The show was also criticized for its intentions "to laugh at shortcomings of the race" and "ridiculing [of] even the professional and better class of Negroes [sic] in the estimation of the white world." (Shankman 238) Others also worried that children were being educated about a prejudice toward Black people depicted in the show.

The same message in *Amos 'N' Andy* can be interpreted in an opposite way for other viewers. Polysemy occurs as different and conflicting interpretations are derived from the same text. Although *Amos 'n' Andy* was criticized as the misrepresentation of Black people, television editor and critic Van Der Werff argued the show was the only place on American television to see Black people in that era (Ihnat et al). As the first television show featuring Black actors playing Black people in American history, it was the only show in which professionally acknowledged and respected Black actors could be seen as characters. The show presented a spectrum where Black people played characters with occupations and roles of all kinds.

Some critics also noted that the show featured Black characters wearing suits and ties, which was rare in 1950s television during which the only occupations African-Americans seemed to have on television were associated with servantry. The rare image of Black people wearing professional attire in preparation for business could be read as aspirational rather than delusional or unrealistic within the context of the show. In addition to various occupations and presentations of

Black characters, there were also episodes which were inspiring and positive. For instance, a well-known episode involved Amos explaining the "Lord's Prayer" to her daughter as the heavenly sounds of a choir played in the background (Ihnat et al).

Although negative portrayals of Black people have been denounced by critics of the show, the misrepresentations and stereotypes within the show do not accurately represent the significance of the entire show for its supporters. Polysemy occurs not only within the show, but also in the audience perceptions of the show. For many viewers, *Amos 'n' Andy* can be seen as a great comedy. For them, the brilliantly designed comedic acting presented by the show is worth appreciating. Still, this discussion of the show seems unable to shift from a discussion of racial prejudice to the art of comedy in and of itself. Despite praising the show's "authentic presentation of some elements of black [sic] humor" and "brilliant comic acting", writer Mel Watkins also noted that "the element of comic exaggeration was forgotten by many, and *Amos 'n' Andy* was judged as a wholly inappropriate presentation of African-Americans." (Ihnat et al)

Civil Rights activist Jesse Jackson commented in the documentary *Amos & Andy: Anatomy of a Controversy* that "these actors paid the dues for future generations to receive more dignified roles. They proved to Hollywood executives that blacks could not only act but draw large numbers of viewers." He said,

"I remember growing up as a kid watching this and Stepin Fetchit movies. Black people had enough sense to appreciate them as funny people playing out roles. Their roles were so limited we laughed at them and laughed at their roles. But at the same period all this was on TV out came Martin King, Malcolm X, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Howard Thurman." (00:42:40-00:43:57)

In other words, he did not believe *Amos 'n' Andy* was actually influential for Black people. The problem with the show was its status as the only representation of Black people during the era. Wright argued that abandoning the show as a great comedy is not a solution so much as increasing Black representation is. He argued that the *NAACP*'s intent to boycott the show should have been redirected to demand that the entertainment industry includes more shows with diverse representations. Instead of putting pressure on *CBS* to cancel the show, he argued, the organization should have been working with Black writers and directors to develop alternative projects which could be presented to white studio executives.

Amos 'N' Andy presented conflicting messages which could be interpreted as racist stereotypes and as an example, albeit flawed, of Black representation on television. After all, *Amos 'N' Andy* seems as though it was the first television show in American history that considered Black audiences. In doing so, it can be seen as both a harmful text and one which contributed to American television shows in which Black people have more dignified roles.

Works Cited

Amos & Andy: Anatomy of a Controversy. Dir. Stanley Sheff. Perf. George Kirby. Telefeatures Corp, 1986. Film.

Ihnat, Gwen, et al. "Amos 'N' Andy was the rare representation of black culture on 1950s TV—but at what cost?" *The A.V. Club*, 7 Aug. 2013, https://tv.avclub.com/amos-n-andy-was-the-rare-representation-of-black-cult-1798239784.

Kagan, Norman. "Amos 'n Andy: Twenty Years Late, or Two Decades Early?" *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. VI, no. 1, 1972, pp. 71-75.

Shankman, Arnold. "Black Pride and Protest: The Amos 'N' Andy Crusade." *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1978, pp. 236-249.

"Kingfish Sells A Lot" *Amos 'n' Andy.* Columbia Broadcasting System, 1951. Television.

"The Gun." *Amos 'n' Andy.* Columbia Broadcasting System, 1951. Television.

Wright, Joshua K. "Reflections on Black Image in Amos 'n' Andy." Abernathy. https://abernathymagazine.com/reflections-on-black-image-in-amos-n-andy/. Accessed 22 Nov. 2017.

Identity Crisis: Asians in the Media

by Angelika Olegario

As a child, I struggled–and still do–to find myself and my identities represented in the media, which makes me feel isolated, alienated, and different. My younger self saw no one that looked like me, an Asian girl, so I never thought I could aspire to be part of or engage with the entertainment industry. It was distant, unattainable, and foreign to me because my appearance was foreign to them. The media has the power to inform people within and across cultures about diversity. This discourse is, however, virtually absent. The absence of my identity denotes to me an unimportance and neglect about it. Sadly, such an ignorance continues and, in my opinion, it has considerable adverse effects.

I see the importance of media imagery in which there are weighted implications about race. We see media imagery everywhere: ads, print, magazines, movies, films, social media, art, drawings, paintings, sculptures, etc. Every medium tells various messages that we often do not take the time to absorb. It is extremely easy to get caught up in the media we are exposed to. The media manipulates audience's allure to and obsession with novelty and sensationalization. Images might constantly be replaced, but it seems as though messages are recycled. Stories are being created, inflated, and discarded to make way for even more sensational ones. It is easy, then, to get distracted or not care about a single story's social implications. The circulation of images and messages distracts us from being conscious readers, and therefore, we miss what important issues must be addressed. Along with digital media (ie. social media), television, film, computer, and phone screens are constantly changing, with images popping up every second! Our gaze keeps shifting, not long enough to really observe the bigger picture. We neglect to see what is missing and what is wrong with these images: they are not truly reality because they don't reflect the diversity of society.

The industry searches for representative people that will emulate and support the dominant white narrative. This consequently sets social standards (i.e. norms, appearances, values, customs, behaviours) and media constructs of race and gender, which are incredibly salient for social change. If you don't fit the image that complements the dominant narrative, you can expect little to no presence in prevalent media spaces. Images and pages of white models and white narratives pervade all media: print, digital and television and film. Now that I think about it, whenever I read a book, novel or fictional story where the character's race/ethnicity is not explicitly mentioned, I do picture a white character! Not only are images created on these platforms, but they are circulated within and across them. Consequently, the same faces, narratives and ideas are shown, and constructions of reality become homogenous and promote ideals that lack diversity. Dominant narratives persist because it relies on the interdependence of the various media forms. The same stories are published across all media outlets. In a society ruled by white male thought, blind consumers, especially young audiences that are easily impressionable, may not recognize the effect. Obliviously, audiences might inadvertently embody and perpetuate media's ideas in their everyday life and

social interactions. This shows how crucial it is to be conscious about media since a lack of one fuels the cycle, which allows for these one-sided messages to infiltrate society. The pervasiveness of media, and the fact that we all interact with some form of it on a daily–sometimes hourly–basis, demonstrates its social power. Its social presence has become so ordinary that it almost fuses with our own realities. A scary, but interesting realization. We model our behaviour after the people we see in media and those we see in everyday life (who are likely also modelling media messages). Media has a meaningful role in our society and should be considered as not just entertainment but also as a tool for communication and enlightenment. However, I think having a society which takes on the form of media can be dangerous. Media images are constructed, they are someone's take on reality. If we take media constructs as real, we lose the ability to distinguish between lived experience and a mediated representations of reality. We also lose the opportunity to interpret media as art. I believe that media which exactly reflects reality can be dogmatic. This is troublesome because we can lose our agency in media. Media messages are only real if we make it so. I think the importance of consumers comes in the critical consciousness; we have the power to choose what media messages should be important and re-enacted in society. Media mirrors our society just as much as we mirror media. But like a reflection in a glass mirror, we have the power to control what and how we are seen in the mirror. We can also critique what we see in the glass mirror, which we should do as an audience of the Media Mirror too.

Too often are we exposed to white imagery. White faces pervade media of all kinds, which perpetuates the white narrative of white idealism. Conversely, the depictions of diverse cultures, such as Black, Latin and Asian cultures, are extremely neglected. And often if they are present at all, they are negatively portrayed. They are stereotyped, stigmatized, sexualized, objectified, fetishized and/or appropriated. For instance, Asian women have been not only been historically stereotyped, but also fetishized and sexualized, such a view of us is also still apparent in today's media. Asian women play stereotypical roles in TV and film, such as Chinese-American actress Lucy Liu as a sexy martial arts expert in Charlie's Angels. Asians also mainly occupy small, minor roles. We seldom see Asians in strong, powerful positions. They are supplementary to white leads. This paints them as inferior. Asian culture is also vastly appropriated, as exemplified by the wide selling of kimonos as fashion items. The cultural meaning of our clothing is stripped from its seams. In the name of western fashion, clothing informed by culture becomes a commodity. It is no longer a cultural artefact, it is a temporary trend. Throughout mediated history, this cycle has long been a practice. Not only do Asian women experience this, but so do Asian men. Mickey Rooney, a white American actor, infamously played I.Y Yunioshi in Breakfast at Tiffany's. The cultural impact of the movie on American society was profound and amidst its popularity is the negatively stereotyped imagery attributed to Asians. With such a wide viewership,

it seems that people's perception of Asians was both negative and normalized. I imagine this is especially true if this were someone's first exposure to Asians. This practice of white-washing is culturally insensitive and ignorant, but since white people are doing it, they are protected by their privilege. They are protected by the social and public idea that White Is Right. As a result, a whole culture and identity suffers. At the hands of white media, cultural authenticity suffers while misrepresentation and negative stereotypes survive. To counteract this injustice, it's important that we don't remain complicit. If we don't do anything about it, if we don't identify that it is wrong, and if we don't criticize or actively challenge it, then there is no reason for its normalization to stop.

Cultural sensitivity is (and has been) difficult to find because the mediascape is (and has been) dominated by white patriarchal thoughts. Unfortunately, young, blind consumers mindlessly take these representations as fact and embody them in real-life social interactions. The internalization of these ideas perpetuate and validate them. This calls for a need to change media imagery, deviating away from the white model citizen. As stories get replaced every second, minute, and day, the white narrative is recycled because the images tied to these old and new stories are white-centric. Changing images and faces which have been long repeated in the media can ultimately change the narrative of white idealism and break such an exclusive cycle. New faces introduce new stories, which are more real, relatable and diverse. Moreover, new narratives can also challenge those of the old ones and could deem old narratives as wrong and invalid. Seeing diverse faces can also encourage diverse viewers to participate within the industry and contribute a storytelling which accurately represents their cultures and identities. If media moves forward in the ways I have suggested, it could have a significant impact on social change. Promoting diversity within and across media can influence social perspectives on diversity and equality. Since mass media indeed reaches the masses, I believe it could contribute to societal change as a whole.

LOOK WITH YOUR A THOUSAND EYES

by Jemima Hamilton

LOOK WITH YOUR A THOUSAND EYES is a piece about the way we see–and do not see–bodies of queer women. The piece uses excerpts from Monique Wittig's written work *The Lesbian Body* and *The Straight Mind* to emphasize the ways in which the Male Gaze erases actual queer women's bodies, replacing them with a distorted, fractured image of queer women that is more appealing or desirable to heterosexual audiences.

In this piece, I demonstrate how absurd the invisibility of queer women is to the heterosexual viewer by recreating film stills about queer women through a Lesbian Gaze. In order to do this, I pasted images from pornography created by and for queer women onto film stills taken from popular movies centred around lesbian relationships. Film stills represent the highest form of the Male Gaze acting on womens' bodies as first discussed in the context of narrative cinema in Laura Mulvey's essay *Visual Pleasures in Narrative Cinema.* By inserting queer images into the world of mainstream film, I demonstrate the extreme discrepancies between the representations of queer women seen in mainstream media, queer women who actually exist, and the many eyes which look at them.

demonstrate against pornography, the discourses with the reality the oppressed know this power and

I am dumb in this desert devoid of your ten thousand eyes darker than the dark where too am unseen by you,

Everything which puts them into qu

I am cold

as it is for semioticians.

power over us.

These discourses deny us every possibility of creating our own categories. But then
most ferocious action is the unrelenting tyranny that they exert upon our physical and
mental selves.
m/y feet are completely
em. bedded in the ground,
I allow m/yself to be
reached by your
ten thousand
glances
or if
you prefer
by the single
glance of your
it is not the same,
ten thousand eyes but
oppress us
When we use the overgeneralizing term "ideology" to designate all the discourses of the dominating group, we relegate these discourses to the domain of irre
you do not have the right to speech because your discourse is not scientific and not theo-
discourses of heterosexuality from speaking unless in the sense that they prevent us
wherever I may be m/y ineffable one you gaze at m/e
with your ten thousand eyes, we speak in their terms.

as if anything of that which signifies could escape the political in this moment of history, exist.

in a loud voice all the love names you were used to call m/e.

nd as if, in what concerns us, politically insignificant signs

The discourses which particularly oppress all of us, lesbians, women, and homo- sexual men, are those discourses which take for granted that what founds socie

Representations of Psychology in *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*

by Shubhi Sahni

The sixth season of *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* features an episode titled "Mrs. Sohmers Needs a Psychologist" in which the President of one of Gracie's clubs, Mrs. Sohmers, sees a psychologist to cope with Gracie's illogical antics. The episode portrays the concept of psychology as both a laughing matter and as a subject of fear and worry. Specifically, it presents conflicting messages around the idea of seeing a psychologist. While the episode seems to intentionally de-stigmatize the idea of seeking out professional help, it simultaneously undermines such efforts by depicting a psychologist, Dr. Hendricks, as incompetent and dismissive. The episode also reinforces the message that the act of seeing a psychologist is as troublesome as the very fearsome concept of doing so, which plagues the characters on the show.

A study completed by the *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* entitled "Public Conceptions of Mental Illness in 1950 and 1996: What is Mental Illness and Is It to be Feared?" investigates the public perception of mental illness in 1950 and 1996. The study reveals that in 1950, the American public viewed mental illness through the lens of "negative stereotypes, fear, and rejection" and that many Americans were very reluctant to seek out professional help (Phelan, Link, Stueve, & Pescosolido 189). In this way, "Mrs. Sohmers Needs a Psychologist" challenges and reinforces popular ideas of psychology in 1950s America as it provides a depiction of an unconventional patient seeking out of professional help but ultimately undermines any positive messages of mental health by creating contrary stereotypes of psychology as being both laughable and fearful.

The appearance of characters is used to both challenge and highlight stereotypes of people that would seek out professional help from those who would not. For example, the only person in the episode who seeks out professional help voluntarily is Mrs. Sohmers. She is depicted as a modest, well-dressed, frail old lady who is often confused by Gracie's actions. While her clothing suggests that she belongs to the upper middle class and holds a respectable position in society, her demeanour and actions reveal that she has neurotic tendencies. To illustrate, in the opening scene, Dr. Hendricks comments that Mrs. Sohmers has made twenty one visits to his office in three weeks demonstrating her uneasy state. While Mrs. Sohmers seems like the typical patient of a psychologist due to the depiction of her nervous tendencies, she actually opposes many common stereotypes that were held of psychology patients in the 1950s. Most Americans thought that a patient classified as "neurotic" would also be "dangerous," "dirty," or "worthless" (Phelan, Link, Stueve, & Pescosolido 189). In this way, Mrs. Sohmers defies public conceptions of what a mental illness patient is supposed to be, demonstrating that psychologists' patients can come from any level of social status, wealth, and age.

The appearance of characters is also used to highlight stereotypes that existed at the time about mental health patients. For instance, when Dr. Hendricks makes a house call to the Burns's household, Dr. Hendricks's mistakes Harry Von Zell to be George Burns due to the fact that he is wearing George's robe. Harry tries to

explain to Dr. Hendricks that he is not George but George enters the scene and explains that Harry is in fact George and that he is Harry. Dr. Hendricks chooses to believe George despite Harry's explanation and proceeds to offer his services to Harry. In this scene, Dr. Hendricks is presented with two sets of facts, one by a man dressed in nothing but a robe and his underwear and one by a man sharply dressed in a suit. Dr. Hendricks choice to believe George over Harry signifies that a man dressed in a suit is more trustworthy than a man in a house robe. This scene underlines the fact that appearance of characters contributes to how they are treated differently with regards to presumptions made about psychology. George's suit makes him appear to have a higher social status compared to Harry in his robe. As a result, Harry is deemed delusional while George is seen as rational.

All efforts to challenge stereotypes of psychology patients are undermined by a dismissive and incompetent portrayal of Dr. Hendricks. The characters lack agency in interactions with Dr. Hendricks as he determines their mental state and psychological requirements without listening to or investigating their problems. For example, he treats Mrs. Sohmers as delusional for three weeks without even considering the fact that she may be telling the truth about Gracie. Additionally, in his first meeting with Gracie, has says that he is "a trained observer of people" and that he "can't imagine anyone more normal than [her]" when she is the character that exhibits the most abnormal behaviour in the show (Fowler, Paul, Helm, & Burns). Dr. Hendricks' depiction is obviously making a joke about psychologists; he is barely able to understand his patients' problems much less offer them sound advice. This aligns with popular beliefs in American society as "the idea of consulting psychiatrists enjoyed little public endorsement" at the time (Phelan, Link, Stueve, & Pescosolido 189). In fact, one respondent in a study said "I don't think I'd have to go to anybody to hold me hand, tell me I was crazy, hold my hand and talk to me for twenty dollars an hour" (Phelan, Link, Stueve, & Pescosolido 189). This demonstrates how the public thought that psychologists didn't have a real method or purpose to their job. This notion is convey in "Mrs. Sohmers Needs a Psychologist" as in all the scenes related to Dr. Hendricks, there is no sense that a methodology or education is applied to his diagnosis. To illustrate, when Dr. Hendricks visits the Burns household to speak to George, he decides that Ricky, Harry, who he thinks is George, and Gracie all require therapy based on a few observations that are out of context. Accordingly, the impression that is given of Dr. Hendricks is that he has no credibility, ability to diagnosis illness, or ability to help patients cope with their problems.

While the show's plot revolves around psychology, there is no representation of actual psychology. Instead, jokes are made about the idea that women are in need of clinical treatment and that psychologists are incompetent. For instance, Mrs. Sohmers's anxiety and inability to cope with life is demonstrated as a direct result of Gracie's illogical expressions and ideas. This is demonstrated visually when Mrs. Sohmers is unable to process why Gracie would interpret "separating

eggs" in a recipe as physically creating a distance between two eggs rather than cracking them (Fowler, Paul, Helm, & Burns). Mrs. Sohmers is flabbergasted by Gracie's actions and instead of showing her full reaction to the incident, the screen flips and shows her explaining the situation to Dr. Hendricks. This scene depicts how both Mrs. Sohmers and Gracie exhibit abnormal or what could be considered troubled behaviour. First, it shows how Mrs. Sohmers is so taken aback by Gracie's actions that she is unable to cope with the absurdity of the situation in real life and must go through therapy with Mrs. Sohmers to deal with it. Second, it shows how Gracie is so childlike that she takes the term "separating eggs" as a physical instruction rather than a metaphorical one. In this scene, both women are depicted as being out of touch with reality. Mrs. Sohmers is incapable of coping with reality and Gracie appears to live in her own world.

The show also depicts a negative side to psychology through the juxtaposition of the last two scenes in the show. In one scene, Mr. Morton mistakenly believes that his wife is mentally ill when he gets a call from Dr. Hendricks office. Mr. Morton, who is visibly worried, starts acting drastically different and calling his wife "sweetheart" and "precious" (Fowler, Paul, Helm, & Burns). In the next scene, George plays practical jokes on Dr. Hendricks and makes a fool out of him. The juxtaposition of these scenes shows the different messages the show communicates regarding psychology. On one hand, Mr. Morton is very concerned by the phone call he received from Dr. Hendricks's office and starts treating his wife in a much more pleasant manner to ensure that she is okay. The message from this scene is that mental illness is a serious problem that is something to be afraid off. On the other hand, George does not take Dr. Hendricks visit seriously at all. In fact, he pretends to be Harry, refers to him as "Doc" and tells him that at "twenty after four" that he and Harry switch names (Fowler, Paul, Helm, & Burns). George's various practical jokes demonstrate how little he thinks of Dr. Hendricks's opinion and significance as a medical professional. The light and joking tone is especially highlighted when George calls Dr. Hendricks "Doc." The use of the word simultaneously diminishes his importance and establishes a casual dialogue. These dynamic depictions regarding the seriousness of mental health portray that the issue is both worrisome and a joke.

Essentially, "Mrs. Sohmers Needs a Psychologist" presents varying messages regarding psychology that reflect the beliefs of the American people in the 1950s. The fearful and comedic representations of mental illnesses portray how the public thought of psychology as a laughable subject as well as how they attached a particular stigma to it. While the show challenged stereotypes and broadened the representation of types of patients with mental illnesses, it ultimately adhered to all other common stereotypes and negative depictions of psychology.

Works Cited

Fowler, Keith, Norman Paul, Harvey Helm, and William Burns. "Mrs. Sohmers Needs a Psychologist." *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show.* Dir. Frederick De Cordova. CBS. 17 Sept. 1956. Television.

Phelan, Jo C., Bruce G. Link, Ann Stueve, and Bernice A. Pescosolido. "Public Conceptions of Mental Illness in 1950 and 1996: What Is Mental Illness and Is It to be Feared?" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 41.2 (2000): 188. Web.

#LetsTalk Without Bell

by Leora Bromberg

Every year since 2010, on a single day in late January, *Bell Canada* has encouraged Canadians to Break The Stigma and Start A Conversation on mental illness over social media. The company donates five cents for every text and call made on a *Bell* plan and for every social media post that tags *#BellLetsTalk* (Bell Canada, 2018). On January 31, this year's *Bell Let's Talk* day raised just under seven million dollars to invest in Canadian mental health, with over 138 million calls, texts, and social media interactions. With such impressive numbers, *Bell*'s campaign earns Canadians the pride of leading "the biggest mental health conversation in the world" (Bell Canada, 2018). It would seem like Canadians are in dire need of this anti-stigma conversation, considering that twenty percent of Canadians experience problems with mental health and addiction yearly and that in Canada, mental illness is "a leading cause of disability" (CAMH). Curiously, these statistics highlight the connection between mental health and identity, as according to Tatum (2010), the category of ableism in self-definition is one that tends not to be the first to come to mind or capture attention (pp. 6). Although this campaign invites Canadians to consider this often overlooked sphere of identity, are there perhaps consequences of a dialogue on mental health awareness being facilitated primarily through social media and by a multi-million dollar corporation? A closer look at *Bell*'s campaign, target audience, and platforms, and corporate agenda reveals that through simplicity and reinforcement of normative narratives and behaviours, the initiative risks deterring the very dialogue it aims to generate.

An immediate observation is that despite its aim to appeal to all Canadians, there is an undeniable lack of diverse representation within *Bell*'s own promotion of the campaign in terms of race, age, class, and even mental illness. The campaign's ads and testimonial videos primarily voice the experiences of white, adult, cisgender, heterosexual, middle-to-upper class Canadians, with the spotlight on celebrities including six-time Olympic medalist Clara Hughes and actor Howie Mandel (Bell Canada, 2018). The celebrity representatives mostly seem to be adults, despite the fact that more than any other cohort, young people between the ages of 15 to 24 are the most likely to experience mental illness and substance abuse (CAMH). This celebrity representation also distracts from the lived reality of many suffering from serious mental illness who disproportionately experience exclusion, "chronic poverty" and homelessness (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2007). Even the non-celebrity testimonials more often than not feature a hopeful success story of "overcoming" illness, such as those of young athletes (Peters, 2017, pp. 403). Yet, even within the category of mental illness, the campaign tends to acknowledge more socially mainstream conditions such as anxiety and depression, with significantly less media attention to diagnoses like schizophrenia, dementia or eating disorders which continue to face deep stigmatization. Some of the past advertisements even seem to simplify the complexities of mental illness. Take, for example, one Toronto subway ad from *Bell Let's Talk* in 2016 which

read "On January 27, let's turn [sad face emoji] into [happy face emoji]" (Shafi, 2016). Although a campaign "for all Canadians" (Peters, 2017, pp. 396), by mainly advertising a very limited set of identities, *Bell Let's Talk* fails to deeply explore the diverse realities and intersections of identity and mental health.

Aside from advertising, much of the success of *Bell*'s campaign depends fundamentally on the participation of younger audiences and their familiarity with social media. In doing so, *Bell*, as a capitalist entity, inserts itself into the already complicated layers of identity which young people balance in intensely digitally mediated lives. It is important to consider adolescence as a critical period for physical, psychological and social development, including increased chances of struggling with mental health; alongside social expectations to maintain digital presence and self-presentation (Singleton et al., 2016, pp. 394). Online interactions tend to take on a very performative nature. This means that when teenagers engage with social media, they may adjust their self-presentation to please invisible or imagined audiences (boyd, 2014, pp. 31). Various studies have even shown the use of social networking sites to be correlated with signs of psychological distress in young people. Take for instance the sometimes stressful, "addictive" or "compulsive" reliance on receiving likes or shares—the absence of which tends to encourage negative social comparisons and low self-esteem, which can in turn contribute to mental health challenges (Singleton et al., 2016, pp. 395). While the campaign raises impressive funds, does using *#BellLetsTalk* over the span of a single day really allow for meaningful and authentic conversations? By revolving the campaign around young people and online spaces, *Bell Let's Talk* conveys an underlying message that the stigma can be broken through digitally mediated "talking," with the help of the services of this major corporation, rather than through face-to-face conversation.

While *Bell Let's Talk* may spark conversation and raise awareness and funds, the efforts seems problematic when considering the degree to which the campaign is inseparable from *Bell*'s corporate reputation and image. After all, the tag worth spreading is *#BellLetsTalk* and not #LetsTalk. While the campaign may attempt to remain apolitical and benevolent, this hashtag is ultimately a catchy corporate slogan. While *Bell* claims to be selling "anti-stigma," the company is "equally selling its own brand and services," specifically banking on the "emotional investment of young people" (Peters, 2017, pp. 397, 404). Yet, it is also worth acknowledging that depression has been linked with the pressures to keep up with corporate culture (Cvetkovich, 2012, pp. 12). Therefore, maybe this type of anti-stigma dialogue would be more appropriately facilitated by a governmental or non-profit organization. Although *Bell* is donating millions to Canadian mental health, the company still gains direct profit by encouraging customers to use their services more actively on *Bell Let's Talk* day, which, by extension, reinforces the long term use of their services and illuminates the value of these forms of communication. Likewise, the charitable mission of the campaign and

the celebrity support function to increase brand appreciation. Yet, it turns out that *Bell* does not exactly lead by example. In fact, the company recently faced criticism after former employee Maria McLean was fired following a request for medically advised leave for mental health reasons (Peters, 2017, pp. 402). The risk is that participants in *Bell Let's Talk* day might not be conscious of the presence of *Bell*'s branding or how their own emotional labour supports not only the amount of funds raised, but in turn, *Bell*'s business and reputation.

Despite serving a good cause by raising both expansive funds and awareness, *Bell Let's Talk* remains on a surface level rather than digging deeper into the complex realities of mental health and identity in Canada. A *Bell Let's Talk* participant should try to be conscious of *Bell*'s underlying corporate agenda and acknowledge that supportive conversations around mental health should persist year-round, not only on a day when a trending hashtag looks good on your feed. It is also worth considering and giving voice to the experiences and identities which tend to be missing from *Bell*'s advertising campaign, of those that are not white, wealthy and fully recovered from mental illness, and consider how this lack of representation contributes to feeding simplistic and normalized narratives to *Bell* customers and audiences. Anti-stigma dialogues are important but not easy. Therefore, in order to confront mental health realities it is necessary to be critical of corporate interventions and acknowledge that *Bell*'s turn-that-frown-upside-down mission does not suffice.

Works Cited

Bell Canada. (February 1, 2018). A new Bell Let's Talk Day record! *Bell Let's Talk.* Retrieved from: https://letstalk.bell.ca/en/news/1148/a-new-bell-lets-talk-day-record-138383995-messages-of-support-for-mental-health-means-bell-will-invest-a-further-6919199-75-in-canadian-mental-health.

boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: the social lives of networked teens.* New York, NY: Yale University Press. Retrieved from: https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca.

Cvetkovich, A. (2012). *Depression: A public feeling.* Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Mental Illness and addictions: Facts and statistics. (n.d.) *CAMH.* Retrieved from: http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/about_camh/newsroom/for_reporters/Pages/addictionmentalhealthstatistics.aspx.

Peters, M. (2017). How Bell Canada capitalises on the millennial: affective labour, intersectional identity, and mental health. *Open Cultural Studies*, 1(1), 395-405.

Poverty and mental illness. (2007). Canadian Mental Health Association. Retrieved from: https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/poverty-and-mental-illness/.

Shafi, H. (2016, Jan 27). *Let's talk about the corporatization of mental health. Cityscape.* https://torontoist.com/2016/01/bell-lets-talk-mental-health-corporatization/.

Singleton, A., Abeles, P., & Smith, I. C. (2016). Online social networking and psychological experiences: The perceptions of young people with mental health difficulties. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 61, 394-403.

Tatum, B. D. (2010). The complexity of identity. In *Readings for diversity and social justice*, second edition (pp. 5-8). New York: Routledge.

Contributors

to Volume 5

Victoria Yang
Yidi Guan
Huisi Cai
Angelika Olegario
Jemima Hamilton
Shubhi Sahni
Leora Bromberg